

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, June 2022

During this month we Christians will celebrate Trinity Sunday in honor of the one true God, the triune God, who is three distinct Persons and yet one divine Essence, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7)

During public worship services, we Christians frequently confess our faith, with the words of the Apostles’ Creed. Confirmed adults can undoubtedly recall studying the Apostles’ Creed in Luther’s Small Catechism, in which it is divided into three Articles: the first Article dealing with God the Father; the second Article dealing with God the Son; and, the third Article dealing with God the Holy Ghost.

Beginning with this month’s Topical Bulletin and continuing with the following two months, we will review what we confess in the Apostles’ Creed and look at some Scripture proofs regarding that which we confess in each Article. It will be beneficial for us to do so, since we all dwell in sinful flesh which urges us to merely say the words of the Apostles’ Creed mechanically, without really thinking about what we are confessing.

Therefore, this month’s topic for consideration is: **The Apostles’ Creed; the first Article.**

Luther’s Small Catechism puts it thus:

THE FIRST ARTICLE

CREATION

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Comment: Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed is truly Scriptural, for it plainly puts forth the facts that God the Father IS truly Almighty and IS the Creator of heaven and earth, as well as our Provider, who sustains us undeserving sinful human beings with every good thing. Indeed, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

Looking again at the First Article of the Creed, notice also that it is important for each INDIVIDUAL to BELIEVE in God the Father as his or her Almighty Creator and Preserver. To believe in God the Father is to know, trust and confide in Him as one’s Maker; yea, the Maker of all things, as the Holy Bible teaches. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6) “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” (Proverbs 16:4)

The Holy Bible will further illuminate us concerning what it means when each of us confesses: **I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.**

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
(Romans 10:12-17)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Comment: The foregoing Bible passages make it clear that to BELIEVE in God is to have FAITH in God— faith which itself comes by hearing the Word of God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” (Hebrews 11:3)

Comment: Observe that the words of Hebrews 11:3 make it quite clear that the theory of evolution is an absolute lie of the devil; for, the theory of evolution plainly contradicts God’s Word. God-given faith lays hold on the FACT that GOD CREATED ALL THINGS by His own almighty Word!

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.” (Acts 17:24-29)

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” (Colossians 1:16-17)

Comment: The Holy Bible makes it clear that GOD CREATED ALL THINGS: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:11) Yes, the living God, God the Father Almighty, IS the Maker of heaven and earth; and, He preserves heaven, earth and all things, or they would cease to exist! “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He

gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” (Psalm 33:6-9) *There is NO doubt about it: the Holy Bible makes it clear that GOD CREATED ALL THINGS!*

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.” (Genesis 1:26-30)

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7)

Comment: Notice that God made man as the highest of His created works, for man was made in the image of God and was made a LIVING SOUL, NOT merely a living being. Yes, human beings have an immortal soul, while plants, animals, birds and fish do not.

“Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.” (Psalm 36:5-6)

“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.” (Nehemiah 9:6)

Comment: Observe that not only did the Lord God create ALL things; God also PRESERVES that which He created— ALL things!

“The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” (Psalm 145:15-16)

“Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” (Psalm 91:9-10)

“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.” (Psalm 37:5)

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Comment: Note from the foregoing Scripture passages that God PRESERVES those who believe in Him, giving them necessary food and drink for the sustenance of the body, defending and protecting them from evil and dangers to body and soul. God is always doing what is best for us who believe in Him!

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:8-14)

Comment: Fellow Christians, God is so very good and merciful to us undeserving sinners! There is certainly no merit or worthiness within us, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)

“Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” (Psalm 106:1)

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.” (Psalm 107:31-32)

“What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.” (Psalm 116:12-14)

“O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.” (Psalm 118:1)

“O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” (Psalm 118:29)

Comment: We certainly owe our heavenly Father thanks and praise for all that He has done and still does for us! We are to thank and praise God both privately and in public worship. Furthermore, we are to serve and obey God in love and gratitude to Him, because of who He is. Yes, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

Now, if one goes back to the first page of this bulletin and rereads the first Article of the Apostles’ Creed and Luther’s explanation of the same, it will be plainly evident that those words are completely Scriptural in view of the Bible passages we’ve considered throughout this topical bulletin.

Therefore, God grant that when we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles’ Creed, we truly think about what we confess. Let us thank God for revealing Himself to us in the Holy Scriptures and for gifting us with faith in Him; for, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.” (Lamentations 3:22-25)

m.e.l.