

Redeemer OPC, Hawaii
Adult Sunday School
The Apostles' Creed (3)
"First Article - God the Father"

- I. Introduction. Review of "I believe": the nature of saving faith. The main purpose of the last lesson was to distinguish saving faith from things that others call "faith," which cannot save. What we brought out does not deny the truths of predestination or election, or the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate the heart and instill saving faith in it. Faith is the instrument of justification. We don't deny that God can work above or apart from means. The Bible teaches that He does so in the case of children of believers who do not have the capacity for faith, either due to infancy or mental incapacity. So, if they are among the elect, God can regenerate the heart, impute Christ's righteousness to them, and justify them even apart from the instrument of faith. He did so with Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) and John the Baptist (Lk. 1:41-44). He does so in the case of an infant child of a believer when that child dies in its infancy (2 Sam. 12:23). However, we are discussing the Apostles' Creed as a statement of faith, a confession. Thus, our question focuses on those who do have the capacity to understand. So, first, we must recognize that God ordinarily uses an instrument to justify, and the only instrument He uses is saving faith. In connection with a creed, then, as a statement of faith, we needed to define what saving faith is, in distinction from other, wrong conceptions of faith. We did this by identifying the constituent parts of saving faith. Whereas the work of the Holy Spirit is the cause of faith, knowledge, assent, and trust are the parts of faith. Now, to the study of the first article of the Apostles' Creed.
- II. I Believe in God. Superfluous? One might think, "Well, duh!" But it is not an unnecessary statement. It is the foundational statement upon which the rest must be built. It clarifies

which God one believes.

1. The one, true, living God. Not Baal, Molech, Buddha, Vishnu, Krishna, Allah, or a partridge in a....
2. The Triune God that the rest of the creed affirms.
3. It acknowledges that God must be the Object of saving faith, for it is God against whom the sinner has violated, and it is God who saves and forgives.

III. I Believe in God the Father. By “Father” it emphasizes the first Person of Trinity and all that is related to that. The Father’s particular ministry (economical Trinity) is creation and decree (predestination and election). In a confession of faith of a saved sinner, this term also says that God is our Father for the sake of Christ, so it implies the reality of adoption.

IV. I Believe in God the Father Almighty.

A. The Sovereignty of God. “Almighty” brings to the minds of most the omnipotence of God, as it should. But what most do not think of is the other side of God’s sovereignty, His will. Almighty means that God has the power to carry out all of His own most holy will, whatsoever He has decreed. Also, then, His decree is usually thought of specifically in relation to election; thus, this confessing this term is confessing that God is most capable of saving whom He will, and those whom He has chosen by His will.

B. Connection Between the Sovereignty of God and God as Creator. The next term will specify that God is Maker of heaven and earth.

1. As the all-powerful Creator, God owns everything; everything is under His authority. “Almighty” confesses that God has the authority to require anything from His creatures that is in keeping with His own character, such as perfect personal obedience to His law. So, He is the God to whom all people are accountable, and He is perfectly within His right either to judge or

to save those who do not render perfect personal obedience to Him.

2. Having created all things, He is also the one who upholds all that He has created. This is known as His providence: “God’s works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions” (WSC). Thus, we can trust Him who is almighty to work all things according to the counsel of His will as a faithful Father to save and preserve His people. This is the God in whom we all should want to believe, and I want to believe, because there are too many things that can happen to prevent or destroy our faith and salvation otherwise.

V. Maker of Heaven and Earth.

- A. As mentioned above, this says that God’s authority extends over all things, and especially over man, that His authority is complete. Man is a reasoning, religious, and responsible creature of God. He is morally obligated to render perfect personal obedience, and morally responsible for the consequences of not doing so; namely, the wrath to come in hell if he remains outside of Christ.
- B. The Doctrine of Creation. This refuted all secular and philosophical theories, beliefs, and doctrines of the origin of the universe (of which there were many). It still maintains the Biblical truth against the false theory of evolution. Evolution serves the same purpose now as those other false theories did then: to escape man’s responsibility to his Creator and liability to punishment for his sin. It seeks to put distance between man and God by huge periods of time, and seeks to rid man of the need for God as the origin of all things by attributing it to something else. It is Satan’s attempt to deceive people and lead them away from God, and man’s attempt to get rid of God and hide from the reality that the Biblical truth of creation presses upon man (Rom. 1:18). The theory of evolution had its starting point in the

Enlightenment period when men were arrogantly imagining themselves to be so highly intellectually accomplished that they not only did not need God, but considered the Bible to irrelevant and full of wives' tales because they denied the supernatural.