

The Apostlic Creed



I. The Historical Background of the First Article

The Apostles' Creed arose gradually within the early Christian Church as a baptismal confession. Catechumens preparing for Baptism would publicly confess the faith into which they were being baptized. By the second and third centuries, the Church already possessed forms of the creed very similar to the wording used today.

The opening words — “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth” — were not chosen randomly. The early Church faced numerous false teachings that attacked either the goodness of creation or the identity of the Creator Himself. Many early heresies claimed that the material world was evil, corrupt by nature, or created by a lesser deity.

Gnosticism taught that salvation consisted of escaping the physical world through secret spiritual knowledge. Marcion went even further by rejecting the Old Testament entirely and claiming that the God of creation was different from the Father revealed by Jesus Christ. The Church therefore confessed clearly that the Father Almighty — the Creator of heaven and earth — is the very same God who sent His Son for the salvation of sinners.

The First Article therefore stands as a direct rejection of every attempt to separate creation from redemption. Christianity does not treat the created world as evil or meaningless. Instead, creation is the good work of God, even though it now exists under the curse of sin. The God who created the world also entered the world in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

- Why do false teachers attack the doctrine of creation? _____

- Why is it important that the God of the Old Testament and the Father of Jesus Christ are the same God? _____

- How does the doctrine of creation shape the Christian understanding of the body and the physical world? _____

II. Luther's Explanation and Divine Providence

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, land, animals, and all that I have; richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; protects me from all danger, and guards and preserves 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, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

The length and detail of Luther's explanation are significant. Rather than speaking only in abstract theological language, Luther intentionally lists ordinary earthly blessings: clothing, food, home, family, work, property, protection, and preservation. This reflects the biblical understanding that God works through ordinary means in daily life. The Christian therefore learns to recognize even common earthly blessings as gifts flowing from the Father's ongoing providence.

Luther's explanation is remarkably personal. He does not merely confess that God created the universe in some distant past. Instead, Luther places the individual Christian directly within the doctrine of creation: "God has made me." The First Article therefore becomes intensely personal and pastoral.

Luther also emphasizes that creation is ongoing in the sense that God continually preserves and sustains what He has made. The Father did not simply create the world and then abandon it. He continues to uphold creation through His providence. Every breath, every meal, every ability, every earthly blessing remains dependent upon the preserving will of God.

This emphasis upon providence is deeply biblical. Scripture repeatedly teaches that God provides rain, food, government, peace, family, vocation, and daily bread. Luther therefore lists ordinary earthly blessings intentionally. Shoes, clothing, food, drink, house, home, spouse, children, weather, and good government are not accidents of history; they are gifts from the Father's hand.

Luther also stresses that these blessings come "out of pure fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." This language already introduces the foundation of justification by grace alone. Even before discussing redemption in the Second Article, Luther teaches that mankind lives entirely from divine mercy.

Key Themes in Luther's Explanation

Theme	Explanation
Creation	God created both mankind and the entire created order.
Providence	God continually preserves and sustains creation.
Daily Bread	Earthly blessings come from the Father's hand.
Grace	These gifts are undeserved and flow from divine mercy.
Response	Christians respond with thanksgiving, praise, service, and obedience.

III. The First Article and the Christian Life

The modern world often treats human existence as accidental, impersonal, or self-created. The First Article directly contradicts these assumptions. Christians confess that human life is created intentionally by God and therefore possesses inherent dignity and purpose.

The doctrine of creation also shapes Christian ethics. If mankind is created by God, then human life cannot be treated as disposable. The body is not meaningless. Human identity is not self-invented. The Christian understanding of marriage, family, vocation, and stewardship all flow from the confession that God created heaven and earth.

The First Article also provides profound comfort. The Father who created the world continues to govern history and provide for His people. Even during suffering, uncertainty, or hardship, Christians confess that their lives remain under the care of the Father Almighty.

This doctrine ultimately leads to worship. Luther concludes his explanation by stating: "For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him." The Christian response to creation is not pride or independence, but gratitude and trust.

Review and Preparation for Future Study

- The Apostles' Creed developed from early baptismal confessions in the ancient Church.
- The First Article responded to heresies that rejected the goodness of creation.
- Luther emphasizes both creation and God's ongoing providence.
- The doctrine of creation shapes the Christian understanding of humanity, ethics, vocation, and worship.
- Future studies can examine creation, providence, daily bread, vocation, stewardship, and the relationship between faith and science in greater detail.

Closing Thought: The First Article is far more than a statement about how the world began. It is a confession that every moment of life depends upon the Father's preserving care and mercy.