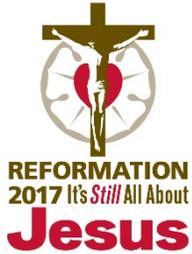


God Revealed: The Creed and the One True God

Pr. Perry Sukstorf, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Olathe, Kansas



So perplexed by what he found when he rubbed the lamp, Aladdin asked the genie to explain what was going on. The genie replied, “PHENOMENAL COSMIC POWER! Itty bitty living space.” Sometimes our understanding of God might seem just as preposterous, or, at times, terribly inadequate.

Perhaps you’ve wondered how to apprehend God and His nature, not only as an entity, but as a power, force, or impetus for existence? Maybe you’ve tried to explain it to your children or students? Thankfully, this doctrine of the Faith is one of the earliest settled upon by the church.

To know God, we look to the inspired Word (2 Pet 1:20-21), which testifies to who/what/how God is. The (Spirit-led) Old Testament prophets proclaimed the God-Man (see Deut 18:15, Is 7:14, 9:5-6, 11:12, 53:5, Mic 5:2) and His work, just as Jesus proclaimed Himself a Person of the Godhead (Jn 6:51, 17:5, 24). After Jesus ascended into heaven, His Church began the task of proclaiming Christ, the Son of God (Matt 16:16), to the world. Because to tell of the Son Jesus is to relate also the story of the Father Creator and the Sanctifying Holy Spirit (see Jn 1:18; Matt 28:19-20), their proclamation was thoroughly Trinitarian. In short, *in Christ, who comes with grace and mercy, God reveals His true nature.*

Roman Christians summarized this proclamation with the Apostles’ Creed (final form late 2nd cent.), followed by others, of which the Nicene (A.D. 381) and Athanasian (c. A.D. 500) Creeds expound the nature of God with more detail. As we enter #Reformation500 (use this to search the net) it’s important to know that Luther (SC 2, LC 2) and the other Lutheran confessors (Ep 12.20-31, SD 12.28-40) relied upon this cornerstone of Christianity not only to cement their ties to the Church Catholic—this historic Christianity which crosses time, borders, principalities, and the rule of men—but to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, the forgiveness of sins through faith in Him.

When confessing the Faith before Charles V in Augsburg (1530), the Reformers used the creed to separate themselves from the heretics who came before (AC 1.3) and, again, when preparing for the council to be held at Mantua (delayed to Trent, 1545), the SA began with a treatment of the shared doctrine of the Trinity in four numbered points (SA 1), its *telos* in Christ (SA 2) and our responsibility to the Trinity as its creatures (SA 3.1)

This confession of Christ and the Triune God, far from being a historical relic, has remained and continues to remain relevant and vital for the Church even today. For example, the centerpiece of the Christian resistance to Hitler in Germany was the confession that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (and not Hitler) are God and that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a confession that Christians even lost their life for.

Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession
Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession
SC = Small Catechism
LC = Large Catechism
SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)
Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome

SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

NOTE: Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period. Please note that the first number in citations of SC and LC points to the Chief Part; any numbers following the period point to the specific section/paragraph. Thus SC 1.8 does not point to the 8th Commandment, but to the explanation of the 4th.