



THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

The Apostles' Creed

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The English word "creed" has its roots in a Latin word *credo*, meaning, "I believe." In the language of the church a creed is a statement of belief. The oldest creed in common use by the Christian Church today is the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles did not write the creed that bears their name. It came into being long after their deaths. The creed passed through some stages of development and gradually grew into its present form. It is called "Apostles' Creed" because it sets forth the central teaching and beliefs of the apostles.

The creed was developed out of a number of brief creedal statements in the New Testament. Some of them were used in Public Preaching, Baptism, Catechetical Instruction and worship before being put together as a single creedal statement. Examples of such creedal statements include:

"... I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37 KJV).

"... If you confess with your mouth (that) Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9 NIV).

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men, the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV).



“Therefore go and make disciples of all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19 NIV).

Other creedal statements are found in passages like 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Philippians 2:10–11; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:8; 1 John 5:1; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 6:13–14; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4–5.

According to Dr. Robert Kolb, the text of the Apostles’ Creed took its present shape in the eighth century. It represented a final revision of the old Roman Creed which was first used in the west in the early third century.

Latourette equally asserted that: “The present form of what we know as the Apostles’ Creed probably did not exist before the sixth century. However, the essential core has a much earlier origin. It may go back to an Eastern development of that formula, but more probably it had its inception in Rome. A briefer form, known as the Roman Creed, was in use in the Church of Rome at least as far back as the fourth century.”

The present text of the Apostles’ Creed can hardly be attributed to a single author. Equally, no council or group of individuals has been identified with its authorship.

The creed was first a baptismal confession and later developed into a statement for the declaration of faith in Christ—“Jesus is the Son of God.” In further development it became an apology, a defense of faith in Christ. Later stages saw it become the refutation of heretical teachings such as Gnosticism, Marcionism, Montanism and used for Christological teaching.

The first article of the creed describes God the Father as Almighty, the maker of all things, provider and sustainer of all things.

The second article describes Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit; he suffered, died, was buried, he resurrected and ascended into heaven.

The third article describes the Holy Spirit, the state of the Church as holy, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of all believers and the gift of everlasting life through Christ righteous suffering.

This creed is of great significance to all Lutherans because it confers to us the idea of one God manifested in three different persons—the Trinity. To Lutherans the creed is a true Apostolic confession, teaching and belief. It gives us the knowledge of creation, redemption and sanctification and the gift of eternal life.



My Ibibio tribe in Africa already had the cultural idea of one God in three persons. The Ibibio of old believed in *Abasi Ukot, Abasi Eyeyen and Abasi Iman*—God of the inlaw, God of the grandchildren and God of the allied, so the creed gained easy acceptance in the Ibibio area because of the tribe’s former cultural religious background.

The Lutheran Church of Nigeria started in 1936 with the rural Ibesikpo clan, the late Rev. Dr. Jonathan Udoekong its pioneering father. The Nigerian church has grown from an initial 16 congregations to 339 in 38 districts. The church is established in 15 states of Nigeria and works in a dozen different languages, with English in common. The church has more than 80,000 baptized members.

