

B.A.S.I.C.

Brothers And Sisters In Christ

The Augsburg Confession: Article One, Of God

By Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

The first article of the Augsburg Confession defines the person and nature of God. Every civilization in the world has a belief in “god” in one form or another. These “gods” are not all the same – there are many different “gods” which human beings choose to believe in. This is called “The natural knowledge of God.” By nature all people have a built in knowledge of God which is supported by the creation of the world around us. Paul writes: “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 2:19-20).

Polytheism: Belief in MANY gods is called
Monotheism: Belief in ONE God is called

One True God

But there are not many gods, there is only one true God who alone is worthy of our

praise and honor. In this article the reformers describe the God they believe in, who is distinct from all other gods: “We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God.”

How many true Gods are there?

Mark 12:29-32: “. . . the LORD is one.”

John 17:3: “. . . the only true God . . .”

1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God . . .”

Who is the true God - How is He described?

Deuteronomy 4:35

Isaiah 44:6-8

Three Persons in One God

Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!”

While there is only one God (essence), He is revealed to us in three persons: “There

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nal, without divi-
sion, without end,*

are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.”

- **The unique nature of the Hebrew word for God: It is commonly found in the plural “El” = God; “Elohim” = God(s).**

Along with this plural form for the word God the Hebrew often uses plural pronouns when referring to God - Genesis 1:26: “Then God (Elohim) said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” (cf. Genesis 3:22; 11:7)

- **The three-fold praise to God (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8): Holy, Holy, Holy!**

“And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isaiah 6:3).

- **The three persons of God described together:**

Matthew 28:19
1 Corinthians 12:4-6
2 Corinthians 13:14
Revelation 1:4-6

- **The three persons of God working together:**

Isaiah 42:1
Acts 2:32-33
Ephesians 2:18
1 Peter 1:1-2

The Unity of the Three Persons of God

The reformers declared the unity of these three persons in one God: “All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, one creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible.”

- **The divine nature of the Father:**

1 Corinthians 8:6

- **The divine nature of the Son:**

Isaiah 9:6

John 14:6-11

(Read also the letter to the Hebrews, especially the first chapter in connection with the divine nature of Jesus.)

How can we reconcile the above with John 14:28; Matthew 24:36?

Philippians 2:5-8

Hebrews 2:14-18

- **The divine nature of the Holy Spirit:**

Acts 5:3-4

Psalm 104:30

Luke 1:35

Acts 13:2-4

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Why is the Holy Spirit not spoken of as true God as often as Jesus?

John 16:13-14

The doctrine concerning the nature and persons of God is called: The Trinity (cf. The Athanasian Creed, TLH p.53)

Errors concerning the doctrine of God

Because of the propositions of Eck, which combined the teachings of the Lutherans with the errors of others both past and present, the confessors regularly condemned false teaching which might mistakenly be attributed to them in the articles of the Augsburg Confession.

“Therefore all the heresies which are contrary to this article are rejected. Among these are the heresy of the Manichaeans, who assert that there are two gods, one good and one evil; also that of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and others like them; also that of the Samosatenes, old and new, who hold that there is only one person and sophistically assert that the other two, the Word and the Holy Spirit, are not necessarily distinct persons but that the Word signifies a physical word or voice and that the Holy Spirit is a movement induced in creatures.”

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There are three types of errors which undermine the doctrine of the Trinity. These errors were taught in the ancient church, in Luther’s time, and continue to be taught by many today (the groups in bold are active still today).

1. Overemphasize the Unity of the Essence

Manichaeans - 3rd century dualistic religion (good vs. evil)

Valentinians - 2nd century gnostic religion

Arians - 4th century false teacher who taught Jesus was created

Eunomians - 4th century Arian who taught Jesus was unlike the Father

Mohammedans - 7th century religion known as Islam

Samosatenes - 3rd century followers of Paul of Samosata who taught that Jesus was a mere man - John Campanus and Hans Denck of Luther’s day taught the same

Unitarians - modern gnostics who teach that Jesus was a God-filled human being

Jehovah’s Witnesses - modern Arians who teach that Jesus is not true God

2. Overemphasize the Trinity of Persons

John Philoponus - 6th century tritheist (three gods)

Mormons - modern religions which teaches that Father, Son and Spirit are each a distinct god, who were once men but became gods

3. Misrepresent the relationship of the Persons

Adoptionism - 7th century teaching that Jesus was adopted as the Son of God

Subordinationism - teaching that the persons of the Trinity are inferior to one another

Tanzania Ups and Downs

By Pastor Emeritus David Koenig

One uplifting event in the LCEA's brief history with us was the beginning of a seminary which had in 2006 fourteen enrolled.

When the ELCT, which was the large union of Lutheran churches in Tanzania, decided to ordain women, it was the last straw for a small group in that church body. They formed a group and wrote letters of inquiry to the LC-MS, WELS and the CLC. The letter to the CLC dated April 4, 2000 was addressed to Prof. Pfeiffer at Immanuel Lutheran College. He forwarded the letter to me. The date is important to help us remember that God is in charge. I was already scheduled to go to Etogo, Kenya at the end of April. Happily, a meeting was arranged. I met in Nairobi with four of the pastors of the Lutheran Church of East Africa which had formed two and a half years earlier. During several days of meetings I went over with them fourteen pamphlets and leaflets explaining our teachings. They also presented a doctrinal paper on their positions. Here is one of the 'ups'. We seemed to be agreed. But of the four pastors I met with now only one is in fellowship with us, Pastor Jeremiah Issangya. One of the 'downs'. Yet for those who left us they have been replaced by pastors who joined us, Malyi, Gondwe, Mshana.

One uplifting event in the LCEA's brief history with us was the beginning of a semi-

nary which had in 2006 fourteen enrolled. But then came the break with the LCEA and they closed the seminary.

When I visited in Tanzania each year until Pastor Mayhew took over, it was a joy to be out in the congregations visiting with people and seeing the church at work. While it is sad that so many who originally were with us are no longer, it is a sign of God's hand that there are even more who have joined us.

Statistics: 30 pastors, 8 pastors in training, 45 evangelists, 15 evangelists in training, 35 congregations, 20 preaching stations, 3500 members.

One of the areas to pray about in their work is with the Masai tribe. This was one of the least evangelized tribes in Africa. These rather tall and formerly warlike people are heavily nomadic. Pray our brothers can continue to reach out to these people in the Great Rift Valley. Another area in which work has been done is along the coast of the Indian ocean. This is where the Muslims are heavily concentrated. May God use our people to show the love of Christ to these people under Allah.
