



The Creed

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What is a Creed?

- A creed is a statement of the shared beliefs of a religious community.
- Derived from Latin *credo* or “I believe”.
- In Christianity, a creed is a **prayer of faith** in what God has revealed to the Church.
- Creeds considered part of Sacred Tradition:
 - The Apostle’s Creed (earliest version)
 - The Nicene (-Constantinopolitan) Creed

Symbol of the Apostles

- Earliest mention by Council of Milan (390 AD)
 - “Let them give credit to the Creed of the Apostles, which the Roman Church has always kept and preserved undefiled.”
- Consists of twelve propositions, each of which was attributed by legend to one of the apostles.
- Eusebius (*The History of the Church 1.13*) records the words of Thaddeus to Abgar, Toparch of Edessa:
 - “[Jesus] who was crucified and descended into Hades... but ascended with a great multitude to his Father; and how he is seated at the right hand of God the Father with glory in the heavens; and how he will come again with power to judge living and dead.”

The Arian Heresy

- During the Roman persecutions, when there was yet no canon of Scripture, all Christians accepted Jesus as God's Son, as taught in the Apostle's Creed (AC).
- Not all, especially in the East, acknowledged that Jesus was God despite statements in the gospels (e.g., John 20:28) and by St. Paul (e.g., Philip 2:5-11).
- Arius of Alexandria (250-336 AD), taught that the Son of God was a creature, rather than pre-existent.
- After the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople (325-381 AD), Arianism died out in the Roman Empire, but persisted among the Germanic tribes.

First Council of Nicaea

- Convened by Emperor Constantine (325 AD) to settle the Arian controversy after the Edict of Milan (313 AD) ended persecution of Christians.
- Council's intent to bring about a uniform Christian doctrine resulted in the Nicene Creed (NC), which emphasized equality of the Father and Son.
- Nicene Creed was amended by the First Council of Constantinople (381 AD) to stress the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

1. God the Father

- “I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth” (AC)
- “...and of all things visible and invisible.” (NC)
- God is the Almighty (*El Shaddai*), Eternal (*El Olam*), and Most High (*El Elyon*) being.
- God made the world out of nothing (2 Mac 7:28).
- God is the holy ground of our being. His name to us is YHWH, “I am who am (Ex 3:14).”
- God is a personal being, not a Force (I-Thou, not I-It).
- He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 3:15), the Father of fathers and of all spiritual beings.

2. God the Son

- “and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord.” (AC)
- “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father; through him all things were made.” (NC)
- “Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD (Deut 6:4).”
- “I and the Father are one (John 10:30).”
- The Father knows Himself in eternally begetting God the Son, the Logos Who spoke Creation into being (John 1:1-3).
- Logos: word, reason, measure, cause, rule, principle, truth, essential nature, mathematical relation, conversation.
- The Son is the embodiment of God’s self-understanding.

3. The Incarnation

- “Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.” (AC)
- “For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” (NC)
- Jesus is true God and true Man, with two distinct natures in a single person (hypostatic union).
- Mary is the Mother of God, the God-bearer (*Theotokos*) and true Ark of the Covenant overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (Ex 40:34; Lk 1:35).

4. The Passion

- “suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell.” (AC)
- “For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried.” (NC)
- Jesus is the “Lamb of God (John 1:35)” the Paschal (i.e., Passover) sacrifice who, like the scapegoat of Leviticus 16:10, takes away the sins of the world.
- “[He was] put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison... For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.” (1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:6)

5. The Resurrection

- “The third day he rose again from the dead.” (AC)
- “and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” (NC)
- “Now I would remind you. . . that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (1 Cor 15:1-5).”
- On the third day of Creation, the dry land appeared from beneath the waters (Gen 1:9).
- Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights (Jon 1:17).

6. The Ascension

- “He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” (AC)
- “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.” (NC)
- “He raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places... and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for **the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all** (Eph 1:20-23).”

7. The Last Judgment

- “From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.” (AC)
- “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.” (NC)
- “The Last Judgment will reveal **even to its furthest consequences** the good each person has done or failed to do... [Christ] will pronounce the final word on all history. **We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation.**” (CCC 1039-1040)

8. God the Holy Spirit

- “I believe in the Holy Spirit” (AC)
- “the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.” (NC, Constantinople I)
- The love between the Father and the Son is personified by the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God, hence “God is love (1 Jn 4:8).”
- There are three Persons in one God, who share one undivided Substance and one Will only.

9. The Church and the Communion of Saints

- “the holy catholic church, the communion of saints.” (AC)
- “I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” (NC)
- “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the **communion** of the Holy Spirit be with **you all** (2 Cor 13:14).”
- “There is **one body** and **one Spirit** (Eph 4:4).”
- “And you... he has now reconciled **in his body**... to present you **holy** and blameless and irreproachable (Col 1:21).”
- You are **fellow citizens with the saints** and members of the household of God, built upon **the foundation of the apostles** (Eph 2:19-20).”
- The Eucharist is the **sacrament of unity and communion.**

10. The Forgiveness of Sins

- “the forgiveness of sins” (AC)
- “I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins” (NC)
- Jesus “breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (John 20:22-23).”
- “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).”

11. The Final Resurrection

- “the resurrection of the body” (AC)
- “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead” (NC)
- “The resurrection of all the dead... will precede the Last Judgment.” (CCC 1038)
- “The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:26).”
- “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be but a bare kernel... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:36-44).”

12. Life Everlasting

- “and life everlasting. Amen.” (AC)
- “and the life of the world to come. Amen.” (NC)
- “***For man***, this consummation will be the final realization of the **unity of the human race**... The beatific vision, in which **God opens himself in an inexhaustible way** to the elect.” (CCC 1045)
- “***For the cosmos***, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man (Rom 8:19-23)... **The visible universe, then, is itself designed to be transformed**... sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ.” (CCC 1046-1047)

