

The History of the Creeds

1. The beginning of Creeds

- a. What is a Creed? A fixed formula summarising the content of our Faith and authorised by the Church.
- b. The first Creed: 'Jesus is Lord!' see Romans 8.9
- c. New Testament 'Creeds':
 - i. Formulae about Jesus Christ:
 1. I Corinthians 15.3ff
 2. I Peter 3.18ff
 3. I Timothy 3.16
 - ii. Formula about God the Father and God the Son:
 1. 1 Timothy 2.5f

2. Creeds & Baptism

- a. Declaratory Creeds at Baptism:
 - i. Questioning the candidate: The Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8.36-8
 - ii. Fixed forms of Creeds emerge by the 4th century
 - iii. The Baptismal Creed of the Roman Church, found in two version:
 1. Latin version recorded by Rufinus around the year 404, called the creed of the Apostles
 2. Greek version recorded as the creed of Marcellus of Ancyra, in the year 340 (also in the Psalter of Athelstan). The Roman Church worshipped in Greek until the mid-fourth century
- b. Why is our text of this Creed different? A version of the Roman Creed used in Spain and Gaul, adopted by the Emperor Charlemagne as the standard form and accepted at Rome about 1000AD
- c. How do we use this Creed?

- i. At Baptisms and to reaffirm our Baptismal Promises at the Easter Vigil, in question-and-answer form
- ii. At Morning and Evening Prayer
- iii. When beginning the Rosary and certain other devotions

3. The Nicene Creed

- a. The Creed that takes its name from the Council of Nicaea in 325
- b. The Council was summoned to oppose the doctrine of Arius, who taught that:
 - i. The Word of God was created by the Father
 - ii. The Word of God became flesh, but not man – a human body but no human soul
- c. The Council introduces the term 'Homoousios' meaning 'of one substance/consubstantial' to correct this false teaching
- d. The Creed is probably one used by a Christian community in Palestine/Syria which was adapted by the Council, possibly the Creed of the church at Caesarea. Its original language is Greek.
- e. The Creed of the Council of Nicaea is different in places to the Creed we call the Nicene Creed
- f. The text of the Creed as we have it is preserved in the minutes of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which say that it was the work of the Council of Constantinople in 381. For this reason it is sometimes called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.
- g. The Creed is used at the Eucharist in the East and West, and at Baptism in the East
- h. The words 'and the Son' with reference to the procession of the Holy Spirit were added to the Creed probably in Spain in the 6th century.
- i. The Eastern Churches reject this, and it was one of the causes of the Schism between East and West in 1054

Texts

The original Roman Baptismal Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty;
and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord,
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,
on the third day rose again from the dead,
ascended into heaven,
sits at the right hand of the Father,
whence he will come to judge the living and the dead;
and in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Church,
the remission of sins,
the resurrection of the flesh,
[life everlasting]

The expanded version of the Roman Baptismal Creed we call The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.



The Creed of the Council of Nicaea, 325

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages.

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.

And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is from a different *hypostasis* or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic Church anathemizes.

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the form of the Nicene Creed used today

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Questions

- Compare the different New Testament texts which contain professions of faith. What stands out to you about what they say?
- Compare the old Roman Creed with the Apostles' Creed as we now have it. Why do you think the additions to it were made?
- Look at the original Creed of the Council of Nicaea. Why do you think the bishops at the Council chose to use a word borrowed from philosophy "of one substance" rather than Biblical language to oppose Arius?
- What differences do you notice between the original Creed of the Council of Nicaea and the one that we use?
- Was it right to change the Creed to say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father AND the Son?

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