



Adult Education & Formation Fall 2018

Understanding Others' Beliefs & Our Own

Through this course we seek to understand the religious beliefs of neighbors and those of our own tradition by looking at the Anglican Articles of Religion.

Christian Creeds and Confessions

Essential Christian beliefs, Christian creeds, and the role of Confessions/Articles of Religion.

What is a creed? From the Latin *credo* (I believe) a creed is a summary statement of essential beliefs.

Are creeds biblical? While the creeds we use in worship are not found in the bible, there is ample biblical evidence to support their use. Consider:

- 1 Cor. 15:3: *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins...*
 - 1 Corinthians is one of the earliest books written (53-54 AD). Yet, a recognizable tradition existed, even at this early date.
- Other biblical texts that *could* have functioned as early creeds: Deut. 6:4, John 1:49, Phil. 2:11, 1 Cor. 12:3

What do creeds teach us implicitly? A religious creedal statement is neither obvious nor inevitable. Most religions do not have creeds. As a creedal religion, we believe:

- Religious truth includes both transcendent doctrines which we could not naturally know, and real historical events that occurred in time and space.
- Religious truth can be known and distinguished from error. We may think, "Who can know?" or "That may be true for you, but not me."
- Religious truths can be expressed in words. We may think, "Words are insufficient to describe God."
- A person must align themselves with the truth by affirming the truth verbally and publicly. We may think, "It is enough that I just believe in my heart."
- Faith is both a personal and communal exercise.

What are creeds for?

Likely, creeds were first used as a teaching aid and summary of Christian faith, especially for those joining the church,

Creeds also (perhaps primarily?) guarded the church's teaching.

Can you identify a phrase from the Apostle's Creed on the left, which addresses some errors on the right?

<p>I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.</p> <p>I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Jesus really didn't come in the flesh. He only seemed to- A heresy called Docetism.</p> <p>Christianity teaches moral truths. It doesn't really matter if it happened or not.</p> <p>Heaven is a purely spiritual place- with angels, harps and clouds.</p> <p>Spiritual things are good. Physical things are bad- a heresy called Gnosticism.</p> <p>Real Christians are an elite group of super-spiritual people, and they alone understand God's ways.</p>
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Creeds and Councils

The first council was in Nicaea (325). The council affirmed that Jesus, the Son, is of one substance with God, the Father. This contrary to Arius who said of Jesus, "There was when he was not."

The Nicene Creed (325) emphasizes the divinity of Jesus.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

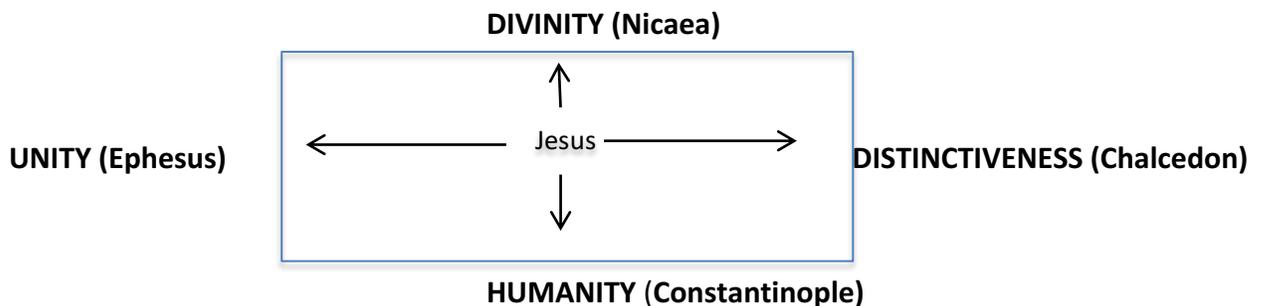
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the begotten of God the Father, the Only-begotten, that is of the essence of the Father. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten and not made; of the very same nature of the Father, by Whom all things came into being, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Who for us humanity and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate, was made man...

Second council: Constantinople (381). The council affirmed the full humanity of Jesus, contrary to Apollinarius, who taught that Jesus had assumed the boy and soul of a man, but not the spirit. Key Line: What He has not assumed, he has not redeemed.

Third council: Ephesus (431). The council affirmed the unity of Jesus nature, contrary to Nestorius, who taught that Mary was not the Mother of God (Theotokos) but the mother only of his human nature, while the divinity of Jesus came on him later, perhaps at his baptism.

Fourth council: Chalcedon (451). The council affirmed the distinction between Jesus two natures, contrary to Eutyches, who taught that the divine nature of Jesus “swallowed-up” his human nature.



These four councils establish the Christological and Trinitarian questions of early Christianity.

When we refer to the “tradition” of the church we are referring to the first **FIVE** centuries, in which there were **FOUR** councils, which affirmed **THREE** creeds, which affirmed the **TWO** natures of the **ONE** Christ.

The Athanasius Creed, although not written by Athanasius, and not often used in public worship, is the last of the ecumenical creeds is a summary of the first four councils.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith unless every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinites, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the catholic religion; to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is

of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance [Essence]; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the living and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.

The creeds focus on two issues. Many other issues (such as our salvation) are left untouched. Why? Creeds are almost always protective; responding to errors in the church and culture.

What do we do with the Creeds?

We keep them.

The operative word is keep; not acquire, or even believe but keep. The author, in fact, is not talking about unbelievers but about deserters, not about those who have never heard of Christ, nor even those who have misunderstood and refused to accept him, but of those who having really understood and really believed, then allow themselves, under the sway of sloth or of fashion or any other invited confusion to be drawn away into sub-Christian modes of thought. They are a warning against the curious modern assumption that all changes of belief, however brought about, are necessarily exempt from blame.¹

We say them. As we do, we are both the students and teachers of doctrine; we submit to prior generations and proclaim to future generations.

¹ Athanasius, *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation, with an Introduction by C.S. Lewis*, Translated by a religious of CSMV (London: AR Mowbray & CO Ltd., 1970) 8.