



THIS WEEK'S ALTERNATE CREED:

THE APOSTLES' CREED (Traditional Version)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And 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, dead, and buried;*
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the
Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick
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.

*Traditional use of this creed includes these words:
"He descended into hell."

**universal

WEEK 1

WHAT IS A CREED?

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2025

I. Opening Prayer and Scripture Reading

- A. Recite the Apostles' Creed
- B. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (*Shema*)
- C. Opening Prayer

II. Introduction to Creeds

- A. Definition of a creed: A formal statement of Christian beliefs.
- B. The Three Creeds of Church: The Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed
- C. The role of creeds in the Church:
 1. As a tool for teaching and unifying the faith community.
 2. As a means of summarizing core Christian doctrines.
 3. As a confession of faith in worship.
- D. Discussion Point: Why do you think early Christians found it necessary to develop creeds?

III. What is faith? (with help from Alister McGrath)

- A. *Credo*: I/we believe
- B. Faith as ascent: I believe in God
- C. Faith as trust: I trust in God
- D. Faith as commitment: I have committed my life to God (baptism) and want to grow in the faith.
- E. Faith as obedience: I want to live like a Christian because faith without works is dead.
- F. Discussion Point: What does it mean for belief to not just be in the head, but also the heart and body (gut)?

IV. Creeds in Scripture

- A. Examples of early creeds in the Bible:
 1. The *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5): The foundation of Jewish monotheism.
 2. Early Christological statements:
 - a. Philippians 2:5-11: The humility and exaltation of Christ.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 8:6: Affirmation of one God and one Lord.
 - c. Romans 10:9-13: Confession of Jesus as Lord.
- B. Reflection Question: How do these early creedal statements shape our understanding of faith?

V. Development of Early Christian Creeds

- A. The Apostolic Tradition: Oral and written transmission of faith.
- B. The Interrogative Creed: Used in baptismal rites, where the candidate responds to questions about their faith.
- C. The Apostles' Creed: An early baptismal creed used to instruct new believers.
- D. Development of the Nicene Creed: The growing need for a universal statement of faith due to theological controversies.

THE NICENE CREED

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 of the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
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 worshiped 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.

*universal

VI. The Context Leading to Nicea

- A. Early heresies and the need to define orthodoxy:
1. Gnosticism: Denial of the goodness of creation and the incarnation.
 2. Arianism: A heresy that states Jesus Christ is a created being, distinct from God, and not divine
 3. Sabellianism/Modalism: Confusion about the distinct persons of the Trinity.
- B. The Church's response: The call for a unified, authoritative creed.

VII. Toward Orthodoxy

- A. What is orthodoxy? "right -glory/praise" The law of prayer is the law of belief is the law of your life (*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*)
- B. Generous Orthodoxy(Hans Frei)-A minimum standard of faith leaves room for diversity and divergence even over important things. An orthodox heart is motivated by love toward God that is shown by love toward others. Orthodoxy is in its nature ecumenical and open.
- C. Wild Orthodoxy-G. K. Chesterton "This is the thrilling romance of Orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic.... It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob. To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom - that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect."
- D. Learned Ignorance(Nicholas of Cusa and Augustine)- Augustine "*Si comprehendis, non est Deus*" is a Latin phrase that translates to "*If you understand, it is not God.*" Anselm "*Faith seeking understanding*" is a Latin phrase, *Fides quaerens intellectum*. The Trinity helps us know what we do not know. The Eternal Triune God is a mystery except for what this God has revealed to us, and this revelation is most full in the person of Jesus. The purpose of orthodoxy is not to answer questions but to keep the question open.

VIII. Application and Discussion

A. Discussion Questions:

1. How does the act of reciting a creed impact your personal faith?

2. In what ways can creeds promote unity in a diverse Christian community?

B. Reflection Activity:

1. Write down one line from a creed (either biblical or from the Apostles' Creed) that resonates with you and explain why.

IX. Closing Reflection and Prayer

- A. Reflect on the importance of confessing faith as a community.
- B. Recite the Nicene Creed
- C. Closing Prayer: Ask God to deepen our faith and unity through the study of His Word and the creeds.