

The Trinity Class 10: The Creeds, Part 2: Answer to the Heretics

Truro Anglican Church Sunday School October 20, 2024

| THE APOSTLES' CREED | THE NICENE CREED |
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| <p>I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.</p> | <p>We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, visible and invisible.</p> |
| <p>I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.</p> | <p>We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten 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.</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>We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],¹ 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.</p> |

¹ The phrase "and the Son" (Latin filioque) is not in the original Greek text. See the resolution of the College of Bishops concerning the filioque in *Documentary Foundations* (page 768).

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Last week we introduced the use of Creeds in the life of the church. They provided a way for new converts to the faith to be tested before being admitted to the church; they functioned as a memory tool to help people judge truth from error; they were used in the educational system of the early church.

This week, we will examine some of the controversies that forced the Church to wrestle with what the church believes and why. The Creeds are the result of these struggles, especially the Nicene Creed.

Some of the controversies the Church was forced to deal with:

Gnosticism: An all-encompassing term covering an enormous range of beliefs. The modern “New Age” movement is very similar. Salvation is achieved by knowledge: Knowing the secret passwords allows you to ascend to the one true God.

Docetism: Deals with the nature of Jesus’ Incarnation: was it real or fake?

Adoptionism: Deals with Jesus’ essential nature- is He God by nature or is He made God by the Father after His human birth? (This is the “Jesus was a good boy” teaching.)

Marcionism: Argued that there were two gods- one evil who created the world and one who is good whom Jesus called Father. Believed the Old Testament revealed the evil god and only some portions of the New Testament reflect the good god. Forced the church to define the canon of Scripture.

Montanus: Believed he was the incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

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Modalism (Also called Monarchianism): Argued against the Trinity by denying the existence of the persons.

Arianism: Denies the Trinity by claiming that the Father cannot exist as three persons and that the Son is a created being, inferior in nature to the Father. Originally argued that the Holy Spirit was also a created person. Modern Arians now argue that the Holy Spirit is just a force or power. This is the direct ancestor of the modern Jehovah's Witnesses. The Nicene Creed was originally composed as a direct response to this heresy in particular.

Apollinarianism: Wrestled with the nature of Christ as both God and Man in one human person. Overemphasized the deity of Christ at the cost of his humanity.

There's a lot more! These are some of the major ones. All of these can still be found active in the world today.

For a good overview of the major heresies and what they do to a human soul who follows one of them, I strongly recommend the book "The Cruelty of Heresy" by C. Fitzsimmons Allison. The ISBN number is 978-0-8192-1513-0.

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The following is an attempt to illustrate the Athanasian Creed graphically. Thanks to Jim Murphy for adapting this:

