

## WEEK 2

### **The Apostle's Creed: Embracing Creedal Faith in the Midst of Pluralism**

*The Catechetical lectures are given to those who are to be enlightened in baptism or confirmation and also to believers who are already baptized for edification.*

1. **What is a Creed?** A creed is a statement of *faith* or *belief* from the Latin word *credo*, meaning “I believe.” Latin root= ‘to place one’s heart in’; ‘to trust with the heart.’
2. **Why does the Church use Creeds?**
  - a. **Distinction.** The first object of the earliest Christian creeds was to distinguish the Church from the world, from Jews and heathen, afterwards orthodoxy from heresy, and finally denomination from denomination.<sup>5</sup>
  - b. **Catechism.** To instruct converts and baptized disciples as well.
  - c. **Safeguard.** The Church’s creeds correct ancient and modern heresies, declaring and safeguarding God’s truth in Holy Scripture about Himself, ourselves, and the whole creation (1 Ths 2; 2 Tim 2; Jude 3).

***The faith is something to be jealously guarded, something that people might fall away to their spiritual peril.***<sup>6</sup>

### **3. The Importance of Creeds.**

#### **a. Creeds are necessary for at least 5 reasons:**

- i. Creeds are **summaries** of what the apostles taught and what the Bible teaches. The Creeds, therefore, are both **biblical** and **apostolic**.
- ii. Creeds proclaim the **essentials** of the faith.
  1. **The Vincentian Canon** (AD445), written by St Vincent of Lérins, lays out the test of catholicity: that “*which has been believed everywhere, at all times, and by all.*”
- iii. Because Christians hold the essentials of the faith in the Creeds in common, Creeds also create Christian **unity**. They embody the faith

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<sup>5</sup> Phillip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. 1: The History of the Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Gibson, Edgar, *The Three Creeds*, p. 7.

of all generations of Christians, across all lands. The Creeds, therefore, are **one and catholic** (or universal).

- iv. The Creeds not only bind true Christians together but also help us distinguish between **orthodox** believers and **heretics**. The Creeds, therefore, are **holy**.
- v. The Creeds shape and regulate the **theological thinking** and **public teaching** of the Christian church.

#### **4. Are the use of Creeds Biblical?**

##### **a. The Great Shema (*hear*), Deut 6:4-5.**

- i. Affirmed by both Jesus and St. Paul (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor 8:6).
- ii. Jesus, Paul, and the first Christians were creedal simply by virtue of being Jewish in the orbit of Jewish beliefs about God, covenant, and the future.

##### **b. New Testament Creedal Formulas.**

- i. **Petrine Confession** (Mt 16:16). The first Christian confession or creed is that of Peter, when Christ asked the apostles, *'Who say ye that I am?'* and Peter, in the name of all the rest, exclaimed, as by divine inspiration, *'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'*.
- ii. *1 Tim 1:15, The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*
- iii. *1 Tim 3:16, And we all agree, our religion contains amazing revelation: He was revealed in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*
- iv. *Phil 2: 6-11, Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
- v. *Rom 10:9, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
- vi. *1 Cor. 8:6, yet for us, there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*

vii. 1 Cor. 15:3-7, *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 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. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.*

c. **The early church** developed creedal statements to summarize what *they* believed the God of Israel **HAD** done and **WOULD** yet do in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## 5. The Ecumenical Creeds: Creeds Forged in Controversy.

a. **The Ecumenical Creeds** are *the Apostle's (AD200), Nicean (325, 381), and Athanasian Creeds (500):*

1. 325ad- Nicea; 381ad- Constantinople; 431ad Ephesus; 451ad- Chalcedon.

ii. **Ecumenical or Catholic because** “They contain chiefly the orthodox doctrine of God and of Christ or the fundamental dogmas of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. They are the common property of all churches and the common stock from which the later symbolical books have grown.”<sup>7</sup>

iii. **Nicene Creed** (Council of Nicea 325, 381). Response to the Arian heresy “There was a time when he was not.” Defended by St. Athanasius.

iv. “And in one Lord Jesus Christ, *the only begotten Son of God; Begotten of his father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten not made; Being of one substance of the Father...*” (Nicene Creed)

b. **Athanasian Creed** (500ad). Attributed to St. Athanasius in the fifth century as a means of instruction in the Catholic faith, at a time when the Arian heresy had once again reared its ugly head and further *clarified Trinitarian heresies. Recited on ‘Trinity Sunday’.*

i. “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone 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

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid p. 10.

Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. 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 Co-Eternal” (Athanasian Creed).

## 6. The Apostle’s Creed (AD200)

- a. Creed of Creeds.** The Apostle’s Creed should be known by all Christians and is one of the three pillars of the Christian Catechism: *The Lord’s Prayer, The Ten Commandments, and The Creed.*

**“As the Lord’s Prayer is the Prayer of Prayers, the Decalogue the Law of Laws, so the Apostles’ Creed is the Creed of Creeds.”<sup>8</sup>**

- b. Apostolic Origin.** It was generally believed that the Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, while still under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, composed our present Creed between them, each of the Apostles contributing one of the twelve articles. Dating back to St. Augustine; (400) St. Ambrose; (400) Rufinus; (390) Council of Milan.
- c.** In the following Table it will be seen how near an agreement there is between the statements contained in the Creed and those made by the Apostles in their early missionary work:

Statements of Apostles, etc., expressing belief in	God the Father.	God the Son.	God the Holy Ghost.	Our Lord’s Sufferings.	Our Lord’s Resurrection.	Our Lord’s Ascension.	Our Lord’s Second Coming.	Repentance.	Forgiveness of Sins.	The Church.
St. Matthew 28.	19	19	19		10					19, 20
St. Luke 24.	49	49	49, Acts 1:4, 8	46	46	51, Acts 1:9	Acts 1:11	47	47	49, Acts 1, 8
St. John 20.	17	17	22		9, 20, 28	17	21:22		20:23	21, 23
St. Peter, Acts 2	17	22, 23, 24	17, 33, 38	23	24, 31, 32	[Mark 16:19.] 33		38	38	32
Acts 3	13	13, 15		15	15	21	19-21	19, 26	19	15
Acts 4	24	12, 27, 30		10, 27	10					
Acts 5	30	31	32	30	30	31		31	31	32
Acts 10	34-36	38	38	39	40, 41		42		43	41, 42
St. Stephen, Acts 7	2, 32, 37, 55	52, 55	51	52	55, 56	55, 56				
St. Paul, Acts 13	17, 23	23, 33, 35		28	30, 33, 34, 37				38	31
Heb. 6	1	1, 6	4	6	2		2	1, 6		

<sup>8</sup> Phillip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. 1: The History of the Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 14-15.

- d. (AD221) Baptismal confession** used in the church at Rome;
- e. Present form** develops over centuries, goes back to the 8th century.

## 7. The Content of the Apostle's Creed.<sup>9</sup>

- a. I, for myself, as personally responsible for my faith to God and His Church, openly profess, to His glory, that I
- b. believe, from my heart, with the assent of my reason and the submission of my will,
- c. in God the Father, by a mysterious, unintelligible manner of paternity, Father of the uncreated, co-equal, and co-eternal Son: Father also of all the regenerated, by their adoption through His thus only-begotten Son:
- d. Almighty, so that nothing is beyond His power which is consistent with goodness; knowing all things past, present, and to come; exercising authority over all things and persons, and upholding all things by His universal and omnipresent Providence: I believe that He was and is the
- e. Maker, that is, the original Creator of the original matter, and Disposer of that material in fit order,
- f. of heaven, which comprehends all that has originally occupied space beyond this world,
- g. and earth, which comprehends all organic and inorganic beings and substances within the compass of this world.
- h. And I equally believe
- i. in Jesus, perfect Man, in all the qualities of human nature,
- j. Christ, anointed to be the Saviour of the world, the High Priest of a new order of priesthood, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
- k. His only Son, eternally begotten, and therefore having such a Sonship as none others who call God Father can possess,
- l. our Lord, being God, the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity, as well as Man; Lord of all by His Divine Nature, Lord of the Church by His work of Redemption. Thus I believe in the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, in a Saviour Divine and Human,
- m. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, through a mysterious and unintelligible operation, which miraculously superseded the ordinary law of nature, so that the Holy Child Jesus was
- n. Born of the Virgin Mary, a holy maiden, who thus miraculously became His mother that He, being born of a Virgin and not of a wife, might be free from the sin of our common origin, which is conveyed from parent to child by natural conception. Being thus born in

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<sup>9</sup> Blunt, *An Expository Paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed*, 197-198.

our nature, but without our sin, He bore it as His own through infancy, childhood, and mature manhood; and when the time was fully come, He offered it as a sacrifice for our sins when He

- o. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judæa and Jerusalem, and
- p. Was crucified, by being nailed alive to a cross of wood, set upright in the ground. Being thus crucified, His sufferings were the greatest that had ever befallen any man, being aggravated by the burden of sin which He, though innocent, was bearing for our sakes. Not through the intensity of His sufferings, but of His own will, He gave up His life when all was accomplished that could be by His pains, and then became
- q. dead, through the separation of His Soul from His Body, in the same manner as human beings ordinarily become so. Being dead, His holy Body, still the Body of the Son of God, was taken down from the cross,
- r. and buried, with reverence and honour, but as the dead bodies of other men are. And, while the dead Body of the Son of God was in the tomb, with His living Soul
- s. He descended into hell, that He might there triumph over Satan; proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to all who had ever died; entirely release the souls of the righteous dead from the power of Satan; and prepare a paradise of rest in which they and all other righteous souls may dwell until the Day of Judgement.
- t. The third day, after the evening of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and a part of Sunday had passed,
- u. He rose again from the dead, reuniting His Soul to His uncorrupted Body, so as to be again “perfect Man” in respect to all the qualities that belong to sinless and unsuffering human nature. Then
- v. He ascended into heaven, after forty days, not as God only, but as God and Man,
- w. And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, receiving in His Human Nature, as well as in His Divine Nature, the adoration of angels and men; and by His presence there making a continual intercession for us, and being a Mediator between Divine and human nature for ever.
- x. From thence He shall come, the same holy Jesus Who suffered and died,
- y. to judge, with a just, irreversible, and yet merciful judgement,
- z. the quick, who shall be alive at His coming,
- aa. and the dead, who shall have died at any time from the foundation of the world.
- bb. I believe, also, with equal faith, and equal assent of my reason,
- cc. in the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Strengthener and Consoler of the Church, Who ministers in it the grace which the Saviour has gained for it,

- dd. The holy Catholic Church, which is the whole number of the baptized, the mystical Body of Christ; which was founded by the twelve Apostles, and is continued in existence by the perpetuation of an Episcopal ministry; which, by the merciful Providence of the Lord, holds the true Faith; which is divided into many separate bodies, all having their own bishops, and is yet one by being united to Christ, our Spiritual and Ministerial Head. I likewise believe in
- ee. The Communion of Saints, that is, the Union in Christ of all who are one with Him, whether they are among the living in the Church on earth, the departed in paradise, or the risen saints in heaven. I also believe in
- ff. The Forgiveness of sins, by the ministration of Christ's Church in Baptism and in Absolution,
- gg. The Resurrection of the body, when it shall be, as now, my own very body, and reunited to my soul,
- hh. And the Life everlasting, wherein the bodies and souls of all who have ever lived will live for ever, they that have done good in never-ending happiness, and they that have done evil in never-ending misery.
- ii. And, lastly, I reiterate my assent to all these truths, in the presence of God and man, by solemnly adding
- jj. Amen.