

2. Introduction

I. Definitions

1. Creed

Lat. *credo* “I believe.” “a fixed formula summarizing the essential articles of the Christian religion and enjoying the sanction of ecclesiastical authority” (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*).

E.g. Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed.

2. Confession

Lat. *confessio* < *confiteor* “I acknowledge, confess.” More detailed expressions of belief.

E.g. Augsburg Confession (1530), Geneva Confession (1536), First and Second Helvetic Confessions (1536, 1566), Scots Confession (1560), Belgic Confession (1561), Westminster Confession of Faith (1646-48), Second London Baptist Confession (1689).

3. Catechism

Gk *katēcheō* “I instruct”; *katēchēsis* “instruction.” A catechist catechizes catechumens with a catechism.

E.g. Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Westminster Larger Catechism, Shorter Catechism (1648)

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992, Engl 1994)

The New City Catechism (Crossway, 2017) by The Gospel Coalition & Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Catechisms are usually in the form of Q&A:

- Heidelberg:

Q1: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ... (Heidelberg)

- Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q1: What is the chief end of man?

A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. (WSC)

- *New City Catechism*:

Q1: What is our only hope in life and death?

A: That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.

4. Canon

Gk *kanōn* “rule.” E.g. Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619).

5. Dogma

Gk *dogma* “rule, decree” < *dokeō* “I think.” E.g. Dogma of Catholic Church.

6. Doctrine

L *doctrina* “teaching” < *doctor* “teacher” < pp *doceo, docere* “to teach.”

E.g. PBCC Doctrinal Statement.

II. Biblical Statements

A. Old Testament

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (Deut 6:4) = The *Shema*.

B. New Testament

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. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Rom 10:9-10)

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:3)

³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 1:3-4)

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to... (1 Cor 15:3-7)

²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. (1 John 4:2-3)

[Christ Jesus] ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:6-11)

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. (1 Cor 8:6)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor 13:14)

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. (1 Tim 3:16)

III. Statements of the Early Church

A. The Apostles' Creed

Based on the *Old Roman Symbol/Creed*, a baptismal creed ca. 140, encapsulating the rule of faith (*regula fidei*) transmitted from the apostles.

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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 Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on 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 Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

B. The Nicene Creed

Council of Nicea, 325; Council of Constantinople, 381

I 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 only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]*; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

* “and the Son” (Lat. *filioque*) was added later by the Western Church. The Eastern (Orthodox) Church does not recognize this addition.

C. The Chalcedonian Definition

Council of Chalcedon, 451

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer (*theotokos*); one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence (*hypostasis*), not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.

D. The Athanasian Creed

Not by Athanasius (c 296-373). Probably formulated by the western (Latin) church ca. 400. Not recognized by the Eastern church. Aka *Quicumque vult* (whosoever wishes).

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except

every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly...

The Three Symbols (*tria symbola*): Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian Creeds; aka the ecumenical creeds (but eastern church doesn't recognize the third).

IV. Historical Development

140 Old Roman Creed, a baptismal creed using in Rome. Develops into the Apostles' Creed (first found in its current form ca. 750)

A. The Ecumenical Councils (325-787)

- 325 Council of Nicea issued the original Nicene creed, rejecting Arianism (Son is a created being), and affirming that Christ is fully divine, one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father.
- 381 Council of Constantinople revised the Nicene Creed, affirming that the Spirit is divine. Nicene, Nicene-Constantinopolitan, or Constantinopolitan Creed.
- 431 Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius (Christ has two separable natures), and declared Mary *theotokos* (God-bearer, i.e. Mother of God).
- 451 Council of Chalcedon issued the Definition of Chalcedon, affirming that Christ has two natures in one person (hypostatic union). Condemned monophysites.
- 553 Council of Constantinople II condemned the Three Chapters (a compendium of the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa, advocates of Antiochene theology emphasizing Christ's humanity at the expense of his deity.)
- 680 Council of Constantinople III condemned monothelitism (Christ has a single will), affirming that Christ possessed a human will and a divine will that function in perfect moral harmony.
- 787 Council of Nicea II declared that icons and other symbols are acceptable aids to worship and devotion, rejecting the iconoclasts (icon-smashers).

B. The Split Between East and West

- 867 Patriarch of Constantinople declared Rome heretical for adding *filioque* (and the Son) to Creed
- 1054 Pope Leo IX excommunicated Patriarch of Constantinople (head of Eastern Church); a few days later Patriarch excommunicated papal legates. The Great Schism.

C. The Reformation and the Protestant Church

- 1517 Luther nailed 95 theses to door of castle church in Wittenberg. Considered the start of the Reformation (Oct. 31).
- 1521 Diet of Worms: "Here I stand, I can do no other." Luther reluctantly was forced to separate from the Catholic Church, starting the German Reformation.
 - German Reformation: Augsburg Confession (1530), Heidelberg Catechism (1563).
 - Swiss Reformation: Geneva Confession (1536), First, Second Helvetic Confessions (1536, 1566).
 - Scottish Reformation: Scots Confession (1560).
 - Low Countries: Belgic Confession (1561).
 - English Reformation: Thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1562).
- 1618-19 Synod of Dordt issued its canons (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, total depravity = TULIP) in response to the teaching of Jacob Arminius.
- 1644-48 Westminster Assembly of Divines issued the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger

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Catechism, the Shorter Catechism (collectively, the Westminster Standards). The Presbyterian WCF was modified for Baptist purposes as the Second London Baptist Confession (1689).

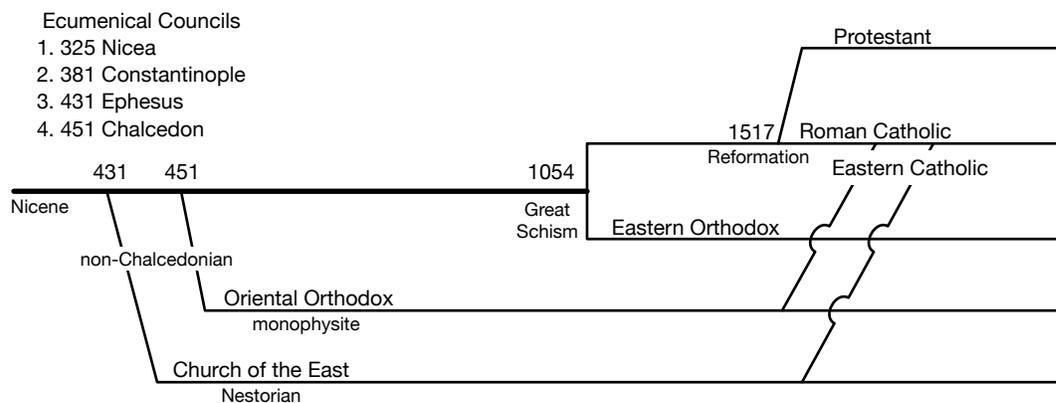
The basic beliefs of the Protestant church are often summarized as the five solas:

- *sola scriptura* by Scripture alone
- *sola fide* by faith alone
- *sola gratia* by grace alone
- *solus Christus* Christ alone
- *solus Deo gloria* glory to God alone

D. The Catholic Church

- 1545-63 Council of Trent: Roman Catholic response to the Reformation (Counter-Reformation). Corrected many abuses; revitalized church. Declared inspiration of apocrypha, traditions; sole validity of Church-authorized interpretation of Bible; baptismal regeneration; purgatory; Pope as vicar upon earth of God and Christ. Reaffirmed 7 sacraments, transubstantiation, reservation of sacrament (cup not given to laity).
- 1869-70 First Vatican Council: affirmed papal infallibility, part of the expanding dogma of Catholic Church: Immaculate conception of Mary (1854), Papal infallibility (1870), Bodily assumption of Mary (1950).
- 1965 Second Vatican Council: permitted vernacular in worship.

“In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things charity.”



Development of the Churches

E. Doctrinal Standards of Churches

In addition to the ecumenical statements (Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Chalcedonian Definition) recognized by the whole Church, different denominations affirm different credal standards.

1. Protestant

Anglican: (Thirty-nine) Articles of Religion (1562).

Baptist: with the exception of Reformed Baptists, Baptists generally eschew doctrinal statements.

- **Reformed Baptist:** Second London Baptist Confession (1689).

Lutheran: Book of Concord: 10 statements incl. the three ecumenical creeds and the Augsburg

Confession (1530).

Methodist:

Presbyterian: the Westminster Standards: the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger & Shorter Catechisms, all issued by the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1644-48).

Westminster Standards: Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC).

Book of Confessions: ten statements: Nicene Creed, Apostles' Creed, Scots Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Second Helvetic Confession, Westminster Confession of Faith, Shorter Catechism, Larger Catechism, Theological Declaration of Barmen, Confession of 1967. Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA), ECO.

Reformed: the Three Forms of Unity: Belgic Confession (1561), Canons of Dort (1618-19), Heidelberg Catechism (1563). Dutch Reformed heritage: CRC, RCA (both add Belhar Confession), URC.

Non-denominational:

- write their own statements (PBC, PBCC).
- use a generic evangelical statement, e.g. InterVarsity Doctrinal Basis.
- use no standard, because “Scripture is sufficient.”

2. Catholic

- Ancient creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian), Chalcedonian Definition.
- Expanding dogma consisting of *ex cathedra* pronouncements by the Pope.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)

3. Orthodox

Ancient creeds (Apostles', Nicene—rejects Athanasian), Chalcedonian Definition.