

What are Creeds and Councils?

Creeds

- The English word “creed” comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.”
- Creeds set forth the basic beliefs of the church that have been handed down from earliest times.
- Creeds summarize the teachings of Scripture in a concise manner – they do not create doctrine.

Councils

- Councils brought together leaders from all over the known world to hammer out issues, such as responses to heretical teachings, that were too difficult for individual pastors or bishops to handle alone.

What is Heresy?

Traditionally, a heretic is someone who has compromised an essential doctrine and lost sight of who God really is, usually by oversimplification. Literally, heresy means “choice” — that is, a choice to deviate from traditional teaching in favor of one’s own insights. // Justin S. Holcomb.

The Creeds and Councils

The Creeds

- **Apostle’s Creed:** The Baptismal Creed – summarizes the teaching of the Apostles.
- **Nicene Creed:** The most important and earliest Creed – Jesus is fully God.
- **Athanasian Creed:** Explains the teaching of the Trinity – The Father is God, The Son is God, The Holy Spirit is God.

The 7 Ecumenical Councils

- First Council of Nicaea 325 AD
- First Council of Constantinople 381 AD
- First Council of Ephesus 431 AD
- Council of Chalcedon 451 AD
- Second Council of Constantinople 553 AD
- Third Council of Constantinople 681 AD
- Second Council of Nicaea 787 AD

Martin Luther:

“The first, at Nicaea, defended the deity of Christ against Arius; the second, at Constantinople, defended the deity of the Holy Ghost against Macedonius; the third, at Ephesus, defended the one Person of Christ against Nestorius; the fourth, at Chalcedon, defended the two natures in Christ against Eutyches: — but they did not thereby establish any new article of faith. For these four articles are established far more abundantly and powerfully in St. John’s Gospel alone, even though the other evangelists and St. Paul and St. Peter had written nothing about them, though all these, together with the prophets, teach them and testify mightily to them.”

The Heresies

- **Marcion:** The God of the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are two different gods.
- **Docetists:** Jesus only appeared to be human.
- **Arius:** The Son was a created being and is a lesser being than the Father. Also known as adoptionism.
- **Apollinarius:** Jesus’ divine nature/Logos replaced the human rational soul in the incarnation.
- **Mani:** The key to salvation was separation: the divine spirit was confined in the material world and needed to be released.
- **Pelagius:** Original sin does not exist. Perfect people existed before Christ. We can be saved by grace or by obeying the law.

- **Sabellius:** Jesus and the Father are not distinct person, but “modes” of a single being.
- **Eutyches:** The divinity of Christ swallows or absorbs his humanity. Also known as monophysitism.
- **Nestorius:** Jesus was composed of two separate persons, one divine and one human – split inside of one body.
- **Socinus:** The Trinity is irrelevant and Jesus’ death is only an example.

Why does this matter?

Creeds Give Us Language

- Creeds help us summarize the teachings of the Bible so that we can more easily remember them and share them with others.
- Creeds help us pass our faith on to the next generation.
- “No Creed but Jesus”
- Luke 24:27, 44-45

Creeds are for Unity

- Creeds create an understanding of the basics for common belief

Guard Us From Making New Heresies/False Teaching

- If we ignore the Creeds and the history of the church all we end up doing is re-inventing new heresies
- “I don’t need all that doctrine stuff”
- Galatians 1:6-9
- 2 Timothy 1:11-14
- Titus 2:1

Truth Matters

- John 14:6, 16-17, 26
- John 16:13
- 1 John 2:20-23
- 1 John 4:1-3