

# ECUMENICAL CREEDS

APOSTLES' CREED

NICENE CREED

ATHANASIAN CREED

CREED OF CHALCEDON



## Introduction to the

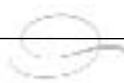
# ECUMENICAL CREEDS

A creed expresses what the church believes to be the truth of Sacred Scripture. An ecumenical creed expresses certain fundamental truths of Scripture which are held by most Christian churches throughout the world. Three of these ecumenical creeds—the *Apostles' Creed*, *Nicene Creed*, and *Athanasian Creed*—are cited in Article 9 of the *Belgic Confession* as statements of truth which “we do willingly receive.” These ancient creeds express basic truths regarding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity over against various errors which surfaced in the early history of the New Testament church. To these three the Protestant Reformed Churches have added the *Creed of Chalcedon* (AD. 451), which sums the truth of the Person and Natures of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though this creed is not mentioned by name in the Reformed confessions, it is included because the doctrine set forth in it is clearly embodied in Article 19 of the *Belgic Confession*.



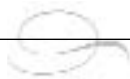
## Introduction to the **APOSTLES' CREED**

The name of this creed does not point to apostolic authorship, but rather to the fact that it summarizes briefly the fundamental truths of Scripture as given to us through the apostles. In its simplest form the creed probably originated in the early part of the second century and arose in connection with the instruction of catechumens in preparation for baptism. In its present form this creed is probably of no earlier date than the latter part of the fifth century. It is the best known of the ecumenical creeds; and it gives simple, brief, and yet full expression to our "catholic, undoubted Christian faith."



## APOSTLES' CREED

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
2. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell;
5. The third day He rose again from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
7. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Ghost.
9. I believe an holy catholic church; the communion of saints;
10. The forgiveness of sins;
11. The resurrection of the body;
12. And the life everlasting. AMEN.



## Introduction to the NICENE CREED

This creed is acknowledged by name in Article 9 of our *Confession of Faith*. It expresses the truth of Scripture concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and it was occasioned by various errors with respect to that truth. In its earliest form the creed was adopted by the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) over against the heresy of Arianism. It was revised by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), which enlarged the confession concerning the Holy Ghost. The Latin, or Western, Church added to the article on the procession of the Holy Ghost the words “and the Son” (Latin: *Filioque*), a change which has been maintained since the Council of Toledo (A.D. 589).



## NICENE CREED

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, true God of true God; begotten, not made, being of one essence 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 Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both 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 proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake 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.



## Introduction to the

# ATHANASIAN CREED

This ecumenical creed is acknowledged by name in Article 9 of our *Confession of Faith*. While it bears the name of Athanasius, the great church father of the fourth century who defended the truth of the Trinity and of the deity of Christ against the attacks of heretics, he was not its author. It was probably written as much as three centuries later by an unknown author. Another name for this creed, though rather unfamiliar, is *Symbolum Quicunque*, after the opening word in the Latin original. Written in rhythmic cadences, this creed may have been composed to be chanted in the public worship of the churches. It is a fuller statement of the truths of the Trinity and the person and natures of Christ than either the *Nicene Creed* or the *Creed of Chalcedon*, but it lacks their simplicity and precision of expression. Verses 3-28 set forth the doctrine of the Trinity, and verses 29-43 the doctrine of the incarnation and the union of the two natures of Christ in the person of the Son of God.





## ATHANASIAN CREED

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the essence.
5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated.
9. The Father infinite, the Son infinite, and the Holy Ghost infinite.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three infinities, but one uncreated and one infinite.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty.
14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.

18. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge every person by Himself to be God and Lord:
20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
25. And in this Trinity none is before or after; none is greater or less.
26. But the whole three persons are coeternal and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.
28. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe faithfully the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.
31. God, of the essence of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world.
32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
34. Who although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.
35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.

36. One altogether, not by confusion of essence, but by unity of person.
37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
39. He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.
40. From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
42. And shall give account for their own works.
43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly he cannot be saved.



## Introduction to the CREED OF CHALCEDON

The *Creed of Chalcedon*, A.D. 451, is not mentioned by name in any of our three forms of unity, but the doctrine set forth in it is clearly embodied in Article 19 of our *Confession of Faith*. It constitutes an important part of our ecumenical heritage. The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon settled the controversies concerning the person and natures of our Lord Jesus Christ and established confessionally the truths of the unity of the divine person and the union and distinction of the divine and human natures of Christ. It condemned especially the error of Nestorianism, which denied the unity of the divine person in Christ; the error of Apollinarianism, which denied the completeness of Christ's human nature; and the error known as Eutychianism, which denied the duality and distinction of the divine and human natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. What was confessionally established at Chalcedon concerning the person and natures of Christ has continued to be the confession of the church catholic ever since that time.



## CREED OF CHALCEDON

We, then, following the holy fathers, all with one consent teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; coessential with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy fathers has handed down to us.

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