

# ***The Apostles' Creed***



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- *Intro to the Creed Itself—The Nicene Creed*



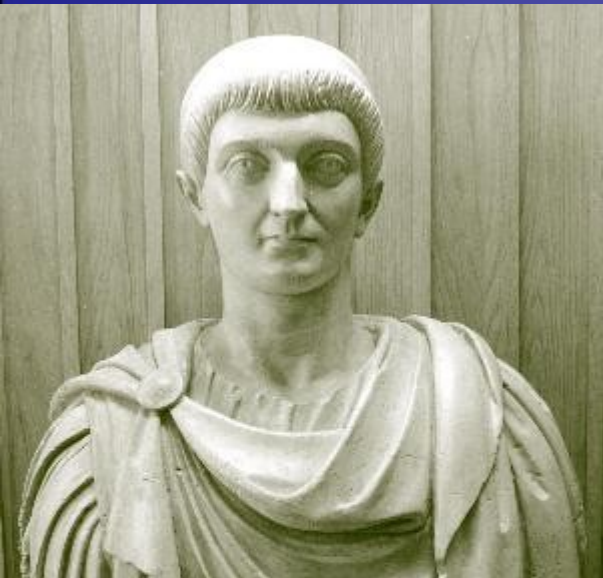
# Intro to the Creed Itself

- To understand the Apostles' Creed, let's do a smidgey bit of a history review

325

Constantine convened Council of Nicaea

- He desperately wanted the Church to be unified—so he *institutionalized* unity by calling every bishop in the world to the world's first “Ecumenical Council”
  - In fact, the word “ecumenical” comes from the Greek phrase, “οἰκουμένη γῆ” (“oikouménē gē”), which means “the whole inhabited world”



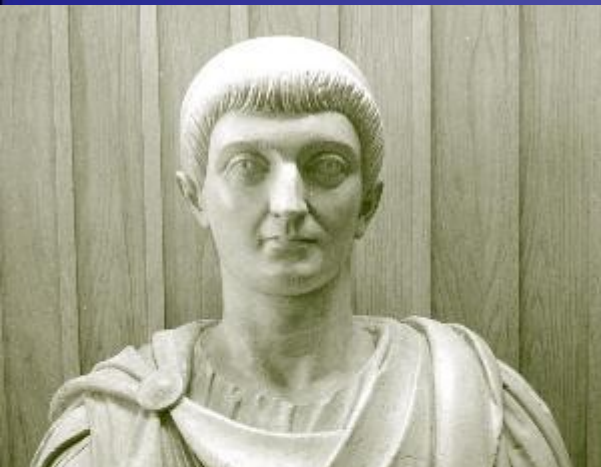
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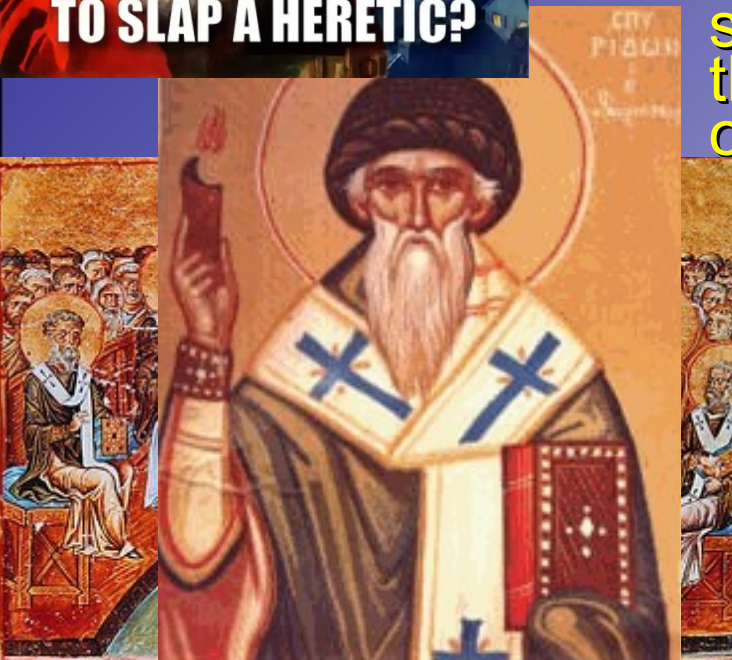
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- Nicaea was chosen not only because it was centrally located within the Churchy world but also because it was near Byzantium
- Much of the purpose of the Council was to standardize doctrines—specifically to combat the growing heresy promoted by Bishop Arius of Alexandria

(NOTE: Yes, this is the bishop that jolly old Santa Claus supposedly punched out except—if the incident ever even occurred at all—it was technically the Greek-born Bishop Nicholas of Myra in Turkey who supposedly “boxed the ears” of a “prominent Arian leader”)



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    - Much of the purpose of the Council was to standardize doctrines—specifically to combat the growing heresy promoted by Bishop Arius of Alexandria
      - Arius taught that Jesus was not *really* God—he was only a man who was “*sorta like*” God (thus, much of the Council's time was focused on discussing Christology)



# Intro to the Creed Itself



Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man      Marcionism      ~~God~~

- Lay theologian Marcion taught that YAHWEH was a *naughty* god from the Jewish “Old” Testament, and Jesus was a *good* god from the Christian “New” Testament
  - Therefore, Jesus *couldn't* have been a human being, since that would have made Him part of YAHWEH's sinfully fleshly Creation



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  - Therefore, Jesus *couldn't* have been a human being, since that would have made Him part of YAHWEH's sinfully fleshly Creation—but He wasn't really “God” in the same sense that YAHWEH had been, since they were effectively two *different* gods
  - Jesus only *seemed* human while here on Earth, when He was actually only a Spirit (spawning the movement known as “*Docetism*”—from the word, “*δοκέω*” or “*dokeō*”—“to seem”)

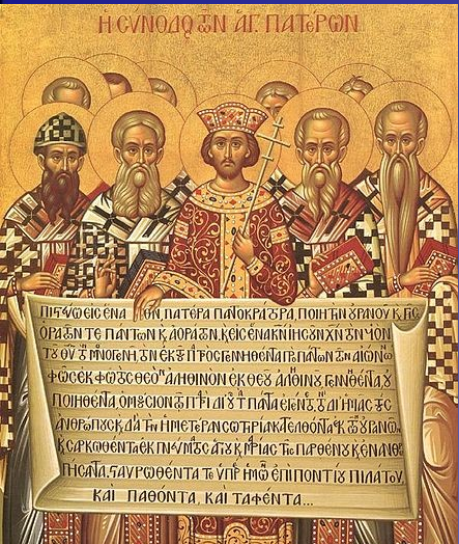




# Intro to the Creed Itself



Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.



Man

Marcionism

~~God~~

Man

Arianism

God

- Arius said that Jesus wasn't *divine*—or at least not as divine as the *Father* was
  - The Father was the all-powerful *θεος* (“*Theos*” or “*God*”), and Jesus was the perfect human *κυριος* (“*Kyrios*” or “*Lord*”) who came *from* the Father during human history to teach us how to be *holy* humans
  - So the word that Arius wanted to use to describe Christ's essence in the Creed was “*ὁμοιούσιος*” (“*homoioúsios*”)—“a similar essence [to God the Father]”



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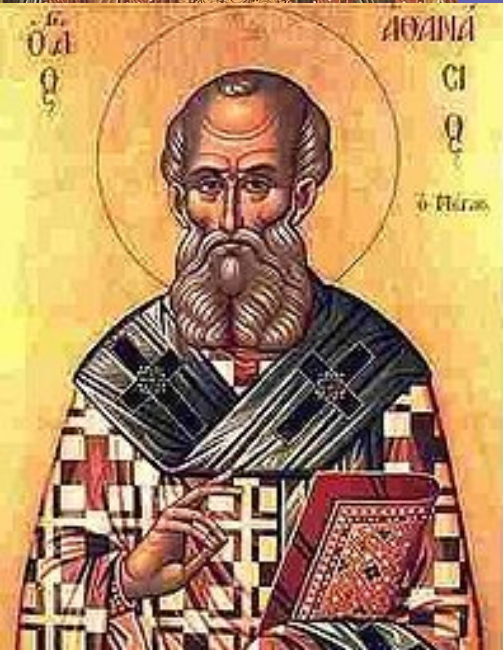
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Man      Marcionism      ~~God~~

Man      Arianism      God

Man      Orthodoxy      God



- Bishop Athanasius (and 315 other guys) argued that Jesus was fully divine and fully man at the same time—thus, that He was of the *same* substance and nature as God the Father
- So the word that *these* guys chose to use to describe Christ's essence in the Creed was “ὁμοούσιος” (“*homooúsios*”)—“the same essence [as God the Father]”
  - Thus, the whole controversy at Nicaea ultimately came down to the letter “i” (“*homooúsios*” vs. “*homoioúsios*”)



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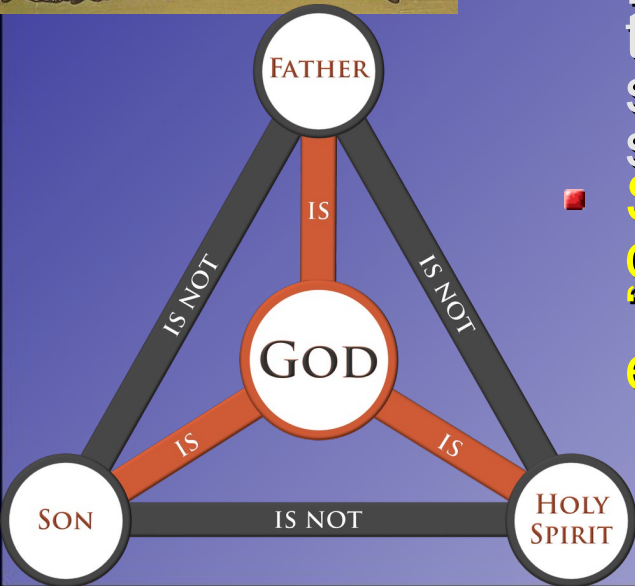
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  - So how important are the little details?



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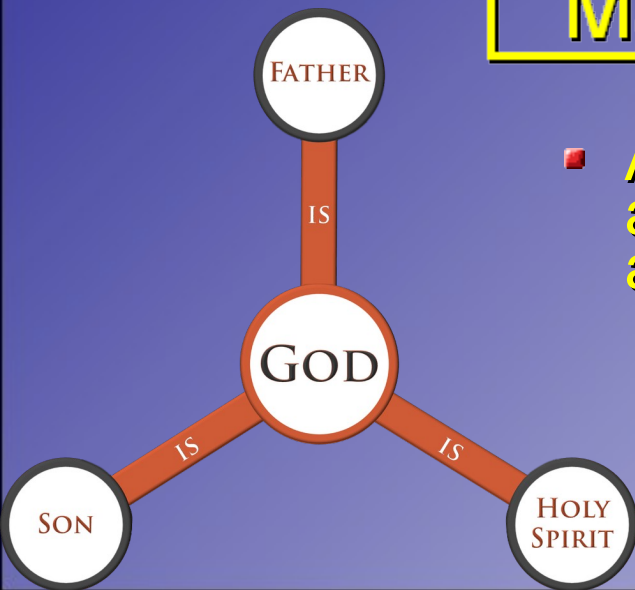
Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man Marcionism ~~God~~

Man Arianism God

Man Orthodoxy God

Man Oneness God



- A new heresy is popping up again these days, arguing that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all *absolutely* the same thing—all just *God*
  - Terms like “Father” or “Son” or “Spirit” are all just limited titles reflecting different personal manifestations of an undifferentiated God in the universe at different times in history
  - And this is why creeds can be helpful...



# *Intro to the Creed Itself*

- To understand the Apostles' Creed, let's do a smidgey bit of a history review
  - 378 Theodosius became Emperor
    - He issued the Edict of Thessalonica, which in 380 legally declared Nicene Christianity to be the state religion of the Roman Empire
      - How was this both good *and* bad for the Church?



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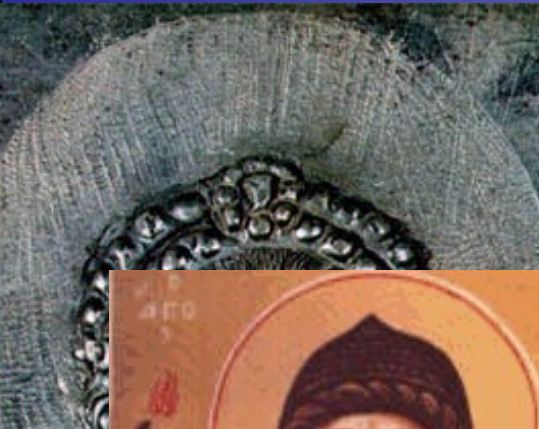
378  
381

Theodosius became Emperor

The Second Ecumenical Council began

- The end result of Council was the issuing of six or seven canons (depending on which historian you accept), among them being...

- 1) The absolute condemnation of all of the versions of Arianism that were still floating around out there (mostly in Britain)



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1) The absolute condemnation of all of the versions of Arianism that were still floating around out there

3) The binding resolution that "The Bishop of Constantinople... shall have the prerogative of honor after the Bishop of Rome, since Constantinople is the *New Rome*..."

- How would the *Eastern* churches have understood and appreciated this canon?
- What precedent does it set to say that the preeminent churches are just *naturally* those which exist where the *secular* government is the most prominent?

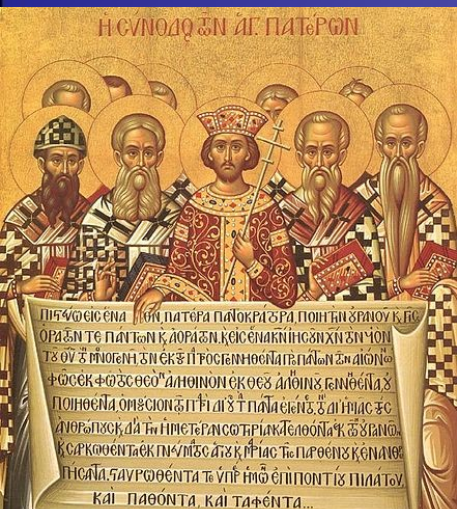


# Intro to the Creed Itself



Funky little teaching moment—

- The Second Ecumenical Council also reaffirmed the original Council's “Nicene Creed,” but in doing so, they also decided to “tweak” it a bit





# Intro to the Creed Itself

## Original Nicene Creed of 325

- We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.
- And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the *only-begotten*; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God—*begotten*, not *made*—being of one substance with the Father;

## “Tweaked” Nicene Creed of 381

- We 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, Light of Light, very God of very God—*begotten*, not *made*—being of one substance with the Father;

(Remember the “*homooúsios*” clarification)



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  - **By whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth;**
  - **Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;**

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- We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
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(this was increasingly becoming a sticky “thing” in the early church, and they wanted to clarify the Biblical position before doctrines spiralled out of control)



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  - By whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth;
  - Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;
  - He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;
  - From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
- And in the Holy Spirit.
- But those who say: “There was a time when he was not;” and “He was not before he was made;” and “He was made out of nothing,” or “He is of another substance” or “essence,” or “The Son of God is created,” or “changeable,” or “alterable”—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church. Amen.

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  - he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and now sits on the right hand of the Father;
  - from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead;
  - whose kingdom shall have no end.
- And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.

(At this point in history, this word simply meant “universal”—i.e.; that everyone was on the same page together as a unified Family of God)



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- And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.
- **In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

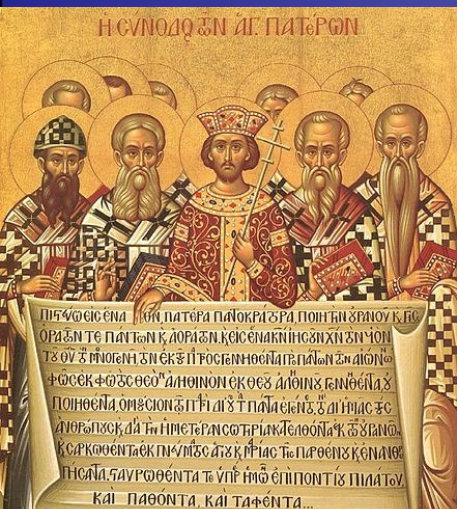


# Intro to the Creed Itself



## Funky little teaching moment—

- The Second Ecumenical Council also reaffirmed the original Council's "Nicene Creed," but in doing so, they also decided to "tweak" it a bit
- At the Council of Toledo in 589, Latin-speaking churches added one word to this creed—*"Filioque"*—which precipitated the split between East and West
  - The *original* "tweaked" creed read, "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father..."
  - The *"tweaked tweaked"* version read, "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*..."
    - How does that change things?
      - The Latin churches (i.e.; Rome) pointed to verses like John 20:22 to support their argument that the Holy Spirit was inherently subordinate to the Son
      - The Greek churches (i.e.; Constantinople) argued that
        - a) this changed the nature of the Trinity
        - b) this was a unilateral action by the Latin churches, and thus a slap in the face to the Greek ones



# *Intro to the Creed Itself*

- To understand the Apostles' Creed, let's do a smidgey bit of a history review  
700± The idea of an *Apostles' Creed* was revisited

