

The Apostles' Creed



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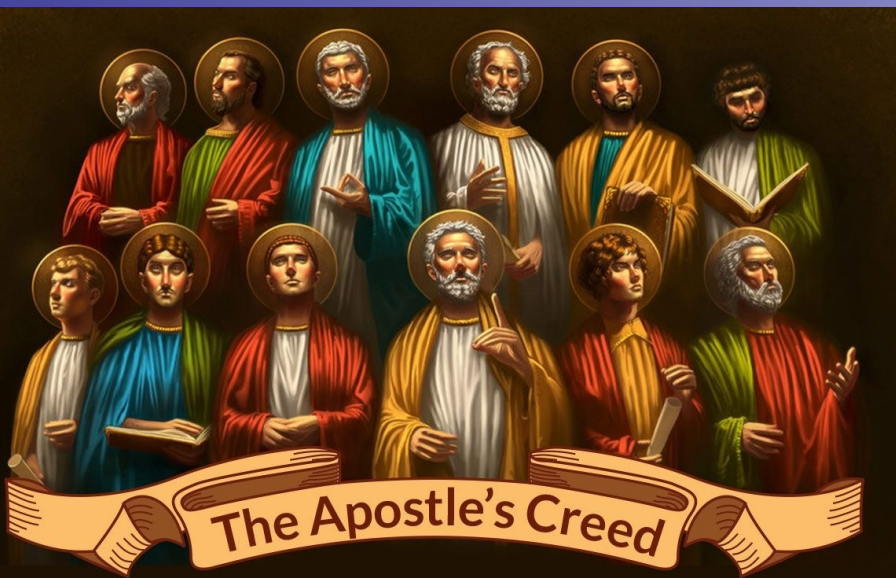
- *Intro to the Creed Itself—The Apostles' Creed*



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
 - By this time, it was commonly held that a so-called “Apostles' Creed” had been written by the Apostles—each man had written one part of it, and then brought the twelve pieces together into a common creed

(NOTE: Official church leaders and theologians still used the official Nicene Creed to go by, but they nonetheless acknowledged the popular “Apostles' Creed” as a helpful tool as well)



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 - Actually, it appears to have been originally written in the late 4th century by Bishop Ambrose of Milan in a letter to Pope Siricius about why we *must* believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary
 - The Church had come to believe that even *marital* sex was sinful, so for Mary to have remained *perfect* and utterly *sinless* her whole life, she had to have *never* had sex—and she had to have *remained* a virgin in *every way* throughout her life (twisting verses like Matthew 1:25 in the process)
 - Thus, when Jesus was born, He didn't break her virgin hymen—instead, He simply passed through the wall of her uterus like a mystical Caesarian section



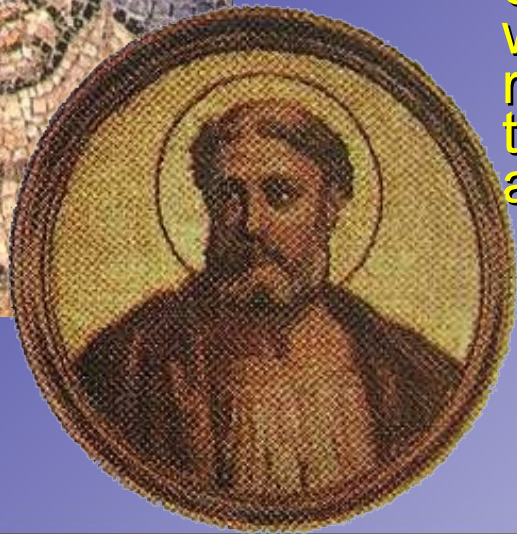
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 - The Church had come to believe that even *marital* sex was sinful, so for Mary to have remained *perfect* and utterly *sinless*...
This is a perfect example of bad, eisegetical history being created out of the aether to support bad theological assumptions
(i.e.; history based on no evidence, running contrary to the uniform testimony of the data in Scripture, to support the bad theology that even marital sex is a defiling act, and thus that Mary *had* to have remained a virgin, since she was utterly perfect and sinless)



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 - But to be fair, Ambrose himself didn't call his doctrinal summation the “Apostles' Creed” (as if it were something that the Twelve had written), but rather, that this was a merely decent summary of the beliefs of Christ, the beliefs of the angels, and the beliefs of the Apostles
 - But as we've just seen, the Church was becoming less and less interested in, say, *accuracy* in their history, and more and more interested in traditional / theological *precedents* to build on—whether they turned out to be **I** true or not



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 - But since the Creed had become (erroneously) famous as the work of the Apostles, and since it lacked the political pitfalls of the hot-button Nicene Creed, the Church brought it back out to present as something that everyone could—and *should*—be in complete agreement upon
 - Interestingly, having learned apparently *nothing* from the *Filioque* controversy from the Council of Toledo in 589—
(when the Roman Catholics had unilaterally amended the *original* version of the Nicene Creed to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds “from the Father and the Son” [*Filioque* in Latin], torquing off the Eastern churches)



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 - Interestingly, having learned apparently *nothing* from the *Filioque* controversy from the Council of Toledo in 589, the Church of Rome again unilaterally “tweaked” the original “Apostles' Creed” to make it more politically and theologically correct



Intro to the Creed Itself

“Apostles' Creed” (3rd—4th century)

“Tweaked” Creed (7th—8th century)

- Bear in mind that there are roughly a bazillion different versions of the “Apostles' Creed” out there in use today
 - Every denomination appears to have developed their own slant on it over time, either to reflect their own biases or to consciously reflect or *not* reflect the *Roman Catholic* biases
 - But for the purposes of this class, we're only going to look at the original Creed and the “tweaked” Creed developed in the 7th-8th centuries



Intro to the Creed Itself

“Apostles' Creed” (3rd—4th century)

- I believe in God the Father Almighty:
- And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;
 - Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
 - And was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
 - and was buried;

“Tweaked” Creed (7th—8th century)

- I believe in God the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth;
- And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;
 - Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary;
 - Who suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 - was crucified, dead and buried;
 - Who descended into Hades



Intro to the Creed Itself



Funky little teaching moment—

- This part gets a little complicated
 - You'll notice that in the *original* Creeds, the emphasis was on the fact that Jesus died and was *buried* in a *tomb*—He was really, really *dead*
 - But this “tweaked” Creed adds this bit about Jesus descending down to *Hades* (ᾍδης—the Greek word for the underworld that everyone goes to after death in Greek mythology)
 - In the Latin, that's “*descendit ad inferos*”
 - Which sounds a lot like “*descendit... in inferiores*” (from Jerome's Latin translation of Ephesians 4:9)
 - But the writers of the Creeds were *originally* just meaning, “He was in the grave—i.e.; Jesus really and truly died”



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 - Nonetheless, a whole doctrine began to rise about Jesus descending into Hell to share the Gospel with lost souls, making use of Ephesians 4:8-10
 - The official name for this doctrine is “The Harrowing of Hell”



Intro to the Creed Itself



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- This part gets a little complicated
 - Paul wrote that after His death, Jesus simply returned to where He came from originally
 - Quoting Psalm 68:18, he said, “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.’ (And what does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)”
 - So the “lower, earthly regions” (or “*inferiores*” in Latin) would be talking about where we are now, as opposed to being in Heaven above
 - But Tertullian had written that the “*inferiores*” here referred to *Hades*, which—it was commonly believed—is located in the bowels of the Earth



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 - So the “lower, earthly regions” (or “*inferiores*” in Latin) would be talking about where we are now, as opposed to being in Heaven above
 - But Tertullian had written that the “*inferiores*” here referred to *Hades*
 - The Church thus began to use the term “*inferos*” (or “*infernos*”) to refer to Hell, since both those words meant “beneath”
 - As time went on, the words lost their *original* meaning and were usually inaccurately associated with the fires of the underworld—which is why we use words like “*inferno*” or “*furnace*” to refer to fiery things today



Intro to the Creed Itself



Funky little teaching moment—

- This part gets a little complicated
 - With little consideration for their original contexts (in part because few people—even theologians—actually had *whole Bibles* to read), various verses were linked together to create a doctrine that Jesus was thrust into Hell to preach to lost souls—
 - Ephesians 4:4-10
 - (Which isn't about Jesus going from Earth to Hell, but rather about Him coming from Heaven to Earth in the first place)



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 - Ephesians 4:4-10
 - Matthew 27:46-47
 - (Which is a line specifically quoting Jesus specifically quoting Psalm 22—a psalm about suffering, having one's hands and feet pierced, having one's clothing divided amongst one's enemies by lot, etc., and expressing the pain of feeling abandoned, but then the *joy* of knowing that God had *not* abandoned the One He loved)
 - (Whatever else Christ *might* have been meaning here, it's really a tenuous argument at best for saying that Christ must thus have been thrust into the fires of Hell—God separated from God)



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 - Ephesians 4:4-10
 - Matthew 27:46-47
 - 1 Peter 3:18-20 (and 2 Peter 2:4-9)
 - (Which is a confusing section where Peter says that after Jesus died, He went and made some form of proclamation to spirits in prison)
 - At first blush, it seems like it supports the doctrine, but there are problems—
 - 1) the word Peter used here is “proclaimed,” not “evangelized” (the emphasis really isn’t on expressing *salvation*, but *victory*)
 - 2) the word “spirits” here is never used for humans elsewhere in Scripture, and the parallel section in 2 Peter clearly indicates imprisoned *angels*



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 - At first blush, it seems like it supports the doctrine, but there are problems—
 - 3) the word “prison” here matches closer to the angels’ dungeons in 2 Peter than it does to common descriptions of Hell
 - 4) Jesus only “made proclamation” to the spirits who sinned before the Flood—if this really were a “Harrowing of Hell,” *why* only those people?



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 - At first blush, it seems like it supports the doctrine, but there are problems—
 - 5) for that matter, the text clearly indicates that Jesus “made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison”—whoever that was, they were *all still imprisoned* when Peter was writing
 - If Jesus were evangelizing, it was a remarkably *ineffective* outreach



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 - 1 Peter 3:18-20 (and 2 Peter 2:4-9)
 - (Which is a confusing section where Peter says that after Jesus died, He went and made some form of proclamation to spirits in prison)
 - At first blush, it seems like it supports the doctrine, but there are problems
 - The more probable meaning of 1 Peter is that Jesus proclaimed His victory over sin and death to the angels who fell with Satan in the Great Rebellion in Heaven (or, yes, for those whose theology leans that way, potentially to the “sons of God” who sinned with the “daughters of men” in Genesis 6)



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 - With little consideration for their original contexts (in part because few people—even theologians—actually had *whole Bibles* to read), various verses were linked together to create a doctrine that Jesus was thrust into Hell to preach to lost souls
 - Basically, this is a textbook example of building a theology by linking three sets of verses that have nothing inherently to do with one another
 - Look for patterns and associations, but be careful not to see patterns where there are no patterns...



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“Apostles' Creed” (3rd—4th century)

- I believe in God the Father Almighty;
- And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;
 - Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
 - And was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
 - and was buried;
 - And the third day rose again from the dead.
 - Who ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;
 - from where he shall come to judge both the living and the dead;
- And in the Holy Spirit;
- the holy Church;

“Tweaked” Creed (7th—8th century)

- I believe in God the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth;
- And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;
 - Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary;
 - Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;
 - Who descended into Hades
 - And the third day rose again from the dead.
 - Who ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
 - from where He shall come to judge both the living and the dead.
- I believe in the Holy Spirit.
- the holy catholic Church,



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- And in the Holy Spirit;
- **the holy Church;**

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 - from where He shall come to judge both the living and the dead.
- I believe in the Holy Spirit.
- **the holy Catholic Church,**

(the term “Catholic” really was becoming a “brand name” by this time—so though it still technically meant “the whole, united Church,” the emphasis was on a Church that was specifically united under the CatholicTM Church in Rome



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 - from where He shall come to judge both the living and the dead.
- I believe in the Holy Spirit.
- the holy Catholic Church,
- **the communion of the saints,**



Intro to the Creed Itself

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - By this time, the Roman Catholic church had begun to officially canonize *particularly* holy people and refer to them as “saints”
 - Actually, the Biblical word for “saint” (ἅγιος or *hagios*) simply means “holy one” and refers to anyone who has been set apart by the blood of Christ
 - Paul uses the term copiously throughout his letters to refer to Christians worshipping in churches—*all* Christians are “saints” because *all* of us have been set apart and made holy by the blood of Christ



Intro to the Creed Itself

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - By this time, the Roman Catholic church had begun to officially canonize *particularly* holy people and refer to them as “saints”
 - The rule for how to canonize a saint became a bit complicated, with multiple steps along the way, but in short, in order for people to become “saints” in the Catholic Church,
 - 1) they have to be dead
 - 2) a thorough investigation into their life must be performed, to ensure that they were in fact holy people while they were alive
 - 3) they have to have at least two miracles that can be clearly attributed to someone praying specifically to them
 - 4) only Rome can determine who should be named a saint, as only Peter was given the keys to God's Kingdom



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 - **So read the “Apostles’ Creed” with this in mind—**
 - When it says, “I believe... in the communion of the saints...” what it was *originally* talking about is that the most special Christians become intercessors for us once they die, and that we should direct our prayers to *them* instead of to God, since God will obviously listen to them better than He would to plain old sinners like you and me
 - This is obviously quite different from what we believe in our church today



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 - Who ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;
 - from where he shall come to judge both the living and the dead;
- And in the Holy Spirit;
- the holy Church;
- the forgiveness of sins;
- and the resurrection of the flesh (body)
- Amen

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- I believe in the Holy Spirit.
- the holy Catholic Church,
- the communion of the saints,
- the forgiveness of sins,
- the resurrection of the flesh (body),
- and the life everlasting. Amen



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- This was an early, *universal* document, intended to bring the whole Church together

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- the communion of the saints,
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- the resurrection of the flesh (body),
- and the life everlasting. Amen

- But *this* was certainly a decidedly Catholic[™] one, intended to enforce unity under *Rome's* authority

