

Church History



Church History

- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11th-13th centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17th-18th centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19th century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20th century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21st century



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- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
 - *The “Dark Ages” Overview*
 - *Flagrant Abuses of Authority: Zeno, Theodoric, and Clovis*
 - *Auctoritas Sacrata Pontificum: Gelasius*
 - *The Rise of the Monk: Benedict, Brendan, and Dennis*
 - *The Politics of Death: Justinian and Columba*
 - *Kingdoms of God*
 - *Streamlining the Church: The Apostles' Creed*



The Early Middle Ages

- The Church began streamlining itself
 - 590 Gregory was elected Pope
 - He focused on building up the Roman Catholic Church as a unified, consistent, and strong power in Europe—reinventing the “Christendom” concept of the earlier Constantinian era of the Roman Empire



The Early Middle Ages

- The Church began streamlining itself

590

664

Gregory was elected Pope

Council of Whitby met in Britain

- The Gregory-installed Roman Catholic clergy clashed with the locally-grown Celtic Christian clergy (the “harmony vs. unity” question)

- Using issues such as the dating of Easter and the mode of tonsure as a basis for discussion, the Roman Catholic Church declared that all churches within Britain—and Christendom at large—would henceforth follow

Rome's customs, and Rome's alone

- To stand against Rome was to stand against the authority of Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys to the Kingdom of God
- Thus, to cut monks' hair differently, to celebrate Easter on a Jewish holiday, or to hold services in the language of the locals (instead of using the Latin used by Rome) was to actively rebel against Peter and thus God's Kingdom—and therefore, was an excommunicable offense



The Early Middle Ages

- **The Church began streamlining itself**

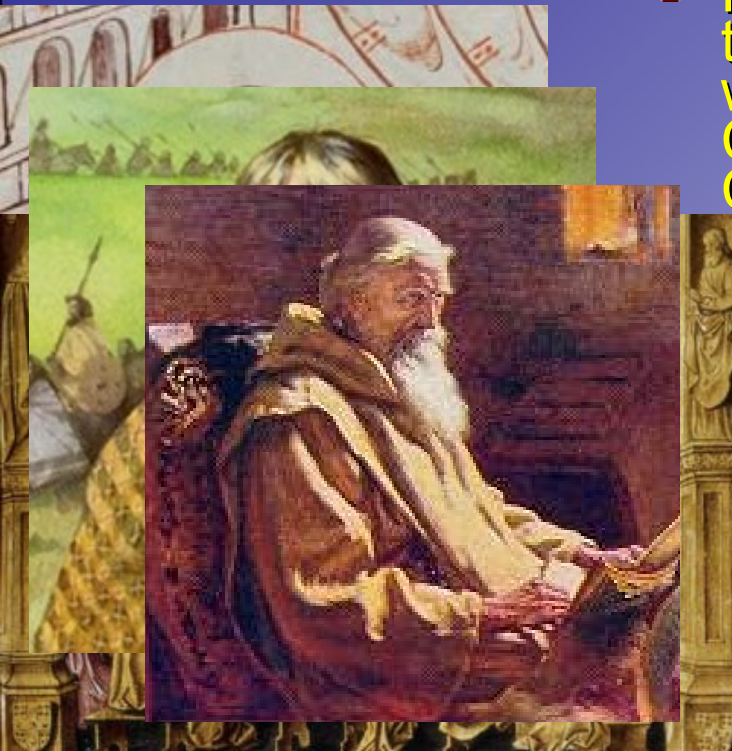
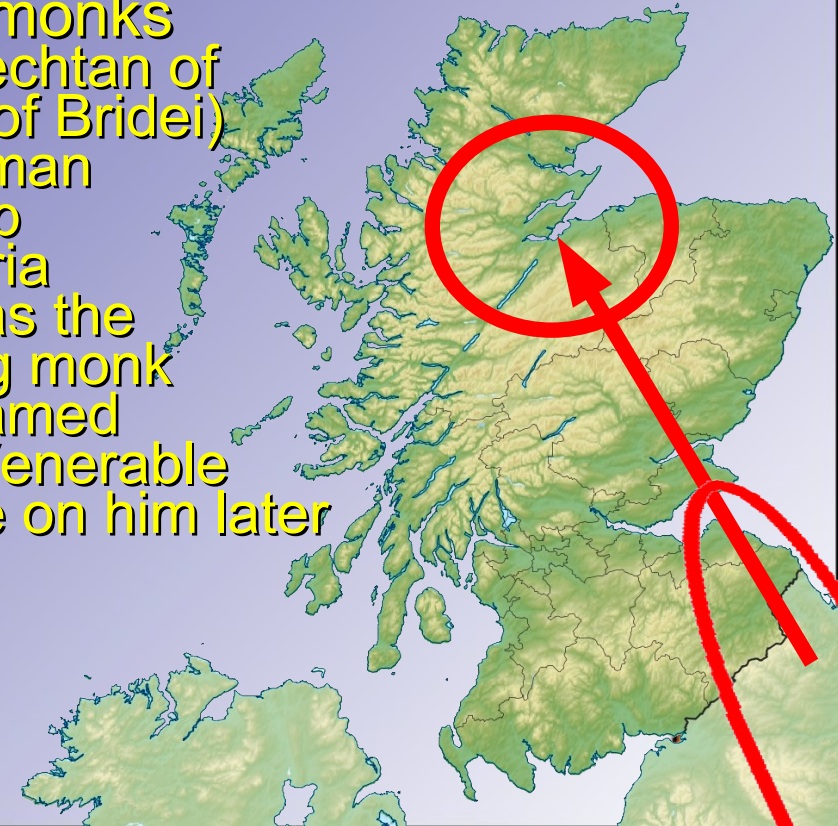
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- The Gregory-installed Roman Catholic clergy clashed with the locally-grown Celtic Christian clergy (the “harmony vs. unity” question)
- **As a result of this decision against the Celtic Christians, many British rulers began to actively turn against the Ionan monks**
 - For instance, King Nechtan of the Picts (a kinsman of Bridei) was converted to Roman Catholicism by Bishop Ceolfrið of Northumbria
 - NOTE: Ceolfrið was the mentor to a young monk in Northumbria named Bæda (aka “the Venerable Bede”)—but more on him later



The Early Middle Ages

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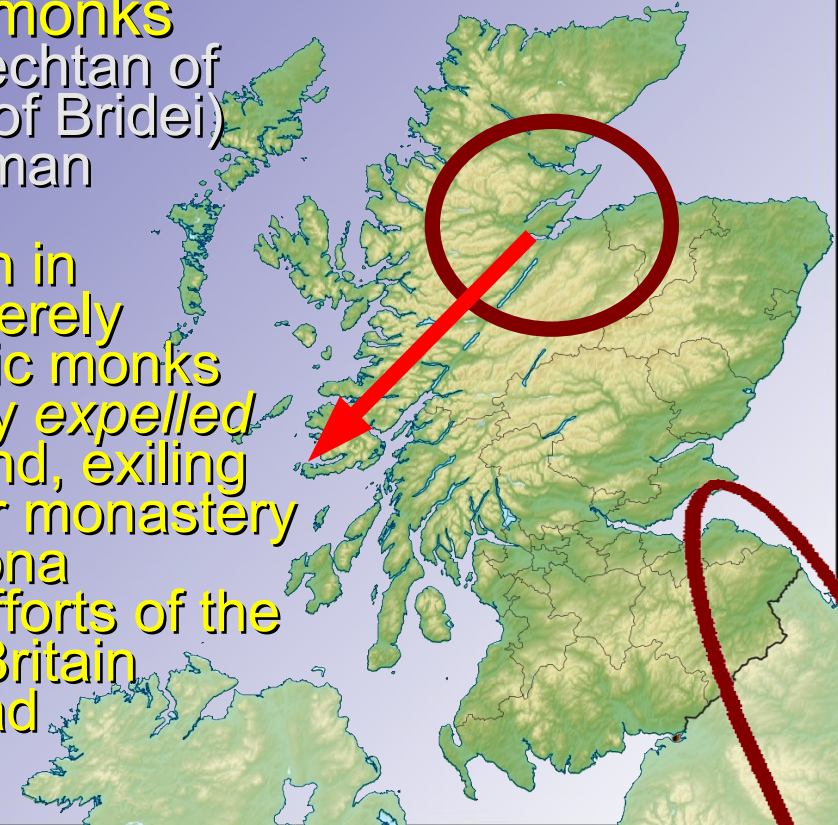
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- As a result of this decision against the Celtic Christians, many British rulers began to actively turn against the Ionan monks
 - For instance, King Nechtan of the Picts (a kinsman of Bridei) was converted to Roman Catholicism
 - To support the church in Rome, Nechtan severely persecuted the Celtic monks
 - In 717, he actually expelled them from Scotland, exiling them back to their monastery on the island of Iona
 - The missionary efforts of the Celtic Church in Britain were officially dead



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700±

The “Apostles' Creed” was revisited

- By this time, it was commonly held that the “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

- 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

- [She *had* to have remained a virgin for life, since otherwise, even *marital* sex would have *defiled* her and made her no longer holy]

- Thus, Matthew 1:25 must be saying that she and Joseph *never* had sexual relations

- But the *whole point* of the verse is that they abstained from sex until *after* Jesus was born, at which point they *didn't* abstain from sex

- That's where Jesus' brothers and sisters came from



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- Thus, Matthew 1:25 must be saying that she and Joseph *never* had sexual relations

- They say Mark 6:3 lists children born to Joseph's never-spoken-of *previous* wife

- That's clearly eisegesis—and why didn't *those* kids travel to Bethlehem with the rest of the family for the census?

- Were they *adults* and travelled alone?

- Why didn't *they* have room for Dad?



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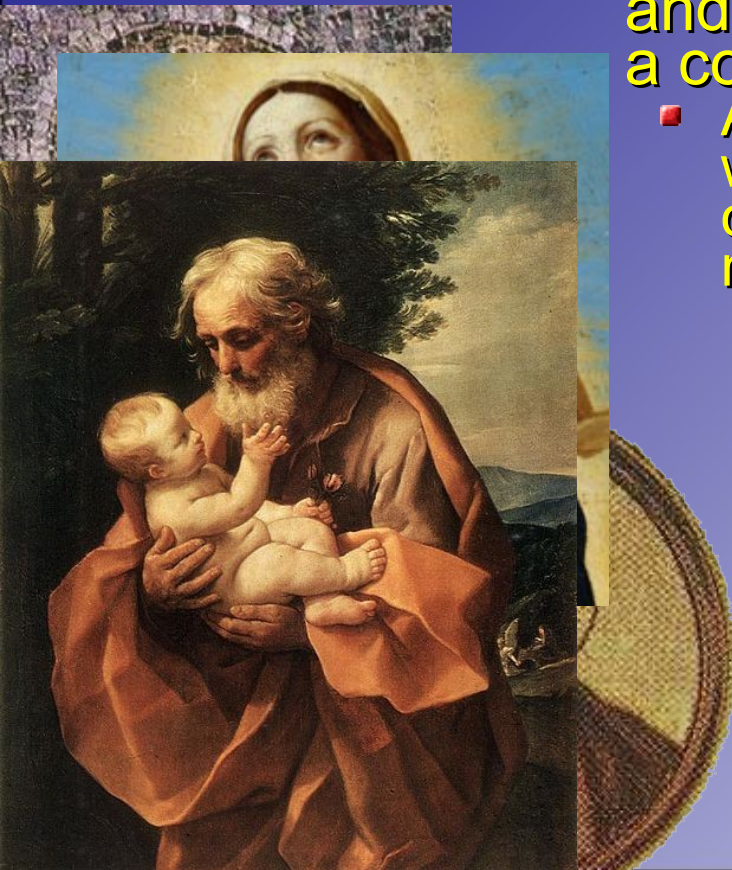
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 - [She *had* to have remained a virgin for life, since otherwise, even *marital* sex would have *defiled* her and made her no longer holy]

- Thus, Matthew 1:25 must be saying that she and Joseph *never* had sexual relations
- They say Mark 6:3 lists children born to Joseph's never-spoken-of *previous* wife
- Thus, they say Joseph must have been an old widower instead of a young man
 - But Joseph was *poor* (see Luke 2:24 and Leviticus 12:8), and only *rich* old men would've been given young wives



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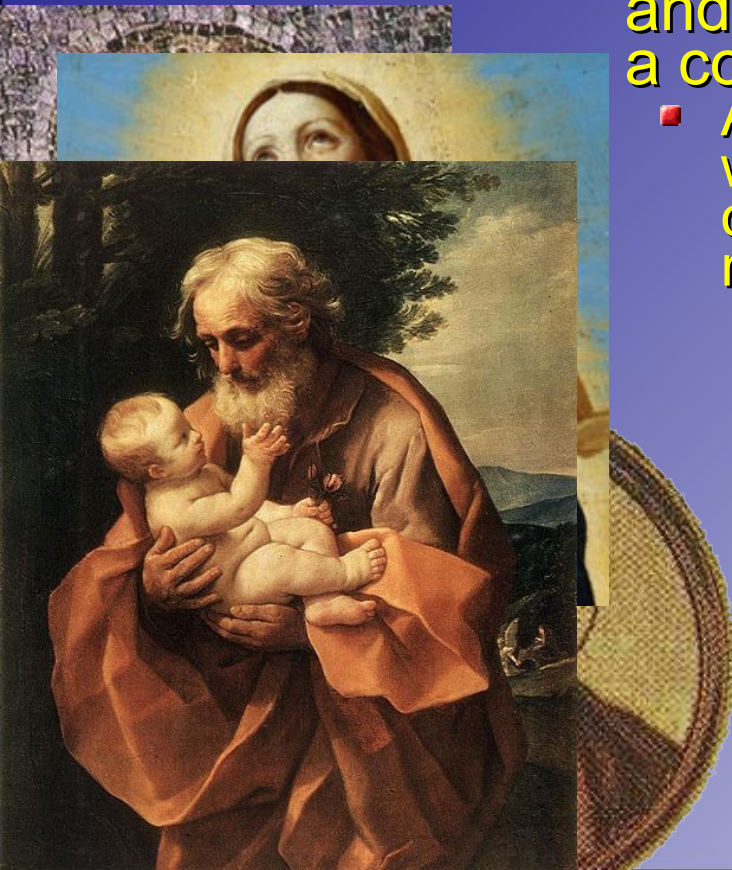
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- [She *had* to have remained a virgin for life, since otherwise, even *marital* sex would have *defiled* her and made her no longer holy]

- This is a perfect example of bad, eisegetical history being created out of the ether to support bad theological assumptions

- (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)



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- To be fair, Ambrose himself didn't call it the “Apostles' Creed” (as if it were something that they'd written), but rather, that this was a fair 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 true or not



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- But since the Creed had become 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, the Church again unilaterally “tweaked” the original “Apostles' Creed” to make it more politically and theologically correct



The Early Middle Ages

“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 *not* reflect the *Roman Catholic* biases
 - But since this is a Church History class, we're only going to look at the original Creed and the “tweaked” Creed developed in the 7th-8th centuries



The Early Middle Ages

“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



The Early Middle Ages

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - This part gets a little complicated
 - You'll notice that in the *original* Creed, the emphasis was on the fact that Jesus died and was *buried* in a *tomb*—He was really, really *dead*
 - But the “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 is a lot like “*descendit... in inferiores*” (from Jerome's Latin translation of Ephesians 4:9)



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 - You'll notice that in the *original* Creed, the emphasis was on the fact that Jesus died and was *buried* in a *tomb*—He was really, really *dead*
 - But the “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 point of fact, a whole doctrine began to rise about Jesus descending into Hell to share the Gospel with lost souls, making use of Ephesians
 - The official name for this doctrine is “The Harrowing of Hell”



The Early Middle Ages

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - 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*” referred to *Hades*, which—as we all know—is located in the bowels of the Earth
 - The Church thus began to use the term “*inferos*” (or “*infernus*”) to refer to Hell, since both those words meant “beneath”
 - As time went on, the words lost their *original* meaning and were indelibly associated with the fires of the underworld—“*inferno*” or “*furnace*”



The Early Middle Ages

- 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 to Hell, but rather about Him coming to Earth)



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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—
 - 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, and the parallel section in 2 Peter clearly indicates imprisoned *angels*



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 - (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—
 - 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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 - (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—
 - 5) for that matter, the text clearly indicates that Jesus “made proclamation to the spirits now in prison”—whoever that was, they are *still* in those dungeons
 - 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)



The Early Middle Ages

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 - 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
 - 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...



The Early Middle Ages

“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,
- the communion of the saints,



The Early Middle Ages

- 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* of us are “saints” because *all* of us have been set apart and made holy by the blood of Christ



The Early Middle Ages

- **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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- **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
 - **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
 - Thus, we have genuine communion not only with other *living* Christians, but also with the dead “saints” who have gone before us and now plead our case before God



The Early Middle Ages

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 - 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;
- the forgiveness of sins;
- and the resurrection of the flesh (body)
- Amen

“Tweaked” Creed (7th—8th century)

- I believe in God the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth;
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- the holy Catholic Church,
- the communion of the saints,
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- the resurrection of the flesh (body),
- and the life everlasting. Amen



~~The Early Middle Ages~~

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- This was arguably an early catholic document, intended to bring the Church together

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 - 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,
- the communion of the saints,
- the forgiveness of sins,
- the resurrection of the flesh (body),
- and the life everlasting. Amen
- But *this* was certainly a decidedly Catholic one, intended to *enforce* unity



The Early Middle Ages

- So when we read the Creed today, “Re-Tweaked” Creed (*First Covenant*) this is the version that we make use of here at First Covenant—
 - The focus here goes back to the *original* Creed and points to the fact that Jesus really, honestly was *dead*—in every real and human sense of the word
 - Again, this points back to the force of the original Creed and focuses on the Church as a whole across the globe—not that we’re all always on the same doctrinal page or under the same management, but that we should still nonetheless live in *harmony* with one another as part of the same *family*
 - Which means that *this* line is *not* pointing to the Roman Catholic idea of “saints” being *particularly* holy dead people that we should *pray* to, but rather that all of us who are currently living in God’s Kingdom can and should be in communion with one another at Christ’s table (both metaphorically and literally)
- We 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 **the grave**
 - 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.
- We believe in the Holy Spirit.
 - the **holy and whole Church**,
 - the **communion of the saints**,
 - the forgiveness of sins,
 - the resurrection of the body,
 - and the life everlasting. Amen
- Next week—iconoclasm!

