

Biblical Topics

Creeds

A *creed* is a statement of what we believe and teach. The word is derived from the Latin “credo,” meaning “I believe. It is a confession of what we believe in our hearts and teach in our churches. Creeds are necessary to set forth the true teachings of the Bible over against the teachings of men. Creeds are true only if they fully agree with the teachings of the Scriptures.

The *Apostles’ Creed* is a brief statement of the teachings, or doctrines, of the Apostles as found in the Bible. There is no evidence that the Apostles’ compiled this Creed. In the course of time it probably grew out of the Trinitarian Formula of Baptism, expanding the meaning of “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The *Nicene Creed* was adopted in the face of the Arian controversy. Arius, a Libyan presbyter in Alexandria, had declared that although the Son was divine, he was a created being and therefore not co-essential with the Father. This made Jesus less than the Father, which posed challenges for the doctrine of the Trinity. Arius's teaching provoked a serious crisis.

It is called Nicene because, in its original form (not the form used today), it was adopted in the city of Nicaea (present day Iznik in Turkey) by the first ecumenical council, which met there in the year 325

The *Athanasian Creed* is a Christian statement of belief focused on Trinitarian doctrine and Christology. The Latin name of the creed is taken from the opening words, “Whosoever wishes”. The creed has been used by Christian churches since the sixth century. It is the first creed in which the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated. It differs from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and Apostles' Creeds in the inclusion of anathemas, or condemnations of those who disagree with the creed (like the original Nicene Creed).

In Lutheranism, the Athanasian Creed is—along with the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds—one of the three ecumenical creeds placed at the beginning of the 1580 Book of Concord, the historic collection of authoritative doctrinal statements (confessions) of the Lutheran Church. It is still used in the liturgy on Trinity Sunday.

Information for the Apostle’s Creed is taken from: “Luther’s Small Catechism” annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.

Information for Nicene and Athanasian Creeds is taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.