



"at home, thinking"

seeds for a
Biblical worldview

"As a man thinketh in
his heart, so is he."
Proverbs 23:7 KJV

No. 13

Creeds

I HAVE BEEN THINKING about the Christian creeds. The two primary Christian creeds are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

A creed is a confession of faith. It is the proclamation of a core set of beliefs that we are seeking to live by. While theology addresses the large scope of the knowledge of God—and that in great detail—the Christian creeds have reduced the many truths of Scripture into essential, foundational statements of faith. The English word "creed" comes from the Latin, *credo*, which simply means "I believe."

When Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter gave a short, yet profound response: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matt. 16:15-16 NASB). At this moment in Peter's life and understanding, these words reflected his core belief about the person and nature of Jesus Christ. This statement was Peter's creed.

The Apostles' Creed: The earliest trace of the Apostles' Creed is found in the writings of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who was martyred in Rome sometime in the late 1st or early 2nd century AD. Among the many words found in his writings is the statement that Christ was born "of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and died and was raised from the dead."

The Nicene Creed: Formulated at the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicea in 325 AD, the Nicene Creed is the most widely used of all the Christian Creeds. It is the only creed created by an ecumenical council. The Nicene Creed preceded the canonization of the New Testament.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, And sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in The Holy Spirit; The Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting.

The creeds emerged early in Church history as a defense against false teachers and their apostate teachings. And they capture in concise but profound terms, the essence of our faith.

Not long ago I attended a baseball game at RFK Stadium between the Nationals and the Phillies. Before the game began, all stood, removed their hats, and turned reverently toward the flag above the center-field bleachers. We listened as a chorale from North Dakota sang our National Anthem. I got to thinking about our nation's unifying songs and our pledge: "Oh say, can you see ..."; "Oh beautiful, for spacious skies ..."; "God bless America, land that I love ..."; "I pledge allegiance, to the flag ..."

Even as Americans are united in our common citizenship through public songs and declarations, so the Christian creeds unite believers in our common Christian faith. I was raised in a traditional, liturgical church. Our Sunday services included public responsive liturgical readings, public collective confessions of sin, recitation of the creeds, and praying the Lord's prayer in unison.

In most of our evangelical churches today, we no longer practice these traditional forms of worship. Beginning in the early 19th century, as Americans headed west to pursue freedom and individuality, churches also began to diverge into multiple forms of expression. We lost some of the rich traditions that have bound us together for many centuries.

The Christian creeds unify us, binding us together in a common confession of our faith. "I believe ..."



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