



Nicene Creed

The most important form of the creed was produced by the first ecumenical council at Nicea in 325, and was intended to stand as the measure of orthodoxy for the entire Christian community. The council of Nicea was summoned by the emperor Constantine in an effort to unify the newly Christian empire that have been severely divided by the teaching of an elder of the church in Alexandria named Arius (256-336). In defending of God's absolute uniqueness, Arius argued that God's essence (ousia) could not be shared. He believed that the sharing of God's essence would imply division in God. The Word of God cannot therefore be fully God, but must be something created by God. If so, then the Word has a beginning and was subject to change.

According to this logic, the Word of God is called the "Son of God" was an honorary title. The Word is God in name only. Those who opposed Arius, chiefly Athanasius (295-373) defended the divinity of the Word above all because of their conviction that in Christ, it really was God saving humanity. He responded by describing the Son with a philosophical term, declaring him "one essence" (homoousios) with God.

This theological controversy threatened the stability of both Christianity and the empire of Constantine, given that he wanted Christianity to serve as the glue for the empire. He called a council of bishops from all over the empire to settle the doctrinal dispute for the entire church. As a result the creed below was formed at Nicea.

Nicean Creed

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 as only begotten, that is, out of the being of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not made, one in being with the Father, through whom all things are made, things in heaven and things on earth, who, for us humans and for our salvation came down and became flesh, becoming human, he suffered, and he rose on the third day, and having gone into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead.

And the Holy Spirit,

Those who say, "There was a time when he was not" and "before he was begotten he was not" and that he was made from what was not, or that he was of another being or substance or a creature....let the universal church consider them anathema.

No End to Controversy

This by no means put an end to the controversy, which became even more divisive over the following fifty years. The orthodox rallied around Athanasius. The radical Arians, led by Eunomius, the bishop of Cyzicus, pushed for a rational explanation of the relationship

between the God and the Word, reaching the conclusion that the Son is unlike the Father and is a creature. And if the Son is a creature, the Holy Spirit is also a creature.

This radical teaching drew the great Cappadocian teachers (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzen) into the fray on the side of orthodoxy. Gregory of Nyssa summed up the conflict in this fashion:

The whole controversy, then, between the church and the Arians [the radical Arians] turns on this: Are we to regard the Son and the Spirit as belonging to the created or uncreated existence?"

National Baptist Convention, USA belief regarding the Holy Spirit

Article II. The True God.

We believe the Scriptures teach that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is Jehovah, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; **that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.**

Reading for Next Week

- **Holy Spirit as Power in Paul:** Roman 15.13, 19; 1 Corinthians 12.4; 1 Thess. 1.5-6; 2 Tim. 1.7
- **Dwells in Christians:** Rom. 8.9, 11; 1 Cor. 3.16, 19; 2 Tim 1.14
- **Gives Life to believers:** Rom. 8.11; 3.25; Gal. 3.25
- **Life as First Fruits:** Rom 8.23
- **Holy Spirit as seal:** Eph. 1.13
- **Or as a pledge of future glory:** 2 Cor. 1.22; 2 Cor 4.16-5.5
- **Holy Spirit as present and transforming Power:** Rom 1.4; 2.29; 5.5; 9.1; 14.17; 15.16; 1 Cor 2.4; 7.40; 12.3, 13; 14.2, 15, 16; 2 Cor 12.18; Gal. 3.2, 4, 14; 5.16; Eph 2.18, 22; 3.5, 16; 4.3, 4, 23; 5.18; 6.18; Phil 1.27; 2.1; 1 Thess. 5.19; 2 Thess. 2.13; 1 Tim. 3.16; Tit 3.5