

Continuing in the Apostles' Teaching...

NICENE CREED

Part One



Notes...

Introduction

The Nicene Creed was composed in two parts. First, at the first great Council of Nicea (whence the name of the Creed), A.D. 325, the first two articles were drafted. That Creed originally ended with "And in the Holy Spirit." The third article on the Holy Spirit and the Church was framed at the second ecumenical council, Constantinople I, in 381.

The First Article

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

1. The original Creed was in the plural ("we believe") but in its use in the liturgy it was from the very beginning confessed in the singular. Why do you think that might be?
2. Historically, the Creed took some time establishing itself in the regular Divine Service of the Western Church - it wasn't accepted generally in Rome itself until just after 1000 A.D. Why would its regular use be important?
3. What is the significance of the "one"? Cf. 1 Cor. 8:4-6 and Deuteronomy 6:4.
4. What is unique about the Confession that the one God is "Father"? Cf. Luke 11:2 and John 20:11-18 and Ephesians 3:14,15
5. What is the stress on "Almighty"? What does this mean? Cf. Psalm 93:1,2
6. What does it mean to confess that this One God, who is Father, is the Maker? Cf. Genesis 1:1; Psalm 95:6,7; Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 40:28
7. What does it mean to confess that He is the Maker not only of what we see, but also of what is "invisible" - not seen? Cf. Colossians 1:16
8. Lutherans didn't only confess the Nicene Creed in prose, but in poetry. What aspects of the Creed does our Hymn Paraphrase draw out?

We all believe in one true God, / Who created earth and heaven,
The Father, who to us in love / Has the right of children given.
He in soul and body feeds us; / All we need His hand provides us;
Through all snare and perils leads us, / Watching that no harm betide us.
He cares for us by day and night / All things are governed by His might.

LSB 954:1

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NICENE CREED

Part Two - A



Notes...

Introduction

The word that formed the heart of the Nicene confession in 325 was a non-Biblical word that certain heretics had even used in the past: homoousios. Although a single word in Greek, it is rendered in English by four English words: "being of one substance." This is the word that knocks the Arians out of confessing the Creed: that our Lord Jesus Christ is of one (or the same) substance as His Father.

The Second Article

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

1. Revisit 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 for the language with which this section of the Creed begins. Note that usually (not always) in the NT the term Kyrios, or Lord, is a direct reference to the Son of God.
2. The Creed hangs a lot on our Lord's being "begotten." What is the difference between "begotten" and "made"?
3. How do the following passages speak to our Lord's being begotten, i.e., sharing the Father's own nature:
 - a. John 1:1-3
 - b. John 17:5
 - c. 1 John 5:20
 - d. Colossians 1:13-20
 - e. Mark 4:38-41 (and all the miracles)
4. To say that our Lord is "of one substance with" the Father is to confess that all that makes the Father God (except for being Father) is communicated to the Son and this not in time, but from eternity. Thus this word "homoousios" attacks the Arians at the heart of their confession: "There was, when He (the Son) wasn't." How does Jesus blow away the Arian claim in John 8:56-59? What did the Jews understand him to be claiming for Himself?

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NICENE CREED

Part Three - A



Notes...

Introduction

The Second Article

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

1. Last week was the "who" and this week is the "what" AND the "why."
How does the Nicene Creed delineate both?
2. Compare Article II to 1 Corinthians 15:1-7; Acts 2:22-36; Acts 3:13-26; Acts 10:34-43.
3. What does "according to the Scriptures" mean in this context? See Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:10,11.
4. What is the current state and what the future? How does the Church's proclamation embrace both? Cf. 1 Cor. 11:26
5. What constitutes a person as "living" or as "dead"? Cf. John 15:1-6; John 5:24; John 11:25,26
6. A Kingdom without end means a King who lives forever. See Luke 1:33

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NICENE CREED

Part Three - A



Notes...

Introduction

As mentioned at the beginning of our little series, in 325, the Nicene Creed concluded with "and in the Holy Spirit." It quickly became apparent that that was not enough. There were those who "fought against" confessing the deity of the Holy Spirit, even as others had earlier fought against confessing the deity of the Son. The new "spirit-fighters" (*pneumatomachians*) were officially routed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 when the "rest" of the Nicene Creed was put together. We'll examine the first part of the third article in detail today.

The Third Article

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

1. What titles does the Nicene Creed give to the Holy Spirit? Cf. 2 Cor. 3:6, 17-18; Ezekiel 37:1-10; 1 Cor. 12:1-3, 12-13.
2. From whom does the Spirit proceed? Cf. John 15:26.
3. Why did the Western Church (beginning at the Council of Toledo in Spain, and eventually spreading across Western Europe and the Western hemisphere) confess also a procession "from the Son"? Cf. John 16:15; Galatians 4:6; John 20:22,23.
4. What does the Western Church NOT mean by confessing "filioque" - "and the Son"?
5. What does the Western Church MEAN by this confession?
6. What does the Holy Spirit share together with the Father and the Son? How does this show up in the Church's worship? Can you list examples from the Divine Service we regularly use?
7. What are we confessing when we say that the Holy Spirit spoke by the prophets? Cf. Acts 4:24-26; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Tim 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:11

Conclusion: We all confess the Holy Ghost, Who, in highest heaven dwelling With God the Father and the Son, Comforts us beyond all telling; Who the Church, His own creation, Keeps in unity of spirit. Here forgiveness and salvation Daily come through Jesus' merit. All flesh shall rise, and we shall be in bliss with God eternally.
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NICENE CREED

Part Three - B



Notes...

Introduction

With the confession of the Holy Spirit comes the confession of the community that He creates and what that community lives from and lives toward. Thus, the remainder of the Third Article:

The Third Article

And I believe in one holy, Christian [catholic] and apostolic Church; I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

1. What adjectives are used to describe the Church and what does each entail?
 - a. ONE (cf. Eph. 4:4)
 - b. HOLY (cf. Hebrews 12:22-24)
 - c. CATHOLIC (cf. Rev. 7:9)
 - d. APOSTOLIC (cf. Eph 2:19-20; Rev. 21:14)
2. The Church's LIFE is grounded in Baptism and what it gives her. What do the Scriptures teach that Baptism bestows?
 - a. Acts 2:28
 - b. Acts 22:16
 - c. Colossians 2:11-14
3. What is the difference between "believing in" the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come and "looking for" them?
4. What do these passages teach about living from our hope?
 - a. Colossians 3:1-4
 - b. Philippians 3:17-4:1