

One Holy Catholic And Apostolic Church

By Ron Smith

One Holy Catholic Church

Every Sunday Christians recite the Apostles' Creed. "I believe in the holy catholic church." Each of the doctrines found in the creed can be traced to statements current in the New Testament period. The oldest copy of the creed is perhaps the *Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus* (A.D. 215). The word *catholic* simply means *universal*. It has to do with the *unity* of all Christians regardless of their respective denominations. We are all unified by our pledge to the essential doctrines as stated in this creed. What we believe in our hearts, we confess with our mouths. All Christians everywhere confess these doctrines. To deny the Apostles' Creed is to deny Christ.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again 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. AMEN.

The Church's Authority

Jesus said, "And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mat 18:17-18).

To bind means to “make binding” as in a binding agreement.

In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it (Nehemiah 9:38).

What makes the historical creeds such as the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed binding in heaven, is the unified agreement of all the churches in the world. The argument of the Church of Armenia (the first Christian nation state in history), is that after the council of Chalcedon (451 AD) the churches were divided, and therefore all the councils after that are not universally binding. The Armenian Church and the Coptic churches separated from the others at that time.

The Nicene Creed was agreed on in 381 AD as a result of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. This creed was agreed on by all the churches as a result of the controversy on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Arians denied the deity of Christ. They said He was a created being, and was the Son of God but not God. The Nicene Creed says, “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds (æons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father...”

Jesus said that what the church binds on earth is bound in heaven. This defines what a Christian is. To deny this teaching of the Trinity is to be “a heathen and a tax collector.” One who denies the doctrines of these creeds is therefore not a Christian.

The Essentials Of The Faith

St. Augustine said, “In essentials – unity; in non-essentials – liberty; in all things – charity.” The essential doctrines are found in the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed because they are a

binding agreement. This means we are forbidden to divide over non-essential doctrines and *required* to divide if we are not agreed on the essentials. But in all things there must be charity. That means no “name calling” and personal attacks. We are to be objective and not subjective in our debates over non-essential doctrines. Those who run out of reasonable arguments many times resort to name calling and personal acidity.

This does not mean that non-essential doctrines are not important. It just means we have no right to reject each other as non-Christian if we do not agree. There should be liberty to debate the non-essential issues charitably. I have been called the Antichrist by uneducated pastors in Mexico because I reject the teaching of a secret rapture and a soon coming of Christ. The universal churches have never agreed on such non-essentials as the interpretation of prophecy.

The Scriptures

The doctrines on which the universal church agreed were based on the Bible. The early church agreed on the books that were included in the New Testament. Therefore, those who reject the authority of the Bible are not Christians. Eusebius (324 AD), the first church historian, explains the criteria for acceptance. The book had to be written by an apostle or by the companion of an apostle. It also had to be received and read by the universal churches. Those books that did not agree with the essentials (the Gnostic gospels) were rejected as antichrist. Jesus said to His apostles, “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you” (John 20:21). To reject the authority of the apostles and prophets (the Bible) is to reject Christ. To invent a new Christ other than the Scriptural one, is to violate the second commandment (No images; including mental ones).

The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the Old Testament prophets (Eph 2:20). The Bible is the word of the church and the universal church made it binding both in heaven and on earth because Jesus said so (Mat 18:17-18). Paul said the church is the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).

This does not mean the “Roman Church” or the “Baptist Church” or any other denomination. It means the original historical church of the historical creeds that were bound by the united churches.

If the church is the foundation of the truth, and the Bible is the word of the church as spoken by the prophets and apostles, and Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, then we must conclude that any teaching that does not agree with the essential doctrines of the church is “another Gospel” and a false one. Jesus said, “No man comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6).

Jesus And The Prophets

Some attempt to pit Jesus against the Old Testament prophets. But Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Mat 5:17). Everything Jesus did and said was based on the Old Testament. He did not replace it; He fulfilled it. Fulfilling is not abolishing. When He said, “You have heard it has been said, ‘An eye for an eye’, but I say to you”... He was not contradicting Moses; He was contradicting the Pharisees’ method of interpretation. Jesus claimed to be the I AM who was before Abraham (John 8) and who appeared to Moses. Therefore, it was Christ Himself who gave the Law to Moses. Jesus does not replace the Old Testament prophets; He encompasses them. He is the one speaking through them.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe (Heb 1:1-2 NIV).

Since the Nicene Creed is binding, we must believe that Christ is God. God is one essence in three persons. God inspired the prophets and the apostles. Men are fallible, but God’s word

spoken through them is infallible. They were only vessels of clay; but they contained an invaluable treasure (i.e. the word of God).

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us (2 Cor 4:7).

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16 NIV).

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21 NIV).

Jesus evidently believed in the inspiration of Scripture because “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27 NIV). “The words of the prophets are in agreement with this...” (Acts 15:15 NIV).

What About Tradition?

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men (Mark 7:8 NIV).

Traditions that replace God’s word are to be avoided. However, according to Scripture, traditions that do not contradict Scripture and that were handed down by the apostles should be observed. Paul commanded that the traditions that he had handed down be observed, whether they are oral or written.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle (2 Thess 2:15 KJV).

Church History

The history of both the Old Testament church and the New Testament church over the last 5000 years since Abraham has proven that men morally devolve instead of evolving. The second law of dynamics is proven. “All things left to themselves tend to deteriorate.” It is also called *entropy*. The Bible calls it the law of sin and death. It is a record of constant backsliding. Just look at the book of Judges, Kings, and Chronicles. Just look at church history. Denominations start out with the power of God and a generation or so later they deny the essentials of the faith and have a “name that they live and are dead” (Rev 3:1).

The only thing that can reverse death is the power of the resurrection. Christ reversed entropy in His resurrection. And “He must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet; and the last enemy is death” (1 Cor 15:25-26).

Although history shows constant backsliding by God’s people, every now and then God visits His people in reformation and reverses the trend. This happened in the Exodus; it happened several times in Judges; it happened in the reformations of Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, John the Baptist, and Jesus. It happened in church history in the Reformation, the Great Awakenings, etc.

Based on this pattern of the past, we are to expect similar visitations in the future because Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Mat 16:18).

Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account (Eccles 3:15 NIV).

My Homeboys



Martin Luther
(Lutheran)



Saint Augustine
(Catholic)



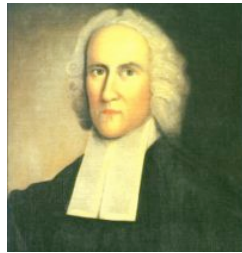
John Calvin
(Reformed)



John Knox
(Presbyterian)



John Owen
(Congregational)



Jonathan Edwards
(Congregational)



George Whitefield
(Anglican)



Charles Spurgeon
(Baptist)



The Elders & Deacons Of Church Of The King Under The Authority Of A Cloud Of Witnesses

Top left to right: Dave Barnes, Charlie White, Brian Burns, Kevin Nunn

Bottom left to right: Juan Guajardo, Mitch Ladyman, Ron Smith

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