

Week Seven, Wednesday, November 3, 2021, “Of God and of the Holy Trinity”, WCF Chapter 2

Augustine’s famous words in His *Confessions* serve us well to begin our study today: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.” The WLC and WSC Q&A 1 also are important to cite. B.B. Warfield would elevate our thoughts to God’s glory and our glorious experience of Him: “No Catechism begins on a higher plane than the Westminster ‘Shorter Catechism.’ Its opening question ... sets the learner at once in his right relation to God. Withdrawing his eyes from himself, even from his own salvation, as the chief object of concern, it fixes them on God and His glory, and bids him seek his highest blessedness in Him.”³³

WCF 2:1: There is but one only,^a living, and true God:^b who is infinite in being and perfection,^c a most pure spirit,^d invisible,^e without body, parts,^f or passions,^g immutable,^h immense,ⁱ eternal,^k incomprehensible,^l almighty,^m most wise,ⁿ most holy,^o most free,^p most absolute,^q working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will,^r for His own glory;^s most loving,^t gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;^u the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him;^w and withal, most just and terrible in His judgments,^x hating all sin,^y and who will by no means clear the guilty.^z

aDeut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4,6. b1 Thess 1:9; Jer 10:10. cJob 11:7-9 ; Job 26:14. dJohn 4:24. e1 Tim 1:17. fDeut 4:15-16; John 4:24 with Luke 24:39; gActs 14:11,15. hJames 1:17; Mal 3:6. i1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:23-24. kPs 90:2; 1 Tim 1:17. lPs 145:3. mGen 17:1; Rev. 4:8. nRom 16:27. oIsa 6:3; Rev 4:8. pPs 115:3. qExod 3:14. rEph 1:11. sProv 16:4; Rom 11:36. t1 John 4:8,16. uExod 34:6-7. wHeb 11:6. xNeh 9:32-33. yPs 5:5-6. zNah 1:2-3; Exod 34:7.

³³ Warfield, “The First Question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism”, in *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* vol. 6, 379. While some emphasize the more “personal” nature of the first person language of the Heidelberg Catechism, especially its opening Q&A 1, “What is my only comfort ...”, Warfield warns that “Even [in it] ... may be some danger that the pupil should acquire the impression that God exists for his benefit.” Still, having thoroughly explored the various influences upon the phraseology of WSC Q&A 1 throughout his article, including the ideas not only of serving God but saving one’s soul and enjoying God’s presence in heaven as primitive aspects blended succinctly behind “enjoy Him forever”, Warfield disclaims: “But according to the Reformed conception man exists not merely that God may be glorified in him, but that he may delight in this glorious God ... No man is truly Reformed in his thought, then, unless he conceives of man not merely as destined to be the instrument of the Divine glory, but also as destined to reflect the glory of God in his own consciousness, to exult in God: nay, unless he himself delights in God as the all-glorious One.”, 397.

One God.³⁴ Against pantheism, polytheism, atheism, agnosticism.³⁵

- a. “Infinite” and “eternal”: not limited by time or space. Van Dixhoorn explains, “... the ‘infinite’ knowledge of God can account for all possible variables and eventualities”.³⁶ The past and future of humanity is always immediately and immutably present to Him. Time is a reflection of/consumed in eternity.
- b. “most absolute”: He is absolute in all His attributes simultaneously.
- c. “Invisible”, thus God may not be represented by idols or images.
- d. “Incomprehensible”: Quantitative, not qualitative. He is hard to understand, but knowable. We can know what God knows, but only what He reveals; finite creatures cannot have God’s exhaustive knowledge. (Deut. 29:29). “God knows all things eternally, by an direct, all-comprehensive intuition ... Our knowledge is dependent; God’s is independent. Ours is fragmentary; God’s total and complete. Ours is in great measure transient; God’s is permanent.”³⁷ God’s knowledge is unlearned, immediate; ours is derived, sequential.
- e. Without “passions”. He has no emotions, which are purely human: see Acts 14:14-15. God has no physical nor emotional feelings. “... he is free of all attitudes ... which reflect instability or lack of control.”** Scripture “condescends” to us in anthropomorphic and anthropopathic language. God is “immutable”³⁸, He does not change. Use the analogy of faith (chapter 1) to compare metaphorical Scriptures in context and protect against apparent contradictions (such as 1 Sam. 15:35 with 15:29 and Mal. 3:6). God is without a body and passions because He is a Spirit (not the same as our soul/spirit). But the incarnate Son DID and now does have emotions (Heb. 4:15) for He took on a human body and soul, though His emotions are always kept in sinless check.
- f. Doctrines on God taught: omnipresence (immensity, immediacy, immanence, everywhere present at the same time: unmeasurable); omniscience (knows everything past, present,

³⁴ Green: “Note that the first question of the Standards about God is not, Is He? But, What is He? The bible at Genesis 1:1 and elsewhere assumes that the being of God is too evident to need either assertion or argument, proof or proclamation,” 26. Earlier, he points to Q&A 1 of the LC and SC, saying: “The answers *imply* two things: 1. The true idea of God as alone in His Godhood, the one grand object of religion. 2. The true idea of man as religious and immortal in his nature, the great subject of religion.” He also nicely points out, “The answers *assert* two things: 1. The duty of man, ‘to glorify God.’ 2. The destiny of man, ‘to enjoy Him.’ Duty first, destiny follows.” “Thus the first statements of the Catechisms strike the keynote of Calvinism ... the significance of human life,” 20, 21.

³⁵ More will be worked out below, but here David Dickson provides some helpful thoughts to meditate on against Tri-theists (three gods) and Manicheans (two gods) regarding the Trinity: “... if that one God have in himself all perfections, there can be no perfection beside him, and so no God but this one true God: for if there were, he should not be God, because not infinite in perfection. And if God be infinite in perfection, then surely there cannot be a multiplicity of Gods, seeing that which is infinite, in that respect, cannot be multiplied.” *Truth’s Victory Over Error*, 17-18.

³⁶ Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: A Reader’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 35.

³⁷ A. A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession: A Commentary*, 51.

³⁸ “Mutableness denotes weakness, and is not in God, who is ‘the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.’ Heb. xiii 8.” Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 67. He adds pastorally, “Expect to meet with changes in everything but God ... Get an interest in the unchangeable God, then thou art a rock in the sea, immoveable in the midst of all changes.” 68.

- and future); omnipotence (infinite, unlimited in ability - Genesis 18:14, so long as not inconsistent with His moral nature - Titus 1:2): thus able to make us know His knowledge that He reveals (against Barth, Van Til's denial of "coordinate" knowledge) and able to make all His will come to pass (against Arminianism, Amyraldianism, Well-Meant Offer); indivisible or "simple". God is perfectly good and absolutely true in Himself. God is self-consistent (He does NOT contradict Himself, nor is His Word inconsistent). This helps us ponder difficult providences. Also a distinction is to be made between communicable and incommunicable attributes (to man, see chapter 4 on creation).
- g. He is a perfect (pure), just, holy, and merciful God Who justly punishes the unrepentant, but graciously pardons those who seek His favor. We His creatures have two options of responding to Him and two respective "responses" from God in return. Our knowledge of God solicits a sovereign response. We are not autonomous; we are accountable to Him.
 - h. Highly recommend memorizing SC Q&A 4-6.
 - i. No wonder we are encouraged by Scripture to worship in wonder of God for Who He is. Consider all the above with Packer's summary: "One aspect of the marvel of God ... is that he simultaneously gives total and undivided attention not just to one thing at a time but to everything and everyone everywhere in his world past, present, and future."³⁹
 - j. "the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.": As God is eternal, our eternity in heaven or hell is of utmost importance to have settled with God now.

WCF 2:2: *God hath all life,^a glory,^b goodness,^c blessedness,^d in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He hath made,^e nor deriving any glory from them,^f but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them: He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things;^g and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever Himself pleaseth.^h In His sight all things are open and manifest;ⁱ His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature,^k so as nothing is to Him contingent, or uncertain.^l He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands.^m To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them.ⁿ*

^aJohn 5:26. ^bActs 7:2. ^cPs 119:68. ^d1 Tim 6:15; Rom 9:5. ^eActs 17:24-25. ^fJob 22:2-3. ^gRom 11:36. ^hRev 4:11; 1 Tim 6:15; Dan 4:25,35. ⁱHeb 4:13. ^kRom 11:33-34; Ps 147:5. ^lActs 15:18; Ezek 11:5. ^mPs 145:17; Rom 7:12. ⁿRev 5:12-14.

God is independent of His creatures. Van Dixhoorn notes, "... every effort is taken in this section of the confession to show that God does not need us, or owe us anything ..."⁴⁰ Sinclair Ferguson explains that "This 'is-ness' of God's is what theologians call, in technical theological language, the *aseity of God* (from the Latin: *a* = from; *se* = himself – God has his being in an underived way, from himself)."⁴¹ R.C. Sproul thinks it is the most important doctrine to know, and the one Christians are most ignorant of. We should thus heed J.I. Packer's warning: "In theology, endless mistakes result from supposing that the conditions, bounds, and limits of our own finite existence apply to God. The doctrine of his aseity stands as a bulwark against such mistakes" (keep this in view with the

³⁹ Packer, 30.

⁴⁰ Chad Van Dixhoorn, 34.

⁴¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *A Heart for God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 51.

discussion about anthropopathisms).⁴² This section sets up much of what comes in following chapters, especially the next ones on eternal decree, creation, providence, and the fall.⁴³

- a. “alone in and unto Himself all sufficient”. He doesn’t need us, but is pleased to make and redeem us for His own glory and secret counsel (LC and SC Q&A 1). Acts 17:25.
- b. “nor deriving any glory ... only manifesting His own glory”: God does not get glory from us, but displays His glory in us. He is complete in Himself. Van Dixhoorn rightly cautions us, “God’s glory comes from himself ... when saints and angels ‘give’ glory to God, we ascribe glory, not add glory, to him.”⁴⁴
- c. “alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things”: God is the cause of all things (see chapter 5). Romans 11:36.
- d. “sovereign dominion ... whatsoever Himself pleaseth”. He owns it all Ps. 24:1; Rom. 9.
- e. “nothing is to Him contingent or uncertain”. He is beyond time and governs over it. He is not waiting to act upon potentiality or what happens (or who will choose Him).⁴⁵
- f. “To Him is due ... whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them.” Creator-creature distinction is vital to remember. We are not autonomous. He demands our response, and tells us what it is to be. More on this in detail in chapter 21.

WCF 2:3: *In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.º The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father:ª the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.¶*

º1 John 5:7; Matt 3:16-17; Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14. ªJohn 1:14,18. ¶John 15:26; Gal 4:6.

The Trinity: only revealed in the Bible (see chapter 1:1). “Trinity” is not a word found in Scripture, but is clearly a doctrine revealed, especially through NT redemptive actions.

- a. “... this doctrine was the first the early church had to work out, and it is the indispensable basis for the doctrine of the Atonement and all that follows.”⁴⁶
- b. “Father” decidedly revealed, and not “Mother”.
- c. “three persons, of one substance”: *Homoousios* versus *homoiousios* regarding substance/essence (first correct: sameness; latter, heresy: likeness). Not Biblical terms but important to teach against heresy. Original Greek church fathers: “one reality and three substances”. WCF reflects Latin changes (See Gordon Clark’s, *Trinity*). Van Dixhoorn’s “spelling it out” is pretty helpful: God is a “tri-unity”.⁴⁷
- d. LC 9: “distinguished by their personal properties”: personalities. Persons can distinctly address and distinctly be addressed. God is personally involved in Himself and with us.

⁴² Packer, 27.

⁴³ “The doctrine of God underlines all the others,” Gordon H. Clark, *What Presbyterians Believe*, 11.

⁴⁴ Van Dixhoorn, 34.

⁴⁵ For an interesting and mostly helpful discussion on contingency, and how it relates to the next chapter on God’s Decree, see J.V. Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical and Theological Insights* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014), pp. 96-111.

⁴⁶ Gordon Clark, *The Trinity*, 10.

⁴⁷ Van Dixhoorn, 37.

- e. LC 11 helpful to explain how we know each person is equally God: manifested (shown, but not defined like a text book)—each ascribed names, attributes, works, and worship that only can be said of or done and received by God. Also, OT Scriptures applied to God are used and applied to Jesus in the NT.
- f. “The Doctrine of the Trinity centers in the deity of Christ.”⁴⁸
- g. “Eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son”: *Filioque*, Western distinction, John 15:26, 20:22, and Rev. 22:1 proves.⁴⁹ Greek Orthodox split over this in 1054, and still reject it.
- h. What the Trinity isn’t (per all above compacted into WCF):
 - i. Arianism: Jesus is a creature. Condemned at Nicea 325 AD (see below).
 - ii. Dynamic Monarchianism (one person and one nature that influenced Jesus)
 - iii. Modalism (often Sabellianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, Adoptionism)
 - iv. Unitarianism.
 - v. Tritheism
 - vi. Polytheism
- i. Tertullian (160-220 AD), North African, trained lawyer.
 - i. First supplied term ‘trinitas’ in argument against Praxeas who taught it was the Father Who suffered on the cross.
 - ii. Also first supplied the distinction of one essence and three persons.
- j. Athanasius: battled in 4th century against Arianism and chief victor at Council of Nicea to condemn it. Tides shifted afterward against him often on this vital doctrine, and he often spent time in wilderness exile. Another North African.
- k. Simple statement on Trinity in WCF hammered out over centuries against heresies, made official in Ecumenical Councils/creeds (see appendix below).
- l. Gregory of Nazianzus, of three Cappadocian fathers in 4th century: “I cannot think on the one without quickly being encircled by the splendor of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straightway carried back to the one.”
- m. B.B. Warfield: “When we have said these three things, then—that there is but one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person—we have enunciated the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness.”⁵⁰
- n. Calvin: “... let those who dearly love soberness, and who will be content with the measure of faith, receive in brief form what is useful to know: namely, that, when we profess to believe in one God, under the name of God is understood a single, simple essence, in which we comprehend three persons ...”⁵¹
- o. Don’t try to illustrate (you will end up teaching a heresy, such as three forms of water = modalism). It is a mystery and incomprehensible. But not irrational.
- p. Thomas Watson: “Our narrow thoughts can no more comprehend the Trinity in Unity, than a nut-shell will hold all the water in the sea.”⁵² Further, “Take away the distinction

⁴⁸ Clark, *What Presbyterians Believe*, 9, 10.

⁴⁹ Insight gleaned from Gregory Beale’s massive NT Greek Commentary on Revelation. Dickson provides another nugget: “... Christ gave to his apostles the Spirit by breathing upon them (*John 20:22*) to show that he proceeded from himself.”, 25.

⁵⁰ B.B. Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 36.

⁵¹ John Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 1, chapter 13, paragraph 20, Ed. John T. McNeill, 144.

⁵² Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 109.

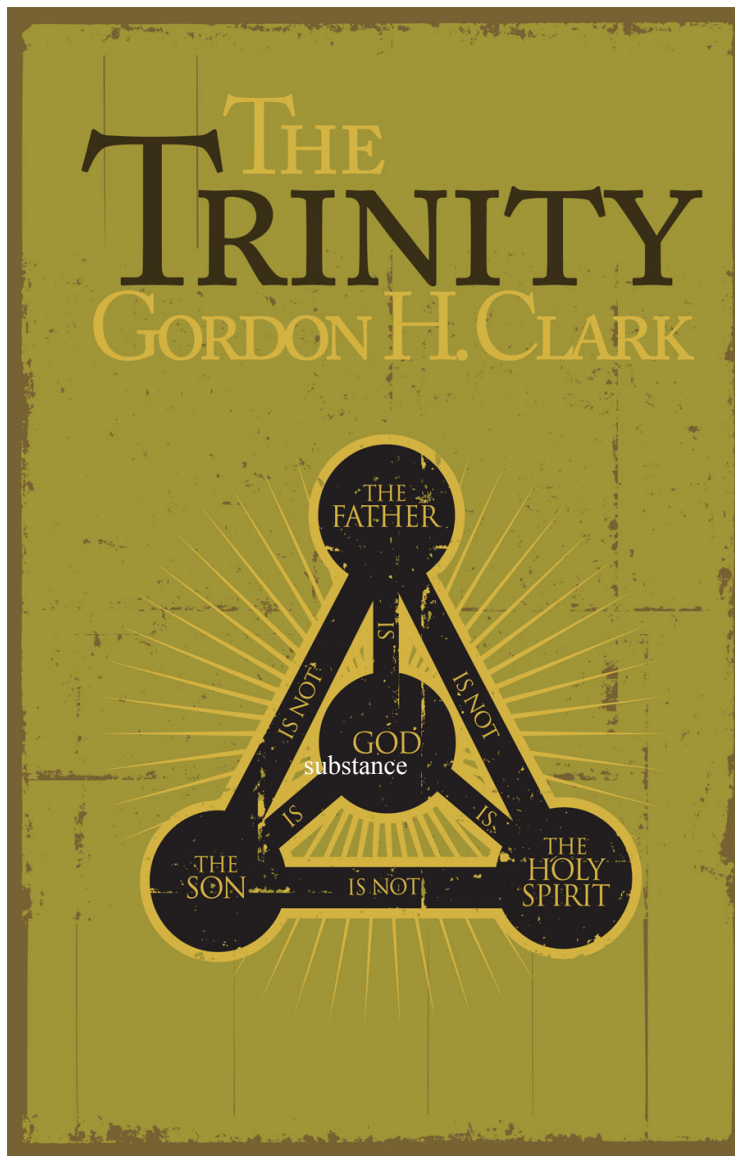
- of the persons in the Trinity, and you overthrown man's redemption ...”⁵³ As well, “The sacred doctrine is not against reason, but above it.”⁵⁴
- q. Not contradictory: see Clark diagram below. Also, Green helpfully points out, “God is not one *and* three. One and three make four. God is one *in* three. He is not one in the same sense as He is three.”⁵⁵
 - r. We mainly know the Trinity as revealed especially in the N.T. in how each Person of the Godhead works toward our redemption (here there is the standard distinction between the ontological Trinity—equal essence, subsistence, and economical Trinity—distinctive works in redemption).

Some closing thoughts by Thomas Watson from his, *Body of Divinity*, on WSC 1, “What is God?”: “Psa xlii 5. It is little comfort to know there is a God, unless he be ours.” (45). “God’s centre is everywhere, and his circumference is nowhere.” (46). “If God be a Spirit, then he is impassible; he is not capable of being hurt ... impenetrable ... God is a Spirit, invisible. How can the wicked with all their faces hurt him, when they cannot see him?” (47). “God is ... omnipresent ... Were it not a foolish thing to bow down to the king’s picture, when the king is present? So it is to worship God's image, when God himself is present.” (47-48). “We must conceive of him spiritually. In his attributes ... which are the beams by which his divine nature shines forth.” (48) Quoting Augustine, “In no place is God’s Being either confined or excluded.” (50). “God, who bounds everything else, is himself without bounds.” (50). “... heaven is his throne ... Isa lxvi I. ... also ... a humble heart is his throne. Isa lvii 15.” (51). “We may go with the bee from flower to flower, but we shall never have full satisfaction will we come to the infinite God.” (53). “... though there be millions of saints and angels, which have a share in God's riches, yet he has enough for them all, because he is infinite. Though a thousand men behold the sun, there is a light enough for them all: put never so many buckets into the sea, there is water enough to fill them.” (53). “There is no walk in the world so sweet as to walk with God.” Psa lxxxix 15 ... It is like walking among beds of spices, which send forth a fragrant perfume.” (54). “... he will not be tied to a place, to a time, or to an instrument ... he will work by improbabilities, he will save in such a way as we think would destroy.” (55). “God’s glory lies chief in his attributes, which are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth.” (55). “Thoughts speak as loud in God's ears as words do in ours.” (55). “... others borrow their knowledge of him; the angels light their lamps at this glorious sun.” (56). “God’s knowledge is instantaneous ... God knows things past, present, and to come ... at once ... God’s knowledge is retentive; he never loses any of his knowledge.” (56). “Ignorance is the nurse of impiety.” (57). “God is of infinite knowledge, he can spy grace where thou canst not ... God can see that holiness in thee which thou canst not discern in thyself; he can spy the flower of grace in thee, though overtopped with weeds.” (60). “God’s power is inexhaustible; it is never sent or wasted ... God has an everlasting spring of strength in himself.” (79). “The fear of God will drive out all other base fear.” (79). “God’s power is not engaged to help those that fight against him.” (80). “The strong God can conquer thy strong corruption; though sin be too hard for thee, yet not for him; he can soften hard hearts and quicken the dead.” (81).

⁵³ Ibid, 110. He also says, “They who would wittingly and willingly blot out the third person, shall have their names blotted out of the book of life.” 112.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 112.

⁵⁵ Green, 27.



Ecumenical Creeds

Source: http://www.prc.org/Three_Forms_of_Unity.htm

INTRODUCTION TO THE APOSTLES' CREED

The name of this creed does not point to apostolic authorship, but rather to the fact that it summarizes briefly the fundamental truths of Scripture as given to us through the apostles. In its simplest form the creed probably originated in the early part of the second century and arose in connection with the instruction of catechumens in preparation for baptism. In its present form this creed is probably of no earlier date than the latter part of the fifth century. It is the best known of the ecumenical creeds; and it gives simple, brief, and yet full expression to our "catholic, undoubted Christian faith."

APOSTLES' CREED

- I. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
- II. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;
- III. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;
- IV. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell;
- V. The third day He rose again from the dead;
- VI. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
- VII. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
- VIII. I believe in the Holy Ghost.
- IX. I believe an holy catholic church; the communion of saints;
- X. The forgiveness of sins;
- XI. The resurrection of the body;
- XII. And the life everlasting. AMEN.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NICENE CREED

This creed ... expresses the truth of Scripture concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and it was occasioned by various errors with respect to that truth. In its earliest form the creed was adopted by the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) over against the heresy of Arianism. It was revised by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), which enlarged the confession concerning the Holy Ghost. The Latin, or Western, Church added to the article on the procession of the Holy Ghost the words "and the Son" (Latin: *Filioque*), a change which has been maintained since the Council of Toledo (A.D. 589).

NICENE CREED

I 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, God of God; Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the HOLY GHOST, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the prophets.

And I believe one holy 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.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ATHANASIAN CREED

This ecumenical creed ... bears the name of Athanasius, the great church father of the fourth century who defended the truth of the Trinity and of the deity of Christ against the attacks of heretics, [but] he was not its author. It was probably written as much as three centuries later by an unknown author. Another name for this creed, though rather unfamiliar, is *Symbolum Quicumque*, after the opening word in the Latin original. Written in rhythmic cadences, this creed may have been composed to be chanted in the public worship of the churches. It is a fuller statement of the truths of

the Trinity and the person and natures of Christ than either the Nicene Creed or the Creed of Chalcedon, but it lacks their simplicity and precision of expression. Verses 3-28 set forth the doctrine of the Trinity, and verses 29-43 the doctrine of the incarnation and the union of the two natures of Christ in the person of the Son of God.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the essence.
5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated.
9. The Father infinite, the Son infinite, and the Holy Ghost infinite.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three infinites, but one uncreated and one infinite.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty.
14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.
18. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge every person by Himself to be God and Lord:
20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
25. And in this Trinity none is before or after; none is greater or less.
26. But the whole three persons are coeternal and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.
28. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe faithfully the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.
31. God, of the essence of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world.
32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
34. Who although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.
35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.
36. One altogether, not by confusion of essence, but by unity of person.
37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
39. He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.
40. From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
42. And shall give account for their own works.
43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly he cannot be saved.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CREED OF CHALCEDON

The Creed of Chalcedon, A.D. 451, is not mentioned by name in any of our three forms of unity, but the doctrine set forth in it is clearly embodied in Article XIX of our Confession of Faith. It constitutes an important part of our ecumenical heritage. The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon settled the controversies concerning the person and natures of our Lord Jesus Christ and established confessionally the truths of the unity of the divine person and the union and distinction of the divine and human natures of Christ. It condemned especially the error of Nestorianism, which denied the unity of the divine person in Christ; the error of Apollinarianism, which denied the completeness of Christ's human nature; and the error known as Eutychianism, which denied the duality and distinction of the divine and human natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. What was confessionally established at Chalcedon concerning the person and natures of Christ has continued to be the confession of the church catholic ever since that time.

THE CREED OF CHALCEDON

We, then, following the holy fathers, all with one consent teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; coessential with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *without confusion, without change, without division, without separation*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy fathers has handed down to us.

The Seven Ecumenical Councils

Source: <http://www.pbcc.org/dc/creeds/councils.html>

A Church Council is an official *ad hoc* gathering of representatives to settle Church business. Such Councils are called rarely and are not the same as the regular gatherings of church leaders (synods, etc). An ecumenical council is one at which the whole Church is represented. The three major branches of the Church (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) recognize seven ecumenical councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680), Nicea II (787). Further ecumenical councils were rendered impossible by the widening split between Eastern (Orthodox, Greek-speaking) and Western (Catholic, Latin-speaking) Churches, a split that was rendered official in 1054 and has not yet been healed.

In addition to these universally-acknowledged councils, the Catholic Church recognizes a further fourteen ecumenical councils: Constantinople IV (869-70), Lateran I (1123), Lateran II (1139), Lateran III (1179), Lateran IV (1215), Lyons I (1245), Lyons II (1274), Vienne (1311-12), Constance (1414-18), Florence (1438-45), Lateran V (1512-17), Trent (1545-63), Vatican I (1869-70), Vatican II (1965). But these were councils of only the [Roman] Catholic Church, and are not recognized by the Orthodox or Protestant Churches.

The Council of Nicea, 325

In 324 Constantine became sole ruler of the Roman Empire ... the first Christian emperor, [he] reunified the empire but found the Church bitterly divided over the nature of Jesus Christ. He wanted to reunify the Church as he had reunified the Empire. The major dispute was over the teaching of Arius, but there were other doctrinal issues also. Arianism: teaching of Arius of Alexandria (d. 335), who believed that Jesus Christ was created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by the Father to be the means of creation and redemption. Jesus was fully human, but not fully divine ... The Arian rallying cry was "There was time when the Son was not." Monarchianism: defended the unity (*mono arche*, "one source") of God by denying that the Son and the Spirit were separate persons. Sabellianism: a form of monarchianism taught by Sabellias, that God revealed himself in three successive modes, as Father (creator), as Son (redeemer), as Spirit (sustainer). Hence there is only one person in the Godhead ... The council rejected Arianism. The Council issued a creed based upon an existing baptismal creed from Syria and Palestine. This Nicene creed reads (see above) ...

The Council of Constantinople, 381

The second council met in Constantinople [now Istanbul in modern Turkey], the new [Roman] imperial capital. The council issued a new creed, ... an expression of the faith expressed in the Nicene Creed adopted in 325 ... Later the Western Church unilaterally added a single word to the Creed, inserting *Filioque* "and the Son" to the statement about the Spirit, so as to read "the Spirit...proceeds from the Father and the Son." ... During the Middle Ages this creed became called the Nicene Creed, as it is known to this day.

The Council of Ephesus, 431

Condemned Nestorius and his teaching (Nestorianism) that Christ had two separable natures, human and divine. Declared Mary to be theotokos (lit. God-bearer, i.e. Mother of God) in order to strengthen the claim that Christ was fully divine against those who called her merely Christotokos (Christ-bearer).

The Council of Chalcedon, 451

Issued the Chalcedonian Formula, affirming that Christ is two natures in one person ... one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood ...

The Council of Constantinople II, 553

Condemned the Three Chapters, a compendium of the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa. These three were advocates of Antiochene theology, emphasizing Christ's humanity at the expense of his deity. Their opponents held Alexandrian theology emphasizing Christ's deity.

The Council of Constantinople III, 680

Condemned monothelitism (Christ has a single will), affirming that Christ had a human will and a divine will that functioned in perfect harmony.

The Council of Nicea II, 787

Declared that icons are acceptable aids to worship, rejecting the iconoclasts (icon-smashers)

Other Important Historic Creeds and Confessions:

- *Augsburg Confession*, Martin Luther and Phillip Melancthon. Signed and presented by the Protestant princes and leaders to the Emperor in Augsburg, AD 1530. Germanic areas.
- *French Confession*, Calvin. Accepted by Synod in Paris, 1559, presented by Beza to Charles IX.
- *Scots Confession*, 1560 when Scotland declares itself Protestant. By John Knox and five other ministers named John. Predecessor to Thirty-nine Articles and Westminster Standards.
- *2nd Helvetic Confession*, 1564, Heinrich Bullinger, Switzerland.
- *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England, Cranmer and Ridley, AD 1551, and revised at order of Queen Elizabeth, AD 1562. Calvinistic in nature and the platform of the Westminster Assembly, which originally met to improve them but then started afresh.
- *Three Forms of Unity*: (Used by German and Dutch Churches in America).
 - *Heidelberg Catechism*, 1562, by Ursinus and Olevianus by civil authority, endorsed by Synod of Dort as Confession of Faith for Reformed Churches in Germany and Holland.
 - *Canons of Dort*, 1618-19, by famous Synod of Dort by authority of government to deal with 5 Arminian heresies (to review in later chapters). Answers lead to TULIP.
 - *Belgic Confession*: 1561, first written in French by Guy de Bres.
- *Westminster Standards*: 1643-1648 (see introduction to this class).
- *Waldessian Confession*, 1655, Northern Italy under persecution.
- *Savoy Declaration*, 1658 (English Independents/Congregationalists, edited Westminster)
- *London Baptist Confession*, 1677 (English Baptists further edited Savoy/Westminster)
- *Westminster Standards (moderately modified)*, 1798 (by Presbyterian Church in the USA)

Suggested Reading:

- “The Omnitemporality of God”, Joel R. Parkison in *The Trinity Review*, No. 306, May-June, 2012: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=284>
- “The Clark-Van Til Controversy”, Herman Hoeksema, *The Trinity Review*, No. 249, November/December, 2005. <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=220>

Assigned reading for Wednesday, November 10, 2021:

- WCF chapters 3-5 (Decrees, Creation, Providence) and corresponding Scripture references.
- WLC Q&A 12-20 and corresponding Scripture references.
- WSC Q&A 7-12 and corresponding Scripture references.