

INTRODUCTION TO THE APOSTLES' CREED

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim 1:13

"Stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." 2 Thess 2:15

"Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set." Proverbs 22:28

What are some common objections to the use of creeds and confessions by the church?

How do we respond to those who claim, "No creed but the Bible!"?

Confessions in the Old Testament

1. **Deut 6:4** A daily recited simple confession of God's character and deliverance.
2. **Deut 26:1-11** A more elaborate confession in the context of a worship service.
3. **Psalms 22:22** Quoted in Heb. 2:12 as Jesus' confession.
4. **Psalms 145:4** Confessions as transmission of truth to subsequent generations.

Therefore, even in the OT we see God's people making a public confession of their faith in response to His revelation and salvation.

What God had done in history, His people have always believed and confessed.

Confessions in the New Testament

1. **Matt 16:13-18** *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ
 - a. Peter, in the confession, is not quoting Scripture, but rather he is summarizing the truth about Christ that he has come to know and believe.
 - b. He is blessed for making this good confession.
 - c. This confession is based upon divine revelation.
 - d. Christ will build His church on the solid rock of the truth confessed about Him.

The blessing of God rests upon those that confess the divinely revealed truth about Jesus Christ.

This confession followed Jesus' statement that "everyone who confesses Me before men, I also will confess before My Father who is in heaven." (Matt 10:32)

2. **Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:11**

Simple repeated NT confession: "Jesus is Lord."

3. **1 Tim 1:15; 1 Tim 3:16** "This saying is true and trustworthy of all acceptance..."

Thus, we see that being a confessional church IS being a biblical church.

Creeds and confessions are often referred to as subordinate authorities to the Scriptures and *are not* the rule of faith and practice, *but to be used as a help in both.* (WCF 31.3)

"The value of creeds depends upon the measure of their agreement with the Scriptures... For this reason a creed ought to use language different from that of the Bible. A string of Scripture passages would be no creed at all. A creed is, as it were, a doctrinal poem written under the inspiration of divine truth." Philip Schaff

Practical uses of creeds/confessions

1. *Identification and precision* (1 Cor 8:5-6) All churches have confessions of faith- even if unwritten. All must ultimately answer, “what does the bible *teach*?” Creeds therefore serve as concise, historically rooted summaries of revealed truth that the church can confess with confidence.
2. *Defense* (1 John 4:1-3) Hold fast, stand fast, fight. Creeds are helpful to outwardly define the truths of Scripture from threatening heresies. They affirm in order to deny.
3. *Unification* (Amos 3:3, 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:3-6) i.e. ‘*ecumenical creeds*’ or ‘*forms of unity*’ We are urged by God to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and be of one mind.
4. *Transparency* (2 Cor 4:2) As public statements of faith, creeds are declaratory of what the church believes and can thus be evaluated for error and corrected as needed.
5. *Education* (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 18:25, Luke 1:4, Rom 2:18) Catechesis is used to pass on the faith in the form of sound words.
6. *Liturgy* - We confess the Apostles’ Creed before coming to the Lord’s Supper as a way of fencing by profession of faith

THE APOSTLES’ CREED

- The earliest record of something like the Apostles’ Creed is an early Trinitarian baptismal confession from about 150AD based on Matthew 28:19. Subsequent to their baptisms, recipients were required to affirm their faith by confessing that they believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Though not written directly by the Apostles, the creed is a faithful summary of their doctrine.
- Named *Credo*- literally, “I believe.”
- “The Creed of Creeds”
 - Thoroughly Scriptural in language/doctrine holding fast “the form of sound words”
 - Of antiquity, relating closely to the Apostles’ teaching in time
 - Has been approved by the Church universal for centuries
 - Robustly Trinitarian, yet also Christocentric in structure.
- Other subsequent confessions have used the Apostles’ creed as an outline for doctrine.
 - Heidelberg Q 22: “What is it necessary for a Christian to believe?”
 - A. “All things promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic (universal) undoubted Christian faith, briefly teach us.”
- The structure of the Creed shows the expansiveness and the Trinitarian nature of the gospel. God the Father Almighty is our creator and sustainer. God the Son is our redeemer. God the Holy Spirit is our sanctifier (including the means of the church and communion of the saints!).

Recommended resources: *Affirming the Apostles’ Creed*, JI Packer
The Heidelberg Catechism