

# THE HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF THE NICENE CREED

Presented by  
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- I. The Need for Creeds and Confessions of Faith
  - a) Confessions within the Bible
    - The *shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4)
    - Jesus' call for confession (Matthew 10:32-22)
    - First Christians confessed Christ (Mark 8:29)
    - Credo, ergo, Confiteor used in churches
  - b) development of confessional Christianity
    - 1) public confession at baptism
    - 2) challenges from heretics
    - 3) need for systematic instruction in faith
    - 4) *regula fide*, Roman Creed, and Apostles' Creed
    - 5) rise of Arian heresy (4<sup>th</sup> century)
    - 6) Council of Nicaea (325)
    - 7) Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)
    - 8) Athanasian Creed (5<sup>th</sup> century)
- II. Medieval and Protestant Confessions
  - a) Non-Catholic statements
    - 1) Waldenses' Seven Articles of Faith (13<sup>th</sup> century)
    - 2) *Hussites' Confessio Taborintaricum* (15<sup>th</sup> century)
    - 3) Lutheran Augsburg Confession of Faith (1530)
    - 4) Zwingli's Sixty-Seven Articles (1523)
    - 5) Calvin and the Consensus of Zurich (1549)
    - 6) Anglican Forty-Two Articles of Religion
    - 7) Swiss Helvetic Confessions (1536 and 1561)
    - 8) Dutch Belgic Confession (1561)
    - 9) Scots' Confession (1560)
  - b) Roman Catholic replies to Protestant declarations
    - 1) Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent (1563)
    - 2) Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)
  - c) Post-Reformation statements
    - 1) Westminster Confession and Catechisms (1647)
    - 2) London [Baptist] Confessions (1644 and 1677)
    - 3) Philadelphia [Baptist] Confession and Catechism (1742)
    - 4) New Hampshire [Baptist] Confession and Catechism

- III. Proper Role for Creeds and Confessions
  - a) Subordinate standards
    - 1) Subject to revision
    - 2) Defense of *sola Scriptura*
  
- IV. Conditions in Christendom about A. D. 300
  - a) Christological controversies
    - 1) Christ, whose son, is he?
    - 2) Challenge of Arius (256-336)
    - 3) Reply from Bishop Alexander (r.313-28)
    - 4) Arian view of Christ
    - 5) Intervention of Emperor Constantine (r. 324-37)
  
- V. Proceedings of Council of Nicaea (325)
  - a) Factions participating at council
    - 1) Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arianism
    - 2) Bishop Alexander's rebuttal
    - 3) Compromisers
  
  - b) Role of Athanasius (296-372)
    - 1) Skillful theologian and author
    - 2) Athanasius as Bishop of Alexandria
  
  - c) Formation of Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed
    - 1) Ongoing influence of Athanasius
    - 2) Role of Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379-95)
    - 3) Revisions of Nicene Creed
    - 4) Standard of orthodoxy
  
- VI. Conclusion
  - a) Value of corporate confessions
    - 1) Summary of Bible teachings
    - 2) Outline for doctrinal instruction
    - 3) Definition of Christology in contrast with heresies
    - 4) Affirmation of Trinitarian faith