

Discovery Hour
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Nicene Creed – Introduction
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The present city of Iznik, Turkey, then Nicene, in the Northwest part of the country was the location for the first council of church leaders to occur, in 325 A.D. It consisted of a meeting of 300 Bishops, convened by Constantine the first Christian ruler who had made toleration for the practice of Christianity Roman policy with the Edit of Milan in 313.

The primary product of this meeting was the Nicene Creed. This Creed practically defined the essence of Christianity and those who could not or would adhere to it were deemed outside the faith. In fact, those churches that did not affirm the Nicene Creed were either excommunicated or suffered imperial banishment from Rome. This came to a head in the person of Arius a church elder in Alexandria who propagated the teaching that Jesus was not fully divine in that he was created by God the Father.

Arias, emphasized one God, God the Father. He cannot be of the same essence or being of God the Father because if he is then it is not monotheism. Looking to the Biblical language in John 1:14 the Arians saw “begotten” to mean “made” as in Jesus having been created by God the Father as God the Father had created the world, humans, etc. This means that there was a time prior to his creation by God the Father that the Son was not in existence and thus one of the key phrases for Arians was, “there was when he was not.” Arians understood Jesus to be the first of God’s creations. He also believed Jesus could have sinned.

In 320, Arius wrote the following to the Bishop of the church at Alexandria:

We acknowledge One God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unbegun, alone True, alone having Immortality, alone Wise, alone Good, alone Sovereign; Judge, Governor, and Providence of all, unalterable and unchangeable, just and good, God of Law ... For He is not eternal or co-eternal or co-unoriginate with the Father, nor has He His being together with the Father ... But if the terms ‘from Him,’ and ‘from the womb,’ and ‘I came forth from the Father, and I am come’ (Rom. 11:36; Ps110:3; John 16:28), be understood by some to mean as if a part of Him, one in essence or as an issue, then the Father is according to them compounded and divisible and alterable and material, and, as far as their belief goes, has the circumstances of a body, Who is the Incorporeal God (In Athanasius, *Epistle de Synodis Armini et Seleuciaie Habitis*).

Arius believed the church, in their belief in the deity of Jesus, was denying monotheism. Alexander believed Arius denied the divinity of Jesus. Constantine convened the council to try to resolve the dispute. After the council Constantine issued a proclamation in which he declared Arius to have been “beguiled by the subtlety of the devil,” and affirming the creed. He wrote: For that which has commended itself to the judgment of three hundred bishops cannot be other than the doctrine of God; seeing that the Holy Spirit dwelling in the minds of so many dignified persons has effectually enlightened them respecting the Divine will. Wherefore let no one

vacillate or linger Due thanks to God, the inspector of all things, for having revealed the pure faith, and restored to you love for which ye have prayed” (*Hist. Ecc, 1:9, trans. NPNF, II*).

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, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance 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 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 on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge 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 proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in 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.