

Creeds and Confessions

What the churches have said they believe, from the first centuries to today.

THE FOUR ANCIENT STATEMENTS

STATEMENT	DATE	USE	WHO RECEIVES IT
Apostles' Creed	Roman baptismal creed by about 200; final Western wording by about 700	Baptism, daily prayer and Sunday worship in the West; taught in most catechisms	Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist and many other Protestant churches. Orthodox churches respect its teaching but do not use it in worship.
Nicene Creed	Nicaea 325; expanded at Constantinople 381	The creed of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper in most liturgical churches; said at baptism in the East	Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Oriental Orthodox, and most Protestant churches. The East says it without "and the Son."
Definition of Chalcedon	Council of Chalcedon, 451	A doctrinal definition, not a worship text	Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed and most Protestant churches. Not received by the Oriental Orthodox churches.
Athanasian Creed	Latin, southern Gaul, about 450 to 550; not by Athanasius	Trinity Sunday in some Anglican and Lutheran churches; formerly the Roman office of Prime	Received in the Lutheran Book of Concord, the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles and Catholic teaching. Little used in the East, and never with "and of the Son."

THE SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Nicaea I (325)	Against Arius: the Son is "of one substance" (homoousios) with the Father. The first form of the Nicene Creed.
Constantinople I (381)	The Holy Spirit is "the Lord and Giver of Life," worshiped with the Father and the Son. The Nicene Creed in the form most churches say today.
Ephesus (431)	Against Nestorius: Christ is one person, so Mary may rightly be called Theotokos, "God-bearer."
Chalcedon (451)	Christ is one person "in two natures," fully God and fully human. The Definition of Chalcedon.
Constantinople II (553)	Reaffirmed Chalcedon and condemned the "Three Chapters," writings judged to lean toward Nestorius.
Constantinople III (680–681)	Christ has two wills, divine and human, working in harmony (against Monothelitism).
Nicaea II (787)	Icons may be honored (veneration), as distinct from the worship due to God alone.

Orthodox churches: All seven · **Catholic Church:** All seven, among 21 councils it counts as ecumenical · **Oriental Orthodox churches:** The first three · **Assyrian Church of the East:** The first two · **Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed churches:** Commonly the first four, often the first six, as tested by Scripture · **Baptist, free-church and non-creedal churches:** No council is binding.

CONFESSIONS AND CATECHISMS BY TRADITION

Lutheran

Augsburg Confession, 1530
Small and Large Catechisms, 1529
Book of Concord, 1580

Anglican and Episcopal

Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, 1563, final form 1571

Methodist and Wesleyan

Articles of Religion, 1784
Confession of Faith (Evangelical United Brethren), 1962; part of United Methodist doctrine since 1968

Eastern Orthodox

The Nicene Creed (Symbol of Faith), 381
Confession of Dositheus, 1672
Longer Catechism of St. Philaret, 1823, revised 1839

Reformed and Presbyterian

Belgic Confession, 1561
Heidelberg Catechism, 1563
Second Helvetic Confession, 1566
Canons of Dort, 1619
Westminster Confession and Catechisms, 1646–1647

Baptist

Second London Confession, 1677, reissued 1689
New Hampshire Confession, 1833
Baptist Faith and Message, 1925, revised 1963 and 2000

Roman Catholic

Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 1545–1563
Baltimore Catechism, 1885
Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, Latin typical edition 1997

Anabaptist and Mennonite

Schleitheim Confession, 1527
Dordrecht Confession, 1632

Many Baptist, Stone-Campbell, Quaker, Pentecostal and independent churches use no creed as a test of membership, while often agreeing with the ancient creeds' content. Full texts and links: weekdaygrace.com/creeds-and-confessions.