

## The Apostles Creed

### History of & Reason for

#### 1. **Definition**

*“A Creed, or Rule of Faith, or Symbol, is a \_\_\_\_\_ of faith for public use, or a form of words setting forth with authority certain articles of belief, which are regarded by the framers as necessary for salvation, or at least for the well-being of the Christian Church.”*

-Philip Schaff “The Creeds of Christendom” pg. 3

#### 2. **Reason for Creeds**

There are several different reasons that have been recognized to support the use of creeds in the life of the church. Two of them are:

**-To teach-**A creed seeks to boil down theological \_\_\_\_\_ to a manageable and easy to remember format. Creeds have historically been used to teach catechumen (new believers who are being taught the basic truths of Scripture), to be recited at baptisms (to serve as a public declaration of one’s belief in truth), for the training of ministers and those who would seek to know more fully the truths of Scripture, and to serve as a standard for accepted Christian doctrine.

**-To oppose error-**Creeds have often been born out of times of \_\_\_\_\_. The church in the past has rallied together to combat major theological errors and came together to establish a creed that would serve to defend truth in the face of opposition (this can be seen on a church wide level- these are known as the ecumenical creeds or on a denominational level to clarify lines of doctrine).

**Bonus!**-Those that are commonly included in the category of “ecumenical creeds” (ecumenical means church wide) are: The Apostles Creed, The Nicene Creed, The Chalcedonian Creed, and the Athanasian Creed (this is the common Protestant position- others such as Greek orthodox will have others).

-We do not need to be scared by those who say that creeds are not profitable and harmful to the church. Creeds, rightly \_\_\_\_\_, can be used by God to help keep His church proclaiming a unified and biblical doctrine of God and salvation.

The use of creeds is not in any way an attack on the sufficiency of Scripture. Christians do not turn to creeds over the Bible. By no means! But as Ian Murray reminds us creeds “do the opposite of impinging on the sufficiency of Scripture; it \_\_\_\_\_ brethren in truths taught by that revelation and distinguishes them from teachers who falsely appeal to it.”

-Ian Murray, “Archibald G. Brown: Spurgeon’s Successor” pg. 137

Salvation does not come by simple knowledge of a creed but by \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ. Creeds help us to grow in our understanding of Christ and our salvation but simple knowledge of them is not sufficient to save anyone.

We must remember that “the value of creeds depends upon the measure of their agreement with the Scriptures.” (Scaff, pg. 7) Scripture alone is our ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ but this does not mean that creeds are to be discarded. Again, church historian Philip Schaff reminds us, “The Bible is of God; the Confession (creeds) is man’s answer to God’s Word...the Bible has, therefore, a divine and absolute, the Confession only an ecclesiastical and relative authority.”

We must also remember that just because the Roman Catholic Church holds to the Apostles Creeds (and the other ecumenical creeds) does not mean that we must reject it. We do not reject \_\_\_\_\_ the

beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church (ex. Trinity, virgin birth, bodily resurrection of Christ, etc.). The points of difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics center around the sola's of the Reformation (sola scriptura, sola fide, solus Christus, sola gratia, soli Deo gloria).

### **3. History of Apostles Creed**

While bearing the name of the "Apostles Creed" this creed was not penned by the Apostles but rather it provides a summation of apostolic \_\_\_\_\_. Since this creed contains the teaching of the apostles summed up, in powerful and compact way, it is therefore referred to as the "Apostle's Creed." Schaff writes, "All the facts and doctrines which it contains, are in entire agreement with the New Testament...the rationalistic opposition to the Apostle's Creed and its use in the church is therefore an indirect attack upon the New Testament itself." (20)

The Apostles Creed stands as the \_\_\_\_\_ widespread creed of the New Testament Church. Schaff comments, "As the Lord's Prayer is the Prayer of prayers, the Decalogue the Law of laws, so the Apostles Creed is the Creed of creeds." (14)

The Apostles Creed grew primarily out of two biblical texts (Matthew 16:16 & Matthew 28:19). These texts focus on Christ as Lord and Savior and on the necessary place the doctrine of the \_\_\_\_\_ has for the Church.

This creed cannot be traced to a single author but is rather seen as growing out of the \_\_\_\_\_ church (meaning the church in the western side of the Roman empire-the Latin speaking side).

This creed dates back into the second century but was primarily passed along orally. It was primarily used to train new converts who were desiring to join the church. They would have to memorize it and then recite it at their baptism. The creed, along with the Lord's prayer, played a central role in the private \_\_\_\_\_ life of early Christians (since almost no Christian in the early church had their own copy of Scriptures they relied on these easy to memorize texts).

The Apostles Creed was referred to by early church leaders as "the rule of \_\_\_\_\_" and "the rule of truth."

### **4. Reason to affirm the Apostles Creed**

The Apostles Creed is a summary of the basic truths of the \_\_\_\_\_ (God is Triune, Christ is the Son of God, the virgin birth, Christ's resurrection, etc.). As theologian J.I. Packer writes, "The Creed is, in effect, a power-point declaration of the basics of the Christian message-in other words, the gospel itself."

-J.I. Packer "Affirming the Apostles Creed" pg. 15

The Apostles Creed teaches us the foundation of Christianity. It is good to be reminded of these truths so that our faith does not \_\_\_\_\_ from that which was first delivered unto us. We must "stand firm" and remember what the apostle Paul reminded the Colossian believers that they were to "continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister." (Col. 1:23)

To reject the teachings of the Apostles Creed is to reject the truths of the gospel. One cannot reject any aspect of the Creed and still claim to hold to a biblical gospel. In an age where the gospel is oversimplified the Creed stands as a good reminder of the \_\_\_\_\_ truths that are part of the biblical gospel.