THE NICENE CREED (continued)

process, a variety of creeds were developed. The most important, because of its gaining almost universal acceptance among the major Christian groupings, was the Nicene Creed. It was first promulgated by the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. and later expanded by the Council at Constantinople in 381. It became the standard creed of both the Eastern and Western Churches during the early middle ages and is integral to their liturgies. The creed is considered the unitive statement of faith by the organizationally separate Eastern Orthodox bodies. Like the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed is formally recognized as a doctrinal standard by some Protestant bodies and informally recognized by most others. For example, it is printed as an optional confession of faith to be used in worship services in both the Hymnal and the Book of Worship of the United Methodist Church.

There is only one major variation in the text of the Nicene Creed. A theological difference between the Eastern and Western Churches at the time of the Great Schism of 1054 underlies the Roman Catholic Church's addition of the so-called "filioque clause," which affirmed that, within the mystery of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son, not just the Father. Generally, churches deriving from the Roman Catholic Church have kept the clause in their reprinting of the creed. During the nineteenth century, the filioque (i.e., Latin for "and the Son") clause became a major item of discussion for the Old Catholics.

* * *

THE CHALCEDONIAN FORMULA

Following the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that one and same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be confessed:
Perfect in Deity and perfect in Humanity,
Truly God and truly Man,
Of a rational soul and body,
Cons substantive with the Father according to his Deity,
Cons substantial with us according to his Humanity,
Like us in all respects, apart from sin;
Before the ages begotten of the Father according to his Deity,
And in these last days for us and for our salvation was born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God [Theotokos] according to his Humanity,
One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten,
To be acknowledged in Two Natures
without confusion or change
without division or separation;
The difference of the Natures being by no means removed by the union,
but rather the property of each Nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and one Substance, Not parted or divided into two Persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ;
According as at first the prophets, then the Lord Jesus Christ himself, taught us concerning him, And as the Creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

Notes: Largely confined to theological textbooks today, the Chalcedonian Formula promulgated in 451 C.E. represents the culmination of the major controversies that occupied the Christian Church leaders during the early centuries. It defined the orthodox solution to the problems of the Trinity, the dual nature of Jesus Christ, and the role of the Holy Spirit. The importance of its determinate theological role cannot be underestimated, though its popularity for liturgical use has never approached that of the Nicene Creed.

Because the Chalcedonian Formula has not been utilized as a liturgical confession and the Greek words used in it continue to provoke theological discussions, no standard accepted English text exists, such as exist for the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. The formula's several translations vary from extremely literal to free flowing and interpretive. The text presented here tends toward the literal. Notice should be taken of the formula's affirmation of Mary as "theotokos" [mother of God], an implication of Jesus's divinity that had significant influence on the latter development of understanding the Virgin Mary in the life of the Church.

The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Chalcedonian Formula were by no means the only creeds of the early church. They are the ones that continue to have the most direct effect upon contemporary church bodies by their use and theological impact.

* * *

THE CREED OF ATHANASIUS (SYMBOLUM QUICUNQUE)

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic [true Christian] faith,
2. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlasting ly.
3. And the Catholic [true Christian] faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.
5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory Equal, the Majesty Coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.
8. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.
11. And yet they are not three Eternals: but one Eternal.
12. As there are not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles: but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty.
14. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.
16. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.
18. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the Catholic [Christian] Religion: to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.
20. The Father is made of none: neither created nor begotten.
21. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.
22. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
23. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
24. And in this Trinity none is before, or after other: none is greater, or less than another;
25. But the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: So that in all things, as is aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
26. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
27. Furthermore, it is necessary to Everlasting Salvation; that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
28. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;
29. God, of the Substance of the Father begotten before the worlds: and Man of the Substance of his mother, born in the world;
30. Perfect God, and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
31. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.
32. Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ;
33. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking the Manhood into God;
34. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by Unity of Person.
35. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ;
36. Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.
37. He ascended into heaven; he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty: from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
38. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works.
39. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
40. This is the Catholic [true Christian] faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

Notes: Although now thought to have been written sometime between the fourth and eighth centuries, this creed was for centuries ascribed to Athanasius (299-373 C.E.), the fourth-century bishop who championed what became the orthodox Christian position on the nature of Christ. Even though the creed was never officially accepted by a church council (resulting in a variety of texts with different renderings, rather than one standard text), it became a widely accepted church document. Rendered into liturgical form, it was chanted in both the Roman Catholic Church and Church of England several times per year.

The creed has lost popularity in the contemporary era, although it is still accepted and used in the Roman Catholic Church. The Lutherans included the creed in their doctrinal material as part of their broader case for catholic orthodoxy. The text reproduced here is taken from the Lutheran Book of Concord. The creed is also found in the official materials of other churches, such as the Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church. The Protestant Episcopal Church deleted the creed from its prayer book in 1785.

The words in brackets have been inserted into the text by the Lutheran translators to explain their understanding of the word "catholic," which differs considerably from the common meaning of Roman Catholic.