

**Constantine, Controversy, Councils, and Canon**  
**4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Centuries: 312-500AD**

*“What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.” II Timothy 1:13-14*

**THE APOSTLES’ CREED (110 AD – Ignatius)**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**THE NICENE CREED (325AD)**

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before all ages,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead.

His kingdom will never end.  
And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life.  
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.  
He spoke through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to life in the world to come. Amen.

## **I. CONSTANTINE AND IMPERIAL CHRISTIANITY**

- a. Constantine's "vision" and victory (AD312)
- b. The Edict of Milan (AD313) and toleration for Christianity
- c. Constantine's mixed legacy for the Church

## **II. THREE OTHER FATHERS**

- a. Ambrose of Milan (AD339-97)
- b. Jerome (AD345-420)
- c. Augustine of Hippo (AD354-430)

## **III. FOUR QUESTIONS, AND FOUR COUNCILS**

- a. In the midst of this political change, the church faced renewed questions of orthodox doctrine. These can be summarized in four questions, addressed in turn by four councils:
  - i. Is Christ divine?
  - ii. Is Christ human?
  - iii. If yes to both, how are the two elements combined?
  - iv. What language or terms do we use to describe Him?
- b. The Council of Nicaea (325): Is Christ Divine?
  - i. Arianism – Christ not fully God
  - ii. Alexander and Athanasius disagree
  - iii. Constantine calls the Council
  - iv. Athanasius' 3 grounds of defense
    1. Scripture
    2. Logic of Salvation
    3. The "people"
- c. The Council of Constantinople (381): Is Christ Human?
  - i. Challenges to Nicaea
  - ii. Constantinople's answer
  - iii. Church and State
- d. The Council of Ephesus (431) (or, a Tale of Two Cities): How are the two elements combined?
  - i. Antioch, and Nestorius
  - ii. Alexandria, and Cyril
  - iii. Theodosius intervenes
- e. The Council of Chalcedon (451): How to describe the nature of Christ?
  - i. Eutyches: the "mixed" Christ
  - ii. Leo, Bishop of Rome
  - iii. The Chalcedon resolution