

The Apostles' Creed

1. What is the Apostles' Creed in response to?

At one time, believed to be authored by the Apostles (now understood as an untrue legend), The Apostles' Creed, was developed later in the first or second century. The Creed was written to emphasize the humanity of Christ and deny the heretical thoughts of the Gnostics who believed that Jesus was only a spirit without any material body.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body
and the life everlasting.
AMEN

2. Explanation of the Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Gnostics believed that the physical world was not made by God and therefore was evil.

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,*

Gnostics did not believe that God became man in nature or body: Jesus was a spiritual apparition. The Creed denies this Gnostic belief by stating clearly that Jesus was conceived by the Spirit and born with a real body.

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;

The Creed affirms that Jesus really died physically by stating the time and the method. This last phrase of "descended into hell" does not appear in the earliest versions of this Creed. For deeper discussion, see the article "The confusion posed by the Apostles' Creed: Did Jesus descend into Hell?"

*the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church;

Gnostics believed that Christianity was for a select few. The Creed affirmed Christianity's universal (catholic) appeal.

the communion of saints;

the forgiveness of sins;

Gnostics believed that man needed enlightenment not forgiveness: the problem was ignorance, not sin. In addition, most Gnostics believed that their soul, separate from their evil physical body, was not accountable for the immorality of their body. The Creed affirms that there are sins and that forgiveness is paramount.

the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. AMEN

Gnostics did not believe in the resurrection of the body; they believed that the afterlife would be as a spirit.