

Comparison of the Nicene & Apostles' Creeds; Definition of Filioque; the Great Schism: Doctrine of Procession: Nicaea v. Toledo; Charlemagne & Pope Leo III

NOTE: A comparison of the Nicene Creed with the Apostles' Creed:

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [ὁμοούσιος, *homoousios*] with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father (and the Son [Latin: *qui ex Patre filioque procedit*; added at Toledo in 589]) who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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 arose 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.

11. The Counsel of Nicaea was overwhelmingly attended by over three hundred bishops from the eastern provinces of the empire while those representing the West were less than ten.
12. The Nicene Creed was the official declaration of the Catholic Church regarding, among other things, the deity of Christ in union with His true humanity and the assertion that the procession of the Holy Spirit was from the Father. Thus matters stood for the next 138 years.
13. Over the course of the next century controversy arose between the eastern and western bishops over the doctrine of the Trinity. Bishops of the Eastern churches held that the Father possessed authority over the Son while the Western bishops supported the doctrine that the Godhead was one in essence but three in personality.
14. In the year 589 things came to a head in Spain at the Third Council of Toledo, called by the King Recared. The area was officially Arian until Recared was converted to Catholicism at which point he proclaimed Catholicism the official religion of Spain.

15. The result of this Council was recognition by Spain of the orthodox creeds of the Catholic Church including the Nicene Creed, but with one very small but extremely critical addition of one word which ignited what became known as the Filioque Controversy and which resulted in the Great Schism between the Eastern bishops and those in the West.
16. What the Spanish bishops did at Toledo was incorporate the Nicene Creed into their proclamations of acceptance but in so doing they added the single Latin word *filioque*, which means “and the Son,” to the phrase “And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.”
17. The Latin for the contested addition is:
Filioque: fil-i-ō'-qwē: [*filio*, ablative of *filius*, son, and *que*, and.] the clause in the Nicene Creed stating that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father, it being one of the doctrines serving to separate the Orthodox Eastern Church from the Roman Catholic Church, the former never accepting it. (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*)
18. At first Rome knew nothing about the addition but its addition to the Creed spread quickly throughout Western Europe so that it was ultimately accepted everywhere but Rome.
19. In 809, Charlemagne, who was emperor of the West, expressed concern over its insertion and sent three bishops to confer with Pope Leo III about its authenticity. Leo rejected the insertion based on the fact the Councils had forbidden any alteration in the original text.
20. In order to insure its continued exclusion by the Western church, Leo installed two silver shields at the Confessional in St. Peter's at Rome. Each was engraved with the Creed, one in Latin and the other in Greek, and both without the word *filioque*.
21. Thus the Roman church was in league with the East for the next two hundred years until *filioque* was officially accepted into the Nicene Creed in 1017.
22. This is not to imply that the association was cordial. It was not. In fact the whole *filioque* dispute had caused a widening fissure that was a full-blown schism by the time the West adopted the phrase into the Nicene Creed.
23. The schism was amplified by Pope Leo's shields at St. Peter's which the East never forgot and always contended was confirmation of the original Nicene Creed.
24. During the heated debates that ensued, Eastern writers often commented on the presence of the shields at St. Peter's in support of the original Nicaean text.
25. Although the addition of *filioque* to the original by Toledo seems to be the picking of nits, it created a firestorm that has lasted for almost fifteen hundred years. It is difficult to understand why this was so important until it is realized that it was not only an important theological issue but also a political one.
26. The historical background of the Great Schism sheds light on the subject and the main characters are Pope Leo III and the political derring-do of Charlemagne \chär'-la-män\ who held the titles king of the Franks and emperor of the West.

THE GREAT SCHISM

The debate that created the Great Schism occurred primarily between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Protestant Reformation, a period known as the Middle Ages or the Medieval Period.

The controversy over *filioque* was between the eastern provinces of the Catholic Church based in Constantinople (previously named Byzantium) and the western provinces based in Rome.

We have already noted the Nicene Creed of 325 which was confirmed by the Council of Constantinople in 381. The result was a complete rejection of the Arian heresy regarding the deity of Christ. The Creed was henceforth regarded as unalterable.

Later, in 589, at the Third Council of Toledo, Spain, *filioque* was added to the Nicene Creed and over the next two centuries came to be used widely in the Catholic Churches throughout Western Europe.

At the turn of the ninth century the Catholic pope was Leo the III and Charlemagne was king of the Franks, the people of present-day France and western Germany. On December 25, 800, Leo coronated Charlemagne, emperor of the West. Charlemagne, which in the Latin means Charles the Great, was a member of the Carolingian family and the son of Pepin the Short.

Charlemagne is recognized as being responsible for spreading Christianity throughout Frankish kingdom, an accomplishment made possible in no small part by his grandfather, Charles Martel, whose victory in 732 over 'Abd ar-Rahman \ab-dür-räk-män\' and his Muslim invaders at the Battle of Poitiers \pwä-tyä\' rescued Europe from Islamic rule until the twenty-first century.

In 799, Leo came into conflict with leaders in the Eastern provinces and sought refuge from Charles who orchestrated Leo's return to Rome where, under oath, he cleared himself of all charges. As a gesture of gratitude for Charles's help, Leo chose Christmas Day of 800 to surprise Charles with the imperial title, emperor of Rome, or the West.

The position was honorary and had no constitutional importance, but Charles used it to great advantage, remaining in Rome for four months to try and convict the pope's enemies of *lèse majesté* \läz-ma'-ja -stè\', the crime of treason against a sovereign power.

Charles's influence for Christianity is legendary, but his wisdom in managing the *filioque* controversy in favor of orthodox doctrine had just as much historical impact on Europe as did his grandfather's victory at Poitiers.