

# The Nicene Creed

As approved in amplified form at the [Council of Constantinople \(381\)](#), it is the profession of the [Christian Faith](#) common to the Catholic Church, to all the Eastern Churches separated from Rome, and to most of the [Protestant](#) denominations. Soon after the [Council of Nicaea](#) new formulas of faith were composed, most of them variations of the Nicene Symbol, to meet new phases of [Arianism](#). There were at least four before the Council of Sardica in 341, and in that council a new form was presented and inserted in the Acts, though not accepted by the council. The Nicene Symbol, however, continued to be the only one in use among the defenders of the Faith. Gradually it came to be recognized as the proper profession of faith for candidates for baptism. Its alteration into the Nicene-Constantinopolitan formula, the one now in use, is usually ascribed to the Council of Constantinople, since the Council of Chalcedon (451), which designated this symbol as "The Creed of the Council of Constantinople of 381" had it twice read and inserted in its Acts. The historians Socrates, [Sozomen](#), and Theodoret do not mention this, although they do record that the bishops who remained at the council after the departure of the Macedonians confirmed the Nicene faith. Hefele (II,9) admits the possibility of our present creed being a condensation of the "Tome" ( Gr. *tomos*), i.e. the exposition of the doctrines concerning the Trinity made by the Council of Constantinople; but he prefers the opinion of Rémi Ceillier and Tillemont tracing the new formula to the "Anchoratus" of Epiphanius written in 374. Hort, Caspari, Harnack, and others are of the opinion that the Constantinopolitan form did not originate at the Council of Constantinople, because it is not in the Acts of the council of 381, but was inserted there at a later date; because [Gregory Nazianzen](#) who was at the council mentions only the Nicene formula adverting to its incompleteness about the Holy Ghost, showing that he did not know of the Constantinopolitan form which supplies this deficiency; and because the Latin Fathers apparently know nothing of it before the middle of the fifth century.

The following is a literal translation of the Greek text of the Constantinopolitan form, the brackets indicating the words altered or added in the Western liturgical form in present use:

**We believe (I 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](#), and born of the Father before all ages. ([God of God](#)) light of light, [true God](#) of [true God](#). Begotten not made, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary and was made man; was crucified also for us under [Pontius Pilate](#), suffered and was buried; and the third day rose again according to the Scriptures. And [ascended into heaven](#), sits at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose Kingdom there shall be no end. And (I believe) in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), who together with the Father and the Son is to be adored and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets. And one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess (I confess) one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for (I look for) the [resurrection of the dead](#) and the life of the world to come. Amen."**

In this form the Nicene article concerning the Holy Ghost is enlarged; several words, notably the two clauses "of the substance of the Father" and "[God of God](#)," are omitted as also are the [anathemas](#); ten clauses are added; and in five places the words are differently located. In general the two forms contain what is common to all the baptismal formulas in the early Church. Vossius (1577-1649) was the first to detect the similarity between the creed set forth in the "Anchoratus" and the baptismal formula of the Church at Jerusalem. Hort (1876) held that the symbol is a revision of the Jerusalem formula, in which the most important Nicene statements concerning the Holy Ghost have been inserted. The author of the revision may have been St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386, q.v.). Various hypotheses are offered to account for the tradition that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol originated with the Council of Constantinople, but none of them is satisfactory. Whatever be its origin, the fact is that the Council of Chalcedon (451) attributed it to the Council of Constantinople, and if it was not actually composed in that council, it was adopted and authorized by the Fathers assembled as a true expression of the Faith. The history of the creed is completed in the article Filioque. (See also: ARIUS; [EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA](#))

