
Early Christian Creeds

The Apostles' Creed (against Gnosticism)

A creed generally emphasizes the beliefs opposing those errors that the compilers of the creed think most dangerous at the time. The Creed of the Council of Trent, which was drawn up by the Roman Catholics in the 1500's, emphasized those beliefs that Roman Catholics and Protestants were arguing about most furiously at the time. The Nicene Creed, drawn up in the fourth century, is emphatic in affirming the Deity of Christ, since it is directed against the Arians, who denied that Christ was fully God. The Apostles' Creed, drawn up in the first or second century, emphasizes the true Humanity, including the material body, of Jesus, since that is the point that the heretics of the time (Gnostics, Marcionites, and later Manicheans) denied. (See 1 John 4:1-3)

Thus the Apostles' Creed is as follows:

* I believe in God the Father Almighty,

* Maker of Heaven and Earth,

[The Gnostics held that the physical universe is evil and that God did not make it.]

* And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, * Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

* Born of the Virgin Mary,

[The Gnostics were agreed that the orthodox Christians were wrong in supposing that God had taken human nature or a human body. Some of them distinguished between Christ, whom they acknowledged to be in some sense divine, and the man Jesus, who was at most an instrument through whom the Christ spoke. They held that the man Jesus did not become the bearer or instrument of the Christ until the Spirit descended upon him at his baptism, and that the Spirit left him before the crucifixion, so that the Spirit had only a brief and tenuous association with matter and humanity. Others affirmed that there was never a man Jesus at all, but only the appearance of a man, through which appearance wise teachings were given to the first disciples. Against this the orthodox Christians affirmed that Jesus was conceived through the action of the Holy Spirit (thus denying the Gnostic position that the Spirit had nothing to do with Jesus until his Baptism), that he was born (which meant that he had a real physical body, and not just an appearance) of a virgin (which implied that he had been special from the first moment of his life, and not just from the baptism on].

* Suffered under Pontius Pilate,

[There were many stories then current about gods who died and were resurrected, but they were offered quite frankly as myths, as non-historical stories symbolic of the renewal of the vegetation every spring after the seeming death of winter. If you asked, "When did Adonis die, you would be told either, "Long ago and far away," or else, "His death is not an event in earthly time." Jesus, on the other hand, died at a particular time and place in history, under the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea from 26 to 36 CE, or during the last ten years of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius.]

* was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into Hades.

[Here the creed hammers home the point that he was really dead. He was not an illusion. He was nailed to a post. He died. He had a real body, a corpse, that was placed in a tomb. He was not merely unconscious -- his spirit left his body and went to the realm of the dead. It is a common belief among Christians that on this occasion he took the souls of those who had died trusting in the promises made under the Old Covenant -- Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and many others -- and brought them out of the realm of the dead and into heavenly glory. But the creed is not concerned with this point. The reference to the descent into Hades (or Hell, or Sheol) is here to make it clear that the death of Jesus was not just a swoon or a coma, but death in every sense of the word.]

* The third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, * and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. * From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

* I believe in the Holy Ghost,

* the holy catholic church,

[The Gnostics believed that the most important Christian doctrines were reserved for a select few. The orthodox belief was that the fullness of the Gospel was to be preached to the entire human race. Hence the term "catholic," or universal, which distinguished them from the Gnostics.]

* the communion of saints,

* the forgiveness of sins,

[The Gnostics considered that what men needed was not forgiveness, but enlightenment. Ignorance, not sin, was the problem. Some of them, believing the body to be a snare and delusion, led lives of great asceticism. Others, believing the body to be quite separate from the soul, held that it did not matter what the body did, since it was completely foul anyway, and its actions had no effect on the soul. They accordingly led lives that were not ascetic at all. Either way, the notion of forgiveness was alien to them.]

* the resurrection of the body,

[The chief goal of the Gnostics was to become free forever from the taint of matter and the shackles of the body, and to return to the heavenly realm as Pure Spirit. They totally rejected any idea of the resurrection of the body.]

* and the life everlasting. AMEN

THE NICENE CREED

The Nicene Creed is the most widely accepted and used brief statements of the Christian Faith. In liturgical churches, it is said every Sunday as part of the Liturgy. It is Common Ground to East Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Calvinists, and many other Christian groups. Many groups that do not have a tradition of using it in their services nevertheless are committed to the doctrines it teaches.

(Someone may ask, "What about the Apostles' Creed?" Traditionally, in the West, the Apostles' Creed is used at Baptisms, and the Nicene Creed at the Eucharist (aka the Mass, the Liturgy, the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion). The East uses only the Nicene Creed.)

I here present the Nicene Creed in two English translations, The first is the traditional one, in use with minor variations since 1549, The second is a modern version, that of (I think) The Interdenominational Committee on Liturgical Texts. Notes and comment by me follow.

TRADITIONAL WORDING 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,
begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance 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 Ghost
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 I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord, and Giver of Live, who proceedeth from the Father [and the Son]; who
with the Father and the Son together
is worshipped and glorified;
who spake by the Prophets.

And I believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

MODERN WORDING

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth,

of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,

begotten, not made,

of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. With the Father and the Son

he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

NOTES AND COMMENT

When the Apostles' Creed was drawn up, the chief enemy was Gnosticism, which denied that Jesus was truly Man; and the emphases of the Apostles' Creed reflect a concern with repudiating this error.

When the Nicene Creed was drawn up, the chief enemy was Arianism, which denied that Jesus was fully God. Arius was a presbyter (=priest = elder) in Alexandria in Egypt, in the early 300's. He taught that the Father, in the beginning, created (or begot) the Son, and that the Son, in conjunction with the Father, then proceeded to create the world. The result of this was to make the Son a created being, and hence not God in any meaningful sense. It was also suspiciously like the theories of those Gnostics and pagans who held that God was too perfect to create something like a material world, and so introduced one or more intermediate beings between God and the world. God created A, who created B, who created C... who created Z, who created the world. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, sent for Arius and questioned him. Arius stuck to his position, and was finally excommunicated by a council of Egyptian bishops. He went to Nicomedia in Asia, where he wrote letters defending his position to various bishops. Finally, the Emperor Constantine summoned a council of Bishops in Nicea (across the straits from modern Istanbul), and there in 325 the Bishops of the Church, by a decided majority, repudiated Arius and produced the first draft of what is now called the Nicene Creed. A chief spokesman for the full deity of Christ was Athanasius, deacon of Alexandria, assistant (and later successor) to the aging Alexander. The Arian position has been revived in our own day by the Watchtower Society (the JW's), who explicitly hail Arius as a great witness to the truth.

Here is the Creed (modern wording) a second time, with notes inserted.

- * We believe in one God,
- * the Father, the Almighty,
- * maker of heaven and earth,
- * of all that is, seen and unseen.
- * We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
- * the only son of God,

Here and elsewhere (such as John 1:14) where the Greek has MONOGENETOS HUIOS, an English translation may read either "only Son" or "only begotten Son." The Greek is ambiguous. The root GEN is found in words like "genital, genetics, generation," and suggests begetting. However, it is also found in words like "genus" and suggests family or sort or kind. Accordingly, we may take MONOGENETOS to mean either "only begotten" or "one-of-a-kind, only, sole, unique".

- * eternally begotten of the Father,

Here the older translation has "begotten of the Father before all worlds." One might suppose that this means, "before the galaxies were formed," or something of the kind. But in fact the English word "world" used to mean something a little different. It is related to "were" (pronounced "weer"), an old word for "man," as in "werewolf" or "weregild." (Compare with Latin VIR.) Hence a "world" was originally a span of time equal to the normal lifespan of a man. Often in the KJV Bible, one finds "world" translating the Greek AION ("eon"), and a better translation today would be "age." (Thus, for example, in Matthew 24:3, the question is one of "the end of the age," which makes it possible

to understand what follows as a description of the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, and of the end of an era in the spiritual history of mankind. But I digress.) So here we have "begotten of the Father before all times, before all ages." Arius was fond of saying, "The Logos is not eternal. God begat him, and before he was begotten, he did not exist." The Athanasians replied that the begetting of the Logos was not an event in time, but an eternal relationship.

* God from God, Light from Light,

A favorite analogy of the Athanasians was the following: Light is continuously streaming forth from the sun. (In those days, it was generally assumed that light was instantaneous, so that there was no delay at all between the time that a ray of light left the sun and the time it struck the earth.) The rays of light are derived from the sun, and not vice versa. But it is not the case that first the sun existed and afterwards the Light. It is possible to imagine that the sun has always existed, and always emitted light. The Light, then, is derived from the sun, but the Light and the sun exist simultaneously throughout eternity. They are co-eternal. Just so, the Son exists because the Father exists, but there was never a time before the Father produced the Son.

The analogy is further appropriate because we can know the sun only through the rays of light that it emits. To see the sunlight is to see the sun. Just so, Jesus says, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

* true God from true God,

* begotten, not made,

This line was inserted by way of repudiating Arius's teaching that the Son was the first thing that the Father created, and that to say that the Father begets the Son is simply another way of saying that the Father has created the Son.

Arius said that if the Father has begotten the Son, then the Son must be inferior to the Father, as a prince is inferior to a king. Athanasius replied that a son is precisely the same sort of being as his father, and that the only son of a king is destined himself to be a king. It is true that an earthly son is younger than his father, and that there is a time when he is not yet what he will be. But God is not in time. Time, like distance, is a relation between physical events, and has meaning only in the context of the physical universe. When we say that the Son is begotten of the Father, we do not refer to an event in the remote past, but to an eternal and timeless relation between the Persons of the Godhead. Thus, while we say of an earthly prince that he may some day hope to become what his father is now, we say of God the Son that He is eternally what God the Father is eternally.

* of one being with the Father.

This line: "of one essence with the Father, of one substance with the Father, consubstantial with the Father," (in Greek, HOMO-OUSIOS TW PATRI) was the crucial one, the acid test. It was the one formula that the Arians could not interpret as meaning what they believed. Without it, they would have continued to teach that the Son is good, and glorious, and holy, and a Mighty Power, and God's chief agent in creating the world, and the means by which God chiefly reveals Himself to us, and therefore deserving in some sense to be called divine. But they would have continued to deny that the Son was God in the same sense in which the Father is God. And they would have pointed out that, since the Council of Nicea had not issued any declaration that they could not accept, it followed that there was room for their position inside the tent of Christian doctrine, as that tent had been defined at Nicea. Arius and his immediate followers would have denied that they were reducing the Son to the position of a high-ranking angel. But their doctrine left no safeguard against it, and if they had triumphed at Nicea, even in the negative sense of having their position acknowledged as a permissible one within the limits of Christian orthodoxy, the damage to the Christian witness to Christ as God made flesh would have been irreparable.

Incidentally, HOMOOUSIOS is generally written without the hyphen. The OU (in Greek as in French) is pronounced as in "soup", "group", and so on, and the word has five syllables HO-mo-OU-si-os, with accents on first and third, as shown. The Greek root HOMO, meaning "same," is found in English words like "homosexual" and "homogenized", and is not to be confused with the Latin word HOMO, meaning "man, human".

The language finally adopted in the East was that the Trinity consists of three HYPOSTASES (singular HYPOSTASIS) united in one OUSIA. The formula used in the West, and going back at least to Tertullian (who

wrote around 200, and whose writings are the oldest surviving Christian treatises written in Latin), is that the Trinity consists of three PERSONAE (singular PERSONA) united in one SUBSTANTIA. In English, we say "Three Persons in one Substance." Unfortunately, the Greek HYPO-STASIS and the Latin SUB-STANTIA each consists of an element meaning "under, below" (as in "hypodermic", "hypothermia", etc) followed by an element meaning "stand". Thus it was natural for a Greek-speaker, reading a Latin document that referred to One SUBSTANTIA to substitute mentally a reference to One HYPOSTASIS, and to be very uncomfortable, while a Latin-speaker would have the same problem in reverse. Thus the seeds were sown for a breakdown of communication.

* Through him all things were made.

This is a direct quote from John 1:3. Before the insertion of the HOMO-OUSIOS clause, this line immediately followed "begotten, not made." The two lines go naturally together. The Son is not a created thing. Rather, He is the agent through Whom all created things come to be. Inserting the HOMO-OUSIOS at this point breaks up the flow, and if I had been present at the Council of Nicea, I would have urged the bishops to insert it one line further down instead. In the older translation, in particular, someone reading the Creed is likely to understand it as referring to "The Father by whom all things were made." The newer translation, by revising the English wording, makes this misreading less likely.

* For us and for our salvation

The older translation has, "for us men." Now, while English has in common current usage the one word "man" to do duty both for gender-inclusive ("human") and for gender-specific ("male"), Latin has "homo, homin-" for gender-inclusive and "vir" for gender-specific, while Greek has "anthropos" for gender-inclusive and "aner, andro-" for gender-specific. (Given the demand for a similar distinction in English, I have been arguing for a gender-inclusive use of "man", and the revival of the older word "were" (as in "werewolf" and "weregild") in the gender-specific sense. But so far I have had but scant success.) Where the older translation of the Creed is used, with its "for us men" at this point, a feminist might consider complaining of sexist language. But the Greek and Latin wording here are both gender-inclusive, and so a feminist, reading the Creed in either of those languages, ought to find nothing that will upset him.

* he came down from heaven:

* by the power of the Holy Spirit

* he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, * and was made man.

* For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; * he suffered death and was buried.

You will note that the older translation has here simply, "He suffered and was buried" (Latin, "passus et sepultus est"). Apparently by the time of Nicea, it was no longer necessary to emphasize, to spell out unmistakably, that Christ had really died at Calvary, as it had been spelled out in the Apostles' Creed. And indeed, I have never heard anyone try to argue that the Creed here leaves a loophole for those who want to believe that Jesus merely swooned on the Cross. So apparently the Nicene Fathers were right in supposing that their language would not be misunderstood. However, the framers of the new translation decided to make the meaning unmistakable and to close this particular loophole. And I for one am not sorry.

* On the third day he rose again

* in accordance with the Scriptures;

The wording here is borrowed from 1 Corinthians 15:4. The older translation has "according to the Scriptures," which in terms of modern language is misleading. Today, when we say, "It will rain tomorrow, according to the weatherman," we mean, "The weatherman says that it will rain, but whether he is right is another question." And this is clearly not what either St. Paul or the Nicene Fathers had in mind. The newer translation is an improvement. I would have suggested, "in fulfilment of the Scriptures," which is clearly what is meant.

* he ascended into heaven

* and is seated at the right hand of the Father. * He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, * and his kingdom will have no end.

*

* We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, * who proceeds from the Father [and the Son].

The words shown in brackets,

"and from the Son," are a Western addition to the Creed as it was originally agreed on by a Council representing the whole Church, East and West. They correspond to the

Latin word FILIOQUE (FILI = Son, -O = from, -QUE = and; pronounced with accent on the O), and the controversy about them is accordingly known as the Filioque controversy.

If we are looking for a statement that can be taken as common ground by all Christians, East and West alike, it clearly cannot include the FILIOQUE. On the other hand, Western Christians will be unwilling to have it supposed that they are repudiating the statement that the Spirit proceeds jointly from Father and Son. I accordingly suggest that we print the Creed with the FILIOQUE either in brackets or omitted altogether, but with the understanding that, while assenting to the resulting statement does not commit anyone to belief in the Dual Procession of the Spirit, neither does it commit anyone to disbelief in the Dual Procession.

I reserve extensive comments on the Dual Procession, the history of the belief, and the reasons for and against believing in it, for a separate essay, called CREED FILIOQUE.

* With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. * He has spoken through the Prophets.

This line was directed against the view that the Holy Spirit did not exist, or was not active, before Pentecost.

* We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

Since many Christians from various backgrounds will want to know, "Precisely what would I be agreeing to if I signed this?" I have commented extensively on the wording in a separate file, called CREED CHURCH.

* We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. * We look for the resurrection of the dead, * and the life of the world to come. AMEN. THE FILIOQUE CLAUSE

This essay is an Appendix to the essay called CREED NICENE. It deals with one particular line of the Nicene Creed.

The Creed as formulated at Nicea in 325 ended with the words

* And we believe in the Holy Spirit.

When the Council of Constantinople met in 381, it officially adopted an expanded version, the Creed (without the FILIOQUE) as we have it today. This expanded version is in fact older than 381. It was the Baptismal Creed of the Church of Salamis, on the island of Cyprus, and is quoted by St. Epiphanius of Salamis in 374 in his ANKROTOS (see below). It was apparently a reworking of the Baptismal Creed of the Church of Jerusalem, which in turn was a reworking of the Nicene Creed.

The portion of the expanded Creed that here concerns us reads as follows:

* We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, * who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. * With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. * He has spoken through the Prophets.

I propose to discuss in this Appendix

- 1) the meaning of the Doctrine of the Dual Procession, and some arguments for and against its truth,
- 2) the history of belief in the Doctrine, 3) the history of the insertion of the FILIOQUE clause into the Nicene Creed in the West.

THE NICENE CREED ON THE CHURCH

* We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

[J.S. Bach, a devout Lutheran, wrote a musical setting for the Liturgy known as the B-minor Mass. In his setting for the words printed above, there are two melody lines. One is a traditional Latin plainchant melody, and the other is a traditional Lutheran chorale melody. They are played and sung simultaneously, and they interweave and harmonize perfectly.]

The Creed speaks of (1) the Unity of the Church, (2) the Sanctity of the Church, (3) the Catholicity of the Church, and (4) the Apostolicity of the Church.

[NOTE: Some versions of the Creed omit the word "holy" in describing the Church. When the traditional translation of the Creed into English was made in the 1500's, the oldest available Greek manuscript of the Creed omitted the word "holy", and therefore the translators mistakenly supposed that it was a later addition. In fact it is part of the original Creed, and almost every recent printing of the Creed includes it.]

(1) The Church is One, and the bonds of Unity are Faith and Love. Heresy violates the former, and schism the latter. Heretics violate the unity of the Church by holding to beliefs or practices that are incompatible with the Gospel that the Church has been commissioned to proclaim, so that the Church cannot include them in her fellowship without compromising, diluting, or denying the Gospel message. Schismatics violate the unity of the Church by requiring from others, as a condition of fellowship, assent to doctrines or practices that are not an essential part of the Gospel (though they may be compatible with it). We ought therefore to ask ourselves: "Have I sinned against faith by denying or failing to uphold doctrines essential to the message of the Gospel? Have I sinned against love by requiring as a condition of Christian fellowship agreement with me on matters where Christians may differ and still remain Christians?"

(2) The Church is Holy. Some persons understand this to mean that individual church members are virtuous -- that you can tell which group most truly embodies the church by noting which group has the fewest members who are or ought to be in trouble with the police. This understanding implies that holiness is something that we confer upon the Church -- that by working hard to improve our own personal scores on the Virtue chart we boost the team average. But the older idea is that Holiness is something that the Church confers upon us -- that Our Lord Jesus Christ is Holy, and that He has called us to holiness in Him, and that He brings us into fellowship with Him through the community of believers, by the Sacraments, by the preaching of the Gospel message, by the mutual love and fellowship of the community, by experience of praying and being prayed for, of learning and teaching, of forgiving and being forgiven. We ought therefore to ask ourselves: "Am I opening myself to God's grace as He makes it available to me through the Christian community? Instead of concentrating on my dissatisfaction with those persons in the Church who appear to be unsatisfactory channels of grace, am I looking for, and taking advantage of, whatever spiritual nourishment is available? Am I, in my turn, being open to being used by God as a channel of grace to others? Am I making it easier for them to grow in Christian faith and love? Am I ready to forgive, and ready to seek forgiveness of others?"

(3) The Church is Catholic. The Greek word KATHOLIKOS comes from KATA (a preposition with various meanings depending on the context, often meaning "down" or "negative" as in "catabolic" or "catastrophe" or "cathode," but also often meaning "according to") and HOLOS (meaning "whole" as in "holistic medicine," which claims to treat the whole patient and not just the particular ailment complained of), and thus means, literally, "according to the whole." The meaning of the word as applied to the Church has evolved.

Probably the first Christians to use the term were simply distinguishing the entire Church worldwide from particular congregations. If you said something about the Church, they would ask, "Do you mean the Church in Corinth, or the Church Catholic?"

Around AD 175, Irenaeus of Lyons used it in disputing with the Gnostics. Many Gnostics claimed that their teaching was "the real Gospel." They said that Christ had had two messages. The first message, called "exoteric Christianity," was his message preached to the ordinary man, who was not very "spiritual," and was capable of understanding only a very simple message. The second message, called "esoteric Christianity," was told only to a chosen few who had shown themselves worthy of it, and was concealed from the masses, because they would only misunderstand and pervert it, and would persecute the chosen few who were sufficiently elevated spiritually and intellectually to be able to understand it. For a modern parallel, look for the advertisements of the Rosicrucians (AMORC). They advertise in a large range of magazines, at one time including the National Geographic. Their pitch is that they are a secret society that has existed since ancient times, and that Socrates, Archimedes, Galileo, Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin, and other respected men now safely dead were all members. No proof, of course. It is a secret society. They say, "Our message cannot be entrusted to the masses, but only to those who after careful examination are found worthy to learn it. So send us twenty big ones and we will spill our guts."

In replying to the Gnostics, Irenaeus argued that Christians have never had a secret doctrine in the Gnostic sense. He argues that Christ had no secrets from The Twelve (John 15:15), that the Twelve accepted Paul as one of themselves (2 Peter 3:15), and that both Paul (Acts 20:26f) and the original Twelve (Matthew 28:20) were under strict commandment to pass on to their converts all that they had been taught. The Gospel, the whole Gospel, is to be declared to all men. All are called to a saving knowledge of God in Christ. In this sense, the Church is Catholic, in contrast both with pre-Christian Israel and with the Gnostics.

Irenaeus goes on to say: If Christ did have a special message, you would expect him to entrust it to his apostles, and you would expect the apostles to entrust it to the leaders of the congregations they founded. If we look in cities that are mentioned in the New Testament as places where the Apostles preached, such as Jerusalem, or Antioch, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Rome, we find that in each of them there is a Christian congregation, headed by a bishop who is part of an unbroken and orderly line of bishops going back to the time when the Church in that city was first established by an apostle. Moreover, we find, if we do a little comparing, that the Church in Ephesus and its bishop teach the same doctrines as the Church in Antioch and its bishop. Thus, we have the Church as a world-wide community, with each local congregation agreeing in doctrine with the other congregations spread throughout the world, and also with its predecessor reaching back in time to the Apostles and through them to Christ Himself.

(4) The Church is Apostolic. That is to say, it is the community that Christ founded with the Apostles as nucleus. We read of the first Christian converts added to the Church at Jerusalem that "the continued steadfast in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and the prayers." (Acts 2:42) In order to be a Christian, it is not enough to be in the Apostles' teaching. You must also be in the Apostles' fellowship. The Church is a group, just as the Scouts are a group. Suppose that someone found a Boy Scout Manual, and read it, and said, "I like this!" Suppose that he then sat down and memorized the Scout Oath and the Scout Law, and learned to tie 21 different kinds of knots blindfolded, and how to pitch a tent, and how to swim 25 yards underwater, and how to read a compass, and all the other things that a Scout is required to know and to do. Suppose that he further made a point of being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. Would it be accurate to say that he was a Scout? I think the answer is clearly negative. He might be called Scout-like. He would be someone whom the Scouts would gladly welcome aboard. But until he gets in contact with the Scout organization and joins up, he is not a Scout. In like fashion, to be a Christian does not mean simply holding a certain set of beliefs, even if accompanied by appropriate behavior. It means belonging to the Christian community, to the Church. When God sent an angel to the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10), the angel did not instruct him in Christian doctrine and tell him, "Now, if you believe what I have just said, that makes you a Christian." Rather, he told him how to get in touch with the Christian community by sending a messenger to Peter in Joppa. When Saul was on the road to Damascus, Christ spoke to him. But He did not instruct Saul in Christian doctrine. Rather, He told him to go into Damascus and wait for instructions, and then He sent Ananias, a Christian, to receive Saul into the Christian community. And one of the marks of that community is its continuity with the community that Christ founded and upon whom the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost.