

*Some take the **creeds** literally and others symbolically, in part or whole.*  
 The Church of England counts the creeds as "historic formularies" and so, in effect, does not require people to treat them literally. They still remain cornerstones of the Christian faith. Creeds include the Athanasian, the Nicene and the Apostles. Here is the Apostles Creed, the earliest:

<p>I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.</p> <p><b>CORE BELIEF</b></p>	<p>This means that <b>God</b> is the creator of the universe, spiritual and material, and humankind too, identified as the Father (one part of the later developing Trinity) and is all-powerful.</p>
<p>And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.</p> <p><b>BELIEF AND INSERTION INTO HISTORY</b></p>	<p>The <b>Son</b> (the second part of the Trinity) has Mary as his mother, but no earthly biological father as his earthly origin is the Holy Spirit (the third part of the later Trinity). Remember however Christ is not born from God but co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Many Christians have great difficulty with the idea Jesus was born of a virgin. It is argued that this is a mistranslation from "young woman" in the Jewish Bible. If from a virgin and spirit it means Jesus cannot be fully human (?). Christ redeems humankind.</p>
<p>He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.</p> <p><b>HISTORICAL OBSERVABLE</b></p>	<p>Pontius Pilate was Roman Governor and is said to have agreed to the <b>killing of Jesus</b> who died on the cross on the Friday. This is the most earthly and historical part of the creed, although some claim that the body would not have been buried but dumped as the ruling Romans did with crucified criminals. In the Bible a wealthy Sadducee priest Joseph of Arimathea gets permission from Pontius Pilate to bury the body and the tomb is then guarded by Roman soldiers.</p>
<p>He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again from the dead.</p> <p><b>BELIEF ACTION</b></p>	<p>On the way to the heavenly realm (and pausing for the resurrection appearances) the deceased Jesus first descended to the very dead waiting for their resurrection and touching hell. He had really died! Then <b>he rose</b>. The story in the Bible is that the first witnesses found the tomb empty and the stone rolled back on the third day, Sunday. After this came appearances making early Christian belief statements.</p>

<p>He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.</p> <p><b>BELIEF ACTION SYMBOLIC</b></p>	<p>The Ascension was Jesus leaving the world for heaven, so we can see that his resurrection appearances in the Bible are an in between stage, coming from touching the dead awaiting their resurrection and rising on to the <b>heavenly realm</b> with God the Father.</p>
<p>He will come again to judge the living and the dead.</p> <p><b>FUTURE GUARANTEE</b></p>	<p>According to Jewish belief the dead will have their resurrection, and Christians believe this too, <b>so Christ will return</b> to carry out this judgement on those dead and those alive at that coming time. Much Jewish belief and much Christian belief contain this expectation of the end time. Christian attitudes to judgement depend on an individual's belief in Christ and moral conduct.</p>
<p>I believe in the Holy Spirit</p> <p><b>BELIEF</b></p>	<p>Jesus as a Jew and indeed the first three gospels rarely mention the Holy Spirit, but from John's gospel it is very important. It is not the Trinity, however, which is much later. However, the Spirit becomes crucial in guiding the whole Church, in assisting worship, and experience: and so the Spirit became the <b>dynamic and comforting</b> part of the Trinity. The Spirit blesses and makes holy believers and arguably humankind in general.</p>
<p>I believe in the holy catholic Church and the communion of saints.</p> <p><b>EARTHLY INSTITUTIONS</b></p>	<p>This does not mean Roman Catholic <b>but universal (united) Church</b> (capital C). The communion of <b>saints</b> is considered by some to mean all believers and by others especially honoured believers.</p>
<p>I believe in the forgiveness of sins.</p> <p><b>MORAL DEMAND</b></p>	<p>Christian belief states that all have sinned. Until the last judgement it is a duty to <b>earnestly forgive</b> those who sin, but also to <b>really be sorry</b> so that the loving God forgives. This is the morally demanding part of the creed.</p>
<p>I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.</p> <p><b>HOPE TO END</b></p>	<p>It is not enough to believe in a spirit of a human life living in heaven, but rather the <b>full bodily resurrection</b> as maintained in the Bible. This final resurrection takes place to bring in <b>eternal life</b>. Arguably this is not forever in time, but deeper and beyond time, like God.</p>

*What was the Apostles Creed about?* - It was about arguing against Gnostic Christians...

The Apostles Creed from the first or second century (up to 200 CE) emphasises the importance of **this world made by God**, against views held by Gnostic Christians who believed the material world was evil and Jesus rose into pure spirit.

Christ is also human and fleshy as is the man Jesus, as affirmed later in 451 CE when he is called **fully human and fully God**, whereas Gnostic Christians said Jesus the man was the mouthpiece for a pure Christ.

Gnostics said Jesus became Christ from the Holy Spirit descending at baptism whereas other Christians said Jesus was **Christ from conception**.

Gnostics believed in a spiritual hierarchy of the knowing whereas the Apostles Creed emphasises the **Church as a whole**.

Gnostics believed in getting away from earthly sin whereas others believed we lived **within sin and needed forgiveness**.

**Resurrection** for Gnostics was of the spirit not a dirty body.

Usually the Apostles Creed is said at Baptisms and the Nicene Creed (325 CE) said at other occasions by those who quote it. The Nicene Creed is Trinitarian. Modern wording turns I believe into We believe. The Athanasian Creed of about 500 CE is full-on trinitarianism.

*Trinity and Trinitarian - a development of Christianity over hundreds of years.*

The Trinity is not three Gods, or three Gods in one, it is rather one God in three of one. The three entities are ways or tasks of God, but all three are co-equal and co-eternal with each other. None are superior, and none came before the other. The Trinity is NOT in the Bible but may, just, be suggested for the future. The first three gospels are concerned with the Son of Man and Messiah, the Fourth Gospel has the Word made flesh, and then books of the bible deal with the presences of God as Greek influenced ideas develop the philosophy of God.

From the Athanasian Creed:

3. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, 4. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance [Essence]. 5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. 6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. 7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost... [This goes on!] 27. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

*Christianity spreads - it was a movement of the oppressed and then the Empire.*

The first Christians were in three groups, Jewish Christians, Greek philosophy Christians (gentiles) and Gnostics (spiritual).

The Gnostic Christians were suppressed by the orthodox. Jewish Christians had collapsed in 70 CE with the Romans destroying the Temple. Christians who absorbed Greek philosophy into some Jewish traditions became the orthodox.

The main recruits to Christianity until Emperor Constantine took over the faith were the same social classes of people who followed Jesus. Then in 325 came the Nicene Creed. The Roman Empire shrunk and Emperor Justinian in Constantinople was the remaining part of the Empire, and which became Byzantium and eventually the split with Rome producing the Orthodox Churches. Roman Catholicism survived the ending of Roman Empire and became centre of the loose states making up the Holy Roman Empire. There were wars with the cultural and political spread of Islam. It lost power with the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s. Having many denominations weakened Christianity but it spread over the world with military Empires and its missionaries. Christianity weakened as a mental worldview with the rise of science and secular thought. Today Christianity is divided between strong supernatural belief in the developing world and intellectual weakness in the developed world (secular and sectarian) although with pockets of enthusiasm and variable political and moral influence.