

Q & A

Week 3: June 17, 2020

Q In the two creeds we use in worship, neither of them, when recounting the work of Christ, make a statement about the role of Christ's sinlessness in the redemptive narrative. Is there a historical reason for this?

- Examples of other important gospel doctrines not included in the Apostles or Nicene Creeds
 - Inspiration and authority of the Bible (though the creeds are based on the teaching of the Bible)
 - Substitutionary atonement (though the Nicene creed does say "crucified for us")
 - Justification by faith alone (though the creeds revolve around the phrase "I believe")
- What is a creed? (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, [Chapter 1, Section 1](#))
 - "A Creed, or Rule of Faith, or Symbol, is a confession of faith for public use, or a form of words setting forth with authority certain articles of belief, which are regarded by the framers as necessary for salvation, or at least for the well-being of the Christian Church.
 - "A creed may cover the whole ground of Christian doctrine and practice, or contain only such points as are deemed fundamental and sufficient, or as have been disputed. . . . It may be brief and popular (as the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds), for general use in catechetical instruction and at baptism; or more elaborate and theological, for ministers and teachers, as a standard of public doctrine (the symbolical books of the Reformation period). In the latter case a confession of faith is always the result of dogmatic controversy, and more or less directly or indirectly polemical against opposing error. *Each symbol bears the impress of its age, and the historical situation out of which it arose.*
 - "There is a development in the history of symbols. They assume a more definite shape with the progress of biblical and theological knowledge. They are mile-stones and finger-boards in the history of Christian doctrine. They embody the faith of generations, and the most valuable results of religious controversies. They still shape and regulate the theological thinking and public teaching of the churches of Christendom. They keep alive sectarian strifes and antagonisms, but they reveal also the underlying agreement, and foreshadow the possibility of future harmony."
- Christ's Person vs. Christ's Work in the History of Doctrine
 - "The history of the doctrine of Christ's work is markedly different from that of the dogmas of the Trinity and Christ's person. No particular controversy concerning it has led to a clear-cut formulation." Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3.340.
 - We have to be careful not to impose post-Reformation categories and expectations on ancient church writers and creeds.
 - But at the same time, we should recognize that the most ancient formulations of Christian doctrine clearly presuppose a perfectly obedient Christ.
- Christ's obedience and the Apostles and Nicene Creeds
 - The Christ of the creeds is divine and therefore perfect
 - The Christ of the creeds is Holy-Spirit-conceived and virgin-born
 - The Christ of the creeds died "for us"
 - The Christ of the creeds is resurrected and exalted
- We need both creeds and confessions.
 - Schaff [on the Apostles Creed](#): "It must be admitted that the very simplicity and brevity of this Creed, which so admirably adapt it for all classes of Christians and for public worship, make it insufficient as a regulator of public doctrine for a more advanced stage of theological knowledge."
 - Confessions flesh out what the creeds summarize. The creeds summarize what the confessions flesh out.