

# Canon, Creeds, & Revivals

How the Church Preserved our Christian Beliefs

## Class 6 - Chalcedonian Creed & Second Helvetic Confession

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# Debates on “Who is Christ?”

- “Who is Christ?” is a central question in Christianity. Unique.
- Early Christians worshipped the mystery of the God-man before it could be succinctly described
  - The Apostles spoke of “the image of the invisible God”, “the Word made flesh”, and the “Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.”
- Pre-Nicea (<100 - 325 AD) - Propelled by heretical teaching, early debates focused on whether Christ was divine or human or both.
- Post Nicea (325 - 451 AD) - Later debates focused on how the divine and human can exist at the same time in Christ i.e, “How do we describe the nature of Christ?”



# Early Heresies on view of Christ (100-250 AD)

## Nature of Christ

- Gnostics (100 - 200 AD)

- Many gods - Aeons
- Material world is evil
- Secret knowledge

One Person

fully ~~X~~ God - Aeon

fully ~~X~~ Man - Spirit only

- Marcionite (100-200 AD)

- Rejects OT God - two Gods
- Material world is evil
- Jesus sent by true God
- Salvation by faith

One Person

fully ~~X~~ God

fully ~~X~~ Man - Spirit only

*Apostle's Creed directly combats Gnosticism & Marcionites*

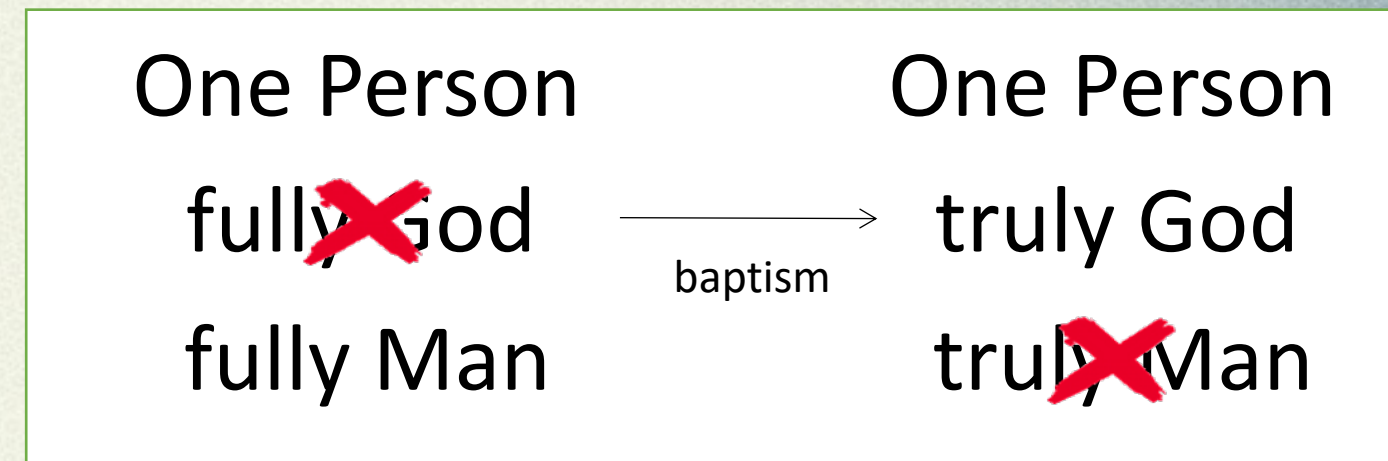


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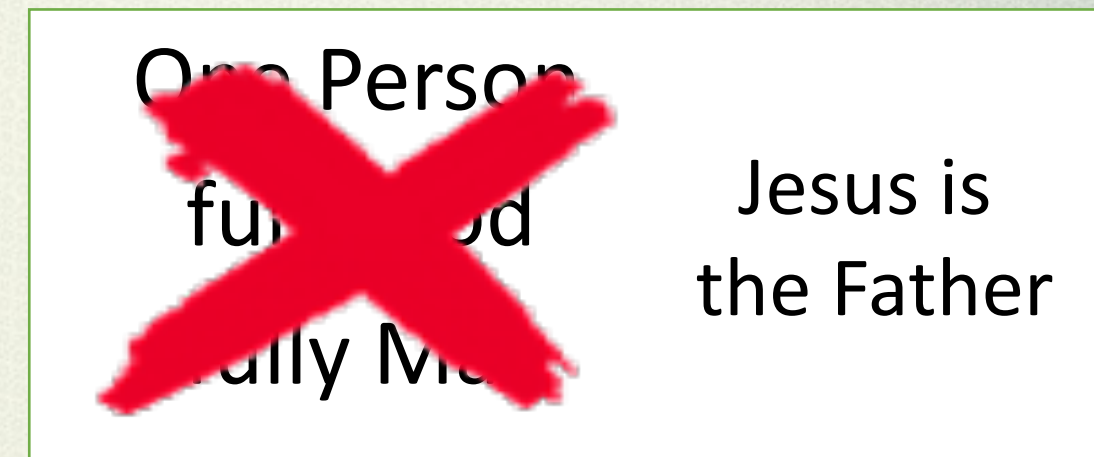
- Adoptionist (150 - 250 AD)

- Jesus born a man
- Recieved power on baptism



- Sabellianism (150 -250 AD)

- Father God was born as Jesus
- Father raised himself from the dead
- Father, Son, Holy Spirit are three modes of God





# Middle Heresies on view of Christ (250 -325 AD)

## Nature of Christ

- Arian (300 - 325 AD)
  - Jesus is lesser being
  - Jesus was created

One Person

fully ~~God~~ - Half God

fully Man

*Nicene Creed was written to directly combat Arianism*



# Later Heresies on nature of Christ (325-451 AD)

- Apollinarius (361 AD)
  - Pastor of Laodicea
  - Divine mind “displaces” human mind
  - only body represented Christ's human nature
- Nestorius (428 AD)
  - Bishop of Constantinople
  - Christ joined two persons
  - Merging of will rather than union
- Monophysites (431 AD)
  - Eutyches - spiritual leader of monastery near Constantinople
  - Divine “absorbed” human nature forming something only divine

One Person  
fully God  
fully ~~Man~~ - body only

One ~~Person~~ - two persons  
fully God  
fully Man

One Person  
fully God → absorbed  
fully ~~Man~~ (merged)



# Chalcedonian Council

- Emperor Marcian (450-457 AD) granted an imperial council requested by Pope Leo I (440-461 AD) that met in 451 AD called the Fourth General Council of Chalcedon
- Near Constantinople, 600 bishops assembled and though reluctant to add to the Nicene Creed, supplemented it with a new definition
- From that day forward most Christians in Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy looked to Chalcedon for the foundation of the doctrine of salvation, a unique God-man, Jesus Christ





## Chalcedonian Creed

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood;

truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body;

consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood;

in all things like unto us, without sin;

begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood;

one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably;

the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ;

as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

- Against Marcion, Gnostics (early) - Jesus was truly human
- Against Sabellianism (early) - Jesus is distinct from the Father
- Against Arius (mid) - Jesus was truly God, not a god.
- Against Adoptionist (early) - Truly God at birth and death
- Against Apollinarius (late) - Jesus was not partially but fully human
- Against Monophysitism (late) - Jesus deity and humanity were not changed in something else
- Against Nestorius (late) - Jesus was not divided but was one person



## Apostle's Creed (100-200AD)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was **conceived** by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; **he descended into hell**. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church, **the communion of saints**, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

## Nicene Creed (325 AD)

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**, was incarnated of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became **truly human**.

**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 Scripture**; 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, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who 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.

## Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD)

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood;

truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body;

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as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.



## *One Person, Two Natures* - Why is this important?

- **Christ is fully God** - so that He has the power to save humankind.
  - One God, not multiple gods - Christ is not an inferior God
- **Chris is fully man** - so that He can fully identify with us. Gives meaning to his suffering and the resurrection.
- **Scripture** - We are not allowed to eliminate portions that we do not like or agree with (Marcion)
- **Trinity (*One God, Three Persons*)** - Preserve the love relationship and mystery between three persons of the Trinity
- **Church Fathers** - We stand on the shoulders of smart, Spirit-led brothers and sisters who have gone before us
- **Church** - The survival of the Church is a testament to God's sovereign work in the world. These heresies have re-emerged in recent times.



# Author of Second Helvetic Confession

**After the great Reformer Ulrich Zwingli died in battle in 1531, Heinrich Bullinger succeeded him as minister of the church in Zurich. Bullinger was a model Reformed minister**

- A preacher, he expounded Scripture at least twice a week.
- A scholar, he wrote Latin commentaries on many books of the Old Testament and on every book of the New Testament except Revelation.
- An educator, he initiated a system of schools for Zurich and was rector of the Carolinum, a theological academy.
- A person with ecumenical and political concerns, he unified the Reformed movement in 1549 by reaching an accord on the sacraments with John Calvin. He almost did the same with Luther.
- A pastor, he welcomed religious refugees into his own home. When the plague swept through Zurich in 1564, he insisted upon ministering to the afflicted, even though he knew he might become infected and die.

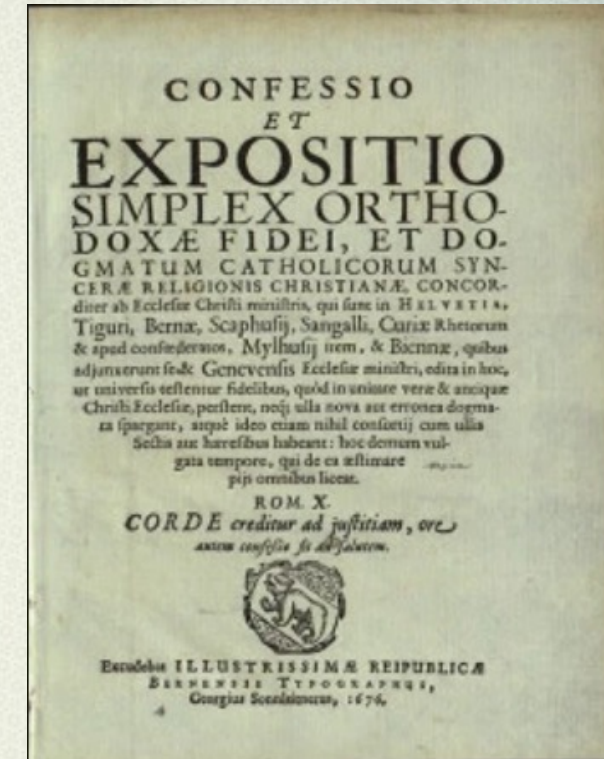


Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575 AD)



# History of Second Helvetic Confession

- **History** - Frederick the Elector, governor of the Palatinate, was to be brought to trial for heresy after he funded the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism. Lutherans considered it too Reformed in spirit. For his defense, he turned to Bullinger for a more moderate confession who offered him this work that he had already prepared earlier in 1561. When the Imperial Diet, the ruling body of Germany, met for trial in 1566, Frederick was exonerated.
- **Wide use** - Soon finding wide acceptance throughout Europe and beyond, it was translated into French, English, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian, Italian, Arabic, and Turkish (international acceptance). (The word “Helvetic” is Latin for “Swiss.” The setting of the Second Helvetic Confession is Swiss-German Reformed Protestantism.)
- **Description** - It is scriptural, judicious, and unifying; uncompromising towards the errors of Rome, moderate in its dissent from the Lutheran dogmas.



published at Zuerich, March 12, 1566, in both [German and Latin]



# Focus of Creeds vs. Confessions

- Authority of Scripture
- Nature of God
- Trinity
- Nature of Christ
- Nature of Humankind
- The work of Christ - Atonement
- Need for Salvation
- The Church and its mission
- Living in Obedience



Creeds



Confessions





# Example 1: Trinity

**5.015 GOD IS ONE.** We believe and teach that God is one in essence or nature, subsisting in himself, all sufficient in himself, invisible, in-corporeal, immense, eternal, Creator of all things both visible and invisible, the greatest good, living, quickening and preserving all things, omnipotent and supremely wise, kind and merciful, just and true. Truly we detest many gods because it is expressly written: “The Lord your God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2–3). “I am the Lord, and there is no other god besides me. Am I not the Lord, and there is no other God beside me? A righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me” (Isa. 45:5, 21). “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex. 34:6).

**5.016 GOD IS THREE.** Notwithstanding we believe and teach that the same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion distinguished as Father, Son and Holy Spirit so, as the Father has begotten the Son from eternity, the Son is begotten by an ineffable generation, and the Holy Spirit truly proceeds from them both, and the same from eternity and is to be worshipped with both.

**5.017** Thus there are not three gods, but three persons, consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal; distinct with respect to hypostases (being), and with respect to order, the one preceding the other yet without any inequality. For according to the nature or essence they are so joined together that they are one God, and the divine nature is common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



# Example 1: Trinity (cont.)

5.018 For Scripture has delivered to us a manifest distinction of persons,

- **Birth** - the angel saying, among other things, to the Blessed Virgin, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over-shadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).
- **Jesus' Baptism** - And also in the baptism of Christ a voice is heard from heaven concerning Christ, saying, “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17). The Holy Spirit also appeared in the form of a dove (John 1:32).
- **Baptism Command** - And when the Lord himself commanded the apostles to baptize, he commanded them to baptize “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).
- **Teaching** - Elsewhere in the Gospel he said: “The Father will send the Holy Spirit in my name” (John 14:26), and again he said: “When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me,” etc. (John 15:26).
- **Apostles' Creed** - In short, we receive the Apostles' Creed because it delivers to us the true faith.



# Example 1: Trinity (cont.)

## 5.019 HERESIES.

- Therefore we condemn the Jews and Mohammedans, and all those who blaspheme that sacred and adorable Trinity.
- We also condemn all heresies and heretics who teach that the Son and Holy Spirit are God in name only, and also that there is something created and subservient, or subordinate to another in the Trinity, and that there is something unequal in it, a greater or a less, something corporeal or corporeally conceived, something different with respect to character or will, something mixed or solitary, as if the Son and Holy Spirit were the affections and properties of one God the Father, as the Monarchians, Noëtiani, Praxeas, Patripassians, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Aëtius, Macedonius, Anthropomorphites, Arius, and such like, have thought.

### Notes -

- *Modal Monarchian - also called Patripassianism. Noetus and Praxeas were early advocates and held that the Father was born as Jesus Christ and raised himself from the dead. Sabellius adds that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are modes of God.*
- *Dynamic Monarchians - Jesus is man only, HS is force. Paul of Samosata*
- *Arian - Jesus was created and is lesser being. Aëtius formed a sect of Arianism.*
- *Macedonianism - A 4th-century Christian heresy that denied the full personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit*
- *Anthropomorphites - Scripture testifies that God has eyes, ears, hands, and feet, as men have.*



## Example 2: Nature of Christ

**CHRIST IS TRUE GOD.** We further believe and teach that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was predestinated or foreordained from eternity by the Father to be the Savior of the world. And we believe that he was born, not only when he assumed flesh of the Virgin Mary, and not only before the foundation of the world was laid, but by the Father before all eternity in an inexpressible manner. For Isaiah said: “Who can tell his generation?” (Ch. 53:8). And Micah says: “His origin is from of old, from ancient days” (Micah 5:2). And John said in the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” etc. (Ch. 1:1). Therefore, with respect to his divinity the Son is coequal and consubstantial with the Father; true God (Phil. 2:11), not only in name or by adoption or by any merit, but in substance and nature, as the apostle John has often said: “This is the true God and eternal life” (I John 5:20). Paul also says: “He appointed the Son the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding all things by his word of power” (Heb. 1:2 f.). For in the Gospel the Lord himself said: “Father, glorify Thou me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made” (John 17:5). And in another place in the Gospel it is written: “The Jews sought all the more to kill him because he ... called God his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18).



## Example 2: Nature of Christ (cont.)

**5.063 THE SECTS.** We therefore abhor the impious doctrine of Arius and the Arians against the Son of God, and especially the blasphemies of the Spaniard, Michael Servetus, and all his followers, which Satan through them has, as it were, dragged up out of hell and has most audaciously and impiously spread abroad in the world.

**5.064 CHRIST IS TRUE MAN, HAVING REAL FLESH.** We also believe and teach that the eternal Son of the eternal God was made the Son of man, from the seed of Abraham and David, not from the coitus of a man, as the Ebionites said, but was most chastely conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the ever virgin Mary, as the evangelical history carefully explains to us (Matt., ch. 1). And Paul says: “He took not on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham.” Also the apostle John says that who-ever does not believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is not of God. Therefore, the flesh of Christ was neither imaginary nor brought from heaven, as Valentinus and Marcion wrongly imagined.

*Notes - Arians believed Jesus was created and is a lesser being. Servetus trinitarian heresy's during Reformation was a form of Sabellianism (God in modes). Valentinus (Gnostic) and Marcion believed material world is evil and Jesus did not have flesh.*



## Example 2: Nature of Christ (cont.)

**5.065 A RATIONAL SOUL IN CHRIST.** Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ did not have a soul bereft of sense and reason, as Apollinaris thought, nor flesh without a soul, as Eunomius taught, but a soul with its reason, and flesh with its senses, by which in the time of his passion he sustained real bodily pain, as he himself testified when he said: “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Matt. 26:38). And, “Now is my soul troubled” (John 12:27).

**5.066 TWO NATURES IN CHRIST.** We therefore acknowledge two natures or substances, the divine and the human, in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord (Heb., ch. 2). And we say that these are bound and united with one another in such a way that they are not absorbed, or confused, or mixed, but are united or joined together in one person—the properties of the natures being unimpaired and permanent.

**5.067 NOT TWO BUT ONE CHRIST.** Thus we worship not two but one Christ the Lord. We repeat: one true God and man. With respect to his divine nature he is consubstantial with the Father, and with respect to the human nature he is consubstantial with us men, and like us in all things, sin excepted (Heb. 4:15).

**5.068 THE SECTS.** And indeed we detest the dogma of the Nestorians who make two of the one Christ and dissolve the unity of the Person. Likewise we thoroughly execrate the madness of Eutyches and of the Monothelites or Monophysites who destroy the property of the human nature.

*Notes - Monophysites - divine “absorbed” human nature*



# Some Summary Remarks

- Reformers appropriated the early creeds as their own
- Retained the nuance of the Trinity and the nature of Christ
- Trinity (One God, three persons)
- Nature of Christ (One person, two natures)
  - Divinity of Christ - so that salvation for all makes sense
  - Humanity of Christ - so that his sacrifice/resurrection/love make sense
- Worth reading (included only included 2 topics here, others include Sola Scriptura, nature of God, nature of humans, salvation, predestination, Church, and more)