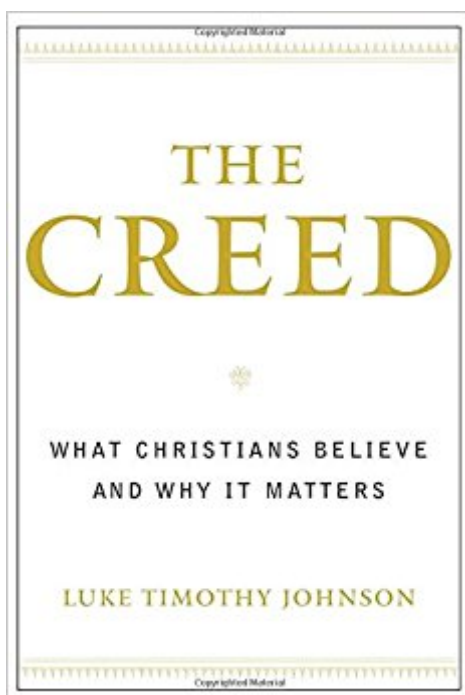


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# The Creed: What Christians Believe And Why It Matters



## Synopsis

This thoughtful, fully accessible exploration of the creed, the list of beliefs central to the Christian faith, delves into its origins and illuminates the contemporary significance of why it still matters. During services in Christian communities, the members of the congregation stand together to recite the creed, professing in unison the beliefs they share. For most Christians, the creed functions as a sort of “ABC” of what it means to be a Christian and to be part of a worldwide movement. Few people, however, know the source of this litany of beliefs, a topic that is further confused by the fact that there are two different versions: the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. In *The Creed*, Luke Timothy Johnson, a New Testament scholar and Catholic theologian, clarifies the history of the creed, discussing its evolution from the first decades of the Christian Church to the present day. By connecting the deep theological conflicts of the early Church with the conflicts and questions facing Christians today, Johnson shows that faith is a dynamic process, not based on a static set of rules. Written in a clear, graceful style and appropriate for Christians of all denominations, *The Creed* is destined to become a classic of modern writings on spirituality.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Catholic theologian Johnson knows that the creed, although it is recited by millions of worshippers every Sunday, is far from being well understood. He also knows, clearly from personal experience, that much of what the creed affirms—from a personal Creator to a final resurrection—is the butt of

jokes at fashionable dinner parties. This book is his careful attempt to explain to perplexed Christians, with attention to their dinner-party friends, why an ancient confession of faith still makes sense in the modern world. Exploring the Nicene creed line by line, Johnson introduces readers to the history behind each phrase, both in Christian Scripture and in church tradition, and he defends its relevance to faith today. While this approach is similar to that of Catholic apologists like Scott Hahn and Patrick Madrid, Johnson diverges from them in his willingness to sharply criticize both the secular modern world and his own tradition when he sees either one denying the powerful, liberating truths that the creed expresses. Both fundamentalists and progressive Christians (liberation theologians, feminists and devotees of the "historical Jesus") get equal-time rebuttals as well. Johnson's studied vagueness on some controversial questions (such as the historical nature of the resurrection and the uniqueness of Christianity) will put off some readers, but many others will find this a compelling introduction to the essence of Christian faith. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Praise for *The Real Jesus* — "More than simply being a critique of the historical Jesus enterprise, Johnson's book provides a positive statement about what it means to have a genuine, contemporary faith in the living Jesus." — *Philadelphia Inquirer* — "The best of the recent flow of books [on Jesus]." — *Newsweek* — "One of the most exhilarating religious books published in this decade." — *Christianity Today* — "Passionately argued . . . Highly recommended." — *Library Journal* Praise for *Living Jesus* — "Johnson demonstrates that the 'living Jesus' of the biblical traditions is immensely more fascinating and significant than any of the 'dead Jesus' that the quests for the historical Jesus keep producing." — *Miroslav Volf, Yale University Divinity School* — "A stirring book" — *Informative and challenging* — *The Bible Today*

This is a very well written scripturally and historically based explanation of every statement of faith recited in the Nicene Creed. Johnson explicates not only the meaning and significance of the belief elements of the Creed, but also the scriptural history and the early Christian church history of why and how each statement came to be selected for this fundamental document of Christian faith. I particularly appreciate how the author captures the modern Christian mind, especially in its frequent failure to concentrate on the meaning of the words we recite at each Mass celebration. His honesty here is humbling and encouraging, making the reading of his book an especially rewarding

experience. He acknowledges the challenge to faith the Creed represents while explaining its richness and clarifying as much as humanly possible the nature of the triune God that Christians are called upon to worship and obey. Many sections of the book also capture the marvelous phenomenon that was the vigorous growth of the Church so soon after the ignominious death on the cross of its Founder. This work is a treat for the restimulation of a Christian faith that might be languishing from years of neglect or thoughtless habit and routine. I highly recommend it.

I belong to a liturgical church and have known the Nicene Creed since I was a little girl in church listening to the grown ups recite the words. I think Mr. Johnson did a wonderful job exploring the background of the words and intent of those words, the history behind the words. What can never be explained, of course, is the feeling, the knowledge, the sense of correctness one feels when one, in church or alone, recites these words. The Nicene Creed is the holy history of the Christian. The author, Luke Timothy Johnson, does a great job of making the Creed accessible to those folks not raised with the Nicene Creed and gives some moments of reflection to those of us who were.

Great resource that breaks down the Nicene Creed and gives an explanation of each component. If I remember correctly, Johnson is from the Catholic faith tradition, but he really does a great job leaving out sectarian bias. HE STICKS TO THE SCRIPTURES AND ITS THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE! I highly recommend it to anyone trying to gain more theological insight (with a bit of historical information) on the Nicene Creed. It is very accessible and not bogged down with a lot of "hard-to-understand" theological terminology.

Much of this book resounded with something that I've known and felt but could not put into words. As a result, I would now describe myself as a creedal or confessional Christian, but as the author points out; living out The Creed is the real challenge to those who recite it. The Nicene Creed's ability to put boundaries but not borders on our faith is one of its greatest strengths.

Timely explanation of Christianity's statement of faith in our post-modern and post-Christian times. For someone who grew up in a neo-Protestant denomination, where the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (or any other) have never been mentioned (from the pulpit or during Sunday School), I found this read not only enlightening but also upbuilding for my faith. While I have to say there are a few statements that Luke Timothy Johnson makes without providing any evidence (and which I would like to challenge), this read is not a light read and neither a dry one. The first

chapter briefly discusses the history of the early Christian creeds. The rest of the book is a treatise and explanation of every sentence, phrase, or words found in the Nicene-Constantinoplean creed. There are sub-chapters that are full of wisdom, and many of them are replete with Bible verses and quotations. While Dr. Johnson comes from a Roman-Catholic tradition, his writing is very Protestant and Orthodox friendly, and for that matter Heathen or non-believer friendly. This book is perfect for anyone who wants to learn what Christians believe now and what they have believed since the early Church times. Also, if you want to better understand the Creed which is recited every Sunday in church, this is an excellent read. The only companion in this subtopic (Christian Creeds) that I would recommend is "Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition" by Jaroslav Pelikan.

This is the book for those who want to learn more about the Nicene Creed. Luke Timothy Johnson explains the meaning and history behind the words many Christians recite each Sunday. I highly recommend this book for Christians who want a deeper understanding of what they believe and for non-Christians who would like to understand what Christians believe and why. It is wonderfully written and brings the Nicene Creed to life.

This is an amazing and inspiring book. Gives each of us who want to follow Christ a better understanding of our history and theology. Prof Johnson has made so much clear that is often obscure. I have gifted this book to many people. I have read many of his books and he always teaches me more.

Pretty deep - but understandable. It is a step-by-step, in-depth look at the creed many Christians recite in church every Sunday but rarely really understand. We used it as a subject in my Bible study and it was wonderful - guided by a minister who added his own study and research to it.

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