

Important Creeds and Councils of the Christian Church

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Class XI: The Council of Trent (1546 - 1564): The Counter-reformation Sola Scriptura

Catholicism and Romanism

What is Protestantism?

Sola Scriptura! The Relationship of Scripture and Tradition

The Counter-Reformation: The Council of Trent (1546 - 1564)

The Council of Trent- is the eighteenth (or twentieth) ecumenical council of the Latin Church. It was called by Pope Paul III for the double purpose of settling doctrinal controversies, which then agitated and divided Western Christendom, and was declared to be a necessity. It was opened in the Austrian city of Trent (since 1917, it belongs to Italy) on the 13th of December, 1545 and lasted with long interruptions, until the 4th of December, 1563 (Interestingly, it began the year of Luther's death and ended the year of Calvin's death).

The Council of Trent is simply a Roman Synod, where neither the Protestant nor the Greek Church was represented; the Greeks were never invited, the Protestants were condemned without a hearing. In the history of the Latin Church (Romanism), it is the most important clerical assembly and set the foundation for the Vatican Council of 1870 and Vatican II of 1962. The decisions of the Council relate partly to doctrine, partly to discipline. The doctrine of the Council is called the Decrees (decreta), which contain the positive statements of Roman dogma. The Canons (canones), condemn the dissenting views with the concluding "anathema sit."

The most important doctrinal sessions against the Reformers and establishing the creed of Romanism are:

Session III.

Decree of the Symbol of Faith- Accepting the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) as a basis for the following decrees (2/4/1546).

Session IV.

Decree of the Canon of Scripture (4/8/1546)

Session V.

On Original Sin (6/17/1546)

Session VI.

On Justification (1/13/1547)

Session VII.

On the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (3/3/1547)

Session VIII.

On the Sacrament of the Eucharist (10/11/1551)

The decrees were signed by 255 Latin fathers and were solemnly confirmed by a bull of Pius IV on the 26th January, 1564.

The Creed of Pius IV was prepared by a college of Cardinals in 1564 and was the direct result of the Council of Trent. It consists of twelve articles: the first contains the Nicene Creed in full, the remaining eleven are a precise summary of the specific Roman doctrines formulated at Trent. The Tridentine Creed (or called the Profession of the Tridentine Faith) was made binding in two bulls: 13th November 1564 and 9th December, 1564. It required all Roman Catholic priests and public teachers in Catholic seminaries, colleges and universities to affirm it.

Excerpts from Part II of the Profession of the Tridentine Faith:

2. I most steadfastly admit and embrace the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions...of the Roman Catholic Church. 3. I admit...the holy Scriptures according to that sense which our holy Mother Church has held, and does hold, to which it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. 4. There are seven sacraments...necessary for salvation...5. I embrace and receive all and every one of the things which have been defined and declared in the holy Council of Trent concerning original sin and justification. 6. I profess...the Mass is offered to God...a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead...that in the eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Church calls this transubstantiation. 8. There is a purgatory, and the souls therein detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful...the saints reigning with Christ are to be honored and invoked, and that they offer up prayers to God for us...and their relics are to be held in veneration. 9. ...images of Christ and of the perpetual Virgin, the Mother of God, and also of other saints, ought to be had and retained, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them. I also affirm that the power of indulgences was left by Christ in the Church, and that the use of them is most wholesome to Christian people.

Next Week: The Council of Trent (1546-1564): The Ecclesiastical Fall of Rome: Justification by Faith Alone