

**RELEVANCE OF NICENE CREED IN THE AGE
OF SECULARISM & TECHNOLOGICAL
PROGRESS**

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1. Introduction

The Nicene Creed stands as a monumental achievement in the history of Christianity, not merely as a statement of belief but as the very bedrock upon which the identity of the Church was built. As John Behr aptly writes, "The Nicene Creed was not simply a document, but a lifeline for a Church in turmoil."¹ The Creed's legacy extends beyond doctrinal formulations to its role in uniting the Christian community. Frances Young points out: "The Nicene Creed's influence did not stop with the fourth century. Its power lies in its capacity to transcend its immediate context, offering a universal language for Christians across different cultures and traditions."² Young's observation highlights the Creed's enduring relevance, which has allowed it to serve as a unifying statement of faith across the whole of Christendom. Its continued use in Christian liturgy today speaks to its ability to adapt and resonate with successive generations.

But in today's rapidly evolving world, one may wonder whether the Nicene Creed, with its ancient origins, holds any relevance. As society moves toward secularism and technological advancement, doctrines formed centuries ago may seem distant or disconnected from modern realities.

This paper seeks to explore the Nicene Creed's importance in the contemporary context, particularly in an age marked by secularism and scientific progress. By addressing how the Creed fares in these modern paradigms, it aims to show that far from being obsolete, the Nicene Creed provides a foundational anchor in navigating the ethical, spiritual, and philosophical challenges of our time.

2. Relevance of the Nicene Creed in the Age of Rising Secularism

The idea of secularism differs significantly between the West and India. While Western secularism often advocates for a strict separation of religion and state, Indian secularism promotes equal respect for all religions, allowing state intervention to ensure fairness and

¹ John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 112.

² Frances Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 95.

prevent discrimination. This inclusive model fosters pluralism, embracing diverse religious groups to encourage peaceful coexistence and interfaith dialogue within a multi-religious society. In this context, the Nicene Creed becomes particularly relevant, as it upholds a vision of the Triune God that resonates with India's pluralistic framework.

Trinitarian theology offers a framework for mutual respect and understanding. The *Missio Dei*, understood as the mission of the Triune God, provides an integrated approach and helps the Church to bear witness to the Triune God in a pluralistic context. Yet, Trinitarian theology has not always occupied a central space in Indian theological discourse, which has often been predominantly Christological. While a focus on Christ is essential, an overemphasis on one person of the Trinity risks presenting a fragmented view of God, which may ultimately hinder the church's mission and witness.

Indian theologians like Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the late Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, highlighted the importance of a holistic Trinitarian theology. He stated: “Holistic theology is Trinitarian theology, and holistic mission is Trinitarian mission, comprising both personal ministry and social ministry, conversion and Christian nurture, the whole person and the whole world.”³ This perspective connects the material needs of individuals with their spiritual growth, advocating for a balance between personal freedom, social justice, and the quest for equality, fraternity, and liberty.

The work of theologian Leonardo Boff further enriches this discussion. He emphasizes that “Relational trinitarian theology gives us a vision of God as a dynamic community of mutuality, openness, difference, and love that makes space for others to participate.”⁴ This Trinitarian relationality comes as a critique of ideologies that promote hegemony, concentration of power, and disregard for diversity and plurality. In a society where religious fanaticism seeks to impose homogeneity, the relational openness of the Trinity stands as a powerful counter-narrative.

Boff argues that the Trinity is not only a model for our participation in the divine life but also an inspiration for social structures in this life. He insists that the divine communion of the Trinity who exists in the reciprocity of love serves as inspiration for social structures and

³ Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, “More Cross-Currents in Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7, no. 4 (1983), 176.

⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (MaryKnoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 149.

relationships. It motivates and indeed demands structures which are characterized by participation, inclusion, equality, reciprocity, and respect for individual differences.⁵

As India's secularism faces growing challenges from religious fundamentalism and social discord, the Nicene Creed's relevance is more crucial than ever. It not only articulates the nature of the Triune God but also offers a profound model for societal engagement based on mutual respect, diversity, and unity. In a pluralistic society like India, the Creed's Trinitarian vision stands as a reminder that the Church's mission is not to align with political powers or agendas that could compromise its spiritual foundation but to embody a deeper, transformative witness rooted in love, inclusion, and equality. In doing so, the Church can bear witness to a vision of secularism that truly respects diversity and fosters justice. The Nicene Creed, far from being merely a historical document, provides a living framework for engaging with India's complex social and religious landscape. It challenges the Church to uphold its spiritual mission while advocating for structures of society that embrace participation, reciprocity, and dignity for all, ensuring the Church remains a beacon of unity and hope in a fractured world.

3. Relevance of Creed in the Age of Science and Technological Progress

In an age dominated by scientific discoveries, technological advancements, and secular ideologies, some may question the relevance of this ancient Creed. Can a declaration forged in an era of emperors and councils still hold significance in a world of artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and space exploration?

The flag bearers of pro-technologies, envision a post-human era, where technology like AI and genetic modification may redefine humanity. The aspirations of techno-posthumanism fall nothing short of apotheosis itself, the self-making of today's human into tomorrow's deity. "Having raised humanity above the beastly level of survival struggles, we will now aim to upgrade humans into gods, and turn Homo sapiens into Homo deus,"⁶ touts best-selling author Yuval Harari.

Technological progress raises many questions about humanity's future and our place in creation. While various aspects could be explored, we should be aware on two key ideas:

⁵ Leonardo Boff, "Trinity," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from *Mysterium Liberationis**, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (MaryKnoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 78.

⁶ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Penguin Random House, 2017), 21.

futurum(becoming) versus adventus(coming), and the Orthodox understanding of Theosis. These concepts, rooted in Christian eschatology and the Nicene Creed, provide a vital counter-narrative to the promises of technological utopianism, reminding us of God's ultimate plan and our calling to share in divine life, rather than rely solely on human innovation.

3.1 Eschatology: Futurum(becoming) & Adventus(coming)

The Creedal statement ‘We look... for new life to come,’ the Church affirms its belief in the glorious reign of kingdom of God.’ But the proponents of technological progress present a stark contrast and project the concept of ‘futurology.’ Ronald Cole Turner highlights the words of Carl Braaten who sharply defined the difference between futurology and eschatology: “A crucial difference between secular futurology and Christian eschatology is this: The future in secular futurology is reached by a process of the world’s becoming. The future in Christian eschatology arrives by the coming of God’s kingdom. The one is a becoming and the other a coming.”⁷

The futurists, according to Ted Peters believe in ‘futurum’, which means, human energy and ingenuity can through technological genius overcome the inertia of fate and transform reality for the better. These futurists who invest their faith in *futurum*, and through technological progress they plan to take hold of the steering wheel of evolution and drive both natural and human history to a destination they design.⁸

However, the Church, rooted in the Nicene Creed, envisions a Christian future of *adventus*. The future in Christian eschatology arrives by the coming of God’s kingdom. The one is a ‘becoming’(futurum) and the other a ‘coming’(adventus). Adventus is, God’s future. God’s ultimate future nullifies what has been evil in history, selects what has been wholesome, and transforms the present creation exhaustively, totally, consummately. Jesus’s Easter resurrection from the dead provides the model, the prolepsis, of the advent of the new creation. A new creation, including eternal life, is a gift of God to those of us who are subject to death. It is a gift of divine grace, not the achievement of human technology.⁹

⁷ Ronald Cole-Turner, “Transhumanism and Christianity,” in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*, ed. Ronald Cole-Turner (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 198.

⁸ Ted Peters, “Homo Deus or Frankenstein’s Monster? Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics,” in *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*, ed. Lisa Stenmark and Whitney Bauman (London: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2022), .

⁹ Ted Peters, “Homo Deus or Frankenstein’s Monster?.....”, 4.

3.2 Theosis or Technological Theosis?

The Creed also affirms, "For us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and became man." This part emphasizes that through Christ's redemptive work, humanity is offered the opportunity for transformation and communion with God, foundational to Theosis. But today's technology projects the idea of 'Self-Divinization' or 'Technological Theosis.'

Brandon Gallaher in his article, 'Technological Theosis' contests on two aspects-'Godmanhood and mangodhood'. Mangodhood is characterized by self-worship, the self-deification of humanity. Mangodhood is the mirror inverse of salvation or Theosis. Then there is Godmanhood¹⁰ which is called in Patristic teaching theosis or theopoiesis (divinization/deification) made possible through the Godman, Jesus Christ. When becoming genuinely Christ-like, we employ the famous term of Vladimir Solov'ev "Godmanhood" Gallaher calls Mangodhood as 'Satanic'!

Theosis as "Godmanhood" was understood as the accomplishment by God of the mystery of his embodiment, perfectly realized in Christ, always and in all things. Mangodhood, in contrast, was declared an instance of the sort of sham human auto-divinization we see in Genesis 3 with the Fall of humanity through its temptation by the serpent who weaves human beings into his ploys by both lies and illusions.¹¹

The Church must distinguish between deification by divine grace and auto-deification. Classic Orthodox theology emphasizes the patient self-work of *askesis*¹², which involves cutting back the self and rooting out passions so that our true selves in Christ can flourish. This journey allows us to know the world as God does and resemble Him. In contrast, auto-divinization represents an impatient attempt to seize divinity through human intellect, manipulating nature

¹⁰ Godmanhood means 'becoming Christ-like' or attaining 'Theosis'. This famous term was employed by Vladimir Solov'ev. See, Jeremy Pilch, *'Breathing the Spirit with Both the Lungs': Deification in the Work of Vladimir Solov'ev*(Leuven: Peeters, 2018).

¹¹ Brandon Gallaher, "Technological Theosis?: An Eastern Orthodox Critique of Religious Transhumanism," in *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*, ed. Lisa Stenmark and Whitney Bauman (London: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2022).

¹² **askesis** involves spiritual disciplines like fasting and prayer that purify the heart and mind, ultimately leading to the transformative experience of deification (theosis). This process aligns the believer more closely with God's divine nature, fostering a profound union with Him.

to elevate ourselves beyond our humanity. True theosis, modeled by Jesus, comes as a divine gift through loving obedience and dependence on the Creator, not by seizing divinity.

The key question is: are we striving to be like God in power or goodness? The serpent in Genesis tempted humanity to chase power apart from God, leading to self-sufficiency and destruction. In contrast, Christian theology calls us to holiness and goodness through union with God. True deification comes from imitating Christ, not pursuing power apart from Him. The Church must engage with technology as a gift from God, used for moral progress and the common good, but resist the temptation to elevate it as an ultimate end.

But on the other hand, as Ted Peters mentions, transhumanists think they see in religion is an archaic commitment to the past, to the status quo, to resistance against anything new.¹³ This image is misleading. Christian theology strongly affirms change! The reluctance to embrace progress on the part of theologians does not come from a posture of resistance to change. Rather, it comes from an entirely different source: a critique of those who put their faith in progress, especially technological progress. Deane-Drummond makes this clear: “We need not totally reject technology, but appreciate its proper limits according to particular goals that express the common good.”¹⁴

While the theories emerging from technological progress, may appear naive and counter to Christian theology, the Church cannot turn a blind eye to the technological advancements shaping our world. The Church will inevitably face challenging questions in the future, but it must not compromise its foundational faith as expressed in the Nicene Creed. This faith, which has been handed down through centuries, should remain the guiding light, even in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

Also, Technology can indeed be a tool for moral progress, helping to create a society where it is easier to live in goodness and truth. Advancements in artificial intelligence or virtual reality can foster empathy, streamline resources, and improve human life in ways that reflect God’s creative intention. But the Church must remain vigilant, ensuring that such technologies are used for the common good and not for exploitation, oppression, or moral decay. Pope Francis’ comment on technology is pertinent. ‘If we get the moral part right, then God’s technological

¹³ Ted Peters, “Transhumanism and the Posthuman Future: Will Technological Progress Get Us There?,” in *H+/-: Transhuman and Its Critics*, ed. Gregory R Hansell and William Grassie (Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2011), 159.

¹⁴ Celia Deane-Drummond, *Christ and Evolution* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

gifts to us will align as well. If we get the technology right, but not the morality, then we will all surely die.’

Therefore, the Church's role is to engage thoughtfully with the advancements of our time, ensuring that technological progress is guided by the timeless truths of our faith. In doing so, the Church can address the moral and ethical challenges that arise, without deviating from the foundational teachings of the Nicene Creed.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Nicene Creed remains crucial in navigating the challenges of an age shaped by science and technological progress. As the Church faces futuristic ideologies like post-humanism, transhumanism and techno-utopianism, it must hold firm to the understanding of true divinization—union with God through holiness and love, not through self-deification or the pursuit of power. While technology offers immense potential for societal and moral progress, it must be embraced with discernment, ensuring it serves the common good rather than promoting a distorted sense of human superiority.

The Church’s task is not to resist change or progress but to ensure that advancements align with divine grace, grounded in the timeless truths of the Creed. As technological innovations continue to reshape the human experience, the Creed provides a moral and spiritual compass, reminding the faithful that salvation and transformation come through God’s grace, not human ingenuity. By remaining engaged yet cautious, the Church can help guide humanity toward a future where technology enhances life while preserving the essence of what it means to be truly human—created in the image of God and called to union with Him.

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