“I now feel compelled instead to write to encourage you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

JUDE 1:3b NET
dalí was inspired to paint The Ecumenical Council upon the 1958 election of Pope John XXIII, as the pope had extended communication to Geoffrey Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury—the first such invitation in more than four centuries.

The Ecumenical Council is an assemblage of religious scenes and other symbols with personal significance to Dalí that he often repeated in his works. At the top center of the piece is the holy trinity. A youthful Father extends an arm to cover his face. Below and to the left of God is Jesus, holding a cross. The Holy Spirit floats to the right with [his] face obscured while a dove flies overhead. Between Jesus and the Holy Spirit is a scene from the Papal coronation. Dalí’s wife Gala is shown kneeling under this area, holding a book and a cross.

Dalí did not sign the canvas: instead he included a self-portrait in the lower left corner, looking out at the viewer.
"Why can't you be distracted by cell-phone use like everybody else?"
Questions:

1. What is the “Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints?”
2. Who were the saints?
3. How did they contend earnestly for the faith?

Topics:

1. Christian Orthodoxy
2. The Problem of False Teaching
3. Apostolic and Early Church Fathers
4. Church History
Creeds and Councils: What are they?

I am Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Dean of the Jacksonville campus. My PhD was in Historical Theology from Cambridge University, and my goals here are to provide free, quality explorations of the life of the church and the history of doctrine.

I don’t take myself too seriously, though I always try to take each subject seriously. I also do not expect everyone to agree with me on everything. That is the fun of history: a lot to argue over!

People may also be interested in my blog, where I at times write things (instead of make videos): https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/ryanreeves/
Oldest extant manuscript of the Nicene Creed, dated to the 5th Century
# Comparison between Creed of 325 and Creed of 381

The following table, which indicates by [square brackets] the portions of the 325 text that were omitted or moved in 381, and uses italics to indicate what phrases, absent in the 325 text, were added in 381, juxtaposes the earlier (325 AD) and later (381 AD) forms of this Creed in the English translation given in Schaff's work, *Creeds of Christendom.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Council of Nicaea (325)</th>
<th>First Council of Constantinople (381)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.</strong></td>
<td><strong>We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God.] Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;</strong></td>
<td><strong>And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds (icons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By whom all things were made; [both in heaven and on earth]</strong></td>
<td><strong>by whom all things were made;</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;</strong></td>
<td><strong>who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;</strong></td>
<td><strong>he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.</strong></td>
<td><strong>from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And in the Holy Ghost.</strong></td>
<td><strong>And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not,' and 'He was not before he was made,' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance or essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]
First seven ecumenical councils

In the history of Christianity, the first seven ecumenical councils, from the First Council of Nicaea (325) to the Second Council of Nicaea (787), represent an attempt to reach an orthodox consensus and to unify Christendom. All of the original seven ecumenical councils as recognized in whole or in part were called by an emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire and all were held in the Eastern Roman Empire.

1. The First Council of Nicaea (325)
2. The First Council of Constantinople (381)
3. The Council of Ephesus (431)

This and all the following councils in this list are not recognized by all of the Church of the East.

- The Second Council of Ephesus (449), this council is not recognized as ecumenical and is denounced as a Robber Council by the Chalcedonians (Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants).

4. The Council of Chalcedon (451)
5. The Second Council of Constantinople (553)
6. The Third Council of Constantinople (680–681)

- The Quinisext Council, also called Council in Trullo, (692) addressed matters of discipline (in amendment to the 5th and 6th councils). The Ecumenical status of this council was repudiated by the Western Churches.

7. The Second Council of Nicaea (787)
1. The First Council of Nicaea (325 AD)

The First Council of Nicaea was convened in 325 by the Roman Emperor Constantine. Constantine had hoped to unite his empire under the banner of Christianity, but now saw such unity threatened by a grave theological dispute. Hosius of Cordoba recommended a council as the means to address the brewing controversy and Constantine responded by calling church leaders to Nicaea in Bithynia (modern-day Iznik, Turkey). Somewhere between 250 and 318 bishops from across the Roman empire attended.

The major issue the council was charged with addressing was the nature of Christ's divinity, and in particular, the relationship between the Father and the Son. As a secondary matter the council debated the celebration of Easter.

Lasting Significance

The First Council of Nicaea is most significant in settling an essential issue related to the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was decreed to be eternal and divine, equal with the Father, and infinitely greater than a created being. However, the Council is also significant as the first attempt to achieve a consensus among all Christians through a debate between representatives from the opposing sides. It set a precedent for holding councils to decide other doctrinal and practical church matters, and for turning these decisions into creeds and canon law.

It would be 56 years before the next council, First Council of Constantinople.
2. The First Council Of Constantinople (381 AD)

The First Council of Constantinople was held in Constantinople, modern day Istanbul, Turkey. It was convened by Theodosius I who at that time was Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. The council was convened to try to unite a church that remained divided over the issue of Christ’s nature and his relationship with the Father. Though the First Council of Nicaea had already attempted to reach consensus, Arianism and other heterodox understandings remained a battleground in every region of the empire.

Lasting Significance
The First Council of Constantinople was significant theologically and administratively. Theologically, it had carried on the logic of the Council of Nicaea and cautiously applied that Council’s reasoning about the Son’s relation to the Father to the Holy Spirit, though confining its statement to biblical terminology. Administratively, the Council continued the eastern practice of accommodating the ecclesiastical organization to the civil organization of the Empire, sowing the seeds of discord among the four great sees of East and West by raising the ecclesiastical status of Constantinople to correspond to its civil position as New Rome.

The council was significant, but many councils would remain before there would be that unified Christian doctrine.
3. The Council of Ephesus (431 AD)

The Council of Ephesus was convened in 431 by Theodosius II, emperor of the eastern half of the Roman empire, and he did so at the request of Nestorius. Nestorius’ teaching about the nature of Christ was generating a great deal of controversy in the church, and he requested a council in the hopes of being able to prove his orthodoxy and silence his detractors. The council met in Ephesus, near present-day Selcuk in Turkey with between 200 and 250 bishops in attendance.

This council came at a time of conflict over authority within the church. The First Council of Constantinople had established the bishop of Constantinople as second in authority following Rome, whose bishop carried the title of Pope and who claimed his authority from the line of Peter. Alexandria and Antioch were also powerful bishoprics and their schools of Christology historically came from different positions. “Roughly speaking, all theologians are in Christology either Antiochene, beginning with the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels and attempting to explain how this man is also God, or Alexandrian, beginning with the Word of John’s Prologue and attempting to understand the implications of the Logos taking flesh.” This council would further expose the rift between the two schools of Christology.

Lasting Significance
The Council of Ephesus confirmed the hypostatic union of Christ as it was made explicit in the Nicene Creed. Once again, Trinitarian doctrine had been defended and further clarified.
4. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)

In 449, a Second Council of Ephesus was convened because of the excommunication of a monk named Eutyches, who taught that Christ, after his incarnation, had only one nature. The council itself devolved into drama when those who supported Eutychus, led by Dioscorus and supported by the Roman Emperor Theodosius II, unilaterally and forcefully asserted their doctrine over those who held the orthodox view that Christ has two natures—one fully human and one fully divine—which exist in hypostasis in one person. When news of the council reached Rome, Pope Leo immediately termed it Latrocinium (a “robber council”).

When Marcian, an orthodox Christian, became emperor, he wished to convene another council in order to resolve the turmoil that the Second Council of Ephesus had stirred up. That council met from October 8 to November 1, 451, in Chalcedon, now a district of modern-day Istanbul. It was held here rather than in Italy because of the pressing threat to the Roman Empire from Attila and his Huns.

Lasting Significance
“As with the Creed of Nicaea, 125 years before, the definition of Chalcedon was not the end but the intensification of controversy.” The intensification of this controversy would lead to further disagreements and taking of sides. Within 33 years, because of the decisions of these councils, there would be a full schism between the churches of the East and the West.
2nd Vatican Council 1962

Pope John XXIII
“We should not imagine a committee of church fathers with a large pile of books and these five guiding principles before them when we speak of the process of canonization. No ecumenical committee was commissioned to canonize the Bible.”

Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, From God To Us Revised and Expanded: How We Got Our Bible
“The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.”

“You picked the wrong religion, period. I’m not going to argue about it.”