

One God in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity Athanasian Creed, Part 1

1. INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF THE CREED

2. THE AUTHORITY OF THE CREED

“Just as Christian truth compels us to confess...” (Line 19); “Now this is the true faith: that we believe and confess” (Line 30).

- a. The Athanasian Creed points away from itself to the “Christian truth” that we confess. The Creed has authority because it faithfully and wisely _____ what God’s Word teaches.

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3)

- b. The creed is not a *lens* or *filter* by which we interpret Scripture; rather, it is a *guide* to help us see what is _____ in Scripture. No merely human authority stands between us and God’s Word.

¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. ¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written... (Acts 15:13-15)

¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed... (Acts 17:11-12a)

- c. God is able to speak through his Word in a way that we can _____ and understand.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3)

¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12)

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:23)

- d. Therefore: We love the creeds and confessions as fruitful and wise guides to God’s Word, showing us what is actually there, but not as human mediators _____ us and God’s Word.

3. THE CONTENT OF THE CREED, PART 1

- a. The creed has two parts: one focusing on the _____ (Lines 3-28) and one on the _____ of Christ (Lines 29-44).

- b. The transcendence of God: uncreated (8), immeasurable (9), eternal (10), almighty (13)

- c. The oneness of God: “Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God.” (Lines 15-16; See also 6, 11, 12, 14, 20, 27)

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

[1] Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic¹ faith. [2] Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally. [3] Now this is the catholic faith: that we worship one God in Trinity and the Trinity in unity, [4] neither confounding their persons nor dividing the essence.

[5] For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. [6] But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. [7] Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Spirit.

[8] The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated. [9] The Father is immeasurable, the Son is immeasurable, the Holy Spirit is immeasurable. [10] The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. [11] And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being. [12] So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings; there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being.

[13] Similarly, the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty. [14] Yet there are not three almighty beings; there is but one almighty being. [15] Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. [16] Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God.

[17] Thus, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. [18] Yet there are not three lords; there is but one Lord. [19] Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually as both God and Lord, [20] so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords.

[21] The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone. [22] The Son was neither made nor created; he was begotten from the Father alone.

[23] The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten; he proceeds from the Father and the Son.

[24] Accordingly, there is one Father, not three fathers; there is one Son, not three sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits. [25] None in this Trinity is before or after, none is greater or smaller; [26] in their entirety the three persons are coeternal and coequal with each other.

[27] So in everything, as was said earlier, the unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity, is to be worshipped.

[28] Anyone then who desires to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.

[29] But it is necessary for eternal salvation that one also believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.

[30] Now this is the true faith: that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man, equally.

[31] He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is man from the essence of his mother, born in time; [32] completely God, completely man, with a rational soul and human flesh; [33] equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity.

[34] Although he is God and man, yet Christ is not two, but one. [35] He is one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh, but by God's taking humanity to himself.

[36] He is one, certainly not by the blending of his essence, but by the unity of his person. [37] For just as one man is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and man.

[38] He suffered for our salvation; he descended to hell;² he arose from the dead on the third day; [39] he ascended to heaven; he is seated at the Father's right hand; [40] from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. [41] At his coming all people will arise bodily [42] and give an accounting of their own deeds. [43] Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.

[44] This is the catholic faith: that one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully.

¹ "Catholic" means universal; that is, there is one church across all times, places, and peoples (Belgic Confession, art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 54).

² See Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 44; Canons of Dort, 2.4.