

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

One of the clearest, most beautiful statements of the Trinity is the Athanasian Creed. While not an official document of the universal (or ecumenical or catholic) councils, the Athanasian Creed seems named in honor of Athanasius, the great defender of Trinitarian doctrine. Used as a Western catechism from about 450 onward, its usefulness continues today:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic [universal] faith, which except everyone shall have kept whole and undefiled, without doubt he will perish eternally. Now the catholic faith is this: We worship One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is One, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit; the Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, and the Holy Spirit is uncreated; the Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, and the Holy Spirit is infinite; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet there are not three eternals but one eternal, as also not three infinites, nor three uncreateds, but one uncreated, and one infinite.

So, likewise, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty; and yet not three almighties but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God; and yet not three Gods but one God. So the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord; and yet not three Lords but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by Christian truth to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be both God and Lord; so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, there be three Gods or three Lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten but proceeding. So there is one Father not three Fathers, one Son not three Sons, and one Holy Spirit not three Holy Spirits.

And in this Trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, but the whole three Persons are coeternal together and coequal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped. He therefore who wills to be in a state of salvation, let him think thus of the Trinity."