

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”, Message # 60 – “The Athanasian Creed”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 27th, 2020.

Paragraph 3 – In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, d) the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, e) yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is f) eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit g) proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.

d) 1st John 5: 7; Matthew 28: 19; 2nd Corinthians 13: 14; e) Exodus 3: 14; John 14: 11;

1st Corinthians 8:6; f) John 1:14,18; g) John 15:26; Gal 4: 6)

The Athanasian Creed says – “Whoever wants to be saved should above all cling to the catholic faith. Whoever does not guard it whole and inviolable will doubtless perish eternally. Now this is the catholic faith: We worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Spirit is still another. But the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, coeternal in majesty. What the Father is, the Son is, and so is the Holy Spirit. Uncreated is the Father; uncreated is the Son; uncreated is the Spirit. The Father is infinite; the Son is infinite; the Holy Spirit is infinite. Eternal is the Father; eternal is the Son; eternal is the Spirit: And yet there are not three eternal beings, but one who is eternal; as there are not three uncreated and unlimited beings, but one who is uncreated and unlimited.

Almighty is the Father; almighty is the Son; almighty is the Spirit: And yet there are not three almighty beings, but one who is almighty. Thus the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God: And yet there are not three gods, but one God. Thus the Father is Lord; the Son is Lord; the Holy Spirit is Lord: And yet there are not three lords, but one Lord. As Christian truth compels us to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords. The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten; the Son was neither made nor created, but was alone begotten of the Father; the Spirit was neither made nor created, but is proceeding from the Father and the Son. Thus there is one Father, not three fathers; one Son, not three sons; one Holy Spirit, not three spirits. And in this Trinity, no one is before or after, greater or less than the other; but all three persons are in themselves, coeternal and coequal; and so we must worship the Trinity in unity and the one God in three persons.

Whoever wants to be saved should think thus about the Trinity. It is necessary for eternal salvation that one also faithfully believe that our Lord Jesus Christ became flesh. For this is the true faith that we believe and confess: That our Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is both God and man. He is God, begotten before all worlds from the being of the Father, and he is man, born in the world from the being of his mother — existing fully as God, and fully as man with a rational soul and a human body; equal to the Father in divinity, subordinate to the Father in humanity. Although he is God and man, he is not divided, but is one Christ. He is united because God has

taken humanity into himself; he does not transform deity into humanity. He is completely one in the unity of his person, without confusing his natures. For as the rational soul and body are one person, so the one Christ is God and man. He suffered death for our salvation. He descended into hell and rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people shall rise bodily to give an account of their own deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, those who have done evil will enter eternal fire. This is the catholic faith. One cannot be saved without believing this firmly and faithfully.

(Taken from the Reformed Church in America Website: Reformed Theology/Creeds and Confessions/The Athanasian Creed)

The 2nd Person is named the Son, because of filiation. (That is – Because of the Divine eternal Personal relationship between the Father and the Son in the One Essence of God)

A. He is called “the Son” because He is begotten of his Father’s substance, or nature. (Prov. xxx. 4; Psalm. ii. 7; Heb. i. 3; Phil. ii. 6;)

John 1: 18 – “No one has seen God at any time.” The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

Why is it that God cannot be seen by people? Because God is a spirit.

The Logos, the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity was begotten by the Father; an eternal begetting, an eternal act. Whatever God does, He does forever. Whatever He does, is done in an eternal sense. The word became flesh; He took to Himself human nature. The begetting takes place within God; not bringing forth anything outside of Himself, except in the Incarnation.

R.C. Sproul on the Athanasian Creed – “The Athanasian Creed

(<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/athanasian-creed/>)

Quicumque vult— this phrase is the title attributed to what is popularly known as the Athanasian Creed. It was often called the Athanasian Creed because for centuries people attributed its authorship to Athanasius, the great champion of Trinitarian orthodoxy during the crisis of the heresy of Arianism that erupted in the fourth century. That theological crisis focused on the nature of Christ and culminated in the Nicene Creed in 325. At the Council of Nicea of that year the term homoousios was the controversial word that finally was linked to the church’s confession of the person of Christ. With this word the church declared that the second person of the Trinity has the same substance or essence as the Father, thereby affirming that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in being and eternity. Though Athanasius did not write the Nicene Creed, he was its chief champion against the heretics who followed after Arius, who argued that Christ was an exalted creature but that He was less than God.

Athanasius died in 373 a.d., and the epithet that appeared on his tombstone is now famous, as it captures the essence of his life and ministry. It read simply, “Athanasius contra mundum,” that is, “Athanasius against the world.” This great Christian leader suffered several exiles during the embittered Arian controversy because of the steadfast profession of faith he maintained in Trinitarian orthodoxy.

Though the name “Athanasius” was given to the creed over the centuries, modern scholars are convinced that the Athanasian Creed was written after the death of Athanasius. Certainly, Athanasius’ theological influence is embedded in the creed, but in all likelihood he was not its author. The present title, *Quicumque Vult*, follows the custom in the Roman Catholic Church that is used for encyclicals and creedal statements. These ecclesiastical affirmations get their name from the first word or words of the Latin text. The Athanasian Creed begins with the words *quicumque vult*, which means “whoever wishes” or “whosoever wishes,” inasmuch as this phrase introduces the first assertion of the Athanasian Creed. That assertion is this: “Whosoever wishes to be saved must, above all, keep the catholic faith.” The Athanasian Creed seeks to set forth in summary version those essential doctrines for salvation affirmed by the church with specific reference to the Trinity.

With respect to the history of the origins of the Athanasian Creed, it is generally thought now that the creed was first written in the fifth century — though the seventh century is also given its due, since the creed does not show up in the annals of history until 633 at the fourth council of Toledo. It was written in Latin and not in Greek. If written in the fifth century, several possible authors have been mentioned because of the influence of their thought including Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo, but it likely was the French saint, Vincent of Lérins.

The content of the Athanasian Creed stresses the affirmation of the Trinity in which all members of the Godhead are considered uncreated and co-eternal and of the same substance. In the affirmation of the Trinity the dual nature of Christ is given central importance. As the Athanasian Creed in one sense reaffirms the doctrines of the Trinity set forth in the fourth century at Nicea, in like manner the strong affirmations of the fifth-century council at Chalcedon in 451 are also recapitulated therein. As the church fought with the Arian heresy in the fourth century, the fifth century brought forth the heresies of monophysitism, which reduced the person of Christ to one nature, *mono physis*, a single theanthropic (God-man) nature that was neither purely divine or purely human. In the Monophysite heresy of Eutyches, the person of Christ was seen as being one person with one nature, which nature was neither truly divine nor truly human. In this view, the two natures of Christ were confused or co-mingled together. At the same time the church battled with the monophysite heresy, she also fought against the opposite view of Nestorianism, which sought not so much to blur and mix the two natures but to separate them, coming to the conclusion that Jesus had two natures and was therefore two persons, one human and one divine. Both the Monophysite heresy and the Nestorian heresy were clearly condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, where the church, reaffirming its Trinitarian orthodoxy, stated their belief that Christ, or the second person of the Trinity was *vere homo* and *vere Deus*, truly human and truly God. It further declared that the two natures in their perfect unity coexisted in such a manner as to be without mixture, confusion, separation, or division, wherein each nature retained its own attributes. So with one creedal affirmation, both the heresy of Nestorianism and the heresy of Monophysitism were condemned.

The Athanasian Creed reaffirms the distinctions found at Chalcedon, where in the Athanasian statement Christ is called, “perfect God and perfect man.” All three members of the Trinity are deemed to be uncreated and therefore co-eternal. Also following earlier affirmations, the Holy Spirit is declared to have proceeded both from the Father “and the Son,” affirming the so-called *filioque* concept that was so controversial with Eastern Orthodoxy. Eastern Orthodoxy to this day has not embraced the *filioque* idea.

Finally, the Athanasian standards examined the incarnation of Jesus and affirmed that in the mystery of the incarnation the divine nature did not mutate or change into a human nature, but rather the immutable divine nature took upon itself a human nature. That is, in the incarnation there was an assumption by the divine nature of a human nature and not the mutation of the divine nature into a human nature.

The Athanasian Creed is considered one of the four authoritative creeds of the Roman Catholic Church, and again, it states in terse terms what is necessary to believe in order to be saved. Though the Athanasian Creed does not get as much publicity in Protestant churches, the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation are affirmed by virtually every historic Protestant church.”