The Athanasian Creed
The Church’s Confession of the Holy Trinity

Early in the fourth century, a new teaching appeared which claimed that Jesus was not true God. Arius, the north African priest who first proposed this theory, was extremely persuasive, and soon the controversy was so widespread that a church council was called to settle the matter. Out of that meeting in A.D. 325 came the Nicene Creed, which clearly confesses Jesus to be true God. That creed, which was expanded in A.D. 381 in order to defend the divinity of the Holy Spirit, is still widely used today as a confession of the tritheine faith.

Despite the clarity of the Nicene Creed, the controversy continued for some time. Toward the end of the fifth century, another creed was written that marveled at the mystery of the Trinity in a way that no creed had ever done. Though attributed to Athanasius, a fourth-century opponent of Arius, this anonymous creed clearly came at a later stage in the debate.

The Athanasian Creed proclaims that its teachings concerning the Holy Trinity and our Lord’s incarnation are the catholic faith. In other words, this is what the true church of all times and all places has confessed. More than 15 centuries later, the church continues to confess this truth, confident that the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has given himself for our salvation.

L: Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith.
C: Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish eternally.
L: And the catholic faith is this,
C: That we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.
L: For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another.
C: But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
L: Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit:
C: The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated;
L: The Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite;
C: The Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal.
L: And yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal,
C: Just as there are not three Uncreated or three Infinites, but one Uncreated and one Infinite.
L: In the same way, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty;
C: And yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.
L: So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;
C: And yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

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