

The Trinity - Belgic Confession, article 8 and 9 Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed

The Trinity

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons: they are not one person. But they are the One God. They are not three Gods. The Church created a word to describe this: Trinity. The word Trinity cannot be found in the Bible. But it does summarize the doctrine of the Bible.

Heresies

The church went through many struggles to come to a solid and Biblical understanding of the Trinity. Throughout this history the Holy Spirit guided the church so that the Biblical doctrine was clearly summarized in Creeds and Confessions.

One of the earliest heresies is that of Arius, in the second and beginning of the third century. The church rejected this heresy at the council of Nicea (AD 325) and at the council of Constantinople (AD 381) the Nicene Creed was adopted as Creed of the church.

After Arius other heretics denied that Jesus Christ assumed true human nature. And with that they rejected the Trinity. The doctrine of the trinity as well as the two natures of Christ is defended in the Athanasian Creed.

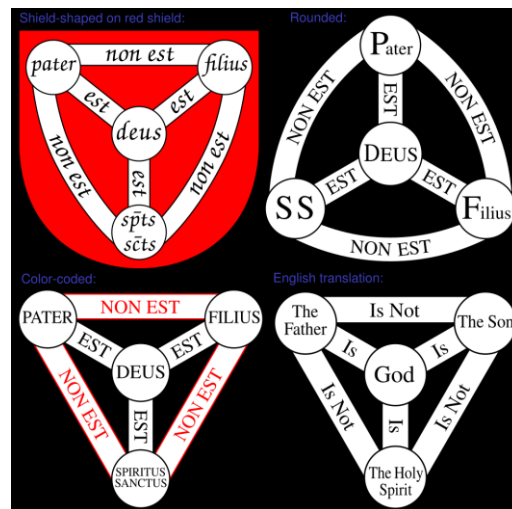
The Athanasian Creed emphatically states that who does not believe the Trinity, cannot be saved (see art. 28).

During the Middle Ages, the church further defended the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is central to the Christian Faith.

Here are two pictures: one from around 1210 (left) and one from 1255-1265 (right). They were used as a symbol to summarise the Christian confession: I believe in God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



And here are some modern versions in both Latin and English:



The Belgic Confession

The Bible tells us that there is only one God.

Article 8 of the Belgic Confession summarises the Biblical teaching.

Article 9 quotes a number of texts from the Bible to support this summary. There are many more texts which can be used, but the Belgic Confession made a careful selection.

Three Gods?

Many have tried to explain that the Three Persons can be One God. But there is not one satisfactory explanation.

Here are two examples being used. Explain why they fall short.

1. Water has three different forms: ice, water, steam, but it is all water.



2. Our national flag has three colours, which form together the one flag.



However, the doctrine of the Trinity is impossible for us to understand. Examples like these fall short to explain it. No creature can be used to explain the Trinity.

One God, Who is at the same time Three Persons. Not three different forms in which God reveals Himself, but three Persons. At the baptism of Jesus, they were all three present: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If we try to understand it, we will always fail. We should not try to explain what the Trinity is but accept and believe what the Bible says.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29:29

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Isaiah 55:8,9

God is eternal God. We are not eternal. We don't understand what eternity means. God is our Creator, we are His creatures. A creature cannot fully understand his Creator. God is wiser than we are.

God revealed to us in His Word that He is the One God, but Three Persons. He did not give us an explanation for it.

We know it but cannot understand it. We believe it.

A. Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word, that these three distinct persons are the one, true, eternal God. **HC Lord's Day 8, answer 25**