

Jesus Christ: True and Eternal God and True and Righteous Man

Belgic Confession article 10 and 19

Article 10 shows from the Bible that Jesus Christ was and is not only a human being but also true and eternal God, the only-begotten Son of God.

Article 19 explains that Christ has two natures, united in one Person.

These two natures have their distinct properties.

- God the Son has not been created. He is eternal and as God filling heaven and earth.
- Jesus Christ as man has been created. His human nature is finite, or else He couldn't die. After His resurrection He has given immortality to His human nature.

But we still believe that He is one Person. Even in His death, His human and divine nature were not separated.

This is impossible for us to comprehend. This must be believed.

This doctrine has been denied by heretics throughout the history of the church, but is essential for us to believe, or else we cannot be saved.

- Lord's Day 6 of the Heidelberg Catechism explains why He must be a true and righteous man (q/a 16) and why He also must be true God (q/a 17). This is also summarised at the end of Article 19 of the Belgic Confession.
- The Athanasian Creed confesses that for our eternal salvation we must believe that our Lord Jesus did assume human nature (see art. 29, on page 495 of the Book of Praise).

Church History

In the third and fourth century, especially Arius had much influence in the church. In his time there were heretics who did not believe that Jesus was really God. Arius agreed with them and developed a doctrine about Christ, in which he said that Jesus was not the real Son of God. At a certain moment He was created by God, as a special man. And because He was a very special man, who did very special things and gave a good example to other men, He received the name 'Son of God'. Just like in the Greek mythology some men who did special things, were called sons of the gods. In the same way, God adopted Jesus as His Son.

In 325 the Council of Nicea was called by Emperor Constantine, and this Council rejected the doctrine of Arius. This Council formulated the Christian doctrine about the Trinity and about Jesus as the Son of God. It was the Council of Constantinople in 381, which adopted the Nicene Creed, in which the doctrinal decision of the Council of Nicea was summarised. Against Arius, it is said in this Creed that Christ is not made, that He is one of substance with the Father. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. (See the Nicene Creed, page 494 of the Book of Praise).

Later, others denied that Christ was true man. They believed that Christ, as Son of God, did not assume human flesh, but He dwelled in a human body, and He again left the human body before this body died on the cross. Because 'God can not die', so it is impossible that Christ Himself died on the cross, they believed.

Against these heresies, the church adopted the Athanasian Creed. It has the name of Athanasius, although he did not write it himself. Athanasius, a bishop in the fourth century, strongly defended the Christian doctrine about the Trinity and about Christ against the heresies of Arius and others. Therefore, this Creed has his name. He was one of the most famous defenders of this Christian doctrine.

This creed consists of two sections. The first sets forth the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The second deals with the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning the two natures.

This Creed is probably written in the time of Augustine (354-430). And his teachings form the background of this Creed. Augustine is one of the most famous 'Church Fathers'.