



The 39 Articles

The faith we confess



Spring 2026

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.



Bible Reading

Romans 10.4-13 (p1137)

1 John 4.1-6 (p1227)

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God



Why creeds?



- Why do you think?
- Two key reasons:
 - *confessing the faith and contending for the faith*
 - *Confessing:*
 - *“if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Ro. 10.9)*
 - *Contending:*
 - *“test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God ...” (1 John 4.1-2)*



Why creeds?

- How many creeds does the Church of England recognise?
 - *The Apostles' creed: confessing*
 - *The Nicene Creed: confessing and contending*
 - *The Athanasian Creed: contending*
- The Athanasian Creed:
 - *meant to be recited around every four weeks at Morning Prayer*
 - *not used in full at St John's for at least decades – or ever?*
 - *until tonight!*

The Athanasian Creed



Whosoever wishes to be saved
before all things it is necessary
that he hold the catholic faith,
which faith, if anyone does not keep it
whole and unharmed,
without doubt he will perish everlastingly.

Now, the catholic faith is this,
that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity,
neither confusing the Persons
nor dividing the divine Being.

For there is one Person of the Father,
another of the Son,
and another of the Holy Spirit,
but the Godhead of the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit is all one,
their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son
and such is the Holy Spirit:
the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated,
and the Holy Spirit uncreated;





the Father infinite, the Son infinite,
and the Holy Spirit infinite;
the Father eternal, the Son eternal,
and the Holy Spirit eternal;
and yet they are not three Eternals
but one Eternal,

just as they are not three Uncreateds, nor three Infinites,
but one Uncreated and one Infinite.
In the same way, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty,
and the Holy Spirit almighty;
and yet they are not three Almightyies
but one Almighty.

Thus the Father is God, the Son is God,
and the Holy Spirit is God;
and yet there are not three Gods
but one God.



Thus the Father is the Lord, the Son is the Lord,
and the Holy Spirit is the Lord;
and yet not three Lords
but one Lord.

Because, just as we are compelled by Christian truth to confess each Person singly to be both God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords.



The Father is from none,
not made nor created nor begotten;
the Son is from the Father alone,
not made nor created, but begotten;
the Holy Spirit is from 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;
one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.



And in this Trinity there is no before or after,
no greater or less,
but all three Persons are co-eternal with each other
and co-equal.

So that in all things, as has already been said,
the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, is to be
worshipped.

He therefore who wishes to be saved
let him think thus of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he should faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Now, the right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man equally.

He is God from the Being of the Father,
begotten before the worlds,
and he is man from the being of his mother,
born in the world;

perfect God and perfect man,
having both man's rational soul and human flesh;
equal to the Father as regards his divinity
and inferior to the Father as regards his humanity;



who, although he is God and man,
yet he is not two, but one Christ;
one, however, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh
but by the taking up of humanity into God;
utterly one, not by confusion of human and divine being
but by unity of Christ's one Person.

For just as the rational soul and flesh are one man,
so God and man are one Christ;
who suffered for our salvation,
descended to the realm of the dead,
rose again the third day from the dead,
ascended to heaven,
sat down at the right hand of the Father,

from where he will come to judge the living and the dead;
at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies
and will give an account for their own actions,
and those who have done good will go into life everlasting
and those who have done evil into everlasting fire.



This is the catholic faith
which, if anyone does not believe
faithfully and firmly,
he cannot be saved.

Amen!



ARTICLES OF RELIGION

A TABLE OF THE ARTICLES

1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.
2. Of Christ the Son of God.
3. Of his going down into Hell.
4. Of his Resurrection.
5. Of the Sufficiency of the Scriptures of the Old Testament.
6. Of the Original or Birth-sin.
7. Of Justification.
8. Of Works before Justification.
9. Of Works of Supererogation.
10. Of the Church.
11. Of the Sacraments.
12. Of the Power of the Keys.



Article VIII: “Of the Three Creeds”



- “THE Three Creeds, *Nicene Creed*, *Athanasius’s Creed*, and that which is commonly called the *Apostles’ Creed*, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.”
- The article answers two questions:
 - *What are the three authoritative Creeds?*
 - *Exactly what authority do the Creeds have?*



The 3 Authoritative Creeds

- Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian (in age order)
- Their names are inaccurate: the apostles didn't write the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed wasn't agreed at the Council of Nicaea and Athanasius was long dead before his Creed was written!
 - *The Article acknowledges this in part by referring to “that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed”.*
 - *An entirely unreliable legend has it that on the Day of Pentecost, each apostle wrote one line of the creed!*



The 3 Authoritative Creeds

- However, each faithfully represents the teaching held by those named:
 - *The Apostles' Creed that of the apostles.*
 - *The Nicene Creed the orthodox teaching of the councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon.*
 - *The Athanasian Creed the teaching of the indefatigable Bishop of Alexandria who relentlessly opposed Arianism – “Athanasius contra mundum”*



The Apostles' Creed (112 words)

- Dates to the 2nd century in its earliest form, before becoming fixed in the 4th century.
- Its content was used to prepare baptismal candidates as a summary of the apostolic gospel.
- In earliest times, it was verbal, not written:
 - *“As late as the time of St Augustine the creed was not committed to writing but stored up in the memory, as a statement of revealed truth to be pondered on and treasured.”*
- It remains an excellent framework for catechism!

I want to be a Christian

J.I. Packer



The Nicene Creed (222 words)



- Probably written by Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (Cyprus) in 374.
- It reflects the teaching of the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381).
- It is designed to define and defend the Bible's teaching about the Trinity and Christ's incarnation.
- Associated with the celebration of the Lord's Supper since the 6th century.

The Athanasian Creed (683 words)



- Is it a creed?
 - *“This document is not really a Creed, but an exposition of the Nicene Creed on the two great points of the Holy Trinity and our Lord’s Incarnation.” (WH Griffith-Thomas)*
- Its length and polemical “bookends” made it unpopular by the 18th century.
 - *American Anglicans ditched it on independence in 1789!*
- It remains a classic statement of biblical orthodoxy.



The authority of the Creeds

- According to the Article, the Creeds “ought thoroughly to be received and believed.”
- But why should we?
 - *Because they are very ancient?*
 - *That is true, but not enough: something can be old and wrong!*
 - *Because they have the authority of the church?*
 - *That is also true, but sometimes “the Church ... hath erred ... in matters of faith.” (Article XIX).*

The authority of the Creeds



- According to the Article, the Creeds “ought thoroughly to be received and believed: *for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.*”
- In other words, our ultimate authority is neither church tradition nor church authority, but God’s word alone.
- Perhaps it’s clearer if we see the alternative ...

The authority of the Creeds



- The Ten Articles of 1536

- *These were written when the Church of England had broken away from the Pope's power, but not Roman Catholic theology.*
- *Preachers must, "believe and defend ... the Bible, and also ... in the three creeds".*
- *In other words, both the Bible and the creeds that developed in the church's tradition had a parallel authority.*

The authority of the Creeds



- This is even clearer in Roman Catholic theology today:
 - *“In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority. ...” (§77)*
 - *“As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.” (§82)*

God's Authoritative Word



- Canon A5:

- *“The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.”*

God's Authoritative Word



- Canons A1-8:
 - *A thing is acceptable if it is “agreeable” to the Word of God (ie positively taught in Scripture) or “not repugnant” to it (ie not forbidden by it).*
- So what is genuinely “Anglican theology”?
 - *“Show us anything clearly set forth in Holy Scripture that we do not teach, and we will teach it; show us anything in our teaching and practice that is plainly contrary to Holy Scripture, and we will abandon it.” (Bishop Stephen Neill)*

Questions



Collect for Trinity Sunday



ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of thy Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech thee, that thou wouldst keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Evening Collect



Lighten our darkness, Lord:
and by your great mercy defend us
from all peril and danger this night;
for the love of your only Son
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.