

B.A.S.I.C.

Brothers And Sisters In Christ

The Athanasian Creed

By Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As there are not three Uncreated nor three Incomprehensibles, but one Uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And

yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after other; none is greater or less than another; But the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He, therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

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

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the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ: One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; He ascended into heaven; He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give an account of their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

Martin Luther once said of the Athanasian Creed: 'I doubt whether the New Testament church has a more important document since the Apostolic Age.' However, in our day, the Athanasian Creed is not nearly as well known as it was in Luther's day.

The Athanasian Creed is like the Apostles' in that its author is unknown. It was written later than the Nicene Creed, appearing in its complete form near the

end of the eighth century. It was wrongly attributed to Athanasius at first, but has kept that title because of Athanasius' defense of the deity of Christ and the Trinity - the two main subjects of this creed.

The Athanasian Creed is an excellent summary of the decisions of the first four ecumenical councils (Nicea - 325, Constantinople - 381, Ephesus - 431, and Chalcedon - 451) against various and many false teachings concerning the fundamental teachings of Scripture.

In the years 400-800 A.D. false teachers arose who began to deny the doctrine of the Trinity and the person and work of Jesus Christ. For this reason, the 'Athanasian Creed' deals with the most fundamental Christian truths of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, and His redeeming work. Our ultimate salvation is at stake because without knowledge of these truths saving faith is impossible.

This confession consists of two distinct parts: The first sets forth in great detail the teaching of the Trinity. It goes beyond the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds which do not state the doctrine of the Trinity explicitly, but by implication. The second part contains a short and clear statement concerning the doctrine of the person of Christ, teaching the proper relation between the divine and human nature of Christ.

So that there is no confusion, we should take note of a few things:

The expression 'catholic faith' does not refer to membership in the Roman Catholic Church, but of those who are

united in the 'universal Christian faith' and members of the Holy Christian Church. 'Catholic' is the Latin word for 'universal.'

The term 'uncreate' reminds us that all three persons of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are equal and without beginning or end. The Son was not 'created' by the Father, nor was the Holy Spirit 'created' by the Father and the Son. All three persons have existed from eternity as one united equal God.

The creed also goes into detail ('perfect God and perfect man'; 'one altogether; not by confusion of substance but by unity of Person.') to show that Jesus Christ was at once fully God and fully man. Jesus was not half God and half man, but as incomprehensible as it seems both immortal and mortal at the same time.

Whenever works are spoken of in connection with the judgment it is good to remember -

Good Works are those things done by believers in the true fear and love of God - for Jesus' sake. The writer to the Hebrews writes: 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him' (Hebrews 11:6).

These will stand as evidence of true faith in Christ, which alone saves. James declares: 'Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead' (James 2:17).

In contrast to the peaceful tone of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Athanasian Creed begins and ends with the strong condemnation: 'This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.' While many have opposed this harsh wording, the same is taught in Scripture: Jesus said, 'Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins' (John 8:24; cf. Acts 4:12, Mark 16:15-16). Let us continue to proclaim both the Law and Gospel of Scripture to today's world!

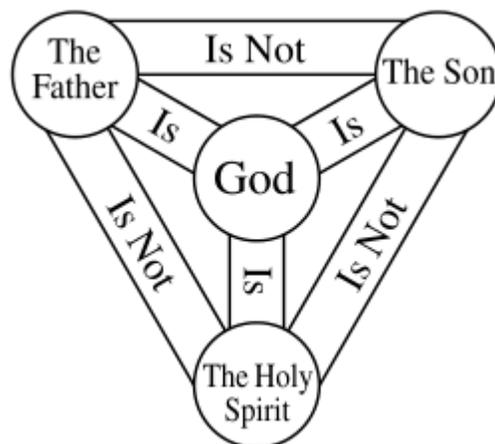


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BELC—Bakthavachalam

By Pastor Emeritus David Koenig

D. Paul Bakthavachalam is president of Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church. When we had a division from the former head of the BELC, D. Paul was the vice-president and stayed with us as did most of the pastors at that time. Since then, there has been steady growth in the church body. About two years ago after four years of not accepting new men for study in the districts, a new batch of 174 men were accepted for study. We praise God for the interest of these men in our sister synod's work. It certainly was not an interest in earthly gain, as we do not pay salaries from the states for these men nor from any central purse of the BELC. The Word of God is alive and active working in the hearts.

Of the new men who entered study and the oldest of them bore the same name as D. Paul, but is not related. D. Paul recently wrote how this man was doing.

"G.D. Bakthavachalam aged 77 years is one of our BELC pastors under the Chittoor District. His wife's name is Usha Rani age 55 and has some mental disorder. He has two sons: one son left in his 21 years old and he will not likely yet return back, one son is studying with us in our Madanapalli Bible classes.

Pastor is serving and is with us. He began his ministry service in 1987 was serving three congregations. Before he became a pastor he had served as a school teacher and he voluntarily resigned his job and began his ministry. Total believers - 125 in his congregation
Thanking you,
Yours in Him, D. Paul"

Meetings with interested pastors were held in G.D.'s partially completed church. He came by bus to our new meetings at Chittoor District which was a long way away. Sometimes he missed classes due to back problems. But he completed the studies and joined us. He is one of the oldest of BELC pastors with a white beard and sparkling eyes.

When Peter said, "Lo, we have left everything and followed You" Jesus answered that we receive a hundredfold back in God's way in this time with persecutions also, and "in the age to come eternal life."

BELC Statistics: Pastors - 774, Pastors in Training - 22, Congregations 1319, Preaching Stations - 387, Members - 40,000+



G.D. Bakthavachalam and wife, Usha, outside his church