

*"Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6, Apocalypse 4)*

Trinity Sunday is one of the days on which the Prayer Book bids us recite the Athanasian Creed at Morning Prayer - as I do. You can find it in the Prayer Book between Evening Prayer and the Litany, so I won't print it here. But it is worth pondering - don't get bogged down in the threats at the beginning and the end which aren't the heart of the matter.

It isn't by Saint Athanasius (a 4th century Greek speaking "Pope" of Alexandria in Egypt) since it seems to be of 6th century date, written in Latin and from southern France). And it isn't a creed (proper creeds are used in baptism to make clear what the candidate is committing himself or herself to). So far as we know, it has never been used for that purpose, but only for worship (even if it was once used for a heretic coming back to the true faith, that is a matter of right worship as much of right ideas).

I should warn you that the Orthodox churches believe the Athanasian Creed should never have been written (because it was wrong to make new creeds after the Church agreed to what we call the Nicene creed). They also think that it contains false doctrine (because they reject the view of the Western churches that the Holy Ghost "is of the Father and the Son"). But all that doesn't make the Athanasian Creed valueless. The Prayer book insists on its use, as I said.

The most important thing we can do is to "rejoice in the Lord". That is at the heart of any serious religion, and certainly at the heart of Jesus' devotion to the Father. One way of doing that is to describe our own puzzlement at God. Be sure, Christianity is not like passing an examination; we are not saved by having even right information about God, but by his help enabling us to give ourselves to him.

We are not saved by having information, much less by churning it out, and faced with the wonder of God we will always end in puzzlement and perplexity even if he by his mercy doesn't let us start there.

But that does not mean information about God is useless. If we are to give ourselves to God (as to any other person or cause, only more so) we will naturally want to know something about him; what he does and what he is like. And in Christianity we can't avoid complications, because we worship one God and yet when we are made members of Christ and receive the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, this is not gifts of beings separate from the Father, but is the very life of the Godhead. And again, our Saviour were of little use if he were not completely human and yet also completely in the Godhead. Hence the puzzles which the Athanasian creed describes and does not invent.

You don't have to delight in puzzles! You do have to delight in God, and give glory to the Father, through the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*"He that liveth for ever created all things in common. The Lord alone shall be justified. To none hath he given power to declare his works: and who shall trace out his mighty deeds? . . . As for the wondrous works of the Lord, it is not possible to take from them nor add to them, neither is it possible to track them out. When a man hath finished, then he is but at the beginning; and when he ceaseth, then shall he be in perplexity." (Ecclesiasticus 18)*