

**"THE ATHANASIAN CREED" AND
ITS USAGE IN THE ENGLISH
CHURCH; A LETTER TO THE VERY
REVEREND W. F. HOOK, D.D. F.R.S.
FROM C. A. SWAINSON, D.D.**

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C. A. SWAINSON

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"THE 'ATHANASIAN CREED"

And its usage in the English Church

RIVINGTONS

London	<i>Waterloo Place</i>
Oxford	...	...	...	...	...	<i>High Street</i>
Cambridge	...	...	...	...	...	<i>Trinity Street</i>



"THE ATHANASIAN CREED"

AND

Its usage in the English Church :

*AN INVESTIGATION AS TO THE ORIGINAL OBJECT OF THE
CREED AND THE GROWTH OF PREVAILING
MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING IT*

A LETTER

TO THE

VERY REVEREND W. F. HOOK, D.D. F.R.S.

DEAN OF CHICHESTER

FROM

C. A. SWAINSON, D.D.,

CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP
OF CHICHESTER; MORRISIAN PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, CAMBRIDGE



RIVINGTONS

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1870

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TO THE DEAN OF CHICHESTER.

MY DEAR MR. DEAN,

I hope you are not so wearied with perusing the correspondence which has been recently carried on in the *Guardian* and elsewhere, with reference to the Athanasian Creed, as to refuse a reading to one more letter on the subject, of somewhat greater length than any which has recently appeared. I have some rays of light to throw upon its use and history which have not been as yet collected ; some few suggestions to make as to its continuance in our services, founded upon past usage, which do not appear to have been offered by others.

And may I begin my remarks by a few notes on our Thirty-Nine Articles, in the eighth of which, as we all know, mention is made of Athanasius' Creed? I

have often remarked in private, although I do not know that I have ever expressed my convictions in print, that almost all the Commentators on these Articles have omitted to call due attention to their true and original import. They are sometimes called Articles of Compromise, sometimes regarded as a yoke almost too heavy to bear. In his famous Tract No. xc. Mr Newman spoke of the Protestant Confession as drawn up "with the purpose of including Catholics:" Lord Chatham is said to have spoken or written of our "Calvinistic Articles:" but, so far as I can discover, few if any modern writers have cared to investigate the origin and intention of these Articles, or to give an account of them with especial reference to the object which their original framers had before them in their preparation.

Thanks to the labours of Archbishop Laurence and Dr Jenkyns, it is now universally acknowledged that the Confession of Augsburg suggested the idea, and to a certain extent the language, of some of our present Articles. But with this acknowledgment we are generally called upon to content ourselves; no information is given in our books as to the object of this Confession of Augsburg. I will venture to supply this lack of information.

The Confession of Augsburg, then, was drawn up (by

Melancthon chiefly) as a kind of manifesto of the opinions of the Protestant party in Germany. It consisted of two parts: the first, enunciating the belief of "our Churches" on matters of the faith: the second, the objections of "our Churches" to certain points of recent ritual. The first part ended with a clause of which this is a translation: "This is a summary of the doctrine held by us, in which it may be seen that there is nothing which differs from the Scriptures, or from the Catholic Church, or from the Roman Church, so far as it is known by its writers. Hence it may be seen how unkindly they are judging, who demand that we shall be treated as heretics. But we do differ in regard to certain abuses which have crept into the Churches without definite authority," and these abuses they proceeded to enunciate¹. Thus whilst the first part of the Confession avowed the belief of the Protestant Churches in regard to God, original sin, the Son of God, the Church, the *cultus* of saints, and so on; the second part contained protests against the withholding of the cup, the celibacy of the clergy, the abuses of Confession and monastic vows, the power assumed by the priesthood; and the epilogue,

¹ *Sylloge Confessionum.* Oxford, 1827, p. 133.

signed by the Elector of Saxony and others of the Re-forming party repeated the statements of the text, and added that there were other grievances besides, such as the traffic in indulgences, pilgrimages, and the abuse of excommunication: they complained of the disputes between the secular clergy and the monks in regard to parochial rights, confessions, burials, and other innumerable matters; but added that they had contented themselves with reciting what was necessary to shew that neither in doctrine nor in ceremony was anything received amongst them which was contrary to Scripture or the Catholic Church, for it was manifest that they had guarded most carefully that no novel or impious doctrines should creep into their Churches¹.

It was at a later epoch that the Augsburg Confession was erected into a doctrinal test of the fitness of a candidate for the ministry.

Such was the manifesto which the Lutheran divines who came to England at the invitation of Henry in 1538 laid before the Bishops, whom they desired to unite "in a firm consent" with them on the subject of the Reformation. They were of course anxious to induce the English authorities to adopt their formula

¹ *Sylloge Confessionum*, p. 158.