

## On The Trinity

Athanasius:

True God to **SAVE** us

True man to save **US**

As Schlink puts it: The Trinity is about salvation. See the Schlink quote p. 2 below and also in Section 1 of *Charter of Freedom*, under “The Trinity = Justification by Faith Alone,” under *Basics of the Luther Renaissance, By What Authority?* At [crossalone.us](http://crossalone.us).

It is not:

1. Some kind of new math
2. A puzzle to be figured out
3. Clarified or solved by analogies, such as the three phases of water, or the equilateral triangle, or three interlocking circles, or: Lover, Beloved, Loving (Augustine)—in fact, all analogies mislead.

What must be avoided:

1. Tritheism (Matt 28:18-20 can be understood as tri-theism).
2. Trimodalism. Three modes, expressions, phases—commonly, the (economic) trinity, that is, the Father the OT, the Son the NT, and the Holy Spirit the Church.

*Opera ad extra indivisa sint.* The external works of the Trinity are undivided: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all Creator (Nicene Creed), all Redeemer, all Preserver.

One God, three persons: From Tertullian (after 180 AD)

325 (Nicaea) and 381 (Constantinople!) -- Nicene Creed -- that he is true God (*homoousios*) = “of one substance” (not *homoiousios* – of the same substance).

431 Ephesus, *theotokos*, Mary is God-bearer -- he is true man, born like us. Did not say “mother” of God.

451 Chalcedon, “unmixed, undivided” -- do not try go beyond this. Do not try to penetrate Jesus’ self-consciousness (like Kazantzakis’ *The Last Temptation of Christ*. He makes Jesus into Zorba the Greek). See also: “Pure Doctrine, No, Pure Gospel, Yes,” under *Basics of the Luther Renaissance, By What Authority?* At [crossalone.us](http://crossalone.us). An excerpt:

“In 451 the Council of **Chalcedon** declared that there was in Christ one person and two natures - **unmixed and undivided**. The Council did not sort out how the divine and human natures of Christ work together; rather, it set limits and thereby excluded certain options. In so doing, the Council served as a road sign. It kept the church from falling into the ditch of Sabellianism on the one side, and on the other side, falling into the ditch of Nestorianism.”

Lutherans accept the first four ecumenical councils.

The Apostles' Creed is not from the Apostles, developed in stages over centuries, in final form after Nicea, did not derive from an Ecumenical Council.

Arians: Used passages like John 1:18 (only says Jesus is revealer) to claim: "There was when he was not," and he is a "secondary" God. Historically Arians did not use John 14:28—as far as our historical records indicate.

NT canon of 27 books first listed by Athanasius in his 4<sup>th</sup> Easter Letter of 367 AD. See Joseph A. Burgess, "How Lutherans Interpret Scripture," 106-111 (on the canon) under *Basics of the Lutheran Renaissance, The Proper Use of Scripture* at crossalone.us.

Athanasian Creed. Not from Athanasius; Origin: 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 66. Emphasis added.

"The Triune God is not yet known if he is presented without the distinction of law and Gospel. **In the Roman church the dreadful fact had become evident that, in spite of the preservation of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, God was *not* known any more, since the Gospel had been lost.** But to know God's essence means to know 'the most profound depth of his fatherly heart, and his sheer, unutterable love' (L.C. II, 64). To know God's love means to receive his gracious love. However, the love of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier is not given through the demands of the law but through the gift of the Gospel. **The triune God, therefore, is known only in the distinction of law and Gospel, that is, by faith in the Gospel.** The train of thought in this chapter has shown that **the Creator is known only in the Gospel.** The same holds true of knowing God the Sanctifier, for the Holy Spirit is given only through the Gospel. Of every knowledge of God the statement applies: 'Thus the entire Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, directs all men to Christ as to the book of life' (S.D. XI, 66)."