

## The Trinity

Athanasius:

True God to **SAVE** us  
True man to save **US**

The Trinity is about salvation.

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

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

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