

Evangelicals Cannot Explain the Trinity — Cheat Sheet

CORE POSITION (ONE SENTENCE)

The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be positively stated without falling into modalism, tritheism, or partialism — heresies by the tradition's own standards —

while the LDS Godhead can be stated clearly, explained simply, and supported biblically.

THE TRINITARIAN TRILEMMA

Every attempt to explain the Trinity falls into one of these condemned heresies:

Heresy	What It Says	Common Example
Modalism	God is one person appearing in three modes	"God is like water: ice, liquid, steam"
Tritheism	Three separate gods	"They're three persons who happen to share divinity"
Partialism	Each person is 1/3 of God	"God is like a pie with three slices"

The "orthodox" position occupies the space between these — but no one has ever positively described what that space *is* without falling into one of them.

BEST SCRIPTURES SHOWING DISTINCT BEINGS (NOT ONE BEING)

- **Acts 7:55-56** — Stephen sees TWO personages: God and Jesus at His right hand
- **Matt. 3:16-17** — Baptism: Son in water, Spirit descending, Father speaking. Three locations.

- **John 17:3** — "Thee the only true God AND Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"
- **John 14:28** — "My Father is greater than I"
- **John 5:19** — Son does what He SEES the Father do — visual, personal distinction
- **John 6:38** — "Not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" — two wills
- **Mark 13:32** — Son doesn't know the hour, Father does — impossible for one being
- **John 20:17** — "My God and your God" — Jesus has a God
- **1 Cor. 15:27-28** — Son will be subject to Father

EVEN THEIR OWN THEOLOGIAN ADMIT IT

- **Karl Rahner**: Most Christians are "mere monotheists" in practice — they don't functionally understand the Trinity

- **Karl Barth**: Proposed "modes of being" instead of "persons" — critics called it modalism
- **Gregory of Nazianzus**: "No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am carried back to the Three" — admitted it resists coherent articulation
- **William Lane Craig**: Proposed "three centers of consciousness" — many evangelicals reject this as tritheism

BIBLICAL "MYSTERY" ≠ PERMANENT INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

- *Mysterion* in the NT = truths previously hidden but NOW REVEALED (Eph. 3:3-6, Col. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 15:51)

- Paul's goal: making the mystery KNOWN (Eph. 6:19)
- The Bible never says God's nature is a permanent puzzle
- The God of the Bible WANTS to be known (John 17:3, John 14:9)

QUICK-FIRE OBJECTION RESPONSES

"It's a mystery — finite minds can't grasp an infinite God."

Biblical mysteries are revealed truths, not permanent contradictions. If the doctrine can't be stated without heresy, the problem isn't human limitation — it's conceptual incoherence.

"Hard to explain doesn't mean wrong."

Quantum mechanics is hard to explain but mathematically coherent. The Trinity has never been positively formalized without contradiction in 1,700 years of trying. That's not complexity — that's incoherence.

"You're just tritheists."

Three beings perfectly united in purpose, will, and glory = one Godhead. Same unity Jesus described (John 17:21-22). If three LDS divine beings = polytheism, then three Trinitarian "persons" = polytheism by the same logic.

"The creeds define the boundaries."

A doctrine defined only by what it is NOT (not modalism, not tritheism, not partialism) but never positively stated is an empty set, not a doctrine.

"The early church understood it intuitively."

No — they debated it violently for centuries. Modalism was popular. Subordinationism was the majority for 300 years. Arianism dominated for decades. The "intuitive understanding" is a myth.

THE LDS ADVANTAGE (ONE PARAGRAPH)

The Latter-day Saint Godhead can be stated in one sentence: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three distinct divine beings, perfectly united

in purpose, will, power, and glory. This matches the biblical text (Acts 7:55-56, Matt. 3:16-17, John 17:3), the earliest Christian writers (Justin Martyr, Origen), and common sense. It requires no appeal to mystery, no philosophical vocabulary, and no paradox. It is the understanding Jesus Himself described: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (John 17:21).

KEY LDS RESOURCES

- [FairLatterdaySaints: Trinity](#)

- [FairLatterdaySaints: Godhead](#)
- [Church of Jesus Christ: Godhead](#)
- D&C 130:22 — Father and Son have bodies of flesh and bone
- Articles of Faith 1:1 — Three distinct beings