

Trinity Types Explained: Why the LDS Godhead Makes More Sense

Heresies, "Orthodox" Models, and Why Nobody Actually Agrees — The Restored Gospel Offers a Better Answer

THE DEVASTATING STATISTIC

Arizona Christian University Study (2025):
Only 11% of Americans hold orthodox Trinity view
Only 16% of self-identified Christians

LifeWay/Ligonier (2016): 71% of evangelicals agreed with the statement "Jesus was the first and greatest being created by God" (Arian-type claim).

If rejecting the Trinity = not Christian, then 84-89% of Christians aren't Christian.

EVANGELICAL LANDSCAPE (WHAT'S TAUGHT)

1) **Mainstream evangelical belief:** Nicene/classical Trinity (one God, three co-eternal persons).
2) **Debated inside evangelicalism:** ESS/EFS (eternal submission in role, while claiming equality in essence).

CONDEMNED HERESIES

1. MODALISM (Sabellianism)

Claim: God is ONE person appearing in three "modes" — Father, Son, Spirit are just masks or roles.

Analogies: Water/ice/steam; one man as father/son/husband

Problem: At Jesus's baptism, all three appear *simultaneously*. Jesus prays to the Father — to Himself?

Status: HERESY — Sabellius excommunicated AD 220

Modern: Oneness Pentecostalism

2. ARIANISM

Claim: Jesus is the first and greatest *creation* of God — NOT co-eternal. "There was a time when the Son was not."

Status: HERESY — Condemned at Nicaea (325 AD)

Modern: Jehovah's Witnesses

Irony: 71% agreed with an Arian-type survey statement.

3. SUBORDINATIONISM

Claim: The Son and Spirit are eternally subordinate to the Father in essence/being.

Irony: Almost ALL early Church Fathers before Nicaea were subordinationists!

Status: Later judged heretical in pro-Nicene theology (Nicaea directly targeted Arius)

4. PARTIALISM

Claim: Father, Son, Spirit are each 1/3 of God — parts that make the whole

Analogies: Egg (shell/yolk/white); clover; pizza slices

Status: HERESY

5. TRITHEISM

Claim: Father, Son, Spirit are three *separate Gods*

Status: HERESY

Irony: LDS accused of this — but we maintain ONE united Godhead

OTHER MAJOR TYPES PEOPLE HOLD

Semi-Arianism: Son is "similar" (not same) substance as Father.

Pneumatomachianism: Holy Spirit not fully divine (Macedonianism).

Adoptionism: Jesus was a man "adopted" as Son.

Unitarianism: One God. Jesus not ontologically God.

Binitarianism: Father and Son divine; Spirit not a distinct co-equal person.

"ORTHODOX" MODELS (THEY DON'T AGREE)

6. LATIN TRINITARIANISM

Associated: Augustine, Aquinas, Western/Catholic

Claim: Persons defined by relations of opposition. Father IS Fatherhood; Son IS Sonship.

Method: Starts with unity, derives persons

Risk: Veers into MODALISM

7. SOCIAL TRINITARIANISM

Associated: Moltmann, William Lane Craig, Cappadocians

Claim: Three distinct centers of self-consciousness, each with own intellect and will, united in love.

Method: Starts with three persons, derives unity

Risk: Veers into TRITHEISM

Note: Closest to LDS — yet they still call us heretics!

8. MONARCHICAL TRINITARIANISM

Associated: Eastern Orthodox, early Church Fathers

Claim: Father is sole source (monarchia) of divinity. Son/Spirit derive nature from Father.

Key: Father as source (monarchia), while Son/Spirit fully divine in Orthodox theology

Risk: Veers into SUBORDINATIONISM

Irony: Resembles pre-Nicene view they call "heresy"!

9. PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL

Associated: Augustine, Aquinas

Claim: Trinity = human mind: memory, understanding, will. Three faculties, one mind.

Risk: Veers into MODALISM

10. RELATIVE IDENTITY MODEL

Associated: Peter van Inwagen (philosopher)

Claim: Father is same God as Son but not same person. Identity is "relative."

Critics: Dale Tuggy calls it "unintelligible"

EAST vs WEST: FILIOQUE SCHISM

Catholic: Spirit proceeds from Father AND Son

Orthodox: Spirit proceeds from Father ALONE

Result: Great Schism 1054 AD — 1000 years of division!

Orthodox call Filioque "heretical." Yet both call LDS heretics.

WHY EVERY ANALOGY FAILS

Analogy	Heresy
Water/Ice/Steam	MODALISM
Sun (star/light/heat)	MODALISM
Egg (shell/yolk/white)	PARTIALISM
Clover (3 leaves)	PARTIALISM
Man as father/son/husband	MODALISM
Three people in family	TRITHEISM

Every analogy fails because the Trinity doctrine is fundamentally incoherent.

THE LDS GODHEAD: SIMPLE & BIBLICAL

D&C 130:22: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost... is a personage of Spirit."

What LDS Believe

Three separate beings: God the Father (physical body), Jesus Christ (physical body), Holy Ghost (spirit)

United perfectly in purpose, will, love

ONE Godhead — one divine council, one plan

Biblically Consistent:

Passage	Trinity Problem	LDS
Matt 3:16-17	3 locations at once	3 beings
Acts 7:55-56	Stephen sees TWO	2 beings
John 14:28	"Father greater" — co-equal?	Father superior
Mark 13:32	Different knowledge	2 beings
Matt 26:39	2 wills in 1 being?	2 beings

JS-History 1:17: "I saw two Personages... One of them spake unto me... pointing to the other — This is My Beloved Son."

Joseph saw TWO separate beings — matching Stephen (Acts 7:55-56).

SUMMARY: ALL MODELS COMPARED

Model	Risk/Problem
Modalism	HERESY
Arianism	HERESY (71% agreed with statement!)
Subordinationism	HERESY (pre-Nicene norm)
Semi-Arianism	HERESY (similar substance)
Pneumatomachianism	HERESY (Spirit denied)
Adoptionism	HERESY (adopted man)
Unitarianism	Nontrinitarian modern family
Binitarianism	Two divine persons only
Partialism	HERESY
Tritheism	HERESY
Latin Trinity	→ Modalism risk
Social Trinity	→ Tritheism risk
Monarchical	→ Subordinationism risk
Psychological	→ Modalism risk
Relative Identity	→ Unintelligible
LDS Godhead	Simple, Biblical, Logical

THE "ONE GOD" OBJECTION

Objection: "Bible says ONE God!"

Response:

1. "Echad" = UNITED one (Gen 2:24; "one flesh" = 2 people)

2. "One God" = the Father (1 Cor 8:6)

3. LDS: ONE Godhead — united in purpose

HYPOSTATIC UNION (CHALCEDON, 451)

What it is: One *person* (the Son) in two complete *natures* (divine + human), "without confusion, change, division, separation."

Best classical defense (why Trinitarians use it):

- 1) It protects full deity and full humanity at once (not half-and-half).
- 2) It distinguishes **who** Jesus is (one person) from **what** He is (two natures).
- 3) Opposite predicates are qualified: omniscient *according to divine nature*, limited knowledge *according to human nature*.
- 4) This aims to avoid Arianism (less-than-God) and Apollinarian/Nestorian splits.

Strong LDS critique (why many still reject it):

- 1) One acting subject still appears to carry opposite properties.
- 2) "According to which nature" can sound like a formal fix, not an explanatory mechanism.
- 3) Agency remains opaque: how two full cognitive-volitional sets operate in one person.
- 4) It can seem philosophically overbuilt compared to plain scriptural language.

LDS alternative: Jesus is the pre-mortal divine Son who truly took mortal flesh. Father and Son are distinct divine beings; incarnation, suffering, obedience, death, and resurrection stay literal without two-natures metaphysics.

QUESTIONS FOR TRINITARIANS

- Why isn't Trinity clearly taught in the Bible?
- Why did it take 300+ years to "define"?
- Why do ALL analogies lead to heresy?
- How can Jesus pray to the Father if same being?
- Why do only 16% match Barna/ACU's trinitarian criteria?
- How do you distinguish "mystery" from "contradiction"?

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Trinity	LDS Godhead
300+ years to develop	Revealed 1820
Greek philosophy	Scripture + revelation
Logically incoherent	Logically consistent
Every analogy = heresy	Simple: 3 united
Only 16% met ACU criteria	Clear to all

The Trinity isn't a mystery — it's a philosophical mess. The LDS Godhead restores simple, biblical truth.

Sources: Arizona Christian University/Barna (2025 criteria item), LifeWay/Ligonier (2016 survey statement: 71%), Stanford Encyclopedia, D&C 130:22, JS-History 1:17