

23. Major Views of the Trinity

Consubstantial → "of same substance, essence, or nature"

View	Source	Adherents	Perception of God's Essence (Oneness-Unity)	Perception of God's Subsistence (Threeness-Diversity)
Dynamic Monarchianism	Theodotus	Paul of Samosata Artemon Socinius Modern Unitarians	The unity of God denotes both oneness of nature and oneness of <i>person</i> . The Son and the Holy Spirit therefore are consubstantial with the Father's divine essence only as <i>impersonal attributes</i> . The divine <i>dynamis</i> came upon the man Jesus, but he was not God in the strict sense of the word.	The notion of a subsistent God is a palpable impossibility, since his perfect unity is perfectly indivisible. The 'diversity' of God is apparent and not real, since the Christ event and the work of the Holy Spirit attest only to a dynamic operation within God, not to a hypostatic union.
Modalistic Monarchianism	Praxeas	Noetus Sabellius Swedenborg Schleiermacher United Pentecostals (Jesus Only) TD Takes	The unity of God is ultra-simplex. He is qualitatively characterized in his essence by one nature and one person. This essence may be designated interchangeably as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are different names <i>for</i> but identical <i>with</i> the unified, simplex God. The three names are the three modes by which God reveals himself.	The concept of a subsistent God is erroneous and confounds the real issue of the phenomenon of God's modalistic manifestation of himself. The paradox of a subsisting "three in oneness" is refuted by recognizing that God is not three persons but one person with three different names and corresponding roles following one another like parts of a drama.
Subordinationism	Arius	Modern Jehovah's Witnesses and several other lesser known cults	The inherent oneness of God's nature is properly identifiable with the Father only. The Son and the Holy Spirit are discrete entities who do not share the divine essence.	The unipersonal essence of God precludes the concept of divine subsistence with a Godhead. "Threeness in oneness" is self-contradictory and violates the biblical principles of a monotheistic God.
"Economic" Trinitarianism	Hippolytus Tertullian	Various "neo-economic" Trinitarians	The Godhead is characterized by trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations of one identical, indivisible substance. The perfect unity and consubstantiality are especially comprehended in such manifest Triadic deeds as creation and redemption.	Subsistence within the Godhead is articulated by means of such terms as "distinction" and "distribution," dispelling effectively the notion of separateness or division.
Orthodox Trinitarianism	Athanasius	Basil Gregory of Nyssa Gregory of Nazianzus Augustine Thomas Aquinas Luther Calvin Contemporary orthodox Christianity	God's being is perfectly unified and simplex: of one essence (<i>homoousia</i>). This essence of deity is held in common by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons are consubstantial, coinherent (<i>perichoresis</i>), co-equal, and co-eternal.	The divine subsistence is said to occur simultaneously in three modes of being or hypostases. As such, the Godhead exists "undivided in divided persons." This view contemplates an <i>identity</i> in nature and <i>cooperation</i> in function without the denial of the distinctions of persons in the Godhead.

23. Major Views of the Trinity (continued)

View	Asignation of Deity/Eternality			Analogical Referent(s)	Criticism(s)
	Father	Son	Holy Spirit		
Dynamic Monarchianism	Unique Originator of the universe. He is eternal, self-existent, and without beginning or end.	A virtuous (but finite) man in whose life God was dynamically present in a unique way; Christ definitely was <i>not</i> deity though his humanity was deified..	An impersonal attribute of the Godhead. No deity/or eternity is ascribed to the Holy Spirit.		Elevates reason above the witness of biblical revelation concerning the Trinity. Categorically denies the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, thereby undermining the theological undergirding for the biblical doctrine of salvation.
Modalistic Monarchianism	Fully God and fully eternal as the primal mode or manifestation of the only unique and unitary God.	Full deity/eternality ascribed only in the sense of his being another mode of the one God and identical with his essence. He is the same God manifested in <i>temporal sequence</i> specific to a role (incarnation).	Eternal God only as the title designates the <i>phase</i> in which the one God, in <i>temporal sequence</i> , <i>manifested</i> himself pursuant to the role of regeneration and sanctification.	One person acting three different roles in the same drama. Water-ice-vapor	Depersonalizes the Godhead. To compensate for its Trinitarian deficiencies, this view propounds ideas that are clearly heretical (e.g., patripassianism). Its concept of successive manifestations of the Godhead cannot account for such simultaneous appearances of the three persons as at Christ's baptism.
Subordinationism	The only one, unbegotten God who is eternal and without beginning	A created being and therefore not eternal. Though he is to be venerated, he is not of the divine essence.	A nonpersonal, noneternal emanation of the Father. He is viewed as an influence, an expression of God. Deity is not ascribed to him.	Mind-idea-action	It is at variance with abundant scriptural testimony respecting the deity of both Christ and the Holy Spirit. Its hierarchical concept likewise asserts three essentially separate persons with regard to the Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. This results in a totally confused soteriology.
"Economic" Trinitarianism	The equal deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is clearly elucidated in observation of the simultaneous relational/operational features of the Godhead. Co-eternality, at times, does not intelligibly surface in this ambiguous view, but it seems to be a logical implication.			A source and its river. Unity between a root and its shoot. The sun and its light.	Is more tentative and ambiguous in its treatment of the relational aspect of the Trinity.
Orthodox Trinitarianism	In its final distillation, this view unhesitatingly sets forth Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as co-equal and co-eternal in the Godhead with regard to both the divine essence and function.			All analogies fail to express orthodox Trinitarianism adequately.	The only shortcoming has to do with the limitations inherent in human language and thought itself: the impossibility of totally describing the ineffable mystery of "three in oneness."