

INTRODUCTION - POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Don't be afraid of this topic!
2. We can only teach what is found in scripture, but should not **put limits** on what the Spirit of God can do in our lives. The unfathomable ways of God → Rom 11:33
3. We must keep scripture in its proper context - when studying passages about the Spirit of God, pay special attention to the audience and circumstances.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT? (WHAT IS THE NATURE OF GOD?)

THE "GODHEAD" OR "TRINITY" - UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN GOD

- The Unity of God (Deut 6:4) - *Shema*
- Diversity Within God (Matt 3:16-17, 28:19 ; II Cor 13:14 ; John 1:1)

<i>God the Father</i>	<i>God the Son</i>	<i>God the Holy Spirit</i>
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ATTEMPTED EXPLANATIONS:

- ***Tritheism*** – Belief that that the Godhead is composed of three powerful entities. As generally conceived, three gods are envisioned as having separate domains and spheres of influence that coalesce into an omnipotent whole.
- ***Arianism*** - Concept that asserts Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was created by God the Father at a point in time, is distinct from the Father and is therefore subordinate to the Father. This belief regarded the Holy Spirit as an illuminating and sanctifying power, but not God.
- ***Sabellianism*** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three different *modes* or *aspects* of one monadic God
- ***Trinity*** - God is One God, but Exists *Eternally* in Three Persons

THE “PERSON” OR “PERSONALITY” OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The Spirit of God is always referred to with a personal pronoun, masculine gender, singular number (Jn 14:15-18, 15:26, 16:5-16; Eph 4:25-30)

DISPENSATIONS OF THE GODHEAD - GOD’S DIRECT INTERACTION WITH MAN

1. **God the Father** - From Creation until the Birth of Christ:
He spoke directly with man or through His angels or prophets → (Gen 22:1-2)
2. **God the Son** - Birth of Christ until Ascension
Immanuel - God is With Us → (Matt 1:23 ; John 1:14 ; Phil 2:5-11)
3. **God the Spirit** - Pentecost until Today

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT → (JOHN 16:5-11 ; ACTS 2:38 ; ROM 8:9)

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Mentioned in 23 of the 39 Old Testament books

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CREATION (GENESIS 1:2, 26)

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE (I CHRONICLES 28:11-12 NIV84)

PROPHETS SPOKE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

→ II Peter 1:20-21

- Balaam Numbers 22-24; 24:1-3
- Saul I Samuel 10:10-11
- David II Samuel 23:1-2
- Isaiah Isaiah 61:1-3
- Ezekiel Ezekiel 2:1-2, 11:1-6

EMPOWERING GOD’S PEOPLE

- Saul I Samuel 11:1-11
- Gideon Judges 6:33-34
- Samson Judges 15:1-17

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION¹

1. Are we really expected to be able to understand the Holy Spirit?
2. Can we properly use the word “Trinity” since it does not occur in the Bible?
3. What does it mean that the Spirit came as a dove at the baptism of Jesus?
4. How did the Holy Spirit come to be? Jesus was born. God has always been. Where did the Holy Spirit come from?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit first mentioned in the Bible?
6. How do you know there is a Holy Spirit?
7. Did the Holy Spirit work in the Old Testament the same as in the New and in these days? It seems the Holy Spirit is spoken of more in the New Testament. Why? Did those in the Old Testament know of the Holy Spirit and his nature?
8. Why is there such an evasion of discussing the Holy Spirit in the church or with non-Christians? The typical remark when reading something about the Holy Spirit in the Bible is “We don’t want to get into that.”
9. How does a literal meaning of John 1:1 affect our perception of it? The literal meaning was “a god was the word.”
10. Did Jesus realize he was part of the trinity before His baptism?
11. When Christ was on earth was there still a trinity?
12. Is the term “Godhood” synonymous with “Godhead?”

¹ Floyd, Harvey. *Is the Holy Spirit for Me*. Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian. 1981. Print.

THE UNFATHOMABLE WAYS OF GOD

Romans 11:33 (ESV)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

THE UNITY OF GOD

Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

DIVERSITY WITHIN GOD

Matthew 3:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

2 Corinthians 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

John 1:1 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT

John 14:15–18 (ESV)

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

John 15:26 (ESV)

²⁶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

John 16:5–16 (ESV)

⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

¹⁶ “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.”

Ephesians 4:25–30 (ESV)

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

DISPENSATIONS OF THE GODHEAD**GOD THE FATHER****Genesis 22:1–2 (ESV)**

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

GOD THE SON**Matthew 1:23 (ESV)**

²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us).

John 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:5–11 (ESV)

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT**John 16:5–11 (ESV)**

⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CREATION**Genesis 1:2 (ESV)**

² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE**1 Chronicles 28:11–12 (NIV84)**

¹¹ Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. ¹² He gave him the plans of all that the **Spirit** had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.

PROPHETS SPOKE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)**

²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Balaam → Numbers 24:1–3 (ESV)

¹ When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. ² And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and he took up his discourse and said,

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

Saul → 1 Samuel 10:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. ¹¹ And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”

David → 2 Samuel 23:1–2 (ESV)

¹ Now these are the last words of David:
The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man who was raised on high,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,

the sweet psalmist of Israel:

² “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me;
his word is on my tongue.

Isaiah → Isaiah 61:1–3 (ESV)

¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
² to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Ezekiel → Ezekiel 2:1–2 (ESV)

¹ And he said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.” ² And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

Ezekiel 11:1–6 (ESV)

¹ The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway there were twenty-five men. And I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. ² And he said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; ³ who say, ‘The time is not near to build houses. This city is the cauldron, and we are the meat.’ ⁴ Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.”

⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, “Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind. ⁶ You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its streets with the slain.

EMPOWERING GOD'S PEOPLE

Saul → 1 Samuel 11:1–11 (ESV)

¹ Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." ² But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel." ³ The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you." ⁴ When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud.

⁵ Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh. ⁶ And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. ⁷ He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man. ⁸ When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. ⁹ And they said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have salvation.'" When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad. ¹⁰ Therefore the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." ¹¹ And the next day Saul put the people in three companies. And they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. And those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

Gideon → Judges 6:33–34 (ESV)

³³ Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.

Samson → Judges 15:1–17 (ESV)

¹ After some days, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a young goat. And he said, "I will go in to my wife in the chamber." But her father would not allow him to go in. ² And her father said, "I really thought that you utterly hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead." ³ And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be innocent in regard to the Philistines, when I do them harm." ⁴ So Samson went and caught 300 foxes and took torches. And he turned them tail to tail and put a torch between each pair of tails. ⁵ And when he had set fire to the torches, he let

the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines and set fire to the stacked grain and the standing grain, as well as the olive orchards. ⁶ Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. ⁷ And Samson said to them, "If this is what you do, I swear I will be avenged on you, and after that I will quit." ⁸ And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

⁹ Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a raid on Lehi. ¹⁰ And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" They said, "We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us." ¹¹ Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so have I done to them." ¹² And they said to him, "We have come down to bind you, that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines." And Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves." ¹³ They said to him, "No; we will only bind you and give you into their hands. We will surely not kill you." So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. ¹⁵ And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men. ¹⁶ And Samson said,
"With the jawbone of a donkey,
 heaps upon heaps,
with the jawbone of a donkey
 have I struck down a thousand men."

¹⁷ As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi.

TRITHEISM

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Tritheism is the belief that cosmic divinity is composed of three powerful entities. As generally conceived, three gods are envisioned as having separate domains and spheres of influence that coalesce into an omnipotent whole. In this primary respect, tritheism differs from cosmic [dualism](#), which often posits two divine powers working in theologic or spiritual opposition.

Most Christian denominations do not hold the universe as spiritually tritheistic, although some [nontrinitarian](#) denominations stray slightly from pure monotheism and the duality between God and Satan. The term has been sporadically used to spearhead heresy accusations, especially when employed against [Christian](#) sects promoting allegedly anathema conceptions of the [Trinity](#).

Monistic tritheism

The [Hindu Trinity](#) of [Brahma](#) the creator, [Vishnu](#) the preserver and [Shiva](#) the destroyer have been held to constitute a Tritheistic belief system. Like the Christian Trinity, these entities are understood to interact harmoniously. However, this Hindu trinity is not conceived in a firmly doctrinal sense, but is rather posited as one of the ways in which the divine order of the universe can be understood. Ultimately, the Universal Spirit, the Param-atman, the [Brahman](#) (not to be confused with [brahmin](#), a social class / caste), or Bhagvan is held to reign supreme as a singular entity.

Monotheistic tritheism

[Muslims](#), [Jews](#), [Unitarians](#) and other [nontrinitarians](#) claim that the orthodox [trinitarian Christian](#) doctrine of the [Holy Trinity](#) of [Father](#), [Son](#) and [Holy Spirit](#) constitutes Tritheism, since these distinct "persons" are unified only by an impersonal substance [ousia](#) which does not transcend, or exist apart from, the persons.

Proponents of trinitarianism claim that the three persons of the Trinity do not have separate powers, since they are omnipotent, and do not have separate spheres of influence, since their sphere of influence is unlimited. They argue that the persons of the Trinity have one divine essence and are indivisible, whereas Tritheism appears to suggest three separate Gods. [Athanasius](#) already attempted to distinguish Trinitarianism from Tritheism and [Modalism](#).

Historical uses of the term in Christianity

The following tritheistic tendencies have been condemned as heretical by mainstream theology. At various times in the [history of Christianity](#), various theologians were accused by the [Church](#) of tritheism, which the Church treated as [heresy](#).

- 1 Those who are usually meant by the name were a section of the [Monophysites](#), who had great influence in the second half of the sixth century, but have left no traces save a few scanty notices in [John of Ephesus](#), [Photius](#), [Leontius](#) etc.^[1] Their founder is said to be a certain [John Ascunages](#), head of a [Sophist](#) school at [Antioch](#). The principal writer was [John Philoponus](#), the

great Aristotelian commentator; the leaders were two bishops, [Conon of Tarsus](#) and [Eugenius of Seleucia](#) in [Isauria](#), who were deposed by their comprovincials and took refuge at Constantinople where they found a powerful convert and protector in [Athanasius the Monk](#), a grandson of the [Empress Theodora](#). Philoponus dedicated to him a book on the Trinity. The old philosopher pleaded his infirmities when he was summoned by the [Emperor Justinian](#) to the Court to give an account of his teaching. But Conon and Eugenius had to dispute in the reign of [Justin II](#) (565-78) in the presence of the Catholic patriarch [John Scholasticus](#) (565-77), with two champions of the moderate Monophysite party, Stephen and Paul, the latter afterward Patriarch of Antioch. The Tritheist bishops refused to anathematize Philoponus, and brought proofs that he agreed with Severus and Theodosius. They were banished to [Palestine](#), and Philoponus wrote a book against John Scholasticus, who had given his verdict in favour of his adversaries. But he developed a theory of his own as to the [Resurrection](#) (see [Eutychianism](#)) on account of which Conon and Eugenius wrote a treatise against him in collaboration with [Themistus](#), the founder of the [Agnocetae](#), in which they declared his views to be altogether unchristian. These two bishops and a deprived bishop named Theonas proceeded to consecrate bishops for their sect, which they established in [Corinth](#) and [Athens](#), Rome, Northern Africa and the Western Patriarchate, while in the east agents traveled through Syria and [Cilicia](#), [Isauria](#) and [Cappadocia](#), converting whole districts and ordaining priests and deacons in cities villages and monasteries. Eugenius died in [Pamphylia](#); Conon returned to Constantinople. Leontius assures that the Aristotelianism of Philoponus made him teach that there are in the Holy Trinity three partial substances (*merikai ousiai, ikikai theotetes, idiai physeis*) and one common. The genesis of the doctrine has been explained (for the first time) under MONOPHYSITES, where an account of Philoponus's writings and those of [Stephen Gobarus](#), another member of the sect, will be found.

- 2 [John Philoponus](#), an [Aristotelian](#) and [monophysite](#) in Alexandria about the middle of the sixth century, was charged with tritheism because he saw in the Trinity as separated three natures, substances and deities, according to the number of divine persons. He sought to justify this view by the [Aristotelian categories](#) of *genus, species* and *individuum*.^[1]
- 3 In the Middle Ages, [Roscellin of Compiègne](#), the founder of [Nominalism](#), argued like Philoponus that unless the Three Persons are *tres res* (3 objects), the whole Trinity must have been incarnate. He was condemned of the heresy of tritheism at the 1092-1093 [Council of Soissons](#) presided over by [Renaud du Bellay](#), [archbishop](#) of [Rheims](#). Attempting to appeal to the authority of [Lanfranc](#) and [Anselm](#), Roscellin prompted Anselm to write [Cur Deus Homo](#) and other treatments of the divine nature refuting his treatment.^[1] Roscellin publicly recanted and, after exile in England and Italy, reconciled himself to the church, but returned to a form of his earlier reasoning.
- 4 Among Catholic writers, [Pierre Faydit](#), who was expelled from the [Oratory](#) at Paris in 1671^[1] for disobedience and died in 1709, practiced a form of Tritheism in his *Eclaircissements sur la doctrine et l'histoire ecclésiastiques des deux premiers siècles* (Paris, 1696), in which he tried to make out that the earliest Fathers were Tritheists. He was replied to by the [Premonstratensian](#)

Abbot [Louis-Charles Hugo](#) (*Apologie du système des Saints Pères sur la Trinité*, Luxemburg, 1699).

- 5 A prominent ideologue of Russian [Old Believers](#) and a writer, [Avvakum](#) (died 1682) was accused by official Orthodox Church and by fellow Old Believers in tritheism, based on some passages in his letters.
- 6 A Catholic canon of Trier named Oembs, influenced by the doctrines of the "Enlightenment",^[1] similarly attributed to the Fathers his own view of three similar natures in the Trinity, calling the numerical unity of God an invention of the [Scholastics](#). His book *Opuscula de Deo Uno et Trino* (Mainz, 1789), was condemned by [Pius VII](#) in a Brief of 14 July 1804.
- 7 The Bohemian Jesuit philosopher [Anton Günther](#) was also accused of Tritheism, leading to his work ending up on the [Index librorum](#).
- 8 Among Protestants, Heinrich Nicolai (d. 1660), a professor at [Dantzig](#) and at [Elbing](#)^[1] (not to be confounded with the founder of [Familia Caritatis](#)), is cited.
- 9 The best known in the Anglican Church is [William Sherlock](#), [Dean of St. Paul's](#),^[1] whose *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and ever Blessed Trinity* (London, 1690) against the [Socinians](#), maintaining that with the exception of a mutual consciousness of each other, which no created spirits can have, the three divine persons are "three distinct infinite minds" or "three intelligent beings.", was attacked by [Robert South](#) in *Animadversions on Dr. Sherlock's Vindication* (1693). Sherlock's work is said to have made [William Manning](#) a Socinian and [Thomas Emlyn](#) an Arian, and the dispute was ridiculed in a skit entitled "The Battle Royal", attributed to [William Pittis](#) (1694?), which was translated into Latin at Cambridge.
- 10 [Joseph Bingham](#), author of the "Antiquities", preached at Oxford in 1695^[1] a sermon which was considered to represent the Fathers as Tritheists, and it was condemned by the Hebdomadal Council as *falsa, impia et haeretica*, the scholar being driven from Oxford.
- 11 Though members of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) would probably not self-identify as tritheist, some critics of [Mormonism](#) claim that it is tritheistic or polytheistic because it teaches that the [Godhead](#) is a council of three distinct deities perfectly *one in purpose, unity and mission*, but nevertheless separate and distinct beings.^{[2][3]}
- 12 Some have suggested that the [Seventh-day Adventist Church](#) has embraced a Trithiestic view of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as it does not see their singularity as a Godhead consisting in one being but rather as three separate beings in a single group.^[4]

See also

- [-ism](#) suffix
- [Triple deity](#)

- [Triple Goddess \(Neopaganism\)](#)

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1 [Categories: Conceptions of GodTheism](#)

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ARIANISM

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Arianism, in [Christianity](#), is a [Christological](#)^[1] concept that asserts that [Jesus Christ](#) is the [Son of God](#) who was created by [God the Father](#) at a point in time, is distinct from the [Father](#) and is therefore subordinate to the Father. Arian teachings were first attributed to [Arius](#) (c. AD 250–336), a Christian [presbyter](#) in [Alexandria, Egypt](#). The teachings of Arius and his supporters were opposed to the prevailing theological views held by [proto-orthodox](#) Christians, regarding the nature of the [Trinity](#) and the nature of Christ. The Arian [concept of Christ](#) is that the Son of God did not always exist but was created by God the Father.

[Homoousianism](#) was formally affirmed by the first two [Ecumenical Councils](#). All mainstream branches of Christianity therefore consider Arianism to be [heterodox](#) and [heretical](#). The Ecumenical [First Council of Nicaea](#) of 325 deemed it to be a heresy. At the regional [First Synod of Tyre](#) in 335, Arius was exonerated.^[2] After his death, he was again [anathemised](#) and pronounced a heretic again at the Ecumenical [First Council of Constantinople](#) of 381.^[3] The Roman Emperors [Constantius II](#) (337–361) and [Valens](#) (364–378) were Arians or [Semi-Arians](#), as was the first [King of Italy](#), [Odoacer](#) (433?–493), and the [Lombards](#) till the 7th century.

Arianism is also used to refer to other [nontrinitarian](#) theological systems of the 4th century, which regarded [Jesus Christ](#)—the Son of God, the [Logos](#)—as either a created being (as in Arianism proper and [Anomoeanism](#)) or as neither uncreated nor created in the sense other beings are created (as in [Semi-Arianism](#)).

Origin

Arius had been a pupil of [Lucian of Antioch](#) at [Lucian's private academy in Antioch](#) and inherited from him a modified form of the teachings of [Paul of Samosata](#).^[4] He taught that God the Father and the Son of God did not always exist together eternally.^[5] Arians taught that the Logos was a divine being created by God the Father before the creation of the world, made him a media through whom everything else was created, and that the Son of God is subordinate to God the Father.^[6] A verse from Proverbs was also used: "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work" ([Proverbs 8:22](#)).^[7] Therefore, the Son was rather the very first and the most perfect of God's creatures, and he was made "God" only by the Father's permission and power.^{[8][9]}

Controversy over Arianism arose in the late 3rd century and persisted throughout most of the 4th century. It involved most church members—from simple believers, priests, and monks to bishops, emperors, and members of Rome's imperial family. Two Roman emperors, [Constantius II](#) and [Valens](#), became Arians or Semi-Arians, as did prominent [Gothic](#), [Vandal](#), and [Lombard](#) warlords both before and after the [fall of the Western Roman Empire](#). Such a deep controversy within the Church during this period of its development could not have materialized without significant historical influences providing a basis for the Arian doctrines.^[10] Of the roughly three hundred bishops in attendance at the [Council of Nicaea](#), two bishops did not sign the [Nicene Creed](#), which condemned Arianism.^[11] [Emperor Constantine](#) also ordered a penalty of death for those who refused to surrender the Arian writings:

"In addition, if any writing composed by Arius should be found, it should be handed over to the flames, so that not only will the wickedness of his teaching be obliterated, but nothing will be left even to remind anyone of him. And I hereby make a public order, that if someone should be discovered to have hidden a writing composed by Arius, and not to have immediately brought it forward and destroyed it by fire, his penalty shall be death. As soon as he is discovered in this offence, he shall be submitted for capital punishment. ... "

— Edict by Emperor Constantine against the Arians^[12]

Beliefs

Reconstructing what Arius actually taught, and why, is a formidable task, both because little of his own work survives except in quotations selected for polemical purposes by his opponents, and also because there is no certainty about what theological and philosophical traditions formed his thought.^[13]

Arians do not believe in the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that God encompasses three persons in one being.^[14] The letter of Arian Auxentius^[15] regarding the Arian missionary [Ulfilas](#) gives the clearest picture of Arian beliefs. Arian [Ulfilas](#), who was ordained a bishop by Arian [Eusebius of Nicomedia](#) and returned to his people to work as a missionary, believed: God, the Father, ("unbegotten" God; Almighty God) always existing and who is the only true God (John 17:3). The Son of God, Jesus Christ, ("only-begotten God" John 1:18;^[16] Mighty God Isaiah 9:6) begotten before time began (Proverbs 8:22-29; Revelation 3:14; Colossians 1:15) and who is Lord/Master (1 Cor 8:6). The Holy Spirit (the illuminating and sanctifying power, who is neither God nor Lord/Master. [First Corinthians 8:5-8:6](#) was cited as [proof text](#):

Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as in fact there are many gods and many lords/masters — yet for us there is one God (Gk. *theos* – θεός), the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord/Master (*kyrios* – κύριος), Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

— [NRSV](#)

The creed of Arian [Ulfilas](#) (c. 311 – 383), which concludes a letter praising him written by Auxentius,^[15] distinguishes God the Father ("unbegotten"), who is the only true God from Son of God ("only-begotten"), who is Lord/Master; and the Holy Spirit (the illuminating and sanctifying power), who is neither God nor Lord/Master:

I, Ulfila, bishop and confessor, have always so believed, and in this, the one true faith, I make the journey to my Lord; I believe in only one God the Father, the unbegotten and invisible, and in his only-begotten son, our Lord/Master and God, the designer and maker of all creation, having none other like him. Therefore, there is one God of all, who is also God of our God; and in one Holy Spirit, the illuminating and sanctifying power, as Christ said after his resurrection to his apostles: "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) and again "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8);

Neither God nor Lord/Master, but the faithful minister of Christ; not equal, but subject and obedient in all things to the Son. And I believe the Son to be subject and obedient in all things to God the Father.^[17]

A letter from [Arius](#) (c. 250–336) to the Arian [Eusebius of Nicomedia](#) (died 341) succinctly states the core beliefs of the Arians:

Some of them say that the Son is an eructation, others that he is a production, others that he is also unbegotten. These are impieties to which we cannot listen, even though the heretics threaten us with a thousand deaths. But we say and believe and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that he does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel he has subsisted before time and before ages as perfect as God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, he was not. For he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say that the Son has a beginning but that God is without beginning.

— Theodoret: Arius's Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, translated in Peters' *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, p. 41

Homoian Arianism

Arianism had several different variants, including [Eunomianism](#) and [Homoian Arianism](#). Homoian Arianism is associated with [Akakius](#) and [Eudoxius](#). Homoian Arianism avoided the use of the word *ousia* to describe the relation of Father to Son, and described these as "like" each other.^[18] Hanson lists twelve creeds that reflect the Homoian faith:^[19]

- 13 The Second Sirmian Creed of 357
- 14 The Creed of Nice (Constantinople) 360
- 15 The creed put forward by [Akakius](#) at Seleucia, 359
- 16 The Rule of Faith of [Ulfilas](#)
- 17 The creed uttered by [Ulfilas](#) on his deathbed, 383
- 18 The creed attributed to [Eudoxius](#)
- 19 The Creed of [Auxentius](#) of Milan, 364
- 20 The Creed of [Germinius](#) professed in correspondence with Valens and [Ursacius](#)
- 21 [Palladius](#)' rule of faith
- 22 Three credal statements found in fragments, subordinating the Son to the Father

Struggles with Catholicism

First Council of Nicaea

In 321, Arius was denounced by a [synod](#) at Alexandria for teaching a heterodox view of the relationship of Jesus to God the Father. Because Arius and his followers had great influence in the schools of Alexandria—counterparts to modern universities or seminaries—their theological views spread, especially in the eastern Mediterranean.

By 325, the controversy had become significant enough that the [Emperor Constantine](#) called an assembly of bishops, the [First Council of Nicaea](#), which condemned Arius's doctrine and formulated the original [Nicene Creed of 325](#).^[20] The Nicene Creed's central term, used to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son, is [Homoousios](#) ([Ancient Greek](#): ὁμοούσιος), or [Consubstantiality](#), meaning "of the same substance" or "of one being". (The [Athanasian Creed](#) is less often used but is a more overtly anti-Arian statement on the Trinity.)

The focus of the Council of Nicaea was the nature of the Son of God and his precise relationship to God the Father. (see [Paul of Samosata](#) and the [Synods of Antioch](#)). Arius taught that Jesus Christ was divine/holy and was sent to earth for the salvation of mankind^[14] but that Jesus Christ was not equal to God the Father (infinite, primordial origin) in rank *and* that God the Father and the Son of God were not equal to the Holy Spirit (power of God the Father).^[5] Under Arianism, Christ was instead not consubstantial with God the Father^[21] since both the Father and the Son under Arius were made of "like" essence or being (see [homoiousia](#)) but not of the same essence or being (see [homoousia](#)).^[21] God the Father is a Deity and is divine *and* the Son of God is not a Deity but divine (I, the LORD, am Deity alone. Isaiah 46:9).^[14] God the Father sent Jesus to earth for salvation of mankind (John 17:3). [Ousia](#) is essence or being, in Eastern Christianity, and is the aspect of God that is completely incomprehensible to mankind and human perception. It is all that subsists by itself and which has not its being in another,^[22] God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all being uncreated.^[23]

According to the teaching of Arius, the pre-existent Logos and thus the incarnate Jesus Christ was a created being; only the Son was directly created and begotten by God the Father, before ages, but was of a distinct, though similar, essence or substance from the Creator. His opponents argued that this would make Jesus less than God and that this was heretical.^[21] Much of the distinction between the differing factions was over the phrasing that Christ expressed in the New Testament to express submission to God the Father.^[21] The theological term for this submission is [kenosis](#). This Ecumenical council declared that Jesus Christ was a distinct being of God in existence or reality ([hypostasis](#)), which the Latin fathers translated as *persona*. Jesus was God in essence, being, and/or nature (*ousia*), which the Latin fathers translated as *substantia*.

Constantine is believed to have exiled those who refused to accept the Nicene creed—Arius himself, the deacon [Euzoios](#), and the Libyan bishops [Theonas of Marmarica](#) and [Secundus of Ptolemais](#)—and also the bishops who signed the creed but refused to join in condemnation of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia and [Theognis of Nicaea](#). The Emperor also ordered all copies of the *Thalia*, the book in which Arius had expressed his teachings, to be [burned](#). However, there is no evidence that his son and ultimate successor, [Constantius II](#), who was an Arian Christian, was exiled.

Although he was committed to maintaining what the church had defined at Nicaea, Constantine was also bent on pacifying the situation and eventually became more lenient toward those condemned and exiled at the council. First he allowed Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was a protégé of his sister, and Theognis to return once they had signed an ambiguous statement of faith. The two, and other friends of Arius, worked for Arius's rehabilitation. At the [First Synod of Tyre](#) in AD 335, they brought accusations against [Athanasius](#), now bishop of Alexandria, the primary opponent of Arius; after this, Constantine had Athanasius banished since he considered him an impediment to reconciliation. In the same year, the Synod of Jerusalem under Constantine's direction readmitted [Arius](#) to communion in AD 336. Arius, however, died on the way to this event in Constantinople. Some scholars suggest that Arius may have been poisoned by his opponents.^[24] Eusebius and Theognis remained in the Emperor's favor, and when Constantine, who had been a [catechumen](#) much of his adult life, accepted [baptism](#) on his deathbed, it was from Eusebius of Nicomedia.^[25]

Aftermath of Nicaea

The Council of Nicaea did not end the controversy, as many bishops of the Eastern provinces disputed the [homoousios](#), the central term of the Nicene creed, as it had been used by [Paul of Samosata](#), who had advocated a [monarchianist Christology](#). Both the man and his teaching, including the term *homoousios*, had been condemned by the [Synods of Antioch](#) in 269.

Hence, after Constantine's death in 337, open dispute resumed again. Constantine's son [Constantius II](#), who had become Emperor of the eastern part of the Empire, actually encouraged the Arians and set out to reverse the Nicene creed. His advisor in these affairs was Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had already at the Council of Nicaea been the head of the Arian party, who also was made bishop of Constantinople.

Constantius used his power to exile bishops adhering to the Nicene creed, especially St [Athanasius of Alexandria](#), who fled to Rome. In 355 Constantius became the sole Emperor and extended his pro-Arian policy toward the western provinces, frequently using force to push through his creed, even exiling [Pope Liberius](#) and installing [Antipope Felix II](#).

As debates raged in an attempt to come up with a new formula, three camps evolved among the opponents of the Nicene creed. The first group mainly opposed the Nicene terminology and preferred the term *homoiousios* (alike in substance) to the Nicene *homoousios*, while they rejected Arius and his teaching and accepted the equality and coeternality of the persons of the Trinity. Because of this centrist position, and despite their rejection of Arius, they were called "semi-Arians" by their opponents. The second group also avoided invoking the name of Arius, but in large part followed Arius' teachings and, in another attempted compromise wording, described the Son as being like ([homoios](#)) the Father. A third group explicitly called upon Arius and described the Son as unlike ([anhomoios](#)) the Father. Constantius wavered in his support between the first and the second party, while harshly persecuting the third.

[Epiphanius of Salamis](#) labelled the party of [Basil of Ancyra](#) in 358 "[Semi-Arianism](#)". This is considered unfair by Kelly who states that some members of the group were virtually orthodox from the start but disliked the adjective *homoousios* while others had moved in that direction after the out-and-out Arians had come into the open.^[26]

The debates among these groups resulted in numerous synods, among them the [Council of Sardica](#) in 343, the [Council of Sirmium](#) in 358 and the double [Council of Rimini](#) and Seleucia in 359, and no fewer than fourteen further creed formulas between 340 and 360, leading the pagan observer [Ammianus Marcellinus](#) to comment sarcastically: "The highways were covered with galloping bishops." None of these attempts were acceptable to the defenders of Nicene orthodoxy: writing about the latter councils, Saint [Jerome](#) remarked that the world "awoke with a groan to find itself Arian."

After Constantius' death in 361, his successor [Julian](#), a devotee of [Rome's pagan gods](#), declared that he would no longer attempt to favor one church faction over another, and allowed all exiled bishops to return; this resulted in further increasing dissension among Nicene Christians. The Emperor [Valens](#), however, revived Constantius' policy and supported the "Homoian" party, exiling bishops and often using force. During this persecution many bishops were exiled to the other ends of the Empire, (e.g., [St Hilary of Poitiers](#) to the Eastern provinces). These contacts and the common plight subsequently led to a rapprochement between the Western supporters of the Nicene creed and the *homoousios* and the Eastern semi-Arians.

Council of Constantinople

It was not until the co-reigns of Gratian and Theodosius that Arianism was effectively wiped out among the ruling class and elite of the Eastern Empire. Theodosius' wife St [Flacilla](#) was instrumental in his campaign to end Arianism. Valens died in the [Battle of Adrianople](#) in 378 and was succeeded by [Theodosius I](#), who adhered to the Nicene creed. This allowed for settling the dispute.

Two days after Theodosius arrived in Constantinople, 24 November 380, he expelled the [Homoiousian](#) bishop, [Demophilus of Constantinople](#), and surrendered the churches of that city to [Gregory Nazianzus](#), the leader of the rather small Nicene community there, an act which provoked rioting. Theodosius had just been baptized, by bishop Acholius of Thessalonica, during a severe illness, as was common in the early Christian world. In February he and [Gratian](#) had published an edict^[27] that all their subjects should profess the faith of the bishops of Rome and Alexandria (i.e., the Nicene faith), or be handed over for punishment for not doing so.

Although much of the church hierarchy in the East had opposed the Nicene creed in the decades leading up to Theodosius' accession, he managed to achieve unity on the basis of the Nicene creed. In 381, at the [Second Ecumenical Council](#) in Constantinople, a group of mainly Eastern bishops assembled and accepted the [Nicene Creed of 381](#),^[28] which was supplemented in regard to the [Holy Spirit](#), as well as some other changes: see [Comparison between Creed of 325 and Creed of 381](#). This is generally considered the end of the dispute about the Trinity and the end of Arianism among the Roman, non-Germanic peoples.

Arianism among medieval Germanic tribes

During the time of Arianism's flowering in [Constantinople](#), the Gothic convert [Ulfilas](#) (later the subject of the letter of Auxentius cited above) was sent as a missionary to the Gothic barbarians across the [Danube](#), a mission favored for political reasons by emperor Constantius II. Ulfilas' initial success in converting this Germanic people to an Arian form of Christianity was strengthened by later events. When the Germanic

peoples entered the [Roman Empire](#) and founded successor-kingdoms in the western part, most had been Arian Christians for more than a century.

The conflict in the 4th century AD had seen Arian and Nicene factions struggling for control of the Church. In contrast, in the Arian German kingdoms established on the wreckage of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, there were entirely separate Arian and Nicene Churches with parallel hierarchies, each serving different sets of believers. The Germanic elites were Arians, and the Romance majority population was Nicene. Many scholars see the persistence of Germanic Arianism as a strategy that was followed in order to differentiate the Germanic elite from the local inhabitants and their culture and also to maintain the Germanic elite's separate group identity.

Most Germanic tribes were generally tolerant of the Nicene beliefs of their subjects. However, the Vandals tried for several decades to force their Arian beliefs on their North African Nicene subjects, exiling Nicene clergy, dissolving monasteries, and exercising heavy pressure on non-conforming Nicene Christians.

The apparent resurgence of Arianism after Nicaea was more an anti-Nicene reaction exploited by Arian sympathizers than a pro-Arian development.^[29] By the end of the 4th century it had surrendered its remaining ground to Trinitarianism.^[30] In western Europe, Arianism, which had been taught by [Ulphilas](#), the Arian missionary to the barbarian Germanic tribes, was dominant among the [Goths](#), [Lombards](#) and [Vandals](#)). By the 8th century it had ceased to be the tribes' mainstream belief as the tribal rulers gradually came to adopt Catholicism. This trend began in 496 with Clovis I of the Franks, then [Reccared I](#) of the [Visigoths](#) in 587 and [Aripert I](#) of the [Lombards](#) in 653. The [Franks](#) and the [Anglo-Saxons](#) were unlike the other Germanic peoples in that they entered the empire as pagans and converted to [Chalcedonian Christianity](#) directly, guided by their kings, [Clovis](#)^[31] and [Æthelberht of Kent](#). The remaining tribes - the Vandals and the Ostrogoths - did not convert as a people nor did they maintain territorial cohesion. Having been militarily defeated by the armies of [Emperor Justinian I](#), the remnants were dispersed to the fringes of the empire and became lost to history. The [Vandalic War](#) of 533-534 dispersed the defeated Vandals.^[32] Following their final defeat at the [Battle of Mons Lactarius](#) in 553, the [Ostrogoths](#) went back north and (re)settled in south Austria.

Arianism from the 5th to 7th century

Much of south-eastern Europe and [central Europe](#), including many of the [Goths](#) and [Vandals](#) respectively, had embraced Arianism (the [Visigoths](#) converted to Arian Christianity in 376), which led to Arianism being a religious factor in various wars in the Roman Empire.^[33] In the west, organized Arianism survived in [North Africa](#), in Hispania, and parts of Italy until it was finally suppressed in the 6th and 7th centuries. [Grimwald, King of the Lombards](#) (662–671), and his young son and successor [Garibald](#) (671), were the last Arian kings in Europe.

Arianism from the 16th to 19th century

Following the [Protestant Reformation](#) from 1517, it did not take long for Arian and other [non-trinitarian](#) views to resurface. The first recorded English [antitrinitarian](#) was [John Assheton](#) who was forced to recant before [Thomas Cranmer](#) in 1548. At the [Anabaptist Council of Venice](#) 1550, the early Italian instigators of the [Radical Reformation](#) committed to the views of [Miguel Servet](#) (died 1553), and these were promulgated by [Giorgio Biandrata](#) and others into Poland and Transylvania.^[34] The antitrinitarian wing of the Polish Reformation separated from the [Calvinist](#) *ecclesia maior* to form the *ecclesia minor* or [Polish Brethren](#). These were commonly referred to as "Arians" due to their rejection of the Trinity, though in fact the [Socinians](#), as they were later known, went further than Arius to the position of [Photinus](#). The epithet "Arian" was also applied to the early [Unitarians](#) such as [John Biddle](#) though in denial of the [pre-existence of Christ](#) they were again largely Socinians not Arians.^[35]

In the 18th century the "dominant trend" in Britain, particularly in [Latitudinarianism](#), was towards Arianism, with which the names of [Samuel Clarke](#), [Benjamin Hoadly](#), [William Whiston](#) and [Isaac Newton](#) are associated.^[36] To quote the *Encyclopædia Britannica*'s article on Arianism: "In modern times some [Unitarians](#) are virtually Arians in that they are unwilling either to reduce Christ to a mere human being or to attribute to him a divine nature identical with that of the Father."^[37] However, their doctrines cannot be considered representative of traditional Arian doctrines or vice versa.

A similar view was held by the ancient anti-Nicene [Pneumatomachi](#) ([Greek](#): Πνευματομάχοι, "breath" or "spirit" and "fighters", combining as "fighters against the spirit"), so called because they opposed the deifying of the Nicene Holy Ghost. However, the Pneumatomachi were adherents of [Macedonianism](#), and though their beliefs were somewhat reminiscent of Arianism,^[38] they were distinct enough to be distinguishably different.^[38]

The [Iglesia ni Cristo](#) is one of the largest groups that teaches a similar doctrine, though they are really closer to Socinianism, believing the Word in John 1:1 is God's plan of salvation, not Christ. So Christ did not preexist.

Arianism today

[Jehovah's Witnesses](#) are often referred to as "modern-day Arians" or sometimes "[Semi-Arians](#)",^{[39][40]} usually by their opponents.^{[41][42][43]} While there are some significant similarities in theology and doctrine, the Witnesses differ from Arians by saying that the Son can fully know the Father (something Arius himself denied), and by their denial of personality to the [Holy Spirit](#). Arius considered the Holy Spirit to be a person or a high-ranking angel, which had a beginning as a creature, whereas the Witnesses consider the Holy Spirit to be God's "active force" or "energy", which had no beginning, and is not an actual person. The original Arians also generally prayed directly to Jesus, whereas the Witnesses pray to God, through Jesus as a mediator.^[44]

Adherents

The teachings of the first two ecumenical councils - which entirely reject Arianism - are held by the [Catholic Church](#), the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#), the [Oriental Orthodox Churches](#), the [Assyrian Church of the East](#) and all churches founded during the [Reformation](#) in the 16th century or influenced by it (Lutheran,

Reformed/Presbyterian, and Anglican). Also, nearly all Protestant groups (such as Methodist, Baptist, most Pentecostals) entirely reject the teachings associated with Arianism. Modern groups which currently appear as embracing some of the principles of Arianism include [Unitarians](#) and [Jehovah's Witnesses](#). Although the origins of their beliefs are not necessarily attributed to the teachings of Arius, many of the core beliefs are entirely similar.

The [Church of God \(7th day\) - Salem Conference](#) may be considered to be Arian.

We believe in one true God who is the creator of all. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He sent his son to Earth to be a sacrifice for our sins. He is a separate being from his son, Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and not a separate being with a separate consciousness. We do not believe in the teaching of the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three parts of a single being who is God. We believe the Father and the Son are separate beings with separate consciousnesses and that the Holy Spirit is not a conscious being but instead the power of God.

— FAQs – Does the Church of God (7th Day) believe in the Trinity?^[45]

Other groups opposing the Trinity are not necessarily Arian.

- The [Iglesia ni Cristo](#),^[46] [Christadelphians](#),^[47] [Church of God General Conference](#)^[48] and other "[Biblical Unitarians](#)" are typically [Socinian](#) in their Christology, not Arian.
- There are also various [Binitarian](#) churches, believing basically that God is two persons, the Father and Son, but the Holy Spirit is not a person. They include the [Church of God \(Seventh Day\)](#) and various offshoots, in particular the former Radio Church of God, founded by Herbert W. Armstrong, renamed the [Worldwide Church of God](#), which after Armstrong's death converted to Trinity, causing many small churches to break off, most still loyal to the teachings of Armstrong, for example [Restored Church of God](#), [United Church of God](#), [Philadelphia Church of God](#), the [Living Church of God](#), and many others. Other Binitarian churches include the Gospel Assemblies, a group of Pentecostal denominations that believe God adopted the name Jesus, and the [Church of Jesus Christ \(Bickertonite\)](#), an offshoot of Mormonism, which believes God is two personages, not persons. Binitarian churches generally believe that the Father is greater than the Son. So that is a view somewhat similar to Arianism.

See also

[Arian controversy](#)

[First Council of Nicea](#)

[Christology](#)

[Germanic Christianity](#)

[Kalam](#)

[Non-Trinitarian churches](#)

[Nontrinitarianism](#)

[Subordinationism](#)

[Unitarianism](#)

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External links

- [Documents of the Early Arian Controversy](#) Chronological survey of the sources
- [English translations of all extant letters relating to early Arianism](#)
- [A map of early sympathizers with Arius](#)
- [Barry, William](#) (1913). "Arianism". *Catholic Encyclopedia*.
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- [The Arians of the fourth century](#) by John Henry "Cardinal" Newman in "btm" format
- [Concise Summary of the Arian Controversy](#)
- [Arianism Today](#)

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SABELLIANISM

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In [Christianity](#), **Sabellianism** in the [Eastern church](#) or [Patripassianism](#) in the [Western church](#) (also known as **modalism**, **modalistic monarchianism**, or **modal monarchism**) is the [nontrinitarian](#) or anti-[trinitarian](#) belief that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son, and Holy Spirit are three different *modes* or *aspects* of one monadic God, as perceived by *the believer*, rather than three distinct persons within *the Godhead*—that there are no real or substantial differences among the three, such that there is no substantial identity for the Spirit or the Son.^[1]

The term Sabellianism comes from [Sabellius](#), who was a theologian and priest from the 3rd century.

Meaning and origins

God is said to have three "faces" or "masks" (Greek πρόσωπα [prosopa](#); Latin [personae](#)).^[2] Modalists note that the only number ascribed to God in the Holy Bible is *One* and that there is no inherent threeness ascribed to God explicitly in scripture.^[3] The number three is never mentioned in relation to God in scripture, which of course is the number that is central to the word "Trinity". The only possible exceptions to this are the [Great Commission](#) Matthew 28:16-20, 2 Corinthians 13:14, and the [Comma Johanneum](#), which many regard as a spurious text passage in [First John](#) (1 John 5:7) known primarily from the [King James Version](#) and some versions of the [Textus Receptus](#) but not included in modern critical texts.^[4] It is also suggested by some modern "Oneness Pentecostal" critics, that Matthew 28:19 is not part of the original text, because [Eusebius](#) of Caesarea quoted it by saying "In my name", and there is no mention of baptism in the verse. Eusebius did, however, quote the trinitarian formula in his later writings. (Conybeare (*Hibbert Journal* i (1902-3), page 102). Matthew 28:19 is quoted also in the [Didache](#) (Didache 7:1), which dates to the late 1st Century or early 2nd Century) and in the [Diatesseron](#) (Diatesseron 55:5-7), which dates to the mid 2nd Century harmony of the Synoptic Gospels. The *Shem-Tob's Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (George Howard), written during the 14th century, also has no reference of baptism or a trinitarian formula in Matthew 28:19. However, it is also true that no Greek manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew has ever been found which does not contain Matthew 28:19. The earliest extant copies of Matthew's Gospel date to the 3rd Century, and they contain Matthew 28:19. Therefore, scholars generally agree that Matthew 28:19 is likely part of the original Gospel of Matthew, though a minority disputes this.

Trinitarians believe that all three members of the Trinity were present as seemingly distinct persons at Jesus' baptism, and believe there is other scriptural evidence for Trinitarianism (see main page for details). Modalism has been mainly associated with [Sabellius](#), who taught a form of it in Rome in the 3rd century. This had come to him via the teachings of [Noetus](#) and [Praxeas](#).^[5]

[Hippolytus of Rome](#) knew Sabellius personally and mentioned him in the [Philosophumena](#). He knew Sabellius disliked [Trinitarian](#) theology, yet he called Modal Monarchism the [heresy](#) of Noetus, not that of Sabellius. Sabellianism was embraced by Christians in [Cyrenaica](#), to whom [Demetrius, Patriarch of Alexandria](#), wrote letters arguing against this belief.

Modalism teaches that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son, and Holy Spirit, identified by the Trinity Doctrine, are different *modes, faces, aspects, or roles* of the [One God](#), as perceived by *the believer*, rather than [three co-eternal persons](#) within *the Godhead*, or a "co-equal trinity". In passages of scripture such as [Matthew 3:16-17](#) where the Son, Father, and Holy Spirit are separated in the text, they view this phenomenon as confirming God's [omnipresence](#), and His ability to [manifest himself as he pleases](#). [Oneness Pentecostals](#) and Modalists dispute the traditional Trinitarian doctrine, while affirming the Christian doctrine of God taking on flesh as Jesus Christ. Like Trinitarians, Oneness adherents believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. However, whereas Trinitarians believe that "God the Son", the eternal second person of the Trinity, became man, Oneness adherents hold that the one and only true God—who manifests himself in any way he chooses, including as Father, Son and Holy Spirit—became man. Oneness Pentecostals and other [modalists](#) are regarded by Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and some other mainstream Christians as heretical for rejecting the [Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople](#) and the Trinity Doctrine, which most mainstream Christendom regards as equivalent to [Unitarianism](#). Modalists differentiate themselves from [Arian](#) or [Semi-Arian](#) Unitarians by affirming Christ's full [Godhead](#), whereas Semi-Arians view the pre-existent Christ as God's first-begotten Son, with a beginning, and brought forth by the Father, before ages.^[6] Oneness teaches that there is only one being, revealing himself in different ways.^{[7][8]} Explaining the [Oneness](#) view of God, as opposed to the Trinitarian viewpoint, Modalists cite passages in the New Testament that refer to God in the singular, and note the lack of the word "Trinity" in any canonical scripture.^[9] They claim that [Colossians 1:15-20](#) refers to Christ's relationship with the Father in a similar sense:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.^[10]

They also cite Christ's response to [Philip](#)'s query on who the Father was in [John 14:10](#):

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Ancient opposition

The chief critic of Sabellianism was [Tertullian](#). In his work *Adversus Praxeas*, Chapter I, he wrote "By this Praxeas did a twofold service for the devil at Rome: he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the [Paraclete](#), and he crucified the Father." From this notion came the term "[Patripassianism](#)" for the movement, from the Latin words *pater* for "father", and *passus* from the verb "to suffer" because it implied that the Father suffered on the Cross.

It is important to note that our only sources extant for our understanding of Sabellianism are from their detractors. Scholars today are not in agreement as to what exactly Sabellius or Praxeas taught. It is easy to suppose Tertullian and Hippolytus misrepresented the opinions of their opponents.^[11]

Tertullian seems to suggest that most of the unwise and unlearned believers at that time favoured the Sabellian view of the oneness of God.^[12] [Epiphanius](#) (Haeres 62) about 375 notes that the adherents of Sabellius were still to be found in great numbers, both in Mesopotamia and at Rome.^[13] The first general council at Constantinople in 381 in canon VII and the third general council at Constantinople in 680 in canon XCV declared the baptism of Sabellius to be invalid, which indicates that Sabellianism was still extant.^[13]

Historic Sabellianism taught that [God the Father](#) was the only true existence of the Godhead, a belief known as [Monarchianism](#). One author has described Sabellius' teaching thus: *The true question, therefore, turns on this, viz., what is it which constitutes what we name 'person' in the Godhead? Is it original, substantial, essential to divinity itself? Or does it belong to and arise from the exhibitions and developments which the divine Being has made of himself to his creatures? The former Sabellius denied; the latter he fully admitted.*^[13]

It has been noted that the Greek term "[homoousian](#)" or "con-substantial", which [Athanasius of Alexandria](#) favoured, was a term reported to be put forth by Sabellius, and was a term that many followers of Athanasius were uneasy about. Their objection to the term "homoousian" was that it was considered to be un-Scriptural, suspicious, and "of a Sabellian tendency."^[14] This was because Sabellius also considered the Father and the Son to be "one substance." Meaning that, to Sabellius, the Father and Son were one essential person, though operating as different manifestations or modes.

Sabellianism has been rejected by the majority of Christian churches in favour of [Trinitarianism](#), which was eventually defined as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons by the [Athanasian Creed](#), probably dating from the late 5th or early 6th century.

Eastern Orthodox view

The [Greek Orthodox](#) teach that God is not of a substance that is comprehensible since God the Father has no origin and is eternal and infinite. That it is improper to speak of things as physical and metaphysical but rather it is Christian to speak of things as created and uncreated. God the Father is the origin, source of the Trinity not God in substance or essence.^[15] Therefore, the consciousness of God is not obtainable to created beings either in this life or the next (see [apophatism](#)), though through co-operation with God (called [theosis](#)) Mankind can become good (God-like) and from such a perspective reconcile himself to the [Knowledge of Good and the Knowledge of Evil](#) he obtained in the [Garden of Eden](#) (see the [Fall of Man](#)). Thus returning himself to the proper relationship with his creator and source of being.

Current adherents

At the Arroyo Seco World Wide Camp Meeting, near Los Angeles, in 1913, [Canadian](#) evangelist R. E. McAlister stated at a baptismal service that the apostles had baptized in the name of Jesus only and not in the triune Name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Later that night, John G. Schaepppe, a German immigrant, had a vision of Jesus and woke up the camp shouting that the name of Jesus needed to be glorified. From that point, Frank J. Ewart began requiring that anyone baptized using the Trinitarian formula needed to be rebaptized in the name of Jesus "only." Support for this position began to spread, along with a belief in one Person in the Godhead, acting in different modes or offices.

The [General Council of the Assemblies of God](#) convened in St. Louis, Missouri in October 1916, to confirm their belief in Trinitarian orthodoxy. The Oneness camp was faced by a majority who required acceptance of the Trinitarian baptismal formula and the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity or remove themselves from the denomination. In the end, about a quarter of the ministers withdrew.^[16]

[Oneness Pentecostalism](#) teaches that God is one Person, and that the Father (a spirit) is united with Jesus (a man) as the Son of God. However, [Oneness Pentecostalism](#) differs somewhat by rejecting sequential modalism, and by the full acceptance of the begotten humanity of the Son, not eternally begotten, who was the man Jesus and was born, crucified, and risen, and not the deity. This directly opposes Patripassianism and the pre-existence of the Son as a pre-existent mode, which Sabellianism generally does not oppose.

Oneness Pentecostals believe that Jesus was "Son" only when he became flesh on earth, but was the Father before being made man. They refer to the Father as the "Spirit" and the Son as the "Flesh". But they believe that Jesus and the Father are one essential Person. Though operating as different "manifestations" or "modes". Oneness Pentecostals reject the Trinity doctrine, viewing it as pagan and un-Scriptural, and hold to the [Jesus' Name doctrine](#) with respect to baptisms. They are often referred to as "[Modalists](#)" or "[Sabellians](#)" or "[Jesus Only](#)". Oneness Pentecostalism can be compared to Sabellianism, or can be described as holding to a form of Sabellianism, as both are [nontrinitarian](#), and as both believe that Jesus was "Almighty God in the Flesh", but they do not totally identify each other.

Therefore, it cannot be certain whether Sabellius taught [Modalism](#) completely as it is taught today as Oneness doctrine, since only a few fragments of his writings are extant and, therefore, all we have of his teachings comes through the writing of his detractors.^[17]

The following excerpts which demonstrate some of the known doctrinal characteristics of ancient Sabellians may be seen to compare with the doctrines in the modern Oneness movement:

- [Cyprian](#) wrote - "...how, when God the Father is not known, nay, is even blasphemed, can they who among the heretics are said to be baptized in the name of Christ, be judged to have obtained the remission of sins?"^[18]
- [Hippolytus](#) (A.D. 170–236) referred to them - "And some of these assent to the heresy of the Noetians, and affirm that the Father himself is the Son..."^[19]

- [Pope Dionysius](#), Bishop of Rome from A.D. 259–269 wrote - "Sabellius...blasphemes in saying that the Son Himself is the Father and vice versa."^[20]
- [Tertullian](#) states - "He commands them to baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into a unipersonal God. And indeed it is not once only, but three times, that we are immersed into three persons, at each several mention of their names."^[21]

Current opposition

While Oneness Pentecostals seek to differentiate themselves from ancient Sabellianism, modern theologians see no difference between the ancient heresy of Sabellianism and current Oneness doctrine. This is based on the denial by Oneness Pentecostals of the Trinity based upon a denial of the distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.^[22] Sabellianism, Patripassianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, functionalism, Jesus Only, Father Only, and Oneness Pentecostalism are viewed as being derived from the Platonic doctrine that God was an indivisible Monad and could not be divided into three separate Persons.^[23]

See also

- [Adoptionism](#)
- [Greek Gospel of the Egyptians](#)

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- [Encyclopaedia Britannica, Sabellianism](#)

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Trinity - God is One God, but Exists *Eternally* in Three Persons