

Trinitarian Heresies

<http://www.monergism.com/Trinitarian%20Heresies.html>

Modalism (i.e. Sabellianism, Noetianism and Patripassianism)

...taught that the three persons of the Trinity as different “modes” of the Godhead. Adherants believed that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not distinct personalities, but different modes of God's self-revelation. A typical modalist approach is to regard God as the Father in creation, the Son in redemption, and the Spirit in sanctification. In other words, God exists as Father, Son and Spirit in different eras, but never as triune. Stemming from Modalism, Patripassianism believed that the Father suffered as the Son.

- Monarchian modalists or "Sabellians" such as the Oneness Pentecostal constellation of sects, which confuse the persons of the Trinity, by reducing them to "modes" or "manifestations" of a single, unitary Deity.

Tritheism

...Tritheism confesses the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three independent divine beings; three separate gods who share the 'same substance'. This is a common mistake because of misunderstanding of the use of the term 'persons' in defining the Trinity.

- The Tritheism of the Church of Latter-Day Saints, commonly known as "Mormons," who maintains that "God the Father (Heavenly Father), Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three separate and distinct beings who together constitute the Godhead."

Arianism

...taught that the preexistent Christ was the first and greatest of God's creatures but denied his fully divine status. The Arian controversy was of major importance in the development of Christology during the fourth century and was addressed definitely in the Nicene Creed.

Docetism

...taught that Jesus Christ as a purely divine being who only had the “appearance” of being human. Regarding his suffering, some versions taught that Jesus' divinity abandoned or left him upon the cross while other claimed that he only appeared to suffer (much like he only appeared to be human).

Ebionitism

...taught that while Jesus was endowed with particular charismatic gifts which distinguished him from other humans but nonetheless regarded Him as a purely human figure.

Macedonianism

...that that the Holy Spirit is a created being.

Adoptionism

...taught that Jesus was born totally human and only later was “adopted” – either at his baptism or at his resurrection – by God in a special (i.e. divine) way.

Partialism

...taught that Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are components of the one God. This led them to believe that each of the persons of the Trinity is only part God, only becoming fully God when they come together.

Trinitarian heresies

http://www.theopedia.com/Trinity#Trinitarian_heresies

Various heresies arose throughout the history of the church, many of which would require significant replies in order to defend the orthodox and biblical view of the one triune God. It is also important to remember that "heretics did not work outside the Christian community - they counted themselves as faithful Christians attempting to explain the gospel in terms their contemporaries might understand" (Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 121). That is, some heretics would ascribe to "one God" but would mean something different than what orthodox Christians taught. Thus it was important to work through doctrines carefully and to protect each detail, whether it be monotheism or the humanity of Jesus.

Denial of the oneness and uniqueness of God

These result from a denial of the statement, "There is only one God."

- Polytheism
 - Mormonism

Denial of the eternal deity of each Person

These result from a denial of the statement, "Each Person is fully God".

- Adoptionism
- Arianism
 - Sects espousing of Arianism like the Jehovah's Witnesses who are willing to believe that Jesus was a "lesser god;" a "mighty one" but not the "Almighty."
- Apollinarianism

Denial of the three Personalities or Persons

These result from a denial of the statement, "The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, eternal Persons".

- Modalism
 - Patripassianism
 - Branhamism
 - The Local Church (or "Living Stream Ministry")
- Monarchism

Denial of the two, distinct, unmingled natures of Christ

- Nestorianism
- Eutychianism

Implications

To illustrate the significance of the Trinity of our faith, consider just briefly the relation of the doctrine of the Trinity to the Christian understanding of salvation. In order for us sinners to be saved, one must see God at one and the same time as the one judging our sin (the Father), the one making payment of infinite value for our sin (the divine Son), and the one empowering and directing the incarnate—human—Son so that he lives and obeys the Father, going to the cross as a substitute for us (the Holy Spirit). The Christian God, to be savior, must then be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is, our salvation comes as the Father judges our sin in his Son, who became incarnate and lived his life in the power of the Spirit as the perfect and sinless God-man, and accomplished his perfect obedience to the Father through the power of the Spirit. Disregard the Trinity and you necessarily undermine salvation.

Bruce Ware *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, 17