

Doctrine of the Trinity

What about the Trinity?

1. The doctrine of the trinity is foundational to Christian faith and yet, the Jehovah Witnesses claim it is the most God dishonoring doctrine in Christendom. But are the Witnesses right? Consider the following evidence in support of the historic position of the Church that the doctrine of the trinity is a true truth.
2. It is to be conceded that the term “trinity” does not occur in Scripture.
3. A Christian writer named Tertullian (c. 160-225) used the Latin word “*trinitas*” when referring to the biblical doctrine of God.
4. At about the same time Theophilus, a Greek speaking minister of the Church, started to teach of God as being triune.
5. The fourth century council of Nicea (AD 325) confirmed as true a belief that had already gained worldwide acceptance among Christians.
6. The Athanasian Creed explains that as Christians, “we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity; Neither confusing the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost; But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.”
7. The Jehovah Witnesses dismiss the trinity as being illogical. They say that $1 + 1 + 1$ does not equal 1. And they are right. But then God is not a mathematical formula. He is the supreme sovereign of the universe. If there were a mathematical formula for the trinity it would $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. On the matter of the trinity Witnesses are like the little girl who was being taken through the multiplication table by her father. “Four times four?” he asked. “Sixteen,” she answered. “Six times six?” “Thirty-six,” she replied. “Thirteen times thirteen?” “There’s no such thing,” retorted the little one. But just because a particular thing has not come within our experience, that is not in itself sufficient reason for disbelieving it.
8. To support their case against the trinity, the Witnesses argue that 1 John 5:7 is not in the original Greek text of the Bible and that the words were inserted into John’s epistle some time before the 15th century. Students of the Bible are familiar with the concerns surrounding 1 John 5:7.
9. Bible students are also familiar with the debate over the translation of 1 Timothy 3:16 (cf. KJV with ASV and TNEB).
10. Turning to John 10:30 the Witnesses claim that when Jesus said that He and His Father were one, He only meant that they were one in purpose and were in harmony with each other.

11. Finally, the Witnesses insist that John 1:1 teaches that the Word Jesus Christ is simply a mighty, exalted one, and in this sense alone is he a “god.”

11. Despite a smooth presentation of their objections to the concept of a trinity, the Scriptures teach the following.

- There is only one God. *Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.* The Witnesses would have us believe that there is “a god” with “the God.” Deuteronomy 32:39 teaches there is “no god” with “the God.” And there is no avoiding this point.
- Jesus is very God of very God. True, while on earth, the words of Christ in John 14:28 certainly apply for Jesus said, “*My Father is greater than I.*” But that was only because Jesus “*took upon Him the form of a servant*” (Philippians 2:7) When Jesus referred to His Father as being greater than He, He was speaking a truth. The Son had humbled Himself under His Father’s hand. But the whole context of Philippians 2:5-11 reveals the essential and intrinsic deity of Christ.
- Jesus not only humbled Himself to the Father, but He humbled Himself before men when He allowed John to Baptize Him and when He washed the feet of the disciples. In all these things Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8). Obedience is not something that deity practice by nature. Obedience was something Christ learned “*by the things, which He suffered*”—He humbled Himself.
- Then what happened? “*God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names*” (Hebrews 5:9, 10). What name was this? Not the name “Jesus” alone, for this name was given to our Lord at birth, not after His death. No, as a direct result of the bestowal of this name the Scriptures declares of Jesus that to Him “*every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2: 10, 11).
- In writing these words Paul is quoting from Isaiah 45:23, 24 “*I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 24 Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.*”
- The conclusion is inescapable. Jesus Christ is divine. Nevertheless, He did not consider His equality with the Father a thing to be grasped but voluntarily emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, and learned obedience. Then He was honored once more by the Father who received Him back into glory with the entire splendor of before.

12. Turning to 1 Corinthians 15:28, the Witnesses teach that Jesus is subject to the Father in heaven as well as on earth. But what this passage is teaching is that in His mediatorial capacity, Jesus will cease to function and that for a simple reason. Once the entire universe has been redeemed and the last vestige of rebellion has been dealt with, then a Mediator to bring men to God will no longer be necessary. And, as 1 Corinthians 15:28 tells us, God will be all in all.
13. As the Son is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” in His essential essence, so is the Holy Spirit who is also divine. This, the Witnesses deny. In fact, they deny that the Holy Spirit is a person at all. The Spirit is reduced in significance. *“The holy spirit is nothing more than God’s impersonal active force,”* says the Witnesses.
14. Turning to John 14:17 the New World Translation refers to the Holy Spirit as it. But though they translate the word “it” in the neuter gender to agree grammatically with the Greek word “*pneuma*” (spirit) they are not consistent when the same grammatical structure occurs in John 4:24.
15. John 14:15-28 clearly reveals the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.
- If “personality” is denoted by will, then the Holy Spirit has a will. 1 Corinthians 12:11 *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”*
 - If “personality” is denoted by the ability to speak, the Holy Spirit speaks. Acts 8:29 *“Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.”*

Acts 11:12 And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.
 - If “personality” is denoted by intelligence then the Holy Spirit has intelligence for He took an active part in creation. *Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*
 - If “personality” is denoted by sensitivity and ability to help, then the Spirit can help. *Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*
16. And there is more. Jesus said that all manner of sin would be forgiven men except slander spoken against the Holy Spirit.

- *Matthew 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. 32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

17. Finally, in Matthew 28:19-20 the Holy Spirit is given the same status as the Father and the Son.

- *Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*