

## Biblical Evidence for the Doctrine of the Trinity

(Adapted from Dr. R. Walter Martin)

### Introduction

“Many people think that the Trinity is impossible to understand, that it is a logical and conceptual impossibility. The cults vehemently deny the Trinity, asserting that it is a doctrine of Satan. The non-Christian religions make sport of the doctrine, saying that Christians believe in three gods.

“But it *is* possible to understand the Trinity. We may not have exhaustive knowledge of the doctrine. But we can know it enough to state it clearly and understand it deeply....”<sup>1</sup>

### How to Prove the Trinity

1. Begin the investigation into Scripture by starting from scratch, assuming nothing.
2. Demonstrate that the Bible teaches that only one God exists (Isa. 44:6; 1 Tim. 2:5<sup>2</sup>).
3. Correctly define the Trinity: “Within the nature of the one, true God exists three Person(age)s: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who share the same attributes, are the same substance (nature, essence or reality) and are in effect the one, true God.”
4. Decide who Jesus is: a lunatic (one who made false claims unknowingly), a liar (one who made false claims knowingly), or who he said he was (one who spoke the truth).<sup>3</sup> Assuming Christ spoke only the truth, we must believe what he says. This is recorded in the Bible, so may we use only the Bible as our only authoritative source concerning this doctrine?
5. Show the person the reasonableness of this proposition: If three biblical Persons are all called God and share the same attributes of God, but there exists only one God, they are, in effect, *the* one, true God. (If this can be demonstrated, then the Trinity is true.)
6. The Bible conclusively proves the above proposition in the following passages that identify the same attributes/titles with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

<b>Attribute/Title</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
Called “God” (deity)	<u>2 Pet. 1:17</u> <sup>4</sup>	Heb. 1:6-8 <sup>5</sup>	<u>Acts 5:3-4</u> <sup>6</sup>
Worshipped as God	<u>Matt. 4:10</u> <sup>7</sup>	<u>John 20:28</u> <sup>8</sup>	None <sup>9</sup>
Indwells believers	<u>1 Cor 3:16a</u> <sup>10</sup>	<u>Col. 1:27</u> <sup>11</sup>	<u>1 Cor 3:16b</u> <sup>12</sup>
Is the truth	<u>John 3:33</u> <sup>13</sup>	<u>John 14:6</u> <sup>14</sup>	<u>1 John 5:6</u> <sup>15</sup>
Raised Christ	<u>Acts 3:26</u> <sup>16</sup>	<u>John 10:17</u> <sup>17</sup>	<u>Rom. 8:11</u> <sup>18</sup>
Omniscient (all-knowing)	Ps. 139:1-5 <sup>19</sup>	John 16:3 <sup>20</sup>	1 Cor 2:10-11 <sup>21</sup>
Omnipotent (all-powerful)	Matt. 19:26 <sup>22</sup>	Phil. 4:13 <sup>23</sup>	Zech. 4:6 <sup>24</sup>
Omnipresent (everywhere)	Jer. 23:24 <sup>25</sup>	Matt. 18:20 <sup>26</sup>	Ps. 139:7-12 <sup>27</sup>
Has personhood	John 3:16 <sup>28</sup>	John 1:9-18 <sup>29</sup>	John 14:17 <sup>30</sup>
Helper ( <i>Paraclete</i> )	2 Cor 1:3-6	1 John 2:1	John 14:26 <sup>31</sup>
Forgives sin	Isa. 45:25 <sup>32</sup>	1 John 2:12 <sup>33</sup>	
Forgets sin	Jer. 31:34 <sup>34</sup>	Heb. 8:12	Heb. 10:17 <sup>35</sup>
Immutable (changeless)	Mal. 3:6 <sup>36</sup>	Heb. 13:8 <sup>37</sup>	
Eternal	Exod. 15:18 <sup>38</sup>	John 1:1-2 <sup>39</sup>	
“I Am”	Exod. 3:14	John 8:58 <sup>40</sup>	
“Alpha and Omega”	<u>Rev. 1:8</u>	<u>Rev. 22:13, 16</u>	
“First and the Last”	<u>Isa. 44:6</u>	<u>Rev. 1:17</u>	
Holy	<u>Isa. 6:3</u> <sup>41</sup>	Mark 1:24 <sup>42</sup>	Luke 11:13

Note: Underlined verses are translated correctly in the Jehovah’s Witness *New World Translation*.

7. Additional evidence from both the Old and New Testament reaffirms the verses on the preceding chart to support the doctrine of the Trinity:

#### a. Old Testament Evidence:

- 1) The title *Elohim* (“God”) always appears in the plural (2570 times!), thus supporting the teaching of Scripture elsewhere that God is more than one Personage (Gen. 1:1ff.).

- 2) Plural personal pronouns (“Us” rather than “Me”) are used for God (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8).
  - 3) The three Persons of the Trinity appear together in the same passage as distinct from one another (Isa. 48:16; 59:20-21; 63:7-10).
  - 4) Distinctions within the nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are evident in:
    - a) Immanuel (Messiah) means “God with us” (Isa. 7:14).
    - b) The Son is called “the mighty God” (Isa. 9:6).
    - c) The Father delegates sovereign authority to the Son (Ps. 2:7).
    - d) The Father sent the Holy Spirit (Ps. 104:30).
    - e) One LORD is distinguished from the LORD (Gen. 19:24; Hos. 1:7).
    - f) The Spirit of the Lord (Holy Spirit) is distinct from the Father and Son (Isa. 48:16).
    - g) The Redeemer (who must be divine) is distinguished from the LORD (Isa. 59:20).
    - h) The Father sent the Angel of Jehovah, or pre-incarnate Christ, who is called God yet distinguished from Him (Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-21; 19:1-28; 32:30; Mal. 3:1).
- b) New Testament Evidence:
- 1) Jesus Christ is called the God incarnate (John 1:14) and the Son of **God** (Matt. 16:16), but He was conceived by the **Holy Spirit** (Matt. 1:18, 20); however, He is never called “the Son of the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, the Spirit must be God since God conceived Mary to produce the Son of God!
  - 2) The three Persons of the Trinity are distinguished at the baptism of Christ, where the Father spoke from heaven and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove (Matt. 3:16-17).
  - 3) The Father and the Comforter (Holy Spirit) are distinguished from Christ Himself (John 14:16-17).
  - 4) The Great Commission command to baptize “in the name (singular) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” breaks the rules of grammar by using a singular noun (“name”) with three (i.e., a plural number of) genitives (Matt. 28:19). Again, in this trinitarian prescription for baptism, the three Persons are distinguished.
  - 5) Many other passages distinguish between the Persons in the Godhead by listing all three in the same passage (John 3:21-24; 4:2-31; 15:26; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor 12:3-6; 2 Cor 1:21; 13:14; Eph. 1:17; 2:13-22; 3:14-19; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Jude 20-21; Rev. 1:4-5).

### **Misunderstandings of the Trinity**

1. Tritheism: three persons who are three gods
2. Modalism: one person who manifests himself in three different ways
3. Unitarianism: one person who is the only God
4. Nonsense: one person who is at the same time three persons

# Denials of the Doctrine

Search Ministries, Dallas, Texas

The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in the Scriptures and it was emphatically affirmed in church history from the earliest period to present. Yet the major cults of America deny the truth of the trinity.

## I. The Mormons reject the Trinity.

- A. Their view of the Father: God the Father is the resurrected Adam. He was once a man but he became a finite god who is now populating the earth with his many celestial wives.
- B. Their view of the Son: Christ is an ordinary man who became a god. He was not produced by a direct act of the Holy Spirit but by actual sexual relations between God the Father (Adam-god) and Mary.
- C. Their world view: Polytheistic. They believe that many gods inhabit the universe and that man may become a god.

## II. The Jehovah's Witnesses reject the Trinity.

- A. Their view of the Father: Jehovah is the <sup>most</sup> high god.
- B. Their view of the Son: Jesus is "god-like" but not Jehovah. Prior to his earthly life he was Michael the Archangel. At his incarnation he became a man. At the resurrection Jesus went back to his former state as an invisible spirit body.
- C. Their view of the Spirit: "So the holy spirit is the invisible active force of Almighty God which moves his servants to do his will" (Let God be True, pg. 108). Thus, the deity and the personality of the Holy Spirit are both denied.
- D. Their view of the Trinity: "The trinity doctrine was not conceived by Jesus or the early Christians (ibid. 1952, pg.93). "The plain truth is that this is another of Satan's attempts to keep the God-fearing person from learning the truth of Jehovah and His Son Christ Jesus" (ibid 93).
- E. Their world view: Jehovah's Witnesses are monotheistic: There is one God who is strictly one person.

## III. The Unity School of Christianity rejects the Trinity.

- A. Their view of the Father: God is an impersonal force or a principle. "God exercises none of his attributes except through the inner consciousnesses of the universe and man" (Jesus Christ Heals, Unity Sch. of Christianity, 1944, pp. 31-32).
- B. Their view of the Son: Jesus of Nazareth was a man. The Christ principle is god or the impersonal force of the universe which resides in all mankind. Jesus of Nazareth allowed the Christ principle to so totally control him that he was elevated to Jesus Christ.
- C. Their view of the trinity: "The Father is a principle, the Son is that Principle revealed in creative plan, the Holy Spirit is the executive power of both the Father and the Son carrying out that plan" (Metaphysical Bible Dict., pg. 629).
- D. Their world view: Pantheistic. God is an impersonal force. Everything that exists is God and God is all that exists.

## IV. The Christian Scientists reject the Trinity.

- A. Their view of the Father: Mary Baker Eddy denied that the God of Christian Science was pantheistic (meaning that god was to be identified with the whole material world). But when she describes God she depicts him as "the divine whole, an all pervading intelligence and love, a divine infinite principle" (Misc. Writings, p. 16). He is not an infinite personal God. He is a divine principle.
- B. Their view of the Son: Christ is a divine idea, or principle. Jesus is the human man who lived in history. Jesus the man more than any other man manifested the Christ principle and thus became Jesus Christ.
- C. Their world view: Christian Science is pantheistic. God is the world and the world is God.

In conversations with members of Cults the Trinity is the place to begin. Probe with two kinds of questions. Who was Jesus Christ? And what is Christ's relationship to the Father and the Spirit? Initially answers from cultists will sound orthodox. But as you ask questions and define terms you will quickly find a radical difference in their Christ and the person who is revealed in the Gospels.

# Different Views of God Diagrammed

(Search Ministries)

# Different Views Of God

**Monarchianism**  
*(Mono = One Arche = Ruler)*  
**One Person One God**

A second- and third-century heresy that denies the doctrine of the Trinity maintaining that the only true God has always existed as one Person not three Persons. The teaching exists today in two forms:

## Modalistic

This view holds that God exists as one Person Who is revealed in history in different modes using different names. The Father Son and Holy Spirit are different names for the same *Person*. Therefore, the Father was born at Bethlehem and crucified at Calvary, but at the time He was called Jesus.

**Currently Taught by The United Pentecostal Church**

*True Jesus Church also*

## Dynamic

This heresy teaches that Jesus is not God but a special man who became (or was adopted as) the Son of God (usually thought to have occurred at His Baptism).

*but JW's say he was born as the Son of God.*

**Currently Taught by The Watchtower**

**Trinitarianism**  
*(Trinus = triple)*  
**Three Persons One God**

The Biblical view of God. The Father Son and Holy Spirit are three separate Persons who have always existed as **ONE TRUE GOD**. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three Gods nor are they three names for the same Person.

Although the word Trinity is not found in the Bible, the idea or teaching is found throughout scripture.

**Currently Taught by The Bible and Christians**

**Tritheism**  
*(Tri = Three, Theos = God)*  
**Three Persons Three Gods**

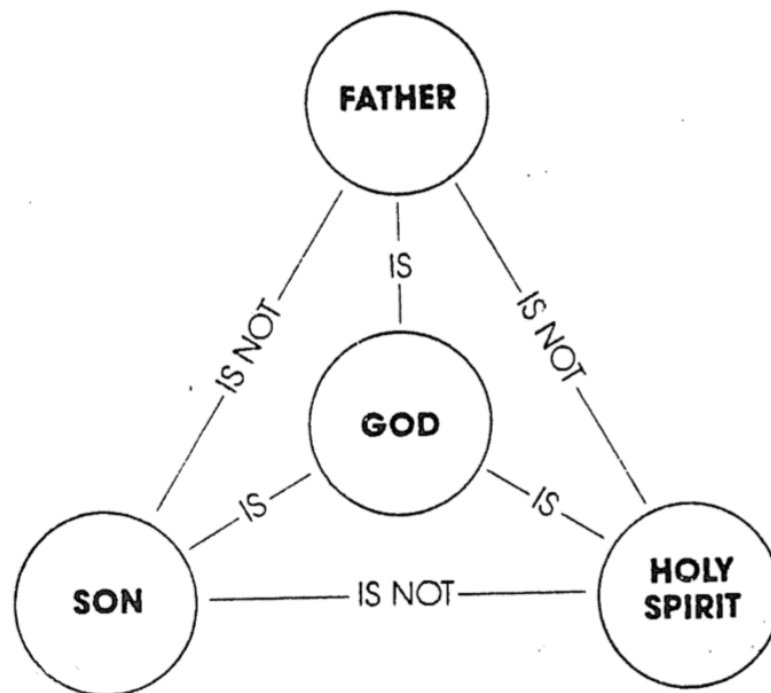
The belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate Gods. This is actually a form of Polytheism (the belief in more than one true God.)

**Currently Taught by Mormonism**

## Illustrations of the Trinity

No illustration of the Trinity can be adequate, but the following illustrations depict some of its aspects:

1. The triple point of water: Water in a vacuum tube at zero degrees centigrade will contain liquid, ice, and vapor, yet each part will still be H<sub>2</sub>O, the same substance.
2. An Egg: An egg comprises three parts: the white, yolk, and shell. However, it is one egg.  
Problem: Illustrates “parts” of God which are unscriptural
3. The Sun: The Sun is unapproachable (the Father) but is the source of beneficial light (the Son), which in turn gives power to make plants grow (the Spirit).  
Problem: Impersonal illustration, whereas God is a personal being
4. A Man: A man can simultaneously be a father, son, and husband, although he is but one man.  
Problem: Approaches modalism since it indicates three different functions for one man.
5. A Diagram: Here is the best Trinity diagram that I have seen (Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 55):



## Conclusion

“A popular statement about the Trinity goes like this, ‘Try to understand the Trinity, and you will lose your mind but fail to understand the Trinity, and you will lose your soul.’ This betrays a misunderstanding of the doctrine. The Trinity is not a logical contradiction. For God to be three persons, yet one essence is logically possible. We do know the **what** of the Trinity: God is three persons but one essence. But the **how** of the Trinity—the exhaustive knowledge of how the persons of the Trinity relate to one another—that is a mystery. It is what we **can** know coupled with what we **cannot** know that compels us to worship such a great God.”<sup>43</sup>

## Trinity Study Endnotes

Note: Underlined verses are translated correctly in the Jehovah's Witness *New World Translation*. Those with double underlines are particularly clear even in this distorted version of the Bible.

- 1 "The Trinity." An unpublished study outline by Search Ministries, Dallas, TX.
- 2 Deut. 4:39b; Isa. 43:10; 44:8; 45:22; Mark 12:29; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:5-6; Jas. 2:19; 1 Cor 8:4-6.
- 3 For a full explanation of the "Liar, Lunatic, Lord" apologetic, see Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 103-107.
- 4 1 Cor 1:3; Eph. 6:23; Phil. 1:12; 2:10; Col. 3:17.
- 5 Matt. 1:23; 4:6-7; Mark 2:1-12; John 1:1, 14; 5:18; 10:30; 12:44-45; 14:9-11; 15:23; 17:11, 21; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:8-11; Col. 1:15-19; 2:9; Tit 2:13; Heb. 1:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 1:8 with 1:17-18.
- 6 Matt. 1:18 with 16:16; 2 Cor 3:17.
- 7 Exod. 20:3-5.
- 8 Matt. 2:2, 8, 11; 28:17; Heb. 1:6.
- 9 No explicit NT text (that I know of) encourages us to worship the Spirit or pray to Him.
- 10 2 Cor 6:16.
- 11 Rom. 8:10.
- 12 John 14:17; 1 Cor 6:19.
- 13 John 7:28; 8:26.
- 14 John 1:14; 8:32 with 8:36.
- 15 John 15:26; 16:13.
- 16 1 Thess. 1:10; Col. 2:12.
- 17 John 2:19-21.
- 18 Acts 17:31.
- 19 Matt. 10:29-30.
- 20 Col. 2:3; Heb. 4:13; Rev. 2:23.
- 21 Isa. 11:2.
- 22 Gen. 18:14; Job 42:4; Jer. 32:17; Zech. 8:6; Mark 10:27; Lk 1:37; 18:27.
- 23 Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3.
- 24 Perhaps also 1 Cor 12:13.
- 25 Job 22:12-14; Eph. 4:6.
- 26 Matt. 28:20; Col. 1:27.
- 27 John 14:17.
- 28 Matt. 6:9-13.
- 29 Phil. 2:6-8.
- 30 The Holy Spirit is not a "vapor" or a "divine influence." Only a person is referred to by the personal pronoun "He" (John 16:8), and only a person can be quoted (Acts 13:2).
- 31 Mark 2:7; Ps. 103:3a, 12; Isa. 1:18; 44:22; 53:5; Jer. 31:34.
- 32 Mark 2:1-11; Acts 10:43; 13:38.
- 33 John 15:26.
- 34 Isa. 43:25.
- 35 The Father's words (Jer. 31:34) are attributed to the Son (Heb. 8:12) and Spirit (Heb. 10:17). The author could not exercise this freedom unless all three are one.
- 36 James 1:17.
- 37 Heb. 1:12.
- 38 Ps. 41:13; Rev. 1:8.
- 39 Col. 1:15; Rev. 22:13.
- 40 John's seven "I am" statements are 6:35; 8:12; 8:58; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1.
- 41 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:8; 15:4
- 42 Parallel in Luke 4:34; cf. Luke 1:35; John 6:69; Acts 2:27; 13:35; Rev. 3:7.
- 43 "The Trinity." An unpublished study outline by Search Ministries, Dallas, TX.