The Trinity:
Class 8: The Error of Arianism

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Should I Care about Errors about the Trinity?

The Jehovah's Witnesses say we are in error. Can you explain?



We have to look at the error called Arianism.



1

Come, thou Almighty King,
help us thy name to sing;
help us to praise:
Father, all glorious,
o'er all victorious,
come, and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.

2

Come, thou Incarnate Word,
gird on thy mighty sword,
our pray'r attend.
Come, and thy people bless,
and give thy Word success,
and let thy righteousness
on us descend.

3

Come, Holy Comforter,
thy sacred witness bear
in this glad hour.
Thou who almighty art,
now rule in every heart,
and ne'er from us depart,
Spirit of pow'r.

4

To the great One in Three
eternal praises be,
hence evermore.
His sov'reign majesty
may we in glory see,
and to eternity
love and adore.

A. Application

Child of God: Gal. 4:4-6

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

- Gal. 4:1-7; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5; John 1:12-13.

B. Basic Formulation

Caution: Road Out! Cliff Ahead!

- Not a good idea to burrow in error
- Rom. 16:19; Phil. 4:8-9
- Remember the principle of human knowledge in dependence on divine knowledge

Arian View

- Arius (c. 250-336), an elder at Alexandria
- He said: Jesus Christ is not fully God
  - First and highest created being
  - "There was a time when the Son was not."
- But: contradicts John 1:1 and other verses
- But: Christians worship him.
- But: salvation is not secure if not guaranteed by fully divine working.

C. Biblical Support

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

- John 1:1; 1:3; 20:28; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13, 9; John 8:58; Ex. 3:13-14.

John 20:28

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him,

Refute: JW "and the word was a god."

John 1:1-3 (2)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him,

- Verse 3: it is the only true God who creates.
- Verse 3: He, the Word, was not made.
- Verse 1: "In the beginning" implies eternal existence (not made, but God himself).

John 1:1 (3)

… and the Word was with God, ...

- JW version has "and the Word was a god."
- Watchtower has approved ASV 1901.
- At biblegateway.com: = ESV and KJV
- Greek

καὶ θεὸς	ἦν	ὁ	λόγος.
kai theos	ēn	ho	logos
and God	was	the	Word

- Omission of article signals the predicate (Greek as free word order)

John 14:28

You heard me say to you, “I am going away, and I will come to you.” If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

Refute: false idea of "greater in being." Misunderstands the significance of Jesus' work in his incarnation. "Going away."

Matt. 24:36

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Refute: false idea of not being God.
Verses 30 and 37 have "Son of Man," who in his humanity in Dan. 7:13 contrasts with the four beasts of Dan. 7:3-8. With respect to his humanity Jesus has limited knowledge (Luke 2:52).

Luke 2:52

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Distinguish Divine Nature and Human Nature

Jesus:

Being God: God does not change in his character ("immutability")

Jesus does not change in his divine nature

Being man: Human beings do change, growing and learning

Jesus changes in his human nature

Col. 1:15-16

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

Refute: idea of being part of creation. "Firstborn" means "preeminent"

Summary on Problem Verses

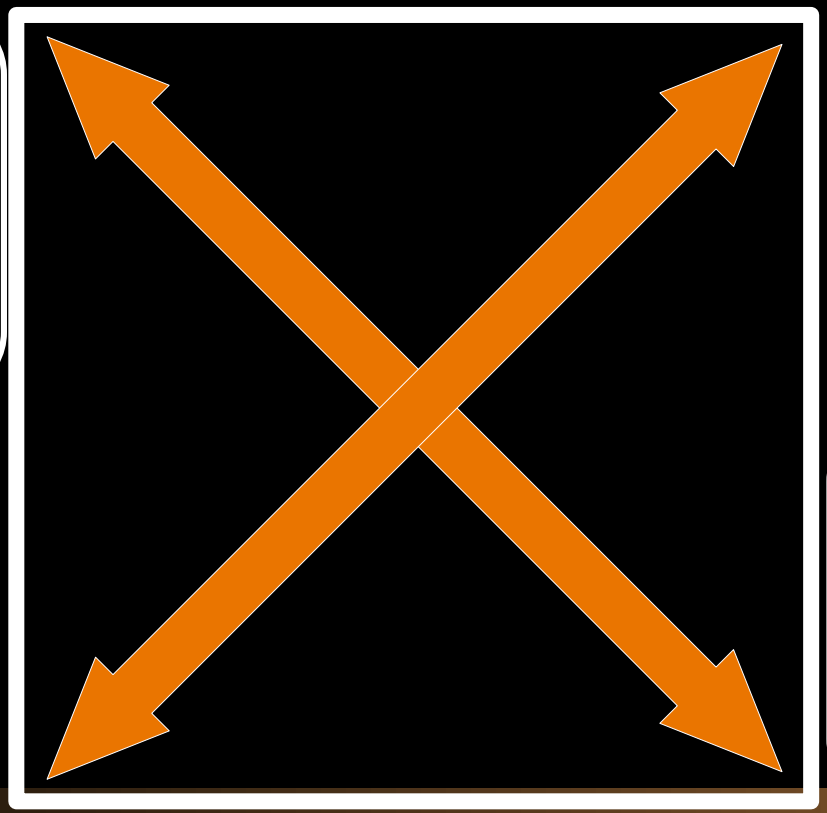
- Some Bible verses clearly teach the full deity of Jesus
- Principle: start with clear verses
- But: Arians have a handfull of verses
- Look carefully at the context!
- Each verse does not mean what Arians take it to mean
- Each verse, when inspected in context, is compatible with Jesus' divinity

Arianism Self-Refutes

- If the Word is less than fully divine
- The language that Arians use is itself caught up in that limitation in language, and cannot penetrate to the high God
- Trustworthiness of Jesus as revealing God is undermined

Frame's Square: Knowledge of Trinity

Arius

Christian		Non-Christian
1 Transcend-ence: God is Trinity (incom-prehensible)		3 Transcend-ence: God is unknowable
Immanence: God says he is Trinity		Immanence: human idea: Trinity makes no sense
2		4

D. Answer: Nicene Creed

The Council at Nicaea

Constantinople

Nicaea



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Cplakidas

Nicaea (ruins)



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QuartierLatin 1968

Answer: Nicene Creed



- Leaders met at
  First Council of Nicaea in 325
- Result: Nicene Creed
- Amended in 381, to become
  Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed
- Confirmed in 451 by
  the Council of Chalcedon

Text of the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,

The Nicene Creed (2)

begotten, not made,
being of the same essence as the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit
of the virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate;

The Nicene Creed (3)

he suffered and was buried;
and the third day he rose again
according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he shall come again, with glory,
to judge the living and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.

The Nicene Creed (4)

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together
is worshiped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets;
and we believe in one holy catholic
and apostolic church;

The Nicene Creed (5)

we acknowledge one baptism
for the remission of sins;
and we look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Text of the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,

The Nicene Creed (2)

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by whom all things were made;
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of the virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate;

homoousios

Same Essence

Homoousios
(ὁμοούσιος)

Homo + *ousios*

homo
= same

ousios*, from *ousia
= being, essence

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, … – Heb. 1:3

E. Advice for Meeting JWs

JWs at Your Door (1)

- Difficult
- Trapped in false teaching
- Better trained leaders come to help a JW who is stimied
- JWs do sometimes leave on their own initiative, because of disillusionment

JWs at Your Door (2)

- Be courteous
- Don't let them in; talk outside
- Ask to see a piece of their literature
  - "Watchtower Society"
- Testify
  - I am a follower of Christ
  - I am saved by God's mercy, not works
  - I am sure that I have eternal life because Christ promises it to believers
- Watchtower Society is a false prophet

F. Applications

You Are a Child of God: Gal. 4:4-6

4 But when the fullness of time had
come, God sent forth his Son, born of
woman, born under the law, 5 to
redeem those who were under the law,
so that we might receive adoption as
sons. 6 And because you are sons, God
has sent the Spirit of his Son into our
hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

- Gal. 4:1-7; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5; John 1:12-13.

Man Creates (Gen. 1:26)





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Man Creates (Gen. 1:26)

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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.”

You Hear God: John 17:8

For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

- John 1:1; 15:26; 16:12-15; Heb. 1:1-2.

You Reflect God: 2 Cor. 3:17-18

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and
where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is
freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled
face, beholding the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same
image from one degree of glory to
another. For this comes from the Lord
who is the Spirit.

- Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:13-17

You Have New Life: Rom. 8:11

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

- Rom. 6:3-11; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:20; 3:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

You Pray: Rom. 8:26-27

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

- Eph. 1:15-17; Heb. 7:23-25; 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5

You Pray: Rom. 8:34

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is <u>interceding for us</u>.

- Eph. 1:15-17; Heb. 7:23-25; 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5

You Are Being Saved: Gal. 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- Eph. 1:15-17; Heb. 7:23-25; 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5.

You Are Indwelt: Rom. 8:9-10

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.
10 But if Christ is in you, although the
body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is
life because of righteousness.

- John 14:23; 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:19.

You Are Under Care: Eph. 1:22

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

- Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 13:20-21; John 10:14-18.

You Serve: Eph. 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- Eph. 4:10-13; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:10-13.

God Sustains You: Heb. 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

- 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 1:18.