

Proverbs 8:1-4; 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

Not so long ago a Jehovah's witness, well, two Jehovah's witnesses came to the Rectory door to tell me about Jehovah. And I opened the door and said 'you know this is a Rectory, don't you? ...and I'm an ordained priest in the Church of England?' 'Yup,' they said. So I went about trying to tell them that their Bible mistranslates John 1:1, because *they* would have you believe it says 'the word was with God and the word was a god.' Which is bad Greek. But they didn't believe me. And I went on to say that the whole of the Orthodox church, and the whole Catholic church, and the whole Anglican church, and the Baptists, and Methodists and Pentecostal church all believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, so it was a courageous move to disagree with that much history and tradition, and the brilliant theological minds of Augustine, Aquinas, Karl Barth, Jurgen Moltmann, me, etc. And they said that they were just wrong, because how can you say there's one God, but God is called Father *and* Son *and* Holy Spirit?

And I warned them that denial of the Trinity did really brutal things to the theology of the cross and the resurrection, making the cross tantamount to cosmic child-abuse — and they said no it didn't.

And after too long a discussion they left, still Jehovah's witnesses, and I closed the door, still Anglican, saddened that I had fluffed it, and that perhaps the most beautiful aspect of our theology was a stumbling block to many.

After closing the door, I began wondering, again, how best to talk about the Trinity in a way that made sense of the confusion, and in a way that drew people back to the true and living (and somewhat confusing) triune God.

I wondered if talking about physics and wave-particle duality would help. Would it have helped if I explained that wave-particle duality is the concept in [quantum mechanics](#) that fundamental entities of the universe, like [photons](#) and [electrons](#), exhibit [particle](#) or [wave](#) properties according to the experimental circumstances? This theory expresses the inability of the [classical](#) concepts such as particle or wave to fully describe the behaviour of quantum objects. And if *physicists* can be ok with having faith in wave-particle duality perhaps we can have faith in the trinity without being very good at imagining or picturing this?

And I wondered also if it would help to find some more definitive verses of the Bible to proof-text the trinity. So I remembered that John 1:1 (in a translation with good Greek) says that the Word (which is Jesus) was with God, and was God — a clear indication of multiple persons but one God. And I thought about 2 Peter 1:1 in which Peter addresses the recipients of his letter, saying, 'To those who through the righteousness of *our God and Saviour Jesus Christ* have received a faith as precious as ours...' a sentence which clearly states that Jesus and God are one, in the opinion of Jesus's chief disciple and head of the church. There's also John 17, in which Jesus concludes that 'I and the Father are one.'

And of course there was Acts 5:3-4 in which Peter, again, addressing Ananias, says that he (Ananias) has lied to the Holy Spirit and then repeating this, for emphasis says, 'What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.' Again, he has spoken about the Holy Spirit as being one and the same as God. And if these verses are all part of our Bible, which everywhere insists

that there is one God, then three persons must be distinctly three, and yet still only one God. QED. Capeesh?

As I said, because I was caught on the hop and not expecting Jehovah's witnesses to knock at the door I didn't do a good job of explaining what happens to salvation theory if Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three beings. But let me try to explain to you?

If the Father was responsible for a creation in which our experience includes great suffering and emotional pain, but then the son — a different god for Jehovah's witnesses — comes to share our experience, that does nothing for our consolation. And if the Father sends the son to this world to experience it, and to die for it, this is cosmic child abuse, not the crucial, self-giving victorious, revelatory, atoning centre-point of history. It's gross. And if all this is true, there is no sense in the Holy Spirit lurking occasionally unpredictably through most of the Bible before suddenly finding his vocation and empowering the early church.

And when we read John's transformative statement that God is **love**, and those who live in love live in God, and God in them — how can we understand this deep unity that draws us into the heart of God if we do not understand God to be the most perfect of loving communities already?

I think I fail at speaking of the Trinity to Jehovah's witnesses, in the end, because the most important, the most impactful aspect of our trinitarian faith is almost too obvious to me now. How I know God just breaks down completely without God being three persons but one essence. Tritheism now makes no more sense to me than the determinedly conspiracy-mad corners of the internet that espouse flat-earth theory. It just doesn't work!

A brief summary: Peter and John both assure us that Jesus is God, while Peter assures us that the Holy Spirit is also God — yet there is one God, leading us to the conclusion that there are three persons of the same being — they are one God.

We believe in one God — not three gods — but this one God has always been known in three distinct ways: as **Father**, **Son**, and **Holy Spirit**.

The **Father** is the source of all life and love.

The **Son**, Jesus Christ, is God made visible — showing us what God is like, sharing our human life, and drawing us back to the Father.

The **Holy Spirit** is God's presence here and now — guiding, comforting, challenging, and renewing us.

The early Christians experienced God in all three ways, and they realised they weren't just different *masks* or *modes* — they were each fully and truly God, relating to one another in love.

So, when we speak of the Trinity, we're saying: **God is not a lonely being, but a relationship**. A communion of love. And we're invited into that relationship — to live, love, and grow in the life of God.

This unity is essential to the integrity of God's character. On the cross the whole of God suffered, and the whole of God forgave. In that reconciliation we are drawn into relationship with the whole of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And I believe that it is this divine love, made real to us and to our experience that makes all the difference, because it enables us to be transformed by God's grace and the Holy

Spirit and to act with extraordinary love, in God's power. No other faith can claim anything close to this. Amen.