

Oneness theology, is a doctrine that believes in the absolute unity of God, rejecting the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Oneness theology teaches that God is a single, indivisible being who has revealed Himself in different modes or manifestations (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) rather than as distinct persons in one Godhead.

Arguments against Oneness theology often center around the following key theological, biblical, and historical points. Below is a development of these arguments, accompanied by scriptural references.

1. The Doctrine of the Trinity in Scripture

The most significant counterpoint to Oneness theology is the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that God exists as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who share one divine essence.

Key Scriptures for the Trinity:

- **Matthew 28:19** – Jesus was first sent to Judea. But now the Disciples are commissioned to the world as Apostles to preach Jesus, the Kingdom of God, the Gospel of Christ is sent to the entire world. Jesus' command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit indicates distinct persons. These distinct persons were present at the baptism of Christ. The dove as the Holy Spirit, and the Father as He validated the Son of God as He spoke. As the scriptures acknowledge the three persons, so we are also commanded to acknowledge the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not as titles, names, or modes, but as three distinct persons.

And in acknowledgement of their personhood, we are called to worship and submit to all three as the one true God.

- **John 14:16-17** – Jesus speaks of asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit, showing distinct roles between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is not the Father who is with us. It is the Holy Spirit sent from the Father at the request of the Son. The Holy Spirit is not with us temporarily, but for all our lives. The Son of God in His resurrected body is in Heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent to dwell with us forever is indicative of three distinct persons.
- **John 1:1-14** – The Word (the Son) was with God and was God, showing the distinction between the Father and the Son but also their unity.
- **John 17:21-23** – Jesus prays for unity among His followers, mirroring the unity between the Father and the Son, which implies a distinct but united relationship.
- **2 Corinthians 13:14** – The apostolic blessing invokes all three persons of the Trinity: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

2. The Relationship between the Father and the Son

Oneness theology struggles with the clear biblical distinction between the Father and the Son. In Oneness theology, Jesus is both the Father and the Son, but the Bible speaks of them as distinct persons, especially in the context of Jesus' relationship to the Father.

Key Scriptures:

- **John 1:18** – "No one has ever seen God. The only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." This shows a distinction between the Father and the Son.
- **John 8:16-18** – Jesus speaks of His relationship with the Father, stating that He is not alone but with the Father who sent Him.
- **John 14:28** – Jesus says, "The Father is greater than I," which suggests a distinction in their roles and nature.

3. The Holy Spirit as a Distinct Person

In Oneness theology, the Holy Spirit is often viewed as just another manifestation of the one God, but traditional Christian teaching affirms that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person within the Godhead.

Key Scriptures:

- **John 14:16-17** – Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit as another Helper, indicating a distinct person from Himself.
- **Acts 5:3-4** – Peter confronts Ananias and Sapphira about lying to the Holy Spirit, saying, "You have not lied to men but to God," showing the divinity and personhood of the Holy Spirit.
- **Matthew 12:31-32** – Jesus warns against blaspheming the Holy Spirit, indicating the Holy Spirit is a distinct person within the Godhead who can be offended in a way that is separate from the Father or Son.

4. The Baptism of Jesus: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The baptism of Jesus in the Gospels is one of the most clear demonstrations of the distinct persons of the Godhead. In Oneness theology, Jesus is often considered to be both the Father and the Son, which makes it difficult to reconcile with the biblical account.

Key Scriptures:

- **Matthew 3:16-17** – At Jesus' baptism, the Son is baptized, the Father speaks from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descends as a dove, showing the three distinct persons in action.
- **Luke 3:21-22** – Similarly, at the baptism of Jesus, all three persons are present, indicating their distinctness while being united in purpose.
- **Mark 1:9-11** – Jesus is baptized, the heavens open, and the Spirit descends like a dove, while the Father speaks, demonstrating their distinct roles and identities.

5. Jesus' Prayer to the Father

The prayers of Jesus, especially in the Gospels, are another major point of disagreement with Oneness theology. Jesus' prayers to the Father suggest a relationship that is more than just a manifestation of God. This indicates that Jesus is distinct from the Father.

Key Scriptures:

- **John 17:1-5** – Jesus prays to the Father, asking to be glorified with the glory He had before the world existed. This clearly shows a distinction between the Father and the Son.
- **Luke 22:42** – Jesus prays to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, saying, "Not my will, but yours be done," indicating a relationship between two distinct persons.

6. The Pre-existence of the Son

Oneness theology often downplays the pre-existence of the Son, suggesting that Jesus only "became" the Son at His incarnation. However, traditional Christian doctrine affirms that the Son existed eternally with the Father.

Key Scriptures:

- **John 1:1-3** – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This emphasizes the eternal existence of the Son (the Word) before His incarnation.
- **John 8:58** – Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am," affirming His eternal existence and pre-incarnate divinity.
- **Philippians 2:6-7** – Paul describes the Son's pre-incarnate state, stating that He was in the form of God before taking on human nature.

7. Historical and Early Christian Doctrine

The doctrine of the Trinity has been the foundation of Christian orthodoxy since the early church, as seen in the Nicene Creed (325 AD) and other early

Christian writings. Oneness theology represents a departure from the historic Christian understanding of God.

Historical Counterpoints:

Early Christian writers such as Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Athanasius consistently affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity and the distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The ecumenical councils, particularly the Council of Nicaea and the Council of Constantinople, were convened to affirm the doctrine of the Trinity in response to various heresies, including those that denied the distinct persons of the Godhead.

8. Practical Theological Implications

Oneness theology often leads to a redefinition of key Christian practices, such as baptism and the nature of salvation. The traditional Christian view holds that baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whereas Oneness theology often teaches baptism in the name of Jesus only.

Key Scriptures:

- **Matthew 28:19** – Jesus' command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is seen as a foundational scriptural basis for Christian baptism.
- **Acts 2:38** – While Oneness theology emphasizes baptism "in the name of Jesus," traditional Christians understand this as part of the

comprehensive understanding of God's work in salvation, including the full revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity, as understood in traditional Christian theology, is supported by numerous scriptural passages that affirm the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit while maintaining their unity in essence.

Oneness theology, while an attempt to emphasize the oneness of God, often struggles to explain the clear distinctions between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Scripture. The historical and theological development of the doctrine of the Trinity further demonstrates the importance of this doctrine in Christian orthodoxy.

Ultimately, these scriptural and theological arguments against Oneness theology point to the need to maintain the historical and biblical understanding of God as Triune.