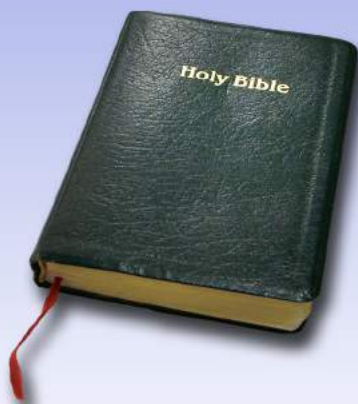


GOD'S
LOVE
on Trial



**Do You Really Know
the God of the Bible?**

GOD'S
LOVE
on Trial



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Chapter 1

The Origin of the Trial

There was a time when all of God's creation was in harmony with God. Everyone was aware of God's great love for them. At that time, there was no question in anyone's mind regarding the goodness and integrity of God. Yet, this harmony and peace would soon be broken by the rise of sin in the heart of Lucifer, whom we now call Satan.

The Bible says that Lucifer was created perfect. God said to him, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." (Ezekiel 28:15) Lucifer means "Light Bearer," and was the name of Satan before he fell. God also said to Lucifer: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12) Lucifer was perfect when God created him. He obviously obeyed the first and greatest commandment, which is to love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind. In order for Lucifer to have loved God with all his heart, he must have understood God's love for him, because the Bible says, "We love [God], because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) Love for God always begins with an understanding and appreciation of God's love for us.

We are not told how long Lucifer remained in a perfect condition, but the Bible says that "iniquity was found" in him. It is hard to imagine how Lucifer, who lived in a perfect universe with a perfect God of love, could come to a point where he would sin against God. While this is a great mystery, God revealed to Ezekiel a few details regarding Lucifer's fall into sin that help us to understand what took place.

God said to Lucifer, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." (Ezekiel 28:17) When God said that Lucifer's heart was lifted up, that was another way of saying that he became proud, and God said this happened because of how beautiful and good he thought he was. This pride, God said, corrupted his wisdom. When God said that Lucifer's wisdom became corrupted, what wisdom was He referring to? The only wisdom that would be relevant in this context is Lucifer's wisdom about God's character of love. This is the wisdom that became corrupted in Lucifer as a result of his pride.

While Lucifer was perfect, he viewed God as a Person who is loving, just, and fair in everything He does and, therefore, Lucifer loved God with all his heart. However, Lucifer began to turn his eyes upon himself and realize how beautiful, how perfect, how wise, he was. He started to become proud of himself, his beauty, and his abilities. As this went on, he started to believe that he deserved a more exalted position than God had given him. He started to think that since he was so wonderful, and deserved a better position in heaven, God was not being fair to him for withholding from him what he deserved. After this, Lucifer began looking upon God as a Person who is unfair, unjust, and selfish. No longer did he recognize God's character of love. His wisdom about God's character of love became corrupted; he began to doubt God's love, causing his love for God to diminish.

Lucifer's wisdom about God's love became so corrupted that he thought he could do a better job of ruling the universe than God Himself. Lucifer finally said, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isaiah 14:14)

After Lucifer cherished evil thoughts about God, he was not content to keep his new views to himself. Soon he started to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of God's faithful angels. He wanted others to have the same distorted picture of God's love that he had come to behold. The Bible says that Lucifer was so successful in his campaign to misrepresent God's character of love that he convinced one third of the angelic host to accompany him in his rebellion. (See Revelation 12:4, 7-9)

It was Lucifer's lie from the beginning that God was not as loving and caring as He made Himself out to be. Sin began with a disbelief in God's love, and Lucifer knew that if he could get others to disbelieve God's love they would join him in his rebellion. He took up the unholy task of bringing God's love into question, of putting God's love on trial.

Eve in the Garden of Eden

Finally Satan was cast out of heaven, but he had not given up on his campaign against God. The controversy was continued on this earth. In the form of a serpent he tricked Eve into accepting his distorted view about God's character. The Bible says, "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." (Genesis 3:1-3) At this point, Eve innocently and completely

believed that God loved her with all His heart. She had every reason to trust that God was looking out for her best interests in withholding the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from her. God had told her not to eat the fruit of that tree because if she did it would have a very negative effect upon her; she would die. Eve understood that the fruit was harmful to her and, therefore, she believed that God was good and loving to withhold it from her.

Here is where Satan seized the opportunity to share his distorted picture of God's character. "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4, 5)

Please notice the intention behind Satan's lie. He was not merely contradicting God's Word, by stating that Eve would not die, but his real intention was to give Eve a distorted picture of God's character of love. Satan knew that as long as Eve understood the fruit of the tree to be bad for her, she would look upon God as good for withholding it from her. So Satan tricked Eve into thinking that the fruit of the tree was actually good for her, which would mean that God was bad for withholding it from her. This is what Satan wanted. He wanted Eve to look upon God in the same way that he did, as a Person who is unjust, unfair, unkind and unloving. This was the real intention behind Satan's first lie to mankind.

Satan planted a seed of doubt in Eve's mind. She began to wonder why God had withheld the fruit of that tree from her. She had understood that it was for her own benefit, but now she began to wonder. Gazing at the fruit, Eve thought something like this, "Could it be that God is withholding this fruit from me because He doesn't want me to become wise, and be elevated to a higher level?"

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." (Genesis 3:6) Satan succeeded in getting Eve to join him in his rebellion against God. What was it that caused Eve's fall? How could Satan convince a perfect, sinless being to openly rebel against God?

Up until that time, Eve was convinced that God loved her very much. God had done many wonderful things for her. He always provided for her needs, and everything was wonderful in that beautiful garden. At Satan's instigation, Eve began to wonder if God really did love her. She wondered if there was something good that God was withholding from her.

Soon she believed Satan's lie and doubted God's love. She ate of the fruit, and we all know the rest of the story.

The Great Controversy

It was a disbelief in God's love that started Satan on his downward path. It was a disbelief in God's love that convinced Eve to sin. It is a disbelief in God's love that keeps us in sin today. It is only through a revelation of God's infinite love, and our appreciation of it, that we can be brought back to God in a loving relationship surpassing any we have yet had.

For many years the people of the world lay in darkness regarding the immense love that God has for them. It was to make clear God's love, and redeem His children, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world. Jesus came to declare the wonderful character of love that God has for each one of us. He came to clarify once and for all that God is love, and His love is so great that He is willing to give up everything dear to Him in order to save those who rebelled against Him.

God's character of love has been at the heart of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. It has been Satan's goal to deceive men concerning the true character of God. Satan would have us believe that God is not as loving as He claims to be. Satan knows that if he can convince us on this issue, we will never completely surrender our lives to God enough to have a hatred for sin so great as to cause us to stop sinning and gain the victory over the mark of the beast crisis so soon to be unleashed upon this world. It is only through receiving a true picture of God's love that we can ever love Him enough to fulfill the commandment that Jesus called "the first and great commandment." Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." (Matthew 22:37, 38)

An Angel With a Vital Message

Because the controversy over God's character is so fierce, and gaining momentum as we near the end of this world and the mark of the beast crisis, God sent a very special message to His people, symbolized by the first angel of Revelation 14. This message will enable us to gain "*the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.*" (Revelation 15:2)

Immediately following John's account of the mark of the beast crisis in Revelation 13, he wrote, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the *everlasting gospel* to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

(Revelation 14:6) This angel represents God's work through human agents to preach a message to "them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." This is the same message Jesus referred to when He said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

Just before the end comes the everlasting gospel will be preached in all the world. What is the *everlasting* gospel? The word *gospel* means "glad tidings" or "good news." "As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15) So this message, that is to go to all the world at this time, is everlasting good news of good things. What good news could be *everlasting* good news? Someone might tell you, "I've got good news! You've just won a million dollars!" This might be good news, but it is *temporary* good news; it is not *everlasting* good news. Everlasting good news is good news that will be good news throughout all eternity.

Paul shed light on this question when he wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For *therein is the righteousness of God revealed* from faith to faith." (Romans 1:16, 17) The gospel reveals the righteousness, or the goodness, of God. Truly this is *everlasting* good news; good news that will still be good news a million years from now, and for all eternity.

Paul stated something else in these verses, which we need to particularly notice. He said the gospel is "the **power** of God unto salvation." When the goodness and love of God is revealed to you it becomes the motivating power that changes your life. Paul expressed it in another place in this way: "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." (Romans 2:4) Understanding the goodness of God, His love, compassion, gentleness, and mercy, leads us to repentance and motivates us to continue serving Him. Love is the agent that God uses to remove sin from our lives.

Now that we have a good understanding of what the everlasting gospel is designed to do, we can look at what this angel with the everlasting gospel has to say to us. He cried "with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:7) Two more angels immediately follow this angel, with additional information to help us gain the victory over the mark of the beast,

but this is the only one that directly instructs us to take action. There are three things we are instructed to do:

- ❶ “Fear God”
- ❷ “Give glory to Him”
- ❸ “Worship Him that made heaven and earth”

We can see that the first angel’s message is calling people to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God of heaven. Based upon what we just learned about the everlasting gospel, we know that this message is designed to reveal the goodness and love of God. It is calling people to know God’s identity and His character of love, which will enable them to love God with all their hearts and gain the victory over the mark of the beast. Only those who understand the everlasting gospel will be able to worship God in spirit and in truth, thus obeying the first angel’s message.

The Most Important Trial of All Time

Satan has called into question God’s love. He has put God’s love on trial, and *you* are a member of the jury. It is up to *you* to decide who is right in this controversy. The trial has come to *you* for a decision. *Your* decision will have everlasting consequences because it will determine how you relate to God, the depth of your love for Him, your obedience to His commandments and, ultimately, your eligibility to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Will *you* be one of those over whom God triumphantly proclaims, “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus”? (Revelation 14:12) Will *you* be one of the blessed ones who “do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”? (Revelation 22:14) If you are going to be in that number, you will need to make the right decision in this great trial that all of us have been plunged into. You will need to examine the evidence for yourself, and come to appreciate God as He is revealed in His Word and through His Son, Jesus Christ. Only then will it be rightly said of you that you are a “true worshiper.” (John 4:23)

Please read on, because the evidence in this trial must be examined thoroughly before an accurate decision can be made. Solomon wrote, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” (Proverbs 18:13)

Chapter 2

The Biblical View of God

God created mankind with an inherent desire to worship. You can go anywhere in the world, even to the most remote tribe in Africa, and you will find that they worship. There is something about believing that a God exists that fills a void in a person's life.

Some, in their desire to worship, have made themselves gods of wood or stone. Others invent mystical gods in their own imaginations.

Every religion is based upon some conception of God. Unfortunately many religions are based upon a conception of false gods, and some are even based upon false conceptions of the true God.

One thing is sure, for those who choose to worship, their whole life and character is molded by the type of person they perceive their God to be. (See 2 Corinthians 3:18.) People who worship a harsh and cruel god will generally become harsh and cruel themselves. So a person's perception of God dramatically affects whether that person is a good person or not, and it ultimately will determine whether that person will live forever or be destroyed in the lake of fire.

The biggest and most important difference between Christianity and paganism is the God that we worship. In order for anyone to be a Christian he must first begin by having an understanding about the true God.

There are many people who think that all Christians have the same ideas about God. However, it is amazing that within Christianity there are many different ideas about God, and these different ideas vary *dramatically* from one another. But how are you to know which one of these ideas is right?

My friends, we can be very thankful that God has not left us to guess on such an important subject as this. He has given us His Word to study and to find out what is truth. So, today we are going to look into our Bibles and see for ourselves what God reveals about Himself.

In John chapter 4 we read an account of Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. In their conversation Jesus made a statement that we really need to consider. He said to her, "Ye worship ye know not what!" (John 4:22) You can just imagine how shocked this woman was to hear these words. You see, the Samaritans were not pagans. They claimed to

worship the same God that the Jews worshiped. But Jesus told this woman that she did not know what she worshiped.

The Apostle Paul gave a similar testimony to the men on Mars' Hill when he said, "As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." (Acts 17:23) Was Paul congratulating the men on Mars' Hill for worshiping an unknown god? Was Jesus complimenting the woman at the well for worshiping something she did not know? Certainly not! That type of worship is useless, and is displeasing to God.

In Jeremiah 9:23, 24 God told Jeremiah, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

God desires us to love Him and worship Him because we know what He is like. He wants us to understand Who He is, and what His character is like so that when we worship Him we know Whom we are worshiping. When we worship something that we do not know or understand, then we are not really worshiping the true God. The men who set up an altar "to the unknown god" were not worshiping the true God at all. Their worship was directed to someone, but it certainly was not directed to the God of heaven. The Bible tells us that when we worship false gods or idols, we are actually worshiping Satan:

In 1 Corinthians 10:20, Paul wrote, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." And in Deuteronomy 32:16, 17, we read, "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." So we see, the Bible teaches that if we worship idols or gods that we do not know, then we are actually worshiping devils.

Friends, this is serious! We better make sure that we know Whom we are worshiping because, if we are wrong on this, then we are worshiping Satan and will be lost.

Satan is at work in this world to deceive mankind into worshiping a false god. He is seeking to hide, from our view, a true picture of the God of heaven and His love for us.

If we worship a god whom we do not know, even if there is no outward idol for our eyes to look upon, we can be just as truly worshipping Satan as were the servants of Baal.

The One God of the Bible

Let us open our Bibles and see what it actually says about God. In Isaiah 44:6 God said, “Beside me there is no God,” and in verse 8 He continued, “Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.” This is very precise language to indicate that the speaker is alone. All of the pronouns are singular, indicating that only one person is speaking. Who is this one person?

Paul clarified this in his first letter to the Corinthians. He wrote, “we know... that there is none other God but one.” (1 Corinthians 8:4) To make it abundantly clear who he was referring to as the God beside which there is none other, Paul continued. In verse 6 he wrote, “To us there is but one God, the Father.” Paul understood the one God of the Bible to be God, the Father, and no one else.

Jesus had the same understanding. After Jesus said, “Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord,” a scribe told Him, “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he.” (Mark 12:29, 32) Who is the one God the scribe was referring to? Was he referring to Jesus as the one God? Certainly not! He was referring to God, the Father, and Jesus knew it.

At another time, while Jesus was talking to the scribes and Pharisees, He said, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God.” (John 8:54) Jesus knew that when the scribes and Pharisees said “God,” they were referring to His Father. When this scribe said, “There is one God; and there is none other but he,” Jesus knew that he was talking about His Father.

Did Jesus correct the scribe by saying, “You’ve got it wrong, I am really the one God of the Bible”? Absolutely not! To the contrary, Jesus complimented him for his good answer by exclaiming, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” Jesus knew that this man was correct, that there is one God, the Father, and there is none other God but He.

The Father is called “the only true God” (John 17:3), “the Most High God” (Mark 5:7), “the only Potentate [the only supreme ruler]” (1 Timothy 6:15), the “one God and Father of all who is above all” (Ephesians 4:6), and it is said several times that “there is none other God but He.” (Mark 12:32; See also Isaiah 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:4; etc.) The Bible is very clear that the “one God” of the Bible is “God, the Father.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

In the Bible, the Father declares that He is the only God, and there is none other god beside Him. Jesus taught the same truth, yet, in the New Testament, we find that Christ is also called God. (Hebrews 1:8) How can that be?

In the Bible, the word “god” has several different meanings. In a very limited sense, men are called gods. Both the Greek word *theos* and the Hebrew word *elohim*, which are most often translated “god” are used in reference to men. (See Exodus 7:1; Psalm 82:6; John 10:34) When the word “god” is used in that sense, then there are hundreds and thousands of gods.

In a less limited sense, angels are called gods. David wrote about man, “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [*elohim*].” (Psalms 8:5) The word “angels” in this verse comes from the Hebrew word *elohim*. The way *elohim* is used here it denotes a type of being that is higher than man, but it is still used in a limited sense, and with this definition there would still be many gods.

In reference to Christ, the word “god” is used in a much less limited sense, to denote His *nature* as being on the same level as His Father—something that cannot be said about any other being in the universe. The Bible says that Christ was “in the form of God.” (Philippians 2:6)

But even when the word “god” is used of Christ, it is used in a limited sense, because Christ has a God who is “the head of Christ,” “above all,” and “greater than” He. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 4:6; and John 14:28) When the word “god” is used in its absolute and unlimited sense, there is only one person to whom it can apply, and that is God, the Father, alone. Jesus said that His Father is “the only true God.” (John 17:3) Paul said, “there is none other God but one... God, the Father.” (1 Corinthians 8:4, 6) Of the 1,354 times the word “god” is used in the New Testament, more than 99% of the time it refers exclusively to God, the Father, while it only applies to His Son four times. (John 1:1; John 20:28; Hebrews 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:16)

So, to clarify, there are many gods when the word “god” is used in a limited sense, to include men and angels. When the word “god” is used as an adjective to describe the nature of God, as in the last part of John 1:1, then there are only two divine beings, God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. The Son of God is completely divine by nature because His Father is divine, just as I am completely human, because my parents are human.

When the word “god” is used in its absolute sense, to denote “the most high God,” “the Sovereign of the universe,” or “the only true God,” then there is only one God; God, the Father, beside which there is no God.

The Love of God

Not only must we know the identity of God in order to worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), but we must also know His character of love. In the most well-known verse of the Bible, Jesus said, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) When Jesus said God “*so loved* the world” He was saying, “This is how much God loves you, He loves you so much that He did something for you—He demonstrated His love for you by giving up His most precious possession, His only begotten Son.

If God had loved the world so much that He gave a goat, you and I would seriously question God’s love for us, because a goat would be an almost meaningless gift for God to give up, since it is something He created. If God had loved the world so much that He gave a human, what would we think then? Well, that is a little better than a goat, but it is still a small gift, because humans were also created. What if God had loved the world so much that He gave an angel? That is a better gift than a human, but it still falls far short of demonstrating how much God loves us. You see, our understanding of God’s love depends upon the value of the gift He gave up for us. The more valuable the gift He gave, the more we can see His love for us.

God gave His only *begotten* Son for us. There are others whom He calls sons, but He only has one *begotten* Son. We can be “sons of God” by *adoption* (Romans 8:14), angels are “sons of God” by *creation* (Job 1:6; 2:1), but Jesus Christ is the only *begotten* Son of God. What sets Jesus Christ apart from everyone else in the universe, and by which we know God’s love for us, is the fact that He was *begotten*. This puts Him in the closest possible relationship with God.

God knows, from firsthand experience, the most valuable possession a person can have. He knows that nothing is more valuable to a person than a child whom they love. This is precisely where God tested Abraham’s love and loyalty when He asked him to offer his beloved son, Isaac, for a sacrifice. Abraham’s willingness to obey God’s command proved that he loved God with all his heart. It proved that he would be willing to give up every possession he had for God.

The same thing is true with God. When He gave up His only begotten Son it proved that He is willing to give up every possession, suffer any

amount of pain, and endure any hardship in order to save those whom He loves. This is what Paul meant when he said, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

God truly loves us, yet this love can only be comprehended by understanding that God gave His only *begotten* Son. Understanding God’s love as demonstrated in the gift of His Son is vitally important for us, for it is the key that enables us to overcome the world. John wrote, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is *the Son of God*?” (1 John 5:5) Believing that Jesus is the *begotten* Son of God enables us to overcome the world by elevating our perception of God’s love and enabling us to love Him with all our hearts in return. John expressed it this way: “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

The Only Begotten Son of God

What did Jesus mean when He said He was *begotten*? Jesus, speaking of Himself, said, “When there were no depths, I was **brought forth** [born]; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I **brought forth** [born]... Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” (Proverbs 8:24, 25, 30)

According to the Bible, Jesus Christ was begotten, which literally means born, before anything was created—long before God sent Him into the world. (See Hebrews 1:1-9; Colossians 1:15; John 3:16, 17; 18:37; and 1 John 4:9.) *How* He was begotten is not for us to know, but God wants us to realize that He and His Son have a close, genuine, father-son relationship that is not just a role or an act.

My friends, God really means what He says. He says that He gave His only begotten Son. If Jesus Christ was not the begotten Son of God before God sent Him into the world, then what did the Father give up? Many sincere Christians believe that Jesus Christ is an exactly equal, same-aged companion of the Father. If this were true, then all the Father gave up was a friend; a companion! If this were true, then the One who loves us the most is Christ, because He is the One who willingly died for us.

It is true that Jesus Christ loves us very much, and we praise and thank Him for that love. However, the Bible teaches that God, the Father, suffered tremendously when His Son was suffering under the weight of our sins. (Compare Psalm 18:4-11 with Matthew 27:45-51) In Abraham and Isaac’s story it was obviously the father, Abraham, who suffered more

than Isaac when he gave up his beloved son. Jesus said, “the Father himself loveth you.” (John 16:27) John wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” (1 John 3:1) We cannot behold the love of the Father if we do not know what He gave up for us. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that *God sent his only begotten Son into the world*, that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9) God has an only begotten Son whom He willingly gave up so that you could be forgiven of your sins and live for eternity. Praise God for such wonderful love!

Some people think that God is beyond the possibility of having a Son, but Jesus said, “with God all things are possible.” (Mark 10:27) The Bible refers to Christ as God’s Son at least 120 times. The Bible does this by using the phrase “Son of God” forty-seven times. Regarding the genuineness of Christ’s Sonship, He is called “the only begotten” five times, “the firstborn” three times, “the firstbegotten” once, and God’s “holy child” twice. Four verses say He was “begotten” prior to His incarnation. Four verses say that He “proceeded forth from,” “came out from” or “camest forth from” the Father. The evidence on this subject is overwhelming. Christ truly is the literal begotten Son of God, brought forth from the Father before all creation. If God expected us to believe anything different, He did a poor job of presenting it in the Bible. In fact, if God had wanted us to believe differently, He purposely confused us by making so many clear statements indicating that Christ is literally the begotten Son of God, without the slightest clarification to indicate that we should not take His words in their common meaning. Yet, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

Any writer or public speaker knows that when they use a word or a phrase that could be easily misunderstood, clarifications need to be made to prevent people from coming to the wrong conclusions. Yet, throughout the New Testament, where Christ is said to be the begotten Son of God, there is never any type of correction or clarification so that these words would not be taken in their natural sense. Jesus said that He is “the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18) Concerning another subject, but the principle can be applied with equal force here, He said, “If it were not so, I would have told you.” (John 14:2)

You might be thinking, “I have always believed Jesus is the Son of God.” Great! You might also be thinking, “Don’t all Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God?” As we shall see a little later, the reality is that most who profess to be Christians actually do not believe Jesus to be the real Son of God.

The Death of the Son of God

Our salvation was accomplished by the death of the Son of God. “We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10) Notice, it was not the death of the Son of man (the human nature), but the death of the divine Son of God that reconciled us to God.

These few words of Paul mean much more than we can fathom with just a brief reading of them. God loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for wretched sinners like you and me. This is more than a cliché. The thought contained in these words demonstrates the immense sacrifice that God made in our behalf. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32) If God was willing to give up His own Son for us, it proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He is willing to give up all that He possesses for our benefit, because His Son meant more to Him than anything in the universe. When we understand what took place at the cross, it will melt our hearts like nothing else can.

The extreme anguish Christ experienced at the cross is described in the following verses: “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.” (Psalm 88:6, 7) Christ suffered the worst death that anyone has ever, or will ever, suffer. Others have suffered equally or even greater if we limit His suffering to His physical pain alone. Yet His death was the worst in that His relationship with His Father was so close that the loss of that relationship caused Him the greatest anguish that anyone will ever suffer. Christ’s emotional turmoil was great when He realized His Father’s displeasure. Though He had not sinned, He was tempted to believe that He would suffer eternal death for the salvation of you and me. Christ made the conscious decision that if it meant He must die for eternity so you can live with God forever, then He was willing to do it.

At any moment the Son of God could have cried to His Father to deliver Him, but He went on, knowing that some would be saved. When a group of soldiers came out to capture Christ, Peter began to fight for Him, but Christ rebuked him saying, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53) He was determined never to give up, even if it meant He would never live again. He had decided to surrender His will to His Father. “And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” (Mark 14:36) The Son of God was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8) Finally, He cried out in anguish,

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) The Son of God suffered a real death for our sins, when the sins of the whole world were placed upon Him. (See Isaiah 53:6 and 1 John 2:2.) It was not pretend, it was not an act, it was real.

There are some who claim that Christ came down from heaven and inhabited a human body and that, when it came time to die, only the human body died while the divine being who came down from heaven remained alive. With this view we would have to conclude that there was only a human sacrifice made for our redemption. No matter how exalted the pre-existent Son was, no matter how glorious, how powerful, or even eternal, if the manhood only died, the sacrifice was only human. It is contrary to reason to believe that a human sacrifice is sufficient to redeem mankind, and it is contrary to Scripture to say that only half of Christ died. Let us see from the Bible why this is so.

In Hebrews chapter one, Paul portrays Christ as being highly exalted, the one who was begotten in the express image of His Father’s person. Then, in Hebrews chapter two, Paul explains the necessity of Christ becoming a man so that He could redeem us. In verse nine of this chapter he explains, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9) Paul explains the importance of Christ becoming a man, made a little lower than the angels, so that He could die; not so that a human body could die, but so that the divine Son of God could die. This verse would mean absolutely nothing if the Son of God did not die completely.

The fact that Christ did die is brought out even more clearly in the following verses: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation [Greek: emptied Himself], and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” (Philippians 2:5-9)

These verses are very clear. The same identical Being who was in the form of God in verse six, died in verse eight. Jesus Christ Himself made it very clear to John that He was dead. Jesus said, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Revelation 1:18)

In Isaiah 53 we read the following account: “it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an

offering for sin,... he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:10-12)

According to the Scripture, the soul of Christ died; the soul of Christ was made the offering for sin. The soul of a person constitutes the entire being. If a soul dies, the entire being is dead. The soul is more than just the body. Jesus said, “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28)

We are told that the soul of Christ was in the grave. On the day of Pentecost Peter said, “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:31) The word hell in the preceding verse was translated from the Greek word *hades*. This word means grave in every case. The soul of Christ rested with His body in the tomb.

The Spirit of Christ inspired David to write concerning Christ’s death, “I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.” (Psalm 88:8) Christ was shut up in the tomb, and He could not come forth. The Bible says more than thirty times that God, the Father, raised Christ from the dead.¹ Paul wrote that he was an apostle, “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God, the Father, who raised him from the dead.” (Galatians 1:1)

Paul also emphasized, in Ephesians 1:19, 20, that “the exceeding greatness” of the Father’s “mighty power” was demonstrated “when he raised” Christ “from the dead.” If Christ had actually raised Himself from the dead, as some people believe, then Paul’s words could not have been true. It would not have been the Father’s power, but the power of Christ which would have been demonstrated.

Christ did not raise Himself from the dead or else He would not have been dead to begin with, and His words could not be true, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” (John 5:30) When the Son of God was asleep in the tomb, He was as the rest of the dead who know not anything and whose thoughts have perished. (Psalm 146:4)

Of Christ we read, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” (Hebrews 5:7) Who was Christ praying to with strong crying and tears? Was He praying to Himself? Absolutely not! He was praying to His Father,

1. Acts 2:24,30,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:23,30,33,34,37; 17:31; 26:8; Romans 4:24,25; 6:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:3,21.

and He was praying to the only One “that was able to save him from death.”

It would have been a mockery for Christ to have cried out to His Father to save Him from death, if all the while He was immortal and able to save Himself from death. Christ died completely, Friends, and He relied upon His Father to resurrect Him. He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), indicating His complete dependence upon His Father to save Him out of death, and His willingness to entrust His eternal life into the hands of His Father.

It was an immense sacrifice for God to yield up His only-begotten Son for us, yet He was willing to do it. If there was any other way that the human race could have been redeemed, God would have done it. Paul wrote, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Galatians 2:21) Redemption comes to us only through “the blood of Jesus Christ.” If redemption could have come to us any other way, then Christ died in vain.

The Holy Spirit

The Bible speaks of many spirits. There are spirits of men, spirits of beasts, spirits of devils, etc. In fact, every living being has a spirit. In the book of Job, we read, “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” (Job 32:8) The Bible says that a spirit is where a person thinks, reasons, is troubled, etc. David wrote, “My spirit was overwhelmed within me.” (Psalms 142:3) Isaiah wrote, “With my spirit within me will I seek thee early.” (Isaiah 26:9) Of Jesus it was said, “When Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?” (Mark 2:8) Based on the testimony of Scripture we can conclude that the spirit of a man is the thinking, conscious, reasoning part of man.

We know that man has a spirit, but does God have a Spirit? Notice how Paul likened the spirit of man to the Spirit of God in 1 Corinthians 2:11: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” God has a Spirit, and that Spirit is holy, for God is holy. That is why God’s Spirit is sometimes called, the Holy Spirit. The word “Holy” is an adjective in every case, whether in English or in Greek. “Holy Spirit” is not a name, but a description of the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is continually referred to as “the Spirit of God,” or “the holy Spirit of God.” (Ephesians 4:30) As we noted earlier, the one God of the Bible is the Father, so the Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit of the Father. This is precisely what Jesus taught when He said, “For it is not ye

that speak, but *the Spirit of your Father* which speaketh in you.” (Matthew 10:20) In Luke’s account of the same conversation this statement is recorded like this: “For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” (Luke 12:12) When we compare these two verses we find that “the Spirit of your Father” is used interchangeably with “the Holy Ghost.” Therefore, the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, is the Spirit of the Father.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit “proceedeth from the Father.” (John 15:26) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, and He sends His Spirit to us through His Son Jesus Christ. Paul expressed it this way: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of *the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*” (Titus 3:5, 6) In this process we gain the added benefit of receiving the Spirit of Christ, who was “in all points tempted like as we are,” and is able to help us when we are tempted.” (Hebrews 4:15; 2:18) We find this truth proclaimed in Galatians 4:6, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” When we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, we receive both the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9-11), not a third being or person, separate and distinct from the Father and His Son.

Chapter 3

Christianity's Foundation Under Attack

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalms 11:3)

The Sonship of Christ is the foundation of the gospel and of Christianity. This is the foundation of which Christ said, “upon this rock I will build my church.” (Matthew 16:18)

One day, when Jesus and His disciples came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and *upon this rock I will build my church*; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:13-18)

Notice that the subject of this conversation was who Jesus is. When Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build my church,” He didn’t change the subject and refer to Peter as the rock, but He was referring to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Upon this truth, Jesus said, “I will build my church.” This is obviously a very important truth, the truth upon which God’s church is built.

Inspiration warns us of accepting false theories about the Father and the Son. John wrote, “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” (1 John 2:22, 23) John also wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 1:9) To acknowledge the Son and abide in the doctrine of Christ means more than just calling Jesus the Son of God. Nearly every Christian in the world will say that they believe

Jesus is the Son of God, but among these Christians there are many different views about the Son of God, and every false theory distorts the love of God in giving His Son to die for our sins.

The disciples and apostles of Christ's day, along with the large majority of Christians who lived in the first few centuries after Christ's death, understood Jesus Christ to be the literal begotten Son of God without any mysterious definition attached to these words. For example, Justin Martyr (110-165 AD), quoting from Proverbs 8, refers to Christ in the following statement:

"The Lord... begets me before all the hills." He adds: "You perceive, my hearers, if you bestow attention, that the Scripture has declared that this Offspring was begotten by the Father before all things created; and that that which is begotten is numerically distinct from that which begets, any one will admit." (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 129)

Novatian (210-280 AD) wrote, "God the Father, the Founder and Creator of all things, who only knows no beginning, invisible, infinite, immortal, eternal, is one God;... of whom, when He willed it, the Son, the Word, was born... the Father also precedes Him,... Because it is essential that He who knows no beginning must go before Him who has a beginning;... [The Son has] an origin because He is born, and of like nature with the Father in some measure by His nativity, although He has a beginning in that He is born, inasmuch as He is born of that Father who alone has no beginning." (Novatian, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, "A Treatise on the Trinity," Chapter 31)

There are many more examples of early Christians, accepting the Word of God just as it reads, who believed Christ to be the literal begotten Son of God who was born before all creation.

Heresies Arose

Over time heresies arose, and the plain statements of the Bible began, by some, to be understood differently from their common and intended meaning. Origen, who lived from 185-254 AD, came up with a new concept of the Sonship of Christ called *the eternal generation of the Son*. "Origen... was the first to propose the concept of eternal generation. The Son is said to be eternally begotten by the Father." (Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary—New Testament*, page 364) The theory of eternal generation maintained that Christ is not a real son, as we would think of a son, but rather a mysterious person who is continually in the process of being begotten by God.

One Catholic publication has this to say about *eternal generation*: "The Christian belief is that the Christ of history is the Son of God,

eternally begotten by one *ceaseless* action from the Father...” (*Tell Us About God... Who Is He?*, page 30, by the Knights of Columbus) This idea teaches that Christ has been in the process of *being* begotten forever in the past, is *still being* begotten, and *will continue* to be begotten forever in the future, in some mysterious way.

The theory of eternal generation, originated by Origen, was not widely accepted in the beginning. Nearly a hundred years passed before his views of eternal generation were regarded by even a noticeable minority to be truth. His view of eternal generation underwent some changes and was accepted as truth in the creed formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD but, even then, it was not held by the majority of Christians, though most of the bishops at the Council signed the creed out of fear of punishment by the Emperor Constantine. The new idea that Christ was not a born Son emerged upon the pages of history rather late—far too late to be considered part of the religion of the Bible. The Council of Nicaea was a pivotal point for the mysterious view of the Sonship of Christ, because it was there that this new view gained a foothold.

The Council of Nicaea

In 325 AD, 318 bishops assembled in the city of Nicaea to discuss whether Christ was literally begotten or not. Referring to this Council, and to the controversy which surrounded it, one historian wrote: “The Arian controversy was chiefly waged over the question of the eternal generation of the Son,” or in other words, the meaning of the term “begotten Son.” (*The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Second Series*, Volume 9, Chapter 2, Introduction to St. Hilary of Poitiers)

The reason this controversy is referred to as the Arian controversy is because a presbyter by the name of Arius openly disagreed with a sermon delivered by the bishop, Alexander, in which he proclaimed that the Father and the Son are the same age; that neither had a beginning. Arius maintained that if the Son is really a Son He must have had a beginning, yet he carelessly referred to this beginning as creation and said that Christ was “begotten, or created... from nothing.” (Arius as quoted in Alonzo T. Jones’ *The Two Republics*, page 333) The controversy spread rapidly with many people choosing sides. The vast majority still accepted the words of Scripture as they read that Christ was literally begotten of His Father, having a beginning, not by creation out of nothing, but by being begotten of His Father. Thus there were three groups in this controversy: 1) those who believed that Christ had a beginning by being literally begotten of His Father, 2) those who believed that Christ had a beginning by being created out of nothing, 3) those who believed that Christ had no

beginning whatsoever, being the same age as God, the Father. In reality, the Arian controversy was between two extreme views of Christ, neither of which are taught in the Scriptures. According to the Bible, Christ is neither created out of nothing, nor is He without beginning but, rather, He was begotten “in the express image” of His Father before anything was created. (Hebrews 1:1-6; Colossians 1:15, etc.)

While this controversy raged, the Roman Emperor Constantine was seeking to have a united Christian church, so he called for a council to be held in 325 AD in a city called Nicaea. Of this council, Philip Schaff wrote, “In reference to the theological question the council was divided in the beginning into three parties. The orthodox party... was at first in the minority... The Arians or Eusebians numbered perhaps twenty bishops... The majority, whose organ was the renowned historian Eusebius of Caesarea, took middle ground between the right and the left...” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, pages 627, 628)

Schaff refers to a group he calls “the orthodox party.” He is referring to the party that maintained that Christ is the same age as His Father, without having a beginning of any kind. Schaff points out that this group was at first in the minority. Since this was the case, they were not, at that time, the orthodox party, because ‘orthodox’ means, “Adhering to what is commonly accepted, customary, or traditional.” (*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*) As we shall see, the group Schaff refers to as the orthodox party did not adhere to what was commonly accepted at their time. Today that party is called “the orthodox party,” because those who believe like they did are *now* in the majority, but at the time of the Council of Nicaea, they were definitely not the orthodox party because they were in the minority.

As the Council of Nicaea began, the so-called “orthodox party,” or those who maintained that Christ was not literally begotten of the Father, was in the minority (less than 20), while the next larger group (around 20) was the Arian group, who maintained that Christ was “begotten, or created... from nothing.” (Jones, *loc. cit.*) The vast majority, being led by Eusebius of Caesarea (at least 279), maintained that Christ was literally “begotten... the first and only offspring of God.” (*Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History*, page 15) This middle group, led by Eusebius of Caesarea, represented the beliefs of the large majority of Christians prior to the Council of Nicaea, all the way back to Christ and His apostles. They were truly the orthodox party of their day, even though, today, they are usually called the Semi-Arian group, as if they arose sometime after the “Arian heresy.” But the facts of history demonstrate that their beliefs were in existence long before Arius was born, and they were in the vast majority.

When the leader of the so-called Semi-Arian group presented a statement of his beliefs, he claimed that it was “a creed that had been largely in use before this dispute ever arose. He stated that this confession of faith was one which he had learned in his childhood, from the bishop of Caesarea, and one which he accepted at his baptism, and which he had taught through his whole career, both as a presbyter and as a bishop.” (*The Two Republics*, by Alonzo T. Jones, pages 347, 348)

This group, led by Eusebius of Caesarea, is an embarrassment to Trinitarians because it comprised the vast majority of the council and they maintained that Christ was truly begotten of God, rather than created or eternally generated. Therefore, many Trinitarian historians completely ignore this group as if it did not exist, and when it is mentioned it is called the Semi-Arian group, as if it were a group that came after, and sprang out of, the “Arian heresy.” However, the facts reveal that the belief that is called Semi-Arianism existed long before Arius was born.

As evidence of the widespread denial of this middle group, notice what one historian has to say:

“The ancient and the Roman Catholic historians... generally assume only two parties, an orthodox majority and a heretical minority. But the position of Eusebius of Caesarea, the character of his confession, and the subsequent history of the controversy, prove the existence of a middle, Semi-Arian party. Athanasius, too, who usually puts all shades of opponents together, accuses Eusebius of Caesarea and others repeatedly of insincerity in their subscription of the Nicene creed, and yet these were not proper Arians, but Semi-Arians.” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Footnote on page 627)

Through the power and influence of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, the minority “orthodox party” succeeded in compelling all to sign their creed or be banished. Thus the new view that Christ was not literally begotten of the Father arose and was accepted as truth in 325 AD at the Council of Nicaea. Shortly after this council, one astonished Christian wrote:

“We have never heard, my Lord, of two beings unbegotten, nor of one divided into two; nor have we learnt or believed that He could suffer any thing corporeal [or bodily], but that there is one unbegotten, and another truly from Him,... We believe not only that [the Son’s] origin cannot be explained in words, but that it cannot be comprehended,...” (Letter written by Eusebius of Nicomedia as found in *An Historical View of the Council of Nice*, by Isaac Boyle, page 41. This book was included in Baker Book House’s edition of *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History*.)

Sonship of Christ Becomes Orthodox

After the Council of Nicaea the Arians and Semi-Arians united in their struggle against the Nicene doctrine. Even though the Nicene doctrine achieved, through threat of banishment, a favorable vote at the Council of Nicaea, it was not the most commonly held belief among Christians, and could only be considered the orthodox belief because it had been voted upon in council. For something to be orthodox it must be the commonly accepted view held by the majority. However, this was not the case immediately following the Council of Nicaea. In opposition to the Nicene doctrine, for many years after the Council of Nicaea the majority of Christians believed that Christ was truly a born Son of God. In fact, 34 years after the Council of Nicaea this view became the official teaching of the Catholic Church at the Council of Rimini in 359 AD. The Arians and Semi-Arians drew up a creed that they could all agree upon. The Rimini Creed said that Christ “was begotten of the Father without change before all ages.” The Arians accepted the creed because they were comfortable with saying Christ was begotten, and the Semi-Arians accepted it because it did not mention that Christ was created. If the number of bishops in council who decide on a doctrine indicates orthodoxy, this creed was even more orthodox than the Nicene or the Constantinople creeds because there were more than 400 bishops in attendance at the Council of Rimini, as compared to the 318 who attended the Council of Nicaea and the 150 who attended the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, where the Trinity doctrine was accepted as truth.

The Council of Rimini is so embarrassing to Trinitarians that most historians completely ignore this ecumenical council. Philip Schaff says, “The first two ecumenical councils” were “Nicaea [325 AD] and Constantinople [381 AD].” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, page 618)

For those who regard ecumenical councils as authoritative to determine doctrine, there is no legitimate reason for ignoring the Council of Rimini, and the only reason it is ignored is because its conclusions disagree with the chosen doctrines of those who ignore it.

(For a more thorough study on the Council of Nicaea and the events that followed, please contact us and request the booklet entitled, *The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity*.)

Eternal Generation

The acceptance of the doctrine of eternal generation by the Catholic Church was an attempt to reconcile the plain statements of the Bible that declare Jesus Christ to be “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18),

with the new view that He did not have an origin. This doctrine declares that Christ is now, always has been, and always will be, in a process of being begotten by His Father in some eternal begetting process that never began and will never end. This is a re-definition of the word “begotten” to make it have some spiritualistic, incomprehensible meaning. The Bible says that Christ “proceeded forth [past tense] and came from God.” (John 8:42) Christ is not proceeding (present tense), but He proceeded (past tense), from His Father. The Holy Spirit is said to be proceeding from the Father. (John 15:26) This is not a begetting process but, rather the Spirit continually emanates from its source, the Father, for it is His Spirit. There is a big difference between proceeded and proceeding, yet the Catholic Church accepted the theory that Christ will always be in the process of being begotten of His Father. As ridiculous as this sounds, it is the official teaching of the Catholic Church and is accepted by a surprising number of Protestant theologians.

The truth is, the people who formulated these theories did not find them in the Bible, but invented them to add to, and seek to make sense of, the chain of lies that began with the new view that Christ was the same age as His Father and not truly the begotten Son of God. Once this false theory is accepted as truth, one is compelled to continue inventing new lies in an attempt to harmonize the first lies that were accepted as truth. Thus, the Roman Catholic system is truly the result of one lie, invented and placed upon another lie, until the final product is so far removed from the truth of the Bible that it can hardly be recognized as having any origin there.

The Foundation of the the Man of Sin

On page 11 of the book, *Handbook for Today's Catholic*, the Roman Catholic Church admits, “The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church.”

To be even more precise, the Catholic Church is founded upon the false theory that Christ is not truly the begotten Son of God, because it is this theory that paved the way for the formulation of the Trinity doctrine, and it is this theory upon which the Trinity is based.

“In the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the concept of the eternal generation of the Son was one of the essential and major factors... The doctrine of the Trinity was discussed, shaped, and confessed around the concept of the eternal generation.” (*A History of the Doctrine of Eternal Generation of the Son and its Significance in the Trinitarianism*, by Jung S. Rhee, Dr. of Theology and the Associate Professor of Systematic

Theology at the multi-denominational Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. This document can be found on the Internet at <http://jsrhee.hihome.com/thesis1.htm>.)

The Council of Nicaea, in 325 AD, said nothing about three persons in one God but, rather, they debated upon, and concluded, that Christ is not truly the begotten Son of God but, instead, a mysterious “person” who is of one substance, or being, with God; who is continuously begotten of the Father. It was not until 56 years later, at the Council of Constantinople, that the idea that God consists of three persons became the official orthodox teaching of the Catholic Church.

Reviewing the history of “eternal generation” does not reveal deeply devoted Christians studying the Bible for more truth but, rather, Satan bringing new theories into Christianity to purposely distort our view of God’s love by insinuating that Christ is not truly the Son of God. He has been so successful in this deceptive work that nearly all of the official teachings of Catholic and Protestant churches reject Christ as the literal begotten Son of God.

“Begotten” Deleted from Newer Translations

Satan is so dedicated to eradicating the wonderful truth that God really gave up His only begotten Son, that he has convinced the translators of most of the new translations, including the NIV, RSV, NASB (1995 Edition), NLT, etc., to delete the word *begotten* from John 3:16. Check it out for yourself!

The translators of the Bible excuse this deletion by their supposed *discovery* that the Greek word (monogenes), that was translated “only begotten,” really means “unique” or “one of a kind” and has nothing to do with begotten. This theory falls quickly when we study the Bible and history. In all of the nine places where *monogenes* is used in the New Testament, it always refers to born children. And the people who lived during the time the New Testament was written, along with the early church writers, also understood *monogenes* to refer to begotten (born) children.

The theory of “eternal generation” is specifically designed to do away with the literal Sonship of Christ, while seeking to harmonize the Bible statements that Christ is the “*begotten* Son of God.” If Origen and the early Catholic councils understood *monogenes* to have no reference to *begotten*, they would have used this argument in their attempt to discard the literal Sonship of Christ, rather than inventing and accepting the confusing theory of “eternal generation.”

Monogenes is a compound word taken from the two Greek words (monos) and (genos). *Monos* means “only” and *genos* means “offspring.” If any of the Greek writers wished to convey the idea of “unique” or “one of a kind,” they did not use *monogenes*, but merely *monos* or (monon). This would not be true if *monogenes* really meant “unique.” If it did, we would find people using it for “only city,” or “only house,” etc., but we never find such usage in the New Testament. Even today, those who use Greek as their main language would never use *monogenes* to mean “unique” because they know it only refers to born children.

In recent years certain theologians have attempted to redefine *monogenes* to mean “unique” or “one of a kind.” Yet, this cannot be accepted! If *monogenes* meant “only begotten” at the time the Bible was written, who has the right to redefine it nearly 2,000 years later and put a meaning on the word that was never thought of nor intended by Bible writers?

Today, many Christians have completely discarded the idea of Christ being the *begotten* Son of God. As an example of this, let us read what one prominent Bible Commentary has to say about it. “The Sonship of Christ is in no proper sense a born relationship to the Father, as some, otherwise sound divines, conceive of it.” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary* on Romans 1:4)

I am saddened to think that Satan has been so successful in removing Christ as the Son of God in the minds of so many Christians. This should not be. I find it ironic that a booklet like the one you are reading is required to help Christians understand that Jesus truly is the Son of God. This should be common knowledge among Christians, for it is the foundation of Christ’s church.

Solid Rock or Shifting Sand

Jesus said that He would build His church on the truth that He is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (See Matthew 16:13-18.) The Catholic Church has united itself with two well-known religions in the world, the Jews and the Muslims, to proclaim that Jesus is not truly the Son of God. The Catholic Church says that they have built their church on the Trinity doctrine, which was founded upon the idea that Christ is not literally the Son of God. There are two churches, with two foundations—one founded on the truth that Christ is the literal Son of God, and the other founded on the lie that He is not the literal Son of God. Satan has a plan in this. He knows that if He can remove the knowledge of Christ being the Son of

God, he has successfully removed the power that can transform the sinner and bring continual victory to the Christian.

John declared, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5) My brethren, let us diligently consider the biblical statements concerning the Son of God, and refuse to accept teachings which are not founded upon Scripture. Paul feared that Christians would be deceived into receiving another Jesus, one who is not the Son of God. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well *bear with him* [or hold yourself erect and firm—*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*].” (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4)

Paul exhorted us not to accept another Jesus, or another gospel, because he knew that there would be men who would come and try to convince us to accept another Jesus than the one who is taught of in the Scriptures. My friends, Paul’s concerns have been fulfilled through the teaching that Jesus is not the Son of God. The Trinity doctrine claims that the Son of God is not really God’s Son, but that He is merely some sort of mysteriously and eternally generated person. This idea denies the Father and Son relationship, which is so vital to our Christian experience. “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” (1 John 2:22)

The rise of the Trinity doctrine was predicted in the Bible many years before the Council of Nicaea. Speaking of the rise of the papacy, the angel Gabriel told Daniel, “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. *Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers*, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.” (Daniel 11:36, 37)

This description of the papacy is almost identical to Paul’s description in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. Notice, Gabriel said that when the papacy comes to power it will disregard the God of his fathers. In other words, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Peter, Paul, and the other apostles, would be disregarded by the papacy. Gabriel continued, “But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a *god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour* with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a

strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.” (Daniel 11:38, 39)

Just as prophesied in the Bible, when the papacy came to power, the “God of [their] fathers” was disregarded, and a “strange god” emerged whom their “fathers knew not.” This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter when Satan inspired the papacy to invent and adopt the Trinity doctrine in the fourth century.

As we shall see, Satan’s counterfeit god includes, inherent in it, a denial of the death of Christ. This, together with its denial of the Sonship of Christ, effectively removes from its adherents any clear picture of God’s love, making it Satan’s masterpiece of deception. It is no wonder that he exerts all his power and influence to preserve, promote and protect this doctrine and to continually invent new angles that supply the same results, to ensnare as many as possible before his time runs out. We can look at the primary religions in the world and see that all of them deny the Sonship of Christ, the death of Christ, or both. The Jewish and pagan religions reject Christ altogether, the Muslim religion believes Christ to be a noble and good prophet, but nothing more than a man, and certainly not the Son of God. The Catholic religion claims Christ to be a mysterious person continuously generating from the Father, and not literally the Son of God, and most Protestant religions follow in the same path or believe Christ to be a Son only by proclamation, by role playing, or by being begotten by Mary in Bethlehem.

Thank God that He is calling His people back to the plain truth of the Bible so that we can appreciate His love in giving His only *begotten* Son to die for our sins.

*My son, if thou wilt
receive my words, and hide
my commandments with thee;
So that thou incline thine ear
unto wisdom, and apply thine
heart to understanding; Yea, if
thou criest after knowledge,
and liftest up thy voice for
understanding; If thou seekest
her as silver, and searchest for
her as for hid treasures; Then
shalt thou understand the fear
of the LORD, and find the
knowledge of God.*

Proverbs 2:1-5

Chapter 4

An Examination of Some of the Most Popular Views About God

“Do you believe in the Trinity?” is one of the most common questions asked to determine orthodoxy within Christianity. Yet, when this question is really understood, you may be surprised at your answer. Many people think that if a person believes in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then he believes in the Trinity, but there are many people who believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who do not believe in the Trinity, even though some of them think they do. There is much more to the Trinity than just believing in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The majority of Christians in the world today claim to believe in the Trinity, even though most will admit that they cannot understand it. With this widespread confusion regarding this doctrine, it is no wonder that among Trinitarians there are many different views about God. Much of this confusion results from the relative ignorance of what the Trinity doctrine really is. Many pastors and church leaders refuse to preach on this subject because they say that they cannot understand it themselves and therefore they feel incapable of expounding upon it to others. The confusion regarding this subject is heightened by the often-repeated saying that the Trinity is a mystery beyond our understanding, and should not be investigated. This has caused many people to ignore the subject of knowing God, and settle for some unknowable mystery in His place.

From my own experience, I have witnessed some of the confusion on this subject. I have met several people who quickly claim that they believe in the Trinity but, upon investigation, I have found that they really do not believe in the Trinity. Even more surprising, there are some, even ministers, who openly denounce the doctrine of the Trinity, but the doctrine they promote is in reality the Trinity itself, or some very close variation of it, even though they wish to call it by another name, such as “Godhead.” You can call a chicken a dog all you want, but it will never change the fact that the chicken is still a chicken.

Because of the confusion that people have about God, and the implications this can have upon the gospel, we would like to examine some of the

most popular views about God and compare them with Scripture. With this information you will be readily able to identify the Trinity doctrine as well as some other views about God that are sometimes called by that name, regardless of what the propagators of those doctrines wish to call them, and what words they use to describe them.

I pray that after reading this study you will be prepared to accept the truth of Scripture and reject all man-made theories about God. I also pray that you will “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason” for what you believe. (1 Peter 3:15)

The four primary teachings about God that exist among Christians are Trinitarianism, Modalism (also called “Jesus only”), Unitarianism, and Tritheism. As we look at the details of these false teachings about God, keep in mind that each one is calculated to deny the literal Sonship of Christ and His complete, divine death on the cross, leaving us with nothing more than a human sacrifice for sins, and no real conception of God’s love.

The Official Catholic View

The main points of the official Catholic view of God, also known as the “orthodox Trinity,” are accepted by most Protestant denominations with little variation. This is the only view that can truly be called “the Trinity” since they are the first ones to have defined this doctrine. On page 11 of the book, *Handbook for Today’s Catholic*, we read,

“The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church...”

“The Church studied this mystery with great care and, after four centuries of clarification, decided to state the doctrine in this way: in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...”

The fundamental teaching of the orthodox Trinity is the idea that there are three distinct persons in one being (one substance), called God. You will notice that with this usage of the words “person” and “being” they cannot mean the same thing, because it takes three “persons” to make up this one being. It is very important to understand this distinction in order to comprehend the different views of God. A being is all that comprises an individual—the spirit, soul, mind, consciousness, will and body. Person, on the other hand, can have several different meanings in theological circles, which we will discuss in more detail later in this study.

To help define the orthodox Trinity, I will quote from the Athanasian Creed, which is accepted as truth by the Catholic Church and most Protestant Churches. (See Philip Schaff’s *History of the Christian*

Church, Volume 3, Section 132, page 696.) The author of the Athanasian Creed is unknown, but portions of it seem to have been taken from the writings of Augustine. The Athanasian Creed says, in part:

The Athanasian Creed

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. But this is the catholic faith: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons; nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one person of the Father: another of the Son: another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coëternal...
15. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God;
16. And yet there are not three Gods; but one God...
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord
20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, there are three Gods, or three Lords...
25. And in this Trinity none is before or after another: none is greater or less than another.
26. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
28. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

(The Athanasian Creed as quoted in Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Section 132, page 690-693)

The Orthodox Trinity

The orthodox Trinity teaches that there is one being called God who is composed of three persons. Each of these persons are said to be distinct, self-conscious persons who are the same age (“none is before or after another”), and they are said to be exactly equal in rank and power (“none is greater or less than another”). However, the definition goes much deeper than this because, according to the orthodox Trinity, the three persons are not really persons as we would think of a person. Normally we would

think of a person as an individual being, but this is not what is meant by the use of the word “person” in the orthodox Trinity. The propagators of this doctrine say the word “person,” when applied to God, is really inadequate because there is no other idea that can be expressed by the word “person” that is similar to the idea that is meant when it is applied to God. That is why most theologians prefer the term *hypostasis* rather than person because it is a word that refers to the theological concept of person that is half-way between mere personality and an individual being. This concept is explained in the following way:

“The doctrine of a subsistence in the substance of the Godhead brings to view a species of existence that is so anomalous and unique, that the human mind derives little or no aid from those analogies which assist it in all other cases. The hypostasis is a real subsistence, — a solid essential form of existence, and not a mere emanation, or energy, or manifestation, — but it is intermediate between substance and attributes. It is not identical with the substance, for there are not three substances [or beings]. It is not identical with attributes, for the three Persons each and equally possess all the divine attributes... Hence the human mind is called upon to grasp the notion of a species of existence that is totally *sui generis* [unique], and not capable of illustration by any of the ordinary comparisons and analogies.” (Dr. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. i. p. 365 as quoted in Philip Schaff’s *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Section 130, pages 676, 677)

This strange conception of God is so difficult to understand that Athanasius did not even understand it. Athanasius was one of the earliest and very influential propagators of the Trinity, and he “candidly confessed, that whenever he forced his understanding to meditate on the divinity of the Logos, his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts.” (Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume 2, Chapter 21, page 223, paragraph 1)

Another man who had a great deal of influence in formulating the Trinity doctrine was Augustine. He was the most influential church writer to define the Trinity, and is very much respected as an authority among Trinitarians. Of him, Philip Schaff wrote, “Of all the fathers, next to Athanasius, Augustine performed the greatest service for this dogma [the Trinity].” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Section 131, page 684)

Even Augustine was unable to define the Trinity. He said, “If we be asked to define the Trinity, we can only say, it is not this or that.”

(Augustine, as quoted in Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Section 130, page 672)

Athanasius and Augustine, the two men who did more to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity than anyone else, admitted that they did not understand it and could not define it.

The Orthodox Trinity Illustrated

One way that is sometimes used to illustrate the orthodox Trinitarian conception of God is to draw a picture of a head with three faces like the one below which was actually drawn by a Trinitarian.

The Orthodox Trinity



One God who consists of
three persons (hypostasis) united in one being

The orthodox Trinity is the official Catholic teaching that the one God of the Bible is one being composed of three self-conscious hypostases. As noted, hypostasis is the Greek word used by Orthodox Trinitarians to describe a supposed species of existence unique to the Trinity that is half-way between attributes and a being and cannot be defined further than to say it is not attributes, and it is not a being.

This concept of God, as confusing as it is, is the most commonly accepted view among Christians.

The orthodox Trinity denies the literal Sonship and the complete death of Christ. It denies the death of Christ, because it is claimed that the divine Son of God is part of God and therefore cannot be separated from Him in death because God cannot die. Notice the words of Augustine, one of the great proponents of the Trinity:

“No dead man can raise himself. He [Christ] only was able to raise Himself, who though His Body was dead, was not dead. For He raised up that which was dead. He raised up Himself, who in Himself was alive, but in His Body that was to be raised was dead. For not the Father only, of whom it was said by the Apostle, ‘Wherefore God also hath exalted Him,’ raised the Son, but the Lord also raised Himself, that is, His Body.”

(*Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1, volume 6, page 656, St. Augustine, “Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament”)

It is true that a dead man cannot raise himself from the dead. It is also true that Christ died. The divine, glorified Jesus Christ said, “I... was dead.” (Revelation 1:18) Since Christ was truly dead, then He could not have raised Himself. The Bible does not teach that Christ raised Himself from the dead. Instead, it says at least thirty times that the Father raised Him from the dead. For example, Galatians 1:1 says, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.)”

I find Augustine’s conclusion that Christ “was not dead” to be contrary to reason and to Scripture, injurious to the power of the gospel, and repulsive to the needs of my soul. Yet, this is the logical conclusion that must be reached if we believe that Christ is a part of the being of God, the Father. The believers in this doctrine are left with the conclusion that the death of Christ was nothing more than the death of a human that had been temporarily filled with the “second person” of the Trinity. No matter how exalted the pre-existent Son was; no matter how glorious, how powerful, or even eternal; if the manhood only died, the sacrifice was only human. Without believing that Christ died, how can anyone appreciate the love of God in giving His Son to die for our sins?

The orthodox Trinity doctrine denies the Sonship of Christ, for if Christ, the Son of God, was some type of projection from the one God and part of the being of God, then He could not properly be called a Son of the Father. This fact was demonstrated by the Catholic acceptance of the doctrine of “eternal generation,” which was discussed in the previous chapter.

Modalism (“Jesus only”)

Modalism, also called “Jesus only,” is the idea that God is one person who operates in three different modes. Please notice point number four of the Athanasian creed. This has specific reference to Modalism and Tritheism. It says, “Neither confounding the persons [Modalism]; nor dividing the substance [Tritheism].” According to orthodox Trinitarianism, Modalism confounded the three persons into one person, claiming that God is one person who manifested Himself in three different modes at three different times. This idea is sometimes called Sabellianism because a man by the name of Sabellius is credited as the one who invented this theory. Here is what Dr. Philip Schaff had to say about this theory:

“His [Sabellius’] fundamental thought is, that the unity of God, without distinction in itself, unfolds or extends itself in the course of the

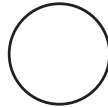
world's development in three different forms and periods of revelation and, after the completion of redemption, returns into unity. The Father reveals himself in the giving of the law or the Old Testament economy (not in the creation also, which in his view precedes the trinitarian revelation); the Son, in the incarnation; the Holy Ghost, in inspiration. The revelation of the Son ends with the ascension; the revelation of the Spirit goes on in regeneration and sanctification.” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 2, Section 152, page 582)

This idea, according to orthodox Trinitarians, confounds the three persons of the Trinity into one person who acts in different modes at different times—in the Old Testament He acts like a Father, during the gospel times as a Son, and today as the Holy Spirit. This idea is called by several names, including, Modalism, Jesus only, and Sabellianism.

Modalism Illustrated

A way to illustrate Modalism would be to draw one circle:

Modalism



One God who is
one person with three consecutive modes or personalities

Modalism is the idea that there is one God, who is one being who manifests Himself in three different modes at different times, so that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not really three persons, but are merely three manifestations of the same individual person. There are some who believe in Modalism who claim that there are three *persons* in God, but to them the word *person* means “personality, characteristic, emanation, or manifestation” rather than a being or an hypostasis.

With this concept, there is no real Son of God. The only concept of a Son of God would have to be limited to God revealing a manifestation of Himself, pretending to be His own Son, such as they suppose happened at the incarnation of Christ. This comes far short of portraying the love of God in giving His Son to die for sinners. In addition to denying the Sonship of Christ, this theory also reduces the death of Christ to that of a mere human, for if Christ was only a manifestation of the one God, then He could not die, because the Bible says that God cannot die. (1 Timothy 6:16) So with this concept, the believer is left with the idea that God so

loved the world that He came to earth pretending to be His own Son, and He pretended to die to reveal His great love for us. It is no wonder that there is a lack of genuine love for God in this world when the regenerating power of God's love, the heart of the gospel, is removed from God's people.

Unitarianism

Unitarianism is similar to Modalism in that it teaches that God is one individual person, but it differs in that Unitarianism does not teach that God has different modes in which He manifests Himself. The above illustration of Modalism can be applied to Unitarianism as well, except for the portion of the definition that says, "three consecutive modes or personalities," for they claim that God only has one personality. Unitarians believe that Jesus was just a man, a prophet endowed with the Spirit of God, rather than a divine being. They also deny that Christ died as a substitute for sinners. (See www.americanunitarian.org and William Channing's work entitled "Unitarian Christianity," which can be found on the Internet at: www.channingmc.org/unitarianchristianity.htm.)

Those who call themselves Unitarians generally call themselves Christians but, perhaps ironically, they hold to a teaching that is believed in the Muslim religion, which is so openly opposed to Christianity.

The Muslim holy book, the Koran, says, "*Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: So believe in Allah and His apostles. Say not 'Trinity': desist: It will be better for you: For Allah is One God: Glory be to Him: (Far Exalted is He) above having a son.*" (Koran 4:171)

With this concept Jesus could fully die, but since they reduce Christ to a mere man and deny that Christ's death truly atoned for our sins, they have less than a human sacrifice for sins; they have no sacrifice at all to atone for sins, either on the part of God or Christ. This concept, like the other false concepts we have examined, eliminates from its adherents any concept of God's love in giving His Son to die for their sins. It is no wonder that the Muslim world demonstrates such a cold and hate-filled religion, when their *god* has never revealed unselfish love to them. It is sad that some "Christians" adhere to this same concept of God and Jesus.

Tritheism

Tritheism is the concept that the one God of the Bible is really composed of three separate beings who are only called one because they are perfectly united in their goals, plans and purposes and they work

together. In this concept God is not an individual, but rather a group of three individuals, or a committee.

Again, I would like to refer you to point number four in the Athanasian Creed. It says, “Neither confounding the persons; nor dividing the substance.” The term, “nor dividing the substance” has direct reference to what is termed “Tritheism.” According to orthodox Trinitarians, Tritheism divides the substance of God into three separate beings, which would be three gods, hence it is labeled *Tritheism*. Notice the following definition of the “orthodox Trinity” in which the definition of Tritheism is brought out.

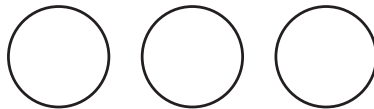
“...the term person [hypostasis] must not be taken here in the sense current among men, as if the three persons were *three different individuals*, or *three self-conscious and separately acting beings*. The trinitarian idea of personality lies midway between that of a mere form of manifestation, or a personation, which would lead to Sabellianism [also called Modalism], and the idea of an independent, limited human personality, which would result in tritheism. In other words, it avoids the... unitarian Trinity of a threefold conception and aspect of one and the same being, and the... tritheistic trinity of three distinct and separate beings.” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Section 130, pages 676, 677, emphasis supplied)

Notice here that Tritheism is defined as the idea that God exists in three persons who are “three different individuals, or three self-conscious and separately acting beings.”

Tritheism Illustrated

Tritheism could be illustrated by drawing three circles in the following way:

Tritheism



One God who consists of
three separate beings
who are *called* “one” because they are one in purpose and character

Tritheism is the idea that the one God of the Bible is not an individual being, but rather a committee of three separate beings who work together in perfect unity, while Modalism, on the other hand, is the idea that the

one God of the Bible is one person who manifests Himself in three different ways. The Orthodox Trinity seeks to find a middle road between these two extremes by inventing a species of existence called hypostasis, which is neither a manifestation nor an individual being.

With the concept of Tritheism, there can be no real Son of God, for all there could be is one divine being playing the role, or pretending to be the Son of another one of the divine beings.

As an example of this theory of role playing, I will quote from Gordon Jenson, who, in 1996, was the president of Spicer Memorial College in Pune, India. He wrote, "In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, ... By accepting the roles that the plan entailed, the divine Beings lost none of the powers of Deity... The divine Beings entered into the roles they had agreed upon before the foundations of the world were laid." (*Adventist Review*, "The Week of Prayer" issue, October 31, 1996)

Tritheism, like Modalism, denies the death of Christ, for it is claimed that all three of these divine beings are exactly alike, and none of them could die or be separated from the other two. Again, the believer is left with a cold perception of God's love, thinking that God (the committee of three) so loved the world that they sent one of them to earth to pretend to be the son of one of the others who had stayed behind, and to pretend to die, to reveal the love of all three, including the two who had stayed behind. This concept falls far short of revealing the wonderful love of God in giving His Son to die for our sins and has nothing more than a human sacrifice for sin.

Applying the Knowledge

As we look at these four views of God, we see that Modalism, Unitarianism and Tritheism all teach that the word *person* means "a being," while orthodox Trinitarianism is adamantly opposed to this definition, and claims that the three persons of the Trinity are some mysterious, undefinable species of existence called hypostasis. Philip Schaff puts it this way,

"The word person is in reality only a make-shift, in the absence of a more adequate term." (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, Section 130, pages 677)

Unitarianism says there is only one divine person, God, the Father. Modalism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the same *person*, Trinitarianism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit are the same *being*, while Tritheism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are *three separate beings*.

With the information contained in this booklet, it should be easy for you to identify Trinitarianism, Modalism, Unitarianism and Tritheism. Yet, Satan is always busy inventing new angles on these concepts, and using different words to describe them, in an effort to confuse God's people, even the very elect. I believe we will see this confusion increase as the time of Christ's return draws nearer.

One way Satan has confused people is by having different people use the same word with different meanings. Some ministers and theologians, when expounding upon God and His nature, use the word "person" to mean, 1) one of the modes, emanations, or manifestations of an individual, so that one being can have several of these "persons" or modes in which he manifests himself. Others use the word "person" to mean, 2) a complete being, so that three persons would be three separate beings. Still others use the word "person" to mean, 3) a mysterious form of existence that is half-way between a characteristic and a being, so that one being can have three separate self-conscious "persons," which are often called "hypostasis." To add to this confusion, the word "being," at times, is used with any of the above three definitions in mind, most rarely with the first definition in mind, and most often with the second definition in mind, but it has also been used with the third definition in mind. So, as you can see, if you want to understand what is being taught by an individual, not only must you understand what he is saying, but you must know what he means when he uses the words, "person," or "being."

A Few Questions

Here are a few questions that can be asked to help you understand the implications of false teachings versus the truth of God's Word:

- When did Jesus Christ become the Son of God?
- Is the Son of God's life derived from the Father?
- Was the Son of God begotten of the Father other than when He was born in Bethlehem?
- Does the Son of God have a separate mind, will, and consciousness apart from God, the Father?
- Can God be tempted with sin?
- Could Jesus have sinned during his incarnation?
- Can God die?
- Was the Son of God conscious during the time He was laying in the tomb?

- Can God have something revealed to Him, that was hidden?
- Do you pray to and worship the Holy Spirit? If *not*, why neglect him? If *so*, where is your biblical example?
- Does the Holy Spirit have a spirit of his own like the Father and the Son?

When you find the answers to these questions in the Bible, they will go a long way to help you understand the truth about God.

Summary

The idea of one God in three persons is contrary to Scripture regardless of which theory is promoted to try to harmonize these contradictory ideas. Modalism, Unitarianism, Orthodox Trinitarianism, and Tritheism are all equally dangerous in that they all deny the Bible truths that Christ is truly the Son of God and that He truly died for our sins. The Catholic acceptance of the eternal generation of the Son is merely an attempt to harmonize the Bible truth that Christ is the *only begotten Son* of God with the false theory that He is the same age as His Father. It is neither biblical, nor consistent with reason. It does away with the Sonship of Christ as thoroughly as Modalism, Unitarianism or Tritheism. There are many other aspects that are affected when one accepts these false theories, yet the most important remain the Sonship of Christ and the death of Christ, because they directly effect our relationship with God, and our ability to fellowship with Him and His Son as real Persons. The nature of Christ at His incarnation is also severely affected, along with the atonement made for our sins.

These false theories about God leave their adherents with, at best, a shallow picture of God's love that is unable to allow them to have the deep, genuine love for God that can endure every hardship, especially the conflict over the Mark of the Beast, which we shall all face very soon.

I would like you to think about something. Even Trinitarians, when they seek converts from the world, will never use the Trinity doctrine to convert sinners, but rather they use what they call heresy, for they know it has more power to convert people than their beloved Trinity doctrine. Trinitarian churches around the world will tell sinners that God loves them so much that He gave His Son to die for their sins. This reaches the hearts of prospective converts and brings them power in their lives to overcome sin. Yet, sadly, after they are converted and come into the church, they are told that Jesus is not really God's Son, but the second person of the Trinity, and that the Son could not die for their sins, because God cannot die. Thus, the truth that gave them power in the beginning is

effectively removed, leaving them with a form of godliness without the power.

If a Trinitarian were to come up to a lost sinner and say, “God loves you so much that He sent His companion into the world to pretend to be His Son and to pretend to die for you,” it would be as useless as anything could be, and would not possibly convert a sinner to the Lord. Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) The *truth* is what converts and sets men free, not lies.

Many people have a false concept of God that denies the true sonship and complete death of Christ. No matter how hard a person tries to love a god like this, they will never be able to love him with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. This is true because God’s love is misrepresented by all false theories about Him, and we can only love Him by first seeing His love for us, as John said, “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

The Bible says, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18) If we are beholding a god that only loves us enough to put on an act, to pretend to be someone he is not, then we will love *him* only enough to put on an act, to pretend to be Christians, when we are not.

Remember that no lie is safe, no matter how innocently it is believed. Paul wrote that those who “believe a lie” will be “damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12) Also, keep in mind that the majority are seldom right in religious matters. Jesus said, “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13, 14) The councils of men, and the man-made creeds that are so often esteemed by Christians, are not the standards by which we can determine truth. There is only one standard, and one alone, that we can trust as an infallible guide to truth, and that is the Word of God. We must not trust man to lead us into truth, for God said, “the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” (Isaiah 9:16)

I pray that you will hold firmly to the truth of the Bible, that “there is but one God, the Father” and “one Lord Jesus Christ,” who is “the only begotten Son of God,” who “proceeded forth” and “came out from God” “before the hills,” who “died for our sins according to the Scriptures,” and “the Father... raised Him from the dead.” I pray that you will also believe the truth that the Holy Spirit is “the holy Spirit of God,” which

“proceedeth from the Father” and is sent to us “through Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 8:6; John 3:18; John 8:42; 16:27; Proverbs 8:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 4:30; John 15:26; Titus 3:5, 6)

If you believe these things, you are simply a Bible-believing Christian, even though people may brand you with awful-sounding names, such as Arian, Semi-Arian, or even heretic. Whatever people may say, hold on to the truth of God’s Word. Men called Paul “a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” (Acts 24:5) Yet, Paul confessed, “after the way which they call *heresy*, so worship I the God of my fathers.” (Acts 24:14) Don’t let the words of men sway you from worshipping God “in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (John 4:23)

My dear friend, God’s love is now on trial! It is the biggest and most important trial in the history of the universe. Satan has called into question God’s love. He has put God’s love on trial, and *you* are a member of the jury. It is up to *you* to decide who is right in this controversy. The trial has come to *you* for a decision. You have the Bible available to you, and God has promised to give you His Spirit to lead you into all truth. God highly values your opinion of Him. The most tender Being in the universe is longing for you to know Him and to love Him with all your heart. He loved you thousands of years before you were born, and He is waiting for you with His arms wide open. His love for you is so great that it constrained Him to send His only Child to die for you so that you can live with Him forever! God says to you now, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” (Jeremiah 31:3)

Keep the faith—the true faith! “Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3)

Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, came to this earth to give us an understanding, that we may know the true God of the Bible. Do you know Him as He is revealed in His Word, and in Christ, or have you settled for some philosophical conception of God in His place? This book will help you answer that question.

