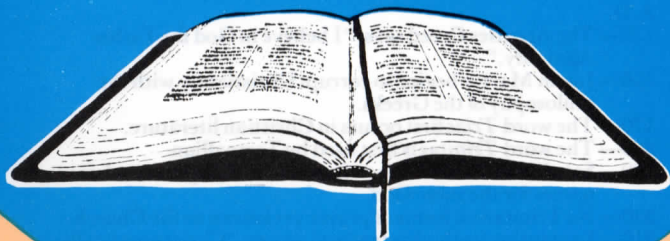


# The Godhead EXPLAINED



**"This is life eternal to  
know thee the  
Only True God"**



**The Doctrine  
of The Trinity  
Challenged by  
the Truth of  
the Scriptures**

## Cover Illustration

This illustration of an idol found in the Temple on Elphanta Island, Bombay, illustrates the pagan form of the Trinity as expressed in the mythology of Hinduism. The three gods, Bhairava (Destruction), Brahma (Creator), and Vishnu (Preserver) are treated as one.

Ecclesiastical history records that the doctrine of the Trinity was gradually superimposed upon the Truth until it completely obscured it, fulfilling Paul's warning (2 Tim. 4:1-3). Consider the following gradual declension in the early church:

A.D.

120— The Apostles Creed says, "I believe in God the Father Almighty."

150— Justin Martyr begins to corrupt Christianity with the philosophy of the Greeks.

170— The word *Trias* first occurs in Christian literature.

200— The word *Trinitas* is first used by Tertullian.

260— Sabellius teaches: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three names for the same God.

300— No Trinitarian forms of prayer yet known to the Church.

310— Lactantius (orthodox teacher) writes: "Christ never calls himself God."

325— The Nicene Council agree to call Christ, "God of God, the God of very God."

350— Great conflicts in the church about the doctrine of the Trinity.

370— The Doxology, "Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," composed, and complained of as a novelty.

381— The Council of Constantinople gives the finishing touch to the doctrine of "three persons in one God."

383— The Emperor Theodosius threatens to punish all who will not believe in and worship the Trinity.

519— The Doxology is ordered to be sung in all the Churches.

669— The Clergy commanded to commit to memory the Athanasian Creed incorporating the doctrine of the Trinity.

826— Bishop Basil orders the Clergy to repeat this creed every Sunday.

### HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

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# God is One Not Three

*“True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him” — John 4:23.*

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Christ's words, quoted above, are challenging. They declare that God finds pleasure only in the worship of those who approach Him “in spirit and truth.” They imply that true worshippers are limited to those who are prepared to search out the truth concerning God, and make it the foundation of their spiritual life.

Most will acknowledge the right of God to dictate the terms of worship. Even human authorities do that in regard to themselves. No one would think of approaching an earthly monarch without conforming to the required conventions — and if he were in ignorance of them, he would take steps to find out what they are.

Should God, Who is higher than any earthly monarch, be treated with less respect?

By no means! And Christ's words above, reveal that He desires true worshippers to come to a sound knowledge of Him as a basis for acceptable worship. This imposes a solemn responsibility upon all who desire to please Him, to carefully search His revelation of Himself (the Bible), if they desire to know Him.

But, if our *motives* are right, do mere terms of doctrine matter? Most would answer in the negative; but Christ's words above reveal that doctrinal truth is vital to personal salvation. After all, how can we properly worship God if we lack a basic understanding of who He is? No, there can be no compromise, no “agreeing to differ” upon this all-important theme. God has revealed Himself and His purpose in the Bible, and it is our duty and privilege to search that wonderful Book, that we might know God whom we worship. To ignore it will render our worship vain and useless, and destroy any hope of personal salvation.

## **A Sound Knowledge of God Essential to Salvation**

Christ, on several occasions, revealed that salvation is bound up in a correct understanding of divine truth (Mark 16:16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:2-3 etc.). In praying to the Father, he declared: “This is life

eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

To what extent do we "know" God? Is our knowledge according to Bible truth? Two opposing ideas are taught in Christendom concerning God.

Most churches teach that He is a triune Being, made up of Father, Son and Holy Ghost — one yet three; equal in knowledge, power, and being, from all eternity to all eternity. On the other hand, Christadelphians claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is false; that God is one only; that Jesus Christ is His Son born 1900 years ago, before which he had no corporeal existence; and that the Holy Spirit (rend. *Ghost* in many Bibles) is the power of God.

Both cannot be right, and, in the light of the Lord's statements above, those who are in error are not in the way of life eternal, no matter how sincere they may be.

This is a very serious statement, and many may not like us stating it so bluntly. In fact, many deprecate debating about God as being undignified. They feel it is unnecessary, and prefer to leave such questions to theologians, whom they believe to be professionally equipped to do so.

But if Christ's words mean anything, they teach that eternal salvation is conditional upon a person worshipping God *in truth*. Therefore, the reader must decide as to whether his personal salvation is worth the trouble and time to seek into the matter.

### **The Trinity Is A Contradiction In Terms**

Most systems of religion propound belief in what is termed the Trinity. They set forth the doctrine that God is both one and three, and is made up of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This doctrine is not drawn from the Bible (where the term, *Trinity*, never appears) but from what is known as the Athanasian Creed, which was drawn up by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in the fourth century after Christ. It defined the Godhead in the following terms:

**"The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God."**

The Trinity is further defined thus:

**"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."**

A careful analysis of that definition will reveal contradiction and confusion.

For example, how can "one God" be three persons, each one a god? How can the Son be "begotten" and yet be from eternity? How can the Father be separate from His "Holy Spirit"?

In short, to believe in what most churches teach concerning the Godhead is to believe an impossibility, a contradiction.

Paul taught that "God is not the Author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33), but the doctrine that teaches that God is both one and three is an obvious error of logic and is confusion.

Test it yourself. Ask any clergyman how God can be both three and one; how He can be "without body parts and passions," and yet be "one substance;" how the Son can be from all eternity, and yet, at the same time, be God's "only *begotten* son" (John 1:18).

You will be told that it is a "mystery," beyond the scope of mankind to understand; or you will be advised not to concern yourself with such "unimportant" matters.

Yet the doctrine of the Trinity is part of the faith, concerning which, the Church of England Prayer Book states: "Except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

### God As Revealed In The Bible

We have briefly seen that the doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory, incomprehensible, and unscriptural. What is the alternative?

The Scriptural teaching is that God is one; Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the manifestation of the Father; the Holy Spirit is the power of God. This is straightforward, comprehensible, orderly, and above all else, Scriptural.

Consider the following epitome, in the light of the Scriptures appended:

1. **One God** — The supreme, self-existent Deity, the One Father, dwelling in unapproachable light, Who has, out of His own underived energy, created heaven and earth, and all that is in them (see Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6-8; 45:5; 46:9; Mark 12:29-32; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Psalm 124:8; 146:6; 1 Timothy 6:15-16).
2. **The Son of God** — The Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man, and afterwards anointed with the same Spirit, without measure,

at his baptism. Put to death as a sin-offering, raised again the third day when he was given eternal life, and now awaiting the time when he shall return to earth to set up the Kingdom of God (see Luke 1:26-33; Acts 2:22-24, 36; Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 3:16-17; John 3:34; Hebrews 2:14-16; Romans 1:3; Hebrews 5:8-9; Acts 1:11; Acts 3:26).

- 3. The Holy Spirit** — The Power of God by which He is cognisant of all that happens in heaven or earth, by which He sustains all creation, by which holy men of old were moved to record His revelation (the Bible), and by which they were enabled to perform miracles in ages past (Genesis 1:1-2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Acts 17:25-28; Neh. 9:30. Connect John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, with Mark 16:17,20 and Luke 24:49. See also Luke 1:35; Acts 5:30-32; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

The Bible nowhere teaches that God is a triune Being, or that the Lord Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, but *the very opposite*.

### **Theologians Admit Trinity Not Taught in the Bible**

The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible. Mosheim, in his *History of the Church*, and Gibbon, in his *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire* (Ch. 21), both acknowledge this. Apparently, the word was first used in an apologetic work of Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch in Syria, in the latter half of the second century. The Trinity of this Bishop, however, was not the modern doctrine of co-equality, but rather a trinity of attributes rather than of persons, and he says expressly, "The true God (i.e. the Father) is alone to be worshipped." It was not until the fourth century, at a time of great apostasy from the pure Apostolic faith, that the doctrine of the Trinity was *actually* introduced. It caused heated controversy, for many still adhered to the teaching of the one God. But gradually the new doctrine prevailed, and ultimately became accepted as basic Christian teaching, fulfilling the prophecy that religious leaders would "make the Word of God of none effect through their tradition" (Mark 7:13; 2 Tim. 4:3).

Many theologians have been frank enough to admit that the doctrine is not taught in the Bible, and that it cannot be logically explained. They acknowledge that the teaching is incomprehensible, and that it propounds a contradiction in terms. They cannot explain how one God can be also three Gods and vice versa; how God can have substance, and yet no form; or how the Son of God can at the same time, be his own Father!

The doctrine is one of confusion, because it is drawn not from the Bible, but from pagan mythology. One edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states:

“The propositions constitutive of the dogma of the Trinity were not drawn directly from the New Testament, and *could not be expressed in New Testament terms*. They were the products of reason speculating on a revelation to faith ... They were only formed through centuries of effort, only elaborated by the aid of the conceptions and formulated in the terms of Greek and Roman metaphysics.”

In short, they were developed, not from the Bible, but from pagan mythology.

That is confirmed by a statement made by Mr. F. J. Wilkin, M.A., D.D., Professor of Theology, Baptist College of Victoria, Australia. In a book attacking Christadelphian teaching, he made the following revealing comment:

**“In the Old Testament, the Unity of God was clearly affirmed. The Jewish creed, repeated in every synagogue today, was ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deut. 6:4). This was the faith of the first Christians, so Paul writes, ‘There is one God and Father of all, Who is above all and through all and in you all’ (Eph. 4:6). But gradually some addition or modification of this creed was found necessary. Christians were fully persuaded of the Deity of Jesus Christ and later of the Deity of the Holy Spirit, and they were compelled to relate these convictions with their belief in the Unity of God. During many years, the problem was discussed and many explanations were attempted. One advanced by Sabellius, that became fairly popular was that Christ and the Holy Spirit were successive manifestations of the Supreme Being, but finally, the belief prevailed that the words Father, Son, Spirit, declared eternal distinctions in the Godhead. That is, that the Trinity of Manifestation revealed a Tri-unity of Being. In other words, that Christ and the Holy Spirit were co-eternal with the Father. With the exceptions of the Unitarians, this is the belief of Christendom today ... But Christadelphianism denies the Trinity ... In this denial it challenges all Christian Churches”** (From *Christadelphianism*, published by *The Australian Baptist*, Victoria).

This clergyman’s statement is staggering in its frankness. It confesses that the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be sought for in the Bible, that it differs from the teaching of the Apostles, and that it was only “adopted” by the Church after many years of contention, because members were “fully persuaded of the Deity of Jesus Christ, and later of the Deity of the Holy Spirit”.

Are sincere worshippers prepared to jeopardise their eternal salvation by resting their hopes, by establishing their worship, upon

such vague foundations?

The writer charges Christadelphians with challenging "all churches" by refuting the doctrine of the Trinity.

Placing their confidence on the Bible, however, Christadelphians gladly take up the gauntlet, and meet the challenge.

They do so, bearing in mind the importance of the doctrine so stressed by the Lord himself, and the prediction of Paul. Christ taught: "The is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Paul forewarned: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3).

The reader owes it to himself, and to his God, to search out the truth of the matter. Remember, Christ taught: "True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and *in truth*; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

### **Jesus Christ Refuted Trinitarianism**

The extract we quoted from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, stated that the dogma of the Trinity was "elaborated by the aid of the conceptions, and formulated in the terms of Greek and Roman metaphysics."

This means that it was derived from paganism.

The testimony is true. The Trinitarianism concept is found in the pagan mythology of Rome, Greece, Babylon and Egypt; but not in the Bible.

In opposition to it and as a challenge to the paganism of surrounding nations, the stern proclamation of God sounded forth: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE Lord" (Deut. 6:4).

The monotheism of the Hebrews was a distinguishing feature in a polytheistic pagan world.

In a similar manner, Christadelphian teaching today challenges the Trinitarianism of the sects and churches about.

Mr. Wilson, in his statement, implied that God made a mistake in His proclamation, and that the theologians of the fourth century knew more about the matter than did Moses, Paul, Jesus Christ or God Himself!

For Jesus Christ affirmed his belief in One God. When asked what was the greatest commandment, the Lord replied: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. (Mark 12:29-30).



A Jewish scribe, a man who firmly believed in the unity of God, and would fiercely reject Trinitarianism as paganism, having heard the Lord's confession of faith, commented: "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is *One God and there is none other but He*, and to love Him with all the heart, etc., is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

This response pleased the Lord Jesus. The Jew had confessed belief in the one true God and had given expression to worshippers rendering loving service beyond the mere formalism of the Law. He was enlightened beyond many the Lord had met. Jesus turned to him: "You are not far from the Kingdom of God," he answered (vv. 32-34).

What more did that Jewish scribe need to be sure of the Kingdom? The Lord expressed what was required in his prayer to which we have already made reference: "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The Jewish scribe knew of "the only true God;" he had yet to embrace the saving principles of the name of Jesus Christ as an atonement for sin through belief and baptism therein (see Acts 2:38).

Unfortunately, the churches of Christendom with the teaching of a triune God, reject the concept of the Godhead to which that Jewish Scribe made reference, and are that "much further" off from the Kingdom of God.

Read carefully the account of Christ's discussion with this Jewish scribe as recorded in Mark 12:29-34, and ask yourself the question: Did he leave the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ believing that the Master was the second person of a triune God?

He did not! And his declaration of belief earned for him the approbation of the Lord: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

What a pity, that theologians make mystery out of the Godhead, confusing that which is plain and simple, and, contrary to Bible teaching, insisting that God is three!

What a pity, that apparently sincere and well-motivated people have drifted from the teaching of the Apostles, as Paul warned they would: "The spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith ..." (1 Tim. 4:1).

### **Apostolic Teaching Concerning God**

The proclamation of God through Moses, and the confirmation of this teaching by the Lord Jesus, is the foundation of all Apostolic

doctrine concerning the Godhead. Here are some statements from their teaching, demonstrating that this is so:

**“To us there is but *One God*, the Father, of whom are all things ... and one Lord Jesus Christ ... howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge” (1 Cor. 8:6-7).**

**“There is *One God*, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).**

**“One Lord (Jesus Christ) ... and *One God* and Father of all” (Eph. 4:6).**

**“Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs which God did by him” (Acts 2:22).**

**“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).**

All these statements are consistent with the proclamation of God through Moses. They refer to God as one, the Father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ as His only begotten Son, born of the virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit (God's power). They provide no support for the doctrine of the Trinity, but the very reverse.

Recognising that God seeks those who would worship Him *in truth* (John 4:23), let us, in respect for His teaching, and in love of His person, quietly search out the truth of this important doctrine, that we may render to Him the honour due to His holy name.

### **The Son Divine But Not Co-eternal With The Father**

It is sometimes claimed that Christadelphians reject the divinity of the Lord Jesus. This is incorrect. Whilst Christadelphians repudiate the doctrine of the Trinity as unscriptural, they do not go to the extreme of Unitarianism, which views Jesus as nothing more than “mere man,” the son of an earthly Father.

There was something more than “mere man” in one who could, under such provocations as he endured, exhibit the wonderful restraint, the beautiful character and the sinless life that the Lord revealed.

That “something more” is revealed in the manner of the Lord's begetting, and the way in which he was anointed with the Holy Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34).

Paul taught that “God was in Christ” reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus was the manifestation of God, as he, himself, testified (John 6:62,63). In nature he was the same as all mankind, “tempted in all points like his brethren” but in begetting and character he was divine (Heb. 4:14-16). In that he differed from

all men before or since.

In *The Declaration*, Christadelphians set out the truth in the following terms:

**“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not the ‘second person’ of an eternal Trinity, but the manifestation of the *One Eternal Creator* who is ‘above all and through all’ (Eph. 4:6), and ‘to whom are all things’ (Rom. 11:36). By His Spirit, this Creator begat Jesus, who was therefore *His Son*; by the same power He anointed him and dwelt in him, and spoke to Israel through him (Heb. 1:1). Jesus Christ, therefore, in the days of his weakness, must be considered from two points of view, one *Deity*, and the other, *Man*. The man was the Son, whose existence dates from the birth of Jesus; the Deity dwelling in him was the Father, Who without beginning of days, is alone eternally pre-existent. God’s relation to the Son was exemplified in the event related in Luke 1:35, by which was established what Paul styles ‘the mystery of Godliness;’ God was ‘manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory’ (1 Tim. 3:16).**

Jesus was “made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4), and, therefore, in nature, identical unto “his brethren” (Heb. 2:17).

But he was also begotten “not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). The Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary, and by this miraculous means, the Son of God was born (Luke 1:35). After his birth, he was anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), so that God overshadowed his development.

This was all for the purpose of saving those who would accept the Divine help. Christ led the way to life eternal for all such. As he was strengthened by God to overcome, so believers can also be strengthened (Phil. 4:13); as he was crucified upon the cross, so they, too, must learn to deny the flesh to serve God in truth (Gal. 5:24).

The very expressions that Christ used constantly, show that he did not claim to be God in the absolute sense. He prayed: “Not my will but Thine be done” (Matt. 26:39). He told his disciples: “My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me” (John 7:16). If he claimed equality with God, he would not have used such expressions but would have claimed the will and the teaching of the Father as emanating equally from himself. On the contrary, he taught: “I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30), and “my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

It is true, that Jesus Christ, as the manifestation of God, as one who completely gave himself to the will and purpose of the Father,

could say: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), and that this statement is often mistaken as a claim of equality with God. Those who do so, however, overlook the fact that what Jesus claimed for himself, he also requested for his disciples. In John 17:21, he prayed: "That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." If the former statement implies the equality of the Son with the Father, the latter statement includes it to involve all believers!

In fact, the Bible does not set forth God as a Trinity, but God in multiplicity, God manifested in the multitude of the redeemed of whom Christ is the chief. So Paul taught: We are "heirs of God, and *joint-heirs* with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

But if Jesus were actually God, how can it be said that we are "joint-heirs" with him of God! It would be a contradiction to so write. Consider also the statement of Hebrews 2:10-11: "For it became him (i.e. God), for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth (the Lord Jesus) and they who are sanctified (the redeemed) are all of one (i.e. God): for which cause he (the Lord Jesus) is not ashamed to call them brethren."

So Jesus calls the redeemed "brethren," because they, like him, will owe their condition when glorified to the Father. But if he were God in the absolute sense, how could he so speak of the redeemed? It would make them part of the Godhead also!

### **Christ Jesus: A Man**

The Bible, therefore, does not set forth the Lord Jesus as the second person of the Godhead, but displays him as the ideal man. It refers to him as "the man Christ Jesus" (Acts 2:22; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 5:15), the "prophet like unto Moses" (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22; Matt. 21:11), made of a woman (Gal. 4:4), "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," "in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15), "learning obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8), "offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from (Greek *ek* — out of) death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).

How can these terms possibly relate to one who is God in the absolute sense? It would be impossible! For example, the Bible teaches that God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), and yet Jesus was subject to temptation; the Bible teaches that God cannot die (1 Tim.

6:17), and yet Jesus died; since the Bible teaches that Jesus offered up prayers to God, did he offer them to himself?

Further, the Lord disclaimed equality with God. When the disciples asked certain information of him at one time, he declared: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32).

In this statement, the Lord confessed that he was limited in knowledge. How would that be possible if he were God? Some reason that he was speaking from the standpoint of his humanity, which, they allege, he had assumed for the purpose of saving mankind, but there is no Scriptural evidence for such a theory. Moreover, if it were true, he should have possessed all knowledge when he ascended into heaven, whereas Revelation 1:1 teaches the contrary. It claims that the Revelation was added knowledge "that God gave unto him to shew unto his servants" things to come.

If it were necessary for God to give the Revelation unto the Son, it is obvious that he did not possess equality of knowledge with the Father, but was subordinate to him. Indeed, Christ, himself, taught his disciples that such was the case when he failed to answer questions they submitted to him, on the grounds that the Father retained the knowledge in His power (Acts 1:6).

The Bible uses terms in relation to Jesus that are incongruous if he were God. It describes him as being weary (John 4:6), as weeping (John 11:35), as praying for strength (Heb. 5:7), as possessing a nature subject to death, common to all mankind (Heb. 2:14), as being in need of redemption (Heb. 9:12; 13:20), as "striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4), as conquering the flesh (John 6:63).

It teaches that "God was in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:19), to "strengthen him" (Psa. 80:17; Isa. 11:2-3), that the world might be "reconciled unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:20-21). It therefore sets him forth as the expression of the Father's love towards those who trust in Him, in that through him is provided the means whereby redemption can come to fallen humanity (John 3:16).

Because of his perfect obedience, his complete conquest of the flesh, he was raised from the dead (Acts 2:24). In thus opening the way for redemption through the forgiveness of sins, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all who come unto God in the way appointed (Rom. 4:25; Gal. 3:26-29).

If Jesus was the second part of a triune God, what is the reason for the lonely cry that issued from his lips during the agony of Calvary, when God withdrew His spirit from him: "My God, my God, why

hast Thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)?

If Jesus were the second person of a trinity, how could Paul write concerning him at the epoch of his greatest triumph when every enemy is crushed before him: "then shall the Son himself be subject unto Him, that put all things under him, that *God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15:28)?

At that epoch, when the triumph of the Son is complete, *he will still be subordinate to the Father*; a fact that is completely at variance with the teaching of the churches of Christendom, but is fully in accord with that set forth in this article.

### Jesus as God

It is true that the title of God is sometimes applied to the Lord Jesus. For example, the apostle Thomas had refused to believe that the Lord had risen from the dead, until he received visible evidence of its truth. When Jesus appeared before him, and showed him the marks in his hands, he exclaimed: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

What did he mean?

Earlier, the Apostles had asked Jesus to teach them concerning the Father (John 14:8). He had replied: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." They saw the Father represented in Jesus, because, as he later stated, he had manifested Him unto the Apostles (John 17:6, 26).

Now the glorious truth, that the one whom the Apostles had faithfully followed was the manifestation of God, burst upon Thomas as a blinding light, causing him to ejaculate: "My Lord and my God."

Did he mean by this that Jesus is the second person of the Godhead? No. Such language as Thomas used is frequently applied throughout Scripture for those who manifest the authority of God, and thus relates to their status as *His representatives*.

This may seem confusing, but, in fact, it is a form of expression of common usage.

For example, an agent goes forth in the name of his employer, and transacts business in his name with full authority to do so. The representative of a firm merges his individuality in the name of the company he represents. His name may be Brown, but when on official business, he can be described as "Jones & Co. calling," without confusion.

This is also true of the agents used by God, as Jesus reminded the

Jews when they challenged him. They had said: "If thou be the Christ tell us plainly" (John 10:24). In answer, Jesus pointed to the miracles and works he had performed, saying: "These bear witness of me," and then he uttered those words, so often misunderstood: "I and the Father are one" (v. 30). The Jews, like the Trinitarians, misunderstood him. They thought that he was claiming equality with God, and did not understand that all that he was doing was claiming to be *the manifestation* of God (1 Tim. 3:16). They declared that he had blasphemed because "Being a man he made himself God."

The Lord's answer to this charge, not only shows that he rejected the concept of equality with the Father, but refuted the teaching that when the title "God" is applied to him, it is in the sense of making him "very God of very God." He replied: "Is it not written in your law, I said, 'Ye are gods.'? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and *the Scripture cannot be broken* (i.e. you cannot refute this fact); say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemest,' because I said I am the Son of God?" (John 10:34).

This explanation by the Lord clearly shows that when the title "God" is applied to him, it no more suggests the equality of Trinitarianism than it does when applied to those "to whom the word of God came." And who were they? They were the priests of Israel, who derived their authority from God, and judged on His behalf. They were His representatives in the nation, and therefore Gods by deputy, for God was "with them in their judgment" (2 Chron. 19:6). Therefore, to stand before the priests was equivalent to standing "before the Lord" as Deut. 19:17 shows.

In most cases, where the word "God" is found in the Bible, it is used as the equivalent for the Hebrew word *Elohim*, a word that has also been translated "angels" (Psalm 8:5) and "judges" (Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9). In the Revised Version of the Bible, the word is rendered "God" in these places. Thus, instead of reading: "They shall be brought unto the judges" (*Elohim*), the R.V. reads: "They shall be brought unto God." Actually, the accused were brought before the priestly judges in Israel, who judged on God's behalf, and who had the title *God* given to them because they were His representatives.

Jesus quoted from Psalm 82:6, in explaining this to the Jews. There, God addressed the mortal rulers of Israel, saying: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men ..." These mortals were "*gods*" because they

were His representatives in the nation. This Psalm, therefore, shows that the title "God" can apply to even mortals when they are given positions of divine authority.

In Zechariah 12:8, the title of "God" is given to the "house of David" in the coming age of glory. In Exodus 7:1 it is applied to Moses. "See," God declared to him, "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh." He was made "god" in that he represented God to Pharaoh.

This use of the title "God" shows that, though it is applied to the Lord Jesus, it no more constitutes him a part of the Trinity than it does those priests and rulers in Israel to whom it was also once applied.

The title was frequently applied to the angels as God's representatives. "Behold," declared God to Moses, "I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way ... beware of him, and obey his voice ... *for My Name is in him*" (Exod. 23:20). The angel was God's representative, but not God Himself. He was one of those messengers who were sent as ministering spirits on the behalf of God's people (cp. Heb. 1:13-14).

### **We Can Become As God**

It was the ambition of Adam and Eve that they might become "equal unto the gods" (i.e. the angels); it is the hope of the redeemed that by obedience to the will of God, they may attain unto that state, and become "equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:36).

Paul taught: "We are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; *heirs of God*, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, that *we may be glorified together*" (Rom. 8:17).

Consider the following Scriptures applied to the redeemed:

**"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).**

**"There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4).**

**"God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people *for His Name*" (Acts 15:14).**

**"I pray for them which shall believe on me ... that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in us" (John 17:20-21).**

These expressions testify to the great hope set before believers. They can attain unto the "glory of God," "divine nature," the "name of God," and complete "oneness with Him." The Lord Jesus attained unto all this, and thus had the name of God bestowed upon himself, a name that he promises



all true believers, who are described as being “heirs of God” with him (Rom. 8:17).

It is surely obvious, therefore, that the mere possession of the name of God does not imply that the name-bearer is equal to God, in the Trinitarian concept, as forming part of a triune Godhead; otherwise room must be found therein for all believers who attain unto that glorious hope.

In short, the Bible sets out the hope that what Jesus Christ is now — glorious, divine, immortal — his followers can become. He, like the good shepherd he is, had led the way through the valley of death to the glory beyond, and he calls upon his sheep to follow him (John 10). He is God’s servant to that end (Acts 3:13-26 — the title “Son” in these passages should be *servant* as in the Revised Version). So Peter taught: “The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:30-31).

If Jesus were God in fact, would it be an exaltation to elevate him to be a Prince and Saviour? Of course not! The fact that Peter taught that Jesus was *promoted* to that status shows conclusively that prior to it he held a lower position.

### God’s Power — The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the energy or power of God by which all creation came originally into being, and by which it is sustained. Whilst God, Himself, is localised in heaven, His Spirit is diffused throughout creation (Psalm 139:7-12). This God-derived energy is the substratum of all creation (Acts 17:25). In that connection, science today confirms Scripture by teaching that energy is the basis of all matter.

The Spirit is sometimes personified in the Bible, as in John 16:7-8, and this has led many to believe that it is a person. They do so because they do not take into account an idiom of the original Greek language. In Greek, inanimate objects which in English would be couched in the neuter gender, are given a masculine or feminine gender, if those objects are identified with any particular individual. For example, a chair is described as “it” in English, because it is neuter, being neither masculine nor feminine. But in Greek that chair can be identified with its owner. If it belongs to me, the chair is described as *he*; if it belongs to my wife, as *she*.

For this reason, the Holy Spirit has frequently been personified in

Scripture, identifying it with God, and so it is personified as *he*. However, if the Holy Spirit were actually a person it should be rendered as *he* in every place where the word is referred to; but it is not. It is sometimes rendered in the neuter. In Romans 8:16, Paul writes: "The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit." The neuter, *itself* is used, and this is in accord with the Greek text, as any Greek scholar will acknowledge.

To personify inanimate objects is normal in Scripture. Wisdom is represented as a woman (Prov. 9:1), mammon is described as a friend (Luke 16:9), sin is personified as a slave-owner (Rom. 6:16), the Holy Spirit as a comforter (John 14:26), expressing the spirit of Truth. So Micah declared: "I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord" (Ch. 3:8). The prophets were moved by the spirit to record the Scriptures (Neh. 9:20; 2 Pet. 1:21), and God used the same means to speak to Israel through His Son (Heb. 1:1).

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is never referred to as the second person of a triune God, clearly showing that the Trinity of the churches was not acknowledged by the early believers. This is shown beyond all doubt by the expressions of Acts 19:2-3. The chapter records the occasion when Paul met certain disciples at Ephesus, and enquired as to whether they had "received the Holy Spirit." The disciples answered: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (i.e. Spirit). Obviously they had never heard of the doctrine of the Trinity!

What a bewildering thing is error; what sublime simplicity is there in truth! We have, in this short article, attempted to traverse much ground and endeavoured to expound, as simply as possible, the most profound subject of all. We have referred the reader to many texts of Scripture, and if he examines these with unbiased mind, carefully analysing their teaching, we are convinced that he will find a consistent exposition of the unity of God through Scripture.

The subject is an important one. It provides the foundation of true worship and the hope of eternal life is bound up in its teaching. It enables us to understand something of He Whom we are invited to see as our spiritual Father, and whose nature, glory and name we are called upon to manifest in the age to come.

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**We invite comment upon the article above, and questions upon any Bible subject. These should be directed to the Editor, 632 Burbridge Rd, West Beach, South Australia 5024.**

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They do not profess to have received any new revelation, but hold that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are able to make wise unto Salvation (2 Tim. 3:15,17). Believing in the Divine Authorship of the Bible, they think it only reasonable to eschew any interpretation thereof which fails to harmonise all the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures; and finding that the creeds of the various sects around are, in a great variety of ways, opposed to the direct teaching of the Bible, they feel compelled to stand apart, making appeal in all such matters to the statements of Scripture, and testing all creeds thereby.

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