

The Sacred Golden Calf

By Gerry Watts

Why is it that if a Christian expresses any kind of doubt concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, they are then labelled as a heretic or as belonging to some kind of cult or false religion? There are those who even state that if another believer doesn't accept this 'orthodox doctrine', then they will not enter into any further discussion on any other subject with him or her, because as far as they are concerned he or she is a 'heretic' and is 'of the devil'! Why has this sacred traditional doctrine of Christendom become such a prejudiced stumbling block for so many? **And this is particularly disturbing when we find that the apostles and prophets, the writers of the scriptures, don't even mention this doctrine in any explicit sense!**

This official doctrine of 'The Holy Trinity' came into being in the fourth century AD, many centuries after the apostles had died, and was claimed by the mighty empire of Christendom as 'The Truth'! Now since then, anyone who dares to question it is figuratively (and in the past, even literally) burned at the stake and branded a heretic! But contrary to what many may think, Christendom does not hold the rights to God's Truth! I believe there *are* elements of truth in the 'trinity' doctrine, but there is also gross error, which has blinded and confused so many of God's children.

In fact, there is plenty of historical evidence available to show that Trinitarian-type beliefs have been an integral part of the ancient religions of the nations, where the various pagan deities were often figured as a three-headed god (although it is more accurate to say that these 'three-headed gods' were usually the top three gods among many others)! I'm not saying that Christianity adopted these pagan, polytheistic beliefs, as some suggest, nevertheless, I think it is true to say that as the centuries passed by the Church became influenced somewhat by pagan thought and practice in some respects, leading to doctrines and practices that were not truly biblical.

Anyhow, I believe that God has revealed Himself quite clearly in His written Word without needing any help whatsoever from man in formulating creeds and official doctrines (and I hasten to add that I'm *not* saying that all creeds are bad or that systematic theology is redundant). But just like king Jeroboam of Israel, who set up the idols in Bethel (meaning 'house of the Deity') and Dan (meaning 'judgment'), God's people would rather bow before the golden calves of Christendom than seek the truth as God has actually given it. But this 'false worship' at the shrines of Christendom only leads to a misrepresentation of God and the true relationship He has with His Son. In no way am I condemning anyone who believes in the Trinity doctrine, I'm just saying that we should not just blindly accept everything that 'orthodox' Christianity says is true.

Now before you start thinking that I'm way off base here in 'heretic land,' I urge you to please take the time to listen to what I have to say and check it out for yourself. Don't let fear be your guide. I may not accept the doctrine of the Trinity any more as it is commonly expressed and believed, nevertheless, I am being faithful to the words of Scripture. See for yourself. In fact, I used to be a staunch Trinitarian - until I began to see that some things just didn't make sense in my spirit. I also came to see that the common view expressed by Jehovah's Witnesses (which is close to Arianism) is also greatly flawed, as well as the general Unitarian belief. Be that as it may, the way I see it now is probably closer to Trinitarian beliefs than any other, though some may disagree with that. Nevertheless, I accept what the Scriptures clearly reveal, but if anyone can give me a good solid scriptural reason as to why they think I'm wrong on any point, then please let me know.

Anyhow, it is not the purpose of this article to examine the historical doctrine of the Trinity within Christendom; or to consider why it was officially introduced in the first place at the Council of Nicaea to combat Arianism; or to get bogged down in the quagmire of religious tradition and thought; or to analyse questionable passages of the Bible - but to take a simple, concise look at the clear statements of what God has revealed about Himself and His Son in the Scriptures, whatever version of the Bible you may use. And I would encourage the reader not to be afraid of searching this matter out, because God will honour the truth-seeker. And one day, the truth will be revealed to all of His children, without condemnation.

The 'trinity' is usually expressed in terms such as this: 'There are three persons in one Godhead - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who have existed from eternity. All three are the One God but are nevertheless distinct'.

Yahweh Elohim

At the beginning of God's written revelation to us, in the writings of Moses in the Hebrew Scriptures, God is revealed as **Yahweh** (or Jehovah) **Elohim**. In most versions, this is usually written as **LORD God**. There are three Hebrew words that are usually translated as 'God' in most versions of the Bible. The Hebrew word '*EI*' means 'subjector'. It would be better to translate this word as '*Deity*', as it is referring to the One God Who is the supreme Subjector of His creation. The Hebrew word '*Elohim*' is the plural form of the word '*Eloah*' and it fundamentally means 'to-subjectors', that is to say, subjectors who point toward The Subjector.

These words can also be translated as 'god' or 'gods', referring to lesser gods, and they are essentially describing those under God who are His channels in ruling creation by His Spirit. But in most instances the word '*Elohim*' is used in relation to the One God and Creator of all, who is named as Yahweh, the God of Israel. But the very nature of the word '*Elohim*' indicates the presence of at least two 'personages'. Also, in Genesis 1:26, God says, '*Let us make humanity in our image, in our likeness...*' indicating a plurality.

Yet it is also very clear that **there is only One God, One Deity, One El and there is no other!**

Deuteronomy 10:14 says,

'Behold, to Yahweh your Elohim belong the heavens and the heaven of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it.'

Verse 17 then uses the following words,

'For **Yahweh** your Elohim, He is the **Elohim** of elohim and the **Lord** of lords, the **EI**, the great, the masterful, and the fear-inspiring One...'

This verse incorporates the words 'El' and 'Elohim' as being one and the same as Yahweh.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says, '*Hear Israel! Yahweh is our Elohim, Yahweh is One.*' So these passages reveal that there is another being who is at one with the Deity, but the very nature of the word '*Elohim*' requires that this being be distinct from the Deity Whom it is in unity with. So who is this 'being' or 'personage'?

Throughout the 'Old Testament' we are also introduced to '*The Angel of the LORD*' or more correctly called, '*The Messenger of Yahweh*'.

The Messenger of Yahweh

This celestial Messenger is the most prominent spiritual being in Scripture. Most of the references in the Hebrew Scriptures to celestial messengers visiting earth, have to do with this special Messenger of God. So who is it? Let us take a brief look.

He is first mentioned in Genesis 16:7-13, where He appears and speaks to Hagar in the desert. But there is an intimation here that this messenger is Yahweh Himself, for He says to her concerning Ishmael, '*Verily, **I am** increasing your seed*'.

Then in Genesis 18:1 - 19:26, we have an enlightening account of three messengers who appear to Abraham and Sarah. It clearly states that one of them is Yahweh Elohim in 18:1,13-14. It is extremely interesting to note that the three messengers, including the Messenger of Yahweh, appeared as men. They also ate and spoke as men. Although God's celestial messengers usually appear in a glorious light, they can and do appear as ordinary men, including The Messenger of Yahweh!

While the Messenger of Yahweh talked with Abraham, the other two messengers go on to Sodom. Then later, the two messengers, along with Yahweh Himself, destroy the whole basin of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and sulphur (possibly a volcano or earthquake).

Here are some other scriptures concerning the appearing of the Messenger of Yahweh, which includes appearances in dreams and visions as well. Some of the visitations were only audible, accompanied by other supernatural manifestations, particularly the visit to Moses in the burning thorn-bush. In Genesis 32:24-30, The Messenger of Yahweh wrestles with Jacob, as a man, then, as time went by and Jacob wouldn't give in, He touches his thigh-bone, causing Jacob's sinew to strain. Jacob knew that he had met with God face to face.

See also Genesis 21:17-19; 22:11-18; 31:11-13; Exodus 3:2-4:17; 14:19; Numbers 22:21-35 and Joshua 5:13-6:5; Judges 2:1-5; 6:11-26; 13:2-23; 2 Kings 1:2-4,15; Zechariah 1:8-21; 3:1-10.

So this Messenger is one and the same as Yahweh Himself? But there were also many other appearances of Yahweh Elohim, but not as a Messenger! When Israel saw the glory of God on Mount Sinai and heard the thunderous voice of God, they were hearing this Messenger Who was appearing in a different form (Exodus 19:16-20:21). When Moses spoke with God face to face in the Tabernacle, he was seeing and hearing this Messenger as Yahweh Himself! (Exodus 33:7-11).

So were these appearances of God, often called theophanies, actually God in His absolute form? It would appear so. But there is a key prophecy in Psalm 110, which causes some difficulties with this thought. This psalm of David is a prophecy concerning the Messiah and it begins by saying,

'Yahweh is saying to my Lord: Sit at My right until I make your enemies a stool for your feet...Yahweh has sworn and will not regret, You are a priest for the eon according to the manner of Melchizedek.' (Compare Matthew 22:41-46)

Also in Psalm 2, which is another messianic prophecy, it speaks of the nations gathering against '*Yahweh and His Anointed One*' (v 2) and in verse 7 Yahweh declares concerning the Messiah,

'You are My Son; today I have become your Father.' (Compare Hebrews 1)

So we are told here that Yahweh is distinct from the Messiah, the promised Anointed One, the Lord, Who is also called God's unique Son! So God has a Son, Who will become the human Messiah, the son of David! But is the Messiah actually to be God Himself? Absolutely speaking, He can't be! There is only One Deity!

But in Psalm 45:6-7, the Messiah is referred to as God, and yet it states that He *has* a God! (Compare Ephesians 1:3)

'Your throne, O Elohim, will last for the eon and further;...therefore Elohim, your Elohim, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your companions.'

Also in Isaiah 9:6-7, the Messiah is called

'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eonian Father, Prince of Peace'

Although there is some debate as to whether the words '*Mighty God*' and '*Eonian Father*' were in the more ancient Hebrew text, nevertheless, the Hebrew Scriptures identify the Messiah as God's Son, and yet they also declare that the Messiah is to be worshipped as God! So now we need to go to the 'New Testament' to see what further revelation is given about the Messiah or Christ.

Jesus The Messiah, the Son of God

It is absolutely evident that the Greek Scriptures prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah or Christ, The Son of God. The apostles also make it clear that all of

these appearances of Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures **were actually made by The Son of God**, who is the visible Image of the invisible God, and the audible Word of the inaudible God. And He also became the only-begotten God, when He was born as the man, Jesus the Messiah.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was toward God, and God was the Word. This was in the beginning toward God. All came into being through it, and apart from it not even one thing came into being which had come into being.' (John 1:1-3)

The apostle John is revealing here that the 'Logos' or Word is the Elohim of the Hebrew Scriptures (also John 5:46-47). Christ is the Word that points all towards the Father. From the beginning of creation, this was the function of the Word, and it was through Christ as the Word of God that ALL things came into existence.

'And the Word became flesh and tabernacles among us, and we gaze at His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth...**No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten God**, Who is in the bosom of the Father, **He unfolds Him**.' (John 1:14 and 18)

Yet the Word became a human being, miraculously begotten of God, Who is His Father. And we are told in no uncertain terms here that **'no one has ever seen God'**! But what about the appearances of God in the Hebrew Scriptures? Evidently, they did not see or hear God in the absolute sense! God is Spirit in the highest sense of the word and is therefore invisible and inaudible. John 4:24 literally reads *'God-spirit'* which in Greek is not a figure like 'God is light' but an actual fact - God is spirit, not a spirit. God is the absolute source of all spirit, which is life; *'The spirit is that which is vivifying'* (John 5:26; 6:63). No one has ever seen God, so this cannot literally apply to Christ Himself! Jesus makes this clear in John 6:46,

'Not that the Father has been seen by anyone, except by the One Who is from God.'

But as the only-begotten God, The Word, Christ unfolds Him. So consequently, if we've seen Christ, we've seen the Father, for they are one! (John 14:6-10). Jesus prayed that this oneness that He had with the Father would become the intimate experience of His followers as well (John 17:20-21). Does that mean He was praying for them to become Deities? Absolutely not!

Paul clearly reveals in Acts 17:22-31 that God is the Source of all life and breath and everything, and that *all humanity* is living and moving and existing **in Him**! This reveals the foolishness of idolatry because God is unlike anything we can perceive. BUT HE HAS GIVEN US A DIVINE IMAGE - HIS SON! In verses 30-31, Paul then distinguishes between God and the appointed Man whom He works through - Christ Jesus. This also applies in 1 Corinthians 8:4-7,

'...there is no other God except One. For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, whether in heaven or on earth, even as there are many gods and many lords, nevertheless for us there is **One God, the Father, out of Whom all is**, and we for Him, and **one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is**, and we through Him. But this knowledge is not in all.'

'...seeing that **out of Him** (God) and through Him and for Him is all...'
(Romans 11:36)

God the Father is the source of all, and His Son is the channel through Whom all exists. So in a relative sense, Christ is the begotten God to all of creation, but because He serves Another, His God and Father, He is the Channel not the Source. There is only ONE GOD, but He has a Son who is His Image! Christ is the Image of the invisible God. Christ is not the invisible God, whom no one has ever seen! He is His Word and Image! And these are the clear words of Scripture.

'...Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible...all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him.' (Colossians 1:15; also 2 Corinthians 4:4)

'...through Whom He also makes the eons; Who, being the Effulgence of His glory and Emblem of His assumption, besides carrying on all by His powerful declaration...' (Hebrews 1:2-3)

'Now saying this is...God's Creative Original' or 'The Beginning of the creation of God' (Revelation 3:14)

In Scripture there are many 'beginnings' but only one absolute beginning, where the definite article '*The*' is used. In Revelation 3:14 it says that Christ Himself, as God's Son, is '*The beginning of the creation of God*' or '*God's Creative Original*'. He is The Beginning and The Consummation, The A and The Z (Gr. Alpha and Omega) (Revelation 21:6; 22:13). He is before all and all was created through Him and for Him. He is the '*Firstborn of every creature*', that is to say, in the eastern symbolism of the firstborn, as the Son He holds all the rights of creation. This does not imply that He needs a heavenly mother! Christ's only mother was Mary, when He was begotten as a man, and at present she is dead, awaiting the resurrection.

But figuratively speaking, He has always been the Son of God from the beginning. Through the unique Channel of His Son, the whole of the universe was created, visible and invisible. In Christ, the ages or time itself was created, and all of creation is under His sway as He has been given all power and authority because He is the Son of God (also John 5:26-27; Matthew 28:18). All is through and for the Son, Who is the visible Image of the invisible God, and Who is one with the Father. And even Jesus said that the Father is greater than all (John 10:29-30).

Paul also makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is The Messenger of Yahweh Who accompanied Israel in the wilderness! (Compare Exodus 17:5-6 and 14:19). He is Yahweh Elohim of the Hebrew Scriptures. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is the Effulgence of God's glory, and every form or assumption of the character of God in communicating with His creation **is Christ as the Emblem or Representation of God**.

In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul says of Christ,

'Who, being inherently in the **form of God**, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless **empties Himself**, taking the **form of a slave**, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a

human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, also, **God highly exalts Him...**'

'Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God.' If Christ were actually the Deity, then this statement would lose its intended meaning! If He were God in the absolute sense, Christ would have every right to do exactly as He pleases! And the words *'equal with God'* are redundant if Christ is God! Why would He need to be equal with God if He were already God! Also it is God Who exalts Him - Christ doesn't exalt Himself! The Son always directs all to His God and Father. Jesus made it plain that He was sent or commissioned by His Father, and He could not do anything apart from Him. He always does the Father's will (John 8:28-29,42, 56-58; Luke 22:42).

This is the most amazing truth that is so hard for us to grasp, that the Creator of all, Who has the power and authority to appear in the form of God, emptied Himself and became a man, and then died a criminal's death on the accursed cross for the sin of all humanity. And because of His faithful obedience, the Father has granted Him immortality and exalted Him above all creation as the Man, Christ Jesus (also 1 Timothy 6:13-16; Revelation 1:12-18).

Christ Jesus, the Man, is the **Mediator** of God and mankind (1 Timothy 2:5). He is neither absolutely God nor just a man, but is a unique combination of the two! As the Son of God, who's right it is to appear in the form of God, as equal to God, He nevertheless emptied Himself of all His glory, and came in the form of a slave, as a human, to die the sacrificial death of the cross! This is true humility, love and grace! And because of this, God has highly exalted Him as Head of the entire universe! There is only One God, and Christ is the Mediator of God and Mankind. But how could Christ mediate with Himself if He were God! Again, these are the clear words of Scripture.

Scripture also declares that Christ is the Complement of the Deity (commonly translated as *'fullness of the Godhead'*),

'...for in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily.'
(Colossians 2:9, also 1:19)

The term *'Godhead'* is not an accurate, consistent English word for the Greek *'theotes'*. It is clearly referring to the Deity, God the Father, of Whom Christ is the Complement. Everything that is essentially God is revealed in Christ. When we look at Christ, we see God, because He completes God's revelation of Himself to His creatures.

I Corinthians 15:24-28, however, is the most enlightening passage of all. Paul alone, in this portion of 1 Corinthians, takes us to the very end of God's plan and purpose of the ages.

*'...thereafter the consummation, whenever He (Christ) may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father...For He subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him (God) Who subjects all to Him (Christ). Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him (Christ), **then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all.**'*

Here we have the truth confirmed that the Great **EI** or God is **The Subjector** of all, and Christ, as the **Eloah**, is the ultimate Channel of that subjection. Together as one, they are **Yahweh Elohim**. We are clearly told here that **the Son Himself shall also be subjected to Him...that God may be All in all!** If Christ is absolutely God, The Deity, then how can He hand over a perfected universe to His Father and become completely subject to God (which would really be Himself!) so that God becomes All in all?

One day we will all become sons of God. We will not be 'Deities' but images of the Son, Who in turn is the Image of God! God will be ALL IN ALL, including Christ Himself!

The Father always has authority over the Son. The Father gives His authority to the Son and sends Him on His behalf. The Son is the only Way to God. Christ has a God and Father - the Father doesn't! He is the Supreme One. And that is why Christ will deliver the kingdom to His Father and become subject to Him, so that God may be All in All.

The Holy Spirit

Now concerning the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are very plain in declaring that the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; Ephesians 4:30). When the grammar of the Hebrew and Greek languages is understood correctly, this Spirit of God can be described as 'He' or 'It'. **But nowhere in Scripture does it state that the Holy Spirit is a distinct 'person' from God.** It is true that the spirit of Christ is distinct from the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9-11; Acts 16:7), but **the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God.**

John chapters 14-16 contain the greatest detail on the Holy Spirit where it appears as though this '*Comforter*' and '*Spirit of Truth*' is another 'person'. But that is not what is being revealed here. This Spirit that is sent from the Father is the manifestation of God's power and character. God is Spirit, and He manifests Himself by His Holy Spirit, which operates through His creation, especially His chosen ones, in various ways.

The simplest and clearest definition of the Holy Spirit of God is in Luke 1:34-35, where the celestial messenger, Gabriel, tells Mary,

'The Holy Spirit shall be coming upon you, and the power of the Most High shall be overshadowing you; wherefore also the Holy One Who is being generated shall be called the Son of God.'

In the Hebrew parallelism of this passage, the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary is the equivalent of the power of God, the Most High, overshadowing her. He is not a distinct person! It is the manifestation of God Himself! Christ does not have two Father's! He was conceived or generated by God's Holy Spirit, which is God's power!

Conclusion

The writers of the Scriptures NEVER teach that God is One, yet He is also really three within a mysterious Godhead! Christ always serves Another - His God and Father. This is His glory as the Son of God! **To make Him the Deity in the absolute sense robs Him of this glory!** Christ Jesus, the Man, is the Mediator of God and mankind. He is God in a relative sense, and this demands that He should be worshipped as the unique Son Who is the Channel of creation.

He is the Image of God and the Word of God. He is *'The Faithful Witness', 'the Firstborn of the dead', 'the Chief Ruler of the kings of the earth', 'the Alpha and the Omega', 'the First and the Last', 'The Origin and The Consummation', 'the Living One', 'the Son of God', 'the True and Holy One', 'the Amen', 'the Faithful and True Witness'* and *'The Beginning of The Creation of God'* or *'God's Creative Original.'* (Book of Revelation)

And at some time in the distant future, Christ will hand over a perfect, subjected universe to His God and Father, and then the Son Himself will become subject to the Father, that God may be ALL IN ALL HIS CREATURES! There is only One God. Glory to His Name! There is only One Lord. Glory to the Lamb! There is only One Spirit - which will bring love, life and fellowship to ALL! And there is only One Name that is lifted up as the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit - 'Yahweh is the Saviour' or **Jesus/Yeshua**.

'...baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19)

'The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the communion of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all! Amen! (2 Corinthians 13:14)