

CHRIST

AND THE

TRINITY

THE TWO FOUNDATIONS OF WORSHIP

Matthew 16:18 - and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Psalms 127:1 - Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

1 Corinthians 3:11 - For other foundation can no man lay.

Colossians 2:7 - Rooted and built up in him, and strengthened with the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Luke 6:48 - He is like a man which built an house, and laid the foundation on a rock.

1 Corinthians 3:10 - I have laid the foundation.

2 Timothy 2:19 - Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.

Hebrews 3:4 - For every house is builded by some man; but that which buildeth all things is God.



D. HERNBERG

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PREFACE

“Christ and the Trinity” was first written as a small, ninety page booklet in 2014. It was distributed online in the form of a pdf, and through various ministries which had printed the booklet for distribution at their own expense. This book is a revised and expanded version of that booklet, and is the first edition of the writing in printed book form.

Changes have been made for the purpose of improving clarity and integrity, to expand the ideas presented in the first little booklet, and to update references. Most of the changes occur in Chapters 5 through 9. Chapter 7 has been expanded into three chapters, and a closing remark has been added as an epilogue. A sub-chapter has been added to Chapter 3 regarding the Holy Spirit, and a clearer, more definite line has been drawn between the foundation of our worship and God’s final judgment, Babylon, and the Mark of the Beast.

All Bible references are from the King James Version unless otherwise specified.

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CHRIST
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TRINITY

PROLOGUE

The Trinity, the central doctrine of modern Christianity, is under scrutiny. Christians who once believed in the Trinity are uprooting their faith from this fundamental doctrine about God, and re-rooting their faith in Matthew 16:16, which declares that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Those who have uprooted their faith from the Trinity for Matthew 16:16 claim that these two foundations are absolutely incompatible. This has created a controversy in the Christian world.

This book explores the controversy by comparing the Trinity and Matthew 16:16 as two foundations of Christian worship, and as two fundamental doctrines about God. This process discovers the true foundation of God’s church on earth, who God really is, thus who His Son really is, and the reason for the controversy.

Since writing the first edition of “Christ and the Trinity,” I have noticed that too many Christians are building doctrines without reference to any foundational belief. Most do have foundational beliefs, but, when building doctrine about various other topics, they are not connecting their building with their foundation. This allows for contradictions in their belief system.

My hope is that this book will help people to realize, not only the importance of a solid foundation, but how important it is to rely upon, and to also utilize, that foundation as other topics are studied and understanding is developed, so

that contradictions can be detected and resolved. Once a solid foundation is established, it will protect the Bible student from adding errors upon the truth, but only if the foundation is used to guide and stabilize the building of other doctrines.

The comparison will give the reader 1) a comprehensive understanding of the controversy, 2) the tools to discern possible contradictions in their beliefs about God and Christ, 3) the opportunity to purposely establish himself on the true foundation, and, 4) a demonstration of how to utilize the true foundation when building other doctrines.

The foundations will be compared in the following manner: 1) each foundation will be tested for scriptural integrity by the Word of God; 2) the line of doctrine that naturally develops from each foundation will be drawn and compared; 3) the relationship between each foundation and worship will be considered; and 4) it will be shown how the controversy is relevant to the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and the events that immediately precede His appearing, which are prophesied in Revelation 14 -- God's final judgment, Babylon, and the mark of the beast.

This all amounts to an understanding of God, who He is and what His love is, that is practical, that is, that the Christian can experience in his daily living, and which will culminate in the fulfillment of his great hope in Jesus Christ -- eternal life with the God of love.

This comparison approaches the two foundations from two perspectives: one, from the perspective of construction; the other, from the perspective of education. The development of sound doctrine involves characteristics of both perspectives. In the process of construction, the foundation supports the structure that is erected upon it; it also

protects the structure from being damaged by the elements of the earth. It is the same with the process of building doctrine. The foundational doctrine must support every other doctrine, as well as protect the Christian from the corrupting influences of the world.

In education, the foundation is not only the beginning point for the development of knowledge, but it is also within the increase of knowledge. For example, counting is the foundation of math, and it becomes the heart of the more complex calculus. Calculus both depends upon, and employs, the solid foundation established with simple counting. It is the same when increasing knowledge of doctrine. The more complicated doctrines begin with, depend upon, and make use of the first lessons of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The foundation itself becomes the heart of all succeeding doctrines.

The aim of this book is not to give a thorough examination of the different doctrines, but to focus on the relationships: the relationship between the foundation and doctrine, the relationship between the foundation and worship, the relationship between the foundation and being prepared for Christ's second advent, and the relationship between the foundation and understanding who God is and His great love. There are many other resources readily available for those who would like to examine the doctrines more thoroughly. I do not wish to duplicate them here.

This book unfolds from beginning to end, therefore it is best read in order, that is, from beginning to end. As each chapter prepares the reader for the next chapter, the book will be most beneficial if followed in the order it is laid out.

Since this book examines a controversial subject in to-

day's Christianity, feedback and conversation are both welcomed and encouraged. If fault is found, and the reader desires to share their criticisms, these, too, are welcomed and encouraged. However, criticisms are welcomed with the request that they be constructive, i.e., that they are offered with thorough biblical support that directly corrects the perceived errors. Rather than merely offering criticisms about the conclusions offered in this book, feedback regarding the process that produced the conclusions is most appreciated.

I hope that both the processes and the outcomes of this comparison will encourage and strengthen my Christian brothers and sisters to make choices for the truth, deepening their relationship with God and Christ, and enabling them to better edify others.

I can be reached for comments at
dh@wordseedpublishing.com

“The foundation of a house serves two basic functions. First, it protects the rest of the house from the harmful effects of the soil. By holding the frame of the house up off the ground, the foundation keeps it a safe distance from the moisture, frost, termites, mildew, rot-producing fungi, and other organisms that live in the ground.

“Second, the foundation serves as a transition from the irregular surface of the land to the level, plumb, and square surfaces of the house. Before the foundation, there is nothing but dirt; after the foundation, there should be a square and plumb structure with a level top. It is upon this flat and even surface that the carpenters begin the frame of the house.”¹

“... ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
1 Corinthians 3:9-11

1 Carroll, John, and Chuck Lockhart. “The Complete Visual Guide to Building a House,” 2013, Taunten Press, p. 6.

THE TWO CLAIMS

The two foundations that will be examined are the Trinity and Matthew 16:16. Even though different denominations have differing versions of the Trinity, they all share common core characteristics that designate the differing doctrines as all equally and fully trinitarian. The following description is the core of all trinitarian beliefs, thus is common to all the various denominations who profess the Trinity:

“God exists as three persons [God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit] ... but is one being [or one unit, or one family]... The members of the Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal... all three are eternal, without beginning...”¹ “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are each equally and eternally the one true God.”²

Parenthetical comments added

And Matthew 16:16 is as follows:

“And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the

¹ Wikipedia. “Trinity.” Section 3.2: One God in Three Persons. Retrieved August 13, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity#Trinitarian_baptismal_formula

² Christian Answers. “How One God Can Be Three Persons. Retrieved August 13, 2019. par. 1. <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t002.html>

Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The doctrine of the Trinity has become the central, distinguishing doctrine of the modern religious denominations that are now recognized as Christian. Here is what mainstream Christianity is saying about the Trinity:

“The doctrine of the Trinity cuts right to the core of the very constituent nature of God. For this reason, the doctrine is an essential teaching of the Christian faith with *salvific import* [emphasis in original]. For, as we have seen, it is inextricably interwoven with Who Christ is – the Author and Perfecter [sic] of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). To reject the Trinity is to reject the God Who Is.”³

Note: To say that the Trinity is a doctrine with “salvific import” means that the Trinity is redemptive, or has salvational (“salvific”) value. In order to be saved, it is said that we need to believe in the Trinity. It has been deemed to be that important (“import”). If one does not believe in the Trinity, it is believed that they will not be saved, thus the Trinity is believed to be a doctrine with “salvific import.”

“Trinitarian theology, in so far as it is concerned with what ‘kind’ of God Christians worship, is far from being a luxury indulged in solely by remote and ineffectual dons; it is of cardinal importance for spirituality and liturgy, for ethics, for the whole

³ Murphy, Gannon. “The Importance of Defending the Trinity.” Retrieved August 13, 2019. par. 6. <https://alt.christnet.bible.narkive.com/1t6TTFSh/the-importance-of-defending-the-trinity>

of Christian self-understanding.”⁴

“The doctrine of the Trinity is truly distinctive of the Christian faith, crucial because it deals with who God is, what He is like, and how He works.”⁵

“It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of the Christian doctrine that God is one in three persons. This has correctly been called the teaching distinctive of the Christian faith, that which sets the approach of Christians to the “fearful mystery” of the deity apart from all other approaches.”⁶

The Trinity is said to be “an essential teaching,” important to the highest degree, even “salvific.” It is considered of “cardinal importance,” meaning it is fundamental, the principle thing, foundational. It is also said to be “distinctive of the Christian faith,” meaning it is the thing that makes the Christian faith what it is; it is “that which sets the approach of Christians to the fearful mystery of the deity apart from all other approaches.” It is the core doctrine, the very heart, of current Christian theology.

Being essential, salvific, and fundamental, the Trinity is the foundation of mainstream Christianity. Being the foundation, it is the base, the starting point, from which all other doctrines develop and radiate. The Catholic Church sums

⁴ Williams, Rowan Douglas. *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology.* SCM Press, 2007. p. 142.

⁵ Davidson, Jo Ann. “Blessed Trinity.” Retrieved August 13, 2019. par. 1. <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/god/trinity/article/go/0/god-in-three-persons/>

⁶ BBC. “The Trinity.” Retrieved August 13, 2019. par.30. http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/beliefs/trinity_1.shtml

it up, “Upon it [the Trinity] are based all the other teachings of the church.”⁷ Thus it is the heart of every other doctrine. Even though most are not aware of it, and do not consciously practice this in their studies, the doctrine of the Trinity yet guides all other doctrines. This is to be expected. If the Trinity is a central doctrine about who God is, it must be the heart of all other doctrines that involve God, consciously or unconsciously, which is absolutely every other doctrine.

The trinitarian belief has become so deep-rooted that it is even recognized as a deciding doctrine. It has become the distinguishing belief that separates Christianity from all other religions.^{8,9} Those Christians who do not believe in the Trinity do not fit into the accepted definition of “Christian,” and are thus not acknowledged as true followers of Christ by mainstream, popular Christianity.

Here I will quote Scripture, the very words of Jesus Christ Himself. Matthew 16:13-18 records a conversation between Jesus and His disciples. In this conversation, Jesus tells us what the central, foundational doctrine of His church is:

¹³ When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

7 Thibodeau, Richard, C.Ss.R. “Handbook for Today’s Catholic.” Liguori Publications, 2004. p.19

8 Religion Facts. “Trinity.” Retrieved August 13, 2019. <http://www.religionfacts.com/trinity> - “The doctrine of the trinity distinguishes Christianity from other religions...”

9 De Young, Kevin. “The Doctrine of the Trinity: No Christianity Without It.” 2011. Retrieved August 13, 2019. <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2011/09/28/the-doctrine-of-the-trinity-no-christianity-without-it/>

- ¹⁴ And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
- ¹⁵ He saith unto them, *But whom say ye that I am?*
- ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*
- ¹⁷ 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.
- ¹⁸ 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.*

Christ has defined a foundation for His church: the revelation, belief, and confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?” The truth of who Jesus is, His identity, is the rock that Christ has said He will build His church on. The foundation that will secure the Christian from being overtaken by the enemy’s wiles and war, that is, that will save and which has salvific import, is believing the simple truth of who Jesus is: He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. According to Jesus Christ, this is the foundation of the Christian church, thus of every true individual Christian and of all doctrines about God.

And so we have two claims: mainstream Christianity claims the Trinity as the foundation of the Christian church, Jesus Christ claims Matthew 16:16. Is the Trinity a counterpart of Matthew 16:16? Do they harmonize and support one another, or do these two claims amount to a controversy? Is there a legitimate conflict between the cur-

rent Christian claim and the claim of Jesus Christ? These questions will be answered in the following pages.

FRAMING THE DOCTRINAL HOUSE

“When you build the frame of the house, you need to do three things. First and foremost, you have to build a safe and sound structure. Second, you have to build a structure that accommodates almost all the subsequent work on the house. As you build the frame, then you must look far into the future and provide for the needs of plumbers, drywall hangers, siders, finish carpenters, and other specialty trade contractors. Third, you should build a structure that meets acceptable standards of quality.”¹

Building a safe and sound frame of doctrine that meets acceptable standards of quality, and that provides for the future needs of the Christian’s doctrinal house, begins with a square, level, and stable foundation. This chapter explores this relationship between the quality of the foundation and the quality of the doctrine that it supports. The stability of the Trinity and Matthew 16:16 as foundations will be examined. Then the quality of the doctrinal framework

¹ Carroll, John, and Chuck Lockhart. “The Complete Visual Guide to Building a House,” 2013, Taunten Press, p. 50.

that can be developed from each foundation will be determined.

Since Matthew 16:16 is the foundation that Christ has declared for His church, the examination will begin here. The reader will see that the doctrines that Jesus taught about God, about Himself, and about salvation essentially begin with Matthew 16:16. The reader will see how Matthew 16:16 is a perfect foundation, and how the doctrines that are developed from it become a sturdy frame for the Christian's doctrinal house.

FRAMING DOCTRINE FROM MATTHEW 16:16

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The first thing to notice about Matthew 16:16 is that it is simple. Just like primary math is the foundation for secondary math, the foundation of Christ's church is simple. It can, and must, be grasped before moving on to more complicated teachings. As the understanding progresses, the foundation -- that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God -- will support, direct, and stabilize each doctrine that develops from this truth. This will be shown below.

Not only is this foundation simple, but it is unchangeable reality. It is a fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Just as one plus one will always equal two, even as one advances on to more complex mathematical expressions, the fact that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God remains true, even when moving on to more complex biblical teachings.

If the sum of one plus one were changeable, if it were

two, but also sometimes three or five or ten, etc., then the more complex math that is built upon that foundation would be nonsense and confusion. The more complex math would be unpredictable and without consistency. Likewise, if the truth that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God could be sometimes true and sometimes changed, then the more complex biblical teachings built upon this foundation would reflect nonsense and confusion -- they would be unpredictable and without consistency. This is the second thing to notice about Matthew 16:16, it is first simple, and it is also unchangeable reality.

As the building begins, the reader will notice the third thing about Matthew 16:16 - it is purely Scripture. It is a clear "Thus saith the Lord," a plain, unmistakable scriptural statement that all can understand and be secure in, even a child. As soon as a child is mature enough to understand that they are a child who has a father they will be able to understand the basis of Christ's church, and be established upon scriptural truth from the earliest age -- Christ is the Son, and the living God is His Father. It is a simple, straight forward, easy to grasp statement of reality from the Word of God.

From this point we can frame other truths of the Bible. The foundation will remain intact, and will be the heart of each succeeding doctrine. From this foundation, other fundamental truths naturally develop:

1. The basic, fundamental belief is a matter of Christ's identity: who Jesus is. Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of the living God:

"¹⁶Thou [Jesus] art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:16

2. Building upon this foundation, and, indeed, from within this foundation, develops another basic truth. If Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then *there is a living God*:

“⁹⁰But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God...” Jeremiah 10:10

“¹⁵... the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
1Timothy 3:15

There are many witnesses throughout the Bible harmoniously declaring the living God. The foundation is sure, and the building being erected is stable.

See also Matthew 16:16; John 6:69; Acts 14:15; Romans 9:26; 2Corinthians 3:3; 6:16; 1Timothy 3:15; 4:10; 6:17; Hebrews 3:12; 9:14; 10:3;12:22; Revelation 7:2; Deuteronomy 5:26, Joshua 3:10; 1Samuel 17:26; 2Kings 19:4; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Jeremiah 10:10; 23:36; Daniel 6:26; Hosea 1:10; etc.

3. The next truth to naturally develop from the base is the fact that Christ is *the Son* of the living God:

“⁴Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his *son's* name, if thou canst tell?” Proverbs 30:4

“¹⁸No man hath seen God at any time; the *only-begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” John 1:18

“¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his *only-begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his *Son* into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 3:16, 17

“⁶⁹And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the *Son* of the living God.” John 6:69

“²⁷She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the *Son* of God, which should come into the world.” John 11:27

“³¹But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the *Son* of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John 20:31

There is no controversy in the Word of God. Christ is God’s Son, His only-begotten Son.

See also Mark 1:1; Luke 4:41; John Chapter 17; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Romans 1:3; 1Corinthians 1:9; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews Chapter 1; 3:6; 5:5; 1John 1:3; 1:7; 2:22; 3:23; 5:20; 2John 1:3; 1:9; etc.

4. Building up another step, we see that if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then *the living God is the Father*.

Christ’s identity is defined by relationship. He is a Son -- the Son of the living God. It naturally follows, then, that God’s identity is also defined by this relationship. *The living God is the Father*. Every time God is declared to

be the Father, an implicit declaration is being made that Christ is the Son of God. And every time Christ is declared to be the Son of God, an implicit declaration is being made that God is the Father:

“⁶But to us there is but one God, *the Father*...”
1Corinthians 8:6

“One God and *Father* of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:6

“³Blessed be God, even *the Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort...” 2Corinthians 1:3

In this sense, the identities of the Father and the Son, God and Christ, are united. Their identities are united through the relationship of Father and Son. The identity of each reveals the truth about the other. The truth about one testifies to the truth of the other. This is why in 1John 2:22, 23 the Bible states,

“²²Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. ²³Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” 1John 2:22, 23

Bound up in the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the truth that God is the Father. Jesus, then, can be denied from any of these points, which are all established in Matthew 16:16: by denying that He is the Christ, by denying that He is the Son of God, or by

denying that the living God is His Father.

See also John 6:27; Romans 15:6; 1Corinthians 1:9; 2Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:1, 1:3; Ephesians 1:3, 6:23; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 1:3; 1Thessalonians 1:1, 3:11, 3:13; 2Thessalonians 2:16; 2Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 1Peter 1:2, 1:3; 2John 1:3; Jude 1:1; etc.

5. Continuing on, if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the living God is the Father, then the relationship between God and Christ is a *Father-Son relationship*. This relationship, in order for it to be authentic, must express the structure of the Father being the Source of the Son.

The Father is most clearly acknowledged as the Source of His Son in John 3:16 where it is declared that the Son is the “only-begotten” Son of God. The Son came from His Father. God is the Father of Christ, and Christ is the Son of God. He is the only One who has come from the divinity of God. Built into every mention and acknowledgment that Christ is the Son of God is the structure of the Father being the Source of His Son.

This structure of the Father being the Source is also made known in Proverbs 8:22-26:

“²²The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. ²³I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. ²⁴When there were no depths, *I was brought forth*; when there were no fountains abounding with water. ²⁵Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was *I brought forth*. ²⁶While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.” Proverbs 8:22-26

This, and other, Old Testament references (Proverbs 30:4; Daniel 3:25; Micah 5:2) testify that Christ was God's Son before the incarnation and before creation. Christ's identity as the Son of God, then, reaches into the days of eternity. In the days of eternity, before the incarnation and before creation, outside of our concept of time, Christ was begotten of God. (See also Micah 5:2; Proverbs 30:4; John 3:18; 8:42; 1John 4:9; Hebrews 1:5)

Just how was Christ begotten of the Father? David Sims explains in his book, "Bible Studies to Do at Home":

"It is not for us to know exactly how the Son was brought forth, because God has not seen fit to reveal it to us. However, in the Genesis account of creation we find a rather interesting account:

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2:21, 22).

"This is one example of someone coming from the substance of another in a different way than children are born. I repeat, it is not for us to know how the Son of God was brought forth, but the point is that the Son "proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42), that he was "brought forth" of the Father "before the hills" (Proverbs 8:24, 25)."²

2 Sims, David. "Bible Studies to Do at Home." 2005. Retrieved August 13, 2019. p. 19. https://7thdayhomechurch.org/Resources/bstdh_2014_usa.pdf

In the above quoted explanation, the example of Adam and Eve is used to illustrate that God was not limited to our experience of human reproduction in bringing forth His Son. Eve is an example of “someone coming from the substance of another in a different way than children are born.”

The illustration must not be taken to mean that, since God created Eve from the rib of Adam, that God somehow *created* the Son. The only-begotten Son is divine. He came forth from God, i.e., from that which is uncreated, making it impossible for Christ to be created.

The above illustration is simply to show that God is not bound by our own experience of human reproduction. Even though we do not know how it happened, we can take God at His Word: Christ is His only-begotten Son. We do not have to think that this happened by a human process, but only believe that the Son came from the Father, that God is the Source of His Son through a process that He has not revealed to man.

6. The doctrinal framework continues. Because Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, He has the same nature and substance as God, that is, *Christ is divine*. He is the only One who has come from God so as to have the divinity of God. Just as a human child inherits human nature and human characteristics, so Christ, the divine Son, possesses the divine nature and the divine characteristics of God. Thus Christ possesses all the authority, dignity, abilities, and glory of God that differentiate the created from their Creator.

Being the only-begotten Son of God, Christ has not only inherited all the characteristics of divinity from God,

but He is the exact representation of God. In Christ, we see God:

“³[Christ is]... the brightness of His glory, and the express image of his person.” Hebrews 1:3

“⁹Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” John 14:9

“³⁰I and my Father are one.” John 10:30

Because Christ is begotten of God and possesses all the traits of God through inheritance, He rightfully claims His Father’s name as His own:

“⁴... as he [Christ] hath *by inheritance obtained a more excellent name...*” Hebrews 1:4

“A son always rightfully takes the name of his father; he has, to some extent, the features and personal characteristics of his father; not perfectly, because there is no perfect reproduction among mankind. But there is no imperfection in God, or in any of His works; and so Christ is the “express image” of the Father’s person. Heb.1:3. As the Son of the self-existent God, he has by nature all the attributes of Deity.”³ The Son is the only perfect representation of God in every way, because He is the *only*-begotten Son of God.

³ Waggoner, E.J. “Christ and His Righteousness.” Southern Publishing Association, 1972. p. 12

7. If Christ is the express image of God's person, the perfect representation of God, then not only is God seen in Christ, but Christ is seen in God. *They are one*, yet two distinct beings with distinct identities. They share the same nature (divine), have the same character (holy and righteous), and the same purpose (the redemption of man, i.e., love).

In this same way we are to be one as the body of Christ, each Christian representing Christ. In this way we are one with the Father in Christ, and with one another, each reflecting the same Christ, but maintaining our individual identities and personalities:

“²¹That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

John 17:21

Just as Christ perfectly represented His Father -- in nature, in character, and in purpose -- Christ is to be perfectly represented in us. We are to represent Christ in nature, in character, and in purpose. This is possible through faith in the promises of the Bible. Through God's promises, we may, in our fallen, mortal, human nature, partake of and express the nature of the divine, uniting with Christ's character and purpose:

“⁴Whereby 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.” 2Peter 1:4

We are born again:

“³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3

We receive the Holy Spirit:

“³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

And by the Spirit we enter into fellowship with God and Christ:

“¹If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit...” Philippians 2:1

“³That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” 1John 1:3 (ESV)

Entering into fellowship with God and Christ by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit means to partner with God and Christ, or to walk with them by partaking of the divine nature through the Word of God. Everyone who professes to be a Christian is to reflect Christ’s character and His purpose. This can only happen if we partake of the divine nature that He has so generously given us access

to through the promises of the Bible and fellowship of the Spirit. Through faith in Christ, in whom all the promises of the Bible are “yea” (2Corinthians 1:20), we may partake of His divine nature. We may have the same righteous character and the same holy purpose. We may be one with Him, and with His body, the church:

“¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. ²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” John 17:19-21

8. Still rooted in Matthew 16:16, we continue to build. Because the relationship between God and Christ is an authentic Father-Son relationship, the Bible not only testifies that the Father is the Source, but that *the Son is subject to His Father*. Before the incarnation, during His incarnation, after His resurrection, at the present moment, and for all eternity Christ was, is, and will be subject to His Father without losing His inherited equality with God.

Before the incarnation --

John 3:16 declares that God sent His Son into the world. If God sent His Son into the world, then He had a Son to send into the world. This not only testifies of Christ's Sonship before His incarnation, but of the authority of the Father before Christ ever graced the earth. Even though

Christ laid His life down for us of His own free will, it was on His Father's command that He was sent:

“⁴²Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; *neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*” John 8:42

While Christ walked the earth --

“¹⁹Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, *The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do:* for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” John 5:19

“²⁸Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that *I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me,* I speak these things. ²⁹And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for *I do always those things that please him.*” John 8:28, 29

At the present moment --

1Corinthians 3:23 and 1Corinthians 11:3 clearly state that this Father-Son structure is current. Notice the use of the present tense:

“²³And ye are Christ's; and Christ *is* God's.”
1Corinthians 3:23

“³But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ *is* God.” 1 Corinthians 11:3

For all eternity --

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 expresses this same structure even after death is abolished and all things are restored:

²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸*When all things are subjected to him [God], then the Son himself will also be subjected to him [God] who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.* 1 Corinthians 15:26-28 (ESV)

See also Psalm 40:8; Matthew 26:39; John 3:16, 4:34, 5:19, 5:30, 5:36-37, 6:38, 6:57, 8:28, 8:42, 14:10, 14:28; 18:11, 20:17; 15:28; etc.

9. Pressing on, because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and because the living God is the Father, it can be trusted that *God and Christ are two separate and distinct Beings*. God is one Being, the Father of Christ; Christ is another Being, the Son of God:

“⁷Grace to you and peace from God our Father, *and* the Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 1:7

“³Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Fa-

ther, *and* from the Lord Jesus Christ.” 1Corinthians 1:3

“²²And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty *and* the Lamb are the temple of it.”
Revelation 21:22

See also John chapter 17; Acts 2:36, 4:10; Romans 8:34; 1Corinthians 3:23, 8:6, 11:3; 2Corinthians 1:2, 1:3, 11:31; Galatians 1:1, 1:3; Ephesians 1:2, 1:3, 6:23; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:3; 1Thessalonians 1:1, 3:11; 2Thessalonians 1:1, 1:2, 1:12, 2:16; 1Timothy 1:2, 2:5, 5:21; 2Timothy 1:2; Revelation 1:1, 20:6, 21:22, 22:1, 22:3.

10. Because God and Christ are two separate and distinct beings, *there are boundaries that define who they are*, and that allow them to be distinguishable. Two examples of boundaries that allow God and Christ to be separate and distinguishable from one another are form and personality.

God has a form. In character and in form, we were created to reflect God. As beings who possess character and form, we were made in the image of God:

“²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Genesis 1:27

Jesus tells us that God has a shape, a shape that can be seen, even though we ourselves cannot see it:

“³⁷And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen *his shape*.” John 5:37

Our God and Father, the Ancient of Days, has hair, a head, and a body that can sit:

“⁹I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.” Daniel 7:9

He has a face that the heavenly angels behold:

“¹⁰Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 18:10

Christ had a form before being incarnated in the form of man. Being the Only-Begotten of God, He is the express image of God. “Express image” in Hebrews 1:3 means an “exact representation,” an “exact reproduction.”⁴ Christ is the exact copy of God. This includes God’s form, or God’s shape:

“¹God... ²hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son... ³who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person... sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Hebrews 1:1-3

Philippians 2:6 reveals that Christ was “in the form of

⁴ Strong, James. “The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.” Zondervan, 2001. p. 1653. Reference number G5481.

God.” “Form” means “shape” as well as “nature”:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God...” Philippians 2:6

As well as having form, God and Christ have likes and dislikes. These are boundaries of their personalities. Just like we have boundaries of what we will allow or disallow according to our likes and dislikes, so do God and Christ. In Proverbs 6:16-19 God lets us know that there are things that He hates:

“¹⁶These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: ¹⁷A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” Proverbs 6:16-19

In Proverbs 8:30 God reveals something that He loves -- He delights in His Son. Christ says,

“³⁰Then [time of creation] I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Proverbs 8:30

God delights in the upright:

“²⁰They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.” Proverbs 11:20

The Son delights to do His Father's will, and loves His Father's law:

“⁸I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Psalm 40:8

God and Christ both love righteousness and hate wickedness:

“⁹Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Hebrews 1:9

11. Because God and Christ are separate and distinct beings with boundaries that define who they are, and because God and Christ are two distinct beings who participate in authentic relationship, *God and Christ are personal Beings*. This means that we can know them. We can enter into a relationship with them. As we gain an experience with God and Christ through relationship, love and trust grows and deepens. As our knowledge and understanding of who they are grows, the relationship strengthens. Not only is this the most incredible privilege that could ever be bestowed upon our fallen race, but it is a necessity if we are to receive the final fulfillment of our hope. We have both the privilege and necessity of knowing God and Christ:

“³And this is life eternal, *that they might know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3

“²⁸Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon

you, and *learn of me*; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”
Matthew 11:28, 29

“³...and truly our *fellowship* is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” 1John 1:3

The deepest needs and desires of our soul are met through relationship with God and Christ.

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Summing it up, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This foundation establishes, supports, directs, and stabilizes the following truths:

1. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God;
2. God exists. He is the living God;
3. Christ is the living God's Son;
4. The living God is the Father;
5. There is an authentic Father-Son relationship between God and Christ, i.e., God is the Source of His Son;
6. The Son is divine through inheritance;
7. God and Christ are one;
8. The Son is subject to the Father;
9. God and Christ are two separate divine Beings;
10. God and Christ have boundaries that distinguish one from the other and define who they are, their personalities;
11. God is a personal God, and Christ is a personal Saviour, who we have the privilege and necessity of knowing.

Starting from the same foundation in Matthew 16:16, we can move on to other lines of doctrinal development. For instance, when Peter answered Jesus' question, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he was speaking to, and about, the *Man* Jesus. Our foundation now directs, supports, and stabilizes the building of doctrine regarding the human incarnation of the divine Son of God. A view begins to open up to the condescension of the living God's only Son, perfect in righteousness and wholly divine, leaving all the glories of Heaven and the bosom of His Father to take on the nature of fallen man, made of "the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3).

Following another line, we see that Jesus is the *Christ*. He is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. This Messiah is both the Son of man and the Son of God, both human and divine. And so the window begins to open to Christ's mediation in the incarnation, to what Christ's mediation in the incarnation actually means to mankind, what it means to his redemption in Jesus the Christ.

It is nothing short of absolutely amazing how the confession of who Jesus is, so easy to understand in Matthew 16:16, and so simple in its design, can become the foundation for every doctrine about God, Christ, and salvation. Truly, it was not from the intellect of Peter that this confession was realized and given. It was a revelation of unalterable reality, the solid foundation of life and truth, by the perfect wisdom and knowledge of God Himself:

¹⁷"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." Matthew 16:17

All this is in Jesus -- in who He is, in His identity.

Matthew 16:16 is a perfect foundation, even being declared by Christ Himself to be the foundational Rock and enduring strength of His church. It is perfectly square, straight, and level. Therefore the doctrines built from this foundation are plumb to the line, forming a doctrinal frame that is stable and perfectly straight, and that will weather the fiercest storm that the enemy can howl upon the church of Christ.

The foundation of Christ's church, according to Christ, is established in Matthew 16:16. It is simple, definite, and clearly stated in the Bible. Even young children can understand it. It rests in "Thus saith the Lord." From it we can build and establish sound doctrines about a personal God and a personal Saviour; about the living God who gave us the Messiah, our Mediator, through the union of the divine with the human in the incarnation of His own divine Son.

What about the doctrine of the Trinity?

FRAMING DOCTRINE FROM THE TRINITY

*"God exists as three persons [God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit] ... but is one being [or one unit, or one family]... The members of the Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal... all three are eternal, without beginning..."*⁵ *"God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are*

⁵ Wikipedia. "Trinity." Section 3.2: One God in Three Persons. Retrieved August 13, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity#Trinitarian_baptismal_formula

*each equally and eternally the one true God.*⁶

Parenthetical comments added

There are two main differences between Matthew 16:16 and the trinitarian foundation to be aware of before looking at the doctrine itself. First, unlike the foundation that Christ has declared for His church, there is no “Thus saith the Lord” for the Trinity. It is nowhere to be found in Scripture. The trinitarian statement that describes God, and which is common to all trinitarian denominations, is not itself in the Scriptures. Neither is even the idea of the Trinity to be found therein.

Many believers in the Trinity will disagree, but it should not be ignored that the fact is openly affirmed by religious scholars of diverse denominations. Christian leaders who defend the validity of the Trinity also admit that it cannot be found in the Bible. The following statements are from just such men:

“What does the Old Testament tell us of God? It tells us there is one God... But *it tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication* of a Triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”⁷

“Certainly, it cannot be denied that not only the word “Trinity,” but *even the explicit idea of the Trinity is absent* from the apostolic witness to the

6 Christian Answers. “How One God Can Be Three Persons. Retrieved August 13, 2019. par. 1. <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t002.html>

7 Edmund J. Fortman, “The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity.” Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999. p. xv.

faith.”⁸

“There is *no systematic doctrine of the “immanent” trinity in the NT [New Testament].*”⁹

Note: “immanent” means inherent or intrinsic; there is no systematic doctrine that teaches that God is inherently triune in the New Testament.

“While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, *it is assumed as a fact.*”¹⁰

“The role of the trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, nor is there any clear statement of the idea... even though *the doctrine of the trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God* it is part of what the church must say to guard the biblical view of God.”¹¹

Because it is not explicitly stated in Scripture, the doctrine of the Trinity is more of a conclusion about Scripture

8 Emil Brunner, “The Christian Doctrine of God.” Digitized by the Internet Archive. 2011. p. 205. Retrieved August 13, 2019 from www.archive.org. *Originally published by The Westminster Press, 1950.*

9 Rahner, Karl. “Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology.” Digitized by the Internet Archive. 2019. Volume 6. p. 295. Retrieved from www.archive.org August 14, 2019. *Originally published by Palm Publishers, 1970.*

10 Wood, Kenneth H. Editor. “The Trinity.” *The Review and Herald*. 1981. Volume 158, No. 31. p.4. Retrieved August 14, 2019 from <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19810730-V158-31.pdf>

11 Rice, Richard. “The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective.” Andrews University Press, 1985 p. 89.

than a foundation beginning with Scripture. There is the necessity, then, of finding the foundation that supports the trinitarian conclusion. This moves us away from the Trinity as a starting point because there is another foundation yet to discover which the Trinity itself is built upon. If there was a reference in the Bible that was explicit, clearly stating the trinitarian creed, then further study would not be required and it might suffice as a beginning point. But, as those scholars who defend the Trinity have openly declared, such a statement is nowhere to be found in the Bible, disqualifying it as a biblical foundation.

This leads to the second difference with using the Trinity as the starting point. Because the Bible student is required to search out a foundation for the Trinity, the Trinity, as a foundation, is complicated. It is like teaching a child to learn the fundamentals of counting by working backwards from algebra. The Christian is expected to understand the complex before the simple in order to discover the simple foundational principles within the complex. It is an impossibility, and compels the Christian to rely upon assumptions. Thus the Trinity is not an actual starting point in the Word of God. It is not a first lesson, being neither clearly stated in Scripture, nor simple.

These two differences between Matthew 16:16 and the Trinity make a direct comparison impossible. It is not possible to build doctrine from the Trinity as can be done from Matthew 16:16 for these reasons:

1. There is no “Thus saith the Lord,” so it is not a starting point. It is not wise, nor responsible, to build doctrine upon a statement about God if it is not explicitly found in the Bible. It may only be accepted as a conclusion.

If used as a foundation, there is nowhere to go with the Trinity; it only points to the need to prove its own validity. And if one does build upon the doctrine of the Trinity, he will be building from, and upon, the conclusions of man, rather than the Word of God.

2. The trinitarian foundation is not simple, but complicated. The process of building upon this foundation is more of a process of deconstruction than it is of construction. One needs to take the complex conclusion about scripture and work backwards before he can go forwards, not only to validate the doctrine, but to understand the basic materials that the Bible student has to work with, which have become the heart of the doctrine. Rather than building from the simple to the more complex, the Christian is forced to figure out the basic lessons about God, Christ, and salvation from a complex doctrine.

For these reasons, it is not possible to use the Trinity as a base upon which to build lines of doctrine as was done with Matthew 16:16. Nevertheless, we will find out what the foundation of the Trinity is so that it can be compared with Christ's foundation. This will be done by comparing the features of the Trinity with the building blocks of Matthew 16:16. In this process, over the next three chapters, we will discover the foundation of the Trinity.

COMPARING THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES

Because Matthew 16:16 is the foundation of Christ's church, its features are the essential building blocks for sound doctrine. They are the truths that are used to build doctrine, and to keep it sound. As they are the essential building blocks, all the features must be accounted for when developing doctrine in order for it to be truthful. Every feature that is within Matthew 16:16 is essential. Christ has spoken, and has established this truth as the foundation of His church. Thus every word is critical in order that the "gates of hell" do not overtake the church.

The features are so closely connected and related that if one is refused the others become perverted. For example, if Jesus is accepted as the Son of man but is refused as the Christ, then the truth about the Man Jesus is perverted and ultimately lost, because He *is* the Christ. If Jesus is received as the Christ, but is refused as the Son of God, then the truth about the Christ, who *is* the Son of God, is perverted, and the Christ is ultimately lost. The identity, personality, and mission of Christ become perverted when one of the features is missing. Every feature is essential and has a close relationship with the other features, and so all must be accounted for in sound doctrine.

Here I would like to remind the reader of two points. First, a foundation contains the building blocks to support, as well as to develop, all succeeding doctrine. If a doctrine is

developed that does not harmonize with the building blocks in the foundation, then it is evident that doctrine has veered away from soundness. For example, one plus one equals two. If a student solves this simple mathematical equation but produces a different sum, we are able to discern that there is an error. The student's process is re-examined to find and correct the reason for the error, and the student is not allowed to progress until the foundation has been correctly learned. It would be a disservice, even an abuse, to allow a student to progress believing that one plus one equals ten.

A solid foundation is what enables errors to be discerned, as well as to ready the student for further education. So it is with doctrine. If a doctrine develops that does not harmonize with the foundational building blocks in Matthew 16:16, we may discern that there is an error. A re-examination is appropriate in order to find and correct the error before attempting to understand subsequent doctrines.

The second point I would like to remind the reader of is that the Trinity is a conclusion about Scripture, not actually a starting point in Scripture. As this is the case, the following comparison will have the effect of checking the validity of the Trinity as a conclusion about Scripture. We will see if the said sum of Scripture (the Trinity) harmonizes with the foundational building blocks (Matthew 16:16).

If the following comparison shows that the building blocks of Matthew 16:16 are present in the Trinity, then we can count the Trinity as a sound doctrine concerning God. But if not, if the following comparison shows that the building blocks are not present, then we must acknowledge that the trinitarian conclusion is an error. If the Trinity is found to be unsound as a conclusion, then the Christian who has produced it as the conclusion of their study will

need to back-track and make the appropriate corrections.

Does the Trinity have the building blocks, the essential features, of Matthew 16:16?

Matthew 16:16

Thou [Jesus] art the Christ,
the Son of the living God.



Features

1. Jesus
2. Christ
3. The Son
4. The living God
5. Father-Son Relationship

Trinity

God exists as three persons [God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit]... but is one being [or one unit, or one family]... The members of the Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal... all three are eternal without beginning.” “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are each equally and eternally the one true God.



Features

1. God
2. Three persons
3. God the Father
4. God the Son
5. God the Holy Spirit
6. Co-equal
7. Co-eternal
8. Eternal
9. No beginning
10. Three-in-one-relationship

There are five essential building blocks in Matthew 16:16: 1) Jesus, 2) the Christ, 3) the Son, 4) the living God, and 5) the Father-Son relationship. Are these five essential building blocks of Matthew 16:16 present in the trinitarian declaration?

1. Jesus -- No. There is no specific reference to Jesus in the trinitarian declaration. Neither is there any biblical witness expressing the trinitarian statement, nor the realization that Jesus is “God the Son” of the triune God. This means that the trinitarian statement cannot be part of a conversation with Jesus as was Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:16, or with any other biblical character. It is addressed to no one, and is a self-supporting statement with no biblical setting, and no biblical witness.

The significance of this missing feature is that there is no link to Jesus, the Son of man. The Trinity is disconnected from the truth that the divine Son of God came in the flesh of man. A foundation is the beginning point and must contain the building blocks that form the increase of knowledge. Since this essential building block is missing from the Trinity, doctrines that develop from the Trinity will be missing this feature. They will ignore, suppress, distort, confuse, or eliminate the truth about Jesus being the divine Son of God in the fallen flesh of man.

2. Christ -- No. There is no specific mention of Christ in the trinitarian foundation. The Trinity makes no reference to the Saviour, the Messiah, the anointed One. The significance of this missing feature is that the Trinity is disconnected from the mediation of Christ for the reconciliation of God and man. There is no acknowledgment that Jesus is the

Saviour of the world.

While we have yet to discover what the foundation of the Trinity is, we can know that it does not include Christ; it does not include the mediation of Christ for the salvation of man. Thus it must be a “Christless” foundation. And if the Trinity is itself used as the foundation, it will not be able to produce a Saviour, as it is without any reference to Christ the Saviour of the world.

3. *The Son* -- Yes. The Son is a feature of the Trinity.

4. *The Living God* -- Yes. God is a feature of the Trinity. However, the Trinity does not speak of the *living* God.

5. *The Father-Son Relationship* -- No. The Father-Son relationship between God and Christ is not a feature of the Trinity. While the words “Father” and “Son” are used in the trinitarian conclusion, they are used with the emphasis that the Son has “no beginning.” The Father is not actually the Source of His Son. This redefines the meanings of the words “Father” and “Son,” which redefines the relationship that the Son of God has with His Father. The authentic Father-Son relationship, where the Son is begotten of the living God, is not in the Trinity.

Even though “Son” is a feature of the Trinity, we are prevented from the conclusion that He is a true Son, the only-begotten Son. And while “God” is a feature of the Trinity, we are prevented from the understanding that He is the true Father of Christ, the One from whom His Son came.

The authentic Father-Son relationship between God and His divine Son is not in the Trinity. As a result, the

identities of God and Christ are distorted. As the doctrine of the Trinity forbids the authentic Father-Son relationship between God and Christ, the identities of both God and Christ, Father and Son, are distorted.

By default, changing the meaning of the Father-Son relationship means that the definition of what it means to be a Son has been changed, and the Christian is left with the problem of redefining and reinterpreting the word “Son” in relation to the identity of God’s Son. This leads to the same process of changing the meaning of “Father” in relation to God, and especially of the word “begotten” in relation to their relationship. When used in the trinitarian statement, these words must be redefined and reinterpreted to mean something other than what they really mean.

Thus we see that the only features on which the Trinity might have agreed with Matthew 16:16, “Son” and “God,” actually pose a conflict. These redefined words actually oppose the truth of Matthew 16:16 because the authentic relationship between God and Christ has been eliminated. We are left with a God who is not really a Father, and a “God the Son” who is not really the Son of God. Thus the Trinity is disconnected from the truth about God and Christ as given in Matthew 16:16, because it denies that the Son came from God, His Father.

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At this point, we can return to the third and fourth features just examined and change the answers from “yes” to “no”: the Son is not a feature of the Trinity, neither is the living God the Father. There is no need of looking at the other features of the Trinity at this point, for it is evident

that the Trinity does not include any of the features of Christ's foundation in Matthew 16:16: the Man Jesus is missing; the Christ is missing; the Father-Son relationship is missing; and therefore the living God and His only-begotten Son are missing.

These differences assure us of something that is crucially important to acknowledge: there is absolutely no agreement between the Trinity and Matthew 16:16, only the appearance of one. And where there is no agreement with Scripture, there is conflict. We have discerned conflict between the trinitarian conclusion and Christ's foundation in Matthew 16:16. Therefore, the trinitarian conclusion is an error.

We can be sure, then, that if the Trinity is used as a foundation it will never be able to produce the same doctrines as Matthew 16:16, because the essential building blocks are simply not part of the doctrine of the Trinity. And just as surely, because the building blocks are not there, subsequent doctrines that are developed from the Trinity will be in conflict with the sound doctrines that are developed from Christ's foundation in Matthew 16:16.

Likewise, no matter how far the doctrinal line is advanced, the foundation of "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" will never produce a doctrine that has sympathy with the Trinity. Matthew 16:16's building blocks are eternal; they will always be present as the root and the heart of sound doctrines, ensuring an enduring conflict with the Trinity.

The Trinity and Matthew 16:16 are in severe conflict. The God of the Trinity cannot be the living God who is the Father of the Son, our Lord Jesus the Christ. The God described in the Trinity is another God who is not

the Father of Christ, but is three persons. Because of the close relationship between foundation and doctrine, any apparent connection between Matthew 16:16 and the Trinity is, in reality, non-existent.

SUMMARY

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| 1. Modern Christianity defines Christianity by the Trinity. | Jesus defines Christianity by Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16. |
| 2. As a foundation, the Trinity is not an actual starting point, being neither explicitly stated in Scripture, nor simple. | As a foundation, Matthew 16:16 is the perfect starting point. It is declared to be the foundation by Jesus Christ Himself, is explicitly stated in Scripture, and is simple. |
| 3. A line of doctrine cannot be safely developed from the Trinity. | A line of doctrine can be safely, and easefully, developed from Matthew 16:16. |
| 4. The features of the Trinity oppose Matthew 16:16. | The building blocks of Matthew 16:16 oppose the Trinity. |
| 5. Doctrines that might be developed from the Trinity will never harmonize with Matthew 16:16. | Doctrines that develop from Matthew 16:16 will never harmonize with the Trinity. |

Since all of the elements of Christ's perfect foundation in Matthew 16:16 are missing from the Trinity, the Trinity is an uneven and unstable foundation. It cannot lead to the construction of a safe frame of doctrine. A doctrinal house built upon the Trinity will not meet acceptable standards of quality. For this reason the Trinity also fails as a conclusion. As a sum of Scripture, it does not harmonize with the foundation taught by Christ. The Christian who has produced it as the conclusion of their study will need to backtrack and make the appropriate corrections.

A NOTE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

Addressing doctrine about the Holy Spirit is not part of this book. The reason for this omission is very simple: Matthew 16:16 does not mention the Holy Spirit. It is the identity of Jesus Christ that is the foundation of the church. Since Matthew 16:16 does not mention the Holy Spirit, doctrine about the Holy Spirit is not part of this book.

Even so, some may yet be expecting to find the Trinity's teaching about the Holy Spirit examined in some manner here. The reason why I have not done so is because the Trinity does not harmonize with, preserve, nor utilize any of the teachings about God and Christ that are found in Matthew 16:16, which is the foundation of all sound doctrine. Therefore, all that needs to be said about the Trinity's teaching of the Holy Spirit is that it cannot be sound doctrine.

But here are a few steps the reader may want to take to begin developing an understanding of the Holy Spirit, steps that preserve, utilize, and include the truths about God and Christ that are established in Matthew 16:16. These steps are by no means exhaustive, but are given here as a sample for the purpose of showing how the foundation can be used to develop an understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Two divine Beings, God and His Son, are the foundation of the church and of man's salvation (see Matthew 16:16; Zechariah 6:12, 13; Revelation 7:10; Revelation 21:22; Revelation 22:1, 3). There is the living God, and the Son of the living God, who is the Christ, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world. The Christ is the divine Son of God and the human Son of man. He is divinity and

humanity united in the incarnate Son of God -- the Man Jesus the Christ. God's divine Son is the Christ (the Saviour) because He reconciled fallen man with God in Himself, and, as a man, proved that the righteousness of God can live in the fallen flesh of man when he is in union with God. Christ gives us His victorious life so that we may live the same victorious life in Him:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

Sound doctrine about the Holy Spirit will not add any new elements to the foundation, but it may expand our understanding:

1. 2Corinthians 3:17

“¹⁷Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Two phrases are used synonymously in 2Corinthians 3:17. “The Lord is that Spirit” is synonymous with “the Spirit of the Lord.” So, “the Spirit of the Lord” has the same meaning as “the Lord is that Spirit.” From this we gain a deeper understanding of our Lord and Saviour: “that Spirit” (the Holy Spirit) is the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Lord Jesus Christ is “that Spirit” (the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit is as the presence of Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus is the life and power that destroys the works of Satan, whose works are sin:

“⁸He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” 1John 3:8

Where the Spirit of Jesus is, Jesus is there destroying the works of Satan, i.e., there is freedom from sin by the saving power in the presence of Jesus Christ:

“¹⁷Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” 2Corinthians 3:17

But the focus here is that “the Lord is that Spirit” means “the Spirit of the Lord.” Jesus Christ (the Lord) is that Spirit (the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Lord is as the Lord Himself; it is the presence of Jesus Christ.

This can reasonably be put to use. For example, Jesus is right now ministering on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary:

“¹Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: *We have such an high priest*, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty *in the heavens*; ²*A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Hebrews 8:1, 2

Christ is our High Priest right now ministering for us in the heavenly sanctuary. But He is also, right now, with His people all over the earth, ministering to us in this world:

“²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20

“¹⁸And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, *I am with you* always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20

“¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever... ¹⁸I will not leave you comfortless: *I will come to you.*” John 14:16, 18

Christ is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, but is still, by His Spirit, ministering to us here on the earth. “The Spirit of the Lord,” that is, the presence of Jesus Christ, is with His people, wherever we are, even to the end of the world. By the Holy Spirit, our Lord is omnipresent. He is right now in the heavenly sanctuary ministering for His people, but He is also with us, exactly where we are, by His Spirit.

2. Psalm 51:10, 11 and Psalm 139:7

“¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from *thy presence*; and take not *thy holy spirit* from me.”

Psalm 51:10, 11

“⁷Whither shall I go from *thy spirit*? or whither shall I flee from *thy presence*?” Psalm 139:7

The same principle is taught in these Scripture passages. God’s Spirit is equated with His presence: “thy spirit” = “thy presence.” The Spirit of God is the presence of God.

3. *Romans 8:9, 10*

“⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the *Spirit of God* dwell in you. Now if any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his. ¹⁰And if *Christ be in you*, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

This passage ties the above passages in steps 1 and 2 together utilizing the principle of Christ’s mediation, which is in the foundation laid in Matthew 16:16. We know that, when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, the whole human race fell. As the head of the human race, Adam, now a sinner, could not pass righteousness to his posterity. He could only pass sinfulness. Because it is sin that causes separation from God, had it not been for Christ’s mediation, not only Adam, but the whole human race that was to come from Adam, would have been forever separated from God:

“¹²Wherefore, as *by one man sin entered into the world*, and death by sin; and *so death passed upon*

all men, for that all have sinned.” Romans 5:12

“¹Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ²But *your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” Isaiah 59:1, 2

Since Adam’s sin, Christ has been the Mediator between God and the human race. His mediation spanned the chasm caused by sin and reconciled us to God:

“¹⁸And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...” 2Corinthians 5:18

The only way for us to come to the Father, is through the mediation of His Son (John 14:6). And the only way for God to be with us is through the mediation of His Son. This is why His Son is called “Emmanuel” in Matthew 1:23. It means Jesus is “God with us”:

“²³Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Matthew 1:23

Jesus is “God with us.” And the presence of Jesus is the presence of “God with us”:

“⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that *the Spirit of God dwell in you.* Now if any man have not *the Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his. ¹⁰And

if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Romans 8: 9, 10

The Spirit of God dwells in the Christian by Jesus Christ. “If Christ be in you,” then “the Spirit of God dwell[s] in you.” If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in Him, he does not have the Spirit of God dwelling in him either. But if the Spirit of Christ does, in fact, dwell in him, then the Father dwells there also:

“²³I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” John 17:23

“I in them” means “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). And “thou in me” means God in Christ. If Christ be in us, and if God is in Christ, then when Christ dwells in the Christian by His Spirit, God dwells there also.

4. John 6:63

“⁶³It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63

It is by Christ’s words that His Spirit dwells within the Christian:

“²³Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me,

he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” John 14:23

Both the Father and the Son dwell within the Christian when he believes, and keeps the words of Christ. When the Christian understands the word, believes it, and loves what he understands and believes, the word of God finds a home in his heart:

“¹¹*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*” Psalm 119:11

“Abode” in John 14:23 above (“we will come unto him and make our *abode* with him”) means “home” and “permanent place.”¹ When we keep the words of Jesus, when we hide them in our heart, God and Christ abide in the heart. The Spirit and life of Christ dwell in us by His word: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

God “hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ” (2Corinthians 5:18) who is the propitiation for our sins, and who cleanses us from sin by the Spirit and life in His word. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2Corinthians 5:19):

“⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none

¹ “abode.” *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, 22nd American Ed., Robert Young, LL.D., 1969, p. 6

of his. ¹⁰And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Romans 8: 9, 10

Christ is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, but when we love His word, and make a home for it in the heart, we allow Him to enter into the inner man, and, by the Spirit and life that is in Christ, work upon the heart to emancipate it from sin, and we are brought into union with God. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” that is, there is freedom from sin:

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, *that I might not sin* against thee.”

The life and power in the Word of God that created heaven and earth, dwells in the Christian, imparting light and life to deliver him from the darkness and death of his sinful ways:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.” (Genesis 1:3, 4)

“The word of God is the seed. Every seed has in itself a germinating principle. In it the life of the plant is enfolded. So there is life in God’s word. Christ says, “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63. “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.” John 5:24. In every command and

in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.”²

This magnifies the importance of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. By His word, Christ has established Matthew 16:16 both as truth and as the foundation of His church. These words, they are Spirit and they are life. Enfolded in these words of truth is not just one promise, but every promise of God. For “*all* the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen” (2Corinthians 1:20). The foundation is the truth of who Jesus is, and it is in the truth of who Jesus is that all the promises of God are fulfilled.

Jesus Himself says, “For 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). The words of Christ in this passage, and in Matthew 16, “they are Spirit and they are life” (John 6:63). Enfolded in these truths is the promise of everlasting life. But it comes on the condition of believing in Him whom God sent, in believing it was the “only-begotten Son of God” whom God gave to the world.

In His words are “the very life and character of God.” Neglecting to believe these words of Christ, neglecting to receive them by faith, is to reject the Spirit and life in Christ that gives salvation by dwelling within the Christian, and delivering him from sin.

2 White, E.G. “Christ’s Object Lessons.” Better Living Publications, 1990. p. 7

Doctrine about the Holy Spirit can be developed that honors the foundation: the living God has a Son whom He sent into the world for the redemption of mankind by His incarnate life and death, and the Holy Spirit is the presence of God and Christ still in the world now, working for man's redemption. God is reconciling the world to himself by, and with, His Son, who is right now ministering as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, and who is, by His Spirit, leading and empowering the global work of the great commission on earth, working within the hearts and minds of individuals who believe in Him, the Son of the living God, as their personal Saviour from sin.

A MOST SERIOUS IMPLICATION

*“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?
He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”
John 2:22*

The Christian foundation is not a concept, nor is it merely a belief. It is Christ Himself. 1Corinthians 3:11 states,

“¹¹For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1Corinthians 3:11

This is exactly what Peter realized and confessed when he said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter confessed Christ Himself, and Christ Himself confirms this as the foundation of His church: “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). The most serious implication of using the Trinity as a foundation is that it replaces the person of Jesus Christ.

Likewise, the trinitarian foundation is much more than a concept, much more than a belief. The Trinity is the name and description of somebody real. It is the name and description of someone believed to be God. Those who believe in the Trinity believe in the God that the Trinity names and describes. They have a relationship with this God. They have an experience with Him. They pray to Him. They contemplate Him. They work for Him. They devote themselves to Him. They receive of His Spirit. They

love Him, and they worship Him.

The Trinity is far more than a concept of God, it is the name of the God it is designed to describe, whom Christians have allowed into their personal experience, into their hearts, and minds, and lives. The name, Trinity, actually points to, identifies, describes, and signifies the trinitarian God whom they worship. This is why He is addressed as “Blessed Trinity,”^{1, 2} “Most Holy Trinity,”³ and “Most Blessed Trinity.”⁴ “Trinity” is the name that represents the God it is said to describe:

“*The name we give to God, The Trinity, marks the depth and height of the Christian knowledge and experience of who God is.*”⁵

And not only that, but the name, Trinity, also “marks” the experience that Christians will have when they worship this God:

“The name we give to God, The Trinity, *marks* the depth and height of the Christian knowledge *and*

1 Davidson, Jo Ann. “Blessed Trinity.” *God in Three Persons*. Retrieved August 13, 2019. see title. <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/god/trinity/article/go/0/god-in-three-persons/>

2 “The Blessed Trinity.” *Catholic Encyclopedia*. See title, par. 12, par. 33, par. 67. etc. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm>

3 Ignatius, Peter. “Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.” Retrieved September 8, 2019. <https://catholicinsight.com/solemnity-of-the-most-holy-trinity/>

4 *ibid.* par. 1

5 Hanvey, James SJ. “The Trinity: On Loving Love Loving.” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par 1. http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20100528_1.htm

experience of who God is.”⁶

The conflict between Matthew 16:16 and the Trinity is not merely a conflict of opinions or of doctrinal interpretation. This conflict is much more ominous. It is a conflict between the foundation laid in Matthew 16:16, which is Christ Himself, and the God that the Trinity describes. The Trinity has become the preferred foundation of modern Christianity. This means that the Trinity has taken the place of Matthew 16:16, which means that the God called the Trinity has taken the place of Jesus Christ. And this means that the general experience of modern Christians is branded, or “marked,” by a God who has taken the place of Jesus Christ.

The Bible names those who put themselves in the place of Jesus Christ. They are called antichrists. We may now remove the capital “G” from the God called the Trinity and replace it with a lower case “g,” demoting this god to its proper place as an idol and an imposter. The name “Trinity” can now, and hereafter, be understood as the name of a little “g” god, and not merely representing a concept or a belief. When “Trinity” is used, it is the name of a real, imposter god who is antichrist.

This is not to say that everyone who has ever believed, or who currently believes, that God is the Trinity has had, or is having, a false Christian experience. In Paul’s address to the Athenians we see how God deals with people who have misconceptions about who He is:

“²⁹Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God,

we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.³⁰ *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:* ³¹*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* Acts 17:29-31

The Athenians were worshipping God in ignorance, ascribing the attributes of an idol made "by art and man's device" to God. While they worshipped God in ignorance, He was unknown to them. They actually called Him "The Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). And while He was unknown to them, they could not glorify Him. Their experience with God may not have been a false experience, for God was surely working for their salvation, but it was certainly "marked" by their idolatrous beliefs.

God winked at the Athenians' misunderstanding of who He is, because it was in ignorance that they held this misunderstanding. God overlooked their error while they were in darkness, but He did not desire that they would stay in ignorance. He sent them Paul to give them a true understanding of God, and called them to repent. They were to leave their misconceptions behind, and receive the true knowledge of God that Paul brought to them, and for a very important reason: because "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." Receiving a true knowledge of God is essentially relevant to being prepared for God's appointed day of judgment.

God works the same way today, and with all the true-

hearted Christians throughout the ages who have worshipped God to the best of their ability and knowledge. He overlooks mistakes made in honest ignorance. But God is calling the people of this day and age to repent, just as He called the Athenians. We are to leave our misconceptions behind and receive the true knowledge of God, that we may no longer worship Him in ignorance, “because God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world.” It is His will that we worship Him in truth:

“³⁰But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit *and in truth*: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” John 4:30

This is the topic of discussion in Chapter 7, “The Return to True Worship.” The foundational teachings about God and Christ that are found in Matthew 16:16 are discussed in relation to the “appointed day, in the which he [God] will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained [His Son].” God winks at the times of ignorance, but is calling all men everywhere to repent, for there is a day of judgment to be aware of and to be prepared for.

We cannot remain in ignorance. By believing that God is the Trinity, Christians everywhere are ignorantly ascribing the attributes of an idol to the true and living God. This needs to be corrected for the very serious reason that “he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world,” and God would have us prepared.

A DEEPER LOOK: THE FOUNDATION OF THE TRINITY

As stated earlier, the Trinity only points to the need to prove its own validity. As it is not explicitly stated in Scripture, nor is a simple concept to grasp, it is not a true foundation. Therefore, the features expressed in the Trinity cannot be considered as essential building blocks, but must be regarded as the conclusion derived from some other set of building blocks. These two points make it necessary to find out what the building blocks of the Trinity are.

The question arises: what then are the essential building blocks that form the features specific to the Trinity? The building blocks of Matthew 16:16 are not present in the Trinity, so we know that the Trinity has a foundation that is different than Matthew 16:16, a foundation that is not Jesus Christ. So what is the foundation, or who is the foundation, that the Trinity is built upon, and made-up of?

We have already clarified the 10 features of the Trinity:

1. God
2. Three persons
3. God the Father
4. God the Son
5. God the Holy Spirit
6. Co-equal
7. Co-eternal
8. Eternal
9. No beginning
10. Three-in-one relationship

After looking at the above features, reflex will likely spur the Bible student who wishes to validate the doctrine of the Trinity to begin gathering Scripture that will prove each point. The student will set themselves to collect all the Scriptures that show that the Father is real, as is the Son, as is the Holy Spirit. He will collect Scriptures that tell about God's eternal nature, how He had no beginning, and that the Son is equal to the Father, etc. This collection of Scripture will be used as the foundation for the Trinity, and to prove its validity.

But this must not be done. Restraint must be exercised, because the Trinity contains none of the essential building blocks for sound doctrine about God. This means that all of the Scriptures that the Bible student gathers will be disconnected from the true foundation, and distorted to validate a doctrine that is antagonistic to Jesus Christ. This is a gross misuse of Scripture, and it cannot reveal the foundation of the Trinity. It can only distort Scripture.

The foundation of the Trinity will be discovered by listening to what it actually says. Both Matthew 16:16 and the Trinity are declarations made by speakers giving their testimony about each foundation. And not only is the speaker of each foundation giving a testimony about the foundation, but the foundation itself in turn gives testimony about the speaker.

For example, in Matthew 16:16, the revelation of Jesus Christ becomes a witness for the true speaker -- His Father in heaven. Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was a revelation that God gave to him. The true speaker is God, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Matthew

16:16 is the witness of God to Peter, and Peter believed and confessed the witness of God about His Son:

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: ¹⁰He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”
1John 5:9, 10

Peter was not “a liar.” Peter believed God’s testimony about Jesus. He spoke the truth in His confession. And as the Father revealed His Son to Peter, the revelation of the Son became a revelation of God:

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” 2Corinthians 4:6

God gives knowledge of Himself when He reveals the truth about Jesus Christ. He speaks to us through His Son:

“¹God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ²Hath in these last days *spoken unto us by his Son.*”
Hebrews 1:1, 2

Christ is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). As God reveals Jesus to our understanding, the Word speaks, and

Jesus becomes a witness for God. He is “the true and faithful witness” (Revelation 3:14).

What does this revelation of Jesus in Matthew 16:16 witness about God? This passage declares that the living God is the Father (because Christ is His *Son*); that the living God, the Father, has a Son who He sent into the world in the flesh (because God’s Son was the *Man* Jesus that Peter was speaking to); and that the living God has provided the Saviour for mankind (because the divine Son of God, who came in the human flesh of man, is the Christ, our Saviour). The Son reveals that His Father is our God of pitying love and salvation.

God reveals Christ. Christ reveals the Father. The witness of the Father about the Son, and the witness of the Son about God are one. They are united in the deepest harmony through the Father-Son relationship. Their witness cannot be separated. Christ is the foundation revealed in Matthew 16:16, and from this foundation we receive true knowledge of God, the speaker.

What about the Trinity? Who is the speaker of the trinitarian declaration about God? If the trinitarian declaration is not a statement from the Word of God, and if it is neither a scripturally sound foundation, nor a scripturally sound conclusion, then where does it come from? In other words, who said so?

Just as the revelation of Christ pointed us to God, so the revelation of the god described in the Trinity points us to the speaker of the Trinity. We have established that the trinitarian declaration is not explicitly found in Scripture, so we cannot say that it comes directly from the word of God. Therefore, the speaker of the trinitarian declaration is not obviously a biblical character -- God, Christ, or any other

known witness to God. We have to make a determination based on what the Trinity is actually revealing about the one witnessing for the Trinity in the trinitarian statement. The Trinity reveals that the god it describes has the following characteristics:

1. He is a god, but is not the living God who is the Father of Christ (the living God is not a feature of the trinitarian declaration);
2. He is a father, but is not the Father of Christ (there is no authentic Father of Christ in the trinitarian declaration);
3. He is a son, but is not the only-begotten Son of the living God (there is no begotten Son of God in the trinitarian declaration);
4. He is a spirit, but, as he is neither the living God nor His Son, he is not the presence of God and Christ that saves from sin. He is the presence of someone other than God and Christ.
5. Even though he is not the living God or His begotten Son, he still claims to have God's divine attributes (co-eternal, co-equal, without beginning nor end).

There is a biblical character that fits this description given in the Trinity. There is a Bible character 1) who is antichrist, 2) who claims our worship, 3) who is a father, and a son, 4) who has a spiritual presence in this world, though not for salvation, and 5) who, while being neither

the living God nor the Christ, neither Father nor begotten Son, still claims equality with God:

“¹²How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” Isaiah 14:12-14

“For thou hast said in thine heart” → “*I have determined to do this.*”

“I will ascend into heaven” → “*I will climb up to the abode of God.*”

“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God” → “*I will claim authority above that of an angel, as if I am Deity.*”

“I will sit upon the mount of the congregation” → “*I will sit in God’s place.*”

“In the sides of the north” → “*In His holy temple*” (see Psalm 48:2).

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds... I will be like the most High” → “*I will exalt myself to the highest height, and claim equality with the living God.*”

The prophet Isaiah has given this revelation of the angel Lucifer and his fall. It is the revelation of one who is an abomination (Isaiah 14:19), a rebellious created son who has fallen from heaven through pride and self-exaltation, and who has determined in his heart to exalt himself, even to the height of the only true and living God. He is indeed a Trinity: he is the father of lies and the source of sin (John 8:44; Genesis 3; 1John 3:8); he is a fallen created son, the prince of this sinful world (John 12:31); and his spirit is in this earth working in “the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).

The speaker of the trinitarian declaration is the fallen angel named Satan, and he speaks of himself. He declares of himself, “I am a god of a different sort, neither Father nor Son, nor their holy Spirit. I am my own witness that I am god, and I have a controversy with the living God and His Son. I will exalt myself, and steal the worship that is due to God.”

The building blocks of the Trinity are the characteristics of Satan, his rebellious, prideful lies and ambition. Though disguised as truth, subtle and poisonous errors pervade: god, but not the living God, the Father of Christ; son, but not the only-begotten Son of the living God; spirit, but not the Holy Spirit of Christ that delivers from sin.

There is a controversy between Matthew 16:16 and the Trinity, which is a controversy between Christ and Satan. It is a controversy between the testimony of Jesus and the testimony of Satan, between the truth about God in Jesus Christ, and the lies about God from their enemy.

- FIVE -

GOD IS LOVE

“God is love.”

1John 4:16

There is one more aspect of the two foundations to compare, and that is the character of each. We have established that each foundation is more than a concept or a belief, each is actually a person: the foundation of Matthew 16:16 is Jesus Christ; the foundation of the Trinity is Satan. Because both Christ and Satan have moral and ethical quality, each foundation has moral and ethical quality, i.e., character. The character of Christ is of the finest quality, perfectly righteous and pure, and is thus the character of Matthew 16:16. The character of Satan is of the most depraved quality, wholly wicked and corrupt, and is thus the character of the Trinity.

Character is revealed through relationship. This truth is expressed in God's law, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). The Ten Commandments are the measure of character for humanity, and every precept of the law, expectably, governs relationships. The first four commandments govern humanity's relationship with God. The last six govern humanity's relationships with other people. When we conform to the law of God, applying its principles practically in relationships, our character is of a high moral and ethical quality. Thus character is revealed through relationship.

Each of the foundations being examined is characterized

by a relationship. In Matthew 16:16, we see the authentic Father-Son relationship between God and Christ. Their Father-Son relationship is the means by which the character of both God and Christ are made known to man. The love of God and Christ is made known to us by, and through, their relationship.

Since the law of God is a transcript of God's character, when the character of God is revealed to us through His relationship with His Son, the law of God is ultimately revealed to us in the same. In Matthew 16:16, God reveals that He and His Son have an authentic Father-Son relationship. Therefore, God's testimony about His Son is a revelation of His law. The truth about who Jesus is is the foundation of the church and knowledge of God, and it is also the foundation for understanding God's holy law.

In the Trinity, the triune relationship reveals the character of Satan. This triune relationship is the foundation of another law, which is antagonistic to the truth about God and Christ, and to the law revealed in them. The wicked and corrupt character of Satan, his rebellion against God and His law, is made known through the triune relationship in the Trinity.

However, both foundations claim our attention as the perfect expression of perfect character. From each we are supposed to understand the perfect love that God is, and that we are to be imbued with, and emulate, as Christians. This chapter will examine and compare what the two relationships reveal and teach about love, about the God who is love, and about the love that we are to bring into our practical experience as Christians. We will see the true and perfect love of God in Christ, and the not so true and not so perfect love of Satan in the Trinity.

LOVE AND THE FATHER AND SON

“God is love”(1John 4:16), and salvation has to do with knowledge of Jesus Christ. Salvation has to do with being saved from rebellion against God and His law due to misconceptions about God and His love that rule the mind. This can only happen through true knowledge of Jesus Christ. As Jesus is “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3), Jesus is the true knowledge of God and His love. He is the Light of the world (John 1:7-9), the only hope for this sin-laden world lying in darkness for want of true knowledge of God. This is salvation: receiving the true knowledge of God in the true knowledge of His Son:

“¹These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: ²As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. ³*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*” John 17:1-3

“²⁰And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true [God], and we are in him that is true [God], even in his Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God, and eternal life.*” 1John 5:20

“⁶For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the

light of the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2Corinthians 4:6

“¹⁸But 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.” 2Corinthians 3:18

“¹⁴And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

Because of the begotten relationship between God and His Son, Christ is the only One who can penetrate the darkness of this world’s misconceptions with true knowledge of God that will deliver from sin. No one else can. For no man has seen God, neither has any man known Him, except by the revelation of Jesus Christ:

“¹⁸No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” John 1:18

“²⁵O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.” John 17:25

It is when we see Christ as He truly is that we see God in Christ. When we see Christ as He truly is, we see that God is the Father of Christ, and that He is in the Son:

“⁹Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” John 14:9

“⁴⁴Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. ⁴⁵And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.” John 12:44, 45

“¹⁸And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself...”
2Corinthians 5:18, 19

It is through the knowledge that Christ is God’s Son that we will know God, and that God is love. The Son reveals that the Father is a God of love, and also just what the love of God toward man is, and what it looks like. Scripture even inextricably unites knowledge of God and His love with the confession that Jesus is the Son of God:

“¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵Who-soever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. ¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1John 4:14-16

Knowledge of God and His love are so united to the

Father-Son relationship that the confession that Jesus is the Son of God is our testimony that we have seen and do know the love of God, and that God is love. The truth about who Jesus is is the knowledge of the love of God in the gospel. Confessing the truth about Jesus (who He is) means that we have seen that God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. The confession that Jesus is the Son of God is our testimony of God's great love in the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we have seen it, and believe it, and know it.

The declaration that "God is love" is made in the context of the Father-Son relationship, i.e., the confession "that Jesus is *the Son of God*." God is the Father who sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world, and has revealed His Son to each one of us just as He revealed Him to Peter in Matthew 16:16. In receiving the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, we not only know God, but we will know that He is love, and what His love is: "we have *known* and *believed the love* that God hath to us. God is love." The confession is our affirmation that we have received God's witness, the knowledge of His Son, in whom is the gospel, the love of God for this world.

Knowing that God is love, and knowing just what this great love of God is, hinges on knowing that Jesus is God's only-begotten Son. It hinges on knowing the relationship between God and Christ. The whole plan of redemption rests in, and unfolds from, the truth of Christ's identity. For if Jesus is the divine Son of God, then He must have come from God. Then the question is, why? Why did the divine Son of God come from Heaven to earth? Why have we found the Son of God on earth "in fashion as a man" (Philippians 2:8)? And how? How did this all happen? The

answer is in unfolding the plan of redemption.

In a few short steps we are taken from the truth of Jesus' identity in Matthew 16:16 to God's love in the plan of redemption. Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God broadcasts the news that He was sent from heaven, as well as the reason that He was sent from heaven. He was sent for our redemption. This is how the relationship between God and Christ reveals the love of God for man, and that God is love.

When we receive this knowledge -- that Jesus is the Son of God, wherein we know and believe "the love that God hath to us," and that "God is love" -- and confess this truth about Jesus, God will *dwell* in us, and we will be *secured* in Him:

"¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵*Who-soever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* ¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; *and he that dwelleth in love [in this knowledge of God] dwelleth in God, and God in him.*" 1John 4:14-16

Parenthetical comments added

"Dwelleth" means "to stay."¹ The person who believes and confesses that Jesus is the Son of the living God "stays" in the love of God that is revealed in the Son whom he confesses, which means he "stays" in God. He is anchored,

1 Strong, James. "The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible." Zondervan. 2001. p. 1653. Reference number G5481.

and cannot be moved. By believing and confessing that Jesus truly is the Christ, the Son of the living God, we are anchored in the love of God, even in God Himself, and God “stays” in us, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail” (Matthew 16:18).

Yet there is corresponding action. If we have truly received the testimony of God about His Son, then we have truly received knowledge of God’s law. Since the law of God is a transcript of His character, when the character of God is revealed to us (i.e. God is love) through His relationship with Christ (i.e. Jesus is the Son), the law of God is ultimately revealed.

Having been reconciled into relationship with God through His Son by believing, we dwell in God’s love. Dwelling in His love, our hearts have received His love, and His love dwells in us. Thus we have received His character, His law, into our hearts and His holy law dwells in us:

“¹⁶I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Hebrews 10:16, 17

“⁸I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Psalm 40:8

Truly knowing that God is love by knowing Jesus, means that we will love His law and delight to live out its holy principles. The love of God’s law will be a new song in our heart. “I will sing a new song unto thee, O God”; “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” (Psalm 144:9; Psalm 119:97).

Thus, in being saved from misconceptions about God and His love through knowledge of Jesus Christ, we are healed from sin. The God who is love expels sin from the heart by the love of God in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is exactly what God sent His Son to do:

“²¹And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

“⁵And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” 1John 3:5

“⁵This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1John 1:5-7

“⁸For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God... ¹Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...” 1John 3:8, 9; 1John 5:1

When we believe and know Jesus, confessing that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, God dwells in us

and we in God, and we experience His great love through deliverance from sin. We will experience personal, practical salvation which is manifested in our lives through relationships. We will keep the law of God. God's love for us is manifested as love returned to Him by obedience to His law: we will love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, and we will love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30, 31). Thus love in the Father and Son relationship means salvation from sin for man.

And there is another truth that brightens the mind when we receive knowledge of Jesus Christ. Knowing that God is love means knowing that God is the Father who gave Himself for us in His Son, which means God's love is paternal. God cares for us, longs for us, protects us, seeks us, and wants us to love Him, trust Him, and know Him as our Father:

“⁹After this manner therefore pray ye: *Our Father* which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”
Matthew 6:9

“¹⁷Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my *Father*: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, *I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*” John 20:17

Many Christians desiring to fully trust God have had poor examples of paternal love from their fathers (or authority figures). The paternal love of God should have become a practical reality in their homes and lives through

the care and devotion of the father, but the opposite has been experienced. Distance, insecurity, fear, abandonment, and/or mistrust have been the practical reality of daily life. The result is confusion and apprehension toward God. Many who desire the healing balm of the love of God cannot trust Him to come close enough to find the full relief of healing. Barriers to knowing God have been set in place by their earthly authority figures.

For those who find themselves in this struggle, understanding the paternal character of God is a most important truth to understand. Rather than being a stumbling block to intimacy with God, as many who struggle with father/authority issues deem it to be, God's identity as the Father is the very thing that transforms the separation, anxiety, and fear into safety, security, and trust. It is the very thing that allows the struggling soul to overcome the confusion left by the father who failed. It is the only thing that can restore what has been damaged and lost by the father's unfaithfulness, i.e., the image of the divine Father, the image of God. The tender, giving, selfless, Fatherly love of God restores the losses and heals the wounds by dwelling in the heart darkened by the pains of sin and error.

If God is not represented in our earthly fathers, then we can look to Jesus, who was the perfect representation of our heavenly Father. The truth of God in Jesus replaces the lies taught by a father who misrepresented God, and God's image is restored, which restores the wounded soul who was created in His image in the first place:

“... seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰And have put on the new man, *which is renewed in knowledge* after the image of him that

created him.” Colossians 3:9, 10

This healing, this restoration of man’s understanding and relationship with God, is found in no other way than through the Son. Many of those who hesitate to draw very near to God because He is a Father, are approaching God through the false son of the Trinity. A false son is the hindrance, not the fact that God is our Father. A false son cannot reveal the heavenly Father, and the distorted image of God in the hurting soul will remain.

The healing love of the true God will not be able to fully restore the broken-hearted who turn to the son of the Trinity, because the Father is not in the unbegotten son of the Trinity. There is only one who can show us the Father and reconcile us to Him, and that is the true Son, God’s only-begotten Son:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
John 14:6

The healing truth of God and His paternal character is revealed, and accessed, through the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). If the truth of the Son is not received, the Christian cannot receive the knowledge of God that will fully restore. With the rejection of the Son, the Christian is without the paternal love of God, that is, the Christian is without God, the Father:

“²³Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” 1John 2:23

The reception of Jesus Christ is the reception of the true knowledge of God. When the Christian receives Jesus by believing that He is the only-begotten Son of the living God, as opposed to the unbegotten son of the Trinity, the Christian receives the truth about God, that He is our heavenly Father who has given absolutely everything to prove His love and faithfulness, and he enters into, and will dwell in, the safety of divine protective and restorative paternal love:

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” 2John 1:9

And he will be delivered from darkness, and healed from sin. God will fulfill His law in him through Jesus. The love of God will dwell in him, and he will have heavenly peace and rest, the peace and rest that belongs only to them which have learned of Jesus (Matthew 11:29), and “which love thy law” (Psalm 119:165). He will have salvation by the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. He will have quietness, confidence, strength, and rest (see Isaiah 30:15).

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Love and the Trinity is an entirely different conversation. The Trinity’s triune relationship moves the conversation about love away from man’s great salvational need, and from the Saviour who provides for this need, to a more philosophical conversation about the nature of love itself and the structure of its nature. And because “God is love,” this philosophical conversation about the nature and structure of love is a philosophical conversation about the nature of God Himself, and the structure of His divine nature.

LOVE AND THE TRINITY

Currently in the Christian world, the triune relationship in the Trinity is being held up as the ideal model of God's love for humanity:

“The community of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit becomes *the prototype of the human community dreamed of* by those who wish to improve society and build it in such a way as to make it into the image and likeness of the Trinity.”²

“At the center of all reality, at the heart of the universe, there exists an eternal divine community of *perfect love*. The Bible calls this community the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”³

The tri-unity of the trinitarian god is believed to be the ideal model of perfect love, “the prototype of the human community.” If modeled after the Trinity, the world will reflect the “divine community of perfect love.” So what does the Trinity's triune relationship teach about love? What are people learning about love by studying the trinitarian model?

The first thing about love, and perhaps the main thing, which is gleaned from the Trinity, and which underpins every other trinitarian lesson about love, is a lesson about the *nature* of love. The Trinity teaches that in order to

² Grenz, Stanley J. “Rediscovering the Triune God.” Augsburg Fortress, 2004. Page 121.

³ Vander Zee, Rev. Leonard. “The Holy Trinity: The Community of Love at the Heart of Reality.” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 3. <https://www.thebanner.org/features/2016/02/the-holy-trinity-the-community-of-love-at-the-heart-of-reality>

understand what love is, we must understand its *nature* in terms of *an essential numeric value*:

*“Three is the essential numeric value of love. Where there is only one person, love cannot occur. Where there are two, each is a sole recipient of the other’s attention, giving place for self-absorption. But the moment there are three, each recipient of any one’s love must also humbly defer attention to the third party, and each one is the third party to the other two. Pure selflessness can now occur by virtue of the fact that each one must love and be loved with both an exclusive and divided interest...”*⁴

The Trinity’s lesson about love teaches that love has an “essential numeric value,” the number three. Love is the number three in its *essence*, or nature. As essential oils are said to be the essence of the plant, “the essential numeric value of love” is said to be the essence of love. Essence is defined as “that which constitutes the particular nature of a being or substance...”⁵ So, the Trinity’s lesson about “the essential numeric value of love” is a lesson about the nature of love. It is a conversation about “that which constitutes the particular nature” of love. It says that the number three is fundamentally and indispensably the structure that constitutes the nature of love, and that love would not exist, and cannot exist, if it were, in nature, inherently structured by another number. Love, in its essence, can only be the

⁴ Asscherick, David. “What is the Meaning of Life?” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 33. <https://lightbearers.org/blog/what-is-the-meaning-of-life/>

⁵ “essence.” Websters-Dictionary-1828.com. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/essence>

number three. Hence, “the essential numeric value of love is three.” The triune relationship in the Trinity teaches that love is inherently the number three in its nature.

And since “God is love” (1John 4:16), we should understand the same about God. God is, in His essence, or nature, said to be inherently the structure of three also. This triune structure is so *essential* that God would not exist, nor could He exist, as a God of love if He were inherently structured by the number one, or the number two.

Following the same trinitarian formula, since the law of God is the law of love, God’s law must be viewed as having the same triune nature and structure. Since love is essentially the number three, and since God and His law are love, God and God’s law are, in their nature, also ascribed the numeric value of three. God is said to be triune in His nature, and since His triune nature is said to be the perfect model for the human community, then it is the perfect model for governing human behavior and interactions in relationships (i.e., law).

Thus God’s law, because it governs human behavior and interactions in relationships, must be viewed as based in the tri-unity of the Trinity. In the trinitarian model, God’s law is as essentially the numeric value of three as are God and the love that God is. The inherent triune structure of the triune god is the essence of triune love, and of the God who is love, as well as the essence of God’s law.

This line of thought best fits into the branch of philosophy called metaphysics, where the big questions of life (concerning first cause, or God, existence, and the nature of reality, etc.) are answered according to man’s theories, theories which are not directed by the Word of God, that is, theories that are speculative. Since the conversation about love in the triune relationship is ultimately a con-

versation about the structure of the divine nature of God's existence, and since God has not revealed anything about this in His holy Word, the conversation about trinitarian love really is a metaphysical conversation; it is philosophical speculation.

For instance, when the word of God is consulted for our understanding of the nature of love we do not discover a number. Rather, we discover Jesus. God's word directs us to Jesus, the visible, tangible, express image of the God who is love. But the life and words of Jesus do not show us that the nature of love is essentially a numeric value. Rather, the life and words of Jesus teach us that the essence of love is obedience to the holy principles in God's law, and self-sacrifice:

⁸"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" Philippians 2:8

²⁰"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Galatians 2:20

Everything that we can know about love, including its nature, is given in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, for He is "made unto us wisdom"; He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God"; in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (1Corinthians 1:30; 1Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3). If we want to gain wisdom about what love is, and about who God is, we can only look to Jesus. The Bible points us to Jesus as the answer to all of our questions and inquiries about love, and about the God who

is love, because the love of God, and even the God who is love, is in Jesus:

“¹⁹To wit, that *God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself...” 2Corinthians 5:19

“²³Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, *God with us*.” Matthew 1:23

“³⁸For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from *the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus* our Lord.” Romans 8:38, 39

Jesus is the Pattern, the real model for the ideal human community. In Jesus, and in Jesus only, is everything we can ever hope to understand about the nature of true and perfect love, the nature of God, and the nature of the law. And Jesus did not say one thing, in word or example, to indicate that “the essential numeric value of love” is an integer that is greater than two and less than four, or that love even has an essential numeric value.

The life of Jesus is the living illustration of the love that God is. It is His life that teaches us, in completeness and fulness, that the nature of love, thus the nature of God, is perfect obedience to the holy principles in the law of God through self-denial and self-sacrifice. This is why, when the Christian partakes of God’s divine *nature* through His promises (see 2Peter 1:3, 4), his being does not become

inherently “the essential numeric value” of three, but his life is modeled after the obedience and self-sacrifice of Christ’s example.

Understanding the nature of love cannot come through philosophical speculation. It comes through Jesus, by belief in the Son and by experience. It comes through Jesus, and it is in Jesus. It comes through the gifts of repentance and forgiveness in Christ, by thirsting after the righteousness of Christ in prayer, in study of the Word, in partaking of God’s promises by faith in His word, and in emulating the Pattern, who loves God with all His heart, all His soul, all His mind, and all His strength, and who loves us the same. This kind of practical, experiential, living study of love will lead to knowing Christ and the love of God, and will also bring salvation. Metaphysical contemplations about the speculated “inherent numeric value of love” will not, and cannot.

A closer examination of the Trinity will now lay open just how problematic this triune model of love is. Ten problems with the trinitarian model will now be discussed:

1. *The first problem* with the trinitarian model is that it takes our eyes off of Jesus and makes itself the pattern, the “model for the ideal community.” Rather than being directed to Jesus and the gospel of Christ as the model of love, rather than being directed to God’s character as revealed in His holy law, and as revealed in the sacrifice of His Son, rather than beholding God in the flesh, rather than fixing our eyes upon the One who was sent to us from heaven, the Trinity sets the Christian to gaze upon a theory which postulates that the nature of love is most profoundly understood by reducing it to an “essential numeric value:” the number three.

2. *The second problem* with trinitarian love is that the theory reaches out of the bounds of divine revelation. It is a conversation about the nature of God's existence and the composition of His substance. But God's word does not reveal any information about the nature of His existence, or the composition of His substance. It is not for us to know. It is a "secret thing" that belongs to God only:

"²⁹The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children for ever, *that we may do all the words of this law.*" Deuteronomy 29:29

God has given us Jesus. He has revealed Jesus to us, as in Matthew 16:16. This is for us to know. Jesus is for us to know so that we may keep God's holy law. But the nature of God's existence and the composition of His nature are "secret things." Such knowledge belongs to God, not to man.

The following paragraphs are to make it plain that the conversation about "the essential numeric value of love" is, in fact, an attempt to explain the divine nature of God's existence. I will begin with an excerpt from a popular preacher's sermon, a sermon devoted to explaining the Trinity. As he introduces his sermon, the preacher says,

"I mean, my mind is just boggled thinking that I have 42 minutes to try and *explain the nature of God...* Does anyone know what my topic is? *Trinity.* Okay, because I thought, well, if you don't know then maybe I'll just preach something else, because I'm mildly nervous about this. Not nervous to be here in front of you because there's no need to be nervous when God has called. Amen? But just the

nature of the topic and the breadth of the topic we're going to be talking about, *the topic that's been assigned to me is the Trinity...*

"I am confessedly noncommittal about the word "Trinity." I am confessedly noncommittal. In other words, to me, I could care less about the word. That's the word that's been assigned to me, *but really the topic is, The Nature of God.*"⁶

It is neither outrageous, nor ill intentioned, to make the claim that conversations explaining the Trinity are, in fact, conversations intended to explain the divine nature of God. It is just a statement of what is obvious and admitted. Even the preachers who teach the Trinity, such as quoted above, are aware of this and openly acknowledge it. Now here is how they reason it through:

They teach that if God were not inherently three beings in His nature, then He could not be love, i.e., the God who is love would not, and could not, exist. It is deemed impossible for God to be love if He is inherently "one," i.e., if God is the Father and not the Trinity. The philosophy speculates that "one" cannot be love for the reason that love needs another to bestow love upon, which leads to the reasoning that, if God *is* love, then, in His very nature -- *in the eternal, uncreated, divine things that make up the substance, qualities, and identity of what and who God is* -- He has to be the number three.

In His very nature, God needs to have another to bestow love upon, and one becomes, not two, but inherently

⁶ Asscherick, David. From sermon titled "Trinity." *Pillars of Our Faith 2010 Camp Meeting*. Transcripts retrieved August 14, 2019. See time mark 14:05-17:40. <http://www.3abn.com/Series/POFCM/POFCM000002.html>

three. The one God, while singularly one, must be composed of a plurality within His nature, that is, of more than one, and more than two. He must be inherently composed of three *beings* -- god the father, god the son, and god the holy spirit -- and yet remain one. In other words, the theory speculates that God cannot exist if the one God is simply and plainly one God:

“Yet a perfectly loving Being [God] cannot perfectly love if he is not sharing that love with at least one other, since perfect love exists between at least two distinct entities. After all, love demands a subject who loves and an object who is loved.”⁷

Parenthetical comments added

“Love [God] is defined in the Bible as other-centered, self-giving action. In order for love to exist [in order for God to exist], there must be more than one. Love [God] cannot occur within the framework of an absolute, solitary self [the Father who is one Being].”⁸ *Parenthetical comments added*

“There’s a certain logic to trinitarian belief. The Bible says that God is love, but the only way God can be love is for God to be a community of divine persons. Love does not exist in a monad. God is

7 Shamoun, Sam. “The Trinity and God’s Attribute of Love.” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 6. http://www.answering-islam.org/Responses/Osama/zawadi_trinity_love.htm

8 Gibson, Ty. Point 8 in an email to Frank Kiln dated July 26, 2010. Archived by Internet Archive October 16, 2005. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20151016015756/http://maranathamedia.com/119-myblog/adventist-perspectives/trinity/3011-letter-to-ty-gibson-regarding-the-trinity>

that eternal community of love.”⁹

This is the premise: “love is defined in the Bible as other-centered, self giving action.”¹⁰ So, since God is love, then God must be other-centered, self-giving action *in what He is*; and the leap is made to the conclusion that God must have actual “others” *in the stuff of what He is* in order to be other-centered.

The theory builds from this premise. It is said that there can never be a time when God was truly one God and alone without someone to bestow love upon, because love cannot exist if it is alone without someone to bestow love upon. Therefore, the one true God cannot truly be the Father, as the Bible teaches, because then there would have been a point in time before Christ was begotten, before which time God would have been alone without the Son. And if He was alone (not inherently three), He could not have existed, or He could not have been love. So, the argument determines that if God *is* love, then God, who *is* one, must somehow be *more than one Being inherently in His nature, in the composition of His divine substance.*

And the reasoning extends: he must also be more than two. He must be three, because not only is one an impossibility for love, but so is two, for two means that each of the recipients only gives what He gets. This is said to be selfish.

⁹ Vander Zee, Rev. Leonard. “The Holy Trinity: The Community of Love at the Heart of Reality.” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 3. <https://www.thebanner.org/features/2016/02/the-holy-trinity-the-community-of-love-at-the-heart-of-reality>

¹⁰ Gibson, Ty. Point 8 in an email to Frank Kiln dated July 26, 2010. Archived by Internet Archive October 16, 2005. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20151016015756/http://maranathamedia.com/119-myblog/adventist-perspectives/trinity/3011-letter-to-ty-gibson-regarding-the-trinity>

There must be a third being to love *in God's nature* so that sharing and self-denial can be exercised. So the smallest inherent number of true love must be three. Love is defined by, and limited to, a number which cannot be reduced to less than three. And so God is said to be three-in-one:

“Three is the essential numeric value of love. Where there is only one person [one essentially singular God who is the Father], love cannot occur. Where there are two, each is a sole recipient of the other’s attention, giving place for self-absorption. But the moment there are three [the three inherent beings of the triune god], each recipient of any one’s love must also humbly defer attention to the third party, and each one is the third party to the other two. Pure selflessness can now occur by virtue of the fact that each one must love and be loved with both an exclusive and divided interest...”¹¹

Parenthetical comments added

“Pure selflessness,” the above author states, can only occur when there are no less than three beings. Therefore, since the Bible is absolutely clear that there is only one God -- “The Lord our God is one Lord”; “But to us there is but one God”; “There is none other God but one” (Mark 12:29; 1Corinthians 8:6; 1Corinthians 8:4) -- the assumption is drawn that the “one God” must somehow be three beings in His essence, that is, in His nature.

This is the lesson learned by looking to the Trinity as

11 Asscherick, David. “What is the Meaning of Life?” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 33. <https://lightbearers.org/blog/what-is-the-meaning-of-life/>

the model of love. It is a conversation that tries to explain the divine nature of God, the composition of the nature of His existence. These are the secret things that belong only to God, which He has not revealed to man. And as God has not revealed knowledge about the composition of His nature and existence, the Trinity's lesson is truly void of knowledge; it is purely philosophical speculation.

3. *The third problem* is that this logic runs contrary to an important biblical fact about God. James 1:13 says that "God cannot be tempted." But the "essential numeric value" of the triune god theory says that God will be tempted if the right conditions do not exist. It is claimed that the reason that God cannot be essentially "two," is because "two" gives "place for self-absorption." The theory is saying that God's love nature depends upon certain conditions. These conditions necessitate the presence of three beings inherent in God's divine nature; and if there were only two beings inherent in His nature, then God would be selfish, giving place to self-absorption. The tri-unity of the Trinity god is his protection from self-absorption. Without this protection, He would give place to self-absorbtion.

Not only is this contrary to Scripture's witness about God, i.e., that He cannot be tempted under any condition, but it actually has catastrophic consequences to the trinitarian belief. This lesson about love taught by the Trinity actually loops around and destroys itself. When tested by the truth about God and Christ in the light of their self-sacrificing love on Calvary, the Trinity's love is seen for what it really is: empty and ultimately worthless to the Christian.

The theory that reduces love, and thus God, to "the essential numeric value" of three is not a lesson of love at

all. It is a lesson of destruction by self-interest. By its own teaching, the Trinity makes trinitarian “love” destructive and worthless. This is the topic of the eighth problem and will be expanded more fully in that section.

4. *The fourth problem* with the trinitarian idea of love is that it denies the fact that Scripture clearly gives an identity to the one God: “But to us there is but one God, *the Father*, of whom are all things” (1Corinthians 8:6). This Scripture has many others that agree with it, but by itself is enough to reveal the falsehood of the Trinity. At the very least, this one Scripture should command our attention and instill a healthy sense of caution to all who consider the doctrine. The Bible teaches that the “one God” is the *Father*.

The Bible has defined a boundary for the study of God, clearly specifying that there is one God, and that this one God is to be known as the Father and Source of all things, even of His Son, Jesus Christ:

“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things...” 1Corinthians 8:6

“³Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” 2Corinthians 1:3

5. *The fifth problem* with the trinitarian model is that, even though the Trinity is thought to be an inexhaustible example of oneness, cooperation, closeness, unity, and love, it must be remembered that the Trinity is antagonistic to God and to His Son. As God and Christ are our perfect example of love, any and all that are against God and Christ are against perfect love. While professing to be the

ultimate revelation of love, the Trinity sets itself against the perfect love of God and Christ. This is a revelation of Satan's character -- deception. The appearance of love hides enmity toward God and His Son.

6. *The sixth problem* with trinitarian love is that it is a closed system. The trinitarian triangle is a complete loop with no exits. The model has no openings for the inherent three's love to pour out upon man. It is limited to the inherent three. There is actually no place given to fallen man in the paradigm. We know and believe the love that God has toward us, but the "toward us" part is not actually in the trinitarian model.

When we look to Jesus as the Pattern, when we comprehend even just a whisper of the glory that He left behind in Heaven, and of the sufferings that He endured as the Son of man on earth, and of the anguish of the cross, we see nothing but the out-pouring of God's love toward man. He did it all for man. But where is the pouring out of God's love for man in the trinitarian model? Selflessness occurs in this model because each of the inherent three are loving the other inherent two, while in turn being loved by the other two. Fallen man is not in this model of selflessness. He has no place in the paradigm. It is a closed system between the three who make up the nature of the Trinity.

Even though the one god of the Trinity is apparently three, and this picture of love is between three, these three are a closed system existing within the nature of the Trinity. The "selflessness" of the trinitarian model happens completely within the Trinity's own self. It is a self-contained model with no place given to fallen man. Thus, this love exemplified in the Trinity is ultimately self-seeking, not

self-sacrificing. This is the character of Satan.

7. *The seventh problem* with trinitarian love lies in the idea that God is a family. In an effort to hold on to the Trinity without accepting the traditional idea that the three god-beings of the Trinity are actually one god-being, many prefer to view the three beings of the Trinity as a unit, or as a relationship, or as a family, rather than as one being:

“God is *a relationship* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”¹²

Many choose to believe that “god the father,” “god the son,” and “god the holy spirit” are not one divine *being*, but still maintain that they are one god by thinking of them as a *relationship* of three divine beings. The “one god” part of the three-in-one-god is viewed as a relationship, as something conceptual and abstract, rather than as a tangible personal Being. This relationship is said to be a family relationship:

“So God is an eternal family, an eternal relationship.”¹³

“The word family carries with it the warm feeling of unconditional love and acceptance; and those of us who grew up in families like that have actually experienced this. If God is a Family, then God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit love each Other in much the same way that truly loving

¹² “Trinity.” Seventh Day Adventists Beliefs. Web page archived by Internet Archive December 29, 2017. Retrieved August 14, 2019. par.1. <https://web.archive.org/web/20171229143012/http://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/trinity/>

¹³ Asscherick, David. “What is the Meaning of Life?” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 32. <https://lightbearers.org/blog/what-is-the-meaning-of-life/>

family members in our own world love each other. And that puts a whole new slant on the word Trinity. It's really just another name for God's loving Family."¹⁴

But viewing the one God as a family does not correct the problem with the traditional trinitarian view. It just creates new problems. First, God is no longer a personal Being who has personal distinction and identity. A "relationship" is not a personal God, neither is a "unity" a divine Being. For example, in human terms, no one has ever contacted me or my husband by asking to speak to our relationship, or to our unity. We cannot pray to a relationship because the relationship is not itself a personal entity. By viewing the one God as a relationship, the one God becomes something intangible that we cannot actually have a relationship with. Rather than being *Someone* we can relate to, God becomes a *something* that we cannot relate to.

Second, the Trinity's "family" is not a family like the word normally means, as normal familial connections are denied in the Trinity. God is not the *real* Father of Christ and Christ is not the *real* Son of God, nor is any adoptive principle considered in the Trinity, nor is the principle of a united church family applicable (because the trinitarian family were always and eternally a whole; they did not find each other from opposite ends of eternity and fellowship together, becoming the triune god). The Trinity's "family" cannot be viewed as a normal family in any of the senses we normally think of a family.

14 Adams, Duane. "God is a Family." Retrieved October 1, 2019. par. 14. <https://www.hopechannel.com/au/read/god-is-a-family>.

The Trinity's "family" of gods are united in the most bizarre way. They are not connected through familial bonds, but are connected by being, as "the essential numeric value of three," the very nature of the one god they are all said to be. They are, all three together and at once, the stuff that constitutes the nature of the trinitarian god they are all three said to be. This is what is being taught:

"... God in His very *nature*, God in His very *essence*, God *in the Godness that makes Him God*, is a family."¹⁵

God is said to be -- in the very substance that makes up the divine nature, in the "essence," in "the Godness that makes Him God" -- a family. This is not a family like your family. Your family is multiple beings who each *possess* a human nature. The people in your family do not exist *within* the human nature making up its substance. They are not within the humanness that makes you human making you, and their, humanness what it is. The actual people in your family do not constitute the human nature that constitutes you and them. Your family does not exist, as living, breathing, individual, acting beings, *within* the human nature that makes you, and them, human.

There is the reality of inheritance where your family's genetic information is passed from person to person in the human nature. In this way you carry elements of your family within you. Each one of us was begotten from the stuff that makes us human. We have inherited the human

¹⁵ Asscherick, David. From sermon titled "Trinity." *Pillars of Our Faith 2010 Camp Meeting*. Transcripts retrieved August 14, 2019. See time mark 38:23-29. <http://www.3abn.com/Series/POFCM/POFCM000002.html>

nature because of this process. Each one of us has familial characteristics and traits that we have inherited from our parents. This connects us to them, our siblings, and to our ancestors. In this sense, we carry our family in our nature. But the trinitarian family cannot be considered in this way, because 1) the principle of inheritance is denied in the Trinity's family, and 2) it is not the traits of the inherent three that are said to exist within the divine nature, but the actual beings themselves.

This turns the designation of "family" into something deceptive when applied to the Trinity, because something entirely different than a family is actually being taught by the trinitarian model. When applied to the Trinity, the family paradigm only serves to conceal the *non-famliness* of the triune relationship. Rather than helping people to understand the Trinity, it actually diverts the mind from what the Trinity actually teaches about itself. It settles people into accepting something familiar that they can be comfortable with and relate to, while the actual trinitarian god is really very uncomfortable for the mind and cannot be related to.

Consider again what the trinitarian family is:

*"... God in His very nature, God in His very essence, God in the Godness that makes Him God, is a family."*¹⁶

It is the "nature" of the Trinity, the "essence," the actual stuff that makes him god that is itself the family: "God in His very nature... is a family." The Trinity's god the father,

god the son, and god the holy spirit exist *within* the divine nature. The nature possess the beings, rather than the beings possessing the nature. A prayer to the Trinity's "family" is a prayer to the "family" that is *within* the Trinity's nature.

A prayer to the Trinity's "god the father" is not a prayer to the one true God, and "Father of whom are all things," who possesses the divine nature, but is a prayer to a being who apparently has his existence within the divine nature of his own divine existence!

Likewise, a prayer to "god the son" is the same. It is not a prayer to the Son of God who possesses the divine nature through His begotten relationship to God. Rather it is a prayer to a being whose existence and personhood is within the actual substance of his own nature and substance!

To make it simple, there aren't really three beings, a "family," in the Trinity. We have already found out that the Trinity is Satan, who is just one fallen angel, and there is nothing in the word of God that tells us that the nature of an angel consists of three angelic beings.

However, there is something in Satan's nature: the traits of his character. The members of the trinitarian "family" are more so the personified qualities and attributes of Satan than they are three real beings. They represent his character, because they make up the stuff that Satan is, that is, the stuff that the Trinity is. They represent what exists in the fallen nature of Satan.

The Trinity's "god the father" more so represents the attributes of Satan than it is another actual god. The Trinity's "god the father" represents the deceptive quality of Satan, as he is the father of lies (John 8:44). It also represents his role in the sins of the world -- sin originated in him; he is the source of sin, that is, he is the father of sin.

The Trinity's "god the son" more so represents the rebellion in Satan's nature, as he is the created son of God who was cast out of heaven, and is judged in the world, and will perish in the lake of fire because of his rebellion against God (Revelation 12:9; John 16:11; Revelation 20:10).

Likewise, "god the holy spirit" more so represents the influence of Satan's rebellion in this world than it is a third god-being. It is the spirit of Satan "that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), inspiring them, through deception, to reflect his own rebellion, and moving them closer and closer toward the same destruction that God has determined for him.

8. *The eighth problem* with the trinitarian model of love is that it is in direct opposition to the love that is revealed in Christ. Rather than modelling self-sacrificing love, the Trinity models self-preservation. The Trinity's removal of the authentic Father-Son relationship between God and Christ, removes sacrifice from love. This is where the Trinity destroys itself.

A concept in which love cannot exist without someone to bestow love upon makes love dependent upon someone else. In essence, it makes the Trinity inherently dependant. If love needs another to bestow love upon, then the Trinity god needs another to bestow love upon. Not "another" in terms that we would normally consider another, like a friend or a spouse, but three others within his very nature and existence. The one god of the Trinity "needs" three "others" within his nature, otherwise he could not exist as love.

So, the core of trinitarian love is need, and it is an existential need. The Trinity's very existence depends upon,

and is limited by, the need for three inherent beings. This brings reciprocity into the model. Each of the inherent three -- god the father, god the son, and god the holy spirit -- is dependant upon the other two. This need for the other two must be met by all three of the trinitarian gods. Each gives, but then the other two must receive what each gives. None can reject what the other two are giving because each *needs* the other two, and rejecting their love would not be loving. And so the need to have others receive is added alongside the love that they each give. So, not only is the core of trinitarian love “need,” but each must give *and* receive in order for the model to work. The Trinity’s model of love teaches dependency and reciprocity. It demands a reciprocal giving and receiving between three beings, and is based in an existential need for these.

The destructive consequences of this concept of God and love are immeasurable. What does it do to the atonement? Did god the son die on the cross? Do we have a complete sacrifice in god the son, or was the death on the cross somehow not a *real* death? What happens to a god who cannot be reduced to less than three, when one of the three dies?

The Trinity is a Christless doctrine (see p. 28) because the existential need of the triune god competes with man’s need for a complete divine Sacrifice. The self-sacrificing love that God *is* can never be fulfilled in the trinitarian model, because the trinitarian god’s existential need for the inherent three competes with man’s existential need for a complete divine Sacrifice.

The trinitarian god needs his son for his own existence and cannot fully give him without destroying himself. According to the philosophy of trinitarian love, god the son

could not have died on the cross without destroying the love nature of the Trinity by altering its “essential numeric value.” The moment god the son died, the Trinity would have ceased to be a god with a “trinity” of three inherent beings, turning him into something other than love, i.e., into a self-absorbed god who is inherently two.

So what happened at Calvary? Did mankind lose the atonement by an incomplete sacrifice? Or did mankind lose the alleged inherently selfless, loving trinitarian god? These are the choices if it was the Trinity’s god the son who hung upon the cross of Calvary. Both options leave man to hopelessness and destruction. This is the god called the Trinity. His triune love offers man hopelessness and destruction.

Through its own teaching of what love is, and thus of who its god is, the Trinity destroys itself, and the hope of redemption for man. The trinitarian god must be, and must remain, inherently three in order to be love. Yet it must also sacrifice one of its members to death on the cross and become inherently two in order to demonstrate the perfect love that it claims to be by being three, and which it cannot be by being two. The Trinity wants it both ways, to sacrifice its son and to have its inherent three, but the two ways crash in a head-on collision. The doctrine is its own downfall.

Satan has come in and confused Christians with this perversion of God and love. He has captivated the minds of men, and they have lost sight of Christ as the only Pattern of love. It is a subtle delusion, and trinitarians do not even realize what has happened. Yet, if tested by God’s self-sacrificing love seen in His Son on Calvary, the delusion is revealed for what it is. If the Trinity’s example of love is held

up to the standard of love in the foundation of Jesus Christ, it is plain that the self-sacrificing love of God cannot exist in the Trinity. It is an impossibility by its own teaching.

It is the “law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2) that is at work in the Trinity because the Trinity’s core is *self-preservation*. He has an existential need to preserve his inherent three. It is the direct opposite of self-sacrifice. This is sin. It is selfishness. Jesus said, “Whosoever shall seek to save his own life shall lose it” (Luke 17:33).

And let’s just say that the three inherent gods of the Trinity were somehow able to offer god the son as a complete sacrifice who really did die on the cross. What if it were possible? The outcome is still destruction. The love of God is not in the Trinity’s sacrifice. It is the only-begotten Son of God who is the love of God, the express image of the God who is love, *because of His begotten relationship to God*. The Trinity’s unbegotten son is not the express image of the God who is love, so he cannot be the love of God. The sacrifice of god the son is a loveless sacrifice because the love of God is not in god the unbegotten son. This kind of sacrifice is emptiness and vanity, and it benefits nothing and no one. It has no value for the sinner. It is worthless:

“³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”
1Corinthians 13:3

“Charity” is agape love,¹⁷ which is the self-sacrificing

17 Strong, James. “The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.” Zondervan. 2001. p. 1587. Reference number G26.

love exemplified in the sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son on the cross (John 3:16). As the only-begotten Son is not in the Trinity, agape love is not in the Trinity's sacrifice. Even if the Trinity were able to somehow sacrifice god the son to a full, complete, and actual death, it would still profit nothing. This is verified by the outcome of the Trinity's own doctrine. The outcome of self-sacrifice in the Trinity's version of love is not life and redemption for fallen man, but rather its own destruction, and the loss of our hope.

Now let us consider time. Some might reason that since it was only a short time before Christ was raised from the dead, only three days, that this was not enough time for the Trinity's nature of love to fall into sinful self-absorption. Is it possible that the Trinity, now inherently the number two for three days, could have maintained itself as love while it waited to receive its resurrected son back? We will use its own theory to answer this question:

“Three is the essential numeric value of love. Where there is only one person, love cannot occur. Where there are two, each is a sole recipient of the other's attention, giving place for self-absorption. But *the moment there are three*, each recipient of any one's love must also humbly defer attention to the third party, and each one is the third party to the other two. *Pure selflessness can now occur* by virtue of the fact that each one must love and be loved with both an exclusive and divided interest...”¹⁸

Parenthetical comments added

18 Asscherick, David. “What is the Meaning of Life?” Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 33. <https://lightbearers.org/blog/what-is-the-meaning-of-life/>

The love nature of the Trinity is absolutely and wholly dependant upon the “essential numeric value” of three. Something magical happens “the moment” there are three inherent beings in one. At that very moment the Trinity becomes love: “the *moment* there are three... pure selflessness can now occur.” Likewise, something destructive must happen the *moment* three is reduced to two inherent beings in one: “where there are two, each is a sole recipient of the other’s attention, giving place for self-absorption.” If god the son truly died on the cross, at that very *moment* the Trinity ceased to be composed of three inherent beings, and his nature became such that it is no longer love. Remember, the number of love has to be three. The Trinity could not have maintained himself as love, even for a moment, if he is, in his nature, no longer “the essential numeric value of love.”

Even though promoters of this theory acknowledge love as “other-centered, self-giving action,”¹⁹ their discourse actually revolves around the nature of the Trinity. Since the love nature of the Trinity is dependant upon a numeric structure, the resulting other-centered, self-giving love actions of the Trinity are dependant upon the same. If the numeric structure was changed to two when god the son died, then the loving actions that are dependant upon the triune structure must have ceased when god the son died. The Trinity’s fall was immediate. He lost the ability to be loving the moment god the son died.

The love of God that is revealed in Christ on Calvary,

¹⁹ Gibson, Ty. Point 8 in an email to Frank Kiln dated July 26, 2010. Archived by Internet Archive October 16, 2005. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20151016015756/http://maranathamedia.com/119-myblog/adventist-perspectives/trinity/3011-letter-to-ty-gibson-regarding-the-trinity>

the complete surrender and sacrifice of Himself to redeem man, is an impossibility in the trinitarian model of love. By its own teaching, whether it sacrificed god the son or not, the end was destruction. If it did not sacrifice god the son to a full and complete death, then its end was destruction through self-preservation. And if it did sacrifice god the son to a full and complete death, then the sacrifice 1) changed the love nature of the Trinity into a self-absorbed nature, which plunged the Trinity into an immediate, existential, and unredeemable fall, and 2) was utterly worthless and empty, having no redemptive value.

9. *The ninth problem* with trinitarian love is that it changes the nature of the Trinity. But the only true God does not change:

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Malachi 3:6

The nature of the Trinity god changes with the act of sacrificing its son -- from love to selfishness. But the scenes of Calvary did not change the nature of the only true God. Rather, the sacrificial death of God's dear Son on the cross fully and perfectly revealed, confirmed, and established, once and for all and for all eternity, that His Father is the unchangeable God of love, whose love is uncompromisingly holy, selfless, merciful, and eternal.

10. *The tenth problem* with trinitarian love is that it lowers the Christian standard. Presently, for the majority of Christians, the Trinity's model of love is the highest ideal. Its reciprocal giving and receiving acknowledges their deep-

est desires to love and be loved, and they connect to the trinitarian teaching through desire. It is true that we all want to love and be loved. Most of us strive for this in our relationships, as it seems to be the formula for contentment and happiness and peace. But we need to pause and thoughtfully consider whether or not this is God's highest ideal for us:

“⁴⁴But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Matthew 5:44

“²⁷But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you... ³⁵love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” Luke 6:27, 35

“³⁵Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35

God's highest ideal is that we find peace, contentment, and happiness in loving when we are not loved; that we love when there is no other who will receive it or return it; to give love when we stand alone in the hateful face of rejection and persecution. This is the kind of love that God is. This is the kind of love that makes us “the children of the Highest” (Luke 6:35). This is the kind of love we see in

Jesus.

It is true that Jesus did desire friendship and love, and that the whole point of redemption is to save us by restoring us to a reciprocal loving relationship with God, and that God's commandments are all about relationships. But the foundation of the love that forms these relationships is not the ideal of reciprocity. Rather, it is the ideal of obedience to God and self-sacrifice.

The principles of obedience and self-sacrifice do not exclude us from loving and being loved, or from desiring these things, but the reciprocal love that is modeled in the Trinity does exclude the principle of self-sacrifice. It does not reach the standard of Christ's teachings and example. The love of Jesus on the cross, the love of God in His law, and the love that is manifested in us as evidence of our reconciliation with God all have their foundation in self-sacrifice and obedience, not in reciprocity.

This makes perfect sense, because the foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. We are founded in Him, and if we love Him we will love one another as Jesus loved us:

“¹²This is my commandment, That ye *love one another, as I have loved you.* ¹³Greater love hath no man than this, *that a man lay down his life* for his friends.” John 15:12, 13

The love of God that is in Jesus, and that will be in us who believe the witness of God about His Son, is different than what is commonly known in the world. It stands out because the ideal, rather, the expectation, is self-sacrifice and obedience to God. This is how the world will know that we are the disciples of Christ:

“³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* ³⁵*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*”
John 13:34, 35

Some may argue that the above two examples refer to laying down one's life for “friends” (John 15:12, 13), and for those who are Christ's “disciples,” i.e., the church family (John 13:34, 35). Argument may be presented that these examples are congruent with the model of trinitarian love. But there is a vital difference, which is the point already made: the foundation is self-sacrifice, not reciprocal love.

In the trinitarian model, none of the inherent three can sacrifice their lives for the other two without the same unfortunate outcome discussed in the eighth problem. In the trinitarian model, each of the inherent three share their affections with the other two, and each is able to remain loving while not being the sole recipient of any of the other two's attention, but this is not the self-sacrifice exemplified by Christ. It may aptly be called the ability to share with those you love, and with those who love you, but this is a far cry different than sacrificing your life.

The self-sacrifice that Christ calls for between His disciples is no different than the self-sacrifice that He calls for towards our enemies. The foundation is the same. It is a principle that applies to friends and church family, as well as to our enemies.

Trinitarian love resonates with natural human desires; the whole world has the desire to love and be loved, Christians and non-Christians alike. But God's desire for His people is different than man's common ideal, “For my

thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8). As Christians, we need to reach beyond the human ideal of reciprocal love and take hold of the self-sacrificing love in Jesus Christ:

“³²For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.”
Luke 6:32

A true Christian life is founded in self-denial and self-sacrifice. The apostle Paul, in Galatians 2:20, describes the true Christian experience:

“²⁰*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*”
Galatians 2:20

The self-sacrificing love and obedience of Christ becomes the self-sacrificing life and obedience of the Christian. And when Galatians 2:20 becomes our own experience, we are then guaranteed another experience:

“¹²Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2Timothy 3:12

We *will* suffer persecution. It is guaranteed by the eternal Word. In the trying circumstances of persecution we have no use for the Trinity’s model of reciprocal love. We need the love of God that is in Jesus Christ. Possessing fallen natures, the characteristics of Satan are already in

us; we already have trinitarian love. It is the very thing that motivates us to protect ourselves, and to hide in the comforts and safety of mutual love and closed circles of familiarity. We need the love of Christ. We need to overcome trinitarian love. The love manifested in Christ is unnatural, foreign, and contrary to the instincts of our fallen nature. It is not found in us, nor is it found in the Trinity. But it is found in Matthew 16:16. It is found in the foundation, Jesus the Christ the Son of the living God.

If our eyes are fixed on the trinitarian model, and our highest ideal is to love and be loved, we will not reach God's standard in Jesus Christ. Even if, as in the trinitarian model, we add the element of being loved "with a divided interest"²⁰ into our experience, we will not attain the will of God for us. For loving with a divided interest, as the Trinity does, is simply sharing attention with those who are perfect, and who we already love and who already love us. It is the kind of love that is dependant upon ideal circumstances. But in Jesus we will find loving obedience to God's law, and self-sacrificing love for God and for man, in the most distressing circumstances.

As discussed in the sixth problem with trinitarian love, the trinitarian model is a closed system between three loving beings. There is no enemy in the trinitarian model, just three loving beings who share love amongst themselves. The model does not include the kind of love that was manifest on the cross for us, the kind of love that lead Christ to lay down His life for His enemies:

“For when we were yet without strength, in due

²⁰ Asscherick, David. "What is the Meaning of Life?" Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 33. <https://lightbearers.org/blog/what-is-the-meaning-of-life/>

time *Christ died for the ungodly*. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*. ⁹Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ¹⁰For if, *when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Romans 5:6-10

The trinitarian model simply does not reach the standard of love in Jesus. We need to “turn our eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face.” He is the Pattern. Only in Him are we able to understand, and receive, the high standard of love that we are to seek and model ourselves after.

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God the Father is One, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things” (1Corinthians 8:6). He is the Source of *all* things. This includes pure and perfect, self-sacrificing love. As finite beings, we are not able to comprehend the existence of our infinite God. He simply is. It is just the same with love, because God is love. Since God simply is, the self-sacrificing love that God is, simply is. We are given no explanation as to the nature of its existence, except that it is of God, and is seen in His Son whom He sent into the world for our salvation.

It is highly presumptuous, even audacious, the highest height of arrogance, to think that the finite mind of a man can even begin to comprehend, let alone explain, the

infinite nature of God's existence. It is especially so when the trinitarian teaching about the nature of God 1) takes our eyes off of Jesus, 2) removes the Sacrifice from love and Calvary, and 3) requires the Christian to deny the witness of God and Christ that forms the foundation and enduring strength of His church, i.e., Matthew 16:16.

Though we cannot explain the existence of God, nor the selfless love that He is, yet we may experience God's love, and know Him in His Son. Through Jesus, the endless supplies of God's self-sacrificing love pour out upon us, and that which is incomprehensible to the finite mind yet may be known through personal experience, through practical religion. The incomprehensible love of God may be comprehended through the personal experience of having our own sins forgiven, and our character cleansed from unrighteousness (1John 1:9), because we have received the witness of God about His Son, and believe and know the love of God, that He sent His Son to save us from our sins.

But Satan, by usurping the place of Christ as the foundation of the church, and of the Pattern of love, robs the Christian of the fullest experience of God's love. He robs the Christian of the knowledge by which he may "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that [he] might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19), because the love that Satan models in the Trinity is a deception, a snare, a perversion of the true self-sacrificing love of the living God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Having already believed the lie of the Trinity, having already been intrigued and deceived by the very source of deception (John 8:44), having allowed him into our hearts and minds, our only hope is to make a full and entire re-

pentance.

We do not have the ability to discern just how pervasively, and to what depth, the tricky tendrils of this false god have twined their way into our perception and understanding. For, as the Catholic Church has declared, the Trinity has been the foundation of “all the other teachings of the church.”²¹ Every doctrine and understanding has been affected by the doctrine of the Trinity. If it is so for the Catholic Church and its peculiar views, it will be so for the other churches who, according to their own peculiar views of the Trinity, have made it the foundation of their faith. We must forsake the Trinity completely and turn our eyes wholly upon Jesus, and, by the truth that is in Him, be cleansed from each and every one of the Trinity’s subtle and cunning errors.

But praise be to God, for we are not alone in this. We have the privilege of prayer and divine help. We have the privilege of crying out with David, “Who can know his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Psalm 19:12); “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23, 24); “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me” (Psalm 43:3).

And God will do it for the willing soul. He will make the crooked paths of the darkened mind straight and change the darkness of error into the light of truth:

“¹⁶And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have

²¹ Thibodeau, Richard, C.Ss.R. “Handbook for Today’s Catholic.” Liguori Publications, 2004. p.19

not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” Isaiah 42:16

Certainly, if we make a full repentance, the fullness, perfection, and healing of God’s eternal love will be known in the faithful worshipper. “The breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (Ephesians 3:18) of the love of Christ will surely manifest in the Christian who seeks to know none but the Son, and, through Him, be a true worshipper of God “the Father, in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Thessalonians 5:24).

THE BIG QUESTION AND THE LITTLE CHURCH

*“Fear not, little flock; for it is your
Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

Luke 12:32

The big question arising from the previous chapters is this: how can so many Christians be entangled in idolatry? The sheer magnitude of the statistics render it an almost inconceivable scene. In 2015 there were an estimated 2.3 billion Christians worldwide.¹ And 99% of these 2.3 billion Christians worship some version of the Trinity.² Nearly *all* of the Christian denominations are preaching falsehood about God and His Son, and are teaching this error to those whom they proselytize. How can it possibly be that the various denominations, all executing missions all over the globe, are unwittingly misusing their sacred trust, misleading so many sincere, seeking people?

Here the reader would do well to check himself: do you find safety in numbers? Do you think that a majority

¹ Hackett, Conrad, and David McClendon. “Christians Remain World’s Largest Religious Group, But They are Declining in Europe.” Pew Research Center, 2017. Retrieved August 14, 2019. See opening diagram. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>

² “Christian Traditions.” Pew Research Center, 2011. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <https://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-traditions/#defining>

consensus validates a doctrine? Are you hanging on to the Trinity because the majority do, or because the popular preachers teach it and promote it? It is only necessary to look at a few biblical examples to show how unreliable, and dangerous, such a method of discernment is.

First, it was the majority of Israelites, God's very own and chosen people, who shouted and screamed pleading with Pilate for the Saviour's death, and for the very reason being discussed in this book. They sought to kill Him because they would not believe that He was the Son of God:

“⁷The Jews answered him, we have a law, and by our law he ought to die, *because he made himself the Son of God.*” John 19:7

And while they sought to crucify God's Son, while they believed they were doing God service, without realizing it, they were worshipping Satan. God's very own people, while they prided themselves as favoured and blessed of God, were worshipping Satan:

“⁴²Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. ⁴³Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. ⁴⁴*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. ⁴⁵And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” John 8:42-45

The Jewish nation rejected Jesus as the Son of God, and in so doing, they worshipped Satan. Though they did not recognize it, this was evidenced in their rejection of the truth about God's Son, in their zeal to persecute those who believed that He was God's Son, and in carrying out the murder of God's Son. They simply would not receive the truth that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

God's people of the present day are not immune to the same blinded idolatry. God has sanctioned the use of Israel's unbelief as a profitable study for our generation: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1Corinthians 10:11). We are warned by Israel's failures, and for what reason? For the reason that we are equally susceptible to the same failures that overtook the Israelites.

Our leaders are as equally prone to the blindness of pride as were the Israelite rulers who fought to secure the murder of the Son of God. Thus they are equally prone to guide with deception. And we are equally vulnerable to worship in vain, placing undo trust in church leaders who teach "for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). A preacher may be dealing in sacred, holy things, yet not be holy in heart or sound in doctrine. The appearance of righteousness can mask a wayward heart, and win the affections of the majority, and lead them astray.

Those who place their trust in a majority consensus, those who discern what is true by the flow of human accord, make themselves vulnerable, and are likely to find themselves following "blind guides" who "shut up the kingdom

of heaven against men,” who neither go in themselves, nor “suffer them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:16).

Second, Jesus has linked our generation to the days of Noah. He points us to the antediluvian world as an example of the days in which we are now living, the last days just before Christ’s return:

“²⁷But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:27

In all the earth only one man and his immediate family, a mere eight people (Genesis 7:7), believed God and were saved from His judgments. The majority would not believe. They were unprepared, and, excepting Noah and his family, “*all* in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of *all* that was in the dry land, died” (Genesis 7:22). Only a very small minority believed God and were saved. Those who are standing for the truth in these last days will, like Noah, have membership with the minority.

Jesus says, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). The word translated as “few” means “puny.”³ The group who find, and enter through, the straight gate, and walk the narrow way will be a very little group, even a puny group.

Third, it must be acknowledged, and remembered, that there is a class of people, a class of Christians, who will have done great things as Christians, who will have “prophesied” in the name of Jesus, who will have “cast out devils” in

3 Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries. Retrieved on August 14, 2019, from Rick Meyer’s e-Sword, 2017. Reference number G3641.

the name of Jesus, who will have done “many wonderful works” in His name, who will have listened to His teachings and think that they have fellowship with Him, but will, nonetheless, become cognizant of a great and terrible error on their part. When it is too late, they will realize a most fearful reality: they have taken the name of the Lord in vain. They have not known the Lord, and He has not known them. Consequently, they will be rejected from His presence:

“²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:21-23

“²⁴Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. ²⁵When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: ²⁶Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. ²⁷But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of

iniquity.” Luke 13:24-27

It is possible for people to believe that they are true Christians when they are not. It is possible to do great things in the name of Jesus, and yet be a stranger to Him. Those who do not *know* the Lord, even though they have performed great and wonderful works, even in His name, are called “workers of iniquity,” and they will be rejected, barred from entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. They are classed with the foolish:

“⁵The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest *all* workers of iniquity.” Psalm 5:5

God hates *all* workers of iniquity, even those who believe they are Christian, but are not. They will expect to be saved, but will not be.

In contrast, those who *do* know the Lord are those who are built on the solid foundation. The Lord calls these wise. They are workers of righteousness in His name, not workers of iniquity, for they hear the sayings of Jesus and they do them:

“²⁴Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.” Matthew 7:24, 25

The wise man’s house is “founded upon a rock.” The rock is the foundation of the wise man’s house. This foundation,

this rock, is Jesus Christ. It is the truth of who He is: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16):

“¹⁸Upon *this rock* I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18

This foundation means the difference between being received by the Saviour as a wise man who knows the Lord and who does the works of righteousness, or being rejected as a fool who does not know the Lord and who does the works of sin. Being founded on the Rock, the wise man is enabled to keep the words of Jesus and to do the works of righteousness. He'll have victory over sin:

“⁴For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1John 5:4, 5

We must know and believe the Father's witness about His Son in Matthew 16:16. It is perfectly safe to believe the Father's revelation, that Jesus is truly the Son of the living God. Not only is it safe to believe this, but it is our only safety. Christ Himself has confirmed it. The reception and confession of the revelation from the Father about His Son to the hearts and minds of man enables the believer to overcome all the sin and temptations of self and the world -- and nothing else will.

Without the solid foundation, the self-deceived Christian will be with the majority, walking the broad way “that

leadeth to destruction” (Matthew 7:13) with the workers of iniquity.

Fourth, Psalm 91, speaking of the last day judgments that fall upon the wicked, states the ratio between those who are God’s (the minority), and those who are not (the majority):

“⁷A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.
⁸Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.” Psalm 91:7, 8

In the final crisis, the Christian will be out-numbered. “Thee” and “thy” are singular pronouns.^{4,5} So, this verse, by using “thee” and “thy,” illustrates how many wicked will fall at the side of one Christian. The wicked who suffer the judgments of God, that is, “the reward of the wicked,” and which class includes professed Christians as pointed out in point three above, are the majority, outnumbering the true Christian by eleven thousand to one.

Some may argue that these numbers cannot be taken literally. But to those I ask, then why were those numbers given? Even if they are not accepted as precise numbers, they still have meaning. Even if the ratio of eleven thousand to one was only used by the psalmist to illustrate a point, what is the point being illustrated? It was chosen to illustrate the point that the end-time Christian will be greatly outnumbered by the wicked who will fall at his side.

4 “thy.” Dictionary.com. Retrieved October 7, 2019. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/thy>

5 “thee.” Lexico.com. Retrieved October 7, 2019. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/thee>

He will see the wicked falling in droves all around him, yet he himself will be safe in the protective care of God.

David was, as were all the prophets who wrote the holy Scriptures, under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ when he wrote the prophetic Psalm 91:

“¹⁰Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: ¹¹Searching what, or what manner of time *the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified* beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. ¹²Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” 1Peter 1:10-12

Even if the numbers are not taken as literal numbers, we can be sure that they do not exaggerate so as to make the conveyed meaning misleading. The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of truth. The numbers used to illustrate the Christian's experience in Psalm 91, even if not accepted as literal, were still inspired, and will surely be according to truth; they will not paint a wrong, or misleading, picture. We may confidently accept the ratio of eleven thousand wicked to one Christian as a meaningful, if not literal, illustration of the Christian's experience in the last days when God will deliver those who have set their love upon Him, and who know His name (Psalm 91:14).

I have applied the ratio of the wicked to the righteous

in Psalm 91:7 to current populations in order to give a realistic, practical idea of Christianity in these last days. Current statistics⁶ have been interpreted with God's statistics in Psalm 91:7, revealing a significant contrast between the number of people who profess to be Christians today, and the number of people who God recognizes as His own.

Even if the ratio in Psalm 91:7 is not accepted as precise, it still has meaning that is according to truth. Therefore, even if the numbers that have been calculated based on this ratio are not accepted as precise, they, also, still have meaning according to truth. The contrast is a meaningful illustration of how many people believe they are Christians, but are not.

The ratio of eleven thousand to one equals 0.009% of the population all the time. So, no matter how the population shifts and changes between now and the appointed time, the ratio will be the same. No matter how many people there are when the last day judgments fall upon the earth,

6 The different statistics in this chapter are from various years, and have been used together to illustrate an overall picture. The calculations will not be exactly applicable to 2020 as 1) different years are combined to illustrate one picture, 2) different sets of information are only available for different years, and 3) statistics for 2020 are not available at the time of writing.

However, for the purpose of this book, the statistics are sufficient to communicate the point being made. The statistics, though from different years, are yet real statistics. A little leeway only needs to be given to allow for the adjustment of population shifts through the years between 2010 and 2020. This will not undermine the point being illustrated by the statistics, because, even though populations tend to increase and shift through the years, they do not shift so drastically in such a time frame, and the ratio in Psalm 91:7 will remain constant, not being affected at all by time or population changes.

we know that only 0.009% of the world's population will be standing safely in God's protective care while the rest fall and suffer the judgments of God.

To get a practical idea of what this means for the Christian population, consider Metro Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada, where the population is estimated to be 2.46 million people.⁷ If eleven thousand wicked are falling beside one Christian, that leaves only 221 true followers of Christ among 2,460,000 Vancouverites, which is 0.009% of the population. Yet 41% of the population claim the name of Christian in Metro Vancouver.⁸ That means that 1,008,600 people are claiming the name of Christian, but possibly only 221 of those will find themselves protected in God's care. That means that possibly only 0.02% of professed Christians expecting to be saved in Metro Vancouver will find that they are actually in God's protective care in the final crisis.

If we want to be counted with Christ, we cannot be among those who are counted with the majority, even the majority of professed Christians. A church of 221 faithful members among 2,460,000 people, where 1,008,600 of those people are professing Christianity, is a very small, even a puny, little church.

To further illustrate, consider the population of Greater

7 "Census Profile, 2016 Census." Statistics Canada. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=5915&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=great%20vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>

8 Todd, Douglas. "B.C. Breaks Records When it Comes to Religion and the Lack Thereof." Vancouver Sun, 2017. par. 5. <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/staff-blogs/b-c-breaks-records-when-it-comes-to-religion-and-the-lack-thereof>

Los Angeles, which is estimated at 13 million people.⁹ At eleven thousand to one, that leaves only 1,170 true followers in Greater Los Angeles (0.009%). However, more than half, 65%, claim to be Christian.¹⁰ This amounts to 8,450,000 people claiming the name of Christian, but possibly only 1,170 of those will stand as they watch the wicked fall. Only 0.01% of professed Christians expecting to be saved in the Greater Los Angeles area would be true followers of Jesus. The true church here is little indeed at perhaps only 1,170 followers among 13,000,000 people, and among 8,450,000 professed followers of Christ.

Is it possible that there is a positive connection between those churches who worship the Trinity (99% of denominations), and those who profess to be Christian in the last days but are not (possibly 99.98% in Vancouver, and 99.99% in Los Angeles)? I think it is possible. For Jesus says that “many” will strive to enter in, but will not be able to:

“²⁴Strive to enter in at the strait gate: *for many*, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Luke 13:24

These “many,” while they expect to enter in, and have strived to enter in, are yet strangers to Jesus, and He is a stranger to them. Not knowing Jesus, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16), they have not the gospel and are thus not delivered from sin. They are workers of iniquity.

⁹ Wikipedia. “Greater Los Angeles.” Retrieved August 14, 2019. See Section 2.2, Metropolitan Statistical Area. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Los_Angeles

¹⁰ “Adults in the Metro Los Angeles Area.” Pew Research Center. Retrieved August 14, 2019. See opening diagram. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/metro-area/los-angeles-metro-area/>

The Trinity has taken the place of Jesus in 99% of the Christian denominations. He has robbed them of the true knowledge of who Jesus is, thus they do not know Him. It is very possible that there is a positive connection between those who call themselves followers of Christ in these last days but do not know Him, and those who worship the imposter god-the-unbegotten-son of the Trinity.

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There is an answer for how so many Christians could have become entangled in the trinitarian idolatry. There is a reason why 99% of Christians are believing and teaching falsehood about God and His Son. It is no mystery: they have been deceived. This should not be surprising to the Bible student, for the Bible is abundant with warnings against this very offense:

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.” Matthew 24:4

“¹³And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Genesis 3:13

“¹⁶Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them.” Deuteronomy 11:16

“²⁰A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in

my right hand?” Isaiah 44:20

“²⁴For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Matthew 24:24

“¹³But 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.” 2Corinthians 11:3

“¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Hebrews 3:13

“⁹And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.” Revelation 12:9

“¹⁹And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. ²⁰And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. ²¹Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” 1John 5:19-21

There is practical truth in Psalm 91:7, but how many will consider the possibility that they have been deceived? How many of the world’s professed Christians will place

themselves fairly in the odds? Have you been deceived? The odds scream that the answer is likely “yes.” So, how do you know? You must assess the quality of your house. Did you build on the solid foundation? Is the frame stable? Are the walls and upper levels plumb to the line? Or do you need to renovate your religion? The strain and stress of renovating a failing house, while very great, is far less than the strain and stress of being utterly swept away with it when the storm comes:

“¹⁶Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. ¹⁷Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. ” Isaiah 28:16, 17

A full ninety-nine percent of the world’s Christian churches are defined by their devotion to the Trinity. Logically, then, a defining characteristic of the remaining one percent is that “these groups often depart from traditional Christian beliefs with respect to the trinitarian nature of God.”¹¹ But simply rejecting the Trinity is not sufficient to make one safe, because rejecting the Trinity does not automatically mean that the foundation has been established.

One may reject the Trinity, yet also refuse to accept that Jesus is the divine Son of God, as some non-trinitarian

11 “Christian Traditions.” Pew Research Center, 2011. Retrieved August 14, 2019. par. 28. <https://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-traditions/#defining>

denominations deny. God's witness about His Son can still be denied by unbelief, even though the Trinity has been rejected as a false doctrine.

In the same way, one may intellectually accept Matthew 16:16, yet testify by their character that they have not hid these precious words in their heart. Though they make a mental assent, the same unbelief is evident in their lives. The love of God in Jesus has not renewed their heart. They have not let the self-sacrificing love and obedience of Jesus become theirs by the grace and power of God in His Word.

Being established on the foundation is about more than rejecting the Trinity, and it is about more than an intellectual agreement with the truth. Truly receiving God's witness about His Son means receiving His Son, fully knowing and believing who He is -- our personal Saviour from sin. It means embracing God's divine Son, inclosing Him in our arms and pressing Him to our bosom as our dearest Friend, and never letting Him go, understanding and ever appreciating that He is all the riches of God's glory (Philippians 4:19) bestowed upon us for practical salvation from sin.

We are to study the Word of God for a reason: to show ourselves "approved unto God," which approval depends upon "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2Timothy 2:15). Sound doctrine, the word rightly divided, will have its roots in the foundation of Matthew 16:16. The God-given gifts of reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2Timothy 3:16), which our Christian walk depends upon, are in the word rightly divided; they are grounded in Matthew 16:16. We need the foundation of Matthew 16:16 to rightly divide doctrine so that we "may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2Timothy 3:17), and ap-

proved of God, “because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

- SEVEN -

THE RETURN TO TRUE WORSHIP

RESTORING THE FOUNDATION

*“Fear God, and give glory to him;
for the hour of His judgment is come.”*

Revelation 14:7

All the inhabitants of the earth are called to glorify God. Every single person on this planet is called to a new life in Christ, to worship the only true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is the global call of the everlasting gospel. This section will examine the relationship between the two foundations of worship and the everlasting gospel's call to glorify God.

Specifically, I will be connecting the two foundations of worship with the gospel call in Revelation 14, verses 6 through 12, also known as “the three angels’ messages.” I have chosen to do this because the gospel call of the three angels in Revelation 14 is especially applicable for our time; for immediately after the three angels’ messages are given comes the harvest (vs. 13-20), the earth is reaped, placing these special messages as the final gospel call going out to the world just before the second coming of Jesus.

End-time themes which have captivated the world's interest are found in this chapter of Revelation, such as the mark of the beast (v. 9) and Babylon (v. 8). People are interested and want to know what these things are, as they

understand that these themes have to do with the last days, that is, that they have to do with the times we are now living in. They want to know what they mean because they understand that these themes effect them personally: they want to avoid the mark of the beast; they want to know who Babylon is so they can watch out for her and avoid her snares; they want to be prepared.

This chapter will show that it is the foundation that matters. The foundation is the basis and groundwork for everything, including the three angels' messages. The reader will see that the everlasting gospel is the principle thing. It is at the very root and heart of these special messages. The everlasting gospel leads and guides the three angels' and lights the way for those who hear their cries.

And the everlasting gospel is Jesus Christ. So it is Jesus that leads and guides the three angels messages and lights the way. And Jesus is the foundation. Thus the foundation is the heart of the three angels' messages, making Matthew 16:16 of paramount significance and relevance.

In fact, the three angels messages *are* the gospel call, drawing "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" to Jesus. The first angel has the everlasting gospel to preach, and, preaching the gospel, he gives his message, "saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come":

"⁶And 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, ⁷*Saying 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 14:6, 7

The first angel’s message is the gospel call, and the second angel unites his message with the first, and the third unites his with the two previous.¹ Thus the three angels’ messages are the gospel call preached to the world in the context of the end-time events and unfoldings revealed in Revelation 14:6-12. Babylon and the mark of the beast are couched within the gospel call. They are the end-time events and unfoldings that accompany this last message of mercy and warning to the world, the gospel of Jesus Christ, “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

Therefore, it is the foundation that matters, because the foundation is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ, thus the foundation, is crucially relevant to the three angel’s messages because it is the gospel

¹ The three angels appear in succession, and are known as the first (v. 6), second (v. 8), and third (v. 9) angels of Revelation 14. When reading Revelation 14, the reader will notice that the first and second angels are not numbered as such. Rather, both are called “another angel.” However, they are understood to be the first and second angels because the third angel is not only numbered as the third, but is also said to follow the one before it. Since the third angel follows the angel before it, the angel before the third angel is the second angel. Likewise, the second angel is said to follow the one before it, designating the one before the second angel as the first angel. As such, they appear in succession, with the first angel sounding his message first, followed by the second angel sounding his message, and then the third angel sounding his. Thus the second angel unites with the first, and the third unites with the two previous. Their messages are given in succession, and join together to form the most solemn three-fold gospel message mankind has ever received from Heaven.

of Jesus Christ that prepares “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” to avoid the mark of the beast (v. 9), to escape the traps of Babylon (v. 8), and to stand the scrutinizing judgment of God (v. 7).

This is how the two foundations of worship are relevant to the three angels messages in Revelation 14, and this is the focus of this chapter. This chapter will not be a study of the three angels’ messages. Rather, the aim here is to show how the two foundations of worship, Matthew 16:16 and the Trinity, are relevant to the three angels’ messages. There are many books and on-line resources for those who desire help with a more thorough study of Revelation 14. Such studies will not be duplicated here. Below is a very brief synopsis to highlight how the two foundations of worship discussed in this book are critically connected to the everlasting gospel’s call in Revelation 14.

In the most general overview, the key focus of the three angels’ messages is worship. There are two groups of people revealed: a pure church who fear God and worship Him, and an apostate church who fear the beast and worship him. The first group, the pure church, receives the everlasting gospel. By “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16) they are purified from sin and “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). The second group, the apostate church, does not receive the gospel. They are not purified from sin. They do not keep the commandments of God, nor the faith of Jesus, and are appointed to suffer the wrath of God.

The following is a brief synopsis of the three angels’ messages for the purposes of this book:

*The First Angel -- The Hour of Judgment Produces a
Pure Church*

“⁶And 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, ⁷Saying 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 14:6, 7

The first angel warns “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” that the wasting sands of time are nearly run; eternity is fast approaching; the hour of God’s judgment has begun. A solemn reality now overarches our daily business and routines. There is an urgency now that no other age has experienced, as this “judgment pertains to the closing up of the work of salvation for the world.”² This is it. This judgment closes “up the work of salvation for the world.” It is the judgment spoken of by Paul in Acts 17:30-31:

³⁰And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: ³¹Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world...”

And by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14:

² Smith, Uriah. “Daniel and the Revelation.” Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1912. pp. 637 - 638.

“¹³Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

And spoken of by Paul in 2Corinthians 5:10:

“¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

And by James in James 2:12:

“¹²So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

And spoken of by Christ in Matthew 12:36:

“³⁶But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

There is, and will be, a people who accept and understand the solemnity and shortness of these last days, and who make haste to wash themselves in the blood of the Lamb, to purify themselves “even as he is pure” (1John 3:3). They believe the first angels cry, and respond, i.e., their actions follow. Their lives are characterized by repentance from sin. The fearsome reality of God’s judgment hour is set into their lives with gravity, and with sober earnestness

and diligence they “speak... and... do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12). They seek the Lord, to make peace with Him, and they find Him, and make peace with Him, and will be “hid in the day of the LORD’S anger” (Zephaniah 2:3; see also Psalm 91).

These are the pure church in the last days who have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). They are the saints, who, having been purified from sin, “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

A word needs to be said about the faith of Jesus. The faith of Jesus is more than confidence in Jesus. The faith of Jesus is something that is “kept.” The pure church “keep” the faith of Jesus just as they “keep” the commandments of God.” In order to keep the commandments of God, one must “obey” His commandments. Likewise, in order to keep the faith of Jesus one must “obey” the faith of Jesus:

“¹Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ²(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) ³Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; ⁴And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: ⁵By whom we have received grace and apostleship, *for obedience to the faith* among all nations, for his name:” Romans 1:1-5

The faith of Jesus is not merely the act of the mind to believe, but includes the actions of life that follow that be-

lief; it is obedience to the doctrines taught by Jesus, which embrace the means of salvation from sin. The pure church not only believes in their mind that Jesus is their Saviour, but they have “kept the faith” (2Timothy 4:7). They follow the plan of salvation in Jesus Christ and are purified from sin. Thus, because they *keep* “the faith of Jesus,” they are purified from sin and keep the commandments of God. For these, judgment will culminate in the full and final fulfillment of their hope: salvation.

As David prophesied,

“⁷Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? ⁸Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, ⁹When *God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.* Selah.”
Psalm 76:7-9

The pure church are “they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). Judgment for them is salvation. They have heeded the first angel’s message and will be saved from the earth when Jesus comes.

The Second Angel -- The Apostate Church

“⁸And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Revelation 14:8

Babylon is the universal apostate church. It is common

knowledge that, in the Bible, “a woman, used as a symbol, signifies a church... The character of the woman determines the character of the church represented, a chaste woman standing for a pure church, a vile woman for an impure or apostate church.”³

Babylon is referred to as “she” and “her” (second angel’s message above), and is also called a “woman” and a “mother” in Revelation 17:

“³So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a *woman* sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴And *the woman* was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in *her* hand full of abominations and filthiness of *her* fornication: ⁵And upon *her* forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE *MOTHER* OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Revelation 17:3-5

Babylon is the name of a symbolic woman, making it known that “she” is a church. But she is also called “the great whore”:

¹And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the *great whore* that sitteth upon many waters: ²With whom the kings of the earth have

³ Ibid p. 651

committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” Revelation 17:1, 2

The great whore of Revelation 17 is surely Babylon of Revelation 14 because the great whore of Revelation 17 is actually called Babylon later in that same chapter (v. 5), and both are described as committing fornication with the nations/kings of the earth, causing all to drink of the wine of her fornication. Therefore, Babylon is not only a church, but she is an impure, apostate church characterized by worldliness and union with government powers. She fornicates with the kings of the earth, thus she is intimate with the world.

Not only is she an impure, apostate church, but she is the mother of daughters who are like her. Babylon is the mother of other churches who bear the same character. They, too, are whores:

“⁵...MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE *MOTHER OF HARLOTS* AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Revelation 17:5

“This circumstance, as well as the name itself, shows that Babylon is not limited to any single ecclesiastical body, but must be composed of many. It must take in all of a like nature, and represent *the entire corrupt or apostate church of the earth...*”⁴

“⁵...MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTH-

⁴ Ibid p. 651

ER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS *OF THE EARTH.*” Revelation 17:5

Babylon is the mother of the harlot churches and abominations of the whole earth. The name Babylon signifies the mother as well as her daughters, because they are just like her. They are one family under the name Babylon. Hence, while the first angel calls for a pure church, a people who will be cleansed from sin to worship the true God, the second angel warns of the universal apostate church, a people who, by reason of their apostasy in worldly unions, commit sin, and do not worship the true God. There are really only two churches in the world: a pure church, and an apostate church, which is every other church that is not pure.

The universal apostate church will not look like one church. Just as I look different than my mother, the daughters of Babylon will look different than their mother, i.e., there are many denominations. However, we can know their relation to the Mother because they have the same character: they do not keep the commandments of God, thus they do not keep the faith of Jesus.

They are a church, yet a church who has departed from the Lord by their whoredom, for that is what “whoredom” means:

“²The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for *the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.*” Hosea 1:2

The mother and her daughters have “committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord,” and, as such, are “full of abominations and filthiness” (Revelation 17:4). They are “the habitations of devils and the hold of every foul spirit”:

“²And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”
Revelation 18:2

Even though the language is very strong -- “whoredoms” and “abominations,” “habitation of devils” and “the hold of every foul spirit” -- this does not require the apostate church, in appearance, to be notably ugly or overtly evil. All that it means is that they have departed from the Lord. Evidence of this departure can be seen in simple worldliness:

“⁴Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4:4

Babylon’s whoredom is in departing from the Lord, which means she is united with the world. This will actually make her a very appealing and attractive to those who want to claim the name of Christian, yet who also want to retain sin and friendship with the world. It is as simple as pride, as pride is of the world. It is as simple as allowing one’s thoughts to follow in lustful tracks, as lust is of the world:

¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” 1John 2:16

Although the Bible uses monstrous terms to describe Babylon, she need not appear overtly monstrous. The litmus test is “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” This is the test to recognize worldliness and departure from the Lord. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

The law is the law of God in the Ten Commandments, and the testimony is the faith of Jesus, which embraces the doctrines that He taught about salvation from sin. The life and words of Christ were a solemn declaration and affirmation (i.e., testimony) establishing the truth about God: that His Father is a God of love and justice, who sent His Son into the world to save the world from their sins, so that “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” by “the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ” (Romans 8:4, 2).

The life and words of Christ, the testimony of Jesus, are not limited to His life as the Son of man on earth, but include the life and words of Christ as they were made known by the prophets:

⁷That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸Whom

having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: ¹¹Searching what, or what manner of time *the Spirit of Christ which was in them* did signify, when it *testified* beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” 1Peter 1:7-11

This is why in Revelation 14:12 the pure church are described as those “who keep the commandments of God *and the faith of Jesus*,” while in Revelation 12:17 they are described as those who “keep the commandments of God, and have *the testimony of Jesus Christ*.” And why in Revelation 19:10 the testimony of Jesus Christ is called *the Spirit of Prophecy*:

“... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
Revelation 19:10

Faith of Jesus = Testimony of Jesus = Spirit of Prophecy

Rev. 14:12

Rev. 12:17

Rev. 19:10

The faith of Jesus embraces all that He testified and taught about salvation -- by His life, by His words, and through the prophets. He is God’s faithful witness (Revelation 3:14):

“²⁶I have many things to say and to judge of you:

but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.” John 8:26

Christ’s life and teachings show us the way of salvation, and if we have faith in Him, we will do as He did, and as He taught us to do, because we believe in Him, and that His life and teachings are Truth.

But Babylon has departed from the Lord. She is not obedient to the faith and thus does not keep the commandments of God. She rejects the faith of Jesus, and the testimony of Jesus, and the Spirit of Prophecy. She has rejected her Saviour, and “is fallen, is fallen” (Revelation 14:8). And because she is fallen, she is “the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit”:

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”
Revelation 18:2

The true church is the habitation of God through the Spirit of God. But Babylon is the habitation of devils; in her is every foul spirit. Babylon is the habitation of devils by the spirits of devils.

God’s true church, His people, are founded upon Jesus Christ, as were the apostles and prophets. As the true church, they are the body of Christ. Thus, as Christ’s body, through the redemption and regeneration of its individual members being “fitly framed together” in purity, the true church is God manifest in the flesh. Comparatively, as the incarnate Christ was God manifest in the flesh, so is the body of Christ, the church on earth; they are the “habitation of

God through the Spirit” of God, i.e., God manifest in the flesh of fallen, but sanctified, human beings who are united in fellowship with the Father and Son through the Spirit:

“¹⁹Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²¹And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; ²¹*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:* ²²*In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*” Ephesians 2:19-22

But Babylon is the habitation of devils through the spirits of devils. Unlike the apostles and prophets, the people who constitute the body of the universal apostate church called Babylon are not founded on Jesus Christ; they have not the Spirit of God. Rather, dwelling in them is “every foul spirit.” In the people of the church named Babylon dwell the spirits of devils. They worship idols, thus they house the spirits of their idols.

The first and second angels’ messages reveal two churches. The first is a pure church called “the saints,” who believe the first angel and heed his counsel to fear God and give Him glory and worship Him. They keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and “are builded together for an habitation of God” through the Spirit of God. The second is a world-wide apostate church called “Babylon,” who do not believe the first angel, nor heed his counsel to fear God and give Him glory and worship Him. They do not keep the faith of Jesus, thus they cannot keep

the commandments of God. They are the habitation of the foul spirits of their idols.

First Angel

A pure church called “the saints.”

A people who believe the first angel and heed his counsel to fear God and give Him glory and worship Him. They keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

A people who “are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Second Angel

The universal apostate church called “Babylon.”

A people who do not believe the first angel, and do not heed his counsel to fear God and give Him glory and worship Him. They do not keep the commandments of God, nor the faith of Jesus.

A people who worship idols and are the habitation of the foul spirits of their idols.

The Third Angel - Two Judgments

“⁹And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor

night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. ¹²Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”
Revelation 14:9-12

Just as the first and second angels highlight two contrasting churches, the third angel highlights two contrasting judgments. We know that these two contrasting judgments correspond with the two contrasting churches because there are but only two possible outcomes of God’s judgment. There are only two options in the word of God: eternal life or everlasting destruction.

The true church, those who are approved of God, who fear God, and keep His commandments and the faith of Jesus, will be deemed worthy to receive eternal life. The only other option for the apostate church, for those who worship the beast and do not keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, is “the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation” (v. 10). It is certain that the apostate church named Babylon will suffer the full force of God’s wrath described by the third angel, as they do not worship God, not keeping His commandments by the faith of Jesus.

The pure church is judged worthy of eternal life with the following judgment:

“¹²Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12

Revelation 14:12 is more than a description of the saints. It is

a judgment about their character, who they are. This judgment deems them worthy of eternal life; these are given the right to the tree of life and entrance into the city of God:

“¹⁴Blessed are they that 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

The universal apostate church is judged worthy of eternal damnation with the following judgment:

“⁹And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb...” Revelation 14:9, 10

The apostate church is described as those who “worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in their forehead, or in their hand.” This is a judgment of their character. They are idolaters. Rather than worshipping God, they worship the beast, and their reward follows: “they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.” These are not granted the right to eternal life, and are denied entrance into the city of God. These must remain outside the city, with the “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Revelation 22:15).

They will be outside the city, among the throng of the deceived who surround new Jerusalem to war against her, and are devoured by fire from God out of heaven:

“⁹And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” Revelation 20:9

Identifying the beast, his image, and his mark is beyond the scope of this book, but here is laid out the critical thing: the beast, his image, and his mark all have to do with a universal apostate religion. Therefore, it is not necessary to identify the beast, or his image, or even his mark, in order to know how critically necessary the foundation of Jesus Christ is in order to avoid the judgments that fall upon Babylon. The foundation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:16) is essential in order to avoid the apostasy of Babylon and the mark of the beast.

The foundation of the true church is Jesus “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). This is plainly stated in Scripture by Jesus Christ Himself: “upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). By this we know that the pure church produced by the first angel’s message is built upon the foundation of Matthew 16:16. Those who fear God and give glory to Him, keeping “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” are those whose foundation is Matthew 16:16. The obvious determination for the church named Babylon, then, is that her foundation is something other than Matthew 16:16.

Without even identifying the beast, or his image, or his mark, we know that the most fundamental issue underlying

them all is the foundation of Jesus Christ. Those who will not build their faith upon Matthew 16:16 will eventually be joined to the apostate church, and find themselves partakers of Babylon's sins. They will be found wanting as the hour of judgment closes, because there is no other option for them. Without the foundation of Jesus Christ, they will not be able to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. As the three angels' prophecies unfold, they will not be prepared to stand.

In the prologue to this book, I wrote,

“In the process of building, the foundation supports the structure that is erected upon it; it also protects the structure from being damaged by the elements of the earth. It is the same with the process of building doctrine. The foundational doctrine must support every other doctrine, as well as protect from the corrupting influences of the world.” (p. iii)

This is how the foundation of Jesus Christ, as laid in Matthew 16:16, protects the Christian from the corrupting influences of the world. The foundation is the difference between uniting with Babylon and the worldly corruptions of her whoredoms, or uniting with the purity of God's commandment-keeping, faithful saints.

There is but only one safe course of action to follow: believe and heed the first angel's cry, “Fear God, and give glory to him... and worship him,” “the Father of whom are all things,” “even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” “who created all things by Jesus Christ (Revelation 14:7; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Romans 15:6; Ephesians 3:9).

The hour of judgment has begun, but it has not yet closed. Now is the time to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” “Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; and then the LORD’S wrath be kindled against you.” “And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them” (2Corinthians 13:5; Isaiah 55:6; Deuteronomy 11:16, 17; Luke 21:8).

THE TRINITARIAN'S CRISIS

As said earlier, this is not a study of the three angels' messages, but a look at how the foundations of our worship relate to this three-fold message -- the connection is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the everlasting gospel preached by the angels of Revelation 14. Everything else communicated by the three angels is directly connected to the gospel of Jesus Christ, both the mercy of God therein, and the warnings for them that do not believe. Through the everlasting gospel preached by the three angels, it is Jesus Himself who cries out to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" calling all to leave their idols, to fear and worship God, His Father and our Father, His God and our God (John 20:17).

Worship is both belief and practice. What is believed about God, will be practiced in life. The call to worship God, then, is a call to correct our ways through the renovation of our religious beliefs. Whatever the religion, whether it be Buddhism, Naturalism, Atheism, etc., or even Christianity, all are called to leave the corruptions of idolatry behind to worship the only true and living God who "made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." All who carry out this reform will have known the love of God (1John 4:14-16) by believing in His Son Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:16), and will thus represent God in the world by keeping His commandments.

The ninety-nine percent of Christians who currently worship the Trinity are included in this necessary reformation because the Trinity is a false god and an idol. Without this reformation, the Trinity believing Christian will not be able to bear the scrutinizing judgment of God, nor be able to stand pure while the nations are defiled by Babylon's idolatry, nor to resist the mark of the beast. He will not be ready because he has not heeded the everlasting gospel's call to leave errors and ignorance behind to worship the only true God in the purity and truth of Jesus Christ.

In order to worship God in the purity and truth of Jesus Christ, we must know who He is in the purity and truth of Jesus Christ. This knowing begins with the purity and truth of Jesus Christ. It begins with Matthew 16:16: God is the living God and our Father. He is the "Father of whom are all things," "even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," "who created all things by Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6; Romans 15:6; Ephesians 3:9). He is the living God (Matthew 16:16), the only true God (John 17:3), and the Creator, who "made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" "by Jesus Christ" (Revelation 14:7; Ephesians 3:9).

Those who have embraced the doctrine of the Trinity will likely have difficulty with this reform. Objections will likely surface. As the truth established in Matthew 16:16 is expressed in the first angel's call to worship God, it will clash with the beliefs of the trinitarian. Objections will arise because the triune-god doctrine is directly challenged by the call to worship the "one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:6). God is not a triune relationship of three gods inherent in the divine nature. God is the Father of all, even of His Son. And the Son of God is exactly that, He is the Son of

God. He is not a sourceless son. He is the only-begotten Son.

Because a sourceless son is thought to be a more highly exalted position than that of the truly begotten Son, the first angel's reform will seem offensive and abhorrent, an insult to "god the son." Until it is realized that it is precisely Christ's divinely begotten Sonship that makes Him equal with God, the first angel's warning is likely to be rejected. It will appear as though "god the son" is being attacked, made inferior, demoted from His trinitarian position as the sourceless "god the son." The truth will appear as a threatening lie that undermines god the son's unbegotten position. The first angel's message will seem like a heretical threat to the trinitarian's eternal security.

It will thrust him into a crisis: will he examine his faith, testing his belief by the foundation of Christ's church? or, desiring to avoid the sacrifices and demands of such a courageous, morally independent, and naked examination of his faith, will he bore himself deeper into a false doctrine by defending the Trinity? The doctrine that he has regarded as having "salvific import," and which has been the very foundation of his faith, is called into review by this plea from Jesus in the first angel's message of Revelation 14.

Here I would like to remind the reader what leading defenders of the trinitarian faith have candidly and openly acknowledged: that the doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere to be found in Scripture. This is significant, because these are the experts. They regard the Trinity as a doctrine of salvational importance, yet admit that the doctrine is not found in Scripture:

"What does the Old Testament tell us of God? It

tells us there is one God... But it tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of a Triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”¹

“Certainly, it cannot be denied that not only the word “Trinity,” but even the explicit idea of the Trinity is absent from the apostolic witness to the faith.”²

“The formal doctrine of the trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is not to be found in the New Testament.”³

“There is no systematic doctrine of the “immanent” trinity in the NT [New Testament].”⁴

Note: “immanent” means inherent or intrinsic, i.e., there is no systematic doctrine that teaches that God is inherently triune.

“While no single scriptural passage states formally

1 Edmund J. Fortman, “The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity.” Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999. p. xv.

2 Emil Brunner, “The Christian Doctrine of God.” Digitized by the Internet Archive. 2011. p. 205. Retrieved August 13, 2019 from www.archive.org. *Originally published by The Westminster Press, 1950.*

3 Achtemeier, Paul J. “Harper’s Bible Dictionary.” Digitized by the Internet Archive. 2014. p. 1099. Retrieved August 13, 2019 from www.archive.org. *Originally Published by Harper and Row, 1985.*

4 Rahner, Karl. “Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology.” Digitized by the Internet Archive. 2019. Volume 6. p. 295. Retrieved from www.archive.org August 14, 2019. *Originally published by Palm Publishers, 1970.*

the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact.”⁵

“The role of the trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, nor is there any clear statement of the idea... even though the doctrine of the trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God it is part of what the church must say to guard the biblical view of God.”⁶

The Trinity’s absence from the Word of God is extraordinarily significant, even if Christian leaders minimize this fact. Scripture “tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of a Triune God.” “Even the explicit idea of the Trinity is absent” from holy writ. “There is no systematic doctrine of the ‘immanent’ trinity in the NT,” and “no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity.” Neither is there even *one* “clear statement of the idea” in the whole Word of God. The doctrine of the Trinity is simply “not part of what the Bible itself says about God.”

These are not my words, and they are not the words of men who criticize the trinitarian view of God. They are statements from Christian leaders who defend the Trinity as the most important and fundamental doctrine of Christianity today.

It is obvious that the doctrine did not come from the Bible. Leading defenders of the Trinity, even from differing

5 Wood, Kenneth H. Editor. “The Trinity.” *The Review and Herald*. 1981. Volume 158, No. 31. p.4. Retrieved August 14, 2019 from <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19810730-V158-31.pdf>

6 Rice, Richard. “The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective.” Andrews University Press, 1985 p. 89.

denominations, have openly acknowledged this fact. The doctrine of the Trinity is a conclusion about the nature and identity of God that He has not taught in His holy word.

And not only that, but it is a conclusion about God that changes the truth of what He has taught -- from the very foundation: it mystifies God and Christ by enmeshing their identities as the same one God; it does away with the personality of God as a personal Being; it denies the Father-Son relationship between God and His Son; it turns the true identity of God the Father into a lie; it denies that Christ is the "only-begotten Son of God"; and it distorts and degrades our understanding of God's love, both conceptually and in our own practical experience.

While endeavoring to exalt god-the-son by giving him a sourceless existence, God's only-begotten Son has been degraded and devalued. By denying who He truly is, Christ is devalued, deemed "not enough." The trinitarian belief says, "The only-begotten Son is not enough. No! We must have a sourceless "god the son" instead!" What a horrible loss, and how great a sin, to deny what the Scriptures plainly state about the relationship between God and Christ, thus denying both God and Christ.

Rather than being satisfied with, and respecting, the limits upon knowledge that are fixed by God's word, the trinitarian defender has stepped out of the bounds that God has placed upon knowledge of the Divine. He has eaten the fruit of this transgression, satisfying a disobedient curiosity about the nature of God. By disrespecting the bounds of God's Word, he has unwittingly trained his mind to be rebellious and undisciplined. He has become accustomed to generating his own answers and explanations where God has withheld, and has habituated his mind to twist what

is simple and plain into something incomprehensible and complicated.

Such a one will readily confess that the divine nature is a mystery which the human mind cannot comprehend. He will generously give the advice that silence is golden when it comes to the nature of God, and that there are limits that need to be respected. But his admonitions are in regard to the mind's inability to understand the philosophical, paradoxical, unsolvable Trinity, and *not* in regard to respecting the sound principles and boundaries of fruitful Bible study.

There is a respect for the mind's limitation to understand the Trinity, and these are called boundaries, but there is not the same respect for the actual biblical boundaries that God has placed upon knowledge of the divine nature by both His silence on the matter, and by the plainness of what He has revealed about Himself in His Son. When the mind tries, but fails to grasp the perplexing arrangement of the Trinity, then the counsel is given: "Stop! Think no further. Respect this boundary. No one can understand the nature of God." But it is not realized that the real boundary has already been disregarded and crossed.

How can such a detailed, apparently salvific, doctrine be developed from an absence of clear biblical information? How can such a so-called important doctrine be defended and valued so highly, and with such rigor, when "it is *assumed* as a fact"?⁷ To assume is to "suppose" that the doctrine is true, yet "without proof."⁸

7 Wood, Kenneth H. Editor. "The Trinity." *The Review and Herald*. 1981. Volume 158, No. 31. p.4. Retrieved August 14, 2019 from <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19810730-V158-31.pdf>

8 "assume." Dictionary.com. Retrieved August 19, 2019. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/assume?s=t>

Since the Trinity is a doctrine that is defended by the Word of God without having actual proof of its validity in the Word of God, its defense is unreasonable. Its defense is irrational, not guided by sound judgment, illogical. That which is without proof is defended as if proved. That which is not true is defended as if it were true. That which is unreasonable, is believed to be reasonable. The mind is trained to see things that are not there as if they are, and the things that are there as if they are not.

When the truth makes contact, the truth then seems untrue; the reasonable seems unreasonable; that which is obtained through sound judgment seems unsound; that which is logical seems strange and illogical; "Son" no longer means Son; "Father" no longer means Father; "Begotten" no longer means begotten. The reinvented interpretations are favored over the plain, common-sense meanings of words that are used and understood in every language all around the globe. By not respecting the limits that God has placed in the Scriptures -- about Himself, about His Son, and about the divine nature -- the Christian is wandering in the wilderness, but he does not perceive it. Instead, he perceives a carefully tended garden where he may safely rest, and gaze upon the trinitarian deception as if it were the most beautiful rose.

Objections to the first angel's message that arise in the mind that has been so trained are brewed with the confusion of disobedience, the confusion of going out of God's bounds. The objections need to be bridled by God's word. And they do *not* need to be resolved before the truth can be accepted. In fact, the trinitarian's objections need to be set aside, as far as necessary, so that they will not prevent him from returning to the beginning foundational teach-

ing of Christ. This is not only appropriate, but it is absolutely necessary. There should be no hesitation to rely upon a clear, plain “thus saith the Lord,” such as Matthew 16:16, John 17:3, and John 3:16, etc., without twisting the words into something they’re not, even if it requires one to acknowledge his whole perception of reality as false and in need of correction.

If a student adamantly believes that one plus one equals ten, is it possible to reason with him when he argues against the fact that one plus one equals two? Is it possible to reason with him, without going back to the foundational principles of counting that show how one plus one equals two and not ten? Any argument that the student will use to defend the idea that one plus one equals ten comes from the imagination. He has invented the defense without regard to reality. The sound principles of counting will not necessarily answer the objections that arise from an erroneous belief that is defended by imaginary inventions. Reason will not be able to penetrate his defense, unless he is willing to accept reality, and set his error aside long enough to be properly taught, and learn the foundational principles of counting.

It is the same here. The trinitarian must find resolution to his objections and questions by returning to Matthew 16:16, the safe and sound, straight and level foundation of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God. God will reveal the truth about His Son to the mind so that he may be established in the foundation of His church, and God will build him up in the truth “line upon line” (Isaiah 28:10). This is how the Bible student’s objections will be either answered or dissolved. This is where he will find his rest, the carefully tended garden of God, the true “rest wherewith [he] may cause the weary to rest” (Isaiah 28:12), and read-

ied to begin his true education, to begin preparations for the earth's closing scenes prophesied in Revelation 14.

Leaving idolatry to worship God in truth, honoring Him as the Creator, as the "Father of whom are all things," requires the foundation of the knowledge of Jesus, who is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." There is no other way to faithfully respond to the angels' three-fold call for reformation. There is no other gospel to preach but the everlasting truth in God's *Son*. There is no other way to worship God but through the truth and life received in His Only-Begotten:

"⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: *no man* cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6

"⁹In 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." 1John 4:9

"¹¹And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his *Son*." 1John 5:11

"²⁰And we know that the *Son of God* is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true [God], and we are in him that is true [God], even in his *Son Jesus Christ*." 1John 5:20

"¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his *only-begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his *Son* into the world to condemn

the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 3:16, 17

“³⁸For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me... ⁴⁰And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth *the Son, and believeth on him*, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:38, 40

“³⁰And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John 20:30, 31

The everlasting gospel is the blessed hope found only in God’s Son. He is the Promise of God: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life,” “and this life is in His Son” (1John 2:25; 5:11). The gospel is the good news of God’s mercy and tender affection toward “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” in redeeming us from the death and destruction of sin to eternal life in His Son.

But it must be remembered that the everlasting gospel is not only a message of mercy. It is also a message of warning, for everyone that “seeth the Son and believeth on Him” will be raised up on the last day, but he that believeth not will be condemned, indeed, is “condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

THE NAME OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:17-18

We must believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God if we will be saved (John 3:18). So what is the name of the only-begotten Son of God that we must believe in to be saved?

“⁴He hath *by inheritance* obtained a more excellent name.” Hebrews 1:4

The name of the only-begotten Son is the Father’s name, which the Son has received “by inheritance.” Believing in the name of the only-begotten Son necessitates believing that the principle of inheritance applies to God and Christ. It means believing in the eternal, authentic Father-Son relationship between God and His divine Son, and that the Son has received His name from God the Father by, and through, the principle of inheritance in their authentic Father-Son relationship.

Acknowledging the principle of inheritance in the

Father-Son relationship is to acknowledge the Father and the Son, that they really are Father and Son. It is bound to receiving the truth about Jesus in Matthew 16:16, that He is the true Son of the living God. And this binds it to receiving the truth about God, who He is, and what He has done for the world in giving us His Son. And this binds it to comprehending the love of God in our personal experience. The name of the only-begotten Son encompasses the whole gospel picture of who He is, of who God is, and of what God has done for mankind through His Son, *because of the principle of inheritance*.

It is the principle of inheritance that underlies, and gives meaning to, the relationship between God and Christ, defining who they are. Therefore it underlies knowledge of them, which is our salvation:

“³And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3

“²⁰And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may *know* him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” 1John 5:20

Because of the principle of inheritance, believing in the name of the Son of God is to know Him as He truly is, as is revealed in Matthew 16:16, that is, as the true Son of God, as God’s only-begotten Son (John 3:16). Likewise, believing in the name of the Son is to also know God, for the name of the Son (who He is), is the Father’s name (who

God is), which the Son “hath by inheritance obtained.”

MEDIATOR OF THE FATHER’S NAME

“¹And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” Revelation 14:1

We must have the Father’s name written in our foreheads if we want to be included with the 144,000, who “are redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3) when Jesus comes. We must believe in the Son’s name, yet it is the Father’s name that is written in the forehead of the 144,000.

The 144,000 are not those who rise from the graves at Christ’s appearing, for those in the graves take part in “the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:11), which is different than being “redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3). Rather than being resurrected from the dead, these are the last generation who have gone through the great and final tribulations prophesied of in Revelation 14, and Psalm 91. They will be alive, and saved from the earth after the judgment hour has closed:

“⁷Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? ⁸Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, ⁹When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.”
Psalm 76:7-9

The 144,000 are “the servants of God” who are “sealed...

in their foreheads” just before the final tribulations are unleashed upon the earth (see Revelation 7:1-3). They are a special class. They are the last generation of believers upon the earth, and they will be alive when Jesus comes. These are sealed in their foreheads with the Father’s name.

They will have kept themselves pure and undefiled through the final tribulations prophesied of in the three angels’ messages. These are they “which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” “and in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:4, 5). They are without fault before the throne of God, that is, they meet the standard of God’s judgment warned of by the first angel.

In their mouth is no guile, there is no lie or deceit, and there is no more sin in them. They are washed in the blood of the Lamb. They “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). They have heeded the warning given by the first angel, and have made the necessary preparations. They have reformed their religion, thus their lives, and they fear God and give glory to Him, and will stand faultless before His throne.

The Father’s name is not written *on* the foreheads of the 144,000, like a visible stamp on the skin, but it is written *in* their foreheads where the pre-frontal cortex is found. The pre-frontal cortex is the region of the brain responsible for high thoughts, personality expression, discernment, and control of impulses and emotional reactions, i.e. the mind, the identity, the personality, the character. The Father’s name written in the forehead is God’s character written in the thoughts, in the personality, in the discernment and choices, and in the demeanor and emotions of those who, by faith, “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” even to the very

throne of God where they stand faultless and undefiled.

Here I will reinforce the connection between God's name, God's law, God's character, and God Himself. When we speak of God's name, we speak of God's holy character. And when we speak of God's holy character we speak of God's holy law, for it is a transcript of His character. When we speak of God Himself, it is impossible to detach Him from His holy character, His holy law, and His holy name because all these are Him and are from Him.

God Himself is holy, and all that has to do with God is holy. "Holy" means morally blameless, morally perfect and pure. This is God -- blameless, morally perfect and pure, i.e., righteous. God's law came from Him, so it is holy and righteous. God's name is His reputation, His character, and so God's name is holy and righteous.

God Himself is holy:

"⁵Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy." Psalm 99:5

God's law is holy:

"¹²Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Romans 7:12

God's name is holy, and He Himself is the Holy One:

"⁷So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel."

Ezekiel 39:7

Everything about God, and everything from God is holy. His character, His law, and His name are holy. According to Ezekiel 39:7 (above), knowing the holy name of God is to know that God is holy: “I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people” equates to “the heathen shall know that I am... the Holy One...” There is a positive connection between God’s name, God’s law, God’s character, and God Himself. Knowing God’s name means knowing God, who He is, His character, and His law.

Those who have the Father’s holy name written in their forehead have God’s holiness written in their character; they have God’s holy law written in their mind and heart:

“¹⁰For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: ¹¹And... all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” Hebrews 8:10, 11

The word “write” in the above passage is the Greek “epigraphō.” It means “to inscribe.”¹ This has a different meaning than to write on a piece of paper. To inscribe is to “engrave on for perpetuity or duration.”² An inscription is “something written or engraved in a solid substance to

1 Strong, James. “The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.” Zondervan. 2001. p. 1610. Reference number G1924.

2 “inscribe.” Websters-Dictionary-1828. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/inscribe>

communicate knowledge to after ages.”³

When God says that He will put His laws into our mind and write them in our hearts, He means that He will impress His principles of love and justice, His holy character expressed in His law, into the depths of our minds and hearts in perpetuity. He means for His law to stay there and define our character, forever. His laws are placed there to communicate His character to the world through our own characters. And when we are living the eternal life of the saved, God’s character will remain the expression of our lives forever, time without end.

We become messengers of God’s love and justice, communicating knowledge of God through our own characters, that is, through the expression of our thoughts, our personality, our discernment and choices, our demeanor, and our emotions. The Bible calls us “epistles,” or letters:

“³Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

2Corinthians 3:3

God’s eternal law, once written upon tables of stone on Mount Sinai, is inscribed into the tables of our heart by His Spirit, and our characters become a letter to be read by all, communicating knowledge of God. The influence of God’s character expressed through ours has eternal influences and outcomes upon those who read our lives through what we

³ “inscription.” Websters-Dictionary-1828. Retrieved August 14, 2019. <http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/inscription>

manifest in the world.

This writing of God's law into our minds and hearts is how we ourselves know Him. If God's law is inscribed into our being for the purpose of communicating knowledge of Him to the world, then the knowledge that is communicated to the world through us, must be knowledge that is first given to us. Thus, this is how we know God. It is how we obtain saving knowledge of Him:

“¹⁰For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts:* and I will be to them a God: ¹¹*and... all shall know me.*” Hebrews 8:10, 11

But the only way to know God is through His Son. And so Christ is the Mediator of this covenant in which God writes His holy law, that is, His holy character, which is His holy *name*, into our minds and hearts. We must realize that it is by believing in the name of the Son that the name of the Father is written in the foreheads of the 144,000.

Christ is the Mediator of His Father's name. It is through Christ that the Father's name is written in the forehead, because the Father's name is in Christ (see Exodus 23:21). The Son hath obtained it by inheritance, and thus He can be, and is, the Mediator of His Father's name to those who believe in Him.

If we want the Father's name, we must come to His Son. We must first believe in the name of the Only-Begotten, which means we must accept the principle of inheritance that underlies the relationship between God and Christ. We must receive the witness of God about Jesus, that He

truly is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). This belief is the entry point to the knowledge of God and Christ that saves, which knowledge is only acquired by God writing His holy name (His law) into our character through belief in His Son’s name (faith in Jesus). The name embraces who Jesus is -- the Only-Begotten, the express image of God through inheritance. And who He is embraces why He was sent (He is the Man Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world by His mediation), what He taught (how to be saved), and the power that He has to forgive and cleanse from sin (He will save).

The saints are they who have the Father’s name written in their foreheads:

“¹²Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God [His law, His character, His holiness, His name in their character], and the faith of Jesus [believing in the name that the only-begotten Son of God has inherited, which embraces who He is, why he was sent to the world, the doctrines that He taught about salvation, and His power to save].” Revelation 14:12

Parenthetical comments added

These will remain pure and undefiled while all others fall with Babylon and worship the beast. These are they who worship God in truth, and glorify Him in response to the first angel’s cry: “Fear God and give glory to Him,” “glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Revelation 14:7; Romans 15:6).

THE NAMELESS SON

In contrast, the son of the Trinity is not, and can never be, the Mediator of the Father's name to the saints, for he is unbegotten. He has not inherited the Father's name. Being his own life source, he has not inherited anything from the Father, including the Father's name. Even though the son of the Trinity is professedly equal to God in power, in authority, in attribute, and in sourceless existence, he is, nonetheless, without the Father's name. The Trinity's sourceless son cannot mediate the covenant that reconciles the believer with God, bringing the heart and mind into harmony with God's character, enabling him to "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

The holiness that is required in order to be preserved through the closing trials prophesied of in the three angels' messages cannot be obtained through the son of the Trinity because He is without the Father's name, thus he cannot impart the holiness of God to anyone. He cannot give the knowledge of God that the pure church will have, which is demonstrated by them keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This knowledge is only acquired by God writing His holy name into the character through belief in His only-begotten Son's inherited name:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." John 3:18

Thus, as we stand on the cusp of Christ's appearing, this message of mercy and warning is given with a "loud voice" so that all may hear and be ready: "Fear God" "even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "give glory to Him, and worship Him... that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" "by Jesus Christ," "for the hour of his judgment is come." "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (Revelation 14:6, 7; Romans 15:6; Ephesians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 10:12).

The fate of every Christian and non-Christian alike is being determined in this judgment hour. Each life is being measured by the standard of God's own character, His holy law: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (James 2:12; Ecclesiastes 12:14).

The hour of judgment has begun, and the required preparation specified by God's word is to fear God and give glory to Him. If we want to be prepared, we must respond to the everlasting gospel, and be saved from our sins by the life and power in God's only-begotten Son. This is God's strong pleading, His life-preserving counsel to all "them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," believers and unbelievers alike. We must believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, if we are to be with the 144,000, "without fault before the throne of God" (Revelation 14:5).

To heed this warning call, to carry out this reformation in our beliefs and practical lives, is our necessary, reasonable, and practical preparation:

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the

words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

Revelation 1:3

The time is at hand. Who will obey the first angel's counsel to fear God and give glory to Him? Right now, Jesus is putting the question to each one of us, “But whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Who will receive the witness of our God and Father, and confess with Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”? Or who will confess the trinitarian creed, that no other biblical witness has ever confessed? Only one is the Rock upon which Christ's church will stand. Only Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16 can keep the Christian from being overcome by the gates of hell, Babylon and the mark of the beast.

⁶³It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. ⁶⁶From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. ⁶⁷Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? ⁶⁸Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

John 6:63-69

EPILOGUE

It must be said that Christians who believe in the Trinity, generally, also believe in Matthew 16:16, but just do not see, or refuse to acknowledge, how serious the conflict is. Either they are unaware of the seriousness of the matter, or they are not prepared to make Matthew 16:16 their only foundation, usually because they are not prepared to lose the approbation of their church. Whatever the reason, they are under the impression that they can believe in Matthew 16:16 and still keep the Trinity as their foundation; that they can, in essence, have two foundations, which of course, is not possible.

This makes sense, though, because the Trinity is not truth. As an unstable foundation, it will allow errors, conflicts, and contradictions to exist in the belief system. The Trinity, itself being an error in conflict and contradiction with the truth, determines that more of the same will be built upon it.

“Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction” (Matthew 7:13). The Trinity is on the broad path. It allows for a broad range of distortions of the truth, and a broad range of errors to exist alongside the truth. It permits the Christian to hold serious conflicts in his beliefs without discerning them. As an error, the Trinity certainly cannot be relied upon to shed light upon its own conflict with the foundation of Matthew 16:16.

However, as soon as Matthew 16:16 is made the only foundation, the truth will begin to drive out the errors, conflicts, and contradictions. As Christians accept the foundation that Christ has determined for His church -- not just as a passage to superficially believe, but as a literally God given truth meant to be the only foundation of the church -- he will gain the discernment that this truth gives. Then the seriousness of the conflict will be seen, and the Trinity will be wholly rejected. Then the Christian will see that it is not possible to hold both Christ and the Trinity together.

But as soon as this foundational conflict is resolved the Christian will gain a new conflict, which he must be prepared to endure. Just as soon as he plants his feet firmly upon the Rock, Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, he will enter into a conflict with the ninety-nine percent of Christians who worship the Trinity; he will no longer have the support of the majority. Not only will he lose the support of the majority, but many have actually lost their responsible positions and employment in their churches, and many more have lost family and friends, and yet many others have been disfellowshipped. For some, all of these sacrifices come together and at once.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the sacrifice, yes, even welcoming the sacrifice, the Christian must make his stand for the truth. Now is a time of decision, a time of weighing and of being weighed. Our life records are being opened in the courts of heaven. Before God's hour of judgment closes, each and every one of us must decide what we will build our faith on: Christ or the Trinity, truth or error.

Have we received the love of the truth that we might be saved? Do we love Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, in whom is the Father's name? Do we really love

Jesus? What will we sacrifice for Him who so loved us and gave Himself for us? The trinitarian error holds sway, and those who decide for the truth will meet with some form of persecution. But the Lord is our reward.

We all are being asked, “Who do you say that the Son of man is?” Will we weather the storms of persecution, being firmly founded upon the Rock? The promise is that the gates of hell shall not prevail. We will know the love of God in His Son, Jesus the Christ, we will be anchored in His love, and “He shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22).

Do you love God? Have you been confronted with the Trinitarian controversy that's sweeping through Christendom? Do you know that the controversy is all about the foundation?

Christ and the Trinity logically and systematically compares Jesus Christ and the Trinity as foundations, exploding myths and misinformation about non-trinitarian beliefs, as well as Trinitarian claims.

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