

A study of the Godhead – as it pertains to Seventh-day Adventism

**A theological and historical perspective - using the Holy Scriptures and the
spirit of prophecy writings**

By Terry Hill

Written to the glory of God the Father and His Son

**“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**

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Preface

This study has been prompted by the ongoing Godhead debate within Seventh-day Adventism – or as it can rightly be called – the Seventh-day Adventist trinity controversy.

The author of this study - a lay person of 68 years of age and a Seventh-day Adventist for over 36 years - has been involved in this debate for more than 10 years. Consequently, during this time period, he has written a great deal regarding the various aspects of it, much of which can be found here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk>

The underlying problem

It is more than likely that concerning our Godhead controversy, some Seventh-day Adventists, even though the discussions have been going on around them for many years, are still unaware of the underlying problem. This is rather unfortunate because until this problem is understood, the controversy itself will not be understood.

During my studies I can truthfully say that I have not come across anyone who has summed up this problem better than Jerry Moon. In a few brief statements he captured the picture perfectly.

In a book published by our denomination – which is said to have been written to answer the many questions raised in this debate, although I do believe, having read it through many times, it does fall short of achieving this objective – he explained (this was on the very first page of the chapter dealing with the trinity doctrine and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history)

“That most of the leading SDA pioneers were non-Trinitarian in their theology has become accepted Adventist history, surprising as it sounded to most Adventists 40 years ago when Erwin R. Gane wrote an M. A. thesis on the topic.” (*Jerry Moon, ‘The Trinity’, chapter, ‘Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history, page 190*)

Amongst other positions he holds, Jerry Moon, PhD, is presently Associate Professor of Church History at Andrews University. Needless to say, he is an avid supporter of the version of the trinity doctrine currently held by our denomination. Here he is saying that it is now common knowledge (“[accepted Adventist history](#)”) that the majority “[of the leading SDA pioneers](#)” were non-trinitarian. Moon was not the sole author of the book 'The Trinity'. He co-authored it along with Woodrow Whidden and John Reeve.

The reality of our history is that it was not just “[most](#)” of our early leading pioneers who were non-trinitarian but all of them. In fact it is true to say that our entire denomination – as a denomination (the preponderant and the official view) - was once non-trinitarian. This was not only for a brief period of time but for the duration of Ellen White’s ministry (1844-1915). It even remained the same for decades after her death. This was not simply because as a denomination we rejected the idea of the 'one God' being a trinity of divine persons (as described by the trinity doctrine) but because our beliefs concerning God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit would not have fitted into a trinitarian concept of God. This meant that before the trinity doctrine could be officially accepted by our denomination (it was first voted in as part of our fundamental beliefs at a General Conference session in 1980), the thinking of Seventh-day Adventists world-wide needed to be changed - at least concerning the

personalities of the Godhead. Obvious to relate, this did not happen overnight. It took many years to accomplish.

Whilst it is true to say that even in our 'earlier days' the word 'trinity' was used in our publications to describe the three personalities of the Godhead - even being used in our 1931 statement of beliefs – it was not used in the sense of trinitarianism as in the trinity doctrine. It was not until 1980 that a declaration of God being a trinity, as described by the trinity doctrine, was accepted into our fundamental beliefs. Even then, amongst the delegates at the General Conference session where the wording of this belief (now No. 2 of our fundamental beliefs) was formulated, there were differences of opinion as to how this belief should be phrased. Before being finalised, the actual wording underwent a considerable amount of discussion and change. This will be seen in [chapter 28](#).

All of this came about because after Ellen White died (1915), some of our then leading brethren began to promote trinitarian concepts of the Godhead. This was particularly concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit. These concepts though did not become the norm in our church for decades after Ellen White's death. It was the continual promotion of these beliefs, also the acceptance of them by both ministry and laity in general, that led to the eventual acceptance of the trinity doctrine.

Jerry Moon continues

*“More recently, a further question has arisen with increasing urgency: **was the pioneers’ belief about the Godhead right or wrong?** (Ibid)*

Along with the rest of our leadership, Jerry Moon is well aware that concerning the three personalities of the Godhead (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), the ‘official beliefs’ we hold today are far different than those generally held by Seventh-day Adventists between 1844 and the late 1940's/1950's. He also realises that our current beliefs are not a modification of what we once taught but a replacement for it. In other words he fully realises that ‘the old beliefs’ (those generally held by Seventh-day Adventists during Ellen White’s ministry also for decades beyond) have been discarded and ‘the new beliefs’ (our present beliefs) have taken their place – which in itself is a denial that the ‘discarded beliefs’ are the truth. This is because truth never changes. If our ‘ditched’ Godhead beliefs had been true (when we held them), they would still be true today. Further revelation from God does not invalidate truth. It only makes it that much clearer.

This means that according to our current church leadership, the non-trinitarian beliefs – as generally held by us for the first 100 years or so of our existence (1844 -1950's) - are false doctrine (heresy). This is the reasoning that today's Seventh-day Adventists are being urged to accept (by our leadership) – which quite understandably, some are finding difficulty to do. This is because it would mean for the first 100 years of our existence as God's remnant people, we were teaching the world - concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit - very serious error, which as I am sure you will agree, is very difficult to believe. This is especially when it is realised that for the first 70 years of this time period we had God’s messenger amongst us, namely Ellen White, who, as we shall see later, supported these beliefs. This is why today there is controversy amongst us. Church members are understandably asking, as Jerry Moon put it, were our past (non-trinitarian) beliefs “right or wrong?”

This is obviously a very important question – and one that needs very serious consideration. As Moon followed on by saying (and this really is the key issue)

*“As one line of reasoning goes, either the pioneers were wrong and the present church is right, **or the pioneers were right and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth.**” (Ibid)*

This really does sum it up. Both sets of beliefs, meaning the 'old' beliefs (discarded by our denomination) and the 'new beliefs' (our current published Godhead beliefs), cannot be correct. This is because they are diametrically opposed to each other. One set of beliefs is non-trinitarian whilst the other is trinitarian. Certainly the 'new theology' is not a modification of the old. The differences can never be harmonised. They depict two entirely different concepts.

It can only be concluded therefore that if our current published Godhead beliefs are biblical, then our early non-trinitarian beliefs are not biblical. Alternatively, if our once non-trinitarian beliefs were biblical, then it can only be concluded, as Jerry Moon freely admits, "[the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth](#)".

In our present Godhead controversy, this is 'the underlying problem' (the bottom line of the argument) – and Jerry Moon recognises the seriousness of it. So too should every Seventh-day Adventist. This is why each one of us, as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, should regard this Godhead debate as being very important. We need to understand who in this controversy is right and who is wrong. This is the prime purpose of this study. It is to help those who are interested, which in the main will probably be Seventh-day Adventists (and those of like thinking), to understand the key issues involved. This will help in drawing the correct conclusions.

The way God works

Some may say that God would not allow error (false doctrine) to come into the Seventh-day Adventist Church but this is not in keeping with the way He works. As Ellen White explained (remembering we are seriously infected by Laodicean lukewarmness – Revelation 3:14-22)

*"God will arouse His people; **if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat.** The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep. Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. **This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting.**" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 5, page 707, 'The mysteries of the Bible a proof of its inspiration'*)*

It is the bringing in of heresies into the beliefs of Seventh-day adventists that will serve as a wake-up call for God's people. God will use these false teachings to sift the "[chaff from the wheat](#)".

If we have failed to make a "[critical examination](#)" of our beliefs, God will not stop us from believing error. This is because He has given each of us the responsibility of studying for ourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). We cannot offload that responsibility onto someone else.

Previous to the above, Ellen White warned of the 'danger' in our church of the lack of difference of opinion. She explained

*"The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. **When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what.**" (Ibid)*

You and I cannot afford to be found in that latter group – meaning amongst those who “hold to tradition and worship they know not what”. Our salvation is at stake.

The words that Ellen White wrote next are probably very applicable to us today

“I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they knew not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth. Certain it is that there has been among us a departure from the living God and a turning to men, putting human in place of divine wisdom.” (Ibid)

I wonder how many Seventh-day Adventists today can give a plain 'thus saith the Lord' for all they believe? Many probably 'feel safe' because they are amongst those who believe the same as they do. What though when we have to stand alone and answer for our beliefs? Will it then be a different story?

In contemplating the above, we also need to take into account the following counsel (remember today we are in the time of the judgment of God's people)

“God will not condemn any at the judgment because they honestly believed a lie, or conscientiously cherished error; but it will be because they neglected the opportunities of making themselves acquainted with truth.” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, page 437, chapter 16, 'Elevate the standard')

This is no different than she wrote in the Review and Herald in 1893 (note the title of the article)

“Those who have an opportunity to hear the truth and yet take no pains to hear or understand it, thinking that if they do not hear they will not be accountable, will be judged guilty before God the same as if they had heard and rejected. There will be no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth. In His sufferings and death Jesus has made atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness.” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, April 25, 1893, 'Accountability for light')

This was written primarily with the Sabbath truth in mind but it has its application 'across the board' to any truth. In other words, we cannot be willingly ignorant of any truth and then expect not to be held accountable for not knowing that truth – whether it is the Sabbath or anything else.

In the judgment, we will be held accountable for the truth we might have known - if we had made the effort to discover it. In brief, ***“there is no provision made for willful blindness”***. If we happen to be holding wrong beliefs – and have made no conscious effort to find out whether they are right or wrong - in the judgement this (lack of effort) on our part will condemn us. It is a question of attitude.

Some may say that this topic of the Godhead is far too much to grasp so they do not bother to make a study of it – but take a look at this counsel

“The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, to the exclusion of grand and lofty themes, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems or to put to the stretch to comprehend important truths, it will, after a time, almost lose the power of growth.” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 5, page 24, 'Our college')

Surely the latter is something to fear. This is why, as well as the simple things of the gospel, we need to study the deeper things of God. This will strengthen our mind and help us to grow spiritually.

Satan takes advantage of our lack of study. He is always ready to deceive the unwary. Deception and destruction is his aim. The deeper our understanding of the revealed Word of God, the safer we will be.

We were also told in 1890 (again note the title of the article)

“God has given us reasoning faculties, and he wants us to use them.” (Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, 10th June 1890, 'Conditions for Obtaining Eternal Riches')

Take note of these words

“When the shaking comes, by the introduction of false theories, these surface readers, anchored nowhere, are like shifting sand. They slide into any position to suit the tenor of their feelings of bitterness.” (Ellen White, Manuscript 889, Letter to W. C. White, May 5th 1897)

We will not be saved 'en bloc' (as Seventh-day Adventists). Salvation is of an individual and a personal nature. Many will be sifted out believing wrong doctrine – even though they are Seventh-day Adventists. The fact that we are now a denomination 17 million strong does not in itself prove that we have all of our teachings correct. To establish what is correct and what is error (if there is error) we need to study for ourselves.

In the light of the above counsel, also other counsel which is very similar to it (this we shall encounter as we progress through this study) it behooves every one of us to take a critical look at what we believe and ask ourselves why we believe it. After all, it just might be that one of the beliefs we hold is one of the heresies that Ellen White said that God would allow to come into our church to “**arouse His people**” (see above). If we have not taken the time and effort to closely examine our beliefs, then how would we know we are not believing error? The answer is obvious. We would not know.

A personal request

In producing this study of our present Godhead controversy, albeit admittedly it is very lengthy, I have done my best to present an evenly balanced view of the key issues involved. I would ask you therefore, if you believe I have misrepresented anything (or anyone), or if you feel I am wrong in any of the conclusions I have drawn, then in the Spirit of Christ please contact me. I do believe that this is what God wants us to do. He wants us to show each other where we are wrong in what we believe – if it is thought error is believed. We must not feel we are not accountable to God for the spiritual well-being of our brother or sister in Christ. We are responsible for what is in our power to do.

I make no confession of having everything correct, neither do I make any confession of knowing all there is to know. I am only human – and like everyone else I make mistakes. This is why I would ask you, in your estimation of this study, to be generous. It is also why I would ask you, if you do reply to me, to be kind and courteous.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, this is the way we should be towards one another. All that I ask, if you think I am wrong, is to show me where I have made my mistake. This I believe is not asking too much of my church brothers and sisters.

There may be those who believe I am attacking the church (because as will be seen I disagree with some of the things taught by our church). This could not be further from the truth. I am simply trying to establish truth. I do believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's remnant visible church – and I do love this church (this I can say with all honesty) - but I also believe that in its theology concerning the Godhead it has gone astray. As you read through this document, this becomes very evident.

Others may say that because I am a Seventh-day Adventist, I have no right to publish views contrary to those held by our denomination but the counsel we have received through the spirit of prophecy says

*“But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; **and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them.** That wonderful “I” may attempt to put down the Holy Spirit’s teaching. Men may for a time attempt to smother it and kill it; but that will not make error truth, or truth error.” (Ellen G. White, Letter to the Battle Creek Church, ‘Danger of Rejecting Truth’, written from “Sunnyside,” Cooranbong, N.S.W. May 30th 1896)*

Freedom of speech is very important. It is something that God has ordained that every person should possess. God values this very highly. This is why we are not to attempt to 'quieten' people simply because they believe differently from us. We are to give them a fair hearing and then make a decision based upon the evidence for their conclusions – also, as has been said above, if error is thought to be there, show them the error.

Through the spirit of prophecy we have been given very strict counsel concerning controversy over doctrine . We shall be taking a look at this in [chapter 1](#).

It is important that in our church life, room is left for the Holy Spirit to work. It is He who will bring truth to God's people. This He will do through whom He likes and whenever He likes. He is no respecter of persons and He has no favourites. To convey truth He will choose leadership or laity. God reveals truth to those humble in spirit - not just to those who have certain academic qualifications.

It may even be said that I should subject myself to the leaders in our church – also believe what they say simply because they are our leaders - but as one brother was told in 1907

“A very dangerous element is coming into our ranks with the idea that certain workers are set to be mind and judgment for their brethren. God never intended this to be; for such a course leaves no freedom for the Spirit of God to work.” (Ellen G. White, Letter to Elder G. B. Starr Sydney Australia, October 1st 1907)

We are living in tumultuous (troubled) times. Deception is rife – even within everything that constitutes Seventh-day Adventism. We are not immune from Satan’s attacks – and we can be sure he has his people in our ranks. This is why the only voice we can fully trust is the voice of God – as He speaks to us individually through His revealed word.

We are God's commandment keeping people. He has ordained that before Christ returns we are to carry His final message to this world. Christ's return is near at hand, It is getting nearer as each day passes. Satan is attempting to confuse us. He is angrier now than he has ever been. We need to be able to distinguish truth from error. We can only do this if we have made the word of God our study and our stronghold.

Pray to God that He will send His Holy Spirit to you and to me. It is He who will lead us into all truth.

May God bless you as you read through this study.

Terry Hill
UK, August 2011

*Please note that unless otherwise stated, all texts referred to in this study are taken from the King James Version of the Scriptures (hereafter KJV) – also that all emphasis is supplied. Please note too that the publication presently known as the 'Adventist Review', which over the years has had a number of name changes, is usually referred to in this study as the 'Review and Herald'. The author has done his best to stay inside of copyright guidelines (fair usage). If any feel he has overstepped this mark and has contravened a copyright, please email him with the relevant information. He will then do what is necessary to remedy the problem.

As and when the author sees fit, this study is subject to revision. The same can be said of his views of the Godhead. Further insight from the Scriptures or from the spirit of prophecy will always be taken into account.. Revision will be made accordingly – whether this is with regard to the content of this document or in the thinking of its author.

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[Continue to chapter one](#) – 'Introductory notes'

Chapter one

Introductory notes

The objective of this study is to show from the Scriptures, also from the writings of Ellen White (a lady who is considered by Seventh-day Adventists to have been given the gift of prophecy), the things that God has revealed concerning Himself as the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit.

This is presented in an orderly manner with the title of each chapter broadly explaining the subject matter dealt with therein although it should be appreciated that from chapter to chapter a certain amount of overlapping will take place.

The author has attempted to set out this study in an easy-to-read format. He believes that because of the confusion that presently exists amongst us regarding our Godhead beliefs, the issues involved must be presented in a way easily understood by a 'younger person'. It is for this reason he has compiled this study with the young and the experienced reader in mind.

Some chapters are very much longer than others. This is because certain subjects demand greater coverage than others. Some subjects are even spread over a number of chapters. The author hopes that the length of the longer chapters will not be a deterrent to them being read. He also hopes the length of the study itself is not off-putting. He realises it is very large – even to an avid reader. He has attempted to cover most (if not all) of the issues involved in this Godhead debate.

Important to note is that each of the subjects dealt with in this study is essential to the present trinity controversy.

Concerning the author

I was not brought up a Seventh-day Adventist. In fact it was not until I was 30 years of age that I first heard the name 'Seventh-day Adventist'. This was in 1973 when I met the lady who eventually became my wife – who at that time had been a church member for 5 years. Today, 38 years later, we are still together.

From the very beginning I loved this church. This is why I devoted so much of my time in serving it. I believe it is God's remnant church – a movement of people raised up by God to deliver a special end-time message heralding the soon return of Jesus. This message is contained in the three angel's messages of Revelation 14:6-12. It is God's final appeal of salvation to the world - also a warning of things to come upon this earth.

Even before my baptism (1975) I was teaching in the church. Shortly afterwards I was given office and began to preach. Throughout the years that followed I was very involved in the life of the church – holding most major offices and involving myself in many types of outreaches. I was regarded as a very faithful Seventh-day Adventist – someone who could be trusted to teach and preach 'the truth'.

After being a church member for 28 years (this was in 2003) all of this changed. This was when I made it known to my local conference president (and others) that I had certain reservations concerning the belief that God is a trinity of persons. This is as depicted by the trinity doctrine – particularly as it is stated in the second of our our fundamental beliefs. It was then, after voicing my objections, that I was prohibited from preaching and teaching etc. – which means that in a very real sense I was ostracised for my faith. Since that time, 8 years ago, nothing has changed.

My rejection by the church that I love has been a very painful experience. It has left me with a feeling of emptiness that 8 years of time has not erased. It cannot be explained - only experienced. Being rejected by someone you love is a very painful experience. Nothing can fill the void. Only God can give consolation.

So how did a devoted and well intentioned Seventh-day Adventist come to find himself in this unenviable situation? Allow me to explain.

Check it before you believe it

As my Christian experience developed, I came to regard myself as a trinitarian. I even came to believe, as do many Christians, that the trinity doctrine is the 'mainstay' teaching of the Christian faith, although looking back on my experience I realise now that I had very little knowledge of what it actually taught. This 'three-in-one belief' seemed to develop within me sub-consciously. I just took it for granted it was true - at least as far as I understood it.

This is probably how it is with many Seventh-day Adventists – meaning they refer to themselves as trinitarians but fail to understand what the trinity doctrine really teaches. More than likely, without any real study of it – also because they realise most Christians seem to revere it - they have assumed it to be true. Some regard this teaching as being so sacrosanct, they believe it should not even be discussed. Many even believe that those who do not accept it will not be saved.

Others on questioning the validity of this teaching have been told it's a mystery we cannot understand so they give it no more thought; thus they fail to dig deeper for the truth and do not ask for a plain 'thus saith the Lord'. In so doing they leave themselves wide open to the suggestions of Satan.

From experience I can say that there is a very expensive price to be paid for professing to believe something without giving it serious consideration. This is why previous to accepting something to be true - no matter what it may be - we owe it to ourselves to check it out. Certainly we must not believe a teaching simply because our church upholds it, or because our pastor teaches it or because most people believe it – or even because we have believed it for many years. This is not safe ground for believing anything. There is no substitute for prayerful, personal study. We must remember that our salvation is at stake.

My 10 years of research has led me to conclude that many Seventh-day Adventists, if it was made clear to them what the trinity doctrine really teaches, would stop referring to themselves as trinitarian. I would even say that because of the beliefs they hold, many are not really trinitarian at all. This is even though they may call themselves trinitarian.

This is how it was with me. Without realising it, I held certain beliefs contrary to trinitarianism yet I was calling myself a trinitarian. It may be the same with you. Check this out as you progress through this study.

A serious misunderstanding

My main purpose in upholding the trinity doctrine was because I came to believe that without this teaching, the divinity of Christ could not be correctly expressed – which on my part was a very serious misunderstanding. This is because all that needs to be done to express our Saviour's divinity correctly is to describe it as it is described in the Bible – which is totally silent about God being a trinity (at least as depicted by the trinity doctrine).

The fact that this three-in-one teaching cannot be found in the Bible is realised by the vast majority of theologians (we shall see this in [chapter 2](#)) – albeit when presenting their theology they do not always bring this to the fore. In other words, they realise that the trinity doctrine is only an assumed doctrine but do not make it overly known.

Whilst trinitarians will usually admit, at least when asked, that their teaching cannot be found stated in the Bible, they do say it is based upon what is revealed in the Scriptures – the operative words being 'based upon'. This we shall also see in [chapter 2](#).

A conflict of beliefs

It was at the beginning of the year 2000 when I first began to realise that certain of my beliefs – particularly concerning Christ – did not fit into a trinitarian concept of God.

One of these beliefs (that I realised very early on in my studies was far from acceptable in trinitarianism) is that in the making of the decision for the divine Christ to become incarnate, a risk was taken concerning His existence. What I mean by this is that if in His humanity Christ had sinned, which according to Scripture had been possible (see Hebrews 4:15), God would not have resurrected Him – thus the divine Christ would have lost His eternal existence.

This 'risk belief' is totally prohibited by the trinity doctrine. In fact in trinity theology, it is totally impossible for any of the three divine persons to cease to be. This is because in trinitarianism, all three together constitute the 'one living God', who, apart from anything else, is immortal. To a very great extent, this three-in-one reasoning conceals the depth of love that God has for fallen humanity. This is because it obscures the fact that in attempting to save mankind from sin, He was willing to give up forever His one and only Son. Trinitarians say the latter is impossible.

We shall see later that in trinitarianism, none of 'the three' can even be separated from each other, not even in the incarnation.

In [chapter 24](#) we shall centre our thoughts on this risk issue. In so doing we shall discover that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told that in the original covenanting of Christ to become incarnate, there was a risk taken concerning His eternal existence. This is one of the reasons why Ellen White's writings cannot be said to depict God as a trinity – at least not in the accepted use of the term. It is also why Ellen White herself, assuming she believed what she wrote, cannot be termed a trinitarian.

Another belief I held – also prohibited by the trinity doctrine – is that at Calvary a divine person died. Trinitarians say that actual personage of the pre-existent divine Son of God did not die – only that He appeared to do so. Their reasoning is that only the human nature of Jesus died. This has been expressed to me by a number of Seventh-day Adventist ministers – all of whom are obviously trinitarian. On many occasion, this same reasoning has also been expressed to me by the trinitarian laity. Rightly or wrongly therefore, I have come to reason that this is fast becoming (or perhaps has already become) the accepted belief amongst Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians.

This trinity reasoning means that for atonement with God, we only have a sacrifice which is human (just human nature). Trinitarianism does not teach that we have a divine sacrifice for atonement. This is something we shall speak of in [chapter 25](#). This is when we shall see that Ellen White said that a divine person really did die at Calvary – also that the death of a divine person was the only way that atonement with God could be made. This is another reason why she cannot be called a trinitarian. A true trinitarian does not even believe that Christ actually separated Himself from the Father – not even in the incarnation - let alone that He died at Calvary.

Not really a son

I came to realise also that according to current Seventh-day Adventist theology, Christ is not really the Son of God. Instead He is said to be only role-playing the part of a son. In other words, the second person of the Godhead - as Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians like to call Him – is only pretending to be a son whilst the divine person known as ‘the Father’ – who is said by the trinitarians to be the first person of the Godhead – is only pretending to be a father. This is not believed by the author of this study. He believes that Christ is truly the Son of God – meaning that God truly is His father. By the trinitarians, the third person of the Godhead is said to be role-playing the part of the Holy Spirit. We shall see this in [chapter 12](#).

It is the author’s belief that where the Scriptures speak of Christ as the Son of God – which is how Jesus described Himself - this should not be taken figuratively (as say the trinitarians amongst us) but literally. He believes that the evidence for this is overwhelming. We shall see later that Ellen White’s writings reveal exactly the same – meaning she believed that Christ is truly the Son of God. This is one more reason why she cannot be called a trinitarian – at least not in the sense of the trinity doctrine as held today by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The amount of information the author has found upholding this Sonship belief is so vast it needed three chapters to present it. These are chapters [6](#), [7](#) and [8](#).

A call to personal study

It was the above ‘trinity realisations’ - plus my discovery that during the time period of Ellen White’s ministry the Seventh-day Adventist Church was strictly a non-trinitarian denomination (which really did surprise me because when I found this out I still believed that the trinity doctrine was the central belief of Christianity) – which led me to study this Godhead debate for myself.

I knew from the beginning that personal study was the only way I could satisfy my inner longing to know the truth. I knew that listening to what others believed was not enough. I knew also that personal study was the only way to answer the many questions that had arisen in my mind. This is apart from wanting to discover for myself what we really taught, as a church, during the time of Ellen White’s ministry. These conclusions I have set out in this study.

No new light

The author of this study does not claim to have new light. In fact his claim is exactly the opposite. He believes that the beliefs once held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, during the early 1900’s when Ellen White’s ministry was drawing to a close (held also by Seventh-day Adventists for decades afterwards), is the truth concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. This of course is prior to these beliefs being changed to what we profess today – the latter meaning as they are presented today in our current published fundamental beliefs, in our Sabbath School lessons studies and in our other official literature etc.

Methodology

In this study of the Godhead, the author has heeded the counsel received through Ellen White. This is where we have been told that to obtain a correct understanding of Scripture, it is important to follow William Miller's rules for Bible study and interpretation. This counsel is

"Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled "Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology," Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:—

"1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible; 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error; 5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible."

The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth." (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, November 25th 1884 'Notes on travel, Portland ME'*)

These words then followed

"Genuine faith is founded on the Scriptures; but Satan uses so many devices to wrest the scriptures and bring in error, that great care is needed if one would know what they really do teach" (*Ibid*)

I would ask you to take special note of this last paragraph. It is obviously very important. We all need to know what the Scriptures really do teach. Our eternal destiny is bound up in it.

Literal or symbolic?

The question has often been asked, "How do we know if something written in the Bible is meant to be taken literally or figuratively?" This is a very good question, especially as far as our present Godhead debate is concerned. This is because by the trinitarians amongst us, Christ is said to be a son only in a metaphorical or figurative sense – meaning He is not really a son but only role-playing the part (pretending to be a son). So how can we know if something is to be taken literally or not?

The only answer that can be given is to use a well known 'rule of thumb', which very simply stated is - accept everything in the Scriptures as literal except where common sense demands that it should not be taken literally.

Uriah Smith phrased it this way

"All scripture language is to be taken literally, unless there exists some good reason for supposing it to be figurative; and all that is figurative is to be interpreted by that which is literal." (*Uriah Smith, Thoughts critical and practical on the book of Daniel, page 129, 'Four Beasts'*)

In other words, take everything to be literal except where there is a very good reason not to do so. This may not appear to be a very scholarly answer but it is the best that can be given. It is a matter of 'personal judgement'.

Take for example where Jesus said

“... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” John 6:53-55

Are we to really eat the body of Christ? Are we to really drink His blood? It should go without saying that this is figurative language although some Christians take it to be literal.

It is the same when Jesus said He is 'a door' (John 10:7-9) – also a vine (John 15:5). No one would even suggest that He is literally a door or that He is literally a vine. Here is where common sense is needed. It is the same where the Scriptures say that “the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12). No one would take this literally.

What though about the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9, 16-17). Is there really such a tree or is this just symbolism? – And how about the tree of life (Genesis 2:9, Revelation 2:7, 22:2 and 14)? Does this really exist? To some Christians, these questions are debatable so what advice can be given?

The only advice that can be given is to use the rule of thumb given above. This is that unless it is impossible for something to be taken literally (meaning it is obviously symbolic or figurative) - then it should be taken literally. The only other thing that can be done, - as we are told in the Scriptures – is that if any of us “lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (see James 1:5). In the finality, it all 'boils down' to personal study and personal understanding.

Personal understanding

No one person can interpret the Bible for someone else. Each must make up their own minds as to what God, through the Scriptures, is saying to them. This is the protestant understanding of how the Scriptures should be studied. It is also the basis for the protestant understanding of how each individual attains to salvation. It is by studying the Word of God for oneself and believing what God says. We are called to a strict and steadfast adherence of His word.

Interpretations of Scripture rendered by those whom the world regards as scholars are not to be received as the truth simply because it comes from them. Each individual must draw their own personal understanding of Scripture. God will illuminate the mind of a humble lay person far more readily than that of any scholar who is dependent upon his own intellectual understanding. No one person can be told by someone else what they must believe.

A humble attitude and a readiness of mind to accept what God says are two imperatives for understanding what is true (see Acts 17:10-12). When it comes to understanding what is the truth, there is no substitute for personal daily study and the illuminating of the mind by the Holy Spirit.

“We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; **yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true**

spirit of the learner.” (Ellen G. White, Great Controversy, page 599, 'The Scriptures a safeguard')

The weight of evidence method

There may at times appear to be a conflict in what the Scriptures are saying. Here again is where common sense is needed.

To ascertain what the Bible says regarding any given subject, everything said about it should be given consideration. In other words, if we are studying regarding what happens to a person at death then we need to search for - also take into account when drawing a conclusion - everything that the Scriptures say concerning what happens when a person dies.

Even then there may appear to be conflict in what the Bible says so what can we do? The answer is that we make a decision based upon the weight of evidence we have found. In other words, when all is read on any particular topic, what overall picture is seen?

Not everything is explained. As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“Well, what if everything is not explained? Where is the weight of evidence? God will balance the mind if it is susceptible to the influence of the Spirit of God; if it is not, then it will decide on the other side. They will come just exactly where Judas came; they will sell their Lord for thirty pieces of silver or something else. They will sacrifice everything to unbelief.” (Ellen White, Sermon, March 9th 1890, 'The spirit of discernment', Manuscript 2 1890)

God's servant had previously written (note the article title)

“None need be left in uncertainty and doubt. There is always sufficient evidence upon which to base an intelligent faith. But God will never remove from any man all occasion for doubts. Those who love to dwell in the atmosphere of doubt and questioning unbelief can have the unenviable privilege. He who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things that he cannot make plain to his finite understanding, will be left to the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and skepticism, and will make shipwreck of faith.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th December 1886, 'Intelligent faith')

Some texts of Scripture may at first appear to conflict with the conclusions that have been drawn by using the weight of evidence method but eventually, in God's time, He will make their meaning known. It is simply that some Scriptures are placed beyond the reach of human minds until God - at a time when He knows is best - chooses to open them to the understanding. Just because we cannot fully understand the meaning of one or two texts of Scripture does not mean that we discard the conclusions we have drawn based upon the majority we do understand. Again this is only common sense reasoning.

Scripture explains Scripture

The Word of God must be its own interpreter. It was written by human hands but God is its author (its inspiration). He alone therefore is its interpreter. When we study the Word of God with a mind and heart open to receive the truth found therein, we can be sure that God's Spirit will illuminate our understanding. All truth revealed in the Scriptures is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

Passages of Scripture which are difficult to understand should be interpreted by those passages which are easier to understand. Scripture is to be compared with Scripture - and

then, in accordance with the weight of evidence method, a conclusion should be drawn. This again may not appear to be a very specific method - or even satisfactory to some - but what must be remembered is that the Scriptures do not set out a methodical study of any topic.

John Wesley had a number of rules of interpretation. These included

1. Speak as the oracles of God.
2. Use the literal sense unless it leads to a contradiction with another Scripture or implies an absurdity.
3. Interpret the text with regard to its literary context.
4. Scripture interprets Scripture

The divine approach to controversy

Before we proceed with the actual study of our Godhead controversy, I believe there is very important spirit of prophecy counsel to be heeded. It concerns controversy over doctrine.

This type of controversy is always very unsettling (and very often personally painful) but through the spirit of prophecy we have been given adequate counsel on how to deal with it - if and when it arises.

In 1888, Ellen White wrote to G. I. Butler (then General Conference president) saying

*"If a brother differ with you on some points of truth, do not stoop to ridicule, do not place him in a false light, or misconstrue his words, making sport of them; do not misinterpret his words and wrest them of their true meaning. **Do not present him before others as a heretic, when you have not with him investigated his positions, taking the Scriptures text by text in the spirit of Christ to show him what is truth. You do not yourself really know the evidence he has for his faith, and you cannot really clearly define your own position.**" (Ellen White, letter to G. I Butler, written from Minneapolis October 14th, 1888, Volume 12 Manuscript Releases, MR 998, letter 21)*

Notice in particular the wording "**text by text** in the spirit of Christ to show him what is truth". This implies a very detailed study – not one that is superficial.

This counsel was given in the backdrop of the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. This is where Ellen White said that those of our leadership (including Butler) had a wrong attitude towards those who had been elected by God (mainly Ellet Waggoner and Alonzo Jones – along with herself) to bring a message to the conference. Some ridiculed both the message and the messengers. This is why the above counsel is so applicable to us today. The same is happening today in our Godhead controversy. People on both sides of the debate are being ridiculed for their beliefs. This is not Christlike. It should not be done. Great care should be taken not to unnecessarily offend. Eternal lives are at stake. In doctrinal disagreements, this is very often forgotten.

*"That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a fearful thought, yet it is possible. **One soul misled, forfeiting eternal bliss--who can estimate the loss! And yet one rash act, one thoughtless word, on our part may exert so deep an influence on the life of another that it will prove the ruin of his soul.** One blemish on the character may turn many away from Christ." (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 86, 'Solomon's repentance')*

This is why we need to remember that in this controversy we are not just dealing with doctrine but also with the destiny of those for whom Jesus died. This should prompt us to 'tread very gently'.

It should also go without saying that in any controversy over doctrine (whatever the subject matter may be), we need to thoroughly examine “the evidence” presented on both sides of the argument. This is the only honest thing to do. It is God’s ordained method of dealing with discord over doctrine. If we are to discover what really is the truth, what other alternative is there?

The letter to Butler continued

“Take your Bible, and in a kindly spirit weigh every argument that he presents and show him by the Scriptures if he is in error. When you do this without unkind feelings, you will do only that which is your duty and the duty of every minister of Jesus Christ.” (Ellen White, letter to G. I Butler, written from Minneapolis October 14th, 1888, Volume 12 Manuscript Releases, MR 998, letter 21)

Note the essentials here. First and foremost we are to go to the brother or sister who differs from us in beliefs and discuss these things with them from the Scriptures. This is to be done in “a kindly spirit”. We are then to “weigh every argument” presented – again implying a detailed study. These are the essentials. If any are missing we can be sure that even more discord will follow.

In the Review and Herald the following year (1889), Ellen White again wrote of this same type of situation. She explained

“Suppose a brother held a view that differed from yours, and he should come to you, proposing that you sit down with him and make an investigation of that point in the Scriptures; should you rise up, filled with prejudice, and condemn his ideas, while refusing to give him a candid hearing?” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 18th June 1889, ‘The necessity of dying to self’)

The answer is returned by her

“The only right way would be to sit down as Christians, and investigate the position presented, in the light of God's word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position in the least if it were false, or strengthen your position if it were true.” (Ibid)

What she wrote next is very applicable to us today – particularly in the light of our Godhead controversy. It was that

“If the pillar of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it. There must be no spirit of Phariseeism cherished among us. When Christ came to his own, his own received him not; and it is a matter of solemn interest to us that we should not pursue a similar course in refusing light from heaven.” (Ibid)

This highlighted the problem at Minneapolis. Pharisaic attitudes were on display. This is why in our present Godhead controversy, we need to put all the evidence on the table – meaning the evidence from both sides of the argument - and give it a thorough examination. Just because a person's interpretation of Scripture conflicts with the way we have understood it for years is not a good reason to refuse to discuss it with them. This is not Christ's way of studying the Scriptures – or of resolving doctrinal conflict. It is not the way either to discover truth. If we fail to study both sides of the question, we may be rejecting certain ‘gems’ of truth that the Lord is attempting to have us see.

The point that Ellen White is making – and it must not be missed – is that in opposition to the spirit of investigation is the “spirit of Phariseeism”. In other words, if we refuse to investigate the other persons point of view, we are being Pharisaic.

Two months later came this counsel (the article was appropriately called 'The test of doctrine')

“Suppose a brother should come to us, and present some matter to us in a different light from that in which we had ever looked at it before, should we come together with those who agree with us, to make sarcastic remarks, to ridicule his position, and to form a confederacy to misrepresent his arguments and ideas? Should we manifest a bitter spirit toward him, while neglecting to seek wisdom of God in earnest prayer,--while failing to seek counsel of Heaven? Would you think you were keeping the commandments of God while pursuing such a course toward your brother? Would you be in a condition to recognize the bright beams of heaven's light should it be flashed upon your pathway? Would your heart be ready to receive divine illumination?--No; you would not recognize the light.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 27th August 1889, 'The Test of Doctrine')

We should not 'gang up' on someone who differs from us on some point of doctrine – neither should we ridicule their understanding of Scripture – or gossip about this person to others. This is not a Christ-like thing to do. Certainly we should not harbour any feelings of resentment (bitterness) towards that person. Again this would not be Christ-like.

It must also be said that feeling 'safe' because we are in a group who believe the same as ourselves is not really safe at all. In fact it is very dangerous feeling. Our only safety is in knowing that our beliefs and our actions are fully in accordance with the revealed Word of God – and this can only be achieved if the Scriptures have been thoroughly investigated..

Feelings are not a safe guide to Christian experience. We are not to regard ourselves as being safe because we 'feel' safe. Our only safety is in study and believing what God has revealed. This advice goes across the board to everyone – laity and leadership alike. None are exempt. Leaders are not safe because they are leaders.

From reading the above, it can be seen that in order to recognise truth we need to have an attitude of brotherly love and kindness. Just because certain brothers and sisters differ from us in certain points of doctrine we must not stand aloof from them or hold feelings of hostility against them. Instead we need to discuss these things with them in a kindly manner (in the Spirit of Christ). This is the Christian thing to do.

The counsel continued

“All this spirit of bigotry and intolerance must be taken away, and the meekness and lowliness of Christ must take its place before the Spirit of God can impress your minds with divine truth. We should come right down to the root of the matter presented, and should not be in a position where we shall have no love for our brother because his ideas differ from our views. ***If you do take this position, you say by your attitude that you consider your own opinion perfection, and your brother's erroneous.”*** (*Ibid*)

We can see that before God will impress a person's mind as to what is "divine truth", there is a criterion to be met. God will not impress the truth on those manifesting a "spirit of bigotry and intolerance". To understand the truth we need an attitude of humility ("the meekness and lowliness of Christ").

As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy (again this was with reference to the meeting at Minneapolis)

“It makes every difference to us in what kind of spirit we come to the investigation of the Scriptures. If we come with a teachable spirit, ready to learn,

with our hearts emptied of our prejudices, not seeking to bring the Scriptures to our ideas but to bring our ideas to the Scriptures, then we shall know of the doctrine. We shall understand it." (Ellen G. White, sermon March 9th 1890, *Sermons and talks, Volume 1, page 140, Manuscript 2, 'The spirit of discernment'*)

Note the remark about with "a teachable spirit". If we are to understand what is the truth this attitude is imperative.

We were also counselled a few weeks later

"Our brethren should be willing **to investigate in a candid way every point of controversy**. If a brother is teaching error, those who are in responsible positions ought to know it; and if he is teaching truth, **they ought to take their stand at his side**. We should all know what is being taught among us, **for if it is truth, we need to know it.**" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 25th March 1890, 'Open the heart to light')

Notice the words "**every point** of controversy". The conclusion is

"No matter by whom light is sent, we should open our hearts to receive it in the meekness of Christ. But many do not do this. When a controverted point is presented, they pour in question after question without acknowledging, without admitting a point when it is well sustained. **O may we act as men who want light! May God give us his Spirit day by day, and let the light of his countenance shine upon us, that we may be learners in the school of Christ.**" (Ibid)

To bring truth to His people, God will choose whomsoever He likes. It does not matter whether someone is young or old, educated or uneducated. To Him it makes no difference. He is no respecter of persons. Scholarly achievements do not impress Him.

In the year 1900, under the heading 'Spirit of Investigation Essential', the following counsel was given regarding the attitude of Sabbath-school leaders

"To hold yourselves aloof from an investigation of truth is not the way to carry out the Saviour's injunction to "search the Scriptures." **Is it digging for hidden treasures to call the result's of some one's labor a mass of rubbish, and make no critical examination to see whether or not there are precious jewels of truth in the collection of thought which you condemn?** (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sabbath-school work, 1900, 'Spirit of Investigation Essential'*)

Again we are told to thoroughly examine the 'other person's' understanding of Scripture. If this injunction is not carried out we are not to condemn that person's beliefs. Note too the remark about "precious jewels of truth". We must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The testimony concluded

"No one of those who imagine that they know it all is too old or too intelligent to learn from the humblest of the messengers of the living God." (Ibid)

In other words, none of us are 'too wise' to learn from others. None of us either have been 'so long in the truth' that we cannot learn from those who are new to the faith. As has been said already, God is no respecter of persons. He will work through the young as well as the old. It is an attitude of humility that is pleasing to Him. It is to the humble, not just to the educated, whom God will reveal truth. Humility is the hallmark of Christianity. An attitude of

'you cannot tell me anything' is offensive to God. It prohibits the working of His Holy Spirit. This is clearly seen in God's message to the Laodicean Church (Revelation 3:14-22).

The following instruction primarily concerns what our attitude should be towards someone who 'sins' but it is just as applicable if we believe someone has wandered away from what we perceive to be 'the truth'.

"When we suppose one to be in error and sin, we are not to divorce ourselves from him. By no careless separation are we to leave him a prey to temptation, or drive him upon Satan's battleground. This is not Christ's method." (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 655, 'In remembrance of me')

Through neglect, we are not to allow those who have wandered away from what we regard as the truth to wander even further away. Decided effort must be employed to win them back. Leaving the wanderer to his (or her) wandering is not Christ's method of dealing with lost sheep. If sheep are considered lost then they are to be sought. They must not be left to stray so far away from the rest of the flock that they may be lost forever. This would be an act of total irresponsibility.

As Christians we have a duty towards the erring – whether this is on a point of doctrine or otherwise. This is why we must ask of ourselves if we are playing our part in seeking those whom we believe to have gone astray – whether it is in doctrine or in some other way. The good shepherd always goes looking for his lost sheep. He never allows them to stray without earnestly searching for them. Needless to say, someone who neglects to seek the wanderer is not a very good shepherd.

"The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of love and meekness. Then let us never become cold, unsympathetic, and censorious. And let us never lose an opportunity to say a word to encourage and inspire hope. We cannot tell how far-reaching may be our words of kindness, our efforts to lighten some burden." (Ellen G. White, Southern Watchman, 29th September 1908, 'Love for the erring')

Remember – we are all the purchase of God

It is very unfortunate that some adopt a hostile attitude towards those who differ from them in beliefs. They tend to forget we are all the purchase of Heaven – meaning we have all been bought with the blood of Christ. As Ellen White wrote to Uriah Smith (Smith, along with others, had stood out again Waggoner, Jones and Ellen White at Minneapolis although he later confessed and repented of his error)

"I point my brethren to Calvary. I ask you, **What is the price of man? It is the only begotten Son of the infinite God. It is the price of all the heavenly treasures. And yet how men treat a brother who presents a view that is not in exact harmony with their understanding of the Scriptures.** Self arises, a fierce and determined spirit is aroused. **They will place the brother in a position that hurts his influence.** If Christ has given that brother a message to bear, upon whom does the hurt come? **Upon the Son of the infinite God. It is not the man, but Jesus Christ, who has become his substitute and surety, that is censured and accused.**" (Ellen G. White, Letter to Uriah Smith, August 30th 1892, letter 25b)

Very often a person who differs in beliefs from someone else is dealt with in such a way that the intent is to destroy his credibility. This is the way this person's influence is quieted, particularly in the church, but it is not the way of Christ. All things done to the purchase of Christ is counted by God as though they have been done against His Son by whose blood they have been purchased. This is a fearful thing to realise.

The conclusion was

“In the books of heaven **there are stern records to be examined**, in regard to the manner in which **some have dealt with the purchase of the blood of Christ.**” (*Ibid*)

In this Godhead controversy, these words should be borne uppermost in mind. Self is always the ongoing problem. It needs to be suppressed until it is not seen.

“Cannot you question and investigate with one another? Indeed you can. **But the great trouble is that self is so large in us all that just as soon as we begin to investigate, we will do it in such an unchristian manner.** It has been done here in Battle Creek; it was done in Minneapolis; it has been done in many other places. **God is not in any such work as that at all; it is the devil that is in such work as that.** We want to come to the Scriptures with humble hearts. If God has a work for us we are ready for it, and we want to know that it is the truth for ourselves, and thus you be driven to your Bibles. You must be driven to them.” (*Ellen G. White, Remarks at the Bible School, February 7, 1890 ‘Lessons from the Vine’, Manuscript 56, 1890*)

without fear or favour

From the above, we can only conclude that we should have no fear in openly discussing our beliefs with each other – not even with those who believe differently than we do. We should not fear either to test any objections made to our beliefs – whether these be the beliefs held by our denomination or otherwise. As Ellen White once said

“We are on dangerous ground when we cannot meet together like Christians, and courteously examine controverted points. I feel like fleeing from the place lest I receive the mold of those who cannot candidly investigate the doctrines of the Bible.” *Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 18th February 1890, ‘How to meet a controverted point of doctrine’*

What is this “dangerous ground”? It is having the spirit of Pharisaism. It is bigotry (narrow-mindedness, prejudice and intolerance).

In any controversy over doctrine, attitude is very important. By refusing to consider the other person's point of view we would be displaying a Pharisaic attitude. The very least we can do is to sit down with that person and thoroughly discuss every point that he or she is making. As followers of Christ – also after seeing the counsel we have received concerning doctrinal disputations - can we afford to do less?

The conclusion was

“Those who cannot impartially examine the evidences of a position that differs from theirs, **are not fit to teach in any department of God's cause.**” (*Ibid*)

If we consider our beliefs to be Scriptural, we should be able to give an answer from the Scriptures for holding them. We should not be afraid when someone challenges these beliefs. If we are afraid to discuss these things, then there is obviously something very seriously wrong. It may even be that we doubt our beliefs can be proven from Scripture. If this is the case then we should act accordingly and ask ourselves why we believe what we believe. In order to find out how much truth there is in our beliefs, we should re-examine them.

Let us not fear therefore in putting our own personal Godhead beliefs to the test. May we heed the divine injunction to

“Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1
Thessalonians 5:20-21

We certainly need to approach this Godhead controversy as one seeking the truth – also to discover any error we have come to accept since we first believed – otherwise we will not recognise the truth when it is presented to us. It is with this thought in mind that I am asking you to read this study – albeit very long - without fear or favour. We all need to know the truth. We all need to avoid believing error. All of us are in the very same position. There are no exceptions. As was said earlier, our salvation is bound up in what we believe.

In our present Godhead controversy, the one thing we need to avoid having is an attitude that refuses to believe we may be wrong in what we believe. It is this attitude that will stop us from seeing the truth. We need an attitude of humility. We need the attitude of Christ.

The year following the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, Ellen White wrote of how it was ‘in the beginning’. She said

“In 1844, when anything came to our attention that we did not understand, we kneeled down and asked God to help us take the right position; and then we were able to come to a right understanding and see eye to eye. **There was no dissension, no enmity, no evil-surmising, no misjudging of our brethren.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 27th August 1889, ‘The Test of Doctrine, see also *Gospel Workers*, page 302, ‘Dangers’)

This is how it should be today within Seventh-day Adventism. She added

“If we but knew the evil of the spirit of intolerance, how carefully would we shun it!”
(*Ibid*)

The word “intolerance” means bigotry and narrow-mindedness. It is this attitude we need to shun.

By 1888 though, the spirit of bigotry was creeping back into our church. This is why at Minneapolis, the message of Waggoner and Jones was ridiculed. As Ellen White explained

“I was confirmed in all I had stated in Minneapolis, **that a reformation must go through the churches.** Reforms must be made, for spiritual weakness and blindness were upon the people who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities and privileges. **As reformers they had come out of the denominational churches, but they now act a part similar to that which the churches acted. We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out. While we will endeavor to keep the “unity of the Spirit” in the bonds of peace, we will not with pen or voice cease to protest against bigotry.**” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases Volume 16, No. 1216*)

It is bigotry that will stop us from advancing in the truth. It is bigotry that will cause reformation to cease. It is bigotry when we become so proud of our knowledge that we say we cannot be wrong. This is when we begin to trust ourselves. This is also when God withdraws His Holy Spirit. Note the words “another coming out”. It is a coming out from bigotry.

As Ellen White continued explaining

“We see a people whom God has blessed with advanced light and knowledge, and will the people thus favored become vain of their intelligence, proud of their knowledge? Will men who ought to be more closely connected with God think it

better to trust in their own wisdom than to inquire of God? There are ministers who are inflated, self-sufficient, too wise to seek God prayerfully and humbly with the earnest toil of searching the Scriptures daily for increased light. ***Many will close their ears to the message God sends them, and open their ears to deception and delusion.*** (Ibid)

We cannot afford to be in that latter group. Let us therefore shun bigotry in any of its forms.

“We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will ***never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.*** As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.” (Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, 26th July 1892, ‘Search the Scriptures’)

Do we have anything to fear? Certainly we do. As we have been counselled

“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history”. (Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin* 29th January 1893, see also *General Conference Daily Bulletin* 20th February 1899 ‘Extracts from Testimonies’, also *Review and Herald* 12th October 1905 ‘Lessons from the Life of Solomon No. 5 (Order and Organization)’ also *Life Sketches* page 196 ‘Burden Bearers’ 1915)

The lesson we should learn is that God cannot ‘get through’ to those who shun honest investigation. This causes God to withdraw His Spirit. It bars the way to reformation – and we all need to reform.

In summary

We noted in the [Preface](#) to this study that over the years there has been considerable change to our Godhead beliefs. This is even admitted by our leadership so it is not exactly a secret. The question remains though, were our beliefs correct before we changed them or are they correct now? In other words, is God a trinity of persons as described by the trinity doctrine or is He not?

So how can we find the answer to this question?

The only answer is personal study. We need to put all the evidence on the table and intelligently weigh it up. If this is done in a spirit of meekness and humility we can be sure that God will honour our endeavours and provide the answer. As He has told us through His chosen messenger

“There is no excuse for any one in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. We are living in perilous times, and it does not become us to accept everything claimed to be truth without examining it thoroughly; neither can we afford to reject anything that bears the fruits of the Spirit of God; but we should be teachable, meek and lowly of heart. ***There are those who oppose everything that is not in accordance with their own ideas, and by so doing they endanger their eternal interest as verily as did the Jewish nation in their rejection of Christ. The Lord designs that our opinions shall be put to the test, that we may see the necessity***

of closely examining the living oracles to see whether or not we are in the faith.
(Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 20th December 1892, 'Christ our hope')

Bearing all of the above counsel in mind, we shall, concerning the Godhead, enter into a study of what God has revealed.

If you the reader would like to address yourself to any of the points made in this study – or make any comments in general - please feel free to contact me. I shall be very glad to hear from you. You can email me at terry_sda@blueyonder.co.uk

[Proceed to chapter 2](#) – “When God is silent”

Chapter two

When God is silent

As would be expected, there are many different aspects to our present denominational Godhead debate. This means there are many things that need to be studied and discussed. We shall though, before we get into any detailed discussions concerning the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, consider the trinity doctrine itself. Obviously it is a major aspect of this controversy.

The silence of God

In our discussions regarding the Godhead, the one thing we need to remember is that there cannot be found in Scripture any explanation of how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have their existence together. This is why we should be very guarded not to make any attempt to explain it - even though each of the three divine personalities of the Godhead can properly be termed 'God'.

In other words, although it may appear evident – also only common sense - to say that all three share a certain unity of being, nowhere in the Scriptures is this explained. This is why any conclusions that are drawn concerning this matter, even though they may be said to be based upon what the Scriptures reveal, will only be speculation.

Putting this in another way – any explanation given regarding the ontological relationship (the nature of being) that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will always need to be assumed. This is why the trinity doctrine - the teaching that says all three divine personalities exist inseparably together in one substance as the 'one immortal God' - is only an assumed doctrine. This is why discussion regarding this issue will often end in difference of opinion and division. It is simply that 'things not revealed' are being debated.

We need to quickly learn the lesson. This lesson is that where God is silent, so too should we be silent. Unfortunately, along with the other trinitarian denominations, we have failed to heed the lesson although as we will now see, some have been very open in their understanding and explanation of the trinity doctrine.

A trinitarian confession

One very well known trinitarian - a Jesuit teacher of 40 years experience – was the late Edmund J. Fortman. He gained a Masters Degree in Latin from St. Louis University, also a doctorate in theology from Gregorian University in Rome. He is said to have had a tremendous influence amongst other Jesuits. He was a very well respected theologian.

As a Jesuit, Fortman believed that the trinity doctrine is the central doctrine of the Christian faith although he did feel that this teaching is not as appreciated as it should be. This is why he wrote a book explaining its history and its significance. This book is called 'The Triune God' (1972). It is a masterpiece of explanation concerning the teaching itself – also its history.

After saying that the trinity doctrine has had "an amazing history" – also that it could only have originated from "divine revelation" - he asks in the introduction to his book this very simple but important question

“What does the Old Testament tell us of God?” (Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God, Introduction, page XV, 1972*)

His answer was

“It tells us there is one God, a wonderful God of life and love and righteousness and power and glory and mystery, who is the creator and lord of the whole universe, who is intensely concerned with the tiny people of Israel. ***It tells us of His Word, Wisdom. Spirit, of the Messiah He will send***, of a Son of Man and a Suffering Servant to come.” (Ibid)

Fortman admits though (even as an ardent trinitarian)

“But it tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of a Triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” (Ibid)

Even as a passionate supporter of the trinity doctrine, Fortman freely admits that nowhere in the Old Testament does it even imply that God is a trinity let alone actually say it. He says also that these writings only speak of the “one God” – obviously the Father - who sent His Son to save mankind.

He says the same regarding the New Testament Scriptures. He explains

“If we take the New Testament writers together they tell us there is only one God, the creator and lord of the universe, who is the Father of Jesus. They call Jesus the Son of God, Messiah, Lord, Savior, Word, Wisdom. They assign Him the divine functions of creation, salvation, judgment. ***Sometimes they call Him God explicitly.”*** (Ibid)

Here is the admittance that even the New Testament Scriptures speak only of “one God” – meaning “the Father of Jesus”. As well as other texts of Scripture, Fortman probably had in mind 1 Corinthians 8:6 and the words of Jesus found in John 17:3. He also says that at times, the New Testament writers refer to Jesus as “God explicitly” – which is very true (for example see John 1:1). In this study we shall see this over and over again.

He then relates what the New Testament writers say of the Holy Spirit. He says

“They do not speak as fully and clearly of the Holy Spirit as they do of the Son, but at times they coordinate Him with the Father and the Son and put Him on a level with them as far as divinity and personality are concerned.” (Ibid)

Again this is very true. The Scriptures do not speak as clearly of the Holy Spirit as they do of the Son. This is why over the years there has been so much conjecture concerning this divine personality. This is certainly how it has been of late within Seventh-day Adventism. The Holy Spirit is certainly a 'mysterious person'.

Through a study of both the Holy Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy, we shall in chapters [18](#), [19](#) and [20](#) discover the things that God has revealed concerning the Holy Spirit.

After saying that the New Testament provides what he terms “a triadic ground plan and triadic formulas”, Fortman said concerning the New Testament writers themselves

“They give us no formal or formulated doctrine of the Trinity, no explicit teaching that in one God there are three co-equal divine persons. But they do give us an elemental trinitarianism, the data from which such a formal doctrine of the Triune God may be formulated.” (Ibid)

We can see that even in the introduction of his book, Fortman clearly says that the trinity doctrine itself cannot be found in the Bible – although as do all trinitarians, he does claim that the information is there for such a teaching to be formulated.

This of course is only a matter of opinion. The non-trinitarians will say that we have no right to go beyond what God has revealed – meaning we have no right to devise a doctrine that attempts to explain God. They maintain that the Scriptures are being misused.

They will also point out that ‘certain data’ in the Scriptures does not allow for the conclusions of such a teaching – also that by the trinitarians, this data is being ignored (or at the best ‘explained away’). In principle, this ‘data’ we noted in [chapter 1](#). Later we shall speak of it in detail.

In chapter 1 of his book, under the sub-heading of 'The Trinity', Fortman says

“Obviously there is no trinitarian doctrine in the Synoptics or Acts. But there are patterns of the triadic pattern of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in both.” (Ibid chapter 1, page 14)

This is not obvious to everyone. There are lots of Christians who believe this teaching can be found in the Scriptures.

Trinitarians often speak of 'hints' and 'suggestions' of the trinity doctrine in Scripture but obviously cannot show where it is stated. Later we shall see this admitted by Seventh-day Adventists.

In chapter 2 of his book, Fortman again says

“There is no formal doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament writers, if this means an explicit teaching that in one God there are three co-equal divine beings”. (Ibid, Chapter 2, ‘The New Testament Witness to God’, page 32)

This is exactly what the trinity doctrine does mean – that in the ***“one God there are three co-equal divine beings***. As Fortman says though, this teaching cannot be found stated in the New Testament. Neither can it be found in the Old Testament.

He concluded

“The Biblical witness to God, as we have seen, did not contain any formal or formulated doctrine of the trinity, any explicit teaching that in one God there are three co-equal divine persons. Rather it contained the data from which a doctrine of this kind could be formulated.” (Ibid, chapter 2, ‘The Triune God in the Early Christian Church’, page 35)

Again this is the admittance that the trinity doctrine itself cannot be found in Scripture – although like every other trinitarian, Fortman says it is based upon what the Scriptures reveal. As has been said already, not everyone agrees with this reasoning.

Fortman added

“And it would take three centuries of gradual assimilation of the Biblical witness to God before the formulation of the dogma of one God in three distinct persons would be achieved.” (Ibid)

This just about sums it up. The doctrine of the trinity cannot be found in the Scriptures. It was formulated in the fourth century – almost 300 hundred years after the canon of Scripture was

closed. This formulating was done by 'the church'. This was as it was fast declining into apostasy – which in itself should send out very serious warning signals.

Concerning the trinity doctrine, it says this in 'The Encyclopedia of Religion' (this is under the sub-heading of 'Development of Trinity doctrine')

“Exegetes and theologians today are in agreement **that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the trinity**, even though it was customary in past dogmatic tracts on the trinity to cite like Genesis 1:26 “Let us make humanity in our image, after our likeness (see also Gn. 3:22, 11:7; Is. 6:2-3) as proof of plurality in God.” (*The Encyclopedia of Religion, Volume 15, page 54, 1987*)

In the next paragraph it said

“Further, exegetes and theologians agree **that the New Testament also does not contain any explicit doctrine of the trinity.**” (*Ibid*)

It later added

“God the Father is source **of all that is** (Pantokrator) and **also the father of Jesus.**” (*Ibid*)

This is exactly what is taught in Scripture – that the Father is the source of everything (“of all that is”) – including the Son of God. As we shall see later, this does not make Christ a lesser divine being than the Father. It shows that He is the Father manifested – God in the person of the Son.

When all is said and done, the trinity teaching is simply an invention of the church – an assumption said to be based upon the Scriptures but as we shall see later, does ignore ‘certain data’ that leads us to conclude it is a wrong assumption.

More 'trinity confessions'

After saying that “we must honestly admit that the doctrine of the Trinity did not form part of the early Christian--New Testament—message”, Emil Brunner, who without reservation supported the trinity doctrine, wrote in his book ‘The Christian Doctrine of God’

“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.**” (*Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Chapter 16, page 205, 'The Triune God'*)

He also said on the next page (note that the Greek word ‘kerygma’, means ‘preaching’, ‘proclamation’ or ‘announcement’)

“The ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity, established by the dogma of the ancient Church, **is not a Biblical kerygma**, therefore it is not the kerygma of the Church, but it is a theological doctrine **which defends the central faith of the Bible and the Church.**” (*Ibid page 206*)

The Harper’s Bible dictionary says

“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.**” (*Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper's Bible Dictionary, 1985 - Page 1099*).

It also says in the Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism

“The doctrine of the Trinity as such **is not revealed in either the OT or the NT**; however, the essential elements of what eventually became the doctrine are contained in Scripture (*The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, page 1270, General Editor Richard McBrien, 1995*)

In his 'Encyclopedia of Theology' Karl Rahner wrote

“Since revelation and salvation come in historical form, **it cannot be expected that the Trinity of God should have been explicitly revealed in the OT.**” (*Karl Rahner, Encyclopedia of Theology – A concise Sacramentum Mundi, page 1755, 1975*)

On the same page Rahner also said (note that 'ipsissima verba' is Latin for 'the very words')

“**There is no systematic doctrine of the “immanent” trinity in the NT.** The nearest to such a proposition is the baptismal formula of Mt 28:19, though it must be noted that **modern exegesis does not count this saying among the ipsissima verba of Jesus.**” (*Ibid*)

The latter means that many scholars today are convinced that Matthew 28:19 does not contain the exact words of Jesus but instead is an interpolation. In other words, as the church expanded its faith, someone (like a scribe) added these words. It is maintained by many today that if quoted correctly, this text would have had Jesus saying “go baptising them into my name”.

From a Scriptural point of view, the most striking evidence in support of this is that in the Book of Acts, Christians were baptised in the name of Christ only, not in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:36-38). This is borne out by such as Eusebius. A number of times when he quoted Matthew 28:19 he only had Jesus saying “in my name”.

As the 'Peake's commentary on the Bible' says

“The command to baptise into the threefold name **is a late doctrinal expansion.** In place of the words “baptizing” ... Spirit we should probably read simply **“into my name”** (*Peake's Bible Commentary, page 722, 1926*)

It also says in the Abingdon Bible Commentary (note Eusebius was a 4th century Christian historian)

“Eusebius quotes this verse with the words **“into my name,” instead of the Trinitarian formula**, which represents the earliest baptismal formula. The baptismal rite of the early church must ultimately rest on an explicit command of Christ” (*The Abingdon Bible commentary, page 995, 1929*)

Very interesting is an article found in the free encyclopedia 'Wikipedia'. In this article there are many quotations from scholars revealing that the baptismal formula, as it is quoted in Matthew 28:19, does not contain the original words of Jesus. One such place quotes the present Pope Joseph Ratzinger (then a cardinal) as saying

"The basic form of our (Matthew 28:19 Trinitarian) profession of faith took shape during the course of the second and third centuries in connection with the ceremony of baptism. **So far as its place of origin is concerned, the text (Matthew 28:19) came from the city of Rome.**"(*Joseph Ratzinger, as quoted in the Wikipedia free dictionary, 'Trinity facts', <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk%3ATrinity/old1>*)

The article itself continued

“The Trinity baptism and text of Matthew 28:19 therefore did not originate from the original Church that started in Jerusalem around AD 33. It was rather as the evidence proves *a later invention of Roman Catholicism completely fabricated. Very few know about these historical facts.*” (Ibid)

Some will say that as it is in the KJV, this verse was quoted in the writings of some of the early Christian writers therefore it was not a Roman Catholic 'invention'.

Whatever the truth of Matthew 28:19, meaning even if Jesus did say originally “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”, this still does not prove God to be a trinity – at least not as purported by the trinity doctrine. At the best it would simply speak of three divine personalities. In [chapter 3](#) of this study there is an explanation of the trinity doctrine.

In 'Early Writings', Ellen White made an interesting comment. She wrote

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances *changed the words*, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain by *causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.* But I saw that the Word of God, as a whole is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another. *True seekers for truth need not err; for not only is the Word of God plain and simple in declaring the way of life, but the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed.*” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 220)

As is said of Matthew 28:19, the same can be said of the words “even the Son of man which is in heaven (at John 3:13), also the words “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth” as found at 1 John 5:7-8. The latter is called the 'Comma Johanneum' – the word 'Comma' meaning 'short clause'. Many of the modern translations omit this clause – or have a footnote alluding to it. Interesting is that all three of these anomalies are associated with the trinity doctrine.

Under the heading “Constructions of the doctrine”, it said in a Nigerian University course paper

“*No one has ever been able to pin point a particular section of Scripture, where the doctrine of Trinity is explicitly stated.* What is thought about Trinity throughout Christian history is through exegetical study of *collected passages of Scripture.*” (Course paper, National Open University of Nigeria, 'Christian Doctrines', Course code, CTH 222, www.nou.edu/noun/noun_ocl/pdf/pdf2/CTH222.pdf)

In his book 'God in three persons', Millward Erickson, who has written extensively in support of the trinity doctrine wrote (this is concerning the trinity doctrine itself)

“*It is a widely disputed doctrine, which has provoked discussion throughout all the centuries of the church's existence.* It is held by many with great vehemence and vigor. These advocates are certain they believe the doctrine, and consider it crucial to the Christian faith. *Yet many are unsure of the exact meaning of their belief.* It was the very first doctrine dealt with systematically by the church, yet it is still one of the most misunderstood and disputed doctrines. *Further, it is not clearly or explicitly taught anywhere in Scripture, yet it is widely regarded as a central*

doctrine, indispensable to the Christian faith.” (Millard Erickson, *God in three persons, A contemporary interpretation of the Trinity*, page 11, 1995)

He later explained

“It is unlikely that *any text of Scripture can be shown to teach the doctrine of the Trinity in a clear, direct, and unmistakable fashion.*” (Ibid, page 109)

From 1887 to 1921, Benjamin B Warfield was professor of theology at Princeton Seminary. He was considered a brilliant theologian. He wrote in his ‘The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity’

“The term ‘Trinity’ is not a Biblical term, and we are not using Biblical language when we define what is expressed by it as the doctrine that there is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.” (Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Biblical doctrine of the trinity*, www.ntslibrary.com/Online-Library-The-Biblical-Doctrine-of-the-Trinity.htm)

He also said (because the wording of the trinity doctrine is not found in Scripture)

“And the definition of a Biblical doctrine in such *unBiblical language* can be justified only on the principle *that it is better to preserve the truth of Scripture than the words of Scripture.*”

“The doctrine of the Trinity lies in Scripture in solution; when it is crystallized from its solvent it does not cease to be Scriptural, but only comes into clearer view. Or, to speak without figure, the doctrine of the Trinity is given to us in Scripture, *not in formulated definition, but in fragmentary allusions*; when we assembled the disjecta membra into their organic unity, we are not passing from Scripture, *but entering more thoroughly into the meaning of Scripture*. We may state the doctrine in technical terms, *supplied by philosophical reflection*; but the doctrine stated is a genuinely Scriptural doctrine.” (Ibid)

In his book ‘The Divine Trinity’, David Brown penned these words

“... *Paul does not draw a sharp distinction between Christ and the Spirit* and indeed that *nowhere in the New Testament is there to be found anything like a full endorsement of later trinitarian doctrine*; yet, again, this is held to be far from the end of the argument.” (David Brown, *The Divine Trinity*, Introduction page xiv, 1985)

Many more quotations could be found - from trinitarian authors - saying the same thing. This is that the trinity doctrine itself cannot be found in the Scriptures. This should be telling us something very important (remember the title of this chapter).

Seventh-day Adventist admittance

In 1981, in an article called ‘The Trinity’, the following statement was made. It said concerning this three-in-one teaching (this was a special issue explaining the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists)

“While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact by Bible writers and mentioned several times”. (Review and Herald, Special issue, Volume 158, No. 31 July 1981, ‘The Trinity’)

Whilst it is true that the trinity doctrine cannot be found expressed in Scripture, it cannot be said either that the Bible writers assumed it as a fact. We have no evidence to support such reasoning. Certainly the Bible writers did not mention it “several times”. The fact is that this teaching was not even formulated (invented) until the 4th century.

The author later said

“Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.” (Ibid)

The way this is written conveys the admittance that the trinity doctrine cannot be found in the Scriptures. This is even though the author said that the Bible writers mention it “several times”. We do not say such as “Only by faith can we accept the Sabbath”, or “Only by faith can we accept that Jesus died for us”. The above statement is obviously meant to convey that the trinity doctrine is not stated in Scripture – which is very true.

Four years later in the ‘Signs of the Times’ Frank Holbrook wrote

“The Scriptures were designed by God for practical living and not for speculative theorizing. Hence, they contain no systematic exposition on the nature of the Godhead. The Christian statement regarding the Trinity is an attempt to state the biblical paradox (which Scripture never attempts to resolve) that there is one God (see Deuteronomy 6:4: James 2:19), yet existing in three Persons (see Matthew 28:19: 2 Corinthians 13:14).” (Frank Holbrook, Signs of the Times, July 1985, ‘Frank answers’)

To a point this is very true. The Bible does not contain a “systematic exposition on the nature of the Godhead” but neither, as Holbrook says, do the Scriptures say that the “one God” exists in three persons – at least not as purported by the trinity doctrine. This is merely an assumption.

The same year, the following was written in one of our publications (this was now 5 years after the trinity doctrine was first voted into our fundamental beliefs)

“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. But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. So 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 safeguard the biblical view of God.” (Richard Rice, The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective’, page 89, ‘A constructive proposal’, 1985)

On the next page, carrying the sub-title ‘Biblical Evidence for the Trinity’, Richard Rice who is Professor of Religion at Loma Linda University writes

“We can find hints of this doctrine in the Old Testament and preliminary expressions of it in the new.” (Ibid)

Then, after quoting several passages which speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit the same author wrote

“As these passages indicate, the idea of the trinity has precedents in the Bible, even though a full-fledged doctrine of the trinity is not to be found there.” (Ibid)

With reference to the trinity doctrine, here we can see it said that in Scripture we can only find “hints”, “preliminary expressions” and “precedents”. Again we see the admittance that the teaching itself cannot be found in the Bible.

Notice too that Rice says that the trinity doctrine “represents **a development** of biblical claims and concepts”, also that “it is part of what the church **must say** to safeguard the biblical view of God”.

Whilst it is true to say that the trinity doctrine was a development of Christian thought based upon what the Scriptures say about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, this does not make it a valid teaching – and when reasoned through, why should the Word of God need safeguarding by a doctrine not contained in the Scriptures? Isn't what God has revealed enough in itself? Our only need should be to believe what God has revealed and leave it there – not invent doctrines He has not revealed. If God has thought it good not for us to know of things not revealed then this is where we should leave it – not speculate concerning it.

This was very well expressed in an article written by a Presbyterian minister by the name of the Rev. Samuel Spear (1812-1891). The article was called ‘The Subordination of Christ’. It was published in 1889 in the New York Independent and later used in 1892, in our ‘Bible Students Library’, to explain our beliefs about God. We re-named it ‘The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity’. This is as opposed to the trinity doctrine - which goes beyond Scripture. The ‘Bible Students Library’ was a series of tracts given to the public as expressing and explaining our denominational beliefs.

Samuel Spear had written

“The Bible, while not giving a metaphysical definition of the spiritual unity of God, teaches His essential oneness in opposition to all forms of polytheism, and also assumes man’s capacity to apprehend the idea sufficiently for all the purposes of worship and obedience. John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6. The same Bible as clearly teaches that the adorable Person therein known as Jesus Christ, when considered in his whole nature, is truly divine and truly God in the most absolute sense. John 1:1-18; 1 John 5:20; Rom. 1:3, 4; 9:5; Titus 2:13.” (Rev. Samuel T. Spear D. D., New York Independent, ‘The Subordination of Christ’, later published by the Seventh-day Adventist pacific Press as ‘The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity’ and included as No. 90 in ‘The Bible Student’s Library’)

Spear quite rightly said that the Scriptures do not contain a “metaphysical definition of the spiritual unity of God”. This was realised by our early Seventh-day Adventists. This is one of the reasons why they were not trinitarians. They stayed with what is revealed in the Bible – no more, no less. Notice too how Christ is spoken of here. It says He is “truly divine and truly God in **the most absolute sense**”. In those early days (1890's), this was the belief of Seventh-day Adventists. This was even though they were not trinitarian. We shall see more of this in [chapter 13](#).

Spear later says (referring to the fact that the Bible speaks in terms of three persons of the Godhead but does not explain the oneness between them as in the trinity doctrine)

“Bible trinitarians are not tritheists. They simply seek to state, in the best way in which they can, what they regard the Bible as teaching.” (*Ibid*)

The terminology “Bible trinitarians” (as we would say today 'non-trinitarians') stands in contrast to those who believe the trinity doctrine to be true (the trinitarians). In other words, just because someone (like a non-trinitarian) refuses to explain (or refuses to accept an explanation of) how the three personalities of the Godhead have their existence together,

this does not mean they are tritheists (believers in three Gods). It is just that they are refusing to go beyond what God has revealed. They are simply staying with only what God has revealed in His word.

In his article, Spear also made the two following statements – which as I am sure you will agree is very good counsel.

“It is enough to take the Bible just as it reads, to believe what it says, *and stop where it stops.*” (Ibid)

“All the statements of the Bible must be accepted as true, with whatever qualifications they mutually impose on one another. The whole truth lies in them all *when taken collectively.*” (Ibid)

Spear concluded his article – which was so brilliantly written

“The simple-minded Christian, when thinking of these wants, and contemplating the divine Trinity, *as he finds it in the Bible*, has no difficulty with the doctrine. It is a light to his thoughts, and a gracious power in his experience. *Content with the revealed facts, and spiritually using them, he has no trouble with them. He does not attempt metaphysically to analyze the God he worships, but rather thinks of him as revealed in His word*, and can always join in the following Doxology:

**“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host!
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”**

***It is only when men speculate outside of the Bible and beyond it, and seek to be wiser than they can be, that difficulties arise; and then they do arise as the rebuke of their own folly. A glorious doctrine then becomes their perplexity, and ingulfs them in a confusion of their own creation. What they need is to believe more and speculate less.*” (Ibid)**

How true are these words. If only more people would heed them. You can read the entirety of Spear's article here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SB-Othersarticles.htm>

Spear's article is representative of what was then, in the 1890's, believed by Seventh-day Adventists. Interesting is the fact that when it was published as one of our tracts in the Bible Student's Library, the highlighted text in the next sentence was omitted

“The distinction thus revealed in the Bible is the basis of the doctrine of the *tri-personal God or tri-une God, which has so long been the faith of the Christian Church.*” (Ibid)

In 1964, R. M. Johnston, who was then Bible teacher at Korean Union College, wrote in a 'Ministry' article called 'What can we know about the Holy Trinity'

“The term "Trinity" is nowhere to be found in the Bible. But the doctrine is there — this conclusion is inescapable.* Nor need we be disturbed by the knowledge that certain words in 1 John 5:7, 8 are spurious additions that found their way into our King James Version from certain manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, where they originated. *For while it is true that no formal statement of the doctrine can be found in the most reliable Biblical manuscripts, nevertheless a comparison of Scripture with

Scripture makes any contrary teaching untenable.” (R. M. Johnston, *Ministry*, November 1964, ‘What can we know about the Holy Trinity?’)

I notice here that Johnston says of the trinity doctrine “the doctrine is there [meaning in the Scriptures] — this conclusion is inescapable”. He also says “it is true that no formal statement of the doctrine can be found in the most reliable Biblical manuscripts”. What he means, by this contradictory statement, is as he says, “a comparison of Scripture with Scripture makes any contrary teaching untenable”.

The latter is far from being true. If we express the three persons of the Godhead as it is stated in the Bible, which is totally silent concerning God being a trinity of persons as purported by the trinity doctrine, this would not be an “untenable” teaching. It would simply be Scriptural – nothing more, nothing less.

Johnston's reasoning was more or less repeated by Richard Rice. This is when he wrote

“So far we have said nothing about the trinity, even though it represents the distinctively Christian understanding of God. *This should not create the impression that we can formulate a doctrine of God without the idea of a trinity, because in fact the opposite is true. A truly Christian doctrine of God is unavoidably trinitarian.*” (Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective, A constructive proposal*, page 88, 1985)

In other words, the only way to explain God is as He is depicted by the trinity doctrine – but then again - why should we attempt to explain God at all? God has not seen fit to do it. Surely on our part, any attempt to explain what God has chosen to keep silent about is only presumption.

To say that a “truly Christian doctrine of God is unavoidably trinitarian” is to say that what was taught in Seventy-seventh Adventism during the time of Ellen White's ministry and for decades beyond was not truly Christian. This is because the trinity doctrine was rejected as not being in keeping with Scripture – or at the best a doctrine not taught in Scripture.

The trinity doctrine certainly goes beyond what God has revealed. It is an attempt to explain something about which God has chosen to keep to Himself.

In our official 'Seventh-day Adventists believe' we say

“Although the Old Testament does not explicitly teach that God is triune, it alludes to a plurality in the Godhead.” (*Seventh-day Adventists believe, A Biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines, page 22*)“

It also says in our official ‘Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology’ (the twelfth volume of the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia)

“The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed.” (Fernando L. Canale, *the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 138, ‘Doctrine of God’*)

The author had also previously said on the first page of his treatise

“Because human philosophy is called to be subject to the Bible, and since divine philosophy is already available in the Scriptures, *our understanding of God must stand free from human speculations.* What we can know about God *must be revealed from the Scriptures*” (*Ibid, page 105*)

Even though this is freely admitted, the Seventh-day Adventist Church still holds to the trinity doctrine as one of its cardinal beliefs. In fact members are even being censured and disfellowshipped for not believing it.

Plainly enough, as we have seen from the above, it is admitted that the teaching that the one God is three persons inseparably connected to each other (as the trinity doctrine states) is not revealed in Scripture. It is merely a human assumption – even though it may be said to be based upon Scripture.

The same author wrote

“Care must be taken to avoid crossing the limit between the revealed and hidden (Deut. 29:29) facets of the mystery, particularly in discussing issues like the Trinity, foreknowledge, and eternity. (Ibid page 108)

Needless to say, in formulating the trinity doctrine, the line has been crossed. It attempts to explain that which God has chosen to be silent upon – and it has caused confusion amongst us (as God’s remnant people).

The secret things of God

How God has His existence is far beyond human comprehension. This is why in His infinite wisdom He has chosen to keep silent about it. We too should respectfully do the same.

It must also be said that to conjecture things concerning God’s existence that He has chosen not to reveal is nothing short of intellectual pride and arrogance. It is like saying we have ‘sorted something out’ about Him that He has chosen to keep to Himself. We should not speculate therefore concerning the things which God has not revealed (such as how He has existence) but concern ourselves only with that which He has ordained is good for us to know.

As He has told us through His Word

“The 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

Under the subtitle of “A False and a True Knowledge of God Speculative Theories”, we have been counselled through the spirit of prophecy (this is after the above passage of Scripture is quoted)

“The revelation of Himself that God has given in His word is for our study. This we may seek to understand. **But beyond this we are not to penetrate.**” (Ellen G. White, 8th Volume Testimonies, page 279, ‘The essential knowledge’, 1904)

The servant of the Lord then added

“The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God; but the effort will be fruitless. **This problem has not been given us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His nature.**” (Ibid)

In consequence she concluded

“Here silence is eloquence. **The Omniscient One is above discussion.**” (Ibid)

In itself, this shows that the writings of Ellen White do not reveal God as a trinity. This is because the trinity doctrine does attempt to explain God – meaning that Ellen White would not have even discussed such a thing (how God has His existence in the three persons of the Godhead) let alone try to explain it. Here we are told not to attempt to explain this existence – meaning we are told not to involve ourselves in speculation concerning God’s nature of existence. As Ellen White said – God is “above discussion”. This is where we should leave it.

Talk of a trinity

In 1903 when talk of God being a trinity was circulating amongst the leadership of Seventh-day Adventism (we shall speak more of this later), also when God was depicted as pervading all nature (as in the beliefs of those such as John Harvey Kellogg and Ellet Waggoner), the following words were penned by Ellen White. This counsel came under the heading of ‘A right knowledge of God’.

“God’s Word and His works contain the knowledge of Himself that He has seen fit to reveal to us. **We may understand the revelation that He has thus given of Himself.** But it is with fear and trembling and with a sense of our own sinfulness that we are to take up this study, **not with a desire to try to explain God**, but with a desire to gain that knowledge which will enable us to serve Him more acceptably.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 132, Nov. 8, 1903, “God’s Chosen People”, ‘A right knowledge of God’)

The instruction given here is that even the things that God has revealed concerning Himself are not to be used in an attempt to explain Him. This would invalidate any effort to describe Him as is done by the trinitarians – meaning as in the trinity doctrine. Trinitarians say that their three-in-one teaching is based upon these revelations but here we are told not to use this information to such an end. We are clearly told only to use this knowledge to serve God “more acceptably”.

There then came a most fearful warning. This is when we were told

“**Let no one venture to explain God.** Human beings cannot explain themselves, and how, then, **dare they venture to explain the Omniscient One?** Satan stands ready to give such ones **false conceptions of God.**” (Ibid)

This is an extremely serious warning. It is a warning that every Seventh-day Adventist should very seriously heed – especially those who say that the trinity doctrine is a valid Christian teaching. Here we are told that if we make any attempt to “explain God” we are leaving ourselves wide open to the suggestions of Satan. We could not have been given a more fearful warning.

We were then told by God’s servant

“To the curious I bear the message that God has instructed me not to frame answers to the questions of those **who enquire in regard to the things that have not been revealed.**” (Ibid)

Again there is this emphasis to ‘leave alone’ the un-revealed (remember from above that it is universally admitted that the trinity doctrine cannot be found stated in Scripture). Notice here Ellen White said that this was instruction given to her by God. She then said

“The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children. **Beyond this, human beings are not to attempt to go. We are not to attempt to explain that which God has not revealed.**” (Ibid)

God specifically instructed Ellen White not to make any attempt to explain what He has not revealed. Human nature being what it is – and because Ellen White was accepted as a special messenger of the Lord (having been given the gift of prophecy) – a great deal of credibility would be given to her words.

This instruction given to her not to “**frame answers**” attempting to explain the un-revealed would obviously have included the trinity doctrine – which does try to explain the unexplained.

We were also counselled

“In regard to the personality and prerogatives of God, **where He is and what He is**, this is a subject which **we are not to dare to touch. On this theme silence is eloquence. It is those who have no experimental knowledge of God who venture to speculate in regard to Him.** Did they know more of Him, they would have less to say about what He is. The one who in the daily life holds closest communion with God, and who has the deepest knowledge of Him, realizes most keenly **the utter inability of human beings to explain the Creator.**” (*Ibid*)

The conclusion was

“Let men beware how they seek to look into **the mysteries of the most high.**” (*Ibid*)

It is only reasonable to say that the things which God has revealed concerning Himself (as the Father), also His Son and the Holy Spirit, should be to us of paramount importance – but not to explain God. As Ellen White said, this should not be done (see above). Obvious to relate, the unimportant things (to us) should be the things that God has chosen not to reveal. If the ‘un-revealed’ had been important (to us), also relevant to our salvation – which obviously it isn’t – then God would have revealed it.

Following on from this previous remark, Ellen White went on to explain that because “**the men of Bethshemesh...had looked into the ark of the LORD**”, God had “**smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men**” (see 1 Samuel 6:19). These “**men of Bethshemesh**” had looked into the things that God had not given permission to look into. We should heed the warning. It is obviously a very serious one.

She later wrote

“**The Bible teaching of God** is the only teaching that is safe for human beings to follow. We are to regulate our faith by a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” (*Ibid*)

The conclusion of which was

“We need to study the simplicity of Christ's teachings. He urges the need of prayer and humility. **These are our safeguards against the erroneous reasoning by which Satan seeks to lead us to turn aside to other gods, and to accept misleading theories, clothed by him in garments of light.**” (*Ibid*)

It was also explained

“**Satan presents his theories cautiously at first**, and if he sees that his efforts are successful, **he brings in theories that are still more misleading, seeking to lead men and women away from the foundation principles that God designs shall be the safeguards of His people.**”

Let not our medical missionary workers accept theories that God has not given to anyone. God will not excuse men for teaching theories that Christ has not taught. He calls upon His army of workers to fall into line, taking their stand under the banner of truth. ***He warns them to beware of occupying their time in the discussion of matters that God has not authorized any human being to discuss.***"
(Ibid)

All of these are very serious warnings. They are warnings not to attempt to look into that which God has not revealed. Unfortunately, by the adoption of the trinity doctrine, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has failed to heed this counsel.

Only a speculative teaching – therefore not essential to salvation

At the very best, the trinity doctrine (any version of it) can only be termed an assumed doctrine. It is a speculative teaching that cannot be proven from Scripture. It is speculative because it attempts to explain things which God has not revealed – meaning how He has His existence in the three persons of the Godhead. This is why as far as our salvation is concerned, it is not necessary to believe it. God has not revealed these things so it should not concern us. Certainly we should not have formulated a doctrine to explain it. Once this fact is grasped it makes a study of the Godhead much more of a blessing.

During the time period of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915), very few Seventh-day Adventists – if any – accepted the trinity doctrine but this did not have an adverse affect on their salvation. In other words, even though they deliberately rejected this three-in-one teaching, a countless multitude of these faithful non-trinitarians will still be found in God's kingdom.

Since the time of Ellen White's death, God has given us no more knowledge of Himself than can be found already revealed through the Scriptures and through the spirit of prophecy – which is totally silent about how He has His existence.

The fact that during the time of Ellen White's ministry the vast majority of (if not all) Seventh-day Adventists were non-trinitarian means that the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventism was non-trinitarianism. It was not until decades after her death that as a standard belief the trinity doctrine was accepted into our church – which obviously was when Ellen White could not speak out against it, except of course through her published writings.

As this messenger of God once said

"Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last. My writings are kept on file in the office, and even though I should not live, these words that have been given to me by the lord will still have life and will speak to the people." (Ellen G. White, Letter October 23 1907, also as quoted in General Conference Bulletin, 1st June 1913)

This is one of the reasons for this study. It is to show what Ellen White really did say about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. These are the words that came from God ***through her***. These words she said, even though she was dead, ***"will still have life and will speak to the people"***. Her writings therefore ***"will constantly speak"***.

Enough revealed

Through His written word, God has revealed enough of Himself so that every individual may have a personal relationship with Him. Enough is revealed also so that each may know what God requires of them – also in the finality, that every one of us may be found in His kingdom. In the 'Signs of the Times' are found these words

“A familiarity with the Word of God is our only hope. Those who diligently search the Scriptures will not accept Satan's delusions as the truth of God. **No one need be overcome by the speculations presented by the enemy of God and of Christ.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 8th August 1905, ‘Christ our only hope’)

Notice here there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Ellen White did not refer to ‘the enemies of God, Christ **and the Holy Spirit**’. Read it again and you will see what I mean. There must have been a reason why in this statement Ellen Why did not include the Holy Spirit. This will be discussed more fully as we progress through this study – especially in chapters 18, 19 and 20.

The above statement was written 7 years after ‘The Desire of Ages’ was published. This is the book that our trinitarian brethren say led our denomination to become trinitarian. One of the reasons they give for their conclusions is that in this book Ellen White spoke of the Holy Spirit as “third person of the Godhead” (page 671). This though does not mean that God is a trinity – at least not as depicted by the trinity doctrine. We shall discover this in [chapter 3](#). This is where we shall see that the word ‘Godhead’ must not be confused with the word ‘trinity’. These are two different words with two entirely different meanings.

It is also true to say that up to the time of the death of Ellen White (1915), ‘The Desire of Ages’ did not, concerning anything, change the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. These types of claims (that in this book she spoke of God as a trinity) only came after she was dead. There was 17 years between the publication of this book and the death of Ellen White. This was plenty of time for our denomination to realise that in this book she had spoken of God as a trinity – if she had done so.

Note well the remark about “Satan’s delusions” and the “speculations” he presents. Our only safeguard is to study the Scriptures for ourselves – also the spirit of prophecy - and then believe what God is telling us. We are not to conjecture concerning the things He has not revealed.

She then added concerning what God has not revealed

“We are not to speculate regarding points upon which the Word of God is silent. All that is necessary for our salvation is given in the Word of God. Day by day we are to make the Bible the man of our counsel.” (*Ibid*)

Nowhere in the Scriptures is God spoken of as depicted by the trinity doctrine. Nowhere either is explained how He has His existence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This having been established, it should not be necessary to say that in our discussions concerning the Godhead - no matter how intellectual or scholarly our speculating may seem – it behooves us to consider only the things that God has revealed. In other words, we should refrain from speculation. It is needless and confusing.

In the West Indian Messenger in 1912 are found the following words. They were primarily with respect to what God has revealed concerning the after-life – or perhaps better said – what He has not revealed about the after-life. The principle is clear though. We must not speculate concerning things that God has chosen not to reveal. As we were told

“Matters of vital importance have been plainly revealed in the Word of God. These subjects are worthy of our deepest thought. **But we are not to search into matters concerning which God has been silent.** May God help His people to think rationally. When questions arise upon which we are uncertain, we should ask, **“What saith the Scriptures?”**”

Christ withheld no truths essential to our salvation. Those things that are revealed are for us and our children, ***but we are not to allow our imagination to frame doctrines concerning things not revealed.*** (Ellen G. White, *West Indian Messenger*, 1st July 1912, 'Be not troubled over minor matters')

The latter of course would include such as the trinity doctrine.

In Volume 8 of the Testimonies we find these words

"We are as ignorant of God as little children, but as little children we may love and obey Him. ***Instead of speculating in regard to His nature or His prerogatives,*** let us give heed to the word He has spoken: "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10." (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 8*, page 279 'The essential knowledge')

After quoting Job 28:12-28 the testimony says

"Neither by searching the recesses of the earth nor in vain endeavors to penetrate the mysteries of God's being is wisdom found. It is found, rather, ***in humbly receiving the revelation that He has been pleased to give, and in conforming the life to His will.***" (Ibid page 280)

The following was penned in 1895

"There are many questions treated upon that are not necessary for the perfection of the faith. We have no time for their study. ***Many things are above finite comprehension. Truths are to be received not within the reach of our reason, and not for us to explain.*** Revelation presents them to us to be implicitly received as the words of an infinite God. While every ingenious inquirer is to search out the truth as it is in Jesus, there are things not yet simplified, statements that human minds cannot grasp and reason out, without being liable to make human calculation and explanations, which will not prove a savor of life unto life.

But every truth which is essential for us to bring into our practical life, which concerns the salvation of the soul, is made very clear and positive." (Ellen G. White, *Notebook leaflets from Elmshaven Library*, page 159, Letter 8, 1895)

Truth never changes

Some may say that concerning the Godhead, the beliefs once held by Seventh-day Adventists was the truth at the time when they believed it (in 'the early days') but today it is not the truth. Looking at this in another way, some may say that the beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists 'used to be the truth' (when they believed it) but today it is error – heresy even.

This is something that quite recently a retired Seventh-day Adventist minister urged me to believe. As I told him though, this reasoning does not make any sense. This is because if something was true yesterday then it must be true today – therefore it will still be true tomorrow. Truth never changes.

As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

"Through all these centuries the truth of God has remained the same. That which was truth in the beginning is truth now. Although new and important truths appropriate for succeeding generations have been opened to the understanding, ***the***

present revealings do not contradict those of the past. (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 2nd March 1886, 'The two dispensations')

Note well the remark "the present revealings do not contradict those of the past."

It was said in the [Preface](#) to this study that the underlying issue in this Godhead debate is whether or not concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, the teachings of early Seventh-day Adventists is the truth. If we apply the previous spirit of prophecy counsel to this question, it means that we need to ask if these teachings were in keeping or not with what God has revealed in the past. If we find that what He revealed in the past contradicts what we teach now, then it is obvious that what we teach now is error. This is because truth never changes.

It was then added

"Every new truth understood **only makes more significant the old**". (*Ibid*)

Whilst we would all admit there is more truth to be had, which in itself is undeniable (we certainly do not know everything there is to know) it will not make into error that which is already known to be the truth. As a brother in the church was told

"When the power of God testifies to what is truth, the truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions, contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. Men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. The truth for this time, God has given us as a foundation for our faith. ***He Himself has taught us what is truth.*** One will arise and still another with new light which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy Spirit." (Ellen G. White, *Letter 329, to Elder Burden, December 1905, see Manuscript Release No.760*)

Admittedly the prime thrusts of these words were written in opposition to Ballenger's views on the sanctuary - which were at variance with what was then taught by Seventh-day Adventists - but the principle is deep and wide. That which God has testified to be the truth through the "demonstration of His Holy Spirit" will always remain the truth. No "after suppositions" are to be entertained. This is the purpose of this study. It is to discover what God has established as the truth.

Weight of evidence and personal study

In the introduction to this study we spoke of the 'weight of evidence' method of studying the Scriptures. This is very important. We all need to personally study what the Scriptures reveal and then weigh up what we have found. This is something that one person cannot do for another.

We must not take someone else's word for what we believe. The counsel we have received tells us

"We must study the truth for ourselves. No living man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who it is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a perfect criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject to one another; but at the same time ***we are to exercise the ability God has given us to learn what is truth.***" (*Review and Herald, 18th June 1889, 'The necessity of dying to self'*)

Just because the church to which we belong (whatever church that may be) holds to a certain doctrine, this is not a very good reason for believing it. As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“But God will have a people upon the earth *to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only*, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 595, ‘*The Scriptures a safeguard*’)

The counsel continued

“*The opinions of learned men*, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority--*not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith***. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.” (Ibid)**

Notice the remark about not believing something just because the majority believe it. As was said in the introduction to this study, regardless of what belief it is, this is not a safe reason for believing anything.

Notice too we are told that before we believe anything we should “demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord”. Where in the Scriptures is God spoken of as a trinity of beings as depicted by the trinity doctrine? The answer, as we have seen from above, is nowhere. This is why this three-in-one teaching goes beyond what God has revealed. It is simply philosophical speculation. Certainly we do not have a “Thus saith the Lord” for believing it.

There then came this warning

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. *He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves*. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.” (Ibid)

Here is an appeal not to believe something simply because the ministry and theologians teach it. This said Ellen White is what Satan wants us to do. It is his desire that instead of studying the Scriptures for ourselves, he wants us to believe what is taught by those in positions of senior office simply because they teach it. We must not fall for Satan’s temptations.

In 'The Great Controversy' she wrote

“*It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul’s salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself*. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, *and he ought not to guess at anything***.” (Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, page 598, ‘*The Scriptures a safeguard*’)**

Through His written word, God Himself speaks to us individually. It is His voice we should heed. There is no need for guesswork. How beautiful are these words

“*The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as if we could hear it with our ears*. If we realized this, with what awe we would open God’s Word, and with

what earnestness we would search its precepts. ***The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One.*** (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 4th April 1906, 'The incarnate word', see also *Testimonies Volume 6 page 393*)

How often, when we open our Bibles, do we regard ourselves as having "an audience with the Infinite One"?

No one's conscience to be our own

In 1896 we were counselled

"God has given us all that we possess. It all belongs to him, ***and we are not to sit at the foot stool of any man to obey his orders; for God has made us free moral agents.*** He requires us to preserve our moral independence, and not be bound about by any man. ***Our consciences are to be controlled by no power on earth.*** The Holy Spirit will work upon minds if we will hearken to its faintest whispers. It is the voice of your Advocate in the heavenly courts." (Ellen G. White, July, 1, 1896, written from "Sunnyside," Cooranbong, Australia, 'To the Men who occupy Responsible Positions in the Work')

Through the Scriptures, God speaks to each one of us individually. We need to listen to what He is telling us – not what others say. What men may say – whoever they are - is a distant second to the Word of God. It is God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) who will give us light and understanding. Notice here we are told that the Holy Spirit is "the voice" of our "Advocate in the heavenly courts".

We have also been told in Volume 2 of the Spirit of the Prophecy

"It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. ***It is for them to decide which to accept.*** The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong." (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2, page 371, 'Resurrection of Lazarus', 1877*)

This speaks of personal responsibility. We must each study for ourselves. God though will not force us to believe the truth – even when we are confronted with it.

It is the work of Satan to use compulsion. His kingdom is a kingdom of fear, force and deception. God's kingdom is a kingdom of love, freedom and light – seeking and urging people to believe the truth.

God's servant then added

"God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, ***but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture.***" (*Ibid*)

In the book 'Great Controversy' we find these words

"It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, ***weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.***" (Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*', page 598, 'The Scriptures a safeguard')

That which our church says, either in its fundamental beliefs or in its publications, also what is said by our ministers and our theologians, should not be believed simply because they say it is true. Neither should we believe something just because the majority believe it. As far as our beliefs are concerned, there is no safety in numbers. In other words, we must not feel safe to believe something just because the majority believe it. This is the reasoning of Satan. This is his way of having us feel 'secure' in what we believe. Note here the counsel to "carefully" study the Scriptures. As we are also told here, with "divine help we are to form **our opinions for ourselves**". We are not to rely upon others.

The conclusion is

"Let all search the Scriptures diligently for themselves, and not be satisfied to have the leaders do it for them, else we shall be as a people in a position similar to that of the Jews in Christ's time--having plenty of machinery, forms, and customs, but bearing little fruit to God's glory. It is time for the church to realize her solemn privileges and sacred trust, and to learn from the great Teacher." (Ellen White, letter to G. I Butler, written from Minneapolis October 14th, 1888, Volume 12 Manuscript Releases, MR 998)

It also says in 'The Desire of Ages'

"The church is built upon Christ as its foundation; it is to obey Christ as its head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man. Many claim that a position of trust in the church gives them authority to dictate what other men shall believe and what they shall do. This claim God does not sanction. The Saviour declares, "All ye are brethren." (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages page 414, 'The Foreshadowing of the cross')

It is imperative that we each study the Scriptures for ourselves and then, based upon what we find that God has revealed, we need to draw a conclusion. This is God's ordained method of Bible study. It is the weight of evidence method.

God bless you as you consider the deeper things of His Word – also as you weigh up the evidence you find in this study.

[Proceed to chapter 3, "Godhead not trinity"](#)

Chapter three

Godhead not trinity

The phrase “Godhead or trinity” is often on the lips of Seventh-day Adventists today but here is where exists confusion. This is because the words ‘Godhead’ and ‘trinity’ bear no relation to each other – or to put it another way - these are two different words with two different meanings. The word ‘trinity’ conveys the idea of three-in-one (a compound tri-unity of persons) whilst the word ‘Godhead’ has no such connotations.

The word ‘Godhead’

In the KJV of the Scriptures, the word ‘Godhead’ is used three times. Each time it simply speaks of divinity – meaning that which is divine.

It is found in Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9. It is akin to the old English word ‘Godhood’ which various dictionaries render as ‘the state of being God’ or ‘the state of being divine’ etc (the quality of being God/deity). Many translations do not use the word ‘Godhead’ but use instead various other words to translate the Greek. These are words such as ‘divine nature’ and ‘deity’ etc. The words ‘divinity’ and ‘deity’ do not appear in the KJV.

In Acts 17:29, the word ‘Godhead’ is used to translate ‘theios’. This is an adjective meaning ‘Godlike’ and is exactly the same word as used in 2 Peter 1:3-4. Here it is twice translated ‘divine’.

In Romans 1:20 it is the Greek word ‘theiotes’ which is translated Godhead. This conveys the meaning of ‘divinity’ or ‘divine nature’ (that which is divine).

In Colossians 2:9 the word ‘Godhead’ is used to translate ‘theotes’. The latter has the meaning of ‘the state of being God’ or ‘being divine’. All of these words are from the root ‘theos’ – which in the New Testament is a word commonly rendered as ‘God’.

We can see therefore that when we talk in terms of the three persons of the Godhead – as did Ellen White - this does not necessarily mean three persons in a compound unity (tri-unity) making the ‘one God’ as in the trinity doctrine but that all three are divine (or deity). This is why the phrase ‘Godhead or trinity’ is extremely misleading. It makes it appear that the two words have much the same meaning when in fact they do not. Ellen White never spoke of God as ‘a trinity’ of persons – at least not as depicted by the trinity doctrine – although she did speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as ‘a heavenly trio’. This is as far as she went. We shall see this later. We shall also see in this chapter an explanation of the trinity doctrine.

Jehovah is one (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Trinitarians tend to make a great deal of Deuteronomy 6:4. They say it helps to show that God is a trinity (a compound tri-unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Some even say that it does actually show it. This is because, so they claim, it speaks of God as a plurality. Allow me to explain why they reason this way.

The text in question reads

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is **one LORD**.” Deuteronomy 6:4

Some have suggested that because the Hebrew word ‘echad’ is used here (translated as ‘one’), it means that God the Father, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit must be ‘one’ compound (composite) being – meaning ‘one God’ as in the trinity doctrine. This does not necessarily follow. It is very much an assumption.

The word ‘echad’ does have a basic meaning of singularity - and it does allow for a plurality in the oneness (and is very often used this way in the Scriptures) - but this does not mean that whatever it describes each time is an ‘indivisible compound one’ as God is described in the trinity doctrine. In fact it does not even mean that whatever the word qualifies must be plural. We shall see this later.

In the second chapter of Genesis it says

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: **and they shall be one flesh**.” Genesis 2:24

The word here translated ‘one’ (“one flesh”) is ‘echad’ (this is plurality in oneness) but who would suggest that when two individuals marry they become the same as God is described by the trinity doctrine, meaning one compound being (literally ‘one flesh’)? Even when they are married, it is quite obvious that a man and woman remain two separate individuals – two people who are physically, mentally and spiritually distinct from each other. This is even though they are of one and the same nature (human nature).

The wording “one flesh” is obviously meant to convey an intended perfect unity – a unity that should never experience a ‘dividing asunder’ – although unfortunately, break ups do happen in marriage. The use of ‘echad’ here therefore does not mean a ‘oneness’ that cannot experience division but speaks rather of a perfect unity (perfect unison).

It is the same with ‘one bunch of grapes’. In the Book of Numbers it says

“And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch **with one cluster of grapes**, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. Numbers 13:23

Again the word ‘one’ is translated from ‘echad’ but this does not mean that each grape is attached to the others as an indivisible whole. They can be separated from each other. This clearly shows that this word ‘echad’ does not necessarily mean an indivisible (inseparable) compound unity such as how God is described in the trinity doctrine - albeit it would allow for it.

Other Scriptural examples of the use of ‘echad’ - also a plurality in a ‘oneness’ - is where God said that the people had become ‘one’. This can be seen in such as Genesis 11:6 and 34:16 etc. This is obviously not physically one but a uniting together as one (in unison). In Exodus 24:3 it says the people spoke with ‘one voice’ but again no one would suggest that this is an indivisible composite oneness. It speaks of unison (accord).

It is also true to say that in the Scriptures the word ‘echad’ is consistently used to describe ‘one item’ without plurality. This is the same way that the English word ‘one’ is used. Examples of this can be found in Genesis 1:9 (one place), Genesis 2:21 (one rib), Genesis 10:25 (one son), Genesis 11:1 (one language), Exodus 26:2 (one curtain), Ezekiel 41:11 (one door) and Ezekiel 48:31 (one gate) etc. As used here, the word ‘echad’ is certainly not meant to convey a compound or collective unity – not even a plurality.

This same Hebrew word is also translated in the Scriptures as 'first'. Examples are such as Genesis 1:5 (the first day), 2:11 (the first river), Exodus 39:10 (the first row) and 40:2 (the first month) etc.

In my pursuit of understanding 'echad', I emailed a Jewish Rabbi. He replied to me saying

"Like its English equivalent, the word "Echad" does not preclude the existence of other objects (as in the sequence "one, two, three..."), nor does it preclude its object being composed of parts (we speak of "one nation," "one forest," "one person" and "one tree," despite the fact that each of these consists of many units or components)." (Email, Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin to Terry Hill, 28th March 2011, Extracted from website article, 'The Numerology of Redemption' – sub-heading 'Two shades of one')

He then explained (in comparing 'echad' to 'Yachid' which means a 'solitary one')

"Chassidic teaching explains that, on the contrary, echad represents a deeper unity than yachid. Yachid is a oneness that cannot tolerate plurality -- if another being or element is introduced into the equation, the yachid is no longer yachid. Echad, on the other hand, represents the fusion of diverse elements into an harmonious whole. The oneness of echad is not undermined by plurality; indeed, it employs plurality as the ingredients of unity." (Ibid)

On another Jewish website I found this explanation of both 'echad' and the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4)

"If there is one phrase that encapsulates the Jewish faith, it is the *Shema*, the verse recited by the Jew every morning and evening of his life, and the last words to issue from his dying lips: "Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is one." ***But why, ask our sages, does the verse employ the Hebrew word echad ("one") to connote G-d's unity?*** The word "one" can also be used to refer to something that is one of a series (as in "one, two, three..."), or to something composed of several components (as in "one loaf of bread," "one human being," "one community"). G-d's unity transcends such "oneness", as Maimonides states in the opening chapter of his Mishneh Torah. Would not the Hebrew word *yachid* ("singular," "only one") have been more appropriate?

But singularity is a challengeable oneness, ***a oneness that may be obscured by the emergence of plurality***. As we have seen, when G-d's infinite potential is expressed in the countless particulars of a diverse creation, this results in a concealment of His oneness. The life-endeavor of the Jew is to effect a truer expression of G-d's oneness -- the oneness of *echad*. *Echad* is the oneness of harmony: not a oneness which negates plurality (and which plurality therefore obscures), ***but a oneness that employs plurality as the implement of unity***" (Website article, 'Three Divine Echoes: Singularity, Plurality and Oneness' Based on the Chassidic discourse "Heichaltzu 5659" by Rabbi Shalom DovBer of Lubavitch; adaptation by Yanki Tauber, www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3028/jewish/Three-Divine-Echoes-Singularity-Plurality-and-Oneness.htm)

From all of the above it can only be concluded that 'echad' certainly depicts a plurality in oneness although it does not necessarily mean that each time it is used it is describing something that cannot be divided. It appear to me that rather than physical unity, it has more to do with unison (accord). If there is an over emphasis on a physical plurality this could be missed. The word 'echad' can also be used of a single item without plurality, also a compound unity if the context demanded it. How this word is to be understood must be determined by its usage (the context). This is how the English word 'one' is understood.

The text itself (Deuteronomy 6:4) says - "YHVH *eloheinu* YHVH *ehad*" – which literally has the meaning (as we would say in English) - "Yahweh our God Yahweh one". Needless to say, the Hebrew can be rendered and interpreted a number of different ways. Here are a few of them

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" The New American Standard Bible

"Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God *is* one Jehovah." Green's Literal translation

"Listen, people of Israel! The LORD our God is the only LORD." New Century Version

"Hear, Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah;" The Darby Translation

"Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God [is] one Jehovah;" Young's Literal Translation

The word 'trinity' – as in the trinity doctrine

Within Christianity there are two basic understandings of God being a trinity. One of these can be found in the trinity doctrine normally termed orthodoxy – which is held by such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church etc – whilst the other version, a different understanding, is found in the version of the trinity held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Whilst I freely admit that I do have certain sympathies with the orthodox version – meaning I can understand the reason why God is explained in this way by the orthodox trinitarians - I cannot say the same concerning the Seventh-day Adventist version. In the light of what God has revealed in the Scriptures – also through the spirit of prophecy - I cannot see how the latter version comes anywhere near being plausible. This of course is a personal opinion. Others will reason differently.

In orthodoxy and in keeping with the Scriptures, the Son is said to be begotten of the Father (albeit eternally begotten) whilst the Holy Spirit is said to be proceeding. This is either from the Father or from the Father and the Son (this is a variant within the orthodox version). Unfortunately, this teaching goes far beyond what God has revealed and says that all three exist inseparably in the one indivisible substance (essence) of God therefore constituting the 'one God'. This is why it is said that God is three-in-one – hence the term 'trinity'. As has been said, this is going beyond what God has revealed – and there are implications of this teaching that are contrary to the gospel. These we shall encounter in more detail later although they have already been mentioned in [chapter 1](#).

The Seventh-day Adventist version of God being a trinity is very much different although the basics reasoning making God three-in-one is the same.

In the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine, the person in the Scriptures who describes Himself as the Son of God (see John 3:16-17 and 9:35-37) is said not to be, in His pre-existence, a real son. Instead He is said to be only role-playing the part of a son (pretending to be a son). In consequence, this means that the Father is not really the father of Christ therefore He is only role-playing the part of a Father (pretending to be a father). The third person, the Holy Spirit, is said to be a person in exactly the same sense as the Father and the Son are persons, therefore He does not proceed from either of them. Instead He is said to be role-playing the part of a Holy Spirit (acting the part of a holy spirit). We shall see this in more detail in [chapter 12](#). All three though, as in the orthodox trinity doctrine, are said to exist inseparably together in one indivisible substance as the 'one compound (composite)

God'. It is the latter that makes the Seventh-day Adventist belief truly trinitarian. If this 'oneness' was not confessed, then their 'trinity belief' would not be trinitarian.

Not the best terminology

In the Review and Herald of October 6th 1977, a question was published that was sent in by a reader. It said

"What is the Adventist teaching on the Trinity? I have always seen the Trinity as three persons in the Godhead. I have never thought of God the Father or the Holy Spirit as having a material or physical body. Nor do I think the Son had a material body until He became man. As I understand it, He now has a material body. Is this in harmony with Adventist teaching?" (Review and Herald, 6th October 1977, 'Bible Questions answered')

The way this question is phrased it does not sound as though it was sent in by a Seventh-day Adventist. From what I have read – and as we shall see later – we have always believed that God has a form. This is something that through the spirit of prophecy has been made very clear to us.

Donald Neufeld who answered this question replied

"The church's statement on the Trinity in its summary of fundamental beliefs is brief. It says, "The Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. (Matt. 28:19; Isa. 44:6; 48:13; Matt. 12:32; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:8, 11.)"—Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, p. 32." (D. Neufeld, Ibid)

Here we can see that the two words "Godhead" and "Trinity" are made to look as though they mean the same thing when they do not ("The Godhead, or Trinity, consists etc..."). This has been the cause of a great deal of confusion amongst us (see above). The statement of our fundamental beliefs referred to here is the one we held prior to our 'new' statement being voted in at the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas Texas. The latter is the one we hold today.

Neufeld did answer this question of whether or not God has body and parts but we shall see this in [chapter 4](#). For now we shall note he wrote concerning the term 'Trinity'

"The term Trinity does not appear in the Bible. Trinity is a theological term and is variously interpreted and defined. With some interpretations Seventh-day Adventists do not agree. Therefore, if the term is used, it should be carefully defined so that people will not attribute to Adventists some of the faulty notions taught under this heading. It may be better to avoid the term and use instead the Biblical term Godhead or Deity." (Ibid)

Neufeld's advice was very sound but it was certainly not heeded. Today we use the word trinity with reckless abandon (without fear of the consequences). Very often those who use it do not know what it really means. Neufeld does not explain what he regards as "faulty notions". He only said there were interpretations of God being a trinity with which the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not agree.

Neufeld's reply was very similar to that which was written by A. T. Jones in 1897 and E. J. Waggoner in 1903. This was when we were still a non-trinitarian denomination.

In 1897, Jones wrote an article called 'How the Catholic Creed was made'. It had as a subtitle (by way of explanation of the content of the article) 'The great trinitarian controversy'. Jones wrote at length of how the trinity creed came to be formulated – also the history behind it etc.

As you may know, the two main opponents in the 4th century 'trinity controversy' were two priests by the name of Arius and Athanasius. The much older Arius defended a non-trinitarian view of God (that he maintained had always been the faith of Christianity) whilst the younger Athanasius promoted a trinitarian view. Athanasius was one of the early 'progressives'. Arius the elder was very much a 'conservative' - also a strict observer of the Scriptures.

Under the sub-heading of 'Warring about human definitions', Jones quoted the author Gibbon as saying that regarding the divinity of the Logos, "the more he [Athanasius] thought the less he comprehended; and the more he [Athanasius] wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts." This led Jones to saying regarding what Athanasius had said (note that this was under the sub-heading 'Trying to put God in a formula')

"It could not possibly be otherwise [than Athanasius admitted], because it was an attempt of the finite to measure, to analyse, and event to dissect, the Infinite. It was an attempt to make the human superior to the Divine. God is infinite. No finite mind can comprehend Him as He actually is. Christ is the word—the expression of the thought —of God; and none but He knows the depth of the meaning of that word. "He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself; . . . and His name is called the Word of God." Rev. 19 :12, 13." (A. T. Jones. Bible Echo, September 3rd 1897, 'How the Catholic creed was made – the great trinitarian controversy')

He then said in the next paragraph

"Neither the nature nor the relationship of the Father and the Son can ever be measured by the mind of man." (Ibid)

Notice Jones does not mention the Holy Spirit. He concluded in the next paragraph

"Therefore, no man's conception of God can ever be fixed as the true conception of God. God will still be infinitely beyond the broadest comprehension that the mind of man can measure." (Ibid)

Jones obviously did not agree with any attempt to explain God by using a formula such as the trinity doctrine (note the article title).

This was similar to what E. J. Waggoner was to write 6 years later. At that time, he was editor of the British 'Present Truth' magazine.

In the July 23rd issue, in 'The editor's private Corner', it was explained by Waggoner that 'a correspondent' (obviously not a Seventh-day Adventist) had written in and had asked 14 questions – each beginning 'Do you believe?' In this issue, Waggoner answered the first 6 of the questions whilst the last 8 he answered in the following week's edition (30th July). These questions were listed in the order they were asked. It is question No. 7 we shall focus our attention on here. The correspondent had asked "Do you believe in the trinity?"

Waggoner replied

"If I knew what you meant by the term, I might tell you; but from the days of Athanasius until now all discussion about the Trinity has been an attempt to define the indefinable and the incomprehensible. Thousands have been put to

death for not professing belief in a formula **which even its professors could not comprehend, nor state in terms that anybody else could comprehend.**” (E. J. Waggoner, *Present Truth – British edition*, 30th July 1903, ‘The editor’s private corner’)

It is obvious that Waggoner had no more regard for the trinity doctrine than did Alonzo Jones. As he so quite rightly said, this teaching “has been an attempt to define the indefinable and the incomprehensible”. This is no different than what Ellen White had said concerning trying to explain God’s existence (see [chapter 2](#) ‘When God is silent’). Notice Waggoner says that even those who had put the formula together could not explain it.

He then added (Waggoner is relating what was then believed by Seventh-day Adventists)

“The Scriptures reveal **"One God and Father of all," our Lord Jesus Christ**, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and **"the eternal Spirit"** through whom Christ offered Himself and was raised from the dead; **but we do not profess any knowledge of them beyond what the Scriptures give us**. In teaching and preaching the Gospel **we always confine ourselves strictly to Scripture terms and language**; those who manufacture terms must be looked to for definitions of them.” (*Ibid*)

He concluded

“It is safest not to presume to define what the Bible has not defined, nor to attempt to explain infinity.” (*Ibid*)

Waggoner here is speaking out against the trinity doctrine. At that time (1903), Seventh-day Adventists were still non-trinitarian. They held to teachings they could define by using Scripture alone. This cannot be done with the trinity doctrine. Waggoner is saying that it is only an assumed doctrine – a teaching invented by men that cannot be defined by using Scripture alone.

Note this was now 5 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'. This is the book in which our leadership (the pro-trinitarians) say that Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity – also the book they say led our denomination to become trinitarian. It is quite obvious that Waggoner never recognised Ellen White as speaking of God as a trinity. As we shall see later, the same can be said of other of our leaders. This type of claim (that in this book Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity) was only made after she died. Note that Waggoner's remarks were made 15 years after the now famous 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. We shall speak in more detail of this in [chapter 14](#).

In the Seventh-day Adventist publication 'The Trinity', Jerry Moon spoke of the Godhead beliefs of William Miller. It was Miller's views of Christ soon returning to earth that led to the movement of people being formed who are now known as Seventh-day Adventists. Moon wrote of Millers beliefs concerning God

“Miller himself held a traditional view of the trinity, but not without a healthy skepticism of philosophical speculation. “I believe in one living and true God,” he declared, “and that there are three persons in the Godhead – as there is in man, the body, soul, and spirit. **And if anyone tell me how these exist, I will tell him how the three persons of the triune God are connected**” (James White, *Life of Miller*, p. 59). Obviously the non-Trinitarian tendency in early Adventism did not come from Miller.” (*Jerry Moon, The Trinity, page 187, 'Anti-Trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist History'*)

Miller is saying that there are three persons of the Godhead but that he did not understand how they existed (“are connected”) together. This is exactly what is being said today by the

non-trinitarians. It is the trinitarians who are saying that they know how the three divine personalities exist together (are connected together) and have therefore devised a formula to depict it. I would say undoubtedly, especially as Miller said he believed in the “one living and true God” (which probably he means ‘the Father’ – see Matthew 16:16, John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6), that he was far from being traditional in his views. It appears he was more in keeping with the non-trinitarians.

We shall now take a look at the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God being a trinity. This is as it is professed in our current official fundamental beliefs. This is the belief that was voted in at the 1980 Dallas General Conference session.

Fundamental belief No. 2 of Seventh-day Adventists

In a denominational book published to explain the official fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church it says

“There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe ... An exposition of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, page 23, 2005*)

Please note that this is our denominational fundamental belief No. 2. Relatively speaking, it is quite a recent addition to our official beliefs. It was first voted in at the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas, Texas – which was 136 years after our beginnings as a movement of people (1844). Notice here it says that the “one God” is “a unity of three co-eternal Persons”. It is this “unity” part that makes this a true trinity profession. If this was omitted it would not be trinitarian.

This belief then describes this unity (trinity) “one God” by explaining

“God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation” (*Ibid*)

Note here the use of the personal pronouns ‘He’ and ‘His’. From this it could be concluded that the Seventh-day Adventist ‘trinity God’ is considered to be a personal being (of sorts). This is rather interesting because beliefs No 3, No 4 and No 5 depict the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit also as persons. It could be interpreted therefore (from this) that Seventh-day Adventists are saying that their compound trinity God is three persons in one personal being although it does say seven pages later

“While the Godhead is not one in person, God is one in purpose, mind, and character. This oneness does not obliterate the distinct personalities of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Nor does the separateness of the personalities within the Deity destroy the monotheistic thrust of Scripture that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God.” (*Ibid page 30*)

Here it is being said that “the Godhead is not one in person” but it does claim that the Scriptures say that the individual personalities of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who make up the Godhead are together the “one God”. It appears therefore that the “one God” is not a person – even though personal pronouns are used (see above). This seems very confusing.

In [chapter 28](#) where we shall be taking a look at how the trinity doctrine was first voted into our fundamental beliefs (this was in 1980), we shall see that this use of the personal pronoun caused problems.

Concerning this three-in-one God being described with a pronoun – also under the sub-heading ‘Three-in-Oneness’ - Jo Ann Davidson (as Professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Andrews University) wrote in an article in the March 2011 edition of ‘Adventist World’ (this was with reference to our Fundamental belief No. 2)

“God refers to Himself both as “He” and “Us”. In the Old Testament the plural form of one of the nouns for God (‘elohim’) is quantitative. “Let us make man in our image.” (Jo Ann Davidson Ph. D, *Adventist World*, March 2011, ‘God in three persons – Blessed Trinity’)

This is making the ‘trinity God’ a person. Personally speaking, I have always taken this (“Let us make man in our image”) as God the Father speaking to the Son – not God speaking to Himself.

The same is said by Ellen White. In ‘Early Writings’ she penned these words (this was after saying that “Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Christ)

“But when God said to His Son, “Let us make man in our image,” Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man, and because he was not, he was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. He desired to receive the highest honors in heaven next to God.” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 145, see also *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 1, page 17, 1858*, also *Volume 3, page 33*)

“After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out their purpose, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. And now God says to his Son, “Let us make man in our image.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 9th January 1897, ‘The Great Controversy: The fall of Satan; The creation’)

An ‘official’ consensus statement

If the above trinity belief sounds somewhat confusing, perhaps an explanation of it will help. It comes to us from an Associate Director of our Biblical our Biblical Research Institute (BRI) – namely Ekkehardt Mueller. This explanation was published in the BRI’s newsletter ‘Reflections’. Before we read it though, we need to see the background to it being made. Background is always very important.

Just over three years ago in May 2008, a ‘trinity congress’ was held in Australia. It was convened because of the upheaval in our church, particularly in Australia, concerning the ‘trinity’ teaching. Regarding this meeting, there follows a few snippets from the newsletter. They help us to understand why this congress was called – also its end result. Following this we shall see an ‘official’ explanation of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God as a trinity (a tri-unity) of persons.

“From May 1-4 more than 65 theologians and biblical scholars, administrators, teachers, and pastors from all over the South Pacific Division, met in Wahroonga/Sydney to study and discuss the doctrine of the Trinity. The meetings were graced with the presence of guests like Brian Edgar, professor of systematic theology at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, Ekkehardt Mueller from the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, and Kai Arasolo from Mission College in Thailand. **The delegates had prepared for the congress by reading significant recent articles on the issue.”** (Biblical Research Institute newsletter ‘Reflections’, July 2008, page 4)

The newsletter also said

“Australia has been severely challenged over the last couple of years by well organized anti-Trinitarian groups who continue to spread their propaganda and strategically target churches and ministers. Yet, as expressed in the opening address by Paul Petersen, Field Secretary of the division and organizer of the congress, though discussing issues in light of these threats, we study the Trinity not just for polemical or apologetic reasons. **As Adventists we pursue a deeper of understanding of who God is, and that quest for a deeper knowledge of the God we worship motivates us to reflect on His nature as the triune God** who has revealed Himself to us as a person in Jesus Christ and through the workings of the Holy Spirit.” (*Ibid*)

Nothing is said here concerning the Father (which is not unusual in ‘trinity discussions’) but God is described as “the triune God”.

This pursuit of “a deeper of understanding of who God is” could be interpreted as using to the wrong ends what God has revealed. As we noted in [chapter 2](#), we have been counselled through the spirit of prophecy that the things which God has revealed concerning Himself are not to be used in an attempt to explain Him. As we were also told, if this is attempted, then Satan is standing by to give wrong conceptions of God. If the trinity doctrine is not an attempt to explain God, then what is it? Here the warning bells should be heard ringing – very loudly.

After saying that scholars from around the world had been invited to contribute to the congress it was explained

“The congress was for **invitees only and limited to a certain academic level.**” (*Ibid*)

It was not just ‘anyone’ who was allowed to attend. The conference was only for those who were regarded as having reached ‘a certainly level of scholarship’. It would appear to me that to understand the truth it is more important for the emphasis to be on humility rather than on scholarly achievements. As we noted in [chapter 1](#) we have been counselled through the spirit of prophecy

“All this spirit of bigotry and intolerance must be taken away, **and the meekness and lowliness of Christ must take its place before the Spirit of God can impress your minds with divine truth.**” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 27th August 1889, ‘The test of doctrine’*)

We are not told here that to understand truth we need to have a certain level of education.

The ‘Reflections’ article later said

“During the last day of the congress delegates worked on and **finalized a statement** intended for the wider church community, **unanimously voted by the delegates.**” (*Biblical Research Institute newsletter ‘Reflections’, July 2008, page 5*)

There then followed a ‘Consensus Statement’ (with “the wider church community” in mind) which bullet pointed various aspects of the conclusions drawn at the congress. Leading up to this it said

“**The Seventh-day Adventist Church has expressed its position on the Godhead in its fundamental beliefs.** Paragraph 2 speaks about the Godhead, and paragraphs 3-5 describe each of the three persons of the Trinity.” (*Ibid*)

The following consensus therefore is in support of, also an explanation of, our fundamental belief No. 2 (which does say that the 'one God' is a trinity of persons). This consensus says

"We, a group of Seventh-day Adventist Christians, theologians, pastors, and administrators, convening in Wairoa, have been invited by the South Pacific Division to study biblical, theological, and historical aspects of this doctrine." (Ibid)

There then followed the consensus statements, the first two of which read

- "On the basis of our study of Scripture we affirm our belief in **"one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal persons"** (Fundamental Belief # 2).
- We understand the eternal pre-existence and full divinity of Jesus and the distinct divine personality of the Holy Spirit **to be essential to our belief in the full redemption and atonement in Jesus Christ.**" (Ibid)

The first statement is the affirmation of our Fundamental Belief No. 2. This is as it is set out in our published fundamental beliefs. The second statement is obviously as this **"eternal pre-existence and full divinity"** (concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit) is expressed in our present trinity doctrine but this was not believed as such by early Seventh-day Adventists.

As we shall see in chapters 13 to 17, our early brethren did believe in the full and complete divinity of Christ but this is as it is expressed in the Scriptures, not as it is expressed in the trinity doctrine. This is because in the Scriptures this three-in-one teaching cannot be found stated. It is just a man made assumption which at the end of the day fails the Bible test for authenticity. It is an attempt to explain what God has not revealed – and in doing so detracts from the gospel of Jesus and the love of God. This is as it is seen in the Father giving His one and only Son as a sacrifice for our redemption. Every day this is coming to be realised by more and more Seventh-day Adventists.

Notice Mueller says here that the **"full divinity of Jesus and the distinct divine personality of the Holy Spirit"** (obviously as depicted in their version of the trinity doctrine) are **"essential to our belief in the full redemption and atonement in Jesus Christ"**. Here there is a very serious implication that if a person does not accept these beliefs, as expressed in the Seventh-day Adventist three-in-one understanding of the 'one God', then that person does not believe in **"the full redemption and atonement in Jesus Christ"**. This would have application to almost all (if not all) Seventh-day Adventists who lived during the time of Ellen White's ministry - also countless hundreds of thousands who lived during the decades immediately following her death.

I say this because during these two time periods, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, by virtue of the beliefs of its members, was predominantly non-trinitarian. This consensus statement, as published in 'Reflections' (see above), could be taken as saying that a belief in the trinity doctrine is equal to (the same as) righteousness by faith. Read it again and you will see what I mean.

The non-trinitarians believe that the Holy Spirit is both God and Christ omnipresent (see John 14:18, 23 and Romans 8:9). This obviously means that they do believe in His full and complete divinity – also that He is a divine personality - but they believe also that by us (by fallen humanity) His nature cannot be understood. This is because God has not revealed it. For this reason the non-trinitarians say we should not conjecture concerning His nature – which would certainly mean it cannot be said that He is a person exactly the same as the Father and the Son.

Both the Father and the Son have a spirit. The Bible is very clear on this point (Romans 8:9). Are we to say also, if the Holy Spirit is said to be a person exactly like the Father and the Son, that He too has a spirit? I would reason that from Scripture, also from the spirit of prophecy, this would be very difficult to prove.

Did you notice that except where He is said to be part of the “one God”, again no mention is made of the Father? No consensus statement was made concerning Him – only concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit.

An ‘official’ explanation

We shall now take a look at how the trinity doctrine is explained. This is as it was set out in this same article in ‘Reflections’. It was in the form of a Bible study and was written by Ekkehardt Mueller - Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute - who was in attendance at the conference. This then is an ‘official’ explanation.

Under the heading “One God and Three Persons” Mueller wrote

“There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), however, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all called God (Matthew 27:46, John 20:28: Acts 5:3-4). Consequently, we do not worship three Gods, but one God who reveals Himself in and consists of three “persons”. **The three persons share one indivisible nature.**” (Ekkehardt Mueller, *Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 8, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*)

This is basic trinity reasoning. It goes beyond what God has revealed but without it (that the three persons exist inseparably in “one indivisible nature” as the ‘one compound God’) there would be no such teaching as the trinity doctrine - at least not as it is generally known today.

Mueller also said

“Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, **each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two.**” (*Ibid*)

Please note the part which is highlighted here. This really is very important – albeit it is only basic trinitarianism. We shall return our thoughts to this later.

He then concludes this section

“This concept of God surpasses our experiences **and our intellect.**” (*Ibid*)

It certainly does. It also goes beyond what God has revealed. How can this ‘one God’ be imagined?

Concerning the Seventh-day Adventist belief of God being a trinity (a compound entity of three inseparable individual persons) Mueller said (this was under the heading ‘Results’)

“We do not believe in three Gods but **one God in three persons.** These three personalities participate **in one substance.** In the divine unity there are **three coeternal and coequal persons,** who, though distinct, **are the one undivided God.**” (*Ibid page 9*)

Note the word “coeternal” here. This denies the true Sonship of Christ – unless of course it is argued, as is said in the orthodox trinity doctrine, that the Son is ‘everlastingly begotten’ of the Father therefore He is everlastingly a son – which is not truly Scriptural. It is also saying

that God is 'one entity' (one unit) of three inseparable divine persons who participate in "one substance". Nothing like this is stated in Scripture – nor in the spirit of prophecy.

With regards to Mueller's reasoning, if she were here today, I can imagine Ellen White saying (as we noted in [chapter 2](#))

"Let no one venture to explain God. Human beings cannot explain themselves, and how, then, dare they venture to explain the Omniscient One? Satan stands ready to give such ones false conceptions of God." (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 132, Nov. 8, 1903, "God's Chosen People)

I can also hear her say

"The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children. Beyond this, human beings are not to attempt to go. We are not to attempt to explain that which God has not revealed." (Ibid)

In his Bible study beginning on page 8, Mueller lists the 'evidences' from the Scriptures for God being a trinity. Regarding the Old Testament proof, he cites a portion of Genesis 1:26 saying "Let us make man...", the reference Exodus 3:2-4 saying "The angel of the Lord is a person of the deity", and Psalms 45:7-8 saying "God is anointed by God". Interestingly this is said under the heading "***Hints for the Existence of a Triune God in the Old Testament***". In other words, this trinity teaching is only ***hinted*** at in the Old Testament not explicitly expressed (says Mueller). This is the same as is admitted by many trinitarians (see [chapter 2](#)). Nothing more is said by Mueller of Old Testament hints.

Regarding the New Testament Scriptures, Mueller cites 4 passages of Scripture which he says (on page 9) contain what he terms "Trinitarian Formulas in the NT". He lists these as 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Jude 20-21, 1 Peter 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 13:14. I would invite you to read these passages and ask yourself if this is enough evidence (for you) to formulate such a teaching as the trinity doctrine – also whether you think that concerning God, these Scriptures do actually contain "Trinitarian Formulas". Remember, this is given as the evidence for the New Testament Scriptures teaching that God is a trinity. What say you?

As you read these passages, it is important to remember that there are millions of people who believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit but do not believe that God is a triune entity as expressed in the trinity doctrine. In other words, just because the Scriptures mention the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (as do the cited Scripture above), this in itself is not a trinity doctrine. The trinity doctrine is to do with what is believed concerning the three personalities – meaning whether or not it is accepted that all three exist inseparably connected together as the 'one compound God'. It is this that would determine a belief that God is a trinity or not. As has been said, many believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit but they do not believe that God is a trinity (as purported by the trinity doctrine).

Ekkehardt Mueller concluded his study by saying

"This doctrine of God is a biblical doctrine. However, it surpasses our understanding. We accept it because it is taught by God's Word and because we have to expect that God is not just a superman. He is and remains God, and surpasses our feelings, our will and our intellectual capacities." (Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 9, 'Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study')

As we noted in [chapter 2](#), the trinity doctrine cannot be found in Scripture so we know that where Mueller says it is "taught by God's Word" this is serious error. The trinity doctrine is not a biblical doctrine. It is an invention of the church – therefore because of this we do not

have to accept it. Certainly as far as our salvation is concerned it is not something needed to be believed.

It is very interesting that Mueller says we cannot understand this teaching. Why should this be said of something that 'the church' invented? This is not logical. If we cannot understand it then how did it come to be formulated in the first place – also how can we believe it? Is it being said that the church has formulated something about the existence of God that no one can understand? It certainly seems that way.

An inseparable unity

We noted above that Mueller said that “each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two”, also that the three “are the one undivided God” (see Mueller above).

Commenting on the threeness and oneness of the trinity doctrine - also after saying that the English word 'person' has its origins in the Latin word 'persona' which at one time meant the mask an actor would wear to identify his (or her) part in a play - Richard Rice made this comment

“Because “person” means something different now, some of the familiar analogies for God break down rather quickly. We cannot, for example, think of God as a family of three, or as a committee that always votes unanimously. **This separates the persons and compromises God’s unity.**” (Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, page 92, 'A constructive proposal', 1985)

This is typical trinity reasoning. The three personalities of the Godhead are not considered separate persons as we normally think of separate persons. Each one is said to be God as a whole Himself - hence the terminologies, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

As Rice had previously explained

“Whenever God works, **all of God works.** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit **are not parts of God**, somehow added together to make the total divine reality. **Each is wholly God.**” (Ibid, page 91)

The above is probably the type of reasoning which led to one of our early Seventh-day Adventists saying

“**What a contradiction of terms is found in the language of a trinitarian creed:** “In unity of this Godhead are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” (A. J. Dennis, ‘Signs of the Times’ May 22nd 1879, page 162 article ‘One God’)

Dennis then said

“There are many things that are mysterious, written in the word of God, but we may safely presume **the Lord never calls upon us to believe impossibilities. But creeds often do.**” (Ibid)

This is very true. God reasons with us through our intellect - the intellect that He gave to us.

Mueller's conclusion

Returning our thoughts to Mueller's Bible study, in conclusion he explained (needless to say in stark contrast to what was said by A. J. Dennis)

*"The doctrine of the trinity **allows us to understand the plan of salvation and other biblical doctrines.**" (Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 9, 'Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study')*

Mueller does not explain what he means by these remarks but within them there is a very serious implication. This is that without a belief in the trinity doctrine, neither the plan of salvation nor certain other biblical doctrines (whatever they may be) can be understood. Why Mueller should reason this way I do not know because the trinity doctrine is only a man-made assumption. Certainly it is not found in the Scriptures.

This implication seriously affects our early Seventh-day Adventists – meaning all those who lived during the time of Ellen White's ministry – plus those who lived during the decades immediately following her death. Almost all of them rejected the trinity doctrine. Is Muller saying that all these hundreds of thousands of Seventh-day Adventists did not understand the plan of salvation – plus certain other unnamed biblical doctrines? Obvious to relate, Mueller's remarks do have very serious implications. This is not only concerning our past non-trinitarians but also with respect to those today who are not trinitarian.

If this is what is being said (that non-trinitarians do not understand the plan of salvation), then this is quite an allegation. This is because many of our past non-trinitarians were famous names within Seventh-day Adventism. These were such as James White (the husband of Ellen White), J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, John Loughborough, Joseph Bates and R. F. Cottrell, as well as many others. All of these rejected the trinity doctrine. Are we to believe that none of these understood the plan of salvation?

Nowhere can be found either where Ellen White confessed the trinity doctrine. Are we to say the same of her? In fact as we shall see later, because of her beliefs, Ellen White can never be termed a trinitarian, at least not with respect to how God is explained in the trinity doctrine.

It is also saying – because the trinity doctrine was not invented until the fourth century of the Christian era – that all the Christians who lived prior to this time did not understand the plan of salvation. This does not seem reasonable even to consider.

It is quite obvious that without the trinity doctrine, the plan of salvation can be understood. In fact I would say that to understand it correctly one would need to be a non-trinitarian. What the trinity doctrine has to do with understanding the gospel I have no idea. As has been said previously, the trinity doctrine destroys certain teachings of the gospel.

In [chapter 4](#) we shall be taking a look at one of the teachings that the trinity doctrine destroys. Strangely enough, within Seventh-day Adventism today, very little is spoken of it but it is a very important teaching of the Scriptures.

[Proceed to chapter 4, 'The trinity doctrine and spiritual views'](#)

Chapter four

The trinity doctrine and spiritual views

In 1855, one of the most ablest theologians of Seventh-day Adventism wrote concerning the trinity doctrine

“This doctrine destroys the personality of God and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The infamous, measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.” (*J. N. Andrews, Review and Herald, March 6th 1855, ‘The Fall of Babylon’*)

Now why would J. N. Andrews make such a statement? I would say it was for much the same reason as given by Ellen White when she spoke of ‘spiritual views’ that burned up the person of Jesus. This we shall see now.

Spiritual views and the throne of David

In ‘Early Writings’ we find these words

“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus’ countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father’s person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. ***I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had,*** but I could not behold it, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.” (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, page 54, 1882*)

This confirms that God and Christ are two separate persons (two separate individuals) each with a form of their own. If Ellen White is to be believed, this is indisputable. Ellen White later said

“I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him ***if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself.*** Said Jesus, ***“I am in the express image of My Father’s person.”***” (*Ibid page 77, see also Spiritual Gifts, Volume 2 page 74, 1860*)

Again are seen two separate personages – one of whom is the “express image” of the “Father’s person”. Notice that Ellen White did not mention the Holy Spirit – only the Father and the Son. She did not ask either whether the Holy Spirit has a form. I would say this is very interesting – also very significant.

She continued

“I have often seen that the spiritual view took away all the glory of heaven, and that in many minds the throne of David and the lovely person of Jesus have been burned up in the fire of Spiritualism.” (*Ibid*)

The term “Spiritualism”, as it is used here, is not referring to ‘speaking to the dead’ etc but to the holding of ‘spiritualistic views’ that most often deny and destroy the reality (the literalness) of the teachings of the Bible.

It is reasonable to believe that these 'spiritual views' (whatever they were in the mind of Ellen White) denied the belief that both God and Christ each have forms of their own – meaning also that it is a denial that in the Godhead there are two separate individual persons each acting in their own individuality. If this were not so, then why would Ellen White make these remarks?

Notice here we are told that “the spiritual view” took away – at least in people’s minds - “the throne of David”. It is also said this view “burned up” (destroyed) “the lovely person of Jesus”.

By the time that Christ came to earth, it was generally believed amongst the Jews that when the Messiah came He would take to himself the throne of David. It was also generally believed that He would rid their nation of its enemies. This was a misunderstanding of the messianic prophecies and the work of the Messiah. The Jews were confusing the prophecies of the first advent with those of the second. They were not looking for a saviour from sin but a temporal king to rid them of the oppression of the Romans.

As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“The Jewish nation had corrupted their religion by useless ceremonies and customs. This laid a heavy tax upon the people, especially the poorer classes. They were also under bondage to the Romans, and required to pay tribute to them. The Jews were unreconciled to their bondage, **and looked forward to the triumph of their nation through the Messiah, the powerful deliverer foretold in prophecy.** Their views were narrow. **They thought the Coming One would, at his appearing, assume kingly honors, and, by force or arms, subdue their oppressors, and take the throne of David.** Had they, with humble minds and spiritual discernment, studied the prophecies, they would not have been found in so great error as to **overlook the prophecies which pointed to his first advent in humility, and misapply those which spoke of his second coming with power and great glory.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 17th December 1872, ‘The first advent of Christ’, see also *Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2 page 14*)

Notice again the need for humility to understand the Scriptures (this was mentioned in [chapter 1](#)) – also that the Jews expected the coming Messiah to “take the throne of David”.

That Christ would take the throne of David was prophesied through Isaiah. He wrote

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, **upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:6-7

The angel Gabriel who visited the mother of Jesus said to her regarding her promised firstborn

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: **and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:** Luke 1:32

Christ was not to have a temporal reign but a reign which is “for ever”. It is He, upon the throne of David, who will eventually rule this world. What therefore did Ellen White mean when she said that “the spiritual view” took away – at least in people’s minds - this belief?

There is a strong possibility that she had in mind the trinity doctrine – or a view which is very similar. Allow me to explain why.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit – not really individual persons say the trinitarians

As we have previously noted (see [chapter 3](#)), the trinity doctrine says that the 'one God' is three persons sharing one indivisible substance or essence – also that each of the three are ***inseparably*** connected to each other. As was said by Ekkehardt Mueller, Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute (BRI) when explaining our fundamental belief that God was a trinity of persons

*“Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, **each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two.**” (Ekkehardt Mueller, *Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 8, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*)*

If this were the case - that “**each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two**” as the one God - then how can there be a separate person – namely the man Jesus – reigning throughout eternity upon the throne of David? No wonder Ellen White said that the spiritual view – which is an apt description of the trinity doctrine – takes away the throne of David belief from people’s minds, also burning up the very person of Jesus. Obviously it does not actually destroy the reality of these beliefs but it certainly obscures them from a person’s mind. How often have you had your thinking directed to the reign of Christ on earth upon the throne of David? Certainly it is not spoken of very often today within Seventh-day Adventism. When it is reasoned through, if the trinity doctrine is believed to be true, then it would not be spoken of very much.

In 'old Seventh-day Adventism', the throne of David belief was highlighted by Uriah Smith in his book 'Daniel and the Revelation'. He explained that Christ is now sat upon His Father's throne but “But the time is coming when he is to change his position, and, leaving the throne of his Father, take his own throne;” (see page 410 1907 edition). In support of this belief, Smith quotes 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 which he explains because of the use of the pronouns may be rather difficult to understand. Therefore to make sense of the passage, he offers the following “slight paraphrase” (as he calls it)

*“Then cometh the end [of the present dispensation], when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom [which he now holds conjointly with the Father] to God, even the Father; when God shall have put down all rule and all authority and power [that is opposed to the work of the Son]. **For Christ must reign [on the throne of his Father] till the Father hath put all enemies under Christ's feet.** But when God saith, All things are put under Christ [and he commences his reign upon his own throne], it is manifest that God is excepted, who did put all things under Christ. And when all things shall be subdued unto Christ, then shall Christ also himself be subject unto God that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” (Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation, page 410, Chapter 3, 'The Seven churches continued', 1907*)*

With reference to this passage of Scripture Smith says

*“From this it will be seen that the kingdom which Christ delivers up to the Father is that which he holds at the present time upon his father's throne, where he tells us he is now seated. **He delivers up this kingdom at the end of this dispensation, when the time comes for him to take his own throne. After this he reigns on the throne of his father David, and is subject only to God, who still retains his position***

upon the throne of universal dominion. In this reign of Christ the saints participate.”
(*Ibid* page 411)

Whatever Ellen White had in mind (when she said “the spiritual view took away all the glory of heaven, and that in many minds the throne of David and the lovely person of Jesus have been burned up in the fire of Spiritualism”), whether it was the trinity doctrine or something else, we can safely conclude that she was saying this ‘spiritual view’ destroys the belief that God and Christ are two individual divine beings each having forms of their own who are separate from each other.

Very interestingly – also in keeping with what we have been told here through the spirit of prophecy - is a remark in our Sabbath School lesson study in 1998. This set of studies was a repeat (a re-hash) of the 1979 fourth quarter’s lesson study – which happened to be the year previous to the trinity doctrine first being voted into our fundamental beliefs. The latter happened in 1980 at the Dallas General Conference session. This fourth quarter’s study was called ‘Our wonderful God’.

This particular week’s study was promoting God as a trinity. In helping Seventh-day Adventists to understand this concept, also helping all the others who would study this lesson, it said (note the title of this particular day’s lesson was ‘Three persons’)

“The word persons used in the title of today’s lesson must be understood in a theological sense. If we equate human personality with God, we would say that three persons means three individuals. ***But then we would have three Gods, or tritheism.*** But historic Christianity has given to the word *person*, when used of God, a special meaning: a personal self-distinction, which gives distinctiveness in the Persons of the Godhead without destroying the concept of oneness. ***This idea is not easy to grasp-or to explain! It is part of the mystery of the Godhead.***” (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4th Quarter 1998, Lesson 3, October 12th ‘Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’*)

Here it is being said that if we understand the three persons of the Godhead to be individual persons (“three individuals”) in the same sense as we term ourselves individuals, then this is wrong. It is saying we would then have “tritheism”, a terminology used to express the idea of “three Gods”. This is in opposition to the ‘one God’ theory of the trinitarians. In other words, if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are said to be individuals like you and I are individuals, we would not have the ‘one God’ as purported by the trinitarians in their trinity doctrine.

As we mentioned in [chapter 3](#), the Bible does speak of the three personalities of the Godhead but it does not explain how they have their existence together. This does not mean that they do not have a certain ‘oneness’ between them but it does mean that we have no right to attempt to explain it (seeing that God has not revealed it).

When used in discussions concerning the Godhead, the word “tritheism” usually carries with it certain derogatory overtones. It usually means that this type of belief is not Scriptural and that anyone holding to it, as opposed to believing that God is a trinity as in the trinity doctrine (that all three personalities together make up the ‘One God’), actually believes heresy. This is what is being implied here in this Sabbath School lesson study.

As it is, the Seventh-day Adventist Church does have a trinity doctrine therefore it is being said that in their three-in-one theology of God, the persons of the Godhead are not individuals as you and I are individuals. This leads us to ask, if this is true, then what are they? It is no wonder the study says “This idea is not easy to grasp-or to explain”.

The study had said earlier (after quoting texts referring to the baptism of Christ and Matthew 28:19 etc)

“These texts and others lead us to believe that **our wonderful God is three Persons in one, a mind-boggling mystery but a truth we accept by faith because Scripture reveals it.**” (*Ibid*, Lesson 3, October 10th)

After reading the above, it is understandable why J. N. Andrews said concerning the trinity doctrine (as we noted at the beginning of this chapter)

“**This doctrine destroys the personality of God and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** The infamous, measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history **might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.**” (*J. N. Andrews, Review and Herald, March 6th 1855, ‘The Fall of Babylon’*)

For an overview of how the trinity doctrine was formulated, also how it became a teaching of Christianity, please see sections 7, 8 and 9 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

In 1851 James White wrote of taking the 'spiritual' view. He said

“If we take the liberty to say there is not a literal Ark, containing the ten commandments in heaven, we may go only a step further and deny the literal City, **and the literal Son of God. Certainly, Adventists should not choose the spiritual view**, rather than the one we have presented. We see no middle ground to be taken.” (*James White, Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, June 9th 1851, ‘The Parable – Matthew XXV, 1-12’*)

Today, the Seventh-day Adventist Church denies that Christ is the literal Son of God. They say the terminology is only metaphorical or figurative etc. It appears therefore that we, as a denomination, have joined the ranks of those who “choose the spiritual view”. We shall see this later.

The outward form of the Seventh-day Adventist God

Many trinitarians claim that God is without body and parts – meaning that He does not have a form. This is understandable – seeing that they teach He is three inseparable persons in one indivisible substance. If He did have a form, what would this three-in-one God look like? We shall see now how Seventh-day Adventist theologians reason this one.

In our current ‘Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology’ – which is said to explain our fundamental beliefs – it says that God has a form but in our minds we cannot perceive it. This is where it explains the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God being a trinity.

Fernando Canale wrote with reference to God

“**In Himself He is real and has a form**, yet that divine reality and form completely **surpass the reality and capability of comprehension of the highest intelligences.**” (*Fernando L. Canale, Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 113, ‘Doctrine of God’*)

In other words, God has a form but it is beyond the human mind to even imagine it. According to this 'official' current Seventh-day Adventist theology, even “the highest intelligences” (whoever they may be) cannot comprehend it. Does this include angels? The reason why I ask is because Jesus did say that “angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (see Matthew 18:10). If these “highest intelligences” do not

include angels (who are usually assumed to know what God looks like) then who are they? Bear in mind that Jesus said that His Father had a face (Matthew 18:10).

Immediately previous to this statement, Canale had explained that although God can perform tasks such as can you and I can perform, He does not have like body members as we do (like arms etc). He said

“Only God can use analogy to reveal Himself without involving vain speculations. **Some of the analogies God draws are called anthropomorphisms**, that is, they attribute to God characteristics belonging to human beings.” (*Ibid*)

Anthropomorphism is ascribing the characteristics of humanity to someone (or something) not human. This is what Canale is saying here – that God does not have body and parts like as we have but with what He does possess (whatever that may be) He can accomplish the same tasks that we accomplish.

He also says

“In biblical anthropomorphisms, God reveals what He is and **what He can do in terms of human realities.**” (*Ibid*)

By way of explanation Canale then says

“For instance, when God says that He has an arm (Exodus 15:16; Psalm 89:13), **He does not mean that He has exactly or univocally what we call an arm.** The expression signifies that God’s reality is capable of performing all that can be performed by a human arm and infinitely more.” (*Ibid*)

We can see here that God is said not to have arms like us but He can do the things that we do with our arms. Canale concludes

“**We cannot conceive or imagine the actual structure of God’s reality that allows Him to perform these acts.** Yet the analogical language reveals to us aspects of God’s being and divine capabilities, while at the same time guarding the mystery of His divine nature.” (*Ibid*)

According to this reasoning it is impossible for us to understand what God looks like although from Canale’s definition of Him, we know for a certainty He does not look like us.

We know this because as an example of what he means, Canale says that God does not have arms like we do but why stop there? If God does not have arms like we do then perhaps He does not have legs like we do – or a face or a body etc like we do. This is why it must be asked, what does this Seventh-day Adventist God look like?

When Moses was upon Mount Sinai to receive from God the tables of stone with the Ten Commandments written upon them, he said to God “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (Exodus 33:18). God replied to Moses saying

“... I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy ... **Thou canst not see my face:** for there shall no man see me, and live ... Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee **with my hand** while I pass by: **And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.**” Exodus 33:19-23

One can only assume that Canale – also all those who hold to his type of trinity three-in-one theology - believe that God’s face, hand and back parts etc spoken of here are all “anthropomorphisms” (not like ours). This is probably the type of view (the spiritual view) that Ellen White said would take away the truth about the person of Jesus – also about Him reigning throughout eternity upon the throne of David. It certainly takes away the view that God and Christ are two separate persons both having forms like us.

Note that if the parts of the body God spoke of here (face, hands and back parts) are “anthropomorphisms”, then it is God who is guilty of using them. This is because it was He that spoke these words to Moses. In other words, it was not Moses who used “anthropomorphisms” but God Himself. Moses was simply relating (recording under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) the words he had heard God speak.

From what we have read above, the trinitarians are saying that the three persons of the Godhead are not really persons as we perceive persons to be (individuals like us) – also that we have no idea as to what God looks like.

In 1977 – also in answer to the question of what Seventh-day Adventists taught concerning the trinity (we noted this question in [chapter 3](#)) - Don Neufeld said concerning the statement of belief in our church manual (please note that this was in 1977, before our present ‘1980 statement of beliefs’ was formulated)

“Worthy of note is the fact that this statement makes **no comment on whether the members of the Godhead have physical or material bodies.**” (Don F Neufeld, *Review and Herald*, October 6th 1977, ‘Bible questions answered’)

He then said

“Adventists have been **reticent to speculate as to this aspect of God's nature.** Speaking of Him, they emphasize His attributes, such as personality, self-existence, transcendence, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, holiness, and love.” (*Ibid*)

He added

“It is true that in the Bible, God is represented as having ears (Ps. 17:6), nostrils (2 Sam. 22:9), a mouth (Deut. 8:3), a hand (Zech. 2:9), feet (Ps. 18:9), **but these are usually considered as being anthropomorphisms**, that is, **expressions attributing to God human characteristics.** They are attempts, it is claimed, to help human beings understand God, who is much above them.” (*Ibid*)

This is much the same as was said by Canale. It is saying that we have no idea as to what God looks like – except that He does not look like us.

The last sentence is very interesting. Who is it that is being said here to be making the attempt to describe God by using human characteristics? According to Neufeld it is the Bible writers but above, where we see God saying that He would make all of His “goodness pass before” Moses, Moses was recording what God actually spoke to him. It can only be concluded therefore, as has been said above, that it was God Himself who used “anthropomorphisms”. After all, it was God who said He had a face, hands and back parts – not Moses.

This was the same with Jesus. He said to his disciples (we noted this above)

“Take 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

Was Jesus using “anthropomorphisms”?

A complete contrast

In complete contrast to what is said here in our denominational ‘Handbook of Theology’, we have been told through the spirit of prophecy that we do look very similar to God. God’s servant wrote

“Man was to bear God’s image, both ***in outward resemblance*** and in character. Christ alone is “the express image” (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; ***but man was formed in the likeness of God.***” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 45, ‘The creation’)

Admittedly no one expects God to look exactly the same as we do in every precise detail but from these remarks (“outward resemblance”) we must look very similar. If we did not look similar, then these comments would be pointless. Certainly what is said here is nothing like as is said in our ‘Handbook of Theology’. Notice we are told that whilst we look like God in “outward resemblance” - also in character - that “Christ alone is “the express image”” of the Father. This is a divine similitude.

On the very same subject we find these words

“In the beginning man was created in the likeness of God ***not only in character but in form and feature***”. (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 4* page 463, ‘God’s people delivered, see also ‘The Great Controversy, page 644’)

Here the emphasis is on “form and feature”. We can see from this that Ellen White would not have agreed with the trinitarian view of God as explained in our ‘Handbook of Theology’. This is one more reason why she must not be called a trinitarian. We shall see other reasons later.

She also said about ‘the spiritual view’ (this is from ‘Early Writings’ as quoted above)

“I have seen that some who have been deceived and led into this error will be brought out into the light of truth, ***but it will be almost impossible for them to get entirely rid of the deceptive power of Spiritualism.*** Such should make thorough work in confessing their errors and leaving them forever.” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 77)

It appears that even if those who had previously accepted the ‘spiritual view’ eventually accept the truth concerning God and Christ (that they are two separate individuals each with forms of their own), they will find it very difficult to completely rid themselves of it. Such is the power of Satan’s deceptions. We need to be aware of these things.

Something else very interesting we have been told through the spirit of prophecy is that

“Evil originated with Lucifer, who rebelled against the government of God. Before his fall he was a covering cherub, distinguished by his excellence. ***God made him good and beautiful, as near as possible like himself.***” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 24th September 1901, ‘Without excuse’)

The inference here is that Lucifer was made to look very similar to God – just as were Adam and Eve. If this is so, this begs a question. If as Canale and Neufeld say we cannot understand what God looks like, then seeing that Satan was created to look very similar to God, then we do not know what Satan looks like either – or any of the other angels – assuming they all look more or less the same.

None of this is reasonable. This is because as we noted above, Canale says that in Himself God has a form yet this surpasses “the **reality and capability of comprehension of the highest intelligences**”. Does this include the angels who according to the spirit of prophecy look like God? If so, who then knows what God really looks like? If Canale’s reasoning is true – also what we are told here in the spirit of prophecy - even the angels who were made to look like God do not know what God looks like. What sense does this make?

All of this reminds me of a statement from the spirit of prophecy. This is where Ellen White said (this was written in the backdrop of the Kellogg crisis which we shall speak of later)

*“The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science represent, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. **God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being, for man was made in His image.**” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 8, page 263, ‘The essential knowledge, 1904*)*

What would be the point in saying we were made in God's image if we do not look like Him – and what would be the point in saying that Christ is the “express image” of God's person (Hebrews 1:3) if Christ does not look like God? One assumes that if the Scriptures say these things, which they do, then the image must be very similar to the original.

Beyond and contrary to divine revelation

Needless to say, the Seventh-day Adventist reasoning that the ‘one God’ is an indivisible (inseparable) compound trinity of persons goes far beyond what God has revealed. This is either through the Scriptures or through the spirit of prophecy. In fact to say that each of the three is “**inseparably connected to the other two**” denies that it was possible for the divine Son of God, even though He became incarnate, to have become lost if He had sinned. In brief, it denies that the Father and the Son are two separate individuals – each acting in their own individuality.

This deprives the gospel of the risk taken, in the plan of redemption, by both the Father and the Son. It also conceals to a great extent the love that God and Christ have for fallen humanity. This is because it obscures the fact that in attempting to save mankind from sin, God was willing to allow His own Son (as we would say of ourselves – His own flesh and blood) to go out of existence.

It may sound a very strange thing to say but the trinitarians say that Christ, even in the incarnation, was not separated from the Father. We shall return to this thought in chapters [24](#) and [25](#).

The Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine even denies that God gave His Son. This is simply because it is said that God never had a son to give. Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians say, as does Muller (see [chapter 3](#)), that the three divine personalities are “**coeternal and coequal persons**” – thus denying that in eternity, Christ was begotten of God. This is something else we shall return our thoughts to later.

A confusion of faith

As we can see from the above, apart from denying certain truths of the gospel, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, by their adoption of the trinity doctrine (God is three inseparable

persons in one indivisible substance), has involved itself in needless speculation – meaning they have taken to assuming things that God has chosen not to reveal. This in turn has been the cause of disharmony amongst God’s remnant people – even confusion.

We were told this would happen. This is when as God’s messenger Ellen White wrote

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, **that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 28th May 1894, 'Delusions of the last days')*

It is the rejection of truth, when it is clearly presented, that causes the conscience to be “seared”. This is why before rejecting anything we must check it out very carefully (see Proverbs 18:13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

As we shall see now, Ellen White had in mind here the rejection of truth concerning God and His Son. This we know because she added

*"Before the last developments of the work of apostasy **there will be a confusion of faith.**" (Ibid)*

Isn't this how it is within Seventh-day Adventism today? Amongst us there is definitely a “confusion of faith”.

It was further explained

*"**There will not be clear and definite ideas concerning the mystery of God. One truth after another will be corrupted.**" And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (Ibid)*

This prediction has been fulfilled precisely. Many Seventh-day Adventists today are confused as to what to believe. This is not only concerning the Godhead itself but also regarding the incarnation – which will of course depend on how the Godhead is understood (viewed).

As we continue this study, we shall also see that “One truth after another” has been “corrupted”. This is what enabled our denomination to accept the trinity doctrine. If the truth about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit had been maintained – as was once taught by Seventh-day Adventists - it would have been impossible to adopt this three-in-one teaching.

The trinity doctrine may sound a rather sophisticated way to describe God but we need to heed the warning

*"The follower of Christ will meet with the "enticing words" against which the apostle warned the Colossian believers. **He will meet with spiritualistic interpretations of the Scriptures, but he is not to accept them. His voice is to be heard in clear affirmation of the eternal truths of the Scriptures.** Keeping his eyes fixed on Christ, he is to move steadily forward in the path marked out, discarding all ideas that are not in harmony with His teaching. **The truth of God is to be the subject for his contemplation and meditation. He is to regard the Bible as the voice of God speaking directly to him. Thus he will find the wisdom which is divine.**" (Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, page 474, 'Written from Rome', 1911)*

*"**God has led us in the past, giving us truth, eternal truth. By this truth we are to stand. Some of the leaders in the medical work have been deceived, and if they***

continue to hold fanciful, spiritualistic ideas, they will make many believe that the platform upon which we have been standing for the past fifty years has been torn away. (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B No.7* page 38, 'Decided action to be taken now', 1903)

Divided loyalties

Some who are loyal to the church realise that by our denominational adoption of the trinity doctrine, we have gone 'much too far' in our theology. They realise that the belief that God is a trinity, as depicted by the trinity doctrine, cannot be supported by Scripture - yet they still wish to remain loyal to the church. This has brought about a conflict of loyalties – a conflict that should never even have arisen. In other words, the adoption into our fundamental beliefs of the trinity doctrine is causing tension amongst God's people where tension should never have existed.

As God's remnant people we need to rid ourselves of this needless and unprofitable speculating. We need to rid ourselves also of the confusion that presently exists amongst us. This would mean that instead of speculating concerning things that God in His wisdom has kept to Himself, we need to concentrate more on what He has chosen to reveal – and then only to serve Him more acceptably. We are not to use these things to explain Him.

There is no value or scholarly achievement in debating things that God has not revealed. Neither will it provide any profit to our understanding of God or add to our spiritual experience. Speculation about God will certainly not help bind us together as 'one people'. This is readily proven by the division that already exists amongst us.

Ellen White continued in her previously quoted testimony

"There are many who deny the preexistence of Christ, and therefore deny his divinity; they do not accept him as a personal Saviour. This is a total denial of Christ. He was the only-begotten Son of God, who was one with the Father from the beginning. By him the worlds were made." (*Ibid*)

Within Seventh-day Adventism today this is a crucial issue. The trinitarians are saying that Christ is not begotten of God (the Father) therefore He is not really a son whereas the non-trinitarians are saying exactly the opposite. The latter say He was begotten of God therefore His Sonship to the Father is literal. In other words, say the non-trinitarians, Christ truly is the Son of God. This is what Ellen White is saying here – that Christ is the "**only-begotten Son of God**". Never did she say of the Father or the Holy Spirit that they are begotten – neither do the Scriptures say it. It is only said of the Son.

The great rebellion – the great controversy

Under the chapter title of 'The Fall of Satan', Ellen White penned these words

"Satan in heaven, before his rebellion, was a high and exalted angel, next in honor to God's dear Son." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times, 9th January 1879, 'The fall of Satan', see also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 page 17, 'The Fall of Satan')*

Again Ellen White speaks of Christ as a son prior to the incarnation. Note again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. She says it was Satan who was "**next in honor to God's dear Son**". Where is the Holy Spirit?

She later said concerning Satan

“A special light beamed in his countenance, and shone around him brighter and more beautiful than around the other angels; yet Jesus, **God's dear Son**, had the pre-eminence over all the angelic host. **He was one with the Father before the angels were created.**” (*Ibid*)

Over and over again Ellen White speaks of the pre-existence Christ as being “God’s dear Son”. She then explained – because of the rebellion of Satan

“The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in **the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon his Son**”. (*Ibid*)

She then said

“**The Son was seated on the throne with the Father**, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was **ordained by himself that Christ, his Son, should be equal with himself**; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, **it was as his own presence.**” (*Ibid*)

Here is seen the pre-eminence of the Father. We shall see more of this chapter 5 (‘The Father – the great source of all’). He is the one who is telling the heavenly host that it was Himself (the Father) who had ordained that “his Son, should be equal with himself”. This shows the pre-eminence of the Father. Note that the presence of the Son was to be considered as His (the Father’s) “own presence”. Note too the repeated use of the word “Son”. This cannot be missed.

The explanation was then given

“The word of the Son was to be obeyed **as readily as the word of the Father. His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host.**” (*Ibid*)

Notice the word “had”. It denotes past tense. This investing was not happening at the time of this assembled host but had happened previously. Nevertheless, the point must not be missed. The Father “had invested” Christ “with authority”. It was also explained

“**Especially was his Son to work in union with himself in the anticipated creation of the earth** and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. **His Son** would carry out his will and his purposes, but would do nothing of himself alone. **The Father’s will would be fulfilled in him.**” (*Ibid*)

In this final sentence again we see the pre-eminence of the Father (the Father working through the Son).

Satan was grieved at what had happened. He had not been taken into the councils of God. He went forth therefore – as explained by Ellen White - to cause rebellion amongst the other angels. She then said concerning the angels that sided with Satan

“They were discontented and unhappy because they could not look into his unsearchable wisdom and ascertain his purposes **in exalting his Son Jesus, and endowing him with such unlimited power and command. They rebelled against the authority of the Son.**” (*Ibid*)

The point here is that as a Son, Christ was exalted. He had been endowed by the Father with power and authority. This exalting had been the prerogative of the Father. Notice too that it is not said these rebellious angels had rebelled against the authority of the Father but the Son’s authority. In ‘The Desire of Ages’ we read

“To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. **He is invested with the right to give immortality.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 786, ‘The Lord is risen’)

Returning our thoughts to the beginning of the rebellion in Heaven, Lucifer wanted to take the place of Christ in executing the orders of God the Father. As we have been told here concerning Satan (Lucifer)

“He declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, **that God's commands alone will he obey.**” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 3*, page 36, ‘The temptation and fall’, 1864)

“Speaking of Satan, our Lord says that “he abode not in the truth.” He was once the covering cherub, glorious in beauty and holiness. **He was next to Christ in exaltation and character.** It was with Satan that self-exaltation had its origin. **He became jealous of Christ, and falsely accused him, and then laid blame upon the Father. He was envious of the position that was held by Christ and the Father,** and he turned from his allegiance to the Commander of heaven and lost his high and holy estate. Though the angels had a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, though they were happy in the glorious service which they did for the King of heaven, **yet, through his crooked representations of Christ and the Father, the evil one deceived a great company of angels,** drew them into sympathy with himself, and associated them with himself in rebellion.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 22nd October 1895, ‘Satan’s malignity against Christ and His people’)

Did you notice again that there is no reference of Satan being jealous of the position held by the Holy Spirit? We are told that Lucifer was only “envious of the position that was held by Christ and the Father”.

We were also told 10 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’

“**Satan is the leader of every species of rebellion today, as he was the originator of rebellion in the courts of heaven. Standing next to Christ in power and honor, yet he coveted glory that belonged to the Son.** He desired to be equal with God. To carry out his purpose he concealed his true designs from the angels, and worked deceptively to secure their allegiance and honor to himself. **By sly insinuations, by which he made it appear that Christ had assumed the place that belonged to himself, Lucifer sowed the seeds of doubt in the minds of many of the angels;** and when he had won their support, he carried the matter before God, declaring that it was the sentiment of many of the heavenly beings that he should have the preference to Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Educational Messenger*, 11th September 1908, ‘Words of exaltation and warning’)

Returning our thoughts to the previously quoted ‘Signs of the Times’ article, these words can be found

“Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile this first great rebel to the will of his Creator. **They justified the act of God in conferring honor upon Jesus Christ,** and with forcible reasons sought to convince Satan that no less honor was his now than before the Father had proclaimed the honor **which he had conferred upon his Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 9th January 1879, ‘The fall of Satan’, see also *Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1* page 17, ‘The Fall of Satan’)

In ‘Patriarchs and Prophets’, Ellen White explains of this same happening

“There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had ***made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning.*** Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions.” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 36, ‘Why was sin permitted’)

We can see here that this assembly of the heavenly hosts was not to change the order of things. It had been the same from the beginning. This means that from the very beginning Christ had been a Son. This was His “true position” with God. He had been ‘brought forth’ (begotten) of the Father. He was God in the person of the Son. This is how it had always been. This assembly of the heavenly host had not changed anything - neither had it brought about a new order of things. All of this of course is in opposition to the role-playing concept now taught within Seventh-day Adventism (see [chapter 12](#)).

On the same page we are also informed (this was with reference to the angels that were siding with Lucifer)

“Although they had heretofore been in perfect harmony with the order which God had established, they were now discontented and unhappy because they could not penetrate His unsearchable counsels; they were dissatisfied with His purpose in exalting Christ. These stood ready to second Lucifer's demand ***for equal authority with the Son of God.*** But angels who were loyal and true maintained the wisdom and justice of the divine decree and endeavored to reconcile this disaffected being to the will of God. ***Christ was the Son of God;*** He had been one with Him before the angels were called into existence. ***He had ever stood at the right hand of the Father;*** His supremacy, so full of blessing to all who came under its benignant control, had not heretofore been questioned.” (*Ibid*)

Ellen White also wrote this of Christ's exaltation

“Our great Exemplar was exalted to be equal with God. He was high commander in heaven. All the holy angels delighted to bow before Him. “And again, ***when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world,*** He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.” Jesus took upon Himself our nature, laid aside His glory, majesty, and riches to perform his mission, to save that which was lost.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 2* page 426, ‘Importance of self-government’)

“The fallen race could be restored only through the merit of Him who was equal with God. Though so highly exalted, Christ consented to take upon Him human nature, that He might work in behalf of man, and reconcile to God his disloyal subject.” (Ellen G. White, *Messenger*, 26th April 1893, ‘Chosen in Christ’)

It is beneficial here to remember that we have been told through the spirit of prophecy that God made Lucifer “good and beautiful, as near as possible like himself.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 24th September 1901, ‘Without excuse’)

What we do know also is that we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“Before Christ left Heaven and came into the world to die, he was taller than any of the angels. He was majestic and lovely. But when his ministry commenced, ***he was but little taller than the common size of men then living upon the earth.*** Had he come among men with his noble, heavenly form, his outward appearance would have attracted the minds of the people to himself, and he would have been received without the exercise of faith.” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts Volume 4a* page 115, ‘The

Messiah', see also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2 page 39 and Review and Herald 31st December 1872)

From this it does not sound as though Christ was dissimilar in form to the angels but somewhat taller.

Oneness between God and Christ

During her ministry as God's messenger to the remnant, Ellen White never once endorsed a teaching such as the trinity doctrine (God is three inseparable persons in one indivisible substance) – although quite obviously she knew all about it. She even may have held to this belief when she was a Methodist. She knew too that in the early 1900's, talk of God being a trinity was circulating amongst Seventh-day Adventists.

In 1906, in an article called 'The Word made flesh', she did speak of a certain oneness between God and Christ – but this she said, whatever it was, could never be understood by humanity. She wrote

*"There are light and glory in the truth that Christ **was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid**. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, **explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths**, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th April 1906, 'The Word made flesh')*

Here we are informed that prior to the creation of our world there was a 'certain oneness' between God and Christ but even if it was explained (says Ellen White), we would not be able to comprehend it. This is where we should leave it - not attempt to explain it. Particularly we should not invent or adopt a teaching such as the trinity doctrine to do it. Notice in this oneness spoken of here there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. This is rather significant. If Ellen White had regarded the Holy Spirit as a person exactly like God and Christ, would she not have included Him in this oneness? Why leave Him out?

It was also said in 1895

"Christ was one with the Father, on a level with the eternal throne, and the glory of God fell directly upon him, and was reflected to the world in the luster of the greatness of the character of the Son of God." (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 25th April 1895, 'Prejudice blinds to truth')

Here again can be seen the two separate personages of God the Father and the Son of God. We are told that "the glory of God fell directly" upon the Son. These two divine persons must never be confused; neither should they be mingled into one. They are two separate divine beings. No mention here is made of the glory of God resting upon the Holy Spirit. Again we must ask why not?

We have also been told in the 5th Volume of the Testimonies

*"Christ prayed that His disciples might be one **as He was one with the Father**. This unity is the credentials of Christ to the world that God sent Him." (Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 5, page 94, 'Workers in our College')*

This 'oneness' spoken of here can only mean a unity of love, purpose and character etc. It cannot be a physical oneness. This is because as the followers of Christ, we have no such unity. We are separate individuals although we are all bearing the same nature – humanity.

In this same sense we are safe to talk of the three persons of the Godhead but we must not say that God is a compound unity such as depicted in the trinity doctrine (one God). As has been said previously, although human logic and reasoning (intellectualism) may appeal to such a belief, we have no evidence in Scripture for teaching it.

We must be careful that in conjecturing about God we do not make Him and His Son non-entities. As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy here

*"We are now to be on guard, and not drawn away from the all-important message given of God for this time. **Satan is not ignorant of the result of trying to define God and Jesus Christ in a spiritualistic way that sets God and Christ as a nonentity.** The moments occupied in this kind of science are, in the place of preparing the way of the Lord, making a way for Satan to come in and confuse the minds with mysticisms of his own devising. **Although they are dressed up in angel robes they have made our God and our Christ a nonentity.** Why?--because Satan sees the minds are all fitted for his working. Men have lost tract of Christ and the Lord God, and have been obtaining **an experience that is Omega to one of the most subtle delusions that will ever captivate the minds of men.** We are forbidden to . . . set the imagination in a train of conjecture." (Ellen G. White, *Diary*, 48, page 153, 163, Aug. 25 and Aug. 28th 1904)*

"Those who are true to the divine Leader will hold fast to the simplicity of the gospel, and will put away the masterly sentiments and sophistries that are coming in to deceive. Those who would have saved from the wily, deceptive influences of the foe must now break every yoke, and take their position for Christ and for truth. They must reject all fictitious sentiments, which, if accepted, will spoil their faith and their experience. Unless they obtain this freedom, they will go on step by step in the downward path, until they deny Him who has bought them with the price of His blood.

*This is the message that I am instructed to bear to our physicians. The Lord calls upon those who claim to be medical missionaries to free themselves from the control of any human mind. He says: "Break every yoke. My servants are not to be under the jurisdiction of any man. **Their minds belong to Me. They have not been sold into bondage to any human being, for him to lead into philosophical speculation and spiritualistic theories.**" (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No. 2*, pages 45, 46, 'Freedom in Christ')*

In [chapter 5](#) we shall discover what the Scriptures tell us concerning the Father. We shall follow this by taking a look at what God has revealed concerning His Son. The latter is covered in three chapters.

[Proceed to chapter 5](#), 'The Father – the great source of all'

Chapter five

The Father - the great source of all

In discussions concerning the three persons of the Godhead, it is not the norm for the Father to be given a great deal of coverage. The main debate is usually concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, throughout the Scriptures it is the Father who is seen as having the pre-eminence – or to put it another way – throughout the Scriptures the Son of God (Christ) and the Holy Spirit are depicted as having their subsistence in - also respectfully subservient to - the Father. We shall return to this thought later.

God the Father – a separate person from the Son of God

During His earthly ministry, Jesus referred to God many times as “the Father” (see Matthew 11:27, 28:19, Mark 13:32, Luke 10:22, John 4:21, 23, 5:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30, 36, 37, 45, 6:27, 37, 44, 45, 46, 57, 8:16, 18, 29, 10:15, 36, 38, 12:49, 50, 14:6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 26, 28, 31, 15:9, 16, 26, 16:3, 15, 16, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 32). Note the amount of times this is recorded by John. He said that his gospel was to show that Christ is truly the Son of God – hence the number of times he records Jesus as saying 'the Father'.

The same could be said of the New Testament writers. Throughout their writings are numerous references to “the Father” – many of which clearly delineate between the separate personages of ‘the Father’ and ‘Christ’. These can be found in such as John 1:14, 18, 3:35, Acts 1:4, 7, 2:33, Romans 6:4, 15:6, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 15:24, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Galatians 1:1, 3, 4:2, Ephesians 1:17, 2:18, 3:14, 5:20, 6:23, Philippians 2:11, Colossians 1:3, 12, 19, 2:2, 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Hebrews 12:9, James 1:17, 1:27, 3:9, 1 Peter 1:2, 17, 2 Peter 1:17, 1 John 1:2, 3, 2:1, 13, 2:15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 3:1, 4:14, 5:7, 2 John 1:3, 4, 9 and Jude 1:1. The disciples of Jesus also referred to God as “the Father” (see John 13:1, 3, 14:8).

The apostles also referred to God as “our Father” – again clearly delineating between the two persons of God and Christ. This can be seen in Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:4, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, 4:20, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3, 3:11, 13, 2 Thessalonians 1:1, 2, 2:16, 1 Timothy 1:2 and Philemon 1:3.

It is important to remember that in the Scriptures, the Father and the Son are always revealed as two separate, distinct personalities. In fact Jesus Himself said that the Father is the only true God. Never is God depicted as anything but a personal being.

In His prayer for His followers Jesus said

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

We can only “know” a person. We cannot have a personal relationship with a non-entity. Notice here though that Jesus said nothing about knowing the Holy Spirit – only that we should know the Father and Himself. This is very interesting – especially as we have been

told through the spirit of prophecy that the Holy Spirit is a person. We shall cover this topic in chapters 18, 19 and 20.

This sentiment expressed here by Jesus is exactly the same as was later written by the apostle Paul. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he penned these words

“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6

Again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. We shall return our thoughts to these texts later.

Spirit of prophecy comments

During the early 1900's (we shall see this in [chapter 26](#)), Ellen White repeatedly emphasised that God and Christ are two separate distinct personages. This she probably did because during this time period, attempts were being made to bring into Seventh-day Adventism certain principles of the trinity doctrine. This serves as a background (a context) to many of the statements she made at that time.

In [chapter 21](#) we shall see that it was John Harvey Kellogg, the leading physician of Seventh-day Adventism, who suggested that God is a trinity. This he did to justify what he had written in his recently published book 'The Living Temple' (1903).

During the early 1900's, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was still a non-trinitarian denomination – meaning that Seventh-day Adventists were predominantly non-trinitarian. In our fundamental beliefs we did not then profess the trinity doctrine. From our beginnings (1844), as a movement of people, this three-in-one belief had been rejected as unscriptural.

In our Godhead beliefs listed in our yearbook, we did not have separate statement concerning the Holy Spirit. We only had separate beliefs listed concerning God (the Father) and Christ.

Through a study of our past publications, it can also be seen that the beliefs we then held concerning God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit would never have fitted into a trinitarian concept of God. Non-trinitarianism was certainly the preponderant belief within Seventh-day Adventism.

Regarding Kellogg's views of God, Ellen White wrote to the teachers at Emmanuel Missionary College (this was in 1903 – the year that Kellogg made the confession that he had come to believe that God was a trinity)

“The new theories in regard to God and Christ, as brought out in "The Living Temple", are not in harmony with the teaching of Christ.” (Ellen G. White, September 23 1903, To the teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, 'A Warning of Danger')

She explained

“The Lord Jesus came to this world to represent the Father. He did not represent God as an essence pervading nature, but as a personal being. Christians should bear in mind that God has a personality as verily as has Christ.” (Ibid)

In speaking here of God, Ellen White is referring to the Father. She also made it clear that He is a “personal being”. Never did she speak of God as a composite (compound) entity as depicted by the trinity doctrine.

As we shall see later, Kellogg's reasoning led him to believe that in the person of the Holy Spirit, God was personally present in the things of nature. In fact in an attempt to justify himself for his belief, it does appear that Kellogg came to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person in the same sense as God the Father and Christ are persons. This is why he said he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. As has been said, this was a belief not generally held then by Seventh-day Adventists. This was even though through the spirit of prophecy we were told that the Holy Spirit is a person. This is one of the reasons why Seventh-day Adventists were not trinitarian. Generally speaking, the Holy Spirit was not regarded as a person like God and Christ. As we shall see later, we have been told that we cannot understand His nature.

These remarks of Ellen White are very interesting. She said that in Kellogg's book there were "**new theories in regard to God and Christ**". She also made it clear (in opposition to how Kellogg's reasoning was making God appear) that God was "**a personal being**" and that He (God) had a personality as much as did Christ. Why I am saying this is interesting is because Kellogg's difference of opinion (with what was then generally believed by Seventh-day Adventists) was with respect to the Holy Spirit.

In the thinking of Seventh-day Adventists – at least in the early 1900's when this Kellogg problem came to the fore – the Holy Spirit was said to be both God and Christ omnipresent. He was reasoned to be both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ omnipresent (see John 14:18, 23, Romans 8:9). So when Kellogg said it was the Holy Spirit that was in the things of nature, to the average Seventh-day Adventist this was the same as saying that both God and Christ were in the things of nature (at least in spirit).

We were also told the same year

"As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son. Jesus, the outshining of the Father's glory, "and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3), was on earth found in fashion as a man." (Ellen White, 'Education', 1903, chapter 'Science and the Bible' page 131, see also Ministry of Healing pages 418, 1905 and 8th Volume of the Testimonies page 265 'The Essential Knowledge' 1904)

The next year (1904) Ellen White wrote

"There is a personal God, the Father: there is a personal Christ, the Son." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 17th March 1904, 'The revelation of God')

Notice that in neither of these statements did Ellen White say there is a personal Holy Spirit. If she had believed that the Holy Spirit is a personal being (exactly like God and Christ) then it would be expected that she would have included Him. As we will see, the same could be said of the statements that follow, although this is not my purpose in quoting them. My objective is to show that Ellen White emphasised that God and Christ are two separate individual persons. Notice the above statement was made 6 years after the publication 'The Desire of Ages' where she said that the Holy Spirit is "the third person of the Godhead" (see page 671).

To the delegates at the 1905 General Conference session she said

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." All through the Scriptures, the Father and the Son are spoken of as two distinct personages." (Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park Washington D. C., May 25th 1905 Review and Herald 13th July 1905, 'Lessons from the first Epistle of John')

Remember this was said in the backdrop of the publication of Kellogg's book 'The Living Temple – also Kellogg saying he had come to believe in the trinity. It is saying clearly that the Father and the Son (God and Christ) are two separate individuals. Again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. Surely we must ask "why not?" In other words, why didn't Ellen White say 'All through the Scriptures, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are spoken of as three distinct personages'? This was 7 years after 'The Desire of Ages' was published.

On October 31st 1905, Ellen White wrote in her diary (this was after quoting, John 1:1-4, 14-16 and John 3:34-36)

*"In this Scripture God and Christ are spoken of **as two distinct personalities, each acting in their own individuality.**" (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 760, Diary note, October 31st 1905)*

During this time period (the early 1900's), Ellen White continually emphasised that God is one personal being (the Father) whilst Christ is another personal being separate from Him. Never did she confuse these two divine personalities - neither did she 'blend them together' as in the trinity doctrine. It was this 'two separate personalities' faith that Ellen White said should be constantly maintained by Seventh-day Adventists. We shall see more of this in [chapter 26](#). Again no mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

The Father the primacy – the Son always the mediatory

Throughout the Scriptures the Son of God is always revealed as the mediatory – or to put it another way – the Father is always seen in the ascendancy. Never is the Son depicted in the primacy. It is always the Father working in and through the Son - not the other way around. This is very clearly seen in the references to the creation of our world.

The Scriptures reveal it was the Father who created all things **through** and **by** His Son. As the apostle Paul wrote

*"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things **by Jesus Christ.**"*
Ephesians 3:9

Whilst not all available manuscripts include the phrase "by Jesus Christ", there is other evidence in the Scriptures that tell us that God created all things through a mediatory (the Son of God).

This is such as the opening verses of Hebrews which tell us

*"**God**, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds;**"* Hebrews 1:1-2 (see also Colossians 1:14-19 and John 1:1-3).

There are those who say that the word "by" is not the best of translations. Many versions use the word 'through'. This is such as the New International Version which says

*"but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and **through whom** he made the universe."* Hebrews 1:2 NIV

The above reveals it is God (the Father) who is the source of all things but creates **through** and **by** a mediatory – which as we shall now see is the Word – the Son of God. The Son therefore was not the prime mover of creation but the Father. The Son was carrying out the Father's will. He was an associate of the Father – a co-worker with God.

Concerning the 'Word' and the creation of all things John wrote

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. **All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.**" John 1:1-3

It was the Father who created all things through the Word. It was not the Word (Christ) who created all things through the Father. It was not the Father either who vacated Heaven, became flesh and dwelt amongst us. It was the "the Word" - the Son of God (John 1:14).

Note John wrote that the Word was "with" God (John 1:1) - meaning the Son was "with" the Father.

The "Word" and "God" are spoken of here as two separate personages. It is only reasonable to accept that someone cannot be the same personage as whom they are with. As we have already noted, we have been told clearly through the spirit of prophecy that a definite distinction should be made – and maintained - between these two divine personalities (the Father and the Son).

As we also noted above, the apostle Paul wrote

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, **of whom** are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom** are all things, and we by him." 1 Corinthians 8:6

Notice here again it says that the Son of God (the Lord Jesus Christ) is the mediatory. The Father made all things through the Son. This is the same as when concerning Christ, the apostle Paul wrote

"And he is before all things, and **by him** all things consist." Colossians 1:17

Christ is a separate personal being (a separate personage) from the Father. He is 'the Word'. The Father created all things by and through 'the Word'.

Interesting to note here is that in these statements concerning the creation of the world there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. This is even though in the account of creation in the book of Genesis it says that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (see Genesis 1:2)

It is also only through Christ that fallen humanity has access to the Father. As Jesus Himself said

"... I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**" John 14:6

Our only way to the Father is through the Son – and needless to say, the objective of Christ's earthly mission was so that once again, just like we did before the entrance of sin, we could have direct communion with the Father.

Christ's objective was not so that we could have direct communion with Him (the Son). This communion has always existed. After sin entered into our world, it was direct communion with the Father that was not available to us. We shall return to this thought later.

Jesus also said to the Jews

"As the living Father hath sent me, **and I live by the Father:** so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John 6:57

The Weymouth version of the New Testament translates the same verse this way

“As the ever-living Father has sent me, and ***I live because of the Father***, so also he who eats me will live because of me.” John 6:57 Weymouth translation

The Complete Jewish Bible translates John 6:57

“Just as the living Father sent me, ***and I live through the Father***, so also who ever eats me will live through me.” John 6:57 The Complete Jewish Bible, Copyright © 1998 by David H. Stern. Published by Jewish New Testament Publications Inc. Distributed by Messianic Jewish Resources. www.messianicjewish.net. All rights reserved. Used by permission

Christ lives through the Father. He has no existence separate from the Father. The life that Christ has within Himself comes from the Father. As Jesus Himself said

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he ***given to the Son to have life in himself***,” John 5:26

It was the prerogative of the Father for the Son to have life within Himself. As the Revised Standard Version puts it

“For as the Father has life in himself, so ***he has granted the Son*** also to have life in himself” John 5:26 RSV

Jesus also said

“... 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.” John 8:28

Throughout the Scriptures the Father is always seen in the primacy – the Son is always seen as the mediatory. What we can see here in this Scripture is the unity between the Father and the Son.

Spirit of prophecy comments

Ellen White wrote in 1890

“The world's Redeemer ***was equal with God. His authority was as the authority of God***.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 7th Jan 1890, 'Christ revealed the Father'*)

Clearly can be seen two separate personages – equal to each other – but it is always the Son who is said to be equal with God (the Father) not the other way around. Here again can be seen the primacy of the Father.

It was then added concerning Christ

“He declared that he had ***no existence separate from the Father***.” (*Ibid*)

Never did Ellen White say that the Father had no existence separate from Christ. She said it is Christ who has “no existence separate from the Father”. Again we can see the Father having the primacy.

It was then explained

"The authority by which he spoke, and wrought miracles, was expressly his own, **yet he assures us that he and the Father are one**". (*Ibid*)

We were also told the next month

"**Christ came to reveal the Source of his power**, that man might never rely on his unaided human capabilities." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 18th February 1890, 'How to meet a controverted point of doctrine'*)

We can see therefore that for both His "existence" and "his power", Christ is the recipient of the Father. This was not only when He was here on earth but also in His pre-existence. Again we see the pre-eminence given to the Father. The Father is the source of all. It is in the Father that Christ receives both His existence and His power ("Christ came to reveal the Source of his power").

As it says in 'The Desire of Ages'

"**I do nothing of Myself**," said Christ; "**the living Father hath sent Me**, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 21, 'God with us' 1898*)

Note again the two separate personages of "Christ" and the "living Father". Christ was living to the glory of the Father. He came to make known the Father (see John 1:18). Notice that Jesus said His Father had sent Him.

God's servant then added

"In these words is set forth the great principle which is the **law of life for the universe**." (*Ibid*)

Take special note of those previously highlighted words. They are very important. She explained

"**All things Christ received from God**, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: **through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all**; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, **to the great Source of all**. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life." (*Ibid*)

Notice here just what it is that flows through the Son. It is "**the Father's life**". This is also the Son's life – albeit the source of this life is the Father.

The "great Source of all" is not the Son but the Father. The Son is the recipient and the mediator of "the Father's life" (see John 5:26). This is obviously why in the same book Ellen White penned these words

"In Christ is **life, original, unborrowed, underived**. "He that hath the Son hath life." 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life." (*Ibid page 530, 'Lazarus come forth'*)

Christ receives this "life" directly from "the great Source of all" (the Father). No wonder it is called "life, original, unborrowed, underived". It is the Father's life. It is this life - "the Father's life" – that comes to us **through** the Son. It is the one and the same life.

We are also told in the same book concerning Christ

"In Christ the cry of humanity reached the Father of infinite pity. As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with divinity. **Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world.** His experience is to be ours." (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 363, 'Come rest awhile')

Once again we see the Son receiving life from His Father. This said Ellen White was through "continual communion" with God.

The year previous to the publication of 'The Desire of Ages' she had written

"God has sent his Son to communicate **his own life** to humanity. Christ declares, "I live by the Father," **my life and his being one.**" (Ellen G. White, *Home Missionary*, 1st June 1897, 'A call to the work')

Again we see it is the Father's life (God's own life) – through the Son – which is being communicated to fallen humanity. God here is obviously the Father (the living God). Note here again the primacy of the Father ("God has sent his Son" and "I live by the Father"). Again we can see Christ's life bound up in the Father's life.

She then added the words of the gospel writer John (John 1:18)

"No man hath seen God at any time; **the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,**" (Ibid)

Again we can see God and His Son as two separate individuals. It is only the Son who can reveal the Father. It is not the Father who reveals the Son. There is a definite order of precedence (priority).

Fallen humanity can possess divine life. As Ellen White wrote as she penned this 'life unborrowed' statement in the 'Signs of the Times' in 1897 (this was one year previous to it being published in 'The Desire of Ages')

"**This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ.** He cannot earn it; it is given him **as a free gift** if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times* April 8th 1897, 'Christ the life-giver')

Notice here we are told that through Christ you and I can possess this "original, unborrowed, underived" life. Ellen White also wrote in 1914

"From Jesus is our life derived. In him is life that is original,--unborrowed, underived life. **In him is the fountain of life. In us there is a streamlet from the fountain of life.**" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 6th August 1914, 'Self-Denying service')

This is only another way of saying, as she did in 'The Desire of Ages', that "through the beloved Son, **the Father's life** flows out to all" (see above).

To us - meaning to fallen humanity - Christ is indeed "the fountain of life" but this life He receives directly from the Father. Even though it is "the Father's life", this life does not come to fallen humanity directly from the Father. It always comes to us **through** the Son. The Father's life is the life of the Son.

Notice that Ellen White said that in us there is "a streamlet from the fountain of life". This is the same life - meaning life "original,--unborrowed, underived". We can have this life through

Christ. This shows that just because Ellen White said that in Christ is this life (“**original,--unborrowed, underived**”), this does not mean that it originated in Him, no more than because we possess it that it originates in us. We can have this life but it does not originate in us. It comes to us from the Father through the Son.

In all things, the Son of God is a mediatory – even of the Father’s life. The Father is the source of all life. It is He who has the pre-eminence.

The love of the Father

There is one verse of Scripture which is probably quoted by Christians more so than any other. This is John 3:16.

Very early in His ministry, Jesus had a discussion with a man who had come to Him by night. This man was Nicodemus. John recorded this conversation in his gospel. It was during this conversation that Jesus said to this Jewish leader

“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. For 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

This is the entire gospel in one single statement. It is that God has so much love for us that rather than leave us to die without a hope – meaning so that He could give us the opportunity of eternal life with Him and His Son - He chose to sacrifice His one and only Son. What could match such a sacrifice? What could match such a love? If only the world at large could catch a glimpse of it.

Unfortunately, as has been said above, this father-son sacrifice is no longer taught within Seventh-day Adventism. No longer is God regarded as a real father – and no longer is the Son regarded as a real son. Instead they are said only to be role-playing these parts. In saying this, the genuine love of the Father in the giving of His son – also the love and trust of a son in a true father-son relationship - has been destroyed in people’s minds.

When Jesus said to Nicodemus that God gave His Son, there is no way that Nicodemus could have reasoned that Jesus was speaking to him metaphorically. He would have taken Christ’s words as being literal – that God really had given His Son.

This is why the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32

This “He” is the Father. It is this “He” who gave His “**own Son**”. This reveals how much “He” – the Father - loves fallen humanity. We should continually sing the Father's praises for the sacrifice of His Son.

Spirit of prophecy comments

In the Signs of the Times in 1883, Ellen White wrote concerning the discourse that Jesus had with Nicodemus. She said that Jesus had explained the salvation of man to him more thoroughly than He had ever done previously with anyone else. She then said concerning Jesus (notice the title of the article)

“He traced man's salvation *directly to the love of the Father, which led him to give his Son unto death* that man might be saved.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times,

15th November 1883, 'The all-important lesson', see also Spirit of prophecy Volume 2, page 133, 1877)

Please note these words very carefully.

Here we are told that it was the Father's great love that "led **him**" – the Father – "to give **his Son unto death**". It must be said therefore that the Father must have had the right (the prerogative) to give the Son – else these words do not make any sense. We are also told that Jesus traced the salvation of mankind "**directly to the love of the Father**". Again the Father is seen as 'the first'. Again we see the pre-eminence of the Father – the pre-eminence in a father-son relationship.

In current Seventh-day Adventist theology, this pre-eminence is not taken literally. It is said to be part of a role-playing act. As it says in the denominational book 'Seventh-day Adventists Believe'

"The Father *seems to act* as source, the Son as mediator, and the Spirit as actualizer or applier." (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe, page 30, 2005, 'The Godhead'*)

Here it is said that the three persons only seem "to act" how they are portrayed in the Scriptures – meaning the Father as the source, the Son as a mediator and the Holy Spirit as a supplier. In other words, they are only role-playing these parts. We shall cover this in more detail in [chapter 12](#).

The book had said previously on the same page

"There is no distance between the persons of the triune God. All three are divine, yet they share their divine powers and qualities. In human organizations, final authority rests in one person – a president, king, or prime minister. In the godhead, **final authority resides in all three members.**" (*Ibid*)

According to this reasoning, no one person of the Godhead actually has the pre-eminence. It concludes

"In the economy of function, different members of the Godhead perform distinct tasks in saving man." (*Ibid page 31*)

If the three persons of the Godhead are all exactly the same – meaning there is no real father, no real son and no real holy spirit - then Ellen White may as well as said that Christ traced our salvation directly to the love of the Holy Spirit and that it was the love of the Holy Spirit that led him (the Holy Spirit) to give his Son unto death. If all three are the same (and they were only role-playing these parts), what difference would it make who sent who? Why say that our salvation can be traced "**directly**" to the love of the Father. Why single out the Father at the expense of the Holy Spirit? If the "**final authority**" really did reside "**in all three**" this would not make any sense.

It is the above type of spirit of prophecy statements ("He traced man's salvation directly to the love of the Father, which led him to give his Son unto death") that show us how far the Seventh-day Adventist Church has strayed away from the real gospel of Jesus – i.e. that God (the Father) really did give His Son (John 3:16-18). This 'real gospel' has been forfeited to philosophical reasoning – namely present day trinity theology.

This same love of the Father is spoken of throughout the entirety of the spirit of prophecy writings. As we are told here

“Here was love, and amazing grace that triumphed over justice. **Retribution fell upon no less a personage than the Son of the Infinite God**, and the universe of heaven rejoiced in the glory of **God's benevolence and self-denial in giving the Prince of heaven to our world.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 5th March 1896, ‘Divinity in humanity’)

Note particularly we are told of “God's benevolence and self-denial” in the “giving” of His Son. Would this make any sense if God was not really a father and Christ was not really a son? Obviously not! Note also that in personality Christ is not the infinite God. He is “**the Son of the infinite God**”. Repeatedly Ellen White made this type of statement.

Here again we see God (the “infinite God” – the Father) “giving” His Son. This reveals that the Father must have had a certain primacy over the Son – else how would He have the right (the prerogative) to give Him? This primacy is only possible in a true father and son relationship. It was a relationship of love, responsibility, trust and submission. The Son loved and trusted the Father therefore He was willingly obedient to Him. This was the same relationship that existed between Abraham and Isaac (see Genesis 22:1-18). We shall return to this point later in the study.

Not without a struggle

I am sure that on this very important topic, the reader of this study will not mind just a few more quotations from the spirit of prophecy. These reveal to us the struggle of a true father giving His beloved son as a sacrifice.

Almost 40 years into her ministry, God's servant penned these words. They are so full of meaning for us today.

“Said the angel, **“Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle?** No, no.” It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, **or to give His darling Son to die for them.**” (Early Writings, supplement, page 127, 1882, see also Volume 1 *Spiritual Gifts* page 26, *Early Writings, spiritual gifts* page 151 and *Spirit of prophecy* Volume 1 page 48)

Here we catch a glimpse of the ‘struggle of love’ that took place prior to Christ coming to earth. God loved His Son so much – yet with equal depth of love He loved fallen humanity. There can be no doubt that Ellen White spoke of Christ as a son **prior to the incarnation**.

She also wrote in 1879

“The Father did not yield up **his dearly beloved Son without a struggle**, whether to let guilty man perish **or to give his Son to die for the lost race.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 30th January 1879, ‘The great controversy: The plan of salvation’)

Again this highlights the struggle that the Father had in the giving of His Son. Here again we see the right of the Father to give – also the genuine emotions of a Father who must decide whether or not to sacrifice His one and only Son. There is no role-playing (pretending) here. This is the genuine struggle of love - the supreme unequalled love that God has for His Son, also the supreme unequalled love that God had (and still has) for fallen humanity. Whichever way God had chosen – whether it was to sacrifice His Son or let you and I die without even a hope - it would be heartbreaking for Him.

If there is no real father and no real son, these statements are farcical. If all three persons are just role-playing their parts then we might just as well have been told that it was the Holy Spirit who struggled to give His Son to die. What sense would that make – particularly in the light of what we have been told through the Scriptures and through the spirit of prophecy?

We have also been told

“It was impossible for God to change his law, or give up the smallest part of its claims, in order to save man; **therefore he suffered his Son** to die for man’s transgression.” *(Ibid)*

If humanity were to be given a second chance, it was the divine Son of God who had to die. There was no other alternative. On the part of both the Father and the Son, this indeed was a sacrifice of supreme unselfish love. We need to recognise again the love, trust and responsibility that would have been necessary in this relationship – that is if this plan was to be carried out successfully.

We have also been told through the spirit of prophecy

“When the plan of salvation was revealed, Satan rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man’s fall, **pull down the Son of God from his exalted position.**” *(Ibid)*

It is almost impossible to believe that Ellen White did not really believe that Christ is truly God’s Son. Here she makes it very clear that He is a Son – **in His pre-existence**. Satan hated the position of Sonship that Christ had with the Father. This hatred he has brought down to earth. We shall see this in the chapters which follow.

By 1908, which was ten years after ‘The Desire of Ages’ had been published (which according to the trinitarians amongst us speaks of God as a trinity), Ellen White had not changed her mind about what she had previously written. This time she said (this was written also in Patriarchs and Prophets published in 1890)

“The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is a lamb “foreordained before the foundation of the world”; **yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race.** But “God so loved the world, that **He gave His only-begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”” *(Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 4th November 1908, ‘When sin entered’, see also Patriarchs and Prophets, ‘The plan of redemption, page 63, 1890)*

Note again the prerogative of the Father to give the Son. This cannot be overlooked.

Ellen White was not playing with words. She was not saying that Christ was the Son of God in any figurative sense. She continually spoke of Christ as a Son **prior to the incarnation** – also of the Father as being a real father. In this study we shall see this over and over again.

If this Father and Son relationship is lost to trinity theology (which is what is presently happening within Seventh-day Adventism), then we lose sight of everything – particularly we lose sight of the love-trust relationship between God and Christ (God and His Son). It is only in a real father and son relationship that we can truly appreciate the sacrifice made by God.

“Such was the Saviour’s reception when He came to the earth. There seemed to be no place of rest or safety for the infant Redeemer. **God could not trust His beloved Son with men**, even while carrying forward His work for their salvation. He commissioned angels to attend Jesus and protect Him till He should accomplish His mission on earth, and die by the hands of those whom He came to save.” *(Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 67, ‘We have seen His star’)*

Too much of Christ - to the detriment of the Father

In 1876 in the Review and Herald, Ellen White wrote of a camp meeting held the previous summer at Eagle Lake, Minnesota. After speaking of the various testimonies of the people who had attended she said

"My husband then spoke a few words to those who were seeking the Lord. He said that many had been very much discouraged **by the wrong views taken of God. They seek him with doubt and fear.** Their hearts murmur, "I am not sure that he will forgive me." **They look upon God the Father as a being of stern majesty and justice, devoid of sympathy and love.**" (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 4th May 1876, 'Camp-meeting at Eagle Lake (continued)')

This is how many people today think of God – as opposed to how they think of Jesus who they look upon as being kind, compassionate and forgiving. Notice here how Ellen White equates "God" with "God the Father" – meaning they are one and the same person.

Then, after quoting Romans 8:32 and John 3:16 (both texts are quoted above) that both speak of the love of the Father in giving of His Son, she said

"Is not the gift of Christ **a pledge of the Father's love for sinners?** I would say unto you who have come forward here, **The Father loves you.**" (Ibid)

Note the emphasis of the last sentence.

So why did Ellen White say that some were seeking God with "doubt and fear"? Why did she say they held "wrong views" of God? Why did she emphasise "The Father loves you"? She explained

"In the popular churches, we hear but little except, "**Do you love Jesus?**" **The love of the Father is scarcely mentioned; it is only Christ, Christ.**" (Ibid)

This is very true. Even to this present time, very little emphasis is given to the love of the Father in giving His Son. It really is "only Christ, Christ". Even on posters advertising church services is seen the words "Come and join us in the worship of Christ". Often no mention is made of the Father. The end result of this is that the love of Christ is exalted to the detriment of the Father.

In other words, the cost of our redemption to the Father is obscured by the emphasis (or perhaps better said 'over emphasis') of the love of Christ. This is totally opposite to what the gospel should be. Christ came to reveal the Father – also to emphasise that it was the love of the Father that led Him (the Father) to give His only Son for our redemption. Christ's entire emphasis was on the love of the Father for fallen humanity. This is why I said that if we lose sight of a real father giving a real son then we lose sight of everything.

Any father who really loves his son would rather die himself than give his own son as a sacrifice. This is the message that the Scriptures are trying to convey – that it was just as much a sacrifice on the part of the Father (perhaps even more so) as it was on the part of the Son. If this is missed, then everything concerning the gospel is missed. This is why Jesus said that God (the Father) loved the world so much that **He gave** His only begotten Son (see John 3:16). If 'the Father' is not seen as a real father then the sacrifice will not be seen as it should be seen. This is how it is today within Seventh-day Adventism. The real sacrifice is lost to philosophical trinity theology.

It must also be asked, if this person known in the Scriptures as ‘the Father’ is not really a father, then why were these things said by Ellen White? If the three persons were only role-playing their different parts (as is said in present Seventh-day Adventist theology), she may as well have said that the love of Christ for humanity was being emphasised at the expense of the Holy Spirit. Why say it was just to the detriment of the Father?

She then added

“God the Father has given unto man the greatest gift that Heaven held. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” I believe that **the heart of the great God is touched and moved by the condition of sinners to-day, as when he gave his Son to die for the sins of the world.”** (*Ibid*)

Notice who is doing the giving. It is the Father. This “great God” is obviously God the Father.

In the next paragraph we find these words

“The Father has given a pledge to sinners, in that he withheld not his dearly beloved Son, but gave him a sacrifice for them. Christ has given the pledge of his love to sinners, in that he gave his life to save them. **If the Father has manifested his love for sinners by giving his only son, will he not freely give every mercy and blessing?”** (*Ibid*)

It should go without saying that Ellen White was making the point that the love of Christ for fallen humanity was being emphasised (or over-emphasised) to the detriment of the Father. She is making the point that it was the Father who gave His Son. This is why she said that in the conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus, He traced the salvation of mankind “**directly to the love of the Father**, which led him to give his Son unto death” (see above).

In 1894 we were told

“Satan is determined that men shall not see the love of God, which led him to give his only begotten Son to save the lost race; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.” (*Ellen White, Review and Herald, 20th March 1894, ‘Christ the center of the message’*)

As we shall see in the chapters that follow, it was Satan’s intention (in Heaven) to obscure the fact that Christ was the Son of God. In this way he attempted to deceive the unfallen angels. This same deception he has brought down to earth. He is still trying to convince people – even Christians - that Christ is not really the Son of God. This obviously obscures the love of the Father in the giving of His Son (which it would do if it was believed that the Father never had a son to give).

She added in the next paragraph

“Look at the cross of Calvary. It is a standing pledge of the boundless love, the measureless mercy, of the heavenly Father.” (*Ibid*)

Very often it is only the love of Christ that is seen at Calvary. We forget that the Father actually gave His Son as a sacrifice – also what it cost Him to see His beloved Son die in agonies of mental torture and physical pain. There is a tendency to forget the sacrifice of the Father – and trinity theology must take a lot of the responsibility for this happening – also those who created it and uphold it. As we are told here, the cross is the “standing pledge” of the love and mercy of “the heavenly Father”.

We were reminded 3 years later

“But in Christ we behold the character of the Father, and see the pitying tenderness which God exercised for fallen man, giving his only begotten Son as a ransom for the transgressors of the law. It is in beholding the love of God that repentance is awakened in the sinner's heart, and an earnest desire is created to become reconciled to God. When the transgressor becomes acquainted with God, and experiences his love, it produces in his heart a hatred for sin and a love for holiness.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 9th March 1897, ‘Christ represents the beneficence of the law’)

Ellen White also wrote a few days later in a letter

“O that everyone would realize the great love, the self-sacrifice, the benevolence, and the kindness ***of our heavenly Father, in giving his Son to die for us*** that we might, if we believe and do his commandments, have a sweet peace, the Father's joy, the Father's love, and unite with him, heart, soul, mind, and strength, to maintain righteousness and to draw in even lines with Christ. ***It is not the sacrifice of Christ only; it is the Father's sacrifice also. The Father, in union and loving sympathy, with his Son, subjected himself to suffer with his Son. He spared not his only begotten Son but freely delivered him up for us all.*** This gift of Christ is the crowning truth of God's love, ***and this Fatherhood***, through all time and through eternity. Here is the love of God ***in his Fatherhood***. Let us drink in this love, that we may know by experience what a real, tender, joyful, experience there is in a realization ***of the Fatherhood of God.***” (Ellen G. White, *Letter to Brethren Daniells, Palmer, and Colcord*, March 12th 1897 Written from “Sunnyside,” Cooranbong, Australia, Spalding and Magan collection page 68)

“In order to fully realize the value of salvation, it is necessary to understand what it cost. In consequence of limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. The glorious plan of man's salvation was brought about ***through the infinite love of God and Father.*** In this divine plan is seen the most marvelous manifestation of the love of God to the fallen race. ***Such love as is manifested in the gift of God's beloved Son amazed the holy angels. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*** (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume, 2, page 200, ‘The sufferings of Christ’*)

Here we are told that we owe our salvation to “the infinite love of God and Father” which was “manifested in the gift of God's beloved Son” (“His only-begotten Son”). This is not denigrating the love of Christ for us but is rather putting the matter in its correct Biblical perspective.

As we have been told

“In plain language the Saviour taught the world that the tenderness, the compassion, and love that he manifested toward man, ***were the very attributes of his Fathers in heaven.*** Whatever doctrine of grace he presented, whatever promise of joy, whatever deed of love, whatever divine attraction he exhibited, ***had its source in the Father of all. In the person of Christ we behold the eternal God engaged*** in an enterprise of boundless mercy toward fallen man. Christ clothed his divinity with humanity, that his humanity might touch humanity, and divinity reach divinity.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 20th August 1894, ‘The Bible to be understood by all’)

Unfortunately, to the detriment of the gospel – also to the detriment of the Father who compelled through His inexhaustible love for our fallen race gave His Son as a sacrifice to

pay the penalty of our sins - Seventh-day Adventist theology (their trinity theology) says that Christ is not really a son therefore the person who is called 'the Father (who is not really a father) did not have a son to send. What a difference it would make if Seventh-day Adventists could once again see the love of the Father in the giving of His Son. How much differently they would see the Father – also view the plan of salvation. Certainly their hearts would be filled with love and admiration for what He has done. Certainly they would not be afraid of Him. Perfect love casts out fear (see 1 John 4:18)

It is no wonder that the Scriptures tell us that we are to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (see Hebrews 4:16). Christ is our “great high priest” but He would not be so if it had not been for the love of the Father. We need to think on these things.

The great source of all

In 1905, in a testimony directed at John Harvey Kellogg (who in 1903 had professed to come to believe in the trinity doctrine), Ellen White made what I would say was her most comprehensive statement on the Godhead. Many use this statement to show that Ellen White was a trinitarian but in reality it clearly shows she was not. People get the wrong idea because they do not understand the context of this testimony – meaning they do not see the reasoning behind it.

We shall study this statement in more detail in [chapter 21](#) but in this chapter I only want to show that in keeping with the rest of her writings, Ellen White viewed the Father as the great source of all. As she said in 'The Great Controversy'

“The Ancient of Days is God the Father. Says the psalmist: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Psalm 90:2. ***It is He, the source of all being, and the fountain of all law, that is to preside in the judgment.*** And holy angels as ministers and witnesses, in number "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," attend this great tribunal." (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 479, 1911 edition" 'Facing life's Record')

Three years earlier to this, these words can be found in the Review and Herald

"God so loved . . . that he gave,"--"gave his only begotten Son,"--that we should not perish, but have everlasting life. "Christ . . . hath loved us, and hath given himself for us." If we love, we shall give. "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister," is the great lesson which we are to learn and to teach. Next to the angelic beings, the human family, formed in the image of God, are the noblest of his created works. God desires them to become all that he has made it possible for them to be, and to do their very best with the powers he has given them. Life is mysterious and sacred. ***It is the manifestation of God himself, the source of all life.*** Precious are its opportunities, and earnestly should they be improved." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald* 3rd December 1908, 'The privileges and duties of the followers of Christ')

The life of the Father came through the Word - meaning the divine Son of God (see John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1:3, Ephesians 3:9 etc). He is the mediator of the Father's life (see above) – whilst the Father is the great source of all. It is because of the victory of the cross that to all who trust Him, Christ is the fountain of life. We are secure in the Father only as far as we abide in Christ's love.

"All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are recipients of the life of the Son of God. However able and talented, however large their capacities, ***they are replenished with life from the source of all life. He is the spring, the fountain,***

of life. Only he who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light and life, could say, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 4th August 1898, 'The Risen Saviour')

It is only because Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son that He could utter these words. This prerogative belongs to divinity alone. It is what God did through His Son at the cross that has made the entire universe secure.

"The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; **the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God.** That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? **The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan.**" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 30th December 1889, 'What was secured by the death of Christ')

In the testimony concerning Kellogg referred to above, also after saying that she had been instructed to say that "The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted" - Ellen White wrote

"Such representations as the following are made: "**The Father is as the light invisible**; the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad." "**The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor**; the Son is like the dew gathered in beautiful form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life." Another representation: "**The Father is like the invisible vapor**; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power." (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 62 'Come out and be separate' 1905*)

These are the type of illustrations used by trinitarians to show that God is three-in-one – and remember - Kellogg said he had come to believe in the trinity. Notice here who is the source each time. It is the Father. We were then told

"All these spiritualistic representations are **simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God can not be compared with the things His hands have made.** These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. **The Father can not be described by the things of earth.** The Father is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight." (*Ibid*)

This is a complete paragraph. We are told that "**God** can not be compared with the things His hands have made" and "**The Father** can not be described by the things of earth." When talking in terms of divine personalities, Ellen White used these two terminologies ("God" and "the Father") interchangeably.

She then wrote two paragraphs concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit – but she did not say that they cannot be described by the things of earth. Why not? It was simply because it is God the Father who is the great source of all and it is He (God) who has His existence in the personages of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In 1906, Ellen White phrased her words a little differently. In an article called 'The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' she wrote

"The Father can not be described by the things of earth. The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight. The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The word of God declares Him to be "the express image of His person." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **Here is shown the personality of the Father.**" (Ellen G. White, Bible training School, 1st March 1906, 'The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost')

She then said of the Holy Spirit

"The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, **making manifest the power of divine grace** to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour." (*Ibid*)

Did you notice again she said nothing about not being able to describe the Son or the Holy Spirit by the things of earth? She only said this about the Father. It is He who is the source of all life. The Son is of the Father. He has no existence separate from the Father. The Holy Spirit is both the Father and the Son omnipresent (see John 14:18, 23).

"So great was the interest of God in our world that He gave His only begotten Son to come to the earth as a little child and to live a life like that of every human being, that through Him humanity might reach divinity." (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 49, 1909)

In the chapters that follow, we shall see that Christ truly is a son and that the Father truly is a father. In later chapters we shall see that the Holy Spirit truly is a holy spirit.

[Proceed to chapter 6](#), 'The Son of God – claims and disputations'

Chapter six

The Son of God – claims and disputations

In the New Testament, Christ is referred to as ‘the Son of God’ over 40 times. This can be found in such as Matthew 8:29, 14:33, 26:63, 27:40, 43, 54, Mark 1:1, 3:11, 15:39, Luke 1:35, 31, 4:41, 8:28, 22:70, John 1:34, 49, 3:16, 18, 5:25, 9:35, 10:36, 11:4, 11:27, 19:7, 20:31, Acts 8:37, 9:20, Romans 1:4, 2 Corinthians 1:19, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 4:13, Hebrews 4:14, 6:6, 7:3, 10:29, 1 John 3:8, 4:15, 5:5, 5:10, 12, 13, 20 and Revelation 2:18.

Jesus consistently referred to God as His Father (see Matthew 7:21, 10:32, 33, 11:27, 12:50, 15:13, 16:17, 18:10,19, 35, 20:23, 24:36, 26:29, 39, 42, 53, Mark 8:38, Luke 2:49, 9:26, 10:22, 22:29, 42, 23:46, 24:49, John 2:16, 5:17, 43, 6:32, 65, 8:19, 28, 38, 49, 54, 10:17, 18, 25, 29, 30, 32, 37, 12:26, 27, 14:2, 7, 12, 14:13, 20, 21, 23, 28 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23, 24, 16:10, 17:24, 18:11, 20:17, 20:21, Revelation 2:27, 3:5, and 21).

A true Son

There are a number of very important times when Jesus referred to Himself as a son. One such occasion was when He said to Nicodemus

“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. 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: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:16-18

Nicodemus was told by Jesus that it was “God” who was doing the giving and sending. He was obviously referring to the Father. Again we see the Father as having the pre-eminence (He is the one doing the giving and sending). We referred to the pre-eminence of the Father in [chapter 5](#). This is the pre-eminence of a father as in a true father and son relationship. It also reveals the love of the Father – also the sacrifice He made – in the giving of His only Son.

There is no reason to suggest that Jesus intended Nicodemus to believe that He (Jesus) was a son in a metaphorical or figurative sense – or believe that for the sake of the plan of redemption He was only role-playing the part of a son (pretending to be a son). Nicodemus, because he was not told otherwise, would have taken Christ’s claim to Sonship as being literal. As Jesus said, God gave “his only begotten Son”. How else was Nicodemus to understand what Jesus was saying to him?

There is something here very important to note. This is that Jesus said to Nicodemus it was God who was doing the giving and sending. We must ask therefore, if the divine person doing this sending is not really a father (as is said today by the Seventh-day Adventist Church), then what right would He (the role-playing father) have to ‘give’ another divine person? For ‘the Father’ to have this prerogative there would need to be a real Father and Son relationship. If no such relationship existed, then even the ‘giving’ of the Son (who was not really a son) would be a complete charade (something which is make believe).

Look at it this way. You and I are completely equal to each other; therefore what right would I have to offer you as a sacrifice? To have this prerogative there would need to exist a certain relationship between us in which this authority (right/prerogative) existed. As regards to God and Christ, this authority was in their Father-Son relationship. This is even though the Son is undoubtedly equal to the Father (see Philippians 2:6).

There is also something else to consider here. This is that if the Holy Spirit is an individual person exactly like God and Christ – as is officially taught today within Seventh-day Adventism – and that no single person actually had the prerogative to give another person (one was not really a father) - would it not be correct to say that the Holy Spirit also sent and gave the one we call the Son? If not, why not? Why say it was just the Father who sent the Son? If it was a ‘committee decision’, then perhaps we should be saying it was the Father and the Holy Spirit who sent the Son – or perhaps all three who sent Him.

If God and Christ are not really a father and a son – which is current Seventh-day Adventism theology (our present theology says they were only role-playing these parts) – these questions need answering. This role-playing issue will be dealt with more fully in [chapter 12](#).

Another occasion when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God was when He asked a man (a man who He had healed of blindness) if he believed on the Son of God (John 9:35).

Upon enquiring as to who was this “Son of God” (John 9:36), the man was told plainly by Jesus

“... thou hast both seen him, and ***it is he that talketh with thee***”. John 9:37

Jesus was not leading this man to believe error. He would not have done such a thing. Jesus always spoke the truth.

The response of the healed man was

“... Lord, I believe. ***And he worshipped him***. John 9:38

There is no explanation from Jesus as to ***how*** He is a Son – neither did Jesus say He was only acting the part of a son. The healed man therefore would have taken Christ’s remarks literally. This is obviously why “***he worshipped***” Jesus. There is no record of Jesus rebuking this man for this act of worship – an act which the Jews would have said was idolatrous. We can assume therefore that Jesus regarded this worship as acceptable.

After Jesus had been arrested (when Pilate said that he could find no fault in Him), the Jews said to this Roman governor

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

Jesus certainly claimed to be the Son of God – and amongst the Jews, by the end of His ministry, this was very well known – especially amongst the leadership. This is why they said He was worthy of death. Remember though, Jesus did not make Himself a son. This was His position by right of inheritance (Hebrews 1:3) – and He did have the word of His Father for making such a claim (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). We shall return to this point later.

This claim to divine Sonship was certainly not something that Jesus had claimed secretly – although He was at times discreet in making it known. This claim would ultimately be His death warrant (Matthew 26:63-66). More of this later.

Spirit of prophecy comments

The plan of salvation was laid between the Father and the Son. As we are told here

“Before the fall of man, **the Son of God had united with his Father** in laying the plan of salvation. God was to be manifested in Christ, "reconciling the world unto himself." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 13th September 1906, 'Love toward God and man')

This was the same as happened regarding the creation of this world. As we have also had explained to us

“Before the fall of Satan, **the Father consulted his Son** in regard to the formation of man.” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 3, page 36, 'The temptation and fall', 1864*)

The following words give us a precious insight as to how the initial rebellion in Heaven came about)

“When Satan learned the purpose of God, **he was envious at Christ, and jealous because the Father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man.** Satan was of the highest order of angels; but Christ was above all. He was the commander of all Heaven. **He imparted to the angelic family the high commands of his Father.**” (Ibid)

Notice here that initially, the “high commands” spoken of here came from the Father. Christ was executing His Father’s will. Here again is shown the pre-eminence of the Father.

It was later explained (again concerning the continuing rebellion)

“All the angels were astir. Satan was warring against the government of God, because ambitious to exalt himself and **unwilling to submit to the authority of God’s Son,** Heaven’s great commander.” (Ibid, page 37)

It was the Son’s authority which Satan questioned, not the Father’s.

“While some of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion, others reasoned with him to dissuade him from his purposes, contending for the honor and wisdom of God **in giving authority to his Son.** Satan urged, **for what reason was Christ endowed with unlimited power and such high command above himself!** He stood up proudly, and urged that he should be equal with God. He makes his boasts to his sympathizers that he will not submit to the authority of Christ.” (Ibid)

Notice here that the “authority” possessed by Christ was given to Him by the Father – also that Christ was “endowed with unlimited power” meaning furnished or supplied with.

We are then told (in conclusion of Lucifer’s rebellion against the Son of God)

“At length all the angels are summoned to appear before the Father, to have each case decided. Satan unblushingly makes known to all the heavenly family, his discontent, that Christ should be preferred before him, to be in such close conference with God, and he be uninformed as to the result of their frequent consultations. **God informs Satan that this he can never know. That to his Son will he reveal his secret purposes,** and that all the family of Heaven, Satan not excepted, were required to yield implicit obedience. Satan boldly speaks out his rebellion, and points to a large company who think God is unjust in not exalting him to be equal with God,

and in not giving him command above Christ. He declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, **that God's commands alone will he obey**. Good angels weep to hear the words of Satan, and to see how he despises to follow the direction of Christ, their exalted and loving commander." (*Ibid*)

Here then was the problem. Lucifer (Satan) would not submit to the authority of the Son. He wanted to be the executor of God's commands. Where in this is the Holy Spirit?

In 'Early Writings' (1882) we find this same situation explained this way

"Some of the angels sympathized with Satan in his rebellion, and others strongly contended for the honor and wisdom of God **in giving authority to His Son**. There was contention among the angels. Satan and his sympathizers were striving to reform the government of God. They wished to look into His unsearchable wisdom, **and ascertain His purpose in exalting Jesus and endowing Him with such unlimited power and command**. They rebelled against the authority of the Son." (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, page 145, 'Spiritual gifts' 1882*)

Here we are told that the Father **endowed** Christ with "unlimited power and command".

Ellen White also penned these words. Note them very carefully.

"Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven **as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father**." (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 3rd March 1874, 'Redemption No. 2', see also Signs of the Times, 5th April 1883, 'Christ's triumph for us'*)

The same truth was repeated in 1887. This is when it was said

"Satan well knew the position which Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father; and that Christ should leave the joy and honor of Heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension. **He knew that this condescension on the part of the Son of God boded no good to him**." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 4th August 1887, 'Christ's triumph in our behalf'*)

Satan "well knew" of Christ's pre-incarnate position as the Son of God – albeit many Seventh-day Adventists – especially our leadership – do not seem to know of it. They deny that in His pre-existence Christ was really a son. They say He is just role-playing the part. It is very 'strange' how these things have developed.

Prior to the creation of our world, God called an assembly of the Heavenly host. This was to set forth the truth position of His Son. In writing of this event, Ellen White explained (in saying that the unfallen angels tried to convince Lucifer that God was justified in conferring honour upon His Son)

"They [the unfallen angels] clearly set forth that **Jesus was the Son of God, existing with him before the angels were created**; and that he had ever stood at the right hand of God, and his mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned; and that he had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 9th January 1879, 'The fall of Satan', see also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 page 17, 'The Fall of Satan'*)

How can these words be misunderstood? They are so plainly said. Christ was a son in His pre-existence. This was the truth that the unfallen angels were attempting to have the fallen angels believe. This was obviously the crucial issue – that Christ really was the Son of God. This same issue exists today. This is the truth that the Seventh-day Adventist non-trinitarians

are attempting to convey to the Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians – that in His pre-existence Christ is truly the Son of God.

With reference to this same assembly Ellen White wrote

“There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had ***made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning.*** Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions.” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 36, ‘Why was sin permitted’)

Christ's pre-existent Sonship with the Father is something that Satan hated. He was jealous of this relationship. How could he be jealous of - and hate something - that did not really exist?

Notice that we are told here that Christ's position with the Father as a son “**had been the same from the beginning**”. If the three persons of the Godhead are all the same, then why didn't Satan hate the Holy Spirit's position? It was the Son's true position that God the Father needed to make known to the heavenly host – not His own position or the Holy Spirit's. Note here the reference to “**the true position of the Son of God**”.

If it is said that in His pre-existence Christ was only pretending to be a son (role-playing the part), then it appears that He caused a lot of unnecessary confusion – even in the courts of Heaven. It would also be saying that this assembly of the Heavenly host was called simply for the purpose of showing created beings the different roles that the persons of the Godhead had chosen to play. This does not seem reasonable to even think about.

When commenting on the raising of Lazarus, Ellen White explained

“Though He was the Son of God, yet He had taken human nature upon Him, and He was moved by human sorrow. His tender, pitying heart is ever awakened to sympathy by suffering. He weeps with those that weep, and rejoices with those that rejoice.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 533, ‘Lazarus come forth’)

“Calmly Christ stands before the tomb. A sacred solemnity rests upon all present. Christ steps closer to the sepulcher. Lifting His eyes to heaven, He says, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.” Not long before this, Christ's enemies had accused Him of blasphemy, and had taken up stones to cast at Him ***because He claimed to be the Son of God.*** They accused Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan. But here Christ ***claims God as His Father, and with perfect confidence declares that He is the Son of God.***” (Ibid page 536)

“In all that He did, Christ was ***co-operating with His Father.*** Ever He had been careful to make it evident that ***He did not work independently;*** it was by faith and prayer that He wrought His miracles. ***Christ desired all to know His relationship with His Father.***” (Ibid)

The conclusion was

“Here the disciples and the people were to be given the most convincing evidence in regard ***to the relationship existing between Christ and God. They were to be shown that Christ's claim was not a deception.***” (Ibid)

Christ was not pretending to be a son. There was too much at stake to have people confused over His true identity. It was His claim to divine Sonship that led to His death (John

19:7, Matthew 26:63-66). Would Jesus have misled people on this point? Of course not! We must not even begin to think such a thing.

“That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a fearful thought, yet it is possible. **One soul misled, forfeiting eternal bliss--who can estimate the loss!** And yet one rash act, one thoughtless word, on our part may exert so deep an influence on the life of another that it will prove the ruin of his soul. One blemish on the character may turn many away from Christ.” (*Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, page 86, ‘Solomon’s repentance’*)

With respect to God commanding "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (the ninth commandment), we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. **All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood.** This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation **by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing.**” (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 309, ‘The law given to Israel’*)

This is quite a list. We are also told

“Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.” (*Ibid*)

On the basis of this and concerning His true identity, Jesus would never have deliberately misled or confused anyone. If He was not truly the Son of God, then He would never have led people to believe it – not even for a fleeting moment. On His part, if He had done it, this would have been a violation of the ninth commandment.

Jesus had been open about His identity. As we have been told

“The flashing forth of His divinity in the cleansing of the temple, His miracles of healing, and the lessons of divine truth that fell from His lips, all proclaimed that which after the healing at Bethesda **He had declared before the Sanhedrin, -- His Sonship to the Eternal.**” (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 231, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand’*)

Claims and disputations

By those with whom Jesus spoke, His claim to divine Sonship was not taken as metaphorical or figurative etc. It was taken in a sense that can only be described as literal. In particular this can be seen in the encounters He had with the Jews. Take for example the dispute we find recorded in John chapter 5.

John wrote (this was after he had written about the healing by Jesus of an impotent man by the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath)

“And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, **My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.** Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not

only had broken the sabbath, **but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**" John 5:16-18

As far as the Jews were concerned, Christ's claim to divine Sonship was a far more serious problem than the healing He did on the Sabbath. They said that Him saying God was "His Father" was the same as "making himself equal with God". To the Jews, this was nothing short of blasphemy.

In [chapter 12](#) we shall see that the Seventh-day Adventist Church says today that these designations (Father and Son) used here by Jesus in this dispute He only meant to be regarded as metaphors or imagery. This was to show, so it is said, the love between the Father and the Son. In other words, according to current Seventh-day Adventist theology, Jesus was not claiming to be a real son but was just role-playing (acting) the part to make a point.

There are a number of versions that by adding the word "own" make this Sonship claim of Christ far more personal.

One of these is 'The Complete Jewish Bible'. It says

"This answer made the Judeans all the more intent on killing him -- not only was he breaking Shabbat; but also, by saying that God was **his own Father**, he was claiming equality with God." John 5:18 The Complete Jewish Bible, Copyright © 1998 by David H. Stern. Published by Jewish New Testament Publications Inc. Distributed by Messianic Jewish Resources. www.messianicjewish.net. All rights reserved. Used by permission

Other translations which have "His own Father" include such as 'Green's Literal Translation', 'Wesley's New Testament', 'The New International Version', 'The New Revised Standard Version' and 'The New American Version'.

Very interestingly, the Weymouth New Testament translates John 5:18 this way

"On this account then the Jews were all the more eager to put Him to death -- because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also spoke of God as being **in a special sense His Father**, thus putting Himself on a level with God." John 5:18 Weymouth translation

Another translation which is very interesting is the Daniel Mace New Testament. This one says

"therefore the Jews were the more eager to kill him, because he had not only violated the sabbath, but likewise, because he had said that God was **his proper father**, making himself equal with God." John 5:18 Daniel Mace translation

The reaction of the Jews to Christ's claim to Sonship shows that this was not taken by them as though He had made it in a metaphorical or figurative sense. It was not taken either in the sense of role-playing (pretending to be a son). The sense was obviously accepted as literal – else why did they want to stone Him because of it – also why would they say that by His claim He was "making himself equal with God"? To say that Christ's claim to Sonship was only metaphorical (to show the love between two of the persons of the Godhead) is not reasonable to assume. These Jews were allowing Satan's hatred of the Son (see comments above) to be worked out through them. They knew that a claim to be the Son of God was the same as claiming to be equal with God.

It will not do either to say that the Jews were thinking in terms of the virgin birth. Obviously they didn't believe such a thing actually happened. Even if Jesus had made reference to this

- which He didn't – it would still not have made Him equal with God. In fact the Jews ridiculed Jesus about his birth – or perhaps better said about His conception. They said to Jesus in one dispute

“... **We be not born of fornication**; we have one Father, even God.” John 8:41

Needless to say, the Jews believed that Christ was making this Sonship claim in the highest possible sense (not in the spiritual sense as they were). It must also be said that even if they had thought that Jesus was simply claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah, this would not have made Him to be “**equal with God**”. Christ was claiming far more than just being the Messiah. He was claiming to be the divine Son of God – and the Jews understood the ramifications (implications) of His claim.

On another occasion – again when the Jewish leadership were disputing His identity – Jesus said (this was concerning those whom He referred to as His sheep)

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. **My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all**; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. **I and my Father are one.**”
John 10:28-30

Here Christ refers to His Father as “**greater than all**”. This is reminiscent of when He said that His Father is “the only true God” (see John 17:3).

In response to the claim made by Jesus - that He and His Father were one (see verse 30) - the gospel writer John records that the Jews “took up stones again to stone” Jesus (verse 31). He also records that when Jesus asked them why they intended to do this, the Jews replied

“... For a good work we stone thee not; **but for blasphemy**; and because that thou, being a man, **makest thyself God.**” John 10:33

Again we can see that by the Jews, Christ's claims were not taken to be in any other sense than literal. We know this because as they said, they were going to stone Him for “**blasphemy**” (for making Himself God). They knew exactly what Christ was claiming.

It is also interesting the way that ‘The Complete Jewish Bible’ renders this verse. It says

“The Judeans replied, “We are not stoning you for any good deed, but for blasphemy -- because you, who are only a man, **are making yourself out to be God [Hebrew: Elohim].**” John 10:33 The Complete Jewish Bible Copyright © 1998 by David H. Stern. Published by Jewish New Testament Publications Inc., Distributed by Messianic Jewish Resources. www.messianicjewish.net All rights reserved. Used by permission

The ‘New International Version’ translates the same verse this way

“We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, **claim to be God.**” John 10:33 New International Version

Needless to say, the Jews did not recognise Christ as being divine in any sense of the word. They said that He was “**a mere man**”.

The New Century Version says

"They answered, "We are not killing you because of any good work you did, *but because you speak against God. You are only a human, but you say you are the same as God!*" John 10:33 The New Century Version

There is no doubt that Jesus was regarded by the Jews as making these claims in the highest possible sense. As has been said already, regarding something as important as this, Jesus would not have misled or confused anyone. We shall see later that regarding this particular encounter with the Jews, Ellen White made a very interesting observation.

Spirit of prophecy comments

In 'The Desire of Ages' we find the following words (this was with reference to the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day)

"Jesus claimed *equal rights with God* in doing a work equally sacred, and of the same character with that which engaged the Father in heaven. But the Pharisees were still more incensed. He had not only broken the law, according to their understanding, but in calling God "*His own Father*" had **declared Himself equal with God. John 5:18, R. V. (Ellen White, 'The Desire of Ages' page 207, 'Bethesda and the Sanhedrin')**

I would ask you to note here something rather significant.

In keeping with the point she was making (we shall see more of this in the next paragraph), Ellen White did not quote here from the KJV but instead used the Revised Version of the Scriptures - thus she quoted Jesus as calling God "**His own Father**". She would not have been so specific if she had quoted the KJV which simply says, "God was His Father". By using the Revised Version, she was obviously making a point - which was

"The whole nation of the Jews called God their Father, therefore *they would not have been so enraged if Christ had represented Himself as standing in the same relation to God*. But they accused Him of blasphemy, showing that *they understood Him as making this claim in the highest sense*." (Ibid)

This "**highest sense**" must be that Christ was claiming a literal Sonship to the Father. There could be no higher sense. This is why the Jews wanted to kill Him (stone Him). To them, Christ's claims were blasphemous.

Three years later when commenting on this same event, Ellen White phrased her words a little bit differently. This time she said

"The whole nation called God their Father, and if Jesus had done this in the same sense in which they did, the Pharisees would not have been so enraged. *But they accused Jesus of blasphemy, showing that they understood that Christ claimed God as His Father in the very highest sense*." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 5th March 1901, 'Lessons from the Christ-Life')

In this statement, Ellen White adds more emphasis than she did previously. In 'The Desire of Ages' (published 3 years earlier) she said that Christ claimed God as His Father in "**the highest sense**". Later, in the Review and Herald, she says in "**the very highest sense**". Obviously she meant that He was the literal Son of God. What else could "**the very highest sense**" mean? Certainly not something that was figurative or metaphorical.

She followed this by saying that "Christ threw back the charge of blasphemy" with the words found in John 5:19. She then added (as though these were the words of Jesus)

“My authority for the work that I am doing, He said, **is the fact that I am God's Son**, one with Him in nature, will, and purpose.” (*Ibid*)

This cannot be simply with reference to Christ's incarnate state. It must be with reference to His pre-existence (“one with Him in nature”).

By her choice of wording (“**the fact that I am God's Son**”), Ellen White is denying that Christ's Sonship is metaphorical, figurative or allegorical. Certainly she does not give any indication that He was only pretending to be a son. There can be no doubt either that she spoke of Christ's pre-existent relationship with God as a literal father and son relationship.

She added (again as though Jesus was speaking)

“I co-operate with Him in His work. My Father loves me, and communicates to me all His counsels. **Nothing is planned by the Father in heaven that is not fully opened to the Son.**” (*Ibid*)

Here again we see the Father and Son relationship. Note Ellen White has Jesus saying He was cooperating in His Father's work. Again, in the relationship, we see the pre-eminence of the Father.

In the Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2 we find these very important words. This was with respect to the dispute Jesus had with the Jews at Bethesda.

“Jesus knew that the Jews were determined to take his life, **yet in this discourse he fully explained to them his Sonship, the relation he bore to the Father and his equality with him. This left them without an excuse for their blind opposition and insane rage against the Saviour.** But, though baffled in their designs, and overawed by his divine eloquence and truth, the murderous hatred of the priests and elders was not quenched.” (*Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2 page 172, 1877, 'Jesus at Bethesda'*)

This cannot be with respect to the incarnation. It is referring to Christ's pre-existent relationship with God. This was His divine “Sonship” – “**the relation he bore to the Father and his equality with him**”. Notice it says that Christ's explanation of His divine Sonship left the Jews without excuse. We need to heed these words.

Two years later she wrote

“Jesus, with startling emphasis, denied that the Jews were following the example of Abraham. Said he, “Ye do the deeds of your father.” **The Pharisees, partly comprehending his meaning**, said, “ We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.” But Jesus answered 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.” **The Pharisees had turned from God, and refused to recognize his Son.**” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, October 23rd 1879, 'Wisdom and compassion of Christ'*)

There are countless numbers today who refuse to recognize God's Son.

In 1893 (this is with reference to the words of Jesus as found in John 10:25-30) we were told through the spirit of prophecy

“With what firmness and power he uttered these words. **The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips**, and a convicting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, “I and my Father are

one." The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that **he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes**. The Jews understood his meaning, **there was no reason why they should misunderstand**, and they took up stones to stone him." (*Ellen G. White Signs of the Times 20th November 1893, 'The True Sheep Respond to the Voice of the Shepherd'*)

As has been said above – the Jews knew exactly what Jesus was claiming – also as is said here – “there was no reason why they should misunderstand”.

Some may say that Ellen White was here making a trinity confession (that Christ and the Father were “of one substance”) but she qualified what she meant by saying that this was inasmuch as the Father and the Son possessed “the same attributes”. We shall return to this thought later.

She also said

“Why did not the stones fly to the mark? -- **It was because divinity flashed through humanity, and they** [the Jews] **received a revelation, and were convicted that his were no common claims.**” (*Ibid*)

As has been noted above – the entire Jewish race called God their father but this is obviously not what Jesus meant when He said that God was His father – and the Jews knew it.

Ellen White then added concerning the Jews

“Their hands relax and the stones fall to the ground. **His words had asserted his divinity**, but now his personal presence, the light of his eye, the majesty of his attitude, bore witness **to the fact that he was the beloved Son of God.**” (*Ibid*)

Christ is divine because He is the Son of God. His Sonship to the Father testifies of His divinity. As we are told here - “divinity flashed through humanity”. Note the reference once again to the Sonship of Christ as being a “fact” (“the fact that he was the beloved Son of God”). This would not make sense if Jesus was only role-playing the part. Read it again and you will see what I mean.

In commenting on this same confrontation, Ellen White wrote with the youth in mind

“To human eyes, Christ was only a man, yet he was a perfect man. In his humanity he was the impersonation of the divine character. **God embodied his own attributes in his Son**, -- his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his purity, his truthfulness, his spirituality, and his benevolence.” (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 16th September 1897, 'What think ye of Christ'*)

Here we have an explanation of the attributes spoken of above. Note that the embodying of them within the Son of God was an act of God. This was the indwelling in Christ of Deity itself. It reminds us of where the Scriptures tell us that “...it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” Colossians 1:19 (see also Colossians 2:9). These very same attributes were in Christ prior to the incarnation.

She then said

“In him, though human, all perfection of character, **all divine excellence, dwelt**. And to the request of his disciple, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," he could reply, "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, Show us the Father?"
"I and my Father are one." (*Ibid*)

Ellen White later explained regarding the reaction of the Jews to Christ's words

"The strong denunciation of the Pharisees against Jesus was, "Thou, being a man, **makest thyself God;**" and for this reason they sought to stone him. **Christ did not apologize for this supposed assumption on his part.**

He did not say to his accusers, "**You misunderstand me; I am not God.**" **He was manifesting God in humanity.**" (*Ibid*)

Jesus was not making Himself to be God but He was God made manifest (see 1 Timothy 3:16). This is why He was making these Sonship claims. His Sonship was His by right of inheritance (see Hebrews 1:1-3).

Christ is God. As these words so clearly explain

"True, he declared, "There is none good but One, that is God," but again he said, "I and my Father are one." **Jesus speaks of himself as well as the Father as God,** and claims for himself perfect righteousness." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 10th October 1892, 'Draw from the source of strength'*)

Jesus was not God in personality but He was God in infinity. As were told here

"The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, **is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.**" (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 116, Dec. 19, 1905, 'An Entire Consecration', see also The Upward Look, page 367*)

Notice who it is that "is truly God in infinity, but not in personality". It is "the **only begotten Son of the Father**". This is referring to Christ prior to the incarnation – not to Christ after the incarnation. Christ is begotten of the Father in eternity. This is why He is God Himself in the person of the Son.

We have been told this regarding the incarnation

"There is **no one who can explain the mystery of the incarnation of Christ.** Yet we know that He came to this earth and lived as a man among men. **The man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty, yet Christ and the Father are one.**" (*Ellen G. White, letter 32, 1899, Manuscript 140, 1903, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary page 1129*)

About my Father's business

When Jesus was 12 years of age He was taken by Joseph and Mary to the Passover held in Jerusalem. This was the first time He had attended. Luke recorded

"And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, **the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem;** and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance." Luke 2:42-44

Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem looking for Jesus but it took 3 days to find Him. They eventually found Him the temple listening to the 'learned doctors' and asking them

questions. Luke recorded that "... all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (see Luke 2:47).

Concerning Joseph and Mary, Luke then says

"And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? **behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.** And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that **I must be about my Father's business?** And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." (Luke 2:48-50)

Mary referred to Joseph as the father of Jesus but Jesus replied differently. He referred to 'God the Father' as His father. Notice here we are told that neither Mary nor Joseph understood what Jesus was saying (when He said "I must be about my Father's business?").

Spirit of prophecy comments

When writing concerning how Jesus was 'left behind' in Jerusalem, Ellen White explained (this was with regards to His mother's enquiry as to why He had not stayed with them – also what did He mean when He had said to Mary and Joseph, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?")

"We here have evidence that Jesus **was not ignorant of his mission from Heaven to the earth, even in his childhood.** Jesus virtually says to his mother, Mary, do you not understand my work and the nature of my mission? He here made known his **peculiar relation to God for the first time. Mary well knew that Jesus did not refer to Joseph when he spoke of doing his Father's business.**" (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 1st August 1873, 'The life of Christ No. 8')

It would be impossible to interpret the words "peculiar relation to God" as speaking of the virgin birth. Mary knew only too well that the child born from her was a miracle of God. This "peculiar relation to God" was the pre-existent relationship that Christ had with the Father.

The next paragraph explains

"The first visit of Jesus to the temple aroused new impulses, and he was so deeply impressed with his relationship with God that **all earthly bonds were forgotten.** And, impelled by the high sense of his work and mission, **he recognized and acknowledged himself as the Son of God,** obedient to his will and engaged in his work." (*Ibid*)

Note the words "all earthly bonds". Primarily these would have been with respect to His mother Mary and Joseph. These bonds were eclipsed as the boy Jesus "recognized and acknowledged himself as the Son of God".

We are then told concerning the words of Jesus, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

"And they understood not the saying that he spake unto them." As there had been **nothing remarkable in the twelve years of the life of Christ, to give outward indications of his sonship with God, his own relatives did not discern the marks of his divine character.**" (*Ibid*)

It does not need saying that both Joseph and Mary knew of Christ's miracle birth so when Ellen White says that prior to this visit to Jerusalem there had been no "outward indications of his sonship with God", this could not have been a reference to His earthly birth but to

Christ's pre-existent relationship with God. It was this Sonship that was not discerned (not recognised)

Concerning the words of the boy Jesus, Ellen White wrote in 'The Desire of Ages'

"How is it that ye sought Me?" answered Jesus. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" **And as they seemed not to understand His words, He pointed upward.** On His face was a light at which they wondered. **Divinity was flashing through humanity.**" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 81, 'The Passover visit')

Here we are told that Jesus was referring to His divine Sonship – the Sonship He had with His Father **prior to the incarnation**. It was because He is the Son of God that He is divine.

In the next paragraph it said

"And His question to them had a lesson. "Wist ye not," He said, "that I must be about My Father's business?" Jesus was engaged in the work that He had come into the world to do; but Joseph and Mary had neglected theirs. God had shown them high honor in committing to them **His Son.**" (Ibid)

Later she wrote

"It was natural for the parents of Jesus to look upon Him **as their own child**. He was daily with them, His life in many respects was like that of other children, and **it was difficult for them to realize that He was the Son of God.**" (Ibid)

Jesus was not Joseph and Mary's "own child". He was the Son of God.

As has been said, neither Mary nor Joseph had difficulty in realising that the birth of Jesus was a miracle – therefore it was not to His human birth at Bethlehem that these words are referring. The words "Son of God" can only be referring to Christ's divine pre-existent Sonship. Read it again and you will see what I mean.

We are also told in the next paragraph (this again was with reference to Jesus saying "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business")

"In the answer to His mother Jesus showed **for the first time that He understood His relation to God.**" (Ibid)

She later added

"**Now she did not understand His words;** but she knew that He had disclaimed kinship to Joseph, **and had declared His Sonship to God.**" (Ibid)

Again this can be no other than a reference to the Sonship Christ had with the Father **prior to Him coming to earth**.

These sentiments expressed here in the spirit of prophecy are no different than those expressed to the youth 25 years earlier. Concerning the child Jesus it is said

"**Jesus claimed his sonship to the Eternal.** He informed Mary that he must be about **his Father's business**, and that his obligation to **his Heavenly Father** was above every other claim." (Ellen G. White, 'Youths Instructor' 1st September 1873 'The Life of Christ No. 9')

God is Christ's "Heavenly Father". Christ is divine because His father is God.

As Ellen White explained the year after the famous 1888 General Conference at Minneapolis

"When Christ was upon earth, it was difficult for those with whom he daily associated to realize **that he was divine**. It was difficult for the members of his own family to comprehend **the fact that he was the Son of God**." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 11th June 1889, 'Man's Failure to Comprehend Divinity in Humanity')

Once again Ellen White refers to Christ's pre-existent Sonship with the Father as a "fact" ("the fact that he was the Son of God"). In other words, Christ really "was the Son of God". This means that He really "was divine". Notice how these two statements are directly related to each other (He was divine – He was the Son of God). How much clearer can these things be said? Note too the article title.

It is because Christ is the Son of God that He is divine. If He was anything less than a Son – even if He had been the first and the greatest of all created beings - He would not be divine. Christ was not created. He was begotten. In eternity He was brought forth of the Father (begotten of the Father). He truly is God's Son – God's personality shown. He is God Himself in the person of the Son. He is the 'express image' of His Father's person (see Hebrews 1:3). He is God manifest (1 Timothy 3:16)..

Ellen White followed on by saying

"It seemed hard for them to realize that **divinity wore the garb of humanity**." (Ibid)

Here the reference is not to the events of Bethlehem (the virgin birth) but with respect to Christ's Sonship in His pre-existence (Christ's divine Sonship). Christ was not partly divine. He was fully and completely divine. He was not 50% God and 50% human. He was 100% God and 100% human.

It then said of Christ

"Again and again he was obliged to declare his position as the Son of God. They were so dull of perception that **they could not distinguish the divine from the human**. Although they believed that his works were of a miraculous character, they could not fully understand their nature, and he had to **state his authority and his position**." (Ibid)

The same state of affairs still exists today. Christ's Sonship to God needs to be declared "Again and again". There are so many who are still "dull of perception".

Notice the words – "they could not distinguish the divine from the human". Here again "the divine" stands in relation to Christ's "position as the Son of God". It is this 'divineness' (His authority and position of Sonship) that Christ had to repeatedly convey to His daily associates.

There can be no mistaking here that these words are speaking of Christ as being a son in His pre-existence. They are certainly not referring to Christ as the Son of God because of the events of Bethlehem (the incarnation).

Again Ellen White wrote of the experience of Jesus after his first trip to the Passover at Jerusalem – also of the words He spoke ("How is it that ye sought Me?" "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?")

“As He spoke these words, **Jesus pointed upward**. On His face was a light at which they wondered. **Jesus knew that He was the Son of God**, and He had been doing the work for which His Father had sent Him into the world.

Mary never forgot these words. In the years that followed, **she better understood their wonderful meaning**.

Though He knew that He was the Son of God, Jesus went home to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary. Until thirty years of age He was "subject unto them." Luke 2:51." (Ellen G. White, *Story of Jesus*, pages 33, 34, 'Child life of Jesus')

There is no way that this could be read as though the terminology "the Son of God" is figurative language – as is said today by our theologians and leadership.

Speaking of this same event we have also been told concerning Joseph and Mary

“While they had been unmindful of the responsible charge intrusted to them, **Jesus was engaged in the work of his Father. Mary knew that Christ did not refer to his earthly father, Joseph, but to Jehovah**. She laid these things to heart, and profited by them.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 31st December 1872, 'The life of Christ', see also *Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2 1877 page 33 'The life of Christ'*)

“Mary was rejoiced to find her son; but she could not forget the anxiety and grief which she had experienced on his account, and reprovingly she said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Christ respectfully lay back the censure, saying, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" **Mary knew that Christ did not refer to Joseph. In this assertion, he made it manifest that he did not recognize Joseph as his father, but claimed God as his Father; and for the first time he spoke to them of the mission which he came on earth to fulfil.**" (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 13th July 1893, 'Words to the young')

“**Though he was the Son of God**, he went down to Nazareth and was subject to his parents. Though his mother did not understand the meaning of his words, she did not forget them, but "kept all these sayings in her heart." (Ellen White, *Youth's Instructor*, 28th December 1895, 'Child Life of Jesus, No, 2)

The youth were also told three years later in 1898 (the year 'The Desire of Ages' was released)

“It is not correct to say, as many writers have said, that Christ was like all children. He was not like all children. Many children are misguided and mismanaged. But Joseph, and especially Mary, **kept before them the remembrance of their child's divine Fatherhood.**" (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 8th September 1898, 'And the grace of God was upon Him')

In 'Special Testimonies on Education' are found these words

“Although the Holy Spirit worked the mind of Christ, so that he could say to his parents, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Yet he worked at the carpenter's trade as an obedient son. He revealed that **he had a knowledge of his work as the Son of God, and yet he did not exalt his divine character**. He did not offer as a reason why he should not bear the burden of temporal care, **that he was of divine origin**; but he was subject to his parents. He was the Lord of the commandments, yet he was obedient to all their requirements,

thus leaving an example to obedience to childhood, youth, and manhood.” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies on Education*, page 16, ‘Higher education’)

In ‘Christ’s Object Lessons’, this is said of Christ’s earlier years

“The life of Christ from His earliest years was a life of earnest activity. He lived not to please Himself. **He was the Son of the infinite God**, yet He worked at the carpenter’s trade with His father Joseph.” (Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 345, ‘Talents’)

Note the contrast. It is divinity (“the Son of the infinite God”) stooping to the depths of a human workman (having a human occupation).

In 1893 Ellen White wrote

“O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that **the infinite God** would consent to the humiliation of **his own dear Son!**” (Ellen G. White, *Christian education*, page 107 ‘The book of books’, 1893)

There can be no doubt that throughout the Scriptures – also throughout the spirit of prophecy - we have been told that Christ was God’s “own dear Son” **prior to the incarnation**. It was He that stooped to the humiliation of human endeavour.

All who would have read the above spirit of prophecy statements - when they were first published - would have taken them to be referring to Christ’s pre-existent relationship with the Father. This is because during the time period of Ellen White’s ministry, this was the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This faith was that because He was begotten of God in eternity (brought forth of God in eternity), Christ is truly the Son of God. We shall see more of this in chapters 13 to 17.

[Proceed to chapter 7](#), ‘The Son of God – whose son is He?’

Chapter seven

The Son of God – whose son is He?

In [chapter 6](#) we noted that throughout the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White, Christ is spoken of as truly the Son of God. We shall continue to see this here.

Whose Son is He?

Nearing the close of Christ's earthly ministry, the Jews, like they often did, tried to entrap Him in His words. On the occasion we shall speak of now, it was through the combined effort of three leading factions – namely the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Herodians. Normally they opposed each other but in this instance they had united against Jesus. This is the norm in a 'common enemy' situation.

The Pharisees had earlier sent their disciples (along with the Herodians) to 'entangle' Jesus in the things of which He had spoken (see Matthew 22:15-16) but by His replies to their questions our Saviour had completely silenced them (22:22). He then did the same with the Sadducees (verses 33-34). Now the Pharisees again tried to 'catch Him out'.

A scribe came to Jesus asking Him which is "the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36); or as Mark's gospel phrases the scribe's question - "Which is the first commandment of all?" (Mark 12:28).

Jesus replied

“... The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; ***The Lord our God is one Lord.***” Mark 12:29

Here Deuteronomy 6:4 is being quoted. As we spoke of this in detail in [chapter 3](#) we will not do so again here.

Jesus then added

“And thou shalt love ***the Lord thy God*** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”. Mark 12:30 -31

In seemingly commending Jesus for His answer – also showing he was convicted of the truth spoken by Christ - the scribe replied

“... Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: ***for there is one God***; and there is ***none other but he***.” Mark 12:32

He also added

“And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, ***is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.***” Mark 12:33

Please note that this is the setting for the conversation which followed. Note too that this was at the latter end of Christ's ministry. This means that this scribe must have been very aware of the previous disputes that Christ had with the Jews. This was when saying that God was His father, the Jews had said that He was "making himself equal with God" (see John 5:18). As has been said in [chapter 6](#), this shows that Jesus was understood as making this Sonship claim in its most literal sense of meaning. If this wasn't so, then none of these so called 'accusations' would make any sense.

Some say that Jesus used the words 'Father' and 'Son' to show the love that exists between Himself and the Father (or the first person of the Godhead as the trinitarians like to call Him) but what sense would this make? If this had been the case, would this have brought about such hatred and anger from the Jews towards Him – even wanting to kill Him?

Mark then records

"And when Jesus saw that he [the scribe] answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art *not far from the kingdom of God*..." Mark 12:34

The Greek word here translated "**discreetly**" means 'intelligently', 'wisely' or 'prudently' – or as we might say today, 'giving it some thought'. Remember – this was in response to what was said by the scribe.

By telling the scribe he was "**not far from the kingdom of God**", Jesus was saying he had it 'almost right' (that he was on the right track). The scribe had recognised that obedience to God's law was far more preferential than a multitude of sacrifices but as yet he had not recognised that Jesus was the divine Son of God. One belief without the other is not sufficient. As we shall see now, this is why Jesus turned the entire conversation around to Himself being a Son.

In a manner inviting a response, Jesus used the scribe's answer to have those gathered around Him to reason concerning His true identity (meaning His divinity or divine Sonship).

As Matthews records

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? *whose son is he* ...?" Matthew 22:42

The term "**Christ**" (Gr. Christos) is not a personal name but a title. It is equivalent to the Hebrew for 'Messiah' (Mashiac) meaning 'the anointed one'. Jesus was therefore asking the Pharisees, '**Whose son** is the Messiah'?

There was no hesitation or ambiguity in the reply of the Jewish leaders. They said

"... The son of David." (*Ibid*)

Amongst the Jews by reason of prophecy, the term "**The son of David**" (not the term Son of God) had become a popular title for the promised Messiah. This was accepted not only by certain of the sects of the Jews (see the Pharisees' confession above) but also by the 'common people' (see Matthew 9:27, 12:22-23, 15:22, 21:9, Mark 10:47 etc). We mentioned in [chapter 4](#) that the eternal reign of the promised Messiah would be upon the throne of David.

In accordance with the prophecies of what we term the 'Old Testament Scriptures', the Jews believed that the Messiah would be of human descent – and more precisely, through the line of David. This is noticeably revealed when concerning Jesus there was division amongst them. As John recorded the Jews as saying

“Hath not the scripture said, That Christ **cometh of the seed of David**, and **out of the town of Bethlehem**, where David was?” John 7:42

Here there is a reference to the prophecy of Micah 5:2 – meaning that the Messiah would come out of Bethlehem. The words “**where David was**” are referring to the fact that Bethlehem was not only David’s birthplace but also his boyhood home.

In response to the Jewish leaders saying that the Messiah is the “**son of David**” (see above), Jesus asked a most intriguing and tantalising question - at least it must have been so to those who did not believe that Christ is truly the divine Son of God. This question was

“ ... How then doth David **in spirit** call him Lord, saying, **The LORD said unto my Lord**, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?” Matthew 22:43-44

The words “**in spirit**” are equivalent to us saying today - ‘under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit’. This was with reference to Psalm 110:1 which says

“**The LORD said unto my Lord**, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Psalms 110:1

Note here that the capitalised “LORD” is from the Hebrew ‘Yehovah’ (Jehovah) whilst the word Lord (not capitalised) is from the Hebrew ‘adown’ (lord, master etc).

David was here given a revelation of the result of Christ accomplishing His earthly mission. It was the invitation to Christ to sit upon the throne of God until the completion of the plan of redemption. It was following this that Christ would take the throne of David. This was spoken of in [chapter 4](#) so we will not go over this again here.

Remember too that these words of Jesus (“**How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord**”) were spoken following directly on from when He had said to the scribe that “**The Lord our God is one Lord**.”, also that people should “**love the Lord thy God**” with all their heart etc (Mark 12:29-31). Remember also that the scribe had said to Jesus “**thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he**” (Mark 12:32).

Appealing to reason, Jesus then enquired of the Jews

“**If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?**” Matthew 22:45

Jesus was not only appealing to reason but also prompting enquiry. He was asking that if the long expected Messiah was coming through the seed of David, also that under inspiration David had called Him “**Lord**” (implying that He had existed prior to David), - then “**how is he his son?**” After all, a son is usually younger than the father. Why call him ‘Lord’?

Jesus was using this Scripture to say to the Pharisees that if Christ is only human (a son by human descent), then why did David call Him “**Lord**”? In reasoning this way, Jesus was leading them to believe that the coming Messiah was ‘before’ David – even though He would be coming through the lineage of David. Jesus was thus pointing out that the Messiah would be divine – just like He was pointing out His own divinity – and His own Sonship.

This was similar to (but not exactly the same as) when Christ said to the Jews “**Before Abraham was, I AM**” (see John 8:58). As used here by Jesus, this (Gr. ego eimi) expresses the idea of ‘eternal presence’, thus He identified Himself as ‘the self-existent one’ – the one who had spoken to the Hebrews at Mount Sinai and who had led them through their wilderness wanderings. In other words, Jesus was claiming to be the God of the Old

Testament – the God of the Jews. This is why the Jews in their anger wanted to stone Him (John 8:59). Christ was claiming to be Deity – their God.

Matthew then records

“And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.” Matthew 22:46

Christ’s question had completely silenced those who thought that the coming Messiah was only to be of human descent. As Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah – then He was also claiming to be ‘the Son’ – the one who was ‘before’ David – also the one whom ‘the LORD’ had called ‘Lord’.

The question that Jesus asked is still as ‘live’ today as when He first asked it – and it is still silencing those who oppose Christ’s claims to divine Sonship. “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?” “If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”

Spirit of prophecy comments

With reference to Psalm 110:1, which as we note above says “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool”, Ellen White wrote

“David called the Messiah, **in his divine character, Lord**, although, **after the flesh, he was the son of David by direct descent.**” (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy Volume 3, page 271, ‘The Pentecost’*)

There are those who say that Christ is only called the Son of God because of His human descent (the incarnation) but here this idea is refuted. Here we are told that by His human descent, He was called “**the son of David**”.

In ‘The Desire of Ages’ we find these words (this was with reference to the above encounter that Jesus had with the Jews)

“The Pharisees had gathered close about Jesus as He answered the question of the scribe. Now turning He put a question to them: “**What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages, page 608, ‘Controversy’*)

It then says concerning the Pharisees

“This question was designed to **test their belief concerning the Messiah**, -- to show whether they regarded Him **simply as a man or as the Son of God.**” (Ibid)

If the Messiah was accepted as the Son of God then He would have been accepted as divine. To say He was simply ‘the Son of David’ was only recognising His human descent (through the line of David).

Ellen White later wrote (this was after saying that not only the multitude but also the Syrophenician woman, blind Bartimaeus and many others who had cried to Him for help had called Him the “Son of David”, also that when riding into Jerusalem He had been hailed with the words “Hosanna to the Son of David”)

“But many who called Jesus the Son of David **did not recognize His divinity**. They did not understand that the Son of David **was also the Son of God.**” (Ibid)

Here we can see the difference between saying that Christ is the Son of David and saying He is the Son of God. The first refers to His human descent whilst the second refers to His divine status.

Saying that Christ is the Son of David is not the same as saying He is the Son of God. The title 'the Son of David' is only a messianic title. It shows only His human lineage. On the other hand, to say He is the Son of God is to recognise His divinity (His divine inheritance).

Note here that the two expressions ('Son of God' and 'divinity') go hand in hand. Christ is divine because He is the Son of God. It was this divine pre-existent Sonship that Christ claimed for Himself. Thus the Jews would recognise Christ as claiming to be divine.

An interesting Sabbath School lesson comment

An interesting comment was made in our Sabbath School Quarterly for the first quarter of 1897. It said (note the lesson title)

*"In a word, **it was a Messiah the Jews looked for, not the Son of God.** They looked for one with divine powers, the delegate of God, sent to accomplish His will and to establish His kingdom, the representative among them of the divine presence; **but they did not look for a real dwelling of a divine person among them.**" (Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, First quarter 1897, 'Gospel of John', Lesson 2, 'The Messiah is the Son of God')*

The study then said

*"It is quite certain that the Jews of the second century thought it silly of the Christians to hold that the Christ **pre-existed from eternity as God**, and condescended to be born as man.'No Jew would allow,' says a writer of that time, '**that any prophet ever said that a Son of God would come**; but what the Jews do say is that the Christ of God will come.' This fact, **that the Jews did not expect the Messiah to be strictly divine**, sheds light on the real ground of accusation against Jesus." (Ibid)*

It then adds this very interesting thought

*"So long as it was supposed that He merely claimed to be the promised Christ, and used the title 'Son of God' as equivalent to a Messianic title, many of the people admitted His claim and were prepared to own Him. **But when the Pharisees began to apprehend that He claimed to be the Son of God in a higher sense, they accused Him of blasphemy, and on this charge He was condemned.**" (Ibid)*

It was this literalness of divine Sonship (the "higher sense") that the Jews regarded as being blasphemous – thus they deemed Christ worthy of death.

The testimony of the Father

In our study of Christ's claims to a divine pre-existent Sonship, there is a very important testimony to consider. This is the testimony of God Himself - when He called Jesus His Son.

Concerning the baptism of Jesus Matthew records

*"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, **This is my beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17*

The same writer also wrote concerning the transfiguration

“While he [Peter] yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, ***This is my beloved Son***, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Matthew 17:5 (See also Mark 1:11, 9:7, Luke 3:22, 9:35)

By those who witnessed these scenes, it was not the voice of Christ that was heard. It was the voice of the Father. He was confirming Christ’s divine Sonship.

As Peter wrote

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ***For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.***” 2 Peter 1:16-17

Spirit of prophecy comments

With regards to the baptism of Jesus, we find in the Spirit of Prophecy (Volume 2) these words

“While the people stood spell-bound with amazement, their eyes fastened upon Christ, from the opening heavens came these words: ***“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”***” (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 2, page 60, ‘The mission of Christ’, 1877*)

We were then told

“The words of confirmation that Christ ***is the Son of God*** was given to inspire faith in those who witnessed the scene, ***and to sustain the Son of God in his arduous work.***” (*Ibid*)

The main purpose for God’s testimony was to assure Christ of His position of divine Sonship with Himself (the Father). Ellen White then added

“Notwithstanding ***the Son of God was clothed with humanity***, yet Jehovah, with his own voice, assures him of ***his sonship with the Eternal.***” (*Ibid*)

This cannot be anything else than Christ’s pre-existent “sonship”. It would not be reasonable to conclude that these words were written with respect to His miracle birth at Bethlehem (note “the Son of God ***was clothed with humanity***”).

In 1874, in the Youth’s Instructor; it was said of the same scene

“As John witnessed the Saviour of the world bowed in the deepest humiliation, and pleading fervently ***with tears for the approval of his Father***, he was deeply moved. As the light and glory from Heaven enshrouded the Saviour, and a voice was heard claiming Jesus as the ***Son of the infinite***, John saw the token God had promised him, and knew for a certainty that the world’s Redeemer had received baptism at his hands.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor, 1st March 1874, ‘The Life of Christ No. 12’*)

Notice here again “the infinite” is not the Son of God but God the Father. Christ is “***the Son of the infinite***”.

Again referring to the baptism of Jesus and the voice of the Father saying “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”, Ellen White wrote

“He [Satan] saw the brightness of the Father’s glory overshadowing the form of Jesus, thus, with unmistakable assurance, pointing out the One in that crowd **whom he acknowledged as his Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 3rd March 1874, ‘Redemption No. 2’, see also *Signs of the Times*, 5th April 1883 and *Signs of the Times* 4th August 1887)

As has been said above, God’s testimony is the most important testimony of all. He confirmed what Jesus later claimed. Again there is no reason to suggest this claim was metaphorical or figurative. For God to say that Christ was His Son - if He was not really a son - would have been very confusing. Obviously God meant what He said. Christ truly is His son.

Ellen White later added

“Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father. And that he should leave Heaven and come to this world as a man filled him with apprehension for his own safety.” (Ibid)

This confirms the previous conclusion. God’s words were with reference to **Christ’s pre-existent Sonship**. It was Christ’s pre-existent position as the Son of God that was so despised by Satan. This is what made the adversary so angry. He was envious of Christ as a son.

Notice too that Ellen White refers to Christ’s Sonship with the Father as a “**position of honor**”. There can be no doubt that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told very clearly that **prior to the incarnation**, Christ really did hold the position of the Son of God. If only more Seventh-day Adventists would realise it. Satan realised it. This is why he is attempting to deceive people into believing that Christ is not really a Son. It is the one truth he hates. The more people he can get to believe his lies the more he is satisfied. We must be careful not to add to that satisfaction. As we are told here, Satan was well aware of the fact that Christ, in His pre-existence, held the position of “**the Son of God**”.

In the ‘Signs of the Times’ in 1887 Ellen White wrote (again concerning Satan)

“When from the opening heavens he heard **the voice of God addressing his Son**, it was to him as the sound of a death-knell. It told him that now God was about to unite man more closely to himself, and give moral power to overcome temptation, and to escape from the entanglements of Satanic devices.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 4th August 1887, ‘Christ’s Triumph in our Behalf’)

Notice particularly the next words of God’s messenger. Again she wrote

“Satan well knew the position which Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father; and that Christ should leave the joy and honor of Heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension. He knew that this condescension **on the part of the Son of God** boded no good to him.” (Ibid)

There can be no mistaking that Ellen White spoke of Christ as being a Son **prior to Him coming to earth**. Again we are told that Satan was well aware of the position that Christ held in His pre-existence “**as the Son of God**”. This cannot be said more plainly.

In a letter in 1910 Ellen White wrote

“Angels were expelled from heaven because they would not work in harmony with God. They fell from their high estate **because they wanted to be exalted**. They had come to exalt themselves, and they forgot that their beauty of person and of character

came from the Lord Jesus.” (*Ellen G. White, Letter 42, to Elder D. A. Parsons, April 29th 1910, as quoted in ‘This day with God, page 128)*

Now note very carefully the next words of Ellen White. She said with reference to the fallen angels and their attempt to deceive the loyal angels

“This fact the angels [fallen angels] would obscure, **that Christ was the only begotten Son of God**, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ.” (*Ibid*)

It would be totally impossible to apply this statement to anything other than Christ's pre-existence. This is with reference to the original rebellion in Heaven. The fallen angels wanted to “obscure” the “fact” that Christ was the “only begotten Son of God”. So too do all the followers of Satan. They are continuing this work today – even amongst Seventh-day Adventists.

We were then told

“**One angel began the controversy** and carried it on until there was rebellion in the heavenly courts, among the angels.” (*Ibid*)

This same deception has been brought down to earth. Like the fallen angels were trying to do, many today are still attempting to hide the fact of Christ's pre-existent Sonship to the eternal.

Satan hated Christ for holding this position of Sonship. This is why concerning Christ's divine Sonship he is still deceiving people today. The more people he can deceive the better he is pleased. Make sure you are not one of them.

In 1894 we were told

“Satan is determined **that men shall not see the love of God, which led him to give his only begotten Son to save the lost race**; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.” (*Ellen White, Review and Herald, 20th March 1894, ‘Christ the center of the message’*)

If people can be deceived into thinking that God never had a son to give, then Satan has the battle ‘half-won’. He also knows, as we are told here through the spirit of prophecy, that if he can obscure the love that has been revealed in God actually giving His Son, then he will achieve obscuring the very thing that “leads men to repentance”. In other words, if Satan can obscure the fact that Christ really is God's Son – and that God really is His father - then his objective will be achieved.

There can be no mistaking that Ellen White consistently spoke of Christ, in His pre-existence, as a true Son. This is undeniable. She said it over and over again. Notice this letter had been written by Ellen White in 1910. This was 12 years **after** the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’. She was still saying that Christ was literally the Son of God – meaning of course - in His pre-existence. This was also then still the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It would not change for decades.

Five years after ‘The Desire of ages’ was published, Ellen White wrote to John Harvey Kellogg saying (although it is unsure whether he actually received the letter)

“When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission

by assuming the likeness of a man **when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God.**" (Ellen G. White, letter, to J. H. Kellogg, Letter No. K-303, August 29th 1903)

This is the truth of the matter. Christ may have veiled His divinity with humanity but as we are told here, "**in reality He was the Son of the infinite God**". This was Christ's true position in Heaven, prior to coming to earth. He really was – and still is - God's one and only begotten Son. How much plainer can anything be said?

In a letter of serious reproof written in 1894 to the captain of the ship 'Pitcairn', Ellen White made it clear that Christ really is God's Son. She wrote

"Christ is the Son of God in deed and in truth and in love, and is the representative of the Father as well as the representative of the human race." (Ellen G. White, letter to Jacob Christiansen, Captain of the missionary ship 'Pitcairn', January 2nd 1894, written from Melbourne)

She later wrote

"God has given to the world and to angels the evidence of the changeless character of His love. **He would part with His only begotten Son, send Him into the world, clothed in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin and to die upon Calvary's cross** to make it manifest to men that there is provision in the counsels of heaven for those who believe in Christ, to keep the commandments of God."

If it is thought that I am misunderstanding Ellen White's words, I would ask you to note she wrote later in the letter

"I have written this out definitely and simply in order that my words may not be misunderstood. May the Lord apply the truth to your heart, and may it work to purify your character, that with the mind you may serve the Lord God and be loved by the Father **as He loves His obedient Son**, is the prayer of Ellen G. White." (Ibid)

Imagine this situation for a moment.

The man who received this letter says to Ellen White that because of what she had written here, he had come to believe that Christ truly is (meaning in reality) the divine Son of God. Can you imagine Ellen White saying to him – "I am really very sorry, I did not mean to give that impression - I only meant that He is a son figuratively or metaphorically"?

I think not. This would not even be imaginable. It can only be expected for someone to take her words concerning Christ in the most literal sense of their meaning – the same as the rest of her words. In other words, Christ really (truly) is the Son of God.

As is said here

"The disciples returned to Jerusalem, **knowing now for a certainty that Jesus was the Son of God.**" (Ellen G. White, Letter from Cooranbong, Australia, May 30, 1896, see *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* page 65, 1923)

Again how much clearer can anything be said?

After speaking of how Jesus was thrust out of the temple at Nazareth (see Luke 4:29), Ellen White explained in a sermon at the 1888 General Conference session

"Here I want to tell you what a terrible thing it is if God gives light, and it is impressed on your heart and spirit, for you to do as they did. God will withdraw His Spirit unless

His truth is accepted. But Christ was accepted by some; **the witness was there that He was God.**" (*Sabbath talk, Minneapolis General Conference, Sabbath, October 20, 1888 - Ms 8, 1888*)

She later said with respect to Christ's baptism and the words of God saying that Christ was His beloved Son

"What does that say to us? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." **It says to you, I, God, have sent My Son into your world, and through Him is opened all heaven to fallen man.** After the sin of Adam man was divorced from God, but Christ came in. He was represented through the sacrificial offerings until He came to our world." (*Ibid*)

How can this be read other than it saying that Christ is a son in His pre-existence? It cannot be read any other way. It is impossible..

Interesting is that in the letter written to Jacob Christiansen (quoted above), Ellen White implored him to come under the control of the Holy Spirit. She wrote explaining (and remember she had said "I have written this out definitely and simply in order that my words may not be misunderstood")

"The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, which is sent to all men to give them sufficiency, that through His grace we might be complete in Him. The Lord has provided that we should always be under the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit." (*Ellen G. White, letter to Jacob Christiansen, Captain of the missionary ship 'Pitcairn', January 2nd 1894, written from Melbourne*)

We shall return to this thought in chapters 18, 19 and 20.

The Father sends His Son

The Scriptures clearly reveal that God the Father sent His 'own Son' into this world. In fact Jesus Himself said

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." John 3:17

The Scriptures also tell us

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, **God sending his own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" Romans 8:3

Jesus also said

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of **the Father which hath sent me.**" John 5:30

He also added

"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, **that the Father hath sent me.** And 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 5:36-37 (see also John 6:57, 8:16 and 18)

Jesus had no qualms about claiming to be the Son of God. He had the testimony of the Father to assure Him (Matthew 3:17).

Speaking on behalf of Christians, the gospel writer John wrote

“And we have seen and do testify that **the Father sent the Son** to be the Saviour of the world. 1 John 4:14

We are also told through the Scriptures

“**He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all**, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32

Texts such as Galatians 4:4, 1 John 4:10, 14 and 5:10 tell us exactly the same. God literally sent ‘**his** Son’ into the world. One would assume therefore that unless the testimony of the Scriptures cannot be trusted to mean what they actually say on this point, then the Father must have had a Son to send. There is no way that these texts of Scripture can be said to be metaphorical or figurative. God really did have a son and He did really send Him.

Notice again in these texts that it is the Father who is seen as having the pre-eminence – meaning He is the One who is doing the giving and the sending. It was not the Holy Spirit who is said to be doing the giving and the sending.

Here is seen the authority of the sender. We can also see a submission of Sonship on the part of the One who is sent. This can be likened to the authority of Abraham (in his household) and the submission of Isaac (as a loving obedient son) to his father. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son whilst Isaac was willing to trust his father (see Genesis 22:1-18). This was a relationship of love, trust and obedience. It was the same relationship that existed between Christ and His father.

Spirit of prophecy comments

In Volume 3 of the Testimonies we find these words

“**Isaac was a figure of the Son of God**, who was offered a sacrifice for the sins of the world.” (Ellen G. White, Volume 3 Testimonies, page 369, ‘An appeal to the young’)

We have also been told

“**God would impress upon Abraham the gospel of salvation to man**. In order to do this, **and make the truth a reality to him** as well as to test his faith, He required him to slay his darling Isaac. All the sorrow and agony that Abraham endured through that dark and fearful trial were for the purpose of deeply impressing upon his understanding the plan of redemption for fallen man.” (Ibid)

Notice here that to “**make the truth a reality**” to Abraham, God instructed him to sacrifice **his own son**. If Christ is not God’s true Son then God’s instruction to Abraham was not much of a reality. In fact it could be said to be a deception (remember above where Ellen White wrote that “in reality” Christ “was the Son of the infinite God”).

We are then told concerning Abraham

“He was made to understand in his own experience how unutterable was the self-denial of the infinite God in giving **His own Son** to die to rescue man from utter ruin.” (Ibid)

If God was not giving of 'His own flesh and blood' (as we would say as humans) – then this statement from the Testimonies is nothing short of a deception. As the Scriptures say, so we are told here. That God was "giving **His own Son**".

Note here again that Ellen White refers to the Father as "the infinite God". Very often she referred to Christ as being '**the Son** of the infinite God' or '**the Son** of the infinite' (or similar wording).

It was then explained

"To Abraham **no mental torture could be equal** to that which he endured in obeying the divine command to sacrifice his son." (*Ibid*)

The account then went on to explain further that unlike the experience of Abraham and Isaac, there was no last minute reprieve for God and His Son – meaning that for the salvation of mankind, God had to put to death His one and only Son. What mental torture for them both! Can we imagine it?

It then said

"Could God give us any greater proof of His love than in thus giving **His Son** to pass through this scene of suffering?" (*Ibid*)

If God was not giving of His own Son then how does this statement make sense? The love of God can only be truly seen if the Father is really a father and the Son is truly a son. Any other relationship completely obliterates the love of God as shown in this sacrifice.

In the Ministry magazine of February 2009 there was published an article written by John C. Johnson. The editor of 'Ministry' points out that this article "was *one* of our ministerial student writing contest winning submissions". Referring to the events of Calvary, Johnson says

"The struggle is clearly felt not only on one side but among **both the Father and the Son**. Gérard Rossé points to the non-intervention of the Father on the cross as a revelation of Himself, not despite His silence but because of His inactivity. The abandonment of the Son should be seen positively as the culminating expression of the Father's love for the Son. **By not intervening at the Cross, the Father actually carried out the sacrifice that Abraham almost did with Isaac, an act that certainly caused the Father great suffering.** John 3:16 says that God the Father gave His only Son, and Brown notices that in this verse, the role of the Father becomes prominent." (*John C. Johnson, Ministry, February 2009, 'A trinitarian view of the cross'*)

A submissive pre-existent Son

Throughout the Scriptures, also throughout the spirit of prophecy, God the Father is seen as sending and giving His Son yet we must not forget the submission – also the willingness – on the part of the Son of God to be sent.

The Scriptures clearly reveal that Christ thought it not robbery to regard Himself as equal with God (Philippians 2:6). They also tell us that whilst humanity was suffering under the consequences of sin, Christ did not consider this position as something to be held on to (to be grasped) therefore so that He could become like one of us and make an atonement with God to save mankind from the results of sin (see Hebrews 2:16-17), He chose to 'let go' of this privilege (see Philippians 2:6-8).

Nevertheless, even though in His pre-existence He was God (and equal with the Father) He did not usurp the authority of the Father. This can be seen in Jude's account of Christ (Michael) raising Moses from the dead.

He wrote

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, *durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*" Jude 1:9

Although considering Himself to be equal with God (Philippians 2:6), the pre-existent Christ respected His father's pre-eminence. As we read here in the Scriptures, He did not Himself bring "a railing accusation" against Satan but said "The Lord rebuke thee" – thus referring the devil to the One (the Father) whom He, as a son, respectfully regarded as a greater authority than Himself – in a father/son relationship. This indeed was a true father-son relationship. This was not just role-playing (acting).

The word here translated "Lord" is from the Greek 'kurios'. This is a word which is used as a matter of respect for a person who is higher in authority than oneself. A slave would use it of his master.

Spirit of prophecy comments

When commenting on when Christ (Michael) raised Moses from death, Ellen White wrote

"Moses passed through death, but Michael came down *and gave him life* before his body had seen corruption. Satan tried to hold the body, claiming it as his; *but Michael resurrected Moses and took him to heaven.*" (*Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, page 164, 1882, see also Signs of the Times, 31st March 1881, 'The death of Moses, also Spiritual Gifts Volume 1, 1858, also Spiritual Gifts 4A 1864, also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 1870*)

Michael (Christ) is the life-giver. He is 'the I AM' in the person of the Son. Now note very carefully Ellen White's next words.

She said

"Satan railed bitterly against God, denouncing Him as unjust in permitting his prey to be taken from him; *but Christ did not rebuke His adversary*, though it was through his temptation that the servant of God had fallen." (*Ibid*)

So why didn't Christ rebuke Satan? Ellen White explained of Christ

"*He meekly referred him to His Father, saying, "The Lord rebuke thee."* (*Ibid*)

Michael was indeed the life giver (the 'I AM') yet He humbly recognised His position as the Son of God – meaning He respectfully recognised the supremacy of His Father as a father. As has been said already, this is a real (true) father-son relationship.

The Father here is called "The Lord". There is no doubt that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told that Christ really was a son – and was a submissive humble Son – even in His pre-existence as God.

In 'Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers' we find these words

“Christ was the only begotten Son of the infinite God, he was the Commander in the heavenly courts, yet he refrained from bringing accusation against Satan.” (Ellen G. White, *‘Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers – Series A, No. 3, page 55, 1895*)

Here again is seen the humility of Christ. He humbled Himself as a true son and recognised His father as the head of all (see 1 Corinthians 11:3).

This submissiveness we also see in what Jesus said about Himself being allowed to die. He was naturally immortal. This was the inheritance He received from His Father. This is why no one could take His life from Him – but He could voluntarily lay it down (voluntarily give it up).

As Jesus said concerning His life

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *This commandment have I received of my Father.*”
John 10:18

This was in His pre-existence – when the decision for Him to die was made. This again shows the pre-eminence of the Father in a true father-son relationship. Christ could not lay down His life without the permission of His Father.

As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy here

“It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image, by a constant manifestation of benevolence. *This work began in the heavenly courts. There God decided* to give human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He “so loved the world that *He gave His only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (Ellen G. White, *Australian Union Conference Record, 1st April 1901, ‘An important letter’*)

It was the Father who ultimately decided that Christ should die. It was He who He gave His only begotten Son”.

Again we are told through the spirit of prophecy

“I then saw the lovely Jesus and beheld an expression of sympathy and sorrow upon His countenance. *Soon I saw Him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father.* Said my accompanying angel, “*He is in close converse with His Father.*” The anxiety of the angels seemed to be intense while Jesus was communing with His Father. *Three times He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time He came from the Father we could see His person.* His countenance was calm, free from all perplexity and trouble, and shone with a loveliness which words cannot describe. He then made known to the angelic choir that a way of escape had been made for lost man; *that He had been pleading with His Father, and had obtained permission to give His own life as a ransom for the race*, to bear their sins, and take the sentence of death upon Himself, thus opening a way whereby they might, through the merits of His blood, find pardon for past transgressions, and by obedience be brought back to the garden from which they were driven.” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings, page 126 ‘Supplement’, 1882*)

In the book 'The Trinity' (which is said to answer the many questions raised in this Godhead debate within Seventh-day Adventism), Woodrow Whidden says

“But what about women and leadership roles in the church? If anyone wants to argue on the basis of Christ’s alleged eternal subordination to the Father in the experience of the trinity, ***we find no convincing biblical evidence that Christ’s subordination has been from all eternity. His subordination was only temporary.*** Furthermore, the scriptural evidence is that the subordination of Christ to the Father and the Holy Spirit to both the Father and the Son ***is merely for the practical purposes of creation and redemption among those otherwise equal in their shared divine nature.***” (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, page 277, ‘Practical implications and conclusions’)

This of course is a denial that this “subordination” (as Whidden calls it) is because of Christ's respect for His Father. I cannot understand, if it were true, why Christ needed to act subordinate (pretend to be subordinate) to the Father as far as creation is concerned. Can you?

Another thought is – if the three personalities were only role-playing (acting), then any One divine personality could have created through either of the other two – and come to think of it, why should any of them work through another in the first place? What would have been the purpose of it – if they were only role-playing (acting)?

If thou be the Son of God

Matthew and Luke both recorded how Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. They both relate that after forty days without food, the devil came to Jesus saying

“... ***If thou be the Son of God***, command that these stones be made bread.” Matthew 4:3

On another occasion Satan said to Jesus

“... ***If thou be the Son of God***, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Matthew 4:6 (see also Luke 4:3, 9)

The challenge is obvious. It is an insinuation of distrust. It is that if Christ is truly the Son of God He could have changed the stones to bread – also that if He was the Son of God and had thrown Himself from the top of the tower then angels would have kept Him from being harmed. It was not the lot of Christ though to prove Himself to Satan. He was to trust in His Father’s word – and He had the testimony of the Father that He was God’s Son (see Matthew 3:17)

Whilst we will not here go into all the reasons why Jesus did not comply with Satan’s requests, it can be clearly seen that Satan’s suggestion was that Christ was not really the Son of God. This was ongoing from his hatred of Christ as a son (in Christ's pre-existence). We noted this above.

The unclean spirits (demons) also knew the identity of Christ. As Matthew records concerning the possessed man (or ‘men’ according to Matthew’s gospel) who came to worship Jesus

“But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, ***thou Son of the most high God?*** I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.” Mark 5:6-7

We know this was an unclean spirit speaking because Jesus said

“... Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.” Mark 5:8

As Mark and Luke both record

“And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, **Thou art the Son of God.**” Mark 3:11

“And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, **Thou art Christ the Son of God.** And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.” Luke 4:41

These demons had supernatural (superhuman) knowledge. These are taken to be the fallen angels who knew Christ in His pre-existence (see 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude verse 6).

Spirit of prophecy comments

In ‘The Desire of Ages’ – and referring to Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, also the insinuations of Satan in attempting Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God (if thou be the Son of God) – we find this written

“Should Jesus do what Satan suggests, **it would be an acceptance of the doubt.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 118, ‘The Temptation’)

On the next page it says

“The words from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), were still sounding in the ears of Satan. **But he was determined to make Christ disbelieve this testimony.**” **The word of God was Christ’s assurance of His divine mission.** He had come to live as a man among men, and it was the word that declared His connection with heaven. It was Satan’s purpose to cause Him to doubt that word.” (*Ibid*, page 119)

Later Ellen White wrote

“**When Satan and the Son of God first met in conflict**, Christ was the commander of the heavenly hosts; and Satan, the leader of revolt in heaven, was cast out. Now their condition is apparently reversed, and Satan makes the most of his supposed advantage. One of the most powerful of the angels, he says, has been banished from heaven. The appearance of Jesus indicates that He is that fallen angel, forsaken by God, and deserted by man. **A divine being would be able to sustain his claim by working a miracle;** “if Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” Such an act of creative power, urges the tempter, **would be conclusive evidence of divinity.** It would bring the controversy to an end.” (*Ibid*)

Satan was trying to get Jesus to doubt the testimony of His Father. Satan knew of Christ’s position in Heaven as the Son of God and he hated it (see above and [chapter 6](#)). Notice here we are told that Satan wanted Jesus to give “evidence” of His divinity. He was asking Him to prove He was the Son of God. He was asking for a show of power.

Ellen White then explained

“Not without a struggle could Jesus listen in silence to the arch-deceiver. **But the Son of God was not to prove His divinity to Satan**, or to explain the reason of His humiliation.” (*Ibid*)

The inference of Satan was of course that if Christ could do these miracles, this would prove He was divine. Satan did not say though 'prove you are divine' or 'prove you are God'. He said "If thou be the Son of God". As we are told here, this was quite a temptation to Christ. It was His relationship to His father that was being challenged.

As far as Satan was concerned, Christ being the Son of God was the same as Him being divine. This is the same message that comes to us through the Scriptures and through the spirit of prophecy. It is because Christ is the Son of God, He is divine. He is God – in the person of the Son.

In the Review and Herald Ellen White wrote

"Satan had come to Christ, saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread," **and now Jesus gave him evidence of his divinity**. He rebuked the enemy. **Divinity flashed through humanity**, and Jesus said: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Ellen White, Review and Herald, 5th July 1892, 'The privilege of the follower of Christ')

Two years later in the Review and Herald we find these words

"And the Devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." Shall the Son of God, the world's Redeemer, take up with the doubt, and prove to the apostate that **he is indeed the Son of God, the Prince of heaven?**" (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 24th April 1894, 'Victory in temptation through Christ')

This is the truth of the matter – contrary to Satan's lies and deceptions. Christ "is indeed the Son of God".

In 1902, in an article appropriately called 'In all points tempted like as we are', Ellen White penned these words

"If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Here is the insinuation of distrust. In the tones of the tempter's voice is an expression of utter incredulity. **Would God treat His own Son thus?** Would He leave Him in the desert with wild beasts, without food, without companions, without comfort? Satan insinuated that **God never meant His Son to be in such a state as this.**" (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 3rd December 1902, 'In all points tempted like as we are')

She also wrote

"In His reply Christ made no reference to the doubt. **He was not to prove His divinity to Satan**, or to explain the reason of His humiliation." (*Ibid*)

Again we can see "divinity" related to the terminology "Son of God". In other words, if Christ is the "Son of God" then He must be divine. Notice too the emphasis on Christ really being God's Son ("Would God treat His **own** Son thus").

Speaking of those who are "professed Christians", Ellen White wrote

"Their perceptive powers are blunted by Satan's artifices, so that they cannot discern that he who afflicted Christ with manifold temptations in the wilderness, determining to **rob him of his integrity as the Son of the Infinite**, is to be their adversary to the end of time." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 8th September 1874, 'The temptation of Christ')

The article was written specifically with reference to Christ's temptation in the wilderness. Satan's ploy was to rob Christ "of his integrity **as the Son of the Infinite**". Many professed Christians are still doing this today. By saying Christ is not truly God's Son they are denigrating His true position with His father. This is even happening today within Seventh-day Adventism.

This entire controversy concerns Christ's Sonship. As we have noted previously, Ellen White did say

"Satan well knew the position which Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father; and that Christ should leave the joy and honor of Heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension. He knew that this condescension on the part of the Son of God boded no good to him." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 4th August 1887, 'Christ's Triumph in our Behalf')

She also wrote

"This fact the angels [fallen angels] would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ." (Ellen G. White, *Letter 42, to Elder D. A. Parsons, April 29th 1910, as quoted in 'This day with God, page 128)*

Today Satan is still trying to obscure "This fact" - that Christ is truly the Son of God. Do not allow him to deceive you. As God has confirmed through the spirit of prophecy, Christ "is indeed the Son of God". Do not listen to the voices that tell you otherwise.

Only the Father and the Son

Speaking of Satan's rebellion in Heaven, we are told in 'The Great Controversy'

"Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer's endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield." (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 494, 'The Origin of Evil' 1911 edition)

The same author wrote in *Spiritual Gifts* Volume 3

"Before the fall of Satan, the Father consulted his Son in regard to the formation of man." (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 3, page 36, 'The temptation and fall')*

She later added

"When Satan learned the purpose of God, he was envious at Christ, and jealous because the Father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man. Satan was of the highest order of angels; but Christ was above all. He was the commander of all Heaven. He imparted to the angelic family the high commands of his Father." (*Ibid*)

Here again can be seen the pre-eminence of the Father.

It was envy of Christ that led to Satan's downfall. Unlike the purposes of the Son of God, our adversary did not seek to bring honour and glory to the Father. As we have been told

“Even the angels were not permitted to share the counsels **between the Father and the Son** when the plan of salvation was laid.” (*Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 8, page 279, 'The essential knowledge'*)

From the above we can see that Ellen White placed a tremendous emphasis on the pre-existent Sonship of Christ. This we shall see again in [chapter 8](#).

[Proceed to chapter 8](#), 'The Son of God – truly a son, truly God'

Chapter eight

The Son of God – truly a son, truly God

In chapters 6 and 7 we have seen over and over again that both the Bible and the spirit of prophecy speak of Christ as a son prior to the incarnation. Exactly the same will be seen in this chapter. We will also see that He is none other than God.

In the beginning

John opened his gospel by writing

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word *was with God*, and *the Word was God*.” John 1:1

Interesting is the way the New English Bible renders this verse. It says

“When all things began, the *word already was*. The word *dwelt with God* and *what God was, the word was*.” John 1:1 New English Bible

In previous chapters we have clearly seen that “**God**” (the Father) and “**the Word**” (the Son of God) are two separate divine personages so we will not go over this again here. What we will note is that one literal rendering of this verse could be

‘In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God [Gr. ton qeon], and the Word was God [Gr. qeov]’.

In this particular instance, in using these words this way, John was conveying the thought that in the sense of divine personages, ‘**the God**’ was separate from ‘**the Word**’ yet the Word ‘**was God**’. By his usage of words, John is saying that the Word was God essentially (the Word was everything that God is) but He is not God in personality (in personage). Here ‘**the God**’ is the Father.

Look at it this way. If John had said that ‘the Word’ was with ‘ton qeon’ (**the God**), and the Word was ‘ton qeon’ (**the God**), this would not make any sense. It would be saying that both ‘the Word’ and ‘the God’ are the same individual personages - which they are not. Here he is saying that the Word is fully and completely God yet at the same time differentiating Him from the ‘one God’, meaning the infinite God, the Father (see John 17:3 and 1 Corinthians 8:6). This was his purpose in writing this way. He wanted to say that both were God – also that God (which must mean the Father) and the Word were two separate personages.

This does not make ‘the Word’ (the Son of God) any less divine than ‘the God’ (the Father) because as we shall repeatedly see, the Scriptures clearly reveal that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. It is just that the Son is not ‘**the God**’ in individual personage. The latter is the Father. John’s purpose was to identify the personage of the Son (see John 20:31).

In an article I found on the web called ‘Trinitarian trickery’ I found an interesting statement. It said (this was referring to John 1:1)

"A point of contention concerning this passage has been the significance of the absence of the definite article *ho* ("the") with the second occurrence of the word *theos*. John says "the word was with the *theos* and the word was *theos*" **but he does not say "the word was the *theos*."** In Koine Greek it was conventional to precede a person's name or title with the definite article when referring to that person. **So in Koine Greek it was conventional to refer to "God" as "the god," unlike our English convention.**" (*Trinitarian trickery, A complete exposé of the false doctrines of the Trinity, www.heaven.net.nz/writings/trinitarian-trickery-John-1-1.html*)

In the New Testament we find that many times the word 'God' has the definite article but almost every time it is translated without it (i. e. 'God' not 'the God'). This is the way in English we use the word 'God'. In modern Greek, a personal name is usually accompanied by the definite article but in English we would not say 'the Terry' but just 'Terry'.

This 'beginning' spoken of by John was not speaking of 'forever' but from **when** the revelation of God began. To put this in another way – the 'beginning' in John 1:1 is the beginning of the revelation of God. It is when God began expressing Himself.

How God had His existence prior to what is revealed here (in John 1:1) we have not been told. Speculation therefore is pointless. God Himself has no beginning – therefore it cannot be speaking of the beginning of God.

Christ – as much God as God the Father

That the Son of God (the Word) is as much 'God' as is God the Father is not in question. As Paul wrote to the Colossians

"For in him dwelleth ***all the fulness of the Godhead bodily***" Colossians 2:9

Other translations render this verse this way

"For it is in Christ that ***the fulness of God's nature dwells embodied***, and in Him you are made complete." Colossians 2:9 Weymouth New Testament

"For in Christ ***all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form***" Colossians 2:9 New International Version

"For in Him ***the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily***" Colossians 2:9 Holman Christian Standard Bible

"For in him ***all the wealth of God's being has a living form***" Colossians 2:9 The Bible in Basic English

"For in him, bodily, ***lives the fullness of all that God is***" Colossians 2:9 The Complete Jewish Bible

God was indwelling in Christ in reality meaning bodily (corporeal). There was no pretence involved. Christ is God in flesh.

There are also other texts of Scripture which tell us that Christ is God essentially. These are such as Hebrews 1:8 which says

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Hebrews 1:8

Here we can see God talking to the Son yet He (God) is calling Him (the Son) God. This is a citation from Psalm 45:6.

Another text to consider is Philippians 2:6. This one says concerning Christ

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

Apart from being told that in His pre-existence Christ was “equal with God”, we are also told that He was once “in the form of God”.

As we reason this through, we need to remember that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul wrote

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” 1 Timothy 3:16

Spirit of prophecy comments

Repeatedly Ellen White referred to Christ as the Son of the infinite God or the Son of the infinite. She obviously meant this as in His pre-existence.

In an article called ‘The Word made flesh’ (which needless to say is based upon the opening dialogue of John’s gospel), she wrote

“But while God’s Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding his pre-existence. **The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God**, in union and oneness **with his Father.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 5th April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh’)

This is very important. Note we are told that the Word pre-existed (meaning prior to Him coming to earth) “even as the eternal Son of God”.

This servant of the Lord added

“Before men or angels were created, the Word was **with God, and was God**”. (*Ibid*)

Throughout her writings, Ellen White speaks of Christ as no one less or no one other than God Himself **in the person of the Son**.

In the ‘Youth’s Instructor’ she wrote

“God showed his love for us **by adopting our nature, in the person of his Son**. God himself inhabited humanity, making us partakers of the divine nature, **that by the incarnation and death of his only begotten Son**, our adoption as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ might be fully accomplished. The origin of this wonderful achievement was his own spontaneous love.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 16th December 1897, ‘The New Commandment part 1’)

With respect to John’s opening words she also said

“The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. **Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense**. He was **with God from all eternity**, God over all, blessed forevermore.” (*Ibid*)

Here we are told very clearly that Christ was “God essentially” – yet we are also told that He was the Son of God – not God Himself (as a personality). Ellen White said, as do the Scriptures, “He was **with** God” (see John 1:1).

As we have also been told

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, **existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father.** He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by him as his right. This was no robbery of God.” (*Ibid*)

Very often, these words – “existed from eternity” – are understandably used by the trinitarians to so say ‘prove’ that Christ was not begotten (brought forth) of the Father. Unfortunately, in so doing, these same trinitarians usually fail to quote the remainder of the paragraph. This is where Ellen White wrote

““The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,” he declares, “before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, **I was brought forth**; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills **was I brought forth**; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth.”” (*Ibid*)

As we shall see in [chapter 10](#), this is Christ speaking of Himself.

Here Christ is saying that in eternity (dateless ages) He was “brought forth”. We can see therefore that when Ellen White said that Christ “existed from eternity”, she was obviously saying that this was from when He was “brought forth”. Exactly when He was ‘brought forth’ we have not been told – and perhaps we could not even understand it if we were told. Here therefore, silence is golden. Eternity is timeless – at least as we know time.

In 1887, which was the year previous to the now famous 1888 General Conference session, Ellen White penned these words

“The apostle [Paul] would call our attention from ourselves to the Author of our salvation. He presents before us his two natures, divine and human. Here is the description of the divine: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He was “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”

Now, of the human: “He was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.” He voluntarily assumed human nature. It was his own act, and by his own consent. He clothed his divinity with humanity. **He was all the while as God, but he did not appear as God. He veiled the demonstrations of Deity which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration, of the universe of God. He was God while upon earth, but he divested himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of a man.**” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th July 1887, ‘Christ man’s example’*)

In the same vein of thought she wrote in 1893

“**Christ was God, but he did not appear as God.** He veiled the tokens of divinity, which had commanded the homage of angels and called forth the adoration of the

universe of God." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 20th February 1893, 'The plan of Salvation')

In a letter written to M. J. Church in 1890 she explained

"Christ did not seek to be thought great, and yet **He was the Majesty of heaven**, equal in dignity and glory **with the infinite God. He was God manifested in the flesh.**" (Ellen G. White, *Letter 8a*, July 7th 1890, To M. J. Church, *Manuscript Release Volume 20*, MR1444)

Note here that Ellen White refers to Christ as "the Majesty of heaven" but also says that He was "**with the infinite God**". She does not say that He is the infinite God - at least not in personality. Note too she said that He was God "**manifested in the flesh**".

She also said in the same letter concerning Christ

"**He was not the Father** but in Him **dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily**, and yet He calls to a suffering world, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (*Ibid*)

In the year 'The Desire of Ages' was published, Ellen White was strongly asserting, as she had always done, that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. She wrote

"**In the person of his only begotten Son, the God of heaven** has condescended to stoop to our human nature. To the question of Thomas, Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 8th November 1898, 'The revelation of God')

"In the grand counsels of Heaven it was found that it was positively necessary that there should be **a revelation of God to man in the person of His only-begotten Son**. He came to earth to be "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (Ellen G. White, *Southern work*, page 25, 'The Review and Herald articles', 1898)

In 'The Review and Herald' in 1907 are found these words

"**The Son of the infinite God came to this earth**, and honored it with his presence. He emptied himself of his glory, **and clothed his divinity with humanity**, that humanity might touch humanity, and reveal to fallen man the perfect love of God." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 6th June 1907, 'No other Gods before me')

There can be no doubt that this is referring to Christ as a Son - **in His pre-existence**. This is only the same as was written 16 years earlier – which was

"It was necessary that **the Son of the infinite God should come** to be the light of the world, to be the fountain of healing mercy to a lost race." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 20th January 1891, 'Co-operation with Christ')

In the Bible Echo in 1899 was published a letter sent by Ellen White from Australia. In it she wrote

“Was not Christ the greatest teacher the world ever knew? **Was He not the Son of the infinite God?** and yet He said, **“I do nothing of Myself.”**” (Ellen G. White, *The Bible Echo*, 18th September 1899, ‘Letter from Sister White’)

There are many quotes from the pen of Ellen White that tell us exactly the same thing – that Christ was the son of ‘the infinite’, meaning a son **prior to the incarnation** – but they are far too many to list all of them here. Here though are just some of them.

“The Son of the infinite God clothed his divinity with humanity, and submitted to the death of the cross, that he might become a stepping-stone by which humanity might meet with divinity.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 16th January 1894, ‘Students required to be workers with God’)

“Although the only begotten Son of the infinite God humbled himself and took upon him humanity, his faith wavered not; but under the trial and test, he was equal to the proving of temptation on behalf of humanity.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 24th April 1894, ‘Victory in temptation through Christ’)

“The Son of the infinite God, the Lord of life and glory, descended in humiliation to the life of the lowliest, that no one might feel himself excluded from his presence.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 22nd December 1891, ‘No caste in Christ’)

“The Son of the infinite God was the author of our salvation. He covenanted from the first to be man's substitute, and **he became man** that he might take upon himself the wrath which sin had provoked.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 21st November 1912, ‘Peril of neglecting salvation’)

“While human beings were instituting schemes and methods to destroy him, **the Son of the infinite God came to our world** to give an example of the great work to be done to redeem and save man.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 21st June 1898, ‘To every man his work’)

“That the Son of the infinite God should bind himself so closely with man was condescension and mercy so wonderful that its mysteries could scarcely be understood.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 30th May 1899, ‘God’s purpose in the gift of His Son’)

“The Son of the infinite God tasted death for every man. **He left the royal courts, and clothed His divinity with humanity.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 3rd February 1898, ‘Knowing Christ’)

“Christ Himself, **the Son of the infinite God, clothed His divinity with humanity**, and came to this world to show human beings what they may become by obeying the principles of heaven.” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B No. 7*, page 10 ‘A warning and an appeal’ 1906)

“When in the fulness of time **the Son of the infinite God came forth from the bosom of the Father** to this world, **He came in the garb of humanity, clothing His divinity with humanity.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 17th May 1905, ‘A teacher sent from God’)

“The One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. **He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the Infinite God.**” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies on Education* 1897, page 173, ‘The divine teacher’)

“After Adam had sinned, the only means of salvation for the human race was **for the Son of the infinite God to give his life** that they might have another trial of obedience. What love the Father manifested in behalf of man, erring and disobedient though he was! He "so loved the world that he gave **his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 15th December 1896, ‘The importance of obedience’)

“The price of man's ransom could be paid only by One equal with God, **the spotless Son of the infinite Father.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 20th October 1896, ‘Laboring in the Spirit of Christ’)

Many more quotes such as these could be found.

God in human flesh

Amongst the last words to his disciples (this was after the last supper and now only hours before the crucifixion), Jesus said that He was going away to prepare a place for them. This was in His “Father’s house” (John 14:1-3). In response to Him saying “And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know” (verse 4), Thomas asked

“...Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” John 14:5

The reply of Jesus was

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

Jesus then said

“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: **and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.**”

Philip responded to these words of Jesus by asking,

“... Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” John 14:8

It is evident that up to now, the disciples had not really understood the relation of Christ to the Father. The reply of Jesus therefore probably surprised the disciples. He said to Philip

“... 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? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: **but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me:** or else believe me for the very works' sake.

A little later Jesus also said

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day **ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.**” John 14:19-20

God the Father and Christ dwell within us through the Holy Spirit (see John 14:18 and 23). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both God and Christ omnipresent. We shall cover this subject in chapters [18](#), [19](#) and [20](#).

As we have read above, Jesus was not the Father (see Ellen White comments page 136) but He was God in human flesh. He was – and still is – the Son of God.

Spirit of prophecy comments (God in human flesh)

In 'The Desire of Ages' Ellen White wrote (this was with respect to Philip asking Jesus to show the disciples the Father - see John 14:7-12)

“Amazed at his [Philip’s] dullness of comprehension, **Christ asked with pained surprise**, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" **Is it possible that you do not see the Father in the works He does through Me? Do you not believe that I came to testify of the Father?** "How sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 663, 'Let not your heart be troubled')

We were then given this explanation

“**Christ had not ceased to be God when He became man. Though He had humbled Himself to humanity, the Godhead was still His own.** Christ alone could represent the Father to humanity, and this representation the disciples had been privileged to behold for over three years.” (*Ibid*)

Ellen White also wrote of Philip

“**He wished Christ to reveal the Father in bodily form; but God had already revealed himself in Christ.** The doubt was answered by words of reproof. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Christ said. Is it possible that after walking with me, hearing my words, seeing my miracle of feeding the five thousand, of healing the sick of the dread leprosy, of raising Lazarus, whose body had seen corruption, and who was indeed a prey to death, you do not know me? **Is it possible that you do not see the Father in the works which he does through me? Do you not believe that I came to testify of the Father?** "How sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." **I am the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."** (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 19th October 1897, 'Words of comfort')

Ellen White continued

“**Christ emphatically impressed on the disciples the fact that they could see the Father by faith only. God cannot be seen in external form by any human being.** Christ alone can represent the Father to humanity; and this representation the disciples had been privileged to behold for over three years.” (*Ibid*)

It is obvious that what is being said here is that God the Father has an external bodily form but fallen humanity cannot behold it. We are to see the Father by faith alone. Notice that Jesus said “I am in the Father, and the Father in me”.

Ellen White added later

“If the disciples had believed in this **vital connection between the Father and the Son**, their faith would not have forsaken them when they saw his suffering and death to save a perishing world. Christ was seeking to lead them from their low condition of faith to the higher experience they might have received had they truly realized what he was, -- **God in human flesh.**” (*Ibid*)

We also find these comments in the spirit of prophecy (again concerning Christ being God Himself in human flesh)

"I know you," Christ declared to the Pharisees, "that ye have not the love of God in you." He spoke to them thus plainly because they could not discern His divinity under the veil of humanity. **He was God in human flesh, and He could not but work the works of God.** Unbelief, prejudice, and jealousy beat about Him, and if His humanity had not been united with divinity, He would have failed and become discouraged. **At times His divinity flashed through humanity, and He stood forth as the Son of God, His veil of flesh too transparent to hide His majesty.** But the men who claimed to be the expositors of the prophecies refused to believe that He was the Christ. **Satan had control of their minds, and they utterly refused to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth.**" (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 26th March 1901, 'Lessons from the Christ-life'*)

“No one, looking upon the childlike countenance, shining with animation, could say that Christ was just like other children. **He was God in human flesh.**” (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 8th September 1898, 'And the grace of God was upon Him'*)

Spirit of prophecy comments (still the divine Son of God)

In the 'Youth's Instructor' in 1891 we find these words

“The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem's manger **is still** the divine Son of God?” (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor 21st November 1895 'Child life of Jesus No. 1'*)

If this does not mean that Christ was the Son of God **in His pre-existence** then how could it be said the babe born at Bethlehem “**is still** the divine Son of God”?

This very same thought was reiterated 10 years later. This is when through the spirit of prophecy it was written of Christ

“In His incarnation **He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God.** Said the angel to Mary, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).” (*Ellen G. White, Selected Messages book 1 page 226 also Signs of the Times August 2nd 1905*)

Some say that Christ's birth at Bethlehem (the incarnation) is the only reason why He is called “the Son of God” but notice here we are told that because of the incarnation He gained this title “in a **new sense**”. This must mean that there existed an 'old sense' (meaning before He came to earth).

In the next sentence the same thought is repeated

“While the Son of a human being, **He became the Son of God in a new sense.**”(*Ibid*)

It is not being said here that Christ is called the Son of God because He became human but that by becoming human He became the Son of God “**in a new sense**”. This can only mean that prior to Bethlehem (in His pre-existence) He must have been the Son of God in an ‘old sense’. This is only reasonable thinking.

This is why Ellen White added

“Thus He stood in our world--**the Son of God**, yet allied by birth to the human race.”
(*Ibid*)

Note the comparison. Christ was the “Son of God, **yet** allied by birth to the human race”. This is saying He was the Son of God **before** He came to earth.

As we noted in [chapter 7](#) was said by Ellen White (this was with regard to when Jesus asked “What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?” - see Matthew 22:42)

“This question was designed to **test their belief concerning the Messiah**, -- to show whether they regarded Him **simply as a man or as the Son of God.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 608, ‘Controversy’)

If Christ was the Messiah then He must be the Son of God. Over and over again we have been told through the spirit of prophecy that Christ is truly the Son of God.

Upon this rock

The identity of Christ is the most important tenet of the Christian faith. In fact it is the very foundation of the Christian faith. This is why in this study we have spent three chapters establishing this fact.

As Jesus asked His disciples

“... **Whom do men** say that I the Son of man am? Matthew 16:13

In answer to this question, the disciples replied that some were saying that Jesus was John the Baptist; some said He was Elijah whilst others said He was Jeremiah or one of the other prophets – all of whom were dead.

Then Jesus made it a more personal inquiry. He asked

“... But **whom say ye** that I am? Matthew 16:15

In his usual forthright manner Peter replied

“... Thou art the Christ, **the Son of the living God.**” Matthew 16:16

Notice here it is not Christ who is referred to as “the living God” but the Father. Peter is calling Christ “**the Son of the living God**”. He is recognising Christ’s divinity – not just saying He is the Messiah.

Jesus responded by saying that Peter’s confession was not of human origin but that which God the Father had revealed to him (see Matthew 16:17). Jesus then told His disciples that His church would be built upon Peter’s confession – also that nothing would prevail against it (verse 18).

This was not the first time that Peter had made that declaration. John recorded (this was after some of Christ’s followers had left Him)

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure **that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.**” John 6:67-69

Even prior to this, the Scriptures record (this was when the disciples saw Jesus walk on the water)

“Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, **Of a truth thou art the Son of God.**” Matthew 14:33

This is the testing truth of the Christian faith – that Christ is truly the Son of the living God - and whilst it is true that although after making this confession some of the disciples turned away from Christ, the promise of Jesus is still valid. God’s true church is still built on the belief that Christ is truly “**the Son of the living God**”. We have the authority of Christ’s words on this one.

The believer’s faith is built upon the premise that Christ is the Son of God. It is recognition of His pre-existent divine status. This is why in his little letters to his brethren, the gospel writer John made such an emphasis of this fact. He wrote

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that **God sent his only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and **sent his Son** to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:8-10

“Whosoever shall confess that **Jesus is the Son of God**, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” 1 John 4:15

“Who is he that overcometh the world, **but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?** 1 John 5:5

“**He that believeth on the Son of God** hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that **God gave of his Son**. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, **and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life**; and he that hath **not the Son of God hath not life**. These things have I written unto you that believe **on the name of the Son of God**; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and **that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**” 1 John 5:10-13

“And 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.” 1 John 5:20

This is reminiscent of when Jesus Himself said

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

To know both the Father and the Son is life eternal. No mention is made of ‘knowing’ the Holy Spirit.

Spirit of prophecy comments

With reference to the confession of Peter that Christ was “the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“The truth which Peter had confessed **is the foundation of the believer’s faith**. It is that which Christ Himself has **declared to be eternal life**.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 412, ‘The foreshadowing of the cross’)

The truth that Christ is the Son of God is not only that which leads to eternal life but in itself is eternal life. This is extremely important to remember – especially as far as this study is concerned.

We were then told

“But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. **Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine**. "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" Job 11:8.” (Ibid)

Here Ellen White reiterates the thought that it was God the Father who had revealed to Peter that Christ is truly His Son. It was not simply Peter’s personal conclusion. It is the same when we believe it. It is because God has revealed it to us – not because we have attained to this knowledge of ourselves.

In 1905 Ellen White wrote

“**Christ’s divinity is to be steadfastly maintained**. When the Saviour asked his disciples the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, **the Son of the living God**." Said Christ, "**Upon this rock**," not on Peter, **but on the Son of God**, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 2nd March 1905, ‘A stirring exhortation’)

Here again we can see that Christ’s divinity is related to the fact that He is the Son of God. It was then added

“Great is the mystery of godliness. **There are mysteries in the life of Christ that are to be believed, even though they can not be explained**. The finite mind can not fathom the mystery of godliness.” (Ibid)

It is not easy to explain how God the Father and His Son are both God yet two distinct separate individuals but this is what the Scriptures reveal. This is just as impossible to explain as is the incarnation (1 Timothy 3:16).

In 1900 we find this written in the ‘Signs of the Times’

“Christ has definitely pointed out our work; **for He Himself, the Son of the living God, stooped to uplift the fallen**. By pledges and words of assurance He sought to win to Himself the poor, the lost, the suffering.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 30th May 1900, ‘Go, work to-day in my vineyard’)

Again and again Ellen White speaks of Christ as Son prior to the incarnation. She also asked the youth of her day

“**Who is Christ?** (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 28th June 1894, ‘Grow in grace’)

She answered by saying

“**He is the only begotten Son of the living God**. He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought, -- as a thought made audible.” (Ibid)

Until it is revealed in the spoken word, a thought is something that is hidden deep in the mind. A word therefore is a manifestation of a thought. So too Christ is a visible manifestation of the invisible God - only invisible to us because of our sinfulness. Only God could truly declare God (see John 1:18). He is the Word made flesh - God made manifest in the flesh (see 1 Timothy 3:16)).

We are then told

“Christ is the word of God. Christ said to Philip, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” His words were the echo of God’s words. Christ was the likeness of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person.” (Ibid)

Note the words “likeness of God”. Christ is the express image of the Father’s person (see Hebrews 1:3). If we have experienced Christ in our lives, we have experienced God in our lives.

In the very first chapter of ‘The Desire of Ages’ we find these words (note the chapter title)

“By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,--God’s thought made audible.” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 19, ‘God with us’)

Ellen White also said the year after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’

“As speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible God. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 15th November 1899 ‘The Law Revealed in Christ’)

This is as was said above. A word is a manifestation of an unseen thought. Note it says that as the Word of God (meaning in His pre-existence) Christ is “the manifestation of the Father”. Christ is begotten of the Father – meaning He is God in the person of the Son.

To the youth she also said

“The more we think about Christ’s becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem’s manger is still the divine Son of God?” (Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor 21st November 1895, ‘Christ life of Jesus No. 1)

This is indeed the mystery of Godliness – Christ the divine Son of God - God Himself manifest in the flesh (see 1 Timothy 3:16). As we noted above, Ellen White wrote

“Christ’s divinity is to be steadfastly maintained... Great is the mystery of godliness.” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 2nd March 1905, ‘A stirring exhortation’)

It cannot be doubted that through the spirit of prophecy – as well as through the Scriptures - we have been told that Christ was a Son in eternity. Satan knew this and hated Him because of it (see [chapter 7](#)). This same hatred can be seen in those who planned the death of Jesus. We shall see this now.

Why Christ deserved to die – according to the Jews

From the very beginning of his earthly ministry until its completion, Jesus was plagued by those who disputed His identity. This began with him who had disputed Christ’s position in Heaven - namely Satan (once Lucifer). This was when he said to Jesus in the wilderness “**I**

thou be the Son of God” (see Matthew 4:3 and 4:6). This same “if” was continued throughout the ministry of Jesus, even up to and including the crucifixion.

As Matthew records

“And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. ***If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.***” Matthew 27:39-40

In mocking Christ, the chief priests, scribes and elders said much the same thing. Matthew records they said

“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: ***for he said, I am the Son of God.***” Matthew 27:42-43

As far as the identity of Christ is concerned, this Sonship claim was **the** problem area for the Jews. It was this that they refused to accept.

When brought before Caiaphas, Jesus was asked by this high priest

“... I adjure thee by the living God, that ***thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.***” Matthew 26:63

In answer to this question Jesus replied

“... ***Thou hast said:*** nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 26:64

In rending his clothes, the High Priest then said of Jesus

“***He hath spoken blasphemy;*** what further need have we of witnesses? behold, ***now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?***” Matthew 26:65-66

This is a leading question. What do we think of Christ’s claim to be the Son of God? Will we dispute it? Those who heard the words of Caiaphas said

“... ***He is guilty of death.***” Matthew 26:66

Spirit of prophecy comments

Regarding the shouts of the revellers for Jesus to “come down off the cross” (see Matthew 27:42), Ellen White penned these words. They should be so full of significance to us today. She wrote

“***The chief priests and rulers who rejected the Son of God had gone from one degree of blindness to another in their hardness and unbelief.*** They had refused the first rays of divine light, and at last by their own perversity and stubbornness they were completely blinded to ***the evidences of the divinity of Christ.***” (Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, 19th April 1892, ‘Christ’s instruction to His followers’)

She then went on to say

“Brethren, it is a terrible thing to refuse to receive the first ray of light; ***for you will thus be led to reject greater light.***” (*Ibid*)

To reject light really is a “terrible thing”? This is why, when truth is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, we should always be ready to grasp it. To do otherwise could be fatal to our salvation.

It was then further explained

“After truth has once appealed to your heart in vain, **the succeeding evidences of its sacred character will become dimmer to your understanding, and how great is your darkness.** By rejection of light, the perception will become blunted, and you will have no power to discern between the sacred and the common. Then grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. This was the condition of those who rejected the Saviour. Because of their stubborn refusal of his teachings, **they were led at last to crucify the Son of God.**” (*Ibid*)

Rejection of light leads to the eventual rejection of Christ – as the Son of God. The two go hand in hand. Again this is a fearful realisation.

Regarding the same event Ellen White wrote concerning Christ

“The crown of thorns he wore, the curse of the cross he suffered, -- who could have imagined that he, **the Son of the infinite God, the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory,** would bow his righteous soul to such a sacrifice! For sinners, for sinners, he died. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! **The Son of God has died on the shameful cross,** that the world might not perish; he died to bring life, everlasting life, to all who shall believe.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 1st September 1891, ‘Meeting trials (Continued)’*)

Who died at Calvary? It was the pre-existent divine Son of God – not just His humanity. We shall speak of this in detail in [chapter 25](#).

With reference to the question that Jesus was asked by Caiaphas (was He the Son of God?), Ellen White wrote

“**To this appeal Christ could not remain silent.** There was a time to be silent, and a time to speak. He had not spoken until directly questioned. **He knew that to answer now would make His death certain.** But the appeal was made by the highest acknowledged authority of the nation, and in the name of the Most High. Christ would not fail to show proper respect for the law.” (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 706, ‘Before Annas and the court of Caiaphas’*)

Can we afford to be silent about the fact that Christ is the Son of God? Christ could not be silent about it – even though He knew it would bring about His death. If we make this same confession, that Christ is truly the Son of God, we should not fear what men may do to us.

She then added

“More than this, **His own relation to the Father was called in question.** He must plainly declare His character and mission.” (*Ibid*)

In the judgement hall, it was Christ’s Sonship with the Father that was being brought into question. This is why regarding this matter, Jesus could not keep silent. The understanding of Him being the divine Son of God is at the heart of the Gospel. It is the very basis of the believer’s faith. It is also that which, if He confessed it, Christ knew would make His death certain – but for our sakes He did not desist from doing so.

She also wrote

“For a moment **the divinity of Christ flashed through His guise of humanity**. The high priest quailed before the penetrating eyes of the Saviour. That look seemed to read his hidden thoughts, and burn into his heart. Never in afterlife did he forget that searching glance **of the persecuted Son of God.**” (*Ibid*, page 707)

Speaking again of Jesus appearing before the high priest, Ellen White wrote in the ‘Youth’s Instructor’

“**The only begotten Son of God was the speaker**, and into the hearts of his hearers flashed the conviction, “Never man spake like this man.” (*Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor, 31st May 1900, ‘The price of our redemption part 1’*)

We were then told

“Weighted with such great results, this was to Christ **one of the most wonderful moments of his life. He realized that now all disguise must be swept away**. The declaration that he was **one with God had been made. He had openly proclaimed himself the Son of God**, the One for whom the Jews had so long looked.” (*Ibid*)

I wonder how many people realise that when Christ confessed before Caiaphas that He was the Son of God, this was “one of the most wonderful moments of his life”. Notice Ellen White says here that the declaration of Him being “one with God” is equivalent to saying He is “the Son of God”. This reminds us of John 10:30 which tells us that Jesus said to the Jews who were disputing His identity

“I and my Father are one.” John 10:30

It was then that Jews took up stones in an attempt to kill Him (John 10:31). Why? They said it was because He was making Himself God (John 10:33).

The following words can be found in the ‘Story of Jesus’

“The Saviour never denied His mission **or His relation to the Father**. He could remain silent to personal insult, but He ever spoke plainly and decidedly when His work **or Sonship to God** was called in question.” (*Ellen G. White, Story of Jesus, 1896, page 116, ‘Before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin’*)

How much clearer can anything be said? Christ plainly spoke of His Sonship with the Father.

In a letter in 1906, Ellen White wrote (this was 8 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’)

“**When I read in the Bible of how many refused to believe that Christ was the Son of God, sadness fills my heart**. We read that even His own brethren refused to believe in Him.” (*Ellen G. White, letter to Dr. and Mrs. D. H. Kress, Letter 398, Dec. 26, 1906*)

If Ellen White were here today she would not only be heartbroken but also shocked as to how many Seventh-day Adventists do not recognise Christ as truly the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father. Could it be that this refusal to accept Christ as such is part of ‘the Omega’ of deception that Ellen White warned would find its way into Seventh-day Adventism and that so many would accept (see [chapter 27](#))? We need to seriously think on these things.

Current reasoning

The present-day theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church denies that Christ is truly the Son of God. In their Bible Commentary series they say (this is found under the title 'The Son of God')

"As applied to Jesus Christ, a Messianic title stressing His deity, comparable with the title "Son of man," which stresses His humanity. Like the many other names and titles accorded Him in Scripture, the title "Son of God" **accommodates to human minds and understanding** an important aspect of His work for our salvation. In view of the broad range of meanings latent in the word "son," as used by the Hebrew people and the Bible writers (see Son), **it is not possible arbitrarily to circumscribe the expression "Son of God" within the narrow limits implied by the English word "son."**" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, Commentary Reference Series volume 8, page 1032, 'Son of God'*)

In other words, the term "Son of God" should not be taken in a literal sense of meaning. The article continued to say

"Whether or not the title is in any sense an appropriate description of the absolute and eternal relationship between Son and Father, **is a matter on which Scripture is silent.**" (*Ibid*)

Needless to say, not everyone would agree with this reasoning. It then concludes concerning the title 'the Son of God'

"Obviously, it does not connote a generic relationship comparable in any way to the usual human father-son relationship, and accordingly **it is necessary to understand it in some sense other than a strictly literal sense.**" (*Ibid*)

Here is the claim that Christ is not literally the Son of God. We shall see more of this same reasoning in later chapters.

The article also said later (this was regarding where the angel Gabriel said to Mary that her promised son would be called the Son of God – see Luke 1:35)

"Here the angel plainly attributes the title "Son of God" **to the unique union of Deity with humanity at the incarnation of our Lord.**" (*Ibid*)

This is saying that Christ is called the Son of God because of the events of Bethlehem – and not because of His pre-existent relationship with God.

In the book 'The Trinity' – this was when speaking of what he terms 'problem texts' of Scripture (this must mean to the trinitarians because they certainly do not cause problems to the non-trinitarians) - Woodrow Whidden, in supporting the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God being a trinity, wrote

"Is it not quite apparent that the problem texts become problems only when one assumes **an exclusively literalistic interpretation of such expressions as "Father," "Son," "Firstborn," "Only Begotten," "Begotten," and so forth?**" (*Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, 'Biblical objections to the trinity' page 106, 2002*)

Here it is being said that the designations of 'Father', 'Son' and 'begotten' etc only cause problems when they are taken literally. This is the same as saying that Christ should not be taken literally when He called Himself the Son of God (John 3:16-17, John 9:34-37 etc). It is

also the same as saying we should not take God literally when He said that Christ was His Son (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). The question must be asked though, why shouldn't their words be taken literally? What reason could we offer? As we have seen in these last three chapters, the Bible and the spirit of prophecy both tell us that Christ is truly the Son of God – meaning that God truly is His father.

The 'official' opposition to Christ literally being the Son of God is expressed in our Seventh-day Adventist Handbook of Theology (this was with reference to the Greek word 'monogenes' which is often translated 'begotten'). Here it says

*"In a similar vein, monogenes **does not contain the idea of begetting but rather of uniqueness** and, when applied to Christ, emphasizes His unique relationship with the Father. On the other hand, Hebrews 1:5 **gives no idea of physical or spiritual generation.**" (Fernando Canale, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia, Volume 12, page 125, 'The doctrine of God'*)*

It then concludes

*"There is, therefore, **no ground within the biblical understanding of the Godhead for the idea of a generation of the Son from the Father.**" (Ibid)*

This "generation" is speaking of the begotten concept – that Christ was brought forth of God in eternity. In other words, it is being said, there are no grounds within the Scriptures to believe that Christ is truly who He claimed to be – the Son of God – God Himself in the person of the Son. Along with many others, I believe differently. I believe we have an abundance of evidence to the contrary – meaning that both the the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy clearly reveal Christ as being literally the Son God. What say you?

Conclusion to parts 1, 2 and 3 of 'The Son of God'

As we shall see throughout this study of the Godhead (especially in [chapter 12](#) – 'A role-playing Godhead'), some claim that Christ is only called the Son of God to explain the love that exists between the personages of the Godhead (meaning He is called a son in some metaphorical sense). Either that or it is said that Christ is only called a son because of the events of Bethlehem (the incarnation and the virgin birth). These are amongst the varying reasons given by our church for Christ being called 'the Son of God'. Each of these reasons tells us that Christ was only role-playing the part of a son (pretending to be a son).

These claims are clearly refuted by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy. As we have seen in the three chapters dealing with this subject, both of these inspired sources say exactly the same thing. This is that in its most literal sense of meaning, Christ is a son in His pre-existence. This I believe is irrefutable.

The very reason why John wrote his gospel was to show that Christ truly is the Son of God. As he came to the end of his gospel he wrote

*"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 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*

As has been said above, some say that John meant that Christ was called the Son of God simply because of the virgin birth (Luke 1:35) but again this would be inconsistent with what has been revealed. It would also be inconsistent with his gospel because in it John makes no mention of this miracle of God.

If as John says his gospel was written to show that Christ is the Son of God – and if John only meant that Christ was the Son of God because of the events of Bethlehem (the virgin birth) – then why did not John include the account of the virgin birth in his Gospel? This seems a reasonable question to ask.

John wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He would not have omitted the most important piece of evidence to show that Christ really is the Son of God. This does not even seem imaginable. One can only conclude that John's purpose for his gospel was to depict Christ, in His pre-existence, as literally the Son of God. What else could God have been inspiring him to do?

Speaking of 'the last days' and the dangers of spiritualism, these words can be found in 'Patriarch and Prophets'

"And Peter, describing the dangers to which the church was to be exposed in the last days, says that as there were false prophets who led Israel into sin, so there will be false teachers, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways." 2 Peter 2:1, 2. Here the apostle has pointed out one of the marked characteristics of spiritualist teachers. **They refuse to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God.** Concerning such teachers the beloved John declares: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? **He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.** Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." 1 John 2:22, 23. Spiritualism, by denying Christ, denies both the Father and the Son, and the Bible pronounces it the manifestation of antichrist." (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 686, 'Ancient and modern sorcery'*)

I believe that after reading what we have been told about God and Christ, many will concur with where the spirit of prophecy says

"The Scriptures clearly indicate **the relation between God and Christ**, and they bring to view as clearly **the personality and individuality of each.**"(*Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 8, page 268, 'The essential knowledge'*)

After quoting Hebrews 1:1-5 she then said

"God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God."

In [chapter 9](#) we shall see that Christ is the God of the Old Testament – the 'I AM'.

[Proceed to chapter 9](#), 'Christ the Old Testament God - the 'I AM''

Chapter nine

Christ the Old Testament God - the 'I AM'

In keeping with what has been concluded from the previous chapters, we shall now see that the divine personage many call the 'Old Testament God' is none other than Christ Himself, the Son of the Living God. We shall also see that He is 'the I AM' – God Himself in the person of the Son – albeit He is a separate person from God (the Father).

Christ and the creation

In the account of creation we find these words

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”
Genesis 1:26

God was obviously speaking to someone – and it must have been someone either identical or almost identical to Himself. This is because He says ***“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”***.

We have seen in [chapter 6](#) that it was God the Father who made all things through His Son (the Word) so we will not discuss this again here, suffice to say that the writer of Hebrews says of God, creation and the Son

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1:1-3

Christ is the “express image” of His Father’s person. God and Christ are two separate individual personalities. God created the world through His Son (see John 1:1-3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:16-17 etc).

In the book of Zechariah there is also a reference to a conversation between the Father and the Son – this time concerning the salvation of mankind. It says

“Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:13

It is God and Christ who are being spoken of here. Two separate individuals. Notice there is no reference to a third person (i. e. the Holy Spirit).

Spirit of prophecy comments

In Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 we find these words

“After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, **the Father and Son carried out their purpose**, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. **And now God says to his Son**, "Let us make man in our image." (*Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1, 1870, 'The Creation', see also Signs of the Times 9th January 1879 and Spiritual Gifts Volume 3 page 33*)

This is in keeping with where the Scriptures tell us that at the end of creation week "... God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". We noted in [chapter 4](#) ('The trinity doctrine and spiritual views') that the current official position of our church is that we have no idea as to what God looks like. Notice there is nothing said here of God speaking to the Holy Spirit.

In 1898, the year 'The Desire of Ages' was published, Ellen White wrote

“The **Father and the Son** rested after Their work of Creation.” (*Ellen G. White, Ms 25, 1898, pp. 3, 4. 'The Man of Sorrows'*)

No mention is made of the Holy Spirit resting. After quoting from Genesis 2:1-3 she then wrote

“The death of Christ was designed to be at the very time in which it took place. It was in God's plan that the work which Christ had engaged to do should be completed on a Friday, and that on the Sabbath He should rest in the tomb, **even as the Father and Son had rested** after completing **Their** creative work.” (*Ibid*)

In 'Spiritual Gifts Volume 1' (1858), Ellen White wrote of what God had shown her. She explained (this was concerning the creation of the world and Satan)

“The Lord has shown me that Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, **next to Jesus Christ.**” (*Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts Volume 1, page 17, 1858, 'The Fall of Satan'*)

She also explained

“And I saw that when **God said to his Son**, Let us make man in our image, **Satan was jealous of Jesus**. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man. He was filled with envy, jealousy and hatred. He wished to be the highest in heaven, **next to God**, and receive the highest honors.” (*Ibid*)

Here it is revealed that Satan wanted to be “next to God” – meaning next to the Father. This was the position held by the Son. Satan wanted to take the position of the Son. Reason with me though - if Christ was seen by Ellen White as being next to God - and Satan was seen as being next to Christ - then where is the Holy Spirit? Our current theology says that that God is a trinity of three individual persons who are inseparably connected to each other.

As we noted in [chapter 3](#) was said by Ekkehardt Mueller – this was as he 'officially' explained the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God being a trinity of persons -

“Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, **each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two.**” (*Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research*)

We need to remember also (we noted this in [chapter 4](#)) that the 'official' explanation of God being a trinity is also found in our 'Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology'. This is where it says of God

"In Himself He is real and has a form, yet that divine reality and form completely surpass the reality and capability of comprehension of the highest intelligences." (Fernando L. Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 113, 'Doctrine of God'*)

It was explained here that God does not have body parts (like arms) as we do but it did say He does have 'things' that enables Him to accomplish the same tasks as we do. In other words, we have no idea as to what God looks like. As it also says in this explanation

"We cannot conceive or imagine the actual structure of God's reality that allows Him to perform these acts." (*Ibid*)

In the 8th Volume of the Testimonies we find these words (this was with reference to the prayer of Jesus when He said to His father "That 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")

"Wonderful statement! The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one." (*Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 8, page 269, The Essential Knowledge*)

"The relation between ***the Father and the Son, and the personality of both***, are made plain in this scripture also:

"Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying,
Behold, the man whose name is the Branch:
And He shall grow up out of His place;
And He shall build the temple of Jehovah; . . .
And He shall bear the glory,
And shall sit and rule upon His throne;
And He shall be a priest upon His throne;
And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both."
Zechariah 6:12, 13, A. R. V. 270 (*Ibid*)

Here the emphasis is on God being a person. We are also told that the unity that exists between the two persons of the Father and the Son (no mention is made of the Holy Spirit) does not make them into 'one person' – neither does it destroy their individual personages. Ellen White wrote this in the backdrop of the 'Kellogg crisis'. As we shall see in [chapter 21](#), Kellogg, by his reasoning, was making God and Christ look like non-entities. He believed that God was actually in the things of nature etc – not just that His power sustained them. He also said he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine which was not then accepted by Seventh-day Adventists in general.

In 'Early Writings' Ellen White penned these words

"I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person." (*Ellen G. White, 'Early Writings', page 54, 1882*)

“The Father’s person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus ***if His Father had a form like Himself***. He said ***He had, but I could not behold it***, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.” (*Ibid*)

Here it is said that the Father and Son (God and Christ) both have “a form” of their own. There is no suggestion of Ellen White seeing God as a trinity. In fact she does not even mention a third person – i.e. the Holy Spirit. Never in her writings is found where she says she ‘saw’ the Holy Spirit – or where she says that the Holy Spirit has a form of His own.

Continuing her thoughts regarding God and His Son as being two separate persons she wrote

“I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that ***He is a person***. I asked Him if His Father ***was a person and had a form like Himself***. Said Jesus, “I am in the express image of My Father’s person.” (*Ibid page 77*)

The Father and the Son are two separate divine personages – just like the disciples of Jesus were separate personages – but again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit.

Christ the angel of the Lord

At times, in the Old Testament, God appears as “the angel of the Lord”. This is not the Father but the Son. This can be seen when God told Abraham he was to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-2). In the book of Genesis it says

“And it came to pass after these things, that ***God did tempt Abraham***, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” Genesis 22:1-2

In verses 11-12 it says

“And ***the angel of the LORD*** called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son ***from me***.” Genesis 22:11-12

In verse 1 it says it was God who spoke to Abraham whilst in verses 11-12 (after Abraham had proved his faithfulness to God by being willing to sacrifice Isaac) it says that “the angel of the Lord” spoke to him saying “now I know that ***thou fearest God***, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son ***from me***”. From this we can see that whilst this angel of the Lord is Christ, He is also God. This means that if He is “of the Lord” – and that He is also God, then this must be the Son of God. With regards to Christ, this is in keeping with all the New Testament references we have seen in previous chapters.

In Genesis 31:11 we read that in a dream it was “the angel of the Lord” who had appeared to Jacob. This ‘angel’ then identified Himself as “the God of Bethel”. This is the place where Jacob had anointed the pillar of stones and where he had made a vow to God (see verse 13).

Another example of the ‘angel of the Lord’ being God is in Exodus 3:2. We are told

“And **the angel of the LORD** appeared unto him [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” Exodus 3:2

In verse 4 this “angel of the LORD” is identified as “the Lord” and “God” (see also verse 11) whilst later we then find this same person identifying Himself as the “I AM”.

When Moses asked for the “name” of the One who had sent him we are told

“And **God said** unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM**: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” Exodus 3:14

From this we can see that the “I AM” is “the angel of the Lord”, yet because He is “of” the Lord He is not the Father but the Son. The Son therefore (as well as the Father) is the “I AM” – meaning that as described in these verses, the angel of the Lord is God in the person of the Son (see also John 8:58). It can only be concluded therefore that ‘the Old Testament God’ – the one who led and spoke to the patriarchs of old - is none other than Christ Himself – or to put it another way – God Himself in the person of the Son.

For an extended discussion on Christ being ‘the I AM’, see section 4 of ‘The Begotten Series’ here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBBS.htm>

Christ a father

It is evident that in ‘Old Testament times’, the One whom the Israelites regarded as God – the One whom we know was the Son of God - they referred to as ‘our Father’. As was spoken by Isaiah

“**Doubtless thou art our father**, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: **thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer**; thy name is from everlasting.” Isaiah 63:16

“**But now, O LORD, thou art our father**; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.” Isaiah 64:8

As Malachi also wrote

“**Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?** why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?” Malachi 2:10

As we now know though, the One who was speaking and dealing directly with the Israelites was not the Father but the Son – albeit He was God Himself (the “I AM”) in the person of the Son.

Isaiah spoke of Christ as ‘the everlasting Father’. This is when he wrote

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

To us, Christ is certainly a father but He is not ‘the Father’. Christ is the Son of the Father (the Son of the Infinite). Isaiah also wrote

"In all their distress **he too was distressed**, and **the angel of his presence saved them**. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." Isaiah 63:9 NIV

It was Christ who led, cared for and provided for the Israelites. It was He who was a father to them. This is just like He is a father to us today. It was He whose "delights were with the sons of men" (see Proverbs 8:31). He was the angel of God's presence (Isaiah 63:9). God's name was within Him (Exodus 23:21).

The writer of Hebrews penned these words

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; **Esteeming the reproach of Christ** greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Hebrews 11:24-26

There is no doubt that to fallen humanity, Christ is also our father as well as our God but He is not, in personality, '**the** Father'. In personality He is **the** Son of God (the Son of the Father). See John 1:18, 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6 etc.

Spirit of prophecy comments (the I AM)

In the first chapter of 'The Desire of Ages' we find these statements

"It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, "I Am That I Am. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." Ex. 3:14. This was the pledge of Israel's deliverance. So when He came "in the likeness of men," He declared Himself the I Am. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God "manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. 3:16." (Ellen G. White, 'The Desire of Ages p. 24 'God with us')

"The Shekinah had departed from the sanctuary, **but in the Child of Bethlehem was veiled the glory before which angels bow**. This unconscious babe was the promised seed, to whom the first altar at the gate of Eden pointed. This was Shiloh, the peace giver. **It was He who declared Himself to Moses as the I am. It was He who in the pillar of cloud and of fire had been the guide of Israel.**" (*Ibid*, page 52, 'The dedication')

Later in the same book (this was with reference to the encounter of Jesus with the Jews as found in John chapter 8) it says

"With solemn dignity Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I Am.**"

Silence fell upon the vast assembly. **The name of God**, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. **He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One**, He who had been promised to Israel, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin." (*Ibid*, page 469, chapter 'The Light of Life')

In 'The Great Controversy', there is what may appear to some to be a contradictory statement. This is where we find these words

"Upon the throne **with the eternal, self-existent One** is He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet

without sin," that He might be "able to succor them that are tempted.'" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 416, 'What is the sanctuary?')

Here we are told that Christ was upon the throne "**with the** eternal, self-existent One" whilst the previous statement said He "He had announced Himself **to be** the self-existent One". This is not on Ellen White's part a contradiction but in keeping with when she said

"The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, **is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.**" (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 116*, Dec. 19, 1905, 'An Entire Consecration', see also *The Upward Look*, page 367)

It simply depends on whether we are speaking of Christ as God (He is God in infinity) or as the Son of God (God in the person of the Son).

We have also been told

"**Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.**" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 29th August 1900, 'Resistance to light, No. 3')

This was Christ's inheritance from His Father. He was self-existent because He was God Himself in the person of the Son. This is why no one could take His life from Him – but He could voluntarily lay it down. This permission He had received from His Father (see John 10:15-18).

As Ellen White also said here

"**The Son of God shared the Father's throne**, and the glory of the eternal, **self-existent One encircled both.**" (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 36, 'Why was sin permitted?')

"Jehovah, **the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One**, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship." (*Ibid* page 305, 'The law given to Israel')

Christ, as well as the Father, can properly be termed Jehovah. As God said of Christ, "my name is in Him" (Exodus 23:21).

Concerning Christ being brought before Caiaphas we are told

"Each action of the high priest was watched with interest by the people; and Caiaphas thought for effect to display his piety. But in this act, designed as an accusation against Christ, he was reviling the One of whom God had said, "**My name is in Him.**" Ex. 23:21." (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 709, 'Before Annas and the court of Caiaphas')

Here we can see it said, in harmony with Scripture, that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. This is why at times we can say "God said" when in reality the person who actually spoke the words was Christ.

As Ellen White said in the year 'The Desire of Ages' was published (note the article title)

"**In the person of his only begotten Son**, the God of heaven has condescended to stoop to our human nature." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 8th November 1898, 'The Revelation of God')

The next year she wrote a testimony to be read at the 1899 General Conference session. This was in the backdrop of the pantheistic type of teaching that was coming to the fore through John Harvey Kellogg and E. J. Waggoner. She wrote (note the additional words to the above)

“In the person of his only begotten Son, the God of heaven has condescended to stoop to our human nature. The Father in heaven has a voice and a person which Christ expressed.” (Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6th March 1899, ‘Special Testimonies’)

Christ is indeed the “only begotten Son” of the Father, thus He was the express image of his Father’s person (see Hebrews 1:3). We shall cover the begotten concept in [chapter 11](#).

In the very same year as the famous 1888 Minneapolis General Conference, Ellen White wrote these words

“Christ, by clothing his divinity with humanity, elevates humanity in the scale of moral value to an infinite worth. But what a condescension on the part of God, and on the part of his only begotten Son, who was equal with the Father!” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 24th July 1888, ‘How do we stand?’)

In the Old Testament, apart from where it is absolutely necessary to avoid confusing the two personages of the Father and the Son, it is not usually crucial to identify whether ‘the Lord’ or ‘God’ is referring to the Father or the Son. This is because in a very real sense, both are God (see John 1:1, Hebrews 1:8).

As we noted above

“The Father in heaven has a voice and a person which Christ expressed.” (Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6th March 1899, ‘Special Testimonies’)

In the ‘Signs of the Times’ we find these words

“In Christ Jesus is a revelation of the glory of the Godhead. All that the human agent can know of God to the saving of the soul, is the measure of the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, to which he can attain; for Christ is he who represents the Father. The most wonderful truth to be grasped by men is the truth, “Immanuel, God with us.” Christ is the wisdom of God. He is the great “I Am” to the world” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 12th December 1895, ‘Character of the Law Revealed in Christ’s Life’, see also *Signs of the Times*, 3rd July 1907)

When the Hebrews left Egypt and journeyed toward the Promised Land, it was Christ who led them in the pillar of cloud. Notice here we are told that “Christ is the wisdom of God”. We shall speak of this in more detail in [chapter 10](#).

As Ellen White often said

“It was the Son of God who stood as an armed warrior before the leader of Israel. It was the One who had conducted the Hebrews through the wilderness, enshrouded in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 4*, page 159, ‘The Taking of Jericho’)

She also wrote

“How different would have been the scriptural record of the history of Israel, a nation so highly favored of the Lord, if they had carried out the instruction given them from

the pillar of cloud by the Son of the living God! (Ellen G. White, *Sabbath-School Worker*, 1st April 1889, 'The responsibilities of parents and teachers')

Christ here, in His pre-existence, is said to be "**the Son of the living God**". In personality He is not the living God Himself. In personality it is the Father who is the "living God".

In the first chapter of 'Great Controversy', Ellen White wrote concerning the impending judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70

"The Son of God Himself was sent to plead with the impenitent city. *It was Christ that had brought Israel as a goodly vine out of Egypt.* Psalm 80:8. His own hand had cast out the heathen before it. He had planted it "in a very fruitful hill." His guardian care had hedged it about." (Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, page 19, 'The destruction of Jerusalem')

Christ is the one who had watched over the Jewish nation yet when He actually came to them in flesh they rejected Him. As John wrote

"He came unto his own, and *his own received him not.*" John 1:11

Spirit of prophecy comments (Christ the law-giver)

It was also Christ who from Mount Sinai spoke the law of the Ten Commandments. As we are told here

"It was Christ who spoke the law from Sinai. It was Christ who gave the law to Moses, engraven on tables of stone. It was his Father's law; and Christ says, "I and my Father are one." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 27th September 1881, 'The exalted position of the Law of God')

The law of the Ten Commandments is said to be Christ's "**Father's law**". In other words, the law belonged to Christ's father (the infinite God). Here again we see the pre-eminence of the Father.

Note also that the Scriptures tell us concerning the giving of the Ten Commandments that it was "God" who "spake all these words" (see Exodus 20:1).

In keeping with this Ellen White wrote 3 years later

***"God spoke this law* from Sinai in awful grandeur, in the hearing of all Israel, and he wrote it with his own fingers upon tables of stone, not for his chosen people only, but for all men, to the close of time."** (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 28th February 1884, 'The Creation Sabbath')

As do the Scriptures (particularly the Old Testament), Ellen White at times made no differentiation between Christ and God. Christ is the Word of God. He is also God (John 1:1) albeit in personality He is the Son of God.

As Ellen White further explained

"The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, *is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.*" (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 116*, Dec. 19, 1905, 'An Entire Consecration', see also *The Upward Look*, page 367)

In personality – also in His pre-existence - Christ is the Son of God. In personality, it is the Father who is the infinite God.

This is in keeping with the words of the apostle Paul who wrote

“But to us there is **but one God, the Father**, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6

We were also told in 1881

“**No less a personage than the Son of God appeared to Daniel**. This description is similar to that given by John when Christ was revealed to him upon the Isle of Patmos.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 8th February 1881, ‘Sanctification, The life of Daniel’, see also *Sanctified life*, page 49, ‘Daniel’s prayers’, 1889)

This was repeated in 1904

“The Hebrew captives had told Nebuchadnezzar of Christ, the Redeemer that was to come, and from the description thus given, **the king recognized the form of the fourth in the fiery furnace as the Son of God**.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 26th April 1904, ‘Lessons From the Life of Daniel The Fiery Furnace’)

It was Christ who spoke instruction to the Hebrews. As Ellen White wrote (this was with reference to the commands given to them by God as found in Deuteronomy chapter 6)

“Who gave these commands? -- **It was the Lord Jesus, enshrouded in the pillar of cloud**. He presented to the people the only true standard of character, which is the law of God.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 21st March 1895, ‘Parents are to teach God’s statutes’)

After the generations that had left Egypt had died, an ‘angel’ came to reprove the Israelites for their backsliding. This was the same ‘angel’ as at the battle of Jericho. We are told through the spirit of prophecy

“**This angel, the same that appeared to Joshua at the taking of Jericho,-- was no less a personage than the Son of God**. It was he who had brought Israel out of Egypt, and established them in the land of Canaan. He showed them that he had not broken his promises to them, but they themselves had violated their solemn covenant.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 2nd June 1881, ‘The angel’s reproof’)

There can be no doubt that the One who communed with and led the Hebrews was non other than the pre-existent divine Son of God – God Himself (the I AM) in the person of the Son. As was said above, it was He whose “delights were with the sons of men” (see Proverbs 8:31). It was also He who came unto His own but was rejected of them (see John 1:11)

It was also He who came down from Heaven and was made flesh. As Ellen White wrote

“The Teacher from heaven, **no less a personage than the Son of God**, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship him in spirit and in truth.” (Ellen G. White, *Christian education*, page 74, 1893, see also *Review and Herald*, 17th November 1891, ‘The Teacher of truth the only safe educator’)

When speaking of the Hebrews making the ‘golden calf’ at Mount Sinai, Ellen White penned these words (this was under the sub-heading of ‘Base Idolatry’)

“In the absence of Moses the congregation demanded of Aaron to make them gods to go before them and lead them back into Egypt. This was an insult to **their chief**

leader, the Son of the infinite God.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 3*, page 339, ‘The Great rebellion’)

Again it can be seen that Christ, in His pre-existence, is said to be a true son. In the spirit of prophecy many other statements like this can be found.

In 'Patriarchs and Prophets' it is written

“Christ was not only the leader of the Hebrews in the wilderness -- **the Angel in whom was the name of Jehovah**, and who, **veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host** -- but it was He who gave the law to Israel. Amid the awful glory of Sinai, Christ declared in the hearing of all the people the ten precepts of His Father's law. **It was He who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone.**” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 366, ‘The law and the covenants’ 1890)

It also says in the next paragraph

“It was Christ that spoke to His people through the prophets. The apostle Peter, writing to the Christian church, says that the prophets "prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching 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." 1 Peter 1:10, 11. **It is the voice of Christ that speaks to us through the Old Testament.** "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19:10." (Ibid)

There can be no doubt that the ‘Old Testament God’, the one who led the Hebrews out of Egypt and through the wilderness into the promised land etc, was none other than the divine Son of God. We have been told through the spirit of prophecy”

“The Lord had committed to Moses the burden of leading his people, **while the mighty Angel, even the Son of God**, went before them in all their journeyings, and directed their travels.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times* 30th September 1880 ‘The sin of Moses’)

The ‘Old Testament God’ - further explanation from the spirit of prophecy

The above is easier to understand when we realise that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told

“After the transgression of Adam, God no longer communicated directly with man; earth was separated, as it were, from the continent of heaven;...” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 10th June 1890, ‘Conditions for obtaining eternal riches’)

These same thoughts are found in ‘Patriarchs and Prophets’. This is where it is written

“Since the sin of our first parents there has been **no direct communication between God and man.**” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 366, ‘The Law and the Covenants’)

Notice the implication in this statement. The implication is that prior to the fall of man, the Father did directly commune with Adam and Eve (“**Since the sin** of our first parents”...etc).

This is very clear (and also very easy to understand) but who then, if not God, has been communicating with fallen humanity?

We are told

“The Father has given the world into the hands of Christ, that through His mediatorial work He may redeem man and vindicate the authority and holiness of the law of God.” (Ibid)

Notice here again the pre-eminence of the Father (“The Father **has given** the world into the hands of Christ”). There is no role-playing here. Ellen White then wrote

“All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man's Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face.” (Ibid)

In 1879, these words were written in the ‘Signs of the Times’

“The transgression of that law had caused a fearful separation between God and man. To Adam in his innocence was granted communion, direct, free, and happy, with his Maker. After his transgression, God would communicate to man only through Christ and angels.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th January 1879, ‘The great controversy: The plan of salvation’)

The same thoughts are reiterated in ‘Patriarchs and Prophets’ (this was with reference to Jacob and his dream of the mystic ladder reaching up to heaven)

“Up to the time of man's rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had He not with His own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man. Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power.” (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 184, ‘Jacob’s flight and exile’)

There can be no doubt that this Old Testament God is none other than Christ (God in the person of the Son). All communication from God is through Him. As was also revealed in 1901

“After the fall, Christ became Adam's instructor. He acted **in God's stead** toward humanity, saving the race from immediate death. He took upon Him **the work of mediator between God and man.**” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 29th May 1901, ‘God’s purpose for us’)

We can see from this that in the sense of divine personalities - meaning individual identity - Ellen White clearly differentiates between God and Christ. This is even in Christ's pre-existence. In other words, when speaking of the pre-incarnate Christ, Ellen White does not here refer to Him as God – at least not as a personality (personage) separate from the Father. It is the Father she calls God. She says that Christ “acted in God's stead”. This was in His pre-existence (after the fall).

Consider this for a moment

If Christ is said to be God in personal identity – meaning as an individual personage - Ellen White's statement would not make any sense. It would be making her say that there has been "no direct communication between God and man" but because Christ is God there has been direct communication between God and man. As has been said, this would be nonsensical. This is why as far as individual persons are concerned, it is important not to confuse the "one God" (the Father) with the Son of God (Christ).

Here we must ask another very important question.

After the fall, why was it that God (the Father) did not directly communicate with humanity yet Christ did? This is well worth pondering. To those who say there is no difference between the Father and the Son, it is also a very difficult question to answer. There was obviously a reason why - from the time when sin first came into our world – that God (the Father) did not directly commune with us but Christ could. This must mean that there is a difference between the Father and the Son. If there is no difference, then why didn't the Father do the communicating directly? This invalidates the role-playing idea.

It was not the "one God" (God the Father – see 1 Corinthians 8:6) who has communed directly with fallen humanity but the Son of God – albeit it was God Himself (the I AM) in the person of the Son. It was He with whom certain "holy men of old" spoke "face to face".

As regards to divine personages, Ellen White spoke of Christ as the Son of God - or the Son of the infinite God - or the only-begotten Son of the Father - or some such similar expression although she made it very clear that He was God essentially (God Himself in the person of the Son). We shall see more of this later.

She also made it very clear that

"From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. *They were two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality*, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character." (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor* 16th December 1897 'The New Commandment part 1')

There is a definite difference between the Father and the Son - even in Christ's pre-existence. This obviously has a bearing on why the Son communicated directly with fallen humanity but not God the Father. Christ is begotten of the Father. The Father is unbegotten. In current Seventh-day Adventist trinity theology, there is no difference between the pre-existent Son of God and God the Father. Here Ellen White refutes this belief. Look at it this way, if there is no difference between the three, then why didn't the person who was pretending to be the Father (role playing the part of a father) speak to fallen humanity - or why not the Holy Spirit?

We are reminded though, through the spirit of prophecy

"Through Christ we have constant communication with the Father. Through this open door we may view the glories of the celestial world, and may estimate the superiority of heavenly attractions as compared with earthly." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 6th January 1891, 'Home Missions')

In summary we can say that in 'Old Testament times' God did speak to humanity but it was always through the Son. It was the Son whom the Israelites regarded as God. Ironically, when He came unto His own, they did not recognise Him (John 1:11).

Christ is the 'everlasting Father' of Isaiah 9:6. He is God Himself in the person of the Son.

In 1897 Ellen White wrote

“When we look with the eye of faith upon the cross of Calvary, and see our sins laid upon the victim hanging in weakness and ignominy there,--**when we grasp the fact that this is God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace**,--we are led to exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 11th February 1897, 'The Mind of Christ'*)

Proceed to [chapter 10](#), 'Christ the Wisdom of God'

Chapter ten

Christ the Wisdom of God

In this chapter we shall consider the reason why Christ is truly the Son of God. We shall see it is because in eternity, He was brought forth (begotten) of the Father.

Proverbs 8:22-31

From the early times of Christianity, it was believed that Christ is truly the Son of God. It was also believed that He was the Wisdom of God brought forth. This is where the scriptures say

“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, ***I was brought forth***; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was ***I brought forth***:

While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, ***I was there***: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

Then I was by him, ***as one brought up with him***: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” Proverbs 8:22-31

The writer of this study takes exactly the same view as the early Christian writers – meaning he regards these words as Christ speaking of Himself. This is confirmed through the spirit of prophecy

“Through Solomon ***Christ declared***: “The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, ***I was brought forth***; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills ***was I brought forth***. . . . When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth; ***then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him***; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.” (*Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, 29th August 1900 ‘Resistance to Light’*)

It is also written in Patriarchs and Prophets

“And the Son of God declares ***concerning Himself***: “The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.” Proverbs 8:22-30.” (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 34 ‘Why sin was permitted?’ 1890*)

Here we are told that these verses are Christ speaking of Himself. Christ therefore is the Wisdom of God brought forth. He is the only begotten of the Father - the divine Son of God. God Himself in the person of the Son. This was the continuing thought throughout early Seventh-day Adventist literature.

Proverbs 8:22-31 – an explanation

It would be beneficial here to take a look at the individual verses of Proverbs 8:22-31. Whilst it is not possible to explain them in every detail, we shall pick up on some of the important points.

Understanding ‘qanah’

The first verse of our study is Proverbs 8:22. It says

“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.”
Proverbs 8:22

Notice here the word LORD is in capital letters. This denotes it is translated from the Hebrew word transliterated ‘YHWH’ (Yahweh or commonly Jehovah).

The use of the word ‘possessed’ in Proverbs 8 is very interesting. It is translated from the Hebrew word ‘qanah’ – which according to Strong’s concordance is from a root that means ‘**to erect**’ or by implication ‘**to create**’. This has led to people asking why the word is translated ‘possessed’.

In the Latin Vulgate Jerome translated it this way

“Dominus **possedit** me initium viarum suarum antequam quicquam faceret a principio”
Proverbs 8:22 Latin Vulgate

The New Jerusalem Bible – a Roman Catholic translation of the Scriptures which is said to be the most widely used Roman Catholic Bible outside of the United States – put this verse this way

“**Yahweh created me, first-fruits of his fashioning**, before the oldest of his works.”
Proverbs 8:22 New Jerusalem Bible

It is interesting that this version of this Scripture has a footnote concerning this verse. This footnote says that Jerome probably interpreted ‘qanah’ as ‘possessed’ because when he was compiling the Vulgate, the ‘Arian controversy’ was still in progress. This is the controversy that led to the first Christian ecumenical council - which was held at Nicaea in AD 325.

This footnote also explains that Jerome probably avoided using the word ‘create’ because it would have given credence to those who supported the belief that Christ was a created being (like an angel etc). Interesting also, seeing that the Roman Catholic Church does not believe that Christ is a created being but is God in the fullest sense of meaning (as in the trinity doctrine), is that the New Jerusalem Bible interprets ‘qanah’ as ‘created’.

Other translations of this verse are also very interesting. Here are some examples

“The LORD **brought me forth as the first of his works**, before his deeds of old”
Proverbs 8:22 New International Version

"The Lord **made me at the beginning of His creation**, before His works of long ago."
Proverbs 8:22 Holman Christian Standard Bible

"The LORD **formed me from the beginning**, before he created anything else."
Proverbs 8:22 The New Living Bible

"The LORD **created me at the beginning of his work**, the first of his acts of old."
Proverbs 8:22 Revised Standard Version

"The LORD **created me first of all**, the first of his works, long ago" Proverbs 8:22
Good News Bible

"The LORD **made me as the beginning of His way**, the first of His works of old."
Proverbs 8:22 JPS Old Testament (1917)

"**ADONAI made me as the beginning of his way**, the first of his ancient works."
Proverbs 8:22 The Complete Jewish Bible

"Yahweh, **had constituted me the beginning of his way**, before his works, at the commencement of that time;" Proverbs 8:22 Rotherham's translation

All of these translations lend themselves to the idea that the "wisdom" of Proverbs 8:22 has a source (an origin). Note the latter translation ("as the beginning of his way"). I find this very interesting.

If the writer of Proverbs had wanted to portray this wisdom as literally 'created' (as in God created angels etc), then it is more than likely he would have used the Hebrew word 'bara' (or at least something very similar to it). This word literally means 'created'. This can be seen in Genesis 1:1 where it says

"In the beginning God **created** [*bara*] the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1

So by his use of 'qanah, what thought did Solomon mean to convey'?

In the KJV of the Scriptures, the Hebrew word 'qanah' is often translated to denote something which has been acquired. The majority of times it is translated 'buy', 'purchased', 'get' or 'bought' etc thus it is used to denote the acquisition of something not previously possessed. This is another branch of meaning of the word.

The writer of Proverbs uses it this way many times. This is such as "getteth understanding" (Proverbs 15:32), "get wisdom" (Proverbs 4:5, 16:16 and 17:16 etc), "getteth knowledge" (Proverbs 18:15) and "buy the truth" (Proverbs 23:23). This gives us a very good idea as to the thought that the writer probably intended 'qanah' to convey in Proverbs 8:22.

Interesting to note is that this same Hebrew word (qanah) is used on three occasions to denote the 'possessor' (see Genesis 14:19, 22 and Zechariah 11:5) but on each occasion it is with reference to something which has **been acquired**. It is also translated 'redeemed' as in "We after our ability have **redeemed** our brethren the Jews which were sold unto the heathen" (see Nehemiah 5:8) – also 'recover' as in "the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to **recover** the remnant of his people" (see Isaiah 11:11).

From the above, we can see that each time 'qanah' is used, it denotes something which has been 'purchased' or 'acquired' etc. This is in keeping with Strong's Concordance which says it is a verb (a word which expresses action – or as we used to say in our school days – a 'doing' word).

Interesting also is the way that other versions of the Bible translate 'qanah'.

The Moffatt translation (1950) translates qanah' as 'formed', whilst the Goodspeed translation (1963) uses the words 'fashioned' ('formed and fashioned'). The Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible (1970) translate it as 'created'. There are other translations that have the word 'formed' and some that have 'formed' in their footnotes whilst the New World Translation says 'produced'. Such is the varied understandings of the Hebrew word 'qanah' as used in Proverbs 8:22.

One thought regarding the wisdom of Christ 'formed' is very interesting.

We have noted in chapter 9 ('The Old Testament God') that since the fall of man, there has been no direct communication between God and man. All communication has been through Christ. This was prior to the incarnation. This has led some to believe that the following Scripture is Christ referring to Himself (like Christ is referring to Himself when He says "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting.. etc)

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: **before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.** I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God." Isaiah 43:10-12

The word "formed" here is from the Hebrew 'yatsar' which in the KJV is translated as 'form', 'potter' and 'fashion' (as in fashioned) etc. It means literally 'to form', 'to fashion' or 'to frame' (like squeezing into shape). This led one Seventh-day Adventist minister to write (this was in a theological paper submitted to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Research Fellowship – a body of people discussing various theological issues)

"The words brought forth [as in Proverbs 8:22] comes from one Hebrew word, (chiyl) (kheel) which literally means **to be begotten, to bring forth, to be born, to be shapen, to be formed.** Here Christ speaking of Himself saith: **"I was brought forth, when there were no foundations abounding with water ... or ever the earth was."** The term "brought forth" or "begotten" here is not applied to His earthly existence but to His being brought forth before anything was created." (Charles Smull Longacre, paper titled 'The Deity of Christ' submitted to the Bible Research Fellowship, January 1947)

Where Longacre says that Proverbs 8:22 is "Christ speaking of Himself", this is exactly what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. He then wrote

"These expressions agree with what Christ saith of Himself in Isaiah 43:10, 11: "That ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He; before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no Saviour." **Another translation of this text reads: "Before Me there was nothing formed of God."** (Ibid)

Longacre further explained

"The implication in our King James translation is that He, Christ, **was "formed" as God, equal with God, but beside Him was no God formed and beside Him was no Saviour appointed.** But the other translation quoted makes the Son of God the "first-begotten before all creation," as Paul puts it in Col. 1:15." (Ibid)

The 3rd century Christian writer Justin explained these 'wisdom' verses in Proverbs chapter 8 this way

"And it is written in the book of Wisdom: 'If I should tell you daily events, I would be mindful to enumerate them from the beginning. **The Lord created me the beginning of His ways for His works.** From everlasting He established me in the beginning, before He formed the earth, and before He made the depths, and before the springs of waters came forth, before the mountains were settled; **He begets me before all the hills.**' When I repeated these words, I added: "You perceive, my hearers, if you bestow attention, that the Scripture has declared that **this Offspring was begotten by the Father before all things created;** and that **which is begotten is numerically distinct from that which begets,** any one will admit." "(Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter CXXVI, 'The various names of Christ')

Here Justin refers to this same Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22) as being created but he also refers to this as the "Offspring" who was "begotten by the Father" "before all things created". He is referring here to Christ.

This was the whole point of his dialogue with Trypho – a Jew who did not accept Christ either as the Messiah or the Son of God. The above came from a section of Justin's writing which gave the various Old Testament names of Christ – names that as a Jew, Trypho would have recognised.

Justin was showing Trypho that Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament. Above is where he is explaining that one of the names of Christ is 'the wisdom' of Proverbs chapter 8.

Even more interestingly - especially in the context of our study of the word 'begotten' – in Genesis 4:1, this same Hebrew word (qanah) is translated 'gotten'. This is where the Scriptures say

"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have **gotten** [qanah] a man from the LORD." Genesis 4:1

Note here that the word 'qanah' is again used with reference to something acquired – also that Cain was 'brought forth' from within the very being of Eve. Here it is associated with literal birth. The entire section we are studying (Proverbs 8:22-31) is birth and parent-child language.

Samuel 23:3 says

"But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought [qanah] and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter." 2 Samuel 12:3

Here we can see that the "poor man" had "bought" (qanah) - meaning purchased - his one lamb.

The word 'qanah' is constantly translated in the KJV in the sense of to 'buy', 'purchase' and 'get' etc (to acquire). This is especially so as it is used by the writer of Proverbs.

Understanding 'owlam'

"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." Proverbs 8:23

Other translations have this verse as saying

“At the outset of the ages, had I been established, in advance of the antiquities of the earth;” Proverbs 8:23 Rotherham’s translation

“From eternal days I was given my place, from the birth of time, before the earth was.” Proverbs 8:23 The Bible in Basic English

“Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.” Proverbs 8:23 Revised Standard Version

“I was set up from eternity, from the beginning, before the earth was.” Proverbs 8:23 The Darby translation

“I was appointed before the world, before the start, before the earth's beginnings.” Proverbs 8:23 The Complete Jewish Bible

“I was formed before ancient times, from the beginning, before the earth began.” Proverbs 8:23 Christian Standard Bible

“I was made in the very beginning, at the first, before the world began.” Proverbs 8:23 Good News translation

“I was created in the very beginning, even before the world began.” Proverbs 8:23 New Century version

“I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.” Proverbs 8:23 New International Version

“I was set apart long ago, from the beginning, before the earth was.” Proverbs 8:23 New Life Bible

“Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.” Proverbs 8:23 English Standard Version

“From the age I was anointed, from the first, From former states of the earth.” Proverbs 8:23 Young’s Literal Translation

“Fro with out bigynnyng Y was ordeined; and fro elde tymes, bifor that the erthe was maad.” Proverbs 8:23 The Wycliffe translation

We can see here that there are many translations that have other than ‘everlasting’ (as the KJV)

When I began to study the begotten concept concerning Christ, the first thing I did was to make enquiries concerning the Hebrew word for ‘everlasting’. Whilst I make no confession of understanding either Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic (this is why I depend on others for my information), I did question in my mind that if the words ‘brought forth’ as found in Proverbs 8:24 and 25 are to be taken literally, then how can it be said that the Son, as a separate personality from the Father, has always had an existence separate from the Father?

Early in my studies I discovered that the word ‘everlasting’ was translated from the Hebrew ‘olam’ or ‘owlam’. This is exactly the same word as used in Micah 5:2 - which the KJV translates as “from everlasting”. Strong’s concordance says that this word means to convey the concept of something ‘concealed’ (hidden). It is also meant to convey the thought of ‘time out of mind (past or future)’ or ‘the vanishing point’. It is said to be ‘practically forever’ but not

quite. Strong's also said that it had as its root word 'alam' (or 'awlam') meaning 'to veil from sight'.

It can be seen from this that the word 'olam' conveys the idea that something was 'so far back in eternity' that it is totally beyond human comprehension – also that it is practically forever.

Just over nine years ago (this was very near the beginning of my trinity studies) I came across two people who were making a study of the original Hebrew language – therefore because they were willing to share their findings with others – and because I wanted to know the real meaning of the word 'olam', I wrote to them requesting its meaning.

A few days later I received the following reply.

"First rule in Hebrew study - **Hebrews think in concrete and Greeks think in Abstracts**. Concrete thinkers think in relation to things that can be seen, touched, smelled, heard or tasted. Some examples of this are tree, singing, smell of baking, etc. Abstract thoughts are such things as believe, faith, grace, etc. These cannot be sensed by the 5 senses. (Jeff Benner to Terry Hill, email 1st November 2001)

The reply continued

"The Hebrews always thought in concrete thought. The word everlasting (the usual translation of the Hebrew word "olam") is an abstract word. The Hebrew meaning is something like "**behind the horizon**". It is something that is beyond what you can see (or understand) **at the moment** but will be revealed as you travel closer (**or at a later time**)." (*Ibid*)

The writer concluded

"The Greek idea of "everlasting" would have been **a foreign concept to the ancient Hebrews**. I hope this helps." (*Ibid*)

I found this to be very interesting. I also found it to be in keeping with Strong's concordance which said the word 'olam' meant that something was 'so far back' in eternity that it was beyond our understanding (certainly not revealed). In brief, it was something 'hidden' or 'concealed' or 'time out of mind' - certainly not comprehensible to the human mind.

The reply to my question had said that the word 'olam' was meant to convey the thought that it was like something that was "**behind the horizon**", which at the moment could not be seen but would appear evident later.

It is true to say that when we look at the horizon we cannot with mere human sight see what is beyond. This is obviously in keeping with this begotten concept. We cannot tell or understand how 'far back' in eternity that this begetting (acquiring) happened. It is beyond human comprehension. All we can say is that Christ is begotten (brought forth of God) in eternity – and this is the Wisdom of God. This is where we must leave it. All other knowledge of this remains with God.

Currently, on the 'Ancient Hebrew Research Centre' website, there is an article explaining 'olam'. In one place it says

"**The Hebrew word olam means in the far distance**. When looking off in the far distance it is difficult to make out any details and what is beyond that horizon cannot be seen. This concept is the olam. The word olam is also used for time for the distant past or the distant future **as a time that is difficult to know or perceive**. This word is

frequently translated as eternity or forever but in the English language ***it is misunderstood to mean a continual span of time that never ends***. In the Hebrew mind it is simply what is at or beyond the horizon, ***a very distant time***.” (Jeff Benner, *Ancient Hebrew word meanings, ‘Eternity – olam’*)

Sometimes the word ‘olam’ is translated ‘old’ (see such as Genesis 6:4, Deuteronomy 32:7, Joshua 24:2, 1 Samuel 27:8, Job 22;15, Psalm 25:6, 77:5, Lamentations 3:6, Ezekiel 25:15, 26:20, Amos 9:11 and Malachi 3:4 etc) but more so it is translated ‘everlasting’ or ‘forever’ or ‘always’ etc. The latter though is not always a correct translation.

Take for example in 1 Samuel 1:22. Here it is recorded that Hannah said that her son Samuel would appear before the Lord ‘always’ but obviously this was not true. It was simply for a long and unknown length of time. It is the same in 2 Kings 5:27 where Elisha told Gehazi that “the leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever”. Obviously it would not be forever.

The word ‘olam’ means a period of unknown (not revealed/unspecified) age – either in the future or in the past.

Understanding ‘nacak’

There is another aspect of the verses in Proverbs chapter 8 to which I would draw your attention. This concerns the words ‘set up’ as they are used in ‘set up from everlasting’ (Proverbs 8:23) - or as could be said with respect to what we have found in our studies, set up from ‘the days of eternity’.

It says in Proverbs 8:23 (KJV)

“I was **set up** from everlasting from the beginning, or ever the earth was.”

We have listed a number of other translations of this verse above so we will not do so again here.

The word ‘set’, according to Strong’s concordance, is translated from the Hebrew transliteration ‘nacak’ meaning ‘to pour out’ as in a libation (to pour in honour) to deity or ‘to cast’ as in casting metal. The idea is ‘pouring’ or ‘to flow’.

In the KJV, this same Hebrew word is translated ‘pour’ in Exodus 30:9 and ‘poured’ in such as Genesis 35:14, Numbers 28:7, 2 Samuel 23:16, 2 Kings 16:13 and 1 Chronicles 11:18. When applied to the Son of God, this could be the ‘pouring out’ of God Himself (in the person of His Son) as an offering to deity on behalf of the sins of mankind.

This “to cast” concept I also find very interesting. This is because just as in other places in the world, we have here in England what is termed ‘metal foundries’. This is where metal casts are ‘founded’ which entails the pouring out of molten metal into moulds of a required shape. Then, when the metal is cooled enough, it is taken from the mould. It is then seen to be the ‘exact shape’ of the mould from which it was cast - thus it becomes the ‘exact image’ of the form from which it originated.

This is an apt description of the Son of God of whom the Scriptures say

“Who being the brightness of his [God’s] glory, and ***the express image of his*** [God’s] ***person***, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Hebrews 1:3

Again according to Strong's concordance, the Greek word used here (translated "express image") is 'charakter' which originally was a tool that was used either for engraving or marking but later came to mean the engraving or the mark itself. Strong's also says that it means an exact impression or precise reproduction (image) of persons or things that are original. Here then we can see that the expression "express image of his person" gives the idea that the Son was the exact 'engraving' (person/character) of the person of God.

In these two concepts (poured out as a libation to deity and poured out as casting an image to the original pattern) in Proverbs 8:23, we can see a picture forming of the idea of 'begotten'. We can also say that love 'found' (founded) a way.

Strong's concordance also says that by analogy, the word 'nacak' (set) can mean 'to anoint a king'. This lends itself to the understanding of the Son of God being referred to as 'the anointed one' as is the meaning (as it is used in Daniel 9:25-26) of the word 'messiah'.

The most meaningful understanding of the use of this word 'nacak' is as it is used with reference to the sanctuary service. This is when it says

"And the *drink offering* thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine *to be poured* [nacak] *unto the LORD for a drink offering.*" Numbers 28:7

The "drink offering" was not drunk. The whole of it was always poured out as an offering of honour (a libation) to the Lord.

When King David took refuge in the Cave of Adullam near Bethlehem (this was because of the insurrection/rebellion of his son Absalom), he remembered how it was when he was a child. He longed to drink of the well by the gate but now the town was in control of the Philistines.

Notwithstanding this the Scriptures tell us

"And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and *drew water out of the well of Bethlehem*, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless *he would not drink thereof, but poured it out* [nacak] *unto the LORD.*" 2 Samuel 23:16

Although thirsting for water – and in spite of the three men risking their lives to obtain it, David poured out the drink as a libation - an offering to the Lord. Note the use of the word 'nacak'.

In the Testimonies we find this comment

"We have marked illustrations of the sustaining power of firm, religious principle. *Even the fear of death could not make the fainting David drink of the water of Bethlehem, to obtain which, valiant men had risked their lives.*" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 5, page 43, 'Parental training'*)

Verses 22 and 23 of Proverbs chapter 8 obviously have a very close connection. They have application to the acquisition of a Son (the wisdom of God) by God – also to Christ being "set up" or installed as mediator.

Understanding 'chuwl'

We will now take a look at the words translated in Proverbs chapter 8 as 'brought forth' (KJV). This is where it says

“When there were no depths, I was **brought forth**; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was **I brought forth**.” Proverbs 8:24-25

This word ‘brought’ in Proverbs 8:24 and 25 is used to translate the Hebrew word transliterated ‘chuwl’. This word means (according to Strong’s concordance) ‘to twist and whirl’ as in a circular or spiral manner.

Whilst this word is used in a variety of ways, Strong’s says it is specifically used in connection with ‘dancing or writhing in pain’. This is particularly in connection with ‘parturition’ - which is with reference **to childbirth**.

A dictionary definition of ‘parturition’ is

“The act of bringing forth, or being delivered of, young; the act of giving birth; delivery; childbirth or **that which is brought forth**; a birth.”

On checking the various translations of the Scriptures, I found that most stayed with the words ‘brought forth’ but the following are some which differed

“When there were no oceans, **I was given birth**, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, **I was given birth**”. Proverbs 8:24-25 New International version

“**When I was born**, there were no oceans or springs of water. **My birth** was before mountains were formed or hills were put in place.” Proverbs 8:24-25 Contemporary English Version

“**I was born** before the oceans, when there were no springs of water. **I was born** before the mountains, before the hills were set in place” Proverbs 8:24-25 Good News Bible

“The depths were not as yet, and **I was already conceived**, neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out. The mountains, with their huge bulk, had not as yet been established: before the hills, **I was brought forth**” Proverbs 8:24-25 Douay Rheims

“When there were no depths, **I was brought forth**; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were formed **was I conceived**” Proverbs 8:24-25 Peshitta – Lamsa

“Depthis of wattris weren not yit; and **Y was conseyued** thanne. The wellis of wattris hadden not brokun out yit, and hillis stoden not togidere yit bi sad heynesse; bifor lital hillis **Y was born**.” Proverbs 8:24-25 Wycliffe Bible (1395)

“**When I was borne**, there were nether depthes ner springes of water. Before the foundations of ye mountaynes were layed, yee before all hilles **was I borne**.” Proverbs 8:24-25 Miles Coverdale (1535)

“**I was born before there were oceans, or springs** overflowing with water, before the hills were there, before the mountains were put in place.” Proverbs 8:24-25 New Century Version

Each of these translations has this Wisdom of chapter 8 as having an origin similar to ‘birthed’. This origin was obviously in God the Father.

In the English language, 'birth' is the nearest concept we have to 'begotten' (Christ the only begotten of the Father) – although we must not liken Christ's begetting to a woman giving birth – nor of Christ being a baby. There is no ground in Scripture that would allow us to reason this way.

In the Scriptures there is no explanation of how Christ is begotten (brought forth) of the Father. Here we must leave it. If God had thought it important to know of this process He would have told us. As it is, He has said nothing about it therefore we must not conjecture (see Deuteronomy 29:29). It is enough to know that Christ was brought forth of the Father. He is the Wisdom of God.

Understanding 'amown (or 'amon')

We shall now take a look at the other Hebrew word translated 'brought' - as in Proverbs 8:30. This is a different Hebrew word than the one translated 'brought' as in verse 24 and 25.

The KJV says

"Then I was by him, as one **brought up** with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him"

The Hebrew word transliterated "brought up" is 'amown' (or 'amon'). Strong's concordance says of this word

*"In **the sense of training**; skilled." (The New Strong's exhaustive concordance of the Bible, 'Hebrew and Aramaic dictionary of the Old Testament, page 10)*

Wycliffe's translation has Proverbs 8:30 saying

"Y was **making alle thingis with him**. And Y delitide bi alle daies, and **pleiede bifore hym in al tyme**," Proverbs 8:30 Wycliffe's translation

This word 'amown' is derived from 'aman' and means (again according to Strong's concordance) 'to build up' or 'support' or 'to foster as a parent or nurse' (nursing). Once again we have the idea of a parent and child relationship, especially as the child is maturing (a building or bringing up - training). It is more often used in the Old Testament to denote faithfulness, believing and trusting like a child, particularly in a growing relationship.

Take for example its usage in Genesis 15:6. This is a text of Scripture with which most Christians are conversant.

It says of Abraham

"And he believed [*Heb. Aman*] in the LORD; and he [God] counted it to him [Abraham] for righteousness." Genesis 15:6

Here we can see Abraham trusting God like a child trusts his parents. It is a 'building up' process.

Repeatedly the word 'aman' is used in the Old Testament to mean 'to foster a belief' or to 'be assured'. Strong's concordance says that it means to build up or support and to foster as a parent or a nurse. It also says that it figuratively means to be firm or faithful or trust or believe.

In this next example of the usage of 'aman', take note that the Hebrew word is translated 'nursing'.

It says in Numbers 11:11-12

"And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? **have I begotten them**, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, **as a nursing (aman) father** beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?" Numbers 11:11-12

The Hebrew word 'aman' is used here to depict a nursing father who carries his children in his bosom. I am sure that most will find this very interesting because as John the Gospel writer says

"No 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

Note now its usage in the book of the Bible that portrays one of the most loving relationships of all time. That is the relationship between Ruth and Naomi.

Ruth had married Naomi's son Mahlon but when he died she accompanied her mother-in-law back to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem. Ruth then married Boaz and produced a son that they named Obed. This child became the father of Jesse, the grandfather of David and an ancestor of Jesus.

When Obed was born the Scriptures say

"And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became **nurse** [aman] unto it." Ruth 4:16

Note that the word 'aman' is used in the sense again of taking care and bringing up (fostering in the sense of developing, encouraging, nurturing and building up trust etc) a child. This is also how it is used in 2 Samuel 4:4, 2 Kings 10:1, 2 Kings 10:5, Esther 2:7 and Esther 2:20.

The idea of firmness of belief and trust in this relationship is very prominent in this word. Look at the way it is used in Isaiah 22:23. Here are a number of translations of that verse

"And I will fasten him as a nail in **a sure place**; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." KJV

"I will drive him like a peg in a **firm place**, ..." New American Standard Version

"I will fasten him **firmly in place** like a peg, ..." Good News Bible

"I will fasten him as a peg in a **secure place**, ..." JPS Old Testament (1917)

"I will fasten him **firmly in place** like a peg, ..." The Complete Jewish Bible

And Y schal sette hym a stake in **a faithful place**, ..." Wycliffe Bible

The picture of wisdom in Proverbs Chapter 8 is of a Son being 'brought up' in a trusting relationship with His Father. This idea of firmness of relationship is prominent.

The translations that give this same impression in Proverbs 8:30 are

“I was like **a child by his side**. I was delighted every day, enjoying his presence all the time” Proverbs 8:30 New Century version

“I was with him **forming all things**: and was delighted every day, **playing before him** at all times” Proverbs 8:30 Douay-Rheims

“I was with him **as someone he could trust**. For me, every day was pure delight, as I **played in his presence** all the time” Proverbs 8:30 The Complete Jewish Bible

“then I was by him **[his] nursling**, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” Proverbs 8:30 The Darby translation

“Then I was by Him, **as a nursling**; and I was daily all delight, **playing always before Him**” Proverbs 8:30 JPS Old Testament (1917)

Other translations interpret ‘aman’ as ‘master craftsman’, ‘master workman’ or ‘architect’ and lend themselves to the idea that God created all things through Christ. These versions are such as the ASV, the NIV, Green’s literal Translation, Rotherham’s translation and Holman’s Christian Standard Bible. Whilst this adequately conveys the idea (quite rightly) that God created this world through His Son (the master craftsman) – it is also seen in Scripture regarding this word that it pertains to a progressive trust, believing and faithfulness as in a child/parent relationship. The phrase ‘master craftsman’ or ‘master workman’ does not appear in the KJV. The word ‘aman’ is usually translated ‘believed’, ‘trust’, ‘faithful’, ‘sure’, ‘steadfast’, ‘nurse’, ‘nursing’ etc.

Delighting with the sons of men

Note the last verse of our study. It says (I have included the context of verse 30)

“Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. Rejoicing in the **habitable part of his earth**; and **my delights were with the sons of men**.” Proverbs 8:30-31

So how is this last part (verse 31) applicable to the pre-existent Son of God? How did He delight in the “**habitable part of his earth**” (meaning with people)?

First of all God had delighted in His creation. He had created both Adam and Eve in His own likeness (Genesis 1:26). Sin had marred that likeness but it did not stop Him delighting in humanity. The Hebrew word used here translated “**delights**” is the Hebrew sha’ shua’. It literally means delight and pleasure (enjoyment).

Following the fall of man – also all the way through Old Testament times – God Himself, in the person of His Son, communicated and tarried with fallen humanity (see [chapter 9](#) – ‘Christ the Old Testament God – the I AM’). As the Scriptures say of Christ

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: **for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ**.” 1 Corinthians 10:1

It was the Son of God who led the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings. It is also He that since the fall of man has communicated with humanity. We noted these things in [chapter 9](#). Other translations of Proverbs 8:31 say

“Rejoicing in *his habitable earth*; And my *delight was with the sons of men*”
Proverbs 8:31 American Standard Version

“rejoicing *in his whole world* and *delighting in mankind*” Proverbs 8:31 New International

“rejoicing in *his inhabited world* and *delighting in the human race*” Proverbs 8:31 New Revised Standard

“*Playing in the world*: and my *delights were to be with the children of men*”
Proverbs 8:31 Douay Rheims

“*playing everywhere on his earth*, and *delighting to be with humankind*” Proverbs 8:31 The Complete Jewish Bible

“As for the *rounde compasse of this worlde* I make it ioyfull: for *my delite is to be among the chyldren of men*” Proverbs 8:31 The Bishop’s Bible (1568)

“and *Y pleiede in the world*; and my *delices ben to be with the sones of men*”
Proverbs 8:31 Wycliffe Bible

“*Playing in His habitable earth*, and *my delights are with the sons of men*”
Proverbs 8:31 JPS Old Testament

There can be very little doubt that these verses are speaking of a person – that person being the pre-existent divine Son of God. It is He who since the first sin in Eden has communicated with – has dwelt with – has delighted in - and has led - fallen humanity. We noted this in [chapter 9](#).

Christ the Wisdom of God – says the spirit of prophecy

In ‘The Great Controversy’ we find these words

“Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. ***Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,--one in nature, in character, and in purpose,--the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.***” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 493, ‘The origin of evil’, 1911)

This was no different than when Ellen White wrote in the first chapter of ‘Patriarchs and Prophets’

“Christ, the Word, ***the only begotten of God***, was one with the eternal Father -- one in nature, in character, in purpose -- ***the only being*** that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 34 ‘Why sin was permitted?’ 1890)

Here we are told that Christ is “the Word, the only begotten **of** God”. This is not a denigrating of Christ but a showing of His true relationship with God. It means that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. Ellen White also said that Christ was “the **only being** that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God”. No mention is made here of the Holy Spirit.

Notice too her use of the word “begotten”. Some say today that the original Greek word translated ‘begotten’ (monogenes) simply means ‘unique’ or ‘one of a kind’ (without the actual begotten/Sonship concept) but obviously Ellen White did not view it this way. She

used the word 'begotten' in its most literal sense of meaning. In [chapter 11](#) we shall see an explanation of 'monogenes'.

After quoting Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:2, she then wrote

"And the Son of God declares **concerning Himself**: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22-30."
(*Ibid*)

Note very importantly we are told here that in these verses quoted (Proverbs 8:22-30), it was the Son of God who "**concerning Himself**" **spoke through** Solomon . This is not wisdom itself but a divine person.

The year following the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', this time in the 'Signs of the Times', Ellen White wrote again with reference to Christ being the wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8. She wrote (note the article title)

"The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old," Christ says. "When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by Him, **as one brought up with Him**; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." But the **only-begotten Son of God humbled Himself to come to this earth.**"
(*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 22nd February 1899, 'The measure of God's love'*)

Here again we can see it said that these verses in Proverbs chapter 8 have their application to "the only-begotten Son of God". It is not surprising therefore that the next year in the 'Signs of the Times' we find these words (this time the article was called 'Resistance to light')

"Through Solomon **Christ declared**: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, **I was brought forth**; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills **was I brought forth**. . . . When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth; **then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him**; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." (*Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, 29th August 1900 'Resistance to Light'*)

Again we are told that these verses in Proverbs chapter 8 are Christ speaking of Himself. This means that Christ was saying that prior to anything being created, He Himself is the one "brought forth" and "as one brought up" with God. Again this must be reference to the original 'begetting' (bringing forth) of the Son.

Some claim that these verses found in Proverbs chapter 8 are only symbolic or allegorical language but it is evident that Ellen White never used them in that sense. She obviously took them to be literal - just as she did the begotten concept. We shall see this in [chapter 14](#).

The conclusion was

"In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. **He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.** He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God **as one brought up with Him.**" (*Ibid*)

Quite understandably, the words of this statement (that there never was a time when Christ “was not in close fellowship with the eternal God”) are used by the Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians to show that Ellen White believed that as a separate personality from God, Christ is co-eternal with the Father. As we have seen from the above though, this is not what she meant. She was obviously saying that **since the time He had been brought forth of God (begotten of God)**, “there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God”.

It is unfortunate that when the trinitarians quote these latter words, they often fail to quote the previous paragraph – where Christ says of Himself “When there were no depths, **I was brought forth**; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills **was I brought forth**”. If it was quoted, a different picture would be seen. This omission is nothing short of a misuse (abuse) of Ellen White’s writings. Read the previous two quotes again and you will see what I mean.

In [chapter 21](#) we shall see that Ellen White said in 1904 that the ‘Alpha’ of heresies was already within Seventh-day Adventism. She said that ‘the Omega’ would follow very soon. She said that in the ‘Alpha’, one of the major problems was that her writings were being misused to try and make her say something she never believed or meant to say. Could this be the same in ‘the Omega’?

Note very well the final sentence here - that Christ was “as one brought up with Him” - meaning as one brought up with “the Eternal God”. This would not make sense at all if it is said that the Son is co-eternal with the Father. If this was the case, how could He be “as one brought up with Him”?

Here also Ellen White was differentiating again with respect to personality. Christ was one personality whilst “the eternal God” was another personality (see John 17:3 and 1 Corinthians 8:6). To a thinking person this should be very significant. The entire language of Proverbs 8:22-31 is a ‘birth’ or parent/child concept.

Just prior to saying these things, Ellen White wrote

“Standing in the presence of the multitude, **Christ uttered words which, if spoken by any one else, would have been blasphemous.**” (*Ibid*)

What were these words that no other man could speak – at least not without being blasphemous? It was when Jesus said in conversation with the Jews (note the ellipses denoting the exclusion of the words of the Jews)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.... If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.... **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.**” John 8:51-58

In ‘The Desire of Ages’ we find this written

“Silence fell upon the vast assembly. **The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi.** He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, “**whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.**” Micah 5:2, margin.”(*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages*, page 469, ‘The Light of life’)

As is said so many times in this study, Christ is the only One brought forth of God therefore He is God's one and only begotten Son. He is God in the person of the Son.

In the 5th Volume of the Testimonies we find these words (this was concerning the king Ahaziah who because of a serious fall had sent messengers to the idol "Baalzebub the god of Ekron" asking about his recovery – see 2 Kings 1:2)

"Ahaziah sent his servants to inquire of Baal-zebub, at Ekron; but instead of a message from the idol, **he heard the awful denunciation from the God of Israel:** "Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." (*Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 5, page 195, 'Shall we Consult Spiritualist Physicians', see also Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, 1890, also Review and Herald 27th June 1882*)

Who was it that sent this message to Ahaziah? It was "the God of Israel" but note now what Ellen White then adds

"It was Christ that bade Elijah speak these words to the apostate king." (*Ibid*)

She then said

"Jehovah Immanuel had cause to be greatly displeased at Ahaziah's impiety. **What had Christ not done to win the hearts of sinners and to inspire them with unwavering confidence in Himself?** For ages **He had visited His people** with manifestations of the most condescending kindness and unexampled love. From the times of the patriarchs He had shown how His "**delights were with the sons of men.**" He had been a very present help to all who sought Him in sincerity." (*Ibid*)

Here we can see it plainly said again that these verses in Proverbs 8 refer to Christ (His "delights were with the sons of men"). He is the wisdom of God – yet He is God Himself in the person of the Son ("Jehovah Immanuel")

From reading all of the above, the weight of evidence is overwhelming. There is no mistaking that even in her 'later years', Ellen White was still referring to Christ as the Wisdom of God brought forth (of Proverbs chapter 8).

Here we can see just what is meant by the Son of God saying of Himself in the book of Proverbs that as one brought up with His Father, "**my delights were with the sons of men**" **Proverbs 8:31**. It is that God Himself, in the person of His only begotten Son, tarried with fallen humanity.

The un-revealed

God has not told us **when** Christ was brought forth (except that it was in eternity) so we must not conjecture. We must simply take the word of God as it reads and believe it. We are not to add to God's words. What we have been told though the spirit of prophecy is that Christ's pre-existence cannot be measured by any means known to humanity.

In 1899, in the 'Signs of the Times' – also with reference to Christ saying "Before Abraham was I am" (note very importantly that this was written by Ellen White **the year following** the publication of her supposedly trinitarian 'The Desire of Ages'), Ellen White said

"Here Christ shows them that, altho they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, **yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation.**" (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 3rd May 1899 'The Word made flesh'*)

She then added

“The existence of Christ before His incarnation **is not measured by figures.**” (*Ibid*)

There is a very strong implication that Ellen White is saying here that as a separate personality from God, the personality of the Son had a beginning of existence. This is in keeping with where she says that Christ was ‘brought forth’ of God. Certainly she was saying that He was begotten in eternity – which cannot be measured by time - at least time as we know it. This is where we should leave it.

John 8:42 and 'exerchomai'

A text of Scripture which some relate to Christ being the 'wisdom of God brought forth' – also over which there is a difference of opinion - is John 8:42. This is where Jesus said to the Jews

“... 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

Showing the usage of various Greek words, this verse says

“... If God were your Father, ye would love me: **for I proceeded forth** [Gr. exerchomai] **and came** [Gr. heko] **from God**; neither came [Gr. erchomai] I of myself, but he sent [Gr. apostello] me” John 8:42

Some say that when Jesus said “for I proceeded forth and came from God” He was referring to Himself becoming a Son (when He was begotten of the Father) whilst others say it simply means that Christ departed from God (as in going from one place to another – i. e. from Heaven to earth).

The debate is over the meaning of – or perhaps better said the use of - the Greek verb 'exerchomai'. Whilst it does mean “to proceed” or “come out of” it also means “to exit”, “to depart”, “to leave”, “to disappear”, “to flow” (from one place to another), “to come forth from (physically)”, “to emanate”, “to come down from” (descended from) and a variety of other meanings. It is made up of two words - 'ek' or 'ex' - meaning 'to issue from' such as in origins (from where an action begins) and 'erchomai' meaning 'to come' (from one place to another) or 'go'. Note John's use (in the text) of 'erchomai'. Some reason that the use of the word 'exerchomai' is meant to say more than just that Christ came from God else why not just use 'erchomai'. The word 'heko' means 'to come' or 'come upon one' (to endure) whilst 'apostello' means basically to be sent (as in 'apostle' – one who is sent).

As far as I can determine (with my extremely limited knowledge of Greek), 'erchomai' has the basic meaning of move from one place to another whilst 'exerchomai' means to depart (exit) from (originally). Perhaps those who have skills in translating from Greek to English will correct me on this one.

The following two texts also contain the word 'exerchomai'. It is when Jesus said

“For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed **that I came out** [Gr. exerchomai] **from God.**” John 16:27

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely **that I came out** [Gr. exerchomai] **from thee**, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” John 17:8

I notice the KJV translators have here “I came out” and not “I came from”.

When all is said and done, there is much to be said for both sides of the argument - which does leave the matter rather inconclusive (meaning it could be taken both ways) - suffice to say that the words "for I proceeded forth and came from God" were used in our past denominational literature to mean Christ was begotten of the Father.

In his book 'Christ and His Righteousness', which is said to depict his message at the now famous 1888 General Conference session held at Minneapolis, E. J. Waggoner wrote

*"There was a time when Christ **proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father** (John 8:42 and 1:18) but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning. But the point is that **Christ is a begotten Son and not a created subject.**" (E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, pages 21-22, 1890)*

In 1890, this was the common faith amongst Seventh-day Adventists. It was that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father therefore He truly is God's one and only Son. It also meant that Christ is God – albeit God in the person of the Son. As we shall see in [chapter 14](#), Ellen White endorsed Waggoner's message at Minneapolis – although she did not agree with his application of every text of Scripture he used. The one thing she did emphasise was that Waggoner's message was a message sent by God.

In 1907, a reader of the 'Signs of the Times' asked (amongst other things)

*"If those that believe on His name were begotten of God, then **how is Jesus the "only-begotten of the Father"**? (Signs of the Times, February 20th 1907, 'Questions')*

Note the question here. It was not regarding whether Christ is begotten – which in 1907 was still the standard faith of Seventh-day Adventists – but why, because those who are born of God are said too be begotten of God (and are therefore called sons of God) is Jesus called the "only" begotten of the Father (see 1 John 5:1, 18, John 1:12, Roman 4:18, Galatians 4:6, Philippians 2:15 and 1 John 3:1).

The answer was returned (note the use of John 8:42)

*"Christ was not begotten in just the way in which men are. He Himself declares. **"I proceeded forth and came from God."** John 8: 42. **Just how this all is we do not know, but we do know this, that He was THE Son of God in a sense that no other was, because He was God;** and yet just as truly are those who believe in Him begotten of God and become His children. 1 John 3: 1." (Ibid)*

This was saying, quite rightly, that God has not revealed 'how' Christ was begotten so we do not know. Christians are sons of God by adoption but Christ is a son because He is begotten of God – the **only** begotten of God. Note the remark "because He was God". This is also the begotten faith. It is that because Christ is begotten of God He is God (not 'a god').

Uriah Smith, as joint editor of the Review and Herald, wrote in 1897 (again note the reference to John 8:42)

*"This uncreated Word was the being who, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. **His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe.** It is set forth in such mysterious expressions as these: "His [God's] only begotten Son" (John 3: 16; John 4:9), "The only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), and, **"I proceeded forth and came from God."** John 8: 42.*

Thus it appears that by some divine impulse, or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared. (Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, March 16th 1897, 'The mind of Christ')

In his book 'The Arians of the fourth century', John Henry Newman, whose beautification was announced in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI, said this about the words 'only-begotten' – also about the fact that we do not know how this begetting was achieved

“Being taken then, as it needs must be taken, to designate His original nature, it witnesses most forcibly and impressively to that which is peculiar in it, viz. ***His origination from God, and such as to exclude all resemblance to any being but Him, whom nothing created resembles. Thus, without irreverently and idly speculating upon the generation in itself***, but considering the doctrine as given us as a practical direction for our worship and obedience, ***we may accept it in token, that whatever the Father is, such is the Son.***” (John Henry Newman, 'The Arians of the fourth Century', page 164, 3rd Edition, 1871, *Of the Trinity*, section III)

Newman also quotes the 4th century church historian Eusebius as saying (after Eusebius saying a created being could never truly be called the Son of God)

“But He who is truly the Son, born from God, as from a Father, He may reasonably be called singularly beloved and only-begotten of the Father, and therefore He is Himself God. This last inference, that what is born of God, is God, of course implicitly appeals to, and is supported by, the numerous texts which expressly call the Son God, and ascribe to Him the divine attributes.” (Ibid page 166)

Note the word “***beloved*** and only-begotten of the Father”. We shall return to this thought in [chapter 11](#)

Ellen White wrote concerning Christ being God's Son and quoting John 8:42 (notice the reference to birth – also the Pharisees partly understanding what Jesus was saying)

“Jesus, with startling emphasis, denied that the Jews were following the example of Abraham. Said he, “Ye do the deeds of your father.” ***The Pharisees, partly comprehending his meaning***, said, “ We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.” But Jesus answered 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.” ***The Pharisees had turned from God, and refused to recognize his Son.***” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, October 23rd 1879, 'Wisdom and compassion of Christ')

Was Ellen White here referring to Christ's divine Sonship being tied in with the words “for I proceeded forth and came from God”? It is quite possible. After all, she was referring to 'birth' and 'sonship' – and she did say “The Pharisees, ***partly*** comprehending his meaning”.

Returning our thoughts to the question - “If we as Christians are called sons of God how is Christ the ***only***-begotten of God?” - we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“A complete offering has been made; for “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,”-- ***not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person***, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 30th May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation')

Here from the spirit of prophecy we see the answer to the above question that was asked by the reader of the 'Signs of the Times'. The difference between Christ and us is that He is a "Son **begotten** in the express image of the Father's person" whilst we are sons of God by adoption.

For those who doubt that Ellen White meant that Christ is truly begotten of the Father and is therefore truly the only begotten (monogenes) Son of God it would be profitable to note that 6 weeks later she wrote

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, **gave his only begotten Son**, tore from his bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 9th July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People'*)

In the penultimate statement we are told that Christ is "a Son **begotten** in the express image of the Father's person" whilst in the latter she says He "was **made** in the express image of his [the Father's] person". This was the belief generally held at that time by Seventh-day Adventists. This was confirmed through the spirit of prophecy. It was that because Christ is begotten of God He is God. He is the only one who is the "express image" of God's person.

In 1901, Ellen White wrote these words

"Satan has made men and women his prisoners, and claims them as his subjects. When Christ saw that there was no human being able to be man's intercessor, He Himself entered the fierce conflict and battled with Satan. **The First begotten of God was the only One who could liberate those who by Adam's sin had been brought in subjection to Satan. The Son of God** gave Satan every opportunity to try all his arts upon Him." (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 125, Dec. 9, 1901, 'The Unchangeable Law of God'*)

The term "The First begotten of God", as used here, obviously has application to the pre-existence of Christ, not the incarnation.

As I am sure most Seventh-day Adventists will agree, revelation from God is far more satisfying than scholarly debates over the meaning and application of various Greek words. Certainly our understanding of these words do not nullify what God has revealed. I would not think that Ellen White had too much command of the Greek language - or that she based any of her writings upon her understanding of it. She wrote as God instructed her to write.

In later chapters we shall return our thoughts to these latter two spirit of prophecy statements. Again I am sure you will agree, they are very interesting, particularly as far as our Godhead study is concerned.

Regardless of any conclusions we may draw concerning John 8:42 – also the use of 'exerchomai' - the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy are replete with what can only be termed 'overwhelming evidence' that Christ is truly the one and only begotten of God, therefore He is truly the 'monogenes' (only begotten) Son of God. We shall be taking a look at this Greek word ('monogenes') in [chapter 11](#).

An appraisal

As we have seen from the above, these verses in Proverbs 8:22-31 refer to the Son of God. In studying these verses in detail, we have also seen that this 'Wisdom' (the Son of God) was 'possessed' (acquired) as He was 'brought forth' (a twist and whirl) by being 'set up' (poured out) and brought up (fostered as meaning nurtured) from everlasting (time out of mind).

In order to see how they apply to the begotten Son of God, let's just read these verses from Proverbs chapter 8 again. This time we will include the things that we have found out about various Hebrew words.

Proverbs 8:22:31 says

“The LORD **possessed** [acquired] me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was **set up** [poured out as a libation/cast/anointed] from **everlasting** [time out of mind], from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was **brought forth** [twist and whirl]; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I **brought forth** [twist and whirl]: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as **one brought up** [nurtured as a child/building up a continuing trust relationship – as a master craftsman] with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; **and my delights** [enjoyments] **were with the sons of men** [the people's of the earth].”
Proverbs 8:22-31

These verses are a beautiful expression of the father-son relationship that has existed from eternity between God and Christ. To say that the words Father and Son are only metaphorical (figurative) - as certain Seventh-day Adventists claim today (mainly the trinitarians amongst us) - is to totally destroy this beauty. This can be seen in their current literature and the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia (see for example Volume 3 pages 972-973). In the latter it says

“There is an obvious parallel in this passage to the work of the second person of the Godhead (see PP 34). However, **the passage is allegorical**, and caution must be exercised not to press **an allegory** beyond what the original writer had in mind.”
(*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 3 page 972, 1966*)

It later said

“Whilst there is doubtless **a reference to Christ**, He is presented **in the figure of wisdom.**” (*Ibid, page 973*)

Ellen White obviously disagreed with this reasoning. We can see from what she said (see above) that she believed these verses were more than just a reference to Christ – also that they were not allegorical. She said that through Solomon, Christ was literally speaking of Himself.

[Proceed to chapter 11, 'Monogenes'](#)

Chapter eleven

Monogenes

Part a – the monogenes Son of God

In the current Godhead controversy within Seventh-day Adventism, the impression is often given that the main dispute concerning Christ is over the precise meaning of the Greek word 'monogenes' – which in the KJV is always translated as 'begotten' (see Luke 7:12, 8:42, 9:38, John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, Hebrews 11:17 and 1 John 4:9).

Needless to say, whilst discussions regarding the meaning of this word are obviously very important (we need to explore the meaning of words), it must be remembered that any belief we hold concerning Christ must not be based solely upon the understanding of a solitary Greek word but on the totality of the evidence we find in Scripture.

In other words, to discover the truth concerning Christ, we must employ the 'weight of evidence' method. This means that whilst the meaning of 'monogenes' is decidedly significant, it is only a single piece of the picture and not the whole. If we bear this in mind it will help to keep things in perspective. We did note in [chapter 10](#) that Christ is the wisdom of God brought forth.

Whilst in this chapter we shall be considering the meaning of 'monogenes', it is just as important to reason **why** the Bible writers used this word - particularly with respect to John's usage of it. This is because John is the only one who applied this word to Christ. The other writers who used it were Luke in his gospel (three times) and Paul in his letter to the Hebrews (once).

By the time John had come to write his gospel (around AD 96), Luke's gospel was circulating amongst Christians (written probably sometime before AD 60). John would more than likely have read it and would have seen how Luke used this word. He would also probably have seen how Paul had used it when referring to Abraham's son Isaac (see Hebrews 11:17-18). Most agree that the book of Hebrews was written quite a while previous to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 – and if written by Paul, as we are told in the spirit of prophecy, then it would need to have been written prior to the mid/late AD 60's when he died. There is no reason to suggest that John would have used 'monogenes' any differently than Luke and Paul.

Putting the above in a nutshell so to speak, it is not simply a case of what does 'monogenes' actually mean but rather what thought did John - also the other Bible writers who used it - intend to convey by their employment of it. The latter is just as important as the former - perhaps even more important.

One particular word in any language can have a number of differing meanings and applications. This means that the understanding of it each time it is used depends upon context. As we study 'monogenes', all the above needs to be taken into consideration.

John and 'monogenes'

John's gospel is very much different than the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. As the evidence of early Christian writers imply, John wrote it to refute certain heresies that as the first century of the Christian era was drawing to a close were threatening to corrupt the gospel. One heresy was that Jesus did not have a pre-existence (was not divine) whilst another was that He was not really human (did not really become flesh).

It must also be remembered that Satan - because of his failure to defeat the incarnate Christ - was angrier than he ever had been. This is why he was attacking the church with every means at his disposal (see Revelation 12:12). Deception is his major weapon, followed by the use of force and discouragement.

Helpful to remember also is that we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

"Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father. And that he should leave Heaven and come to this world as a man filled him with apprehension for his own safety." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 3rd March 1874, 'Redemption No. 2', see also *Signs of the Times*, 5th April 1883 and *Signs of the Times* 4th August 1887)

Satan knew that his ultimate destiny depended upon whether or not he could defeat the incarnate Christ (entice Christ to sin). After his failure to do so, he knew his end was sure (Revelation 12:12). Up to that time he had a 'hope' – which completely disappeared when Christ died on the cross.

Since that time, Satan's ploy has been the same as when rebellion first entered the universe. His intent has been to obscure the fact that Christ really is the Son of God. As Ellen White put it

"This fact the angels [fallen angels] would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they [fallen angels] came to consider that they were not to consult Christ." (Ellen G. White, *Letter 42, to Elder D. A. Parsons, April 29th 1910, as quoted in 'This day with God, page 128)*

In His pre-existence, Christ was truly a son. This is why it is only common sense to assume that the very same deception that Satan began in Heaven (that Christ was not truly the Son of God) he would continue here on earth. This was the challenge he threw at Jesus as our Saviour's earthly ministry began. We do not really need to be reminded that he said to Christ

"... If thou be the Son of God...." Matthew 4:3, 6

We have also seen that through the scribes and the Pharisees etc, Satan continued this dispute (see [chapter 6](#) of this study). He did not want the Jews to understand or accept Christ's relationship to the Father.

There can be no doubt that the testimony of the Scriptures – also the testimony of the spirit of prophecy - is that prior to coming to earth, Christ truly was the divine Son of God. This is the one truth that Satan and the other fallen angels hated (they still do). This is why they attack it with every deception they can devise. Today, Satan and his followers still hate this truth.

A divinely inspired theology

John's gospel is a divinely inspired theology. It was to show that Christ is truly the Son of God. It was this belief that would defeat Satan's purposes. This was the intent of God in inspiring John to write it (see John 20:31).

With respect to Christ, this helps us to understand why John used the word 'monogenes'. He used it in opposition to Satan's continuing deceptions that Christ was not really the Son of God. It was to show that Christ truly is the unique One – the only begotten of God.

Regarding John's usage of 'monogenes', the verses in which this word is found are as follows (as in the KJV)

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

"No man hath seen God at any time, the **only begotten** (Gr. *monogenes*) Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:18

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his **only begotten** (Gr. *monogenes*) Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

"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** (Gr. *monogenes*) Son of God." John 3:18

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his **only begotten** (Gr. *monogenes*) Son into the world, that we might live through him." 1 John 4:9

John used 'monogenes' as a word expressing Christ's pre-existent relationship with God the Father. As we have seen in previous chapters, this was a literal father-son relationship. This was obviously the divinely inspired thought which led John to use 'monogenes'.

Notice in John 3:16 that John records that **Jesus Himself said** that God "gave" and "sent" His "**only begotten Son**". Christ therefore is a son, not because of the incarnation but in respect to His pre-existence. Jesus said that He was the "**only begotten Son**" **before** He was given and sent.

As Jesus also told Nicodemus

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." John 3:17

This is only the same as John wrote in 1 John 4:9 (see above).

The Scriptures also say

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, **God sending his own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" Romans 8:3

Notice the emphasis here on God's "**own Son**".

There is no reason to believe that any of these references to Christ being a son need to be taken figuratively. This is falling into the trap of Satan's deception that Christ is not really the Son of God.

Christ had a pre-existent Sonship relationship with the Father. This parallels the passage of Scripture we studied in [chapter 10](#). This is when we noted that Christ is the wisdom of God brought forth (Proverbs 8:22-31). This too was parent-child language.

Strong's definition

According to Strong's concordance, 'monogenes' is compounded of two separate words, namely 'monos' and 'ginomai'. It says

"3439 ... Monogenes ... from 3441 and 1096; Only-born, i.e. sole - only (begotten, child) (James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the words in the Greek Testament, page 59)

Needless to say, if someone is not begotten then they cannot be an offspring in any sense of meaning.

In the KJV, 'monos' is often rendered 'alone' or 'only'. This can be found in texts such as Matthew 4:10, Matthew 17:8, 1 Corinthians 9:6, 2 Timothy 4:11, Jude 1:4 etc (translated only) and Matthew 18:15, Mark 6:47, John 6:15, 8:16, Galatians 6:4 etc (translated alone). In other places it is translated 'themselves' (see Mark 9:2 and Luke 24:12) – meaning no one else beside or nothing else beside (on their own).

From its usage in the Scriptures, it can be seen that 'mono' has a very obvious meaning. It is also the prefix we commonly use for understanding something to be 'one only'. This is such as in monochrome (one colour), monotone (one tone) and monogamy (one spouse at one time) etc.

The word 'ginomai' has a more varied application.

It is translated as 'done' over 50 times – also 'came' (as in 'came to pass') over 50 times. It is also translated, 'come', 'become', 'made' and 'fulfilled'. Strong's describes it as a word that is translated in the KJV as 'be assembled', 'be' (come), 'be' (brought to pass), 'arise', 'continue' etc. It is a word that has been described as meaning changing from one condition (state) to another.

Strong's also describes this word as

*"A prolongation and middle voice form of a **primary verb**; 'to cause to be' ("gen"-erate) i.e. reflexively to become (**come into being**)" (see The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the words in the Greek Testament, page 19).*

As a verb, 'ginomai' is a part of speech expressing either 'action' or the 'result of action'. As we were all taught in school, a verb is a 'doing' or 'something done' or 'something happening' part of speech (an action word).

Putting these two words together ('monos' and ginomai'), it is reasonable to conclude that 'monogenes' has a meaning such as 'the only one that has come to pass' or, 'the only one who has been brought to pass (has happened)' or 'the only one to come into being' – which in application to children does have, according to Strong's Concordance, the meaning of "only-born, i.e. sole - only (begotten, child)" (see above).

I would reason therefore that John recorded Jesus as saying of Himself (as in John 3:16) that He was the 'only one who is **come to pass**' or who has 'been **brought to pass**' of God. This would mean of course that the Son of God can also be correctly described as being either 'unique' or 'one and only' or 'one of a kind' etc, or, as we have seen in this study and will see again later - '**God Himself begotten**'. This was the view of early Christian writers. They understood the Scriptures as saying that Christ was begotten of God.

For a review of how some of the more prominent early Christian writers regarded Christ's relationship to God, see sections 2 and 3 of the 'Begotten Series' here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBBS.htm>

It will be seen in these aforementioned sections that the early Christian writers said that Christ is the begotten of God whilst the Father is the unbegotten. Many of these writers were Greek speaking. In other words, in order to understand the New Testament Scriptures (which were written in Greek), they did not need to translate from one language (Greek) to another but were reading it in their mother tongue so to speak. It must be asked therefore, where did these early writers get the idea that Christ was begotten of the Father? Obviously it was from the Scriptures. Certainly they did not get it from translations of the Scriptures - like Jerome's Latin Vulgate - which were made after they were dead.

John and his gospel

John obviously had very good reason for using 'monogenes'. It must also be remembered that when he wrote his gospel at the end of the 1st century, heresies were creeping into the Christian church. As was said above, it is claimed that John wrote his gospel to refute certain of these false beliefs – particularly beliefs concerning Christ. This means he would have been very careful indeed in selecting the words he used to describe the pre-existent relationship of Christ to God. He certainly would not have given any cause for confusion. After all, his gospel was ordained and inspired by God to show that Christ really is the Son of God (John 20:30-31, 2 Timothy 3:16). Why therefore, on this point, use words that might cause confusion?

It was not simply John's will that this gospel should be written. It was God's will. We can reason therefore that this is why God miraculously preserved the life of John – so that he could write it at this particular time (near the end of the 1st century). By this time, John would have been quite an 'old man'.

Having become quite aged, John would also have had a reasonable grasp of the 'koine' (the common Greek language). We need to remember also that the words recorded in John 3:16 are the words spoken by Jesus to Nicodemus. We must ask therefore, what was the thought that Jesus intended to convey to Nicodemus (John 3:16-17).

As used in the Scriptures, the word 'monogenes' indicates a parent-child relationship – and with respect to Christ, this was an integral part of John's theology. Throughout the centuries that followed, it was this very same 'Sonship' theology - permeating the entirety of his gospel - that would stand as a bulwark against the errors that some would attempt to bring into the Christian church. In other words, this Sonship belief was the foundational belief of Christianity.

This same 'begotten' belief was retained in the original trinity doctrine – albeit it is not retained in the version of the trinity currently held by Seventh-day Adventists. The official view of our church today is that Christ, in His pre-existence, was not a Son (not the Son of God). This view, for very good reason, has created division amongst God's remnant people.

Christ the Son of God - the foundational belief of Christianity

The belief that Christ is the Son of God is the very foundation of the Christian faith. As the apostle Paul wrote

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

Jesus Himself has also told us

“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

This is the very heart of the gospel. As a sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin, God gave His one and only Son. It is God’s sacrifice of His Son which is our atonement with God – not anything that we do.

In [chapter 8](#) we noted that Jesus asked His disciples

“... **Whom do men** say that I the Son of man am? (Matthew 16:13)

In answer to this question, the disciples replied that some were saying that He was John the Baptist; some were saying He was Elijah whilst others said He was Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.

Jesus then made it a far more personal question. He asked

“... **But whom say ye** that I am? Matthew 16:15

Peter replied

“... Thou art the Christ, **the Son of the living God.**” Matthew 16:16

Jesus responded to Peter by saying that his confession was not of human origin but that which God the Father had revealed to him (see Matthew 16:17). Jesus then told His disciples that His church would be built upon Peter’s confession – also that nothing would prevail against it (verse 18).

He said

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, **and upon this rock** I will build my church; **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**”. Matthew 16:18

Some say that “**this rock**” was Peter himself but this cannot be true. When he denied Christ, “**the gates of hell**” did “**prevail against**” him. Peter was no foundation upon which Christ could build His church. He was an easily moveable stone.

When Jesus said “**this rock**” he was referring to Peter’s confession of faith. This was that Jesus was “**the Son of the living God**”. Jesus was referring to Himself as “**this rock**”. He was not referring to Peter.

In ‘The Desire of Ages’ Ellen White penned these words

“The word Peter signifies a stone,--**a rolling stone**. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. **The church was built upon One against whom the**

gates of hell could not prevail.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 412, ‘The foreshadowing of the cross’)

As she also said in volume 2 of the ‘Spirit of Prophecy’

“The word Peter signifies rolling stone. Christ did not refer to Peter as being the rock upon which he would found his church. ***His expression, “this rock,” applied to himself as the foundation of the Christian church.***” (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of prophecy Volume 2*, page 272, ‘Walking on the water’)

This is the faith upon which the true Christian church is built. It is built upon Christ Himself. This is the belief that He is the Son of the living God. When describing Christ, this is why John used the word ‘monogenes’. John’s purpose was to show that Christ is truly the one and only begotten Son of God (John 20:30-31). This belief was to be the foundation of Christianity. It was the stronghold against Satan’s deceptions that Christ was not the Son of God. As Peter said when talking to the Jews concerning Christ

“This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. ***Neither is there salvation in any other:*** for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:11-12

When speaking these words, Peter must have been remembering the words that Jesus had spoken to him (see Matthew 16:18).

An only child

A miracle of Christ recorded by Luke helps us to understand ‘monogenes’. This miracle was when Jesus restored to life the deceased son of the widow of Nain (see Luke 7:11-16).

Concerning Jesus, Luke explained

“Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, ***the only son*** [monogenes] of his mother, ***and she was a widow:*** and much people of the city was with her.” Luke 7:12

This dead man was unquestionably unique but this was not simply because he was an only son. It was because like himself, his father was dead also – which meant that he was the only son whom his parents together would ever produce. In other words, in this respect he would always remain an ‘only son’. For this reason also, the son must have been ‘greatly beloved’ of his mother. We shall return to this point later. Above everything else, what we should note here is that Luke wanted to point out that this dead man was an only son. It really is this simple.

It was also recorded by Luke that Jesus restored to life the ‘one daughter’ of Jairus. He wrote

“For he [Jairus] had ***one only*** [monogenes] daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying ...” Luke 8:42

Again we see ‘monogenes’ applied to a “one only” person (one of a type or kind). Again it involved a parent-child relationship.

There is one other occasion that Luke used the word ‘monogenes’. This is where he says of the child possessed of an evil spirit

“And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine **only child** [monogenes].” Luke 9:38

With regards to the three occasions that Luke used the word ‘monogenes’, the application is easy to understand. The child in question each time was ‘one of a kind’ (only son, one only daughter, only child) – which conveys the idea of uniqueness.

Interesting is that apart from Luke, John is the only gospel writer to use ‘monogenes’ – and each time he used it, the application was to Christ. Five times he describes Christ as the only begotten of God – therefore depicting Him as ‘the only one of His kind’. In other words, Christ was and still is - **the only** begotten Son of God (John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, and 1 John 4:9).

In an article called ‘The One and Only Son, Richard Longenecker wrote (this was under the sub-heading ‘Linguistic Usage’)

“The word *monogenēs*, with its variants *mounogeneia* (an early feminine poetic form) and *mounogonos* (a later masculine form), occurs first in extant Greek literature in the writings of the eighth-century B.C. poet Hesiod. Thereafter it appears in the work of such diverse authors as Parmenides, Aeschylus, Plato, Herodotus, Apollonius Rhodius, and Antoninus Liberalis, as well as in the Orphic Hymns. It also appears in a number of Greek papyri and inscriptions. ***Literally monogenēs means “sole descent” or “the only child of one’s parents.” It is a stronger term than the simple monos, for it denotes that the parents have never had more than this one child.*** This is one way it was used by Hesiod (*Works and Days* 376; *Theogony* 426), Plato (*Critias* 113d), Herodotus (*History* 7.221), and Antoninus Liberalis (*Mythographi Graeci*, ed. F. Martini, II [1896], 32:1).” (Richard Longenecker, ‘The One and Only Son’, www.forananswer.org/Top_JW/Monogenhs_Longenecker.htm)

Types and kinds

It is interesting that Strong’s concordance says that the Greek word ‘genos’ has as its root ‘ginomai’ - which as we have seen is associated with ‘monogenes’ (Strong’s says that ‘ginomai’ means ‘to cause to be’, ‘generate’ or to ‘become’ etc).

Whilst ‘genos’ has the obvious meaning of ‘type’ or ‘kind’, it always has its application in the sense of either ‘parentage’ or ‘stock’, meaning origins and beginnings etc. This is very clearly seen in the way that this word is used in Scripture.

Using the King James Version as an example, ‘genos’ is translated as

- ‘Kind’ or ‘kinds’ (as in of each kind) in Matthew 13:47, 17:21, Mark 9:29, 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 1 Corinthians 14:10
- ‘Kindred’ in Acts 4:6. Acts 7:13 and Acts 7:19
- ‘Countrymen’ in 2 Corinthians 11:26
- ‘Offspring’ in Acts 17:28, Acts 17:29 and Revelation 22:16
- ‘Stock’ (as in being born of) in Acts 13:26 and Philippians 3:5
- ‘Born’ in Acts 18:2 and Acts 18:24
- ‘Nation’ (as in belonging to) in Mark 7:26 and Galatians 1:14

- ‘Country’ (as in belonging to) in Acts 4:36
- ‘Diversities’ (as of tongues and languages etc) in 1 Corinthians 12:28
- ‘Generation’ (as in belonging to) in 1 Peter 2:9

From this we can see that ‘genos’ is used in the sense of ‘origins’ or ‘species’ (types or kinds) etc.

The unique Christ - the only one of His kind

Returning our thoughts to the way Luke and John used ‘monogenes’, we can see that they both wanted to convey the idea of ‘an only child of its kind’ (type) – meaning a unique child. Those who insist that this word only means ‘unique’ or ‘one of its kind’ without the idea of a begotten son or a begotten daughter, do not appear to take this into account. They must also be willing to provide a satisfactory answer as to why this word was only used in the Scriptures of a parent-child relationship – and remember – the Greek language (the koine), would have been well known to the New Testament writers who used this word (they wrote in Greek). They would have known exactly what ‘monogenes’ meant – even though their everyday language would have been Aramaic. This is why the Bible writers used this word. They wanted to point out that a person was a unique offspring. This is made clear in the examples we have seen (see above).

Never did these inspired writers use ‘monogenes’ with respect to ‘things’. They used it only with respect to persons – the implication being of course that a begetting (acquiring) had already taken place. If there had been no previous begetting there would be no ‘only (unique) offspring’. This much is very obvious.

Note very importantly that a ‘monogenes’ child must be ‘one of a kind’. In other words, a ‘monogenes’ child cannot be one of two or more who are exactly the same type (same kind). This is because it is impossible to have two or more of anything - either things or people - and still describe each as being unique – at least for the same reason.

To put it another way, it is impossible to have in the very same respect two ‘uniques’. This is why the word ‘unique’ can only be used as singular and not a plural. If two people are both described as ‘unique’, then it must be for two different reasons. They cannot be unique for the same reason – else neither of them would be unique (one of a kind).

We therefore need to make the application and ask - “what is it that makes Christ unique (one of a kind)?” I ask this because if He is unique, then how is He different from the other two persons of the Godhead? Obvious to relate, if He is considered ‘one of a kind’ (one of a type), then in some way there must be a difference. On the other hand, if Christ is said to be exactly the same in every respect as both the Father and the Holy Spirit, then it cannot be said that He is ‘one of a kind’. He would be one of three who are exactly the same. To be unique (one of a kind), He must be - in some respect - different than the other two divine personalities.

So what is this difference? I ask this because in current Seventh-day Adventist theology - at least as far as I can determine as seen in their version of the trinity doctrine - all three persons are exactly the same.

This stands in stark contrast to the beliefs of early Christianity - also to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists during the time of Ellen White’s ministry. In these beliefs there was depicted a distinct difference between the three persons of the Godhead. God the Father was said to be unbegotten (the source of all life) whilst Christ, in eternity, was believed to

have been begotten of the Father. This made Him unique because He was the only one begotten (monogenes) of God. This is why He is called 'the only begotten of God'.

The Holy Spirit was said to proceed (not begotten) - either from the Father or from the Father and the Son. Hence all three can be said to be unique – obviously for three different reasons.

In current Seventh-day Adventist theology, this does not appear to be the case. This is because Christ is said to be not begotten – which means He is not believed to be a real son – whilst the Holy Spirit is said not to proceed – therefore He is not really the spirit of God and Christ. In other words, according to current Seventh-day Adventist reasoning, all three persons are exactly the same. So again the question must be asked - "What in Seventh-day Adventist trinity theology makes the Son unique – meaning different from the Father and the Holy Spirit?

It would seem that as far as the Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians are concerned, this is a seemingly difficult question to answer. This is because in their theology, none are begotten and none proceed from either of the others. This would mean, according to this reasoning, that in the redemption of mankind from sin, the three persons resorted to role-playing the parts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – meaning they were pretending to be what they were not. In [chapter 12](#) we shall see how this has been explained.

For a very interesting article on 'monogenes' please [click here](#)

Bizarre reasoning

If Christ is said to be a only role-playing the part of a son, meaning He is only called a son in some figurative or metaphorical way, then for this reason how can He be called unique? In other words, how can He be called 'unique' because He has chosen to role-play the part of the son? This would be bizarre reasoning.

Look at it this way.

The question is asked - and remember here we are talking in terms of Christ's pre-existence (His position as One of the Godhead) - "What makes Christ unique?" In current Seventh-day Adventist theology it cannot be answered "He is unique because He is a son" because it is not believed He is a son. So what remains? Can it be said He is unique because He has chosen to role-play the part of a son? As I said, I cannot see how this could possibly be reasoned. It could not be considered sensible..

John 1:18 and 'God only-begotten'

It would be appropriate here to mention John 1:18. It is an important text of Scripture and it is one of the nine verses in the New Testament which contains 'monogenes'. It says

*"No man hath seen God at any time, **the only begotten** [Gr monogenes] **Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."* John 1:18

This is the final verse in what is known as the prologue to John's gospel (John 1:1-18).

There is a certain controversy over this verse of Scripture. This is because instead of the reading 'monogenes huios' ("**only begotten Son**"), some manuscripts have 'monogenes theos' (God only-begotten). As it says in 'The Interpreter's Bible'

“There is an important textual variant to the only Son. **Three of our oldest MSS read “God only-begotten.”** (*The Interpreters Bible, Volume viii, page 479, 1952*).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary has this to say concerning John 1:18

“Textual evidence is divided (cf. p146) between the readings “Son” and “God”. Either way, reference would be to Christ. If the reading “God” is accepted, the sense would then be; **“the unique one, very God, the one abiding in the bosom of the Father,”** or, **“the only one [who is] God, the one who abides in the bosom of the Father.”** (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 5, page 905, 1966*)

Here is where we need to ask another important question.

If Seventh-day Adventist theology is correct – meaning that the Holy Spirit is a person exactly like God the Father and Christ are persons - then cannot it be said that the Holy Spirit also **“abides in the bosom of the Father”**? If not then why not? Why limit this to the one who is role-playing the part of the son?

This begs another question, if all three are said to be only role-playing their various parts, then why say that Christ is in the bosom of the Father? Why not say He is in the bosom of the Holy Spirit? Why single out the one who is role-playing the part of the father? In fact why say any of them are in anyone's bosom?

If the Son of God really is a son, then John 1:18 makes sense. If he is not a son – meaning He is only acting the part of a son – then the verse makes no sense.

As has been said above, Christ cannot be unique if all three of the Godhead are all exactly the same. If Christ is said to be unique then so must be the Father and the Holy Spirit called unique. Now we come back to the same question. What makes all three unique – and just because all three are of the Godhead can we have 'three uniques'? How do we reason these things?

Interestingly, the manuscripts that have 'monogenes theos' ('God only-begotten') are Alexandrian manuscripts. These may be the oldest but this does not mean they are the most reliable. Many scholars take the view that this is a corrupt text and should read 'monogenes huios' (only-begotten Son'). This would be more in keeping with the 'bent' of John's gospel – also in keeping with its purposes which was to show that Christ is truly the divine Son of God (see John 20:31). It would also be in keeping with the way John 1:18 is quoted by the majority of early Christian writers. They say “only begotten Son” not “God only-begotten”. This is one of the reasons why many scholars say the Alexandrian texts have been corrupted.

The majority of manuscripts (like the Textus Receptus from which the KJV was translated) read 'monogenes huios' (only-begotten Son). It was from Alexandrian thinking that the trinity doctrine was formulated. See section 8 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/DetHis/hDHS8.htm>

It is important to remember that although Christ is God in the person of the Son, He is a separate person from God (the Father). John began his gospel by saying

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:1-3

Notice **“the Word”** (the Son of God), was **“with”** God as well as said to be God.

God has no beginning. He has 'always been'. This "beginning" therefore cannot be referring to the beginning of God but must be referring to the beginning of the revelation of God (when God first expressed Himself).

As J. B. Phillips in his translation of the Scriptures phrased John 1:1

"At the beginning God expressed himself. That personal expression, that word, was with God and was God, and he existed with God from the beginning." John 1:1 J. B. Phillips New Testament

Interesting is the thought rendered by C. S. Longacre.

Referring to those who believe that Christ is truly the Son of God – meaning that in eternity He was brought forth of the Father (Begotten of the Father) - he says (this was in a paper he submitted to what was then known as the 'Bible Research Fellowship')

"This group believe that the Son of God existed "in the bosom of the Father" from all eternity, just as Levi existed in the "loins of Abraham," as the apostle Paul said; "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him." Heb. 7:9, 10. As Paul says; "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were," Rom. 4:17; and God hath "chosen" things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Cor. 1:28, 29. Likewise the apostle John averred; "No 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."(Charles Smull Longacre, paper titled 'The Deity of Christ' submitted to the Bible Research Fellowship, January 1947)

It must be said though that how God had His existence before this "beginning" we have not been told therefore we should not speculate. It is enough for us to know that in eternity Christ was begotten (brought forth) of God (the Father) and is therefore truly the Son of God.

We shall now, by considering the monogenes Isaac, continue our study of 'monogenes'.

[Continue to Part B of this chapter – 'The monogenes Isaac'](#)

Part B

The 'monogenes' Isaac

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul (whom we have been told through the spirit of prophecy wrote this epistle), described Abraham's son Isaac as 'monogenes' - which various Bible translations render as 'only begotten'. This is such as the KJV which says

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his **only begotten** [monogenes] *son* Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Hebrews 11:17-18

The word 'son' is supplied – meaning it is not in the original text. This part of the verse therefore says "... **his only begotten** Of whom it was said ..."

Isaac was not Abraham's only son. He had another son named Ishmael born many years prior to Isaac (by Hagar, his wife's handmaiden) - also six other children by a concubine named Keturah. This is as well as others from various unnamed concubines (see Genesis 16:15, 25:1-2, 6, 1 Chronicles 1:32).

There are a variety of ways that other translations render Hebrews 11:18 but it would be too much to quote them here in their entirety. These have such as "begotten" or "only begotten" (without the word 'son') – also "only son", "one and only son" and "own son".

Two translations – namely the 'Holman Christian Standard Bible' and the 'International Standard Version' - have "unique son" whilst very interesting is how Daniel Mace put this verse in his version of the New Testament. It says

"'Twas by faith that Abraham, when put to the trial, offered up Isaac: He offered up **his darling son**, to whose posterity the promises were to be made good:" Hebrews 11:17
Daniel Mace New Testament (1729)

Most of the 'older' translations have "only begotten" or "only begotten son" – as does the KJV (see above).

Some say that 'monogenes' does not mean literally 'only begotten' but even if this is believed, it must still be asked why the author of Hebrews used 'monogenes' to describe Isaac – also why all the Bible writers who used this word applied it to a parent-child relationship.

A unique son

Isaac was certainly 'one of a kind' (one of a type). There was none other like him. He was unique. This was not simply because he was the only son of Abraham and Sarah but more importantly he was the **only child** that God had actually promised that together they should produce. In other words, Isaac was a son of promise – also an **only son** of promise. None of Abraham's other children were promised. As we shall see later, Isaac was also the one that **God had caused to be**. This cannot be said of any of Abraham's other children.

It cannot be disputed that Paul would have possessed a very good command of the common Greek of his day thus we must conclude that in using 'monogenes' to describe Isaac, he must have had a very good reason for doing so. Needless to say, there must have been a number of different words or phrases he could have used, so why was 'monogenes' his choice?

In Hebrews 11:18, Paul was quoting from Genesis 21:12 (“That in Isaac shall thy seed be called”). This was the confirmation from God that His original promise to Abraham (that his seed would be like the stars of heaven and the sand on a seashore) would not be fulfilled through the already born Ishmael but through a son who was still to come – the one we now know as Isaac (see Genesis 17:6-7 and 18:10-18). Paul was also referring to Abraham’s great act of faith – meaning his intention to follow God’s commands to the letter and sacrifice Isaac (when Isaac was around 18 years of age).

The account of this can be found in Genesis chapter 22. It begins by saying

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only son** Isaac, **whom thou lovest**, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” Genesis 22:1-2

God refers to Isaac as Abraham’s “only” (the translators supplied the word “son”) yet Isaac was not literally Abraham’s only son. When Isaac was born, Ishmael already existed. Note too the words “whom thou lovest”. This is very important. We shall see why later.

The Hebrew ‘Yachiyd’

In the above text (Genesis 22:2), the words ‘thine only’ are translated from the Hebrew word ‘yachiyd’. This is the same as in Genesis 22:12 and 16. These texts read (without the supplied word ‘son’)

“And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only** Isaac, whom thou lovest ...” Genesis 22:2

“And he said, ... for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, **thine only** from me.” Genesis 22:12

“And said ... because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, **thine only**.” Genesis 22:16

We find the same in Amos 8:10 and Zechariah 12:10 – meaning the word ‘son’ is supplied’.

In Proverbs 4:3 there is also a similar occurrence (the need to supply a word when using ‘yachiyd’). In this text, Solomon refers to himself by saying

“For I was my father's son, tender and **only** [yachiyd] **beloved** in the sight of my mother.” Proverbs 4:3

Notice here that the word ‘beloved’ is supplied.

The idea of using ‘Yachiyd’ here was not to say that Solomon was literally an ‘only son’ but that he was the ‘beloved’ son. He was the ‘darling son’ but he was certainly not the only son of David and Bathsheba. They had at least three others (see 2 Samuel 5:14, 1 Chronicles 3:5, 1 Chronicles 14:4). He was obviously ‘special’ though.

On the other four occasions which ‘yachiyd’ is used, it is translated ‘darling’ (Psalm 22:20 and 35:17), ‘desolate’ (Psalm 25:16) and ‘solitary’ (Psalms 68:6). Notice that each time it is translated ‘only’ it is in respect of a child

Note too the use of ‘yachiyd’ in Psalms 22:20. This text of Scriptures says (this is Hebrew parallelism – very common in the Psalms and Proverbs)

“Deliver **my soul** from the sword; **my darling** [yachiyd] from the power of the dog.”
Psalms 22:20

Here we can see the “soul” being thought of as “my darling” (very precious). See also Psalm 35:17. If you remember, Holman’s translation has “darling” (monogenes) in the text of Hebrews 11:18 (see above). The KJV has “only begotten”.

Another example of Yachiyd is in Amos 8:10 which says

“And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of **an only son** [yachiyd], and the end thereof as a bitter day.” Amos 8:10

Here we see the idea of something so precious that it is irreplaceable. This is the thought behind the use here of ‘yachiyd’. Again it is the one ‘greatly beloved’, the ‘darling’ or ‘beloved’ one.

In Genesis 21:1-2 (see above), even though Abraham had then at least one other son (Ishmael), God speaks of Isaac as being Abraham’s “only” (the darling/the beloved). It was God’s way of saying that Isaac was ‘very special’ – unique in fact – none other like him. This is why in describing Isaac to the Hebrew Christians, Paul used the word ‘monogenes’. This he obviously did to be in keeping with the way that in the Hebrew Scriptures God had described Isaac. In other words, as far as Paul was concerned, the Greek word ‘monogenes’ fitted the bill perfectly. Isaac was indeed one of a kind or type (unique). He was the one and only son promised by God to Abraham and Sarah – which needless to say made him a ‘very precious’ (special) son.

Notice that God continued to describe Isaac as ‘only’ (again the word ‘son’ is supplied). He said to Abraham (after Abraham had shown willingness to obey God and sacrifice Isaac)

“... Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, **thine only son** from me ... And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, **thine only son**” Genesis 22:12, 15-16

The ‘beloved’ witness of the Septuagint

In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament Scriptures (translated from Hebrew to Greek between 300 BC and 200 BC) with which Paul would have been very conversant, the word ‘yachiyd’ in Genesis 22:2, 12 and 16 is translated into the Greek as ‘agapetos’. In the KJV New Testament, almost every time this word is used, it is translated as ‘beloved’. This was the same in the Septuagint.

It was this Greek word ‘agapetos’ that was used when God’s voice was heard confirming Christ’s relationship to God. This was at the baptism of Jesus and upon the mount of transfiguration.

Matthew wrote

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, **This is my beloved Son** (Gr. *agapetos*), in whom I am well pleased ... While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, **This is my beloved** (Gr. *agapetos*) son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” Matthew 3:17, 17:5.

This is how 'yachiyd' is translated into English in the Septuagint. Genesis 22:2 reads (in the Septuagint)

"And it came to pass after these things that God tempted Abraam, and said to him, Abraam, Abraam; and he said, Lo! I *am here*. And he said, **Take thy son, the beloved one**, whom thou hast loved—Isaac, and go into the high land, and offer him there for a whole-burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."
Genesis 22:2 Septuagint

This phrase "the beloved one" is in contrast to the KJV which says "... Take now thy son, **thine only** son Isaac ..."

It is the same with verses 12 and 16. They say in the Septuagint (in part)

"... for my sake thou hast **not spared thy beloved son** ... and on my account hast not spared **thy beloved son**, surely blessing I will bless thee..." Genesis 22:12, 16

In contrast the KJV says

"...seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, **thine only son** from me... for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, **thine only son**:" Genesis 22:12, 16

Three times when referring to Isaac, God said "only" (Yachiyd). So why did He recognize Isaac as Abraham's "only" and yet ignore Ishmael? Was not Ishmael also greatly beloved?

Isaac the son of promise – caused to be of God

Isaac was the only son that God had promised to be of Abraham and Sarah. He was also the only son of Abraham and Sarah whom **God had 'caused to be'**. This is why Isaac was so very special.

In contrast to Isaac, Ishmael was the product of 'human endeavour' (human works) - a son of 'human devising'. This is why in Galatians 4:29 he is described as one 'born after the flesh'. His birth was 'outside' of the Father's ordained will. On the other hand, Isaac was ordained of God to exist. To put it another way, Isaac existed because of the ordained (commanded) will of God according to God's own divine purposes whilst Ishmael existed purely by the permission of God. It was not God's ordained will (intent) that Ishmael should be born; neither had He promised it.

Isaac was a son whom God 'caused to be', thus by using the word 'monogenes' ('only begotten' or 'only one caused to be' etc), Paul was in keeping with the way that God, in the Old Testament Scriptures, had described Isaac. It was also the way that God described His own Son. God had caused Him to be (see above).

God only acknowledged the son of Abraham's lawful marriage to Sarah - the one whom He had ordained to be born (the one promised and whom God would cause to be).

In the Youth's instructor of June 1901 Ellen White noted

"**God had promised** Abraham that in his old age he should have a son, and this promise had been fulfilled. But now God says: "Take now thy son, . . . and offer him there for a burnt-offering." **God left Ishmael out of the question saying, "Thine only son Isaac."** (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 6th June 1901, 'Unquestioning Obedience')

Although Isaac was conceived by natural means, his conception was a miracle (the supernatural work of God).

When commentating on Abraham's faith – meaning that Abraham believed that after Isaac was dead God could raise him back to life - Ellen White commented

"Isaac was the child of a miracle, and could not the power that gave him life restore it? Looking beyond that which was seen, Abraham grasped the divine word, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Hebrews 11:19." (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 151 'The Test of Faith')

The fact that Isaac was the Son of promise – also that God had 'caused him to be' (the direct result of a miracle of God) - is obviously why to properly describe him (as did God in the Old Testament Scriptures), the writer of Hebrews used the word 'monogenes'. Rather than the biological (physical) nature of Isaac's human conception, Paul must have had in mind this '**God caused him to be**' aspect of it - also that because he was the one sent of God he was the greatly beloved (the darling son).

We are also told through the spirit of prophecy (this is very important)

"The command of God was calculated to stir the depths of his soul. "Take now thy son." (Ellen G. White Spiritual Gifts Volume 3 page 105 1864, see also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 page 99, 1870)

Ellen White then adds

"Then as though to probe the heart a little deeper, he adds, "thine only son whom thou lovest." That is, the only son of promise, "and offer him as a burnt-offering." (Ibid)

We can see here that Ellen White emphasises the phrase "thine only son whom thou lovest" as meaning "**the only son of promise**". This same sentiment is repeated throughout her writings.

Isaac's existence was indeed the work of God. He was the son of promise brought to pass by God. This is why he was so greatly beloved. Needless to say, without this miraculous intervention of God (a miracle), Isaac would not have been born. As we have been told through the Scriptures

"Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? Genesis 18:11-12

At Sarah's age, it was beyond the realms of human possibility for her to have a child - but with God nothing is impossible. God promised that she would have a Son therefore a son she would have. Isaac was indeed a son of promise. He was promised of God.

A divine parallel

The same can be said of the divine Christ. He is **the** Son of promise. He is the 'only one' who has been 'brought to pass' (caused to be) of God's own person (the 'express image' of God's person or as the creeds say, begotten of God, God from God, true God from true God). This signifies therefore that in this respect He is unique. He is God begotten. God Himself in the person of the Son. No other being in the entire universe can make this claim. This is why He is called in the Scriptures the only-begotten of God (John 1:18). This cannot be said of the Father or the Holy Spirit.

The Son of God is the work of God – the beginning of God's way of expressing Himself. This is inasmuch as He (the Son) is begotten of God. If it were not for God's own will, then the Son would not have an existence. It can also be said that because Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son, then the Son exists of His own free will (or the Son is the author of His own existence). To put it another way again, God (Yahweh) alone is responsible for the existence of the separate personalities of the Godhead.

The story of Abraham and Isaac *almost* parallels that of God and His Son. I say 'almost' because unlike Abraham's experience, there was no hand to 'stay the knife' at Calvary. God did sacrifice His only begotten Son – His one and only beloved precious darling Son.

We noted above that Ellen White said concerning Abraham "The command of God was calculated to ***stir the depths of his soul***. "Take now thy son."

The message that comes to us through the Scriptures is also designed to 'stir the depths' of the soul – your soul and my soul. As Jesus said

"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

In our theology, if we make Jesus to be something other than God's true Son – meaning that this title is just metaphorical or figurative etc - then we take away the very thing that God designed should "stir the soul" of every person who hears the story of the sacrifice He made in giving His Son.

God really did give His only begotten (darling beloved precious) Son. He gave Him so that you and I could have a restored relationship with Him. This is a relationship that leads to eternal life with Himself and His Son. Let us be careful not do or say anything that may mar this message.

A closing thought concerning 'monogenes' and 'unique'

The word 'unique' is not normally used to simply mean 'one' or 'one and only'. It involves so much more. Allow me to explain what I mean.

If there is only one apple left in a fruit bowl, for this reason alone it is not usually said to be unique. In other words, this is not the way that the word 'unique' is normally used. It is common practice to only use the word 'unique' if there is something really 'special' about what is being described. Look at it this way.

If I were to say that the 'one and only apple' left in the fruit bowl was unique, then it would be expected to be for a far different reason than that it was the only apple left in the bowl. On the other hand, if the only apple left in the bowl happened to be the only apple that a particular tree had ever produced, then this would be different. For this reason it would truly be unique. This would be the same even if it was amongst other apples in the bowl that had come from a different tree.

This is how it is with God and His Son. The Son is the one and only begotten of God. This is why He is called the only begotten Son of God. This is also why, even when amongst others who are said to be sons of God, He is unique. These 'others' are angels who are literally created by God (Job 38:6-7) – also the sinner who is lovingly adopted of God as a son (see John 1:12, Romans 8:14, Galatians 4:6, Philippians 2:15, 1 John 3:1-2 etc).

As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

"A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- ***not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by***

adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation'*)

We shall come back to this quote in [chapter 14](#). It is of major significance to our study.

As another example of how the word 'unique' is used, imagine a person who for the one and only time in their lifetime builds a computer. It could be said that this computer is unique. In other words, it is the one and only computer of its type or kind - meaning that there is none other like it.

Now let's reason together. What would make this computer unique? Is it the various 'bits and pieces' of the hardware? Is it the software loaded on the computer? Of course not! In this respect there could be many others equivalent to it. What would make it unique is the fact that it would be the only computer that this particular person has ever produced – therefore it is truly 'one of a kind'. It would be this 'only one ever produced' that constituted its claim to uniqueness.

Current Seventh-day Adventist theology

Current Seventh-day Adventist theology says that the divine being who is called 'a son' is one of three co-equal and co-eternal persons of the Godhead - commonly referred to by them as the Second Person of the Godhead. This leads to the belief that all three persons of the Godhead are exactly the same.

The question must be asked therefore - what would make any one of these divine personalities unique? After all, there can be no more three 'uniques' than there can be two 'uniques' – at least not for the same reason. To put it another way again, for one particular person of the Godhead to be regarded as 'unique', then there must be something different about Him from the other two persons. So in current Seventh-day Adventist theology, what would the uniqueness be regarding the Son?

For those who believe that all three persons of the Godhead are exactly the same - also that the Son is not begotten of God - this is a question that is seemingly very difficult to answer. This is because there always has to be a reason why something is said to be unique. In non-trinitarian theology this difficulty does not exist.

To put it in a nutshell, if the Son is said to be the only one of His kind, then how is God the Father and the Holy Spirit different from Him? Are they not also 'one of a kind'?

Note very importantly that the word 'monogenes' is never applied to God the Father or to the Holy Spirit. Are they not also unique? In other words, if 'monogenes' only means one of a kind, then why did not Christ (or the Bible writers) say 'the monogenes Father' or 'the monogenes Holy Spirit'? These are questions that deserve an answer.

We shall now move on to [chapter 12](#). This is where we shall see that to justify their current trinity theology, the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit were not actually these things but are only role-playing (acting out/pretending to be) a father, a son and a holy spirit.

[Proceed to chapter 12](#), 'A role-playing Godhead – current Seventh-day Adventist theology'

Chapter twelve

A role-playing Godhead – current Seventh-day Adventist theology

In 1981 concerning the trinity doctrine, in one of our own denominational publications, a reader posed a question. This was the year after the trinity doctrine was first voted into our fundamental beliefs (1980).

The reader said

*“I am a fledgling Christian and am **mystified by the doctrine of the Trinity.**” (These times – our times, June 1st 1981, ‘Frank answers’)*

It is more than likely that many Christians, even those who are very experienced in matters of a spiritual nature, could make this same confession but what was it about this teaching that mystified this particular person? The reader asked

“To whom should I address my prayers?” (Ibid)

In replying to this question, Pastor Holbrook (a contributing editor of ‘These times – our times’) wrote

*“**It may be inferred from the Scriptures** that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, **They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan.**” (Ibid)*

Here we are asked, in one of our official publications, to believe that sometime in eternity the three persons of the Godhead decided upon who should pretend to be the Father, who should pretend to be the Son and who should pretend to be the Holy Spirit – albeit according to Holbrook, this is what is “**inferred from the Scriptures**”.

I use the word ‘pretend’ because if a person claims to be someone (or something) they are not, then they are only acting out (role-playing) this part. This is what is being said here – “**They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan.**”

Now why would anyone say that this ‘role-playing’ (acting/pretending) is “**inferred**” in the Scriptures - meaning not actually stated?

As far as I can see there can only be one reason. This is if it was decided that the designations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit could not be taken literally – also that nothing can be found saying they are only role-playing these parts. What other reason would there be? This is where we need to exercise the ‘rule of thumb’ spoken of in the introduction to this study ([chapter 1](#)). This is the rule that says that everything in the Scriptures should be taken literally – unless of course it is impossible to do so.

Through the spirit of prophecy we have received this counsel

*“**The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great***

wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Mark 12:24." (Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, page 598, 1911 edition, 'The Scriptures a safeguard')

There then came the counsel applicable to our study. It said

"The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. **If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error."** (*Ibid*)

In the Scriptures there is no mention of the three persons of the Godhead pretending to be (acting/role-playing) what they are not. This is why Holbrook said (in his thinking) that this is only "inferred" in the Scriptures.

So what reason do we have to say that these three persons were pretending to be what they were not? In other words, if Jesus said He was the Son of God – which as we have seen in previous chapters is exactly what He did claim to be – then why should we say that He is not really a son? This Sonship relationship with the Father is not impossible.

Looking at it another way, if Christ was not truly a son, wouldn't He be guilty of leading people to believe falsehoods? I ask this because from what Jesus said concerning Himself (that He is the Son of God), my personal belief is that He really is a son. This means that if He is not a son, then He has caused me to believe something which is not true. At the very least He has confused me. As we have seen in previous chapters, Christ did not confuse or mislead anyone.

God, through the spirit of prophecy, has confirmed that Jesus really is His son. As we shall see later, the Holy Spirit – which the Scriptures reveal as both the Father and the Son omnipresent (see John 14:18, 23) – really is a holy spirit. He certainly is not pretending to be one.

Using distinctly trinitarian language Holbrook later said

"God the Son agreed to step down from His exalted position to be man's Saviour by becoming incarnate. **God the Son is truly God**, but He became truly human, as well. He is the God-Man. By so doing He became **a kind of "second" Adam** (see Romans 5:14, last part), the representative head of the race. In this position He could rightfully bear the liabilities of humanity." (*These times – our times*, June 1st 1981, 'Frank answers')

Nowhere in the Scriptures can the expression "God the Son" be found. What can be found is the terminology 'the Son of God' – which is saying something entirely different. When it is reasoned through, if this divine person (the second person of the Godhead) is not really a son then why should He be called "God the Son"? The only reason could be is if He is said to be role-playing (acting) the part.

What Holbrook meant by saying that the incarnate Son is a "**kind of "second" Adam**" I find very difficult to understand. The Scriptures tell us that in taking upon Himself our fallen human nature, the Son of God did actually become the second Adam – or as the Scriptures

put it - "the last Adam" (see 1 Corinthians 15:45). This was not make-believe on Christ's part. This was for real. Christ was not role-playing (pretending to be) what He was not. He really and truly is "the last [final, uttermost] Adam".

Again using trinitarian language Holbrook later says

"God the Holy Spirit is the one who applies to the individual mind the redemption Christ worked out by His life and death." (Ibid)

Needless to say, neither can the terminology "God the Holy Spirit" be found in Scripture. Nowhere either can these two terms ("God the Son" and "God the Holy Spirit") be found in the spirit of prophecy writings. It is trinitarian language.

In answer to the reader's question, also in the light of his own trinity reasoning, Holbrook wrote

"Since the Trinity is active in behalf of man's redemption, it is really not out of place to address any member of the Deity in prayer." (Ibid)

In the Scriptures, no one is seen directly addressing the Holy Spirit in prayer (or in any other way) but God is addressed **through** the Spirit of God (see Romans 8:26 etc). In chapters 18, 19 and 20 we shall see that in the spirit of prophecy as well as in the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is not spoken of as a person exactly like God and Christ are persons although He can rightly be termed a person. We shall see that His nature cannot be understood by humanity.

Holbrook concluded by saying

"While it is the usual practice to pray to the Father (see Acts 4:24 ff.), Scripture records the martyr Stephen's brief prayer to Jesus (chap. 7:59, 60); some Christian hymns, such as Isaac Watts's "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove," are essentially prayers to the third person of the Godhead." (Ibid)

For 'proof' of his reasoning that we can pray to the Holy Spirit, Holbrook does not appeal to Scripture but instead refers to "some Christian hymns".

By way of summary, it appears that Holbrook is saying that each one of the three divine personalities is exactly the same. This would mean that regardless of which one 'became flesh', that particular divine personage would still be called the Son of God. According to this reasoning, any of them could have taken the roles of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It would not have made any difference.

In the book 'The Trinity', Woodrow Whidden says much the same thing. He explained

"But what about direct prayer to the Holy Spirit? While we have no clear example of or direct command to pray to the Spirit in Scripture, doing so does have, in principle, some implicit biblical support. If the Spirit is indeed divine and personal and He interacts in all sorts of direct personal ways (bringing conviction, healing, transforming grace, granting gifts, etc.), it only seems logical that God's people can pray directly to and worship the Holy Spirit." (Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, page 273, 'Practical implications and conclusions')

A triune role-playing Godhead

In a 1996 week of prayer reading, Gordon Jenson (who was then the President of Spicer Memorial College of Pune, India) informed Seventh-day Adventists world-wide (this must have been approved by our church before it was published)

“A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, **one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son.**” (Gordon Jenson, *Adventist Review*, October 31, 1996, p.12 *Week of Prayer readings*, ‘article ‘Jesus the Heavenly Intercessor)

Again we see the idea of a role-playing Godhead suggested. This would have been read by all who participated in this ‘week of prayer’ reading. Were you one of those who in 1996 participated? Can you remember agreeing with this role-playing Godhead concept?

Jenson also said

“The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, **was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation.** All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven.” (Ibid)

It does appear that Jenson could not bring himself to say that the third person of the Godhead was only role-playing the part of a holy spirit (pretending to be a holy spirit) but what other conclusion can be drawn? In other words, the reality of the Holy Spirit actually being a holy spirit is lost. In this reasoning, the Holy Spirit is depicted as a person exactly like the Father and the Son. In other words, the Holy Spirit is a ‘third person’ – albeit exactly like the other two persons - acting out the role of a holy spirit.

He later said

“As sin progressively developed in heaven and later, on earth, so the plan to deal with it was progressively revealed—**the divine Beings entered into the roles they had agreed upon before the foundations of the world were laid** (see 1 Peter 1:20).” (Ibid)

Notice here that each of the persons of the Godhead are said to have chosen to role-play their various parts. If this were true, then in the plan of redemption they were all pretending to be what they were not. It appears to be said that the actually entering in of the roles did not take place until after sin had broken out.

One of the questions pertaining to this reading was

“How would **you explain the separate roles of the Godhead** in human salvation to a non-Christian?” (Ibid)

If I believed the persons of the Godhead were only role-playing these parts then my answer to Holbrook’s question would be - “with great difficulty”. On the other hand, if I were not a Christian - and I was asked to believe that the three persons only role-played these parts - I would ask why, instead of confusing people by saying they were someone or something they were not, they could not be called what they were in reality.

An objection

Under the heading “More Than Role-playing”, an objection was made to Gordon Jenson’s article. It was sent by email and was signed by Herman J. Smit - who was then the President of the Greek Mission.

Smit said (referring to Jenson’s remarks about a role-playing Godhead)

“That’s like writing a dramatic theater play, for which some persons take on specific roles and then, after the performance, change clothes and look as they did before entering the dressing rooms.” (Herman J. Smit, *President Greek Mission, Review and Herald, Adventist Review, December 26th 1996*)

This more or less sums up this role-playing idea. He then said

“Of course, the Holy Scriptures are ***a precipitation of God’s involvement with this planet and its inhabitants; many things are said in a human way***. But do we honestly believe that it was like this when our salvation was thoroughly planned and set into motion? Distributing roles?” (*Ibid*)

Smit seems to be agreeing that the three persons were not really a father, son and holy spirit but are said to be these things simply for us as humans to be able to understand God’s participation in our salvation. As he said, these things are just “***said in a human way***”. It appears therefore that he is not really complaining about the idea itself (that the three persons of the Godhead were role-playing) – but just the use of words saying they were ‘role-playing’. He did not seem to like this very much.

He continued

“How does this relate to John 3:16? In loving us, God gave His only- begotten Son. ***He didn’t need to take on a role***. Do the unfallen worlds not need a father? Is God only our Father? If God the Son does not need to act as a Saviour on behalf of the unfallen worlds, isn’t He still their Creator, God the Son, or is He a nameless one of the Three?” (*Ibid*)

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Smit wrote

“Speaking about the Holy Spirit ***as sort of a third-choice “remaining divine Being”*** sounds like handing out a “price of comfort” for the less fortunate. For the Comforter, a too-human description.” (*Ibid*)

Nothing else was said by Smit concerning the Holy Spirit but he obviously realised that Jenson was saying that this third person of the Godhead was only said to be role-playing (acting) this part. He concluded

“Please, ***let us be careful in wording*** the Trinity’s initiative in regard to the redemption of humankind. I would still like to cling to the old Nicene Creed—certainly with my Orthodox fellow Christians in mind.” (*Ibid*)

As has been said already, it looks as though Smit was objecting to the words ‘role-playing’ being used rather than the concept itself. He seems to think it would be upsetting for his “***Orthodox fellow Christians***”. Personally speaking, I believe it is upsetting for all who believe that God really is the Father of Christ and that Christ really is the Son of God – also that the Holy Spirit really is what He is said to be - a holy spirit.

As we noted previously in [chapter 5](#), it does say in the Seventh-day Adventist explanation of their beliefs

“The Father ***seems to act*** as source, the Son as mediator, and the Spirit as actualizer or applier.” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe, page 30, 2005, ‘The Godhead’*)

Here it is said that the three persons ***only seem to act*** as a source (the Father), a mediator (the Son) and an applier (the Holy Spirit). In other words, they are only role-playing these parts.

It concludes

“In the economy of function, **different members of the Godhead perform distinct tasks** in saving man.” (*Ibid* page 31)

This was the same as said in the book 'The Trinity' by Woodrow Whidden. He wrote

“While the three divine persons are one, **They have taken different roles or positions in the Godhead's work of creation, redemption, and the loving administration of the universe. The Father has assumed overall leadership, the Son has subordinated Himself to the leadership of the Father, and the Spirit is voluntarily subordinate to both the Father and the Son.**” (*Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, page 243, 'Why the Trinity is important – part 1'*)

If it were true (which I do not believe it is) that the three persons of the Godhead took different roles (meaning they were just role playing the parts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit) I could understand it regarding the plan of redemption but why would it be necessary to do this regarding creation. Why could they not tell the entire universe who they really were without pretending to be someone and something they were not? What sense does that make? This is tantamount to telling lies (deceiving people)

The strange thing is that Whidden says on page 248, 268 and 269 (note the highlighted sections)

“The heart of His [God's] plan has been sacrificially to give **His own divine Son** to come and be one with us as a man to show us what godly love is really all about... The solution to the problem of evil has and will continue to come from none other than God **Himself in the person and work of His Son**. He has thrust Himself into the battle against suffering and evil. And how has He involved Himself? Through sending **His very own divine Son** as a solution to the horrid blot that evil has spread across creation... But the sin emergency did not catch the Holy Trinity off guard. They had conceived a plan in which **God would send His very own Son** to our world to meet Satan in hand-to-hand combat.” (*Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, page 248, 268 and 269, 'Why the Trinity is important – part 1'*)

How can anyone say that Christ is only role-playing the part of a son (pretending to be a son) and then use words that seem to say that in reality He is truly God's Son (i. e. “**His own divine Son**”... “**His very own divine Son**” and “**God would send His very own Son**”? It does not seem possible.

All three exactly the same? (Seventh-day Adventist theology)

One very well known minister who spoke of what he termed the “interchangeableness” of the three personalities of the Godhead (this is exactly the same concept as role-playing) was J. R. Spangler.

In an article called ‘I believe in the Triune God’ he wrote in 1971

“The gospel commission commands surrendered souls to be baptized in **the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**” (*J. R. Spangler, Review and Herald, Oct. 21, 1971, 'I believe in the Triune God', see also Australasian Record 6th December 1971*)

As an associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, Spangler was referring here to Matthew 28:19. He then says with respect to 2 Corinthians 13:14 (which says “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”)

“The apostolic benediction lists the Three and names Christ first. **Paul usually** places God the Father first, but **here it is reversed**. To me this signifies **the interchangeableness of the members of the Godhead** since they are one in action and purpose.” (*Ibid*)

To the best of my knowledge, this text of scripture (2 Corinthians 13:14) is the only place in Paul’s writings where he mentions the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together as such in what we refer to as ‘one text’. I cannot remember where other than this he lists them together in such a manner. Yet Spangler said, “**Paul usually** places God the Father first”, thus making it look as though he very often listed the three together. The fact is that there are very few places in the entire Scripture where all three are listed together as such in one text, let alone in Paul’s writings.

Spangler reasons that whichever of the three divine personalities had come to earth He would still have been called the Son of God. If this were true, the same would apply to the other two who took the roles of the Father and the Holy Spirit. They could have played the part of any of the three.

Before we move away from this point, it is very interesting that in the opening address of each of his letters, the apostle Paul, just as did the other New Testament writers - only says ‘from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ’. In other words, he does not say ‘from the Holy Spirit’.

Why therefore, if the Holy Spirit is a person exactly like God and Christ - did Paul and the other New Testament writers, all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, omit Him from their introductions? We shall return our thoughts to this in chapter 18. This is when we shall see what the Scriptures have to say concerning the Holy Spirit.

I did find one person who said that the three persons of the 'trinity God' are different. This is Jo Ann Davidson, Professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Andrews University. She said in an article in 'Adventist World' concerning the trinity

“The three divine Persons are equal **but not identical**.” (*Jo Ann Davidson Ph.D, Adventist World, March 2011, ‘God in three persons – Blessed Trinity’*)

To say they are different is not usual trinity theology. Unfortunately, Professor Davidson does not explain how they are different. I would find an explanation of this statement quite interesting – especially as she said in the same article

“**God refers to Himself both as “He” and “Us”**. In the Old Testament the plural form of one of the nouns for God (‘elohim’) is quantitative. “Let us make man in our image.” (*Jo Ann Davidson Ph. D, Adventist World, March 2011, ‘God in three persons – Blessed Trinity’*)

Repeated reasoning

Quite recently, in a Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Lesson Study, Spangler’s reasoning was repeated. This was the second quarter of 2008. The principal contributor was Roy Adams.

The study said

“But imagine a situation in which the Being we have come to know as **God the Father came to die for us**, and the One we have come to know as Jesus **stayed back in heaven** (we are speaking in human terms to make a point).” (*Seventh-day Adventist*

Sabbath School Quarterly, page 19, Thursday April 10th 2008, 'The Mystery of His Deity)

Here again we see the reasoning that the roles could have been switched. The lesson study concluded

"Nothing would have changed, except that we would have been calling Each by the name we now use for the Other." (Ibid)

In principle, this is exactly the same as was said by Holbrook, Jenson and Spangler (see above) – meaning that no matter which one of the three personalities had become flesh, He still would have been termed the Son of God. This is only the same as saying that in reality there is no real Father, no real Son and no real Holy Spirit.

The study added

"That is what equality in the Deity means." (Ibid)

This is Seventh-day Adventist trinitarian reasoning. Needless to say, not everyone would agree with it but it does appear to be current Seventh-day Adventist theology. This is because it is now being taught in our current Sabbath School lesson studies (2008). Can you remember discussing this in your Sabbath School class? Did you agree with what was being said?

Only a son because of the incarnation

Some have added another dimension to this 'triune role-playing' theology. This is that Christ is only referred to as a son because of the incarnation.

In June 1982, a very well known evangelist in Seventh-day Adventism – namely J. R. Hoffman - submitted this type of reasoning to the readers of the 'Ministry' magazine. This is a magazine dedicated not only to the Seventh-day Adventist ministry but also many thousands of ministers not of our faith. In fact according to the 'Ministry' website, "Approximately 62,000 pastors of other denominations receive the journal bi-monthly on a gift subscription basis." Obviously this magazine tells the rest of the Christian world what Seventh-day Adventists believe.

In an article called 'Is Jesus Jehovah God', Hoffman presented the view that Christ is called a son only because of the events of Bethlehem. He wrote saying

"The Father, Son relationship in the New Testament, must always be understood in the light of the event of Bethlehem. The only child born into this world with a divine rather than a human father is Jesus. The title 'son' refers to His entry into time and does not deny at all His eternal origins. There are references in the Old Testament to 'Sonship' but these are always in anticipation of the incarnation." (J. R. Hoffman, Seventh-day Adventist Minister, Ministry Magazine article 'Is Jesus Jehovah God?' June 1982 page 24)

The emphasis here is that the 'Father-Son' relationship has no application to Christ's pre-existence. In other words, it has nothing to do with Christ's divine relationship with God. Rather, Hoffman says, it is a terminology only made applicable by the events of the incarnation. This would mean that Christ is only called a son because of what happened 2000 years ago at Bethlehem.

Hoffman later went on to say

“John 3:16 clearly states that the Son was "begotten" (K.J.V.). This is the same word used to convey the idea of **giving birth or existence.**” (*Ibid*)

He then said

“This unfortunate translation of the word monogenes is one that no modern translation of the Bible has perpetuated. Monogenes means "unique, one of a kind." **“To be only begotten” would call for using a different Greek word.**” (*Ibid*)

Unfortunately for us, Hoffman does not say what this “different Greek word” would be, so we cannot check it out. We studied the meaning of 'monogenes' in [chapter 11](#).

During the 1980's, in a sermon he presented when conducting a series of evangelistic meetings, Hoffman reiterated this very same thought. This sermon was recorded on a cassette tape. Like his 'Ministry' article, this tape (acquired through the ABC) is also called 'Is Jesus Jehovah God?'

In this sermon Hoffman says that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have eternally co-existed together. He also says

“The Scriptures teaches and the Christian faith sustains, that there were three persons in heaven **and that by the decision of the holy trinity**, the second person of the Godhead, elected by His own choice (He was not drafted, Paul said He volunteered), he came down into this world and was born in the womb of the blessed virgin at Bethlehem. The only person who was born into this world without an earthly father, is our Lord Jesus Christ” (*J. R. Hoffman, ABC Cassette tape, 'Is Jesus Jehovah God?'*)

Note first of all the avoidance of the word 'son'. Hoffman just says “second person of the Godhead”. He then asks his listeners if they are ready for a conclusion. He follows this by saying

“The second person is the Son of the first person only because of what happened in Bethlehem. The second person is the Son of the first person **only because of what happened here in this world.**” (*Ibid*)

He then adds concerning Christ

“Only person born without an earthly father. He was a child of the Heavenly Father. **This applies to his earthly nature, but it has no context whatsoever with His eternal nature.**” (*Ibid*)

Hoffman concludes

“In His eternal nature, the second person **was not the child of the first person.** He is the child of the first person **only because of what happened at Bethlehem.**” (*Ibid*)

He then asks his listeners

“How many understand what I am saying here?” (*Ibid*)

I would think that most would understand what Hoffman was saying although not everyone would agree with him, especially those who believe what the Scriptures say – also what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. This is that Christ is truly the Son of God – begotten of the Father in eternity.

Hoffman is denying this to be true. He is saying that Christ is not begotten of the Father therefore prior to the incarnation He was not a son. He says that Christ's Sonship only came about because of the events of Bethlehem (the incarnation). This is obviously a form of adoptionism – which in its various forms was rejected by the early Christian church as heresy. The early church believed that Christ was truly the Son of God – meaning a Son in His pre-existence. It is obvious too, seeing that he says the Son was not really a son (at least in His pre-existence) that Hoffman is advocating this role-playing idea.

Straw men

Nine years ago in 2002, the Seventh-day Adventist Church published a book called 'The Trinity'. It was co-authored by Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon and John Reeve. This book says much the same as Jenson, Holbrook, Spangler and Hoffman. This is that the Father/Son relationship is only metaphorical (figurative) and not one that is real. In other words, the Father and Son were not really a father and son but were simply acting out these roles.

This book was published with the intent of justifying our current denominational theology (see page 7 'Introduction'). It is also said to have been published because of the rise of non-trinitarianism within our church, also to answer the objections of the non-trinitarians to the trinity doctrine. Whether it actually did this is entirely the prerogative of the reader of this book to decide. For my part I have read it through on countless number of occasions but it certainly does not answer – or even address – some of the objections that I have to this three-in-one teaching.

Speaking of the texts of Scripture which are 'problem texts' (this must mean to the trinitarians because they certainly do not cause problems to the non-trinitarians) Whidden says

*"Is it not quite apparent that the problem texts become problems only when one assumes **an exclusively literalistic interpretation of such expressions as "Father," "Son," "Firstborn," "Only Begotten," "Begotten," and so forth?**" (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, 'Biblical objections to the trinity' page 106, 2002)*

In other words says Whidden, the designations of 'Father', 'Son' and 'begotten' etc only cause problems when they are taken literally. The question must be asked though, why shouldn't they be taken literally? What reason could we offer?

These terminologies are only a 'problem' to the trinitarians amongst us. This is because if they are taken to be literal (real), this would make null and void the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine – also many of its associated teachings. This is why in order to eliminate this problem, the Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians say that these descriptions should only be accepted as metaphorical or figurative etc (not real). This is also why they resort to teaching a 'role-playing' Godhead.

Whidden then says

*"Does not such literalism go against the mainly figurative or metaphorical meaning that the Bible writers use when referring to the persons of the Godhead? Can one really say that the Bible writers meant such expressions as "the only true God" and "one God the Father" **to exclude the full deity of the Son, Christ Jesus?**" (Ibid)*

Here is where a straw man is set up. The implied allegation is that if it is said that the Father is really a father – also that the Son is really a son, meaning that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father, then this denies "the full deity" of the one who is called a son – or

perhaps better said (according to present Seventh-day Adventist theology), it denies the full deity of the one pretending to be (role-playing) a son.

This is very much a straw man because as we shall see in chapters 13 to 17, in the reasoning of the past and present non-trinitarians, the belief that Christ is begotten of God actually makes Him God in the person of the Son. We have already seen in this study that this is what God Himself has revealed - not only through the Scriptures but also through the spirit of prophecy.

In fact in chapter 2, we took note that in an 1892 tract devoted to explaining to the public our Godhead beliefs it was said

*“The same Bible as clearly teaches that the adorable Person therein known as Jesus Christ, when considered in his whole nature, **is truly divine and truly God in the most absolute sense.** John 1:1-18; 1 John 5:20; Rom. 1:3, 4; 9:5; Titus 2:13.” (Rev. Samuel T. Spear D. D., New York Independent, ‘The Subordination of Christ’, later published by the Seventh-day Adventist pacific Press as ‘The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity’ and included as No. 90 in ‘The Bible Student’s Library’, 1892)*

Notice this was in 1892. We were still then believers in the literal Sonship of Christ – non-trinitarians.

We shall see in [chapter 14](#) that the next year (1893), by saying that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was teaching the truth concerning the pre-existence of Christ, Ellen White did actually endorse this begotten belief. How much more of an endorsement should be needed by Seventh-day Adventists? It was this belief that at this time (1893) was the denominational belief of Seventh-day Adventists. This same belief continued for decades after the death of Ellen White (1915).

We shall also see in [chapter 13](#) that although the early Seventh-day Adventists rejected the trinity doctrine as unscriptural, they certainly upheld the belief that Christ was fully and completely divine. As we noted in the introduction to this study (see [chapter 1](#)), in order to depict the divinity of Christ correctly, the trinity doctrine is not required. All that needs to be done is to present it as it is depicted in the Bible – which is totally silent as to God being a trinity.

Whidden also concluded

*“Furthermore, what proves to be quite ironic is that some of the most compelling evidence for the equality of the Father and the Son occurs in contexts that employ **the very metaphors of “Father” and “Son”** (especially John 5:16-23).” (Ibid, page 106 and 107)*

Notice Whidden’s reference to “[John 5:16-23](#)”. Here he is saying that when Jesus used the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’, He only meant them to be accepted in a metaphorical or figurative sense.

In [chapter 6](#) of this study we took note concerning His identity, of the dispute that Jesus had with the Jews (as recorded in John chapter 5). It was because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God that the Jews said He was making Himself equal with God (John 5:18). They did not see this as a metaphor. They took this to be literal. When reasoned through, for what should this be a metaphor?

Here we must take into consideration something very important.

Whidden says that it was the Bible writers who employed these terms 'Father' and 'Son'. This overlooks one very important point. This is that when John wrote of the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus, also of the conversation that Jesus had with the blind man etc (see John 3:16-17 and John 9:35-38), he was recording what was actually said by Jesus. In other words, John (the Bible writer) was not the one who decided to use the terminology 'Son' but Jesus. This is the same as when Jesus called God His Father. The Bible writers were recording His words. The same can also be said when God Himself said that He was the Father of Christ (see Matthew 3:17, 17:5). Matthew was recording the words actually spoken by God. This means it was not the Bible writers who decided to use these terminologies (Father and Son) but the Father and the Son themselves. This also means that if as Whidden says these words were only metaphors, the responsibility for their usage cannot be put on the Bible writers but upon God and Christ.

It is possible that those who promote the idea that the terms 'Father' and 'Son' are only metaphors will say that we do not really know what the exact words were that God and Christ spoke. If this is said, then without me explaining it in any detail, we, as believers in the inspiration of the Scriptures, have a very serious problem. Our entire faith is built upon what has actually been said by God and Christ.

Whidden had previously said

*"Far from suggesting that the Father generated or begat the Son **as some sort of derived or created semigod**, the imagery of Father and Son points to the **eternal and profound intimacy** that has always existed between the first and second persons of the Godhead as divine "equals" through all eternity (past, present, and future)" (*Ibid*, page 97)*

If the terms 'Father' and 'Son' are only "imagery" for showing the intimacy that has always existed "between the first and second persons of the Godhead", then what about the intimacy that exists between the persons who are role-playing the Father and the Holy Spirit – also between the 'Holy Spirit' and the 'Son' – how is this explained? We must also ask, what is the metaphor or imagery of the 'Holy Spirit' supposed to depict (assuming it is a metaphor)? Again some of the responsibility for this imagery (if it was imagery) must be placed upon God and Christ – and when it is reasoned through – even when the Bible writers themselves used these designations (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) it was the Holy Spirit who put these thoughts into their minds (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20). This means that some of the 'blame' for the use of these metaphors is apportioned to the Holy Spirit.

It can only be said that if the terms 'Father' and 'Son' are only meant to convey to humanity the intimacy that exists between two of the three persons of the Godhead (who are not really a father and a son) then this has been the cause of unnecessary confusion. Why use "metaphors" and "imagery"? Why not say who and what they really are – also how much they love each other? Why confuse the issue by saying things that are not true? Is God the author of confusion?

In Whidden's statement we also see repeated the straw man scenario.

Whidden is saying that if Christ is said to be begotten of God, then this makes Him "some sort of derived or created semigod". As we have seen so far in this study though, also as we shall see in [chapter 13](#), this is far from being the truth. The early Seventh-day Adventists who believed that Christ was begotten of the Father did actually believe that **because** He was begotten of God, He is God Himself in the person of the Son. How this is making Christ a "created semigod" I fail to understand. Obviously, regarding this issue, the present trinitarians are seriously misrepresenting the non-trinitarians. In fact this allegation can rightly be termed a falsehood. Certainly it is not the truth.

Look at these other statements from the book. They all say much the same thing.

“Furthermore, other anti-Trinitarians also want to make essentially the same point – that Jesus is not merely a human being, **but some sort of semi – or demigod who in some sense derived His divine nature from the Father somewhere in the dimly comprehended ages of eternity past. Such concepts about Jesus reflect the classic thinking of Arianism.**” (Woodrow Whidden, ‘The Trinity’, page 59, ‘The full and eternal deity of Christ – part II’, 2002)

On page 94 he said in similar fashion

“Another important consideration involves how we interpret the Bible. **Here the issue pertains to whether we should interpret some passages literally or whether we may treat them more figuratively.** Maybe we could illustrate it this way. While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, **do we really want to take such expressions in a totally literal way? Or would it be more appropriate to interpret them in a more metaphorical way that draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood?**” (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity, Biblical objections to the trinity*, page 94)

On the same page it is said

“As noted above, the gist of the anti-Trinitarian interpretation of this text claims that God the Father has literally generated, or “begat,” a divine being (the Son) sometime in the ages of eternity past **as some sort of semidivine person.** The Arians teach that it was an act of direct creation. The semi-Arians suggest that Jesus sort of split off from the nature of the Father to form a separate divine person. Thus both groups consider Jesus, the Son, to be an inferior “god,” not a true and eternally preexisting being such as the Father” (Ibid)

Whidden also said (after asking “what are we to make of the fact that God calls Christ “My Son,” “begotten” by God, and the “firstborn?””)

“The anti-Trinitarians are quick to give these terms a very literal interpretation in the sense that Christ is a ‘truly’ “begotten, firstborn Son” generated by the Father. **Thus they conclude that Christ is a “god” of lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father.**” (Ibid 101)

Here again we see the repeated setting up of the same straw man. This is because the non-trinitarians amongst us, at least the ones whom I know personally, believe as I do that Christ is God – albeit God in the person of the Son. They certainly do not regard Him as some sort of 'lesser god' – not even 'a god'. They say He is God – in the person of the Son.

The same straw man reasoning was made by Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute. He wrote in an article concerning the trinity and our Godhead history

“Not only did Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*, believe until his death in 1903 that Christ had a beginning, but during the first decades of this century **there were many** who held on to the view that in some way Christ came forth from the Father, i.e., he had a beginning, **and was therefore inferior to Him.**” (Gerhard Pfandl, ‘The doctrine of the trinity among Adventists’, 1999)

Pfandl is correct in saying that “**during the first decades** of this century **there were many**” Seventh-day Adventists who believed that Christ is truly begotten of the Father (truly God's Son) – which is what he is actually saying (we shall see this in chapter 13 to 17) – but he is

wrong in his belief that this same concept makes Christ “inferior” to the Father. In fact the very opposite is true. Those who believe that Christ is begotten of the Father (truly God’s Son) believe that Christ is equal to the Father because He is God in the person of the Son. This we shall see in [chapter 13](#).

What needs to be established is whether or not the Scriptures do actually say that Christ is begotten (brought forth) of God – and that because of this He is truly a son. If this is what the Bible does say then we must accept whatever this conveys. What we must not do, simply because we do not like what this begotten concept conveys, is to say that Christ is not begotten. What right do we have to do such a thing? This would be tantamount to changing what the Bible says just to suit our own ideology (or theology).

As the Rev Samuel Spear once wrote concerning the three personalities of the Godhead (particularly concerning the divinity of Christ)

“All the statements of the Bible must be accepted as true, with **whatever qualifications they mutually impose on one another.**” (Samuel Spear, *The Subordination of Christ, Later published by the Pacific Press as ‘The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity’ and included as No. 90 in ‘The Bible Student’s Library’, 1892*)

He then added

“The whole truth lies in them all **when taken collectively**” (*Ibid*)

This is the view taken by the author of this study – which is that we must study all that the Scriptures say on any particular study and then, by way of conclusion, weigh up what we find. We must not just use certain texts of Scripture to so say ‘prove’ our point and ignore Scripture that say differently. This is not an honest way to study anything, let alone the Scriptures. It is only when we weigh up what the Bible says “collectively” that we can get an honest picture of any subject matter.

Whidden is saying that our past Seventh-day Adventists who believed that Christ is literally begotten of God (meaning He is truly the Son of God) were in fact depicting Him as “some sort of derived or created semigod” – “a “god” of lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father”. As we have seen though – and will see again in the next three chapters - this is a complete misrepresentation of the faith and beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists. It would be so good if our present theologians and historians could correctly portray the faith of their earlier brethren. What a blessing this would be – particularly to those Seventh-day Adventists who unfortunately are taking the word of our current leadership for what they believe.

It would also be good, even Christ-like, if the present trinitarians amongst us do not misrepresent the current Seventh-day Adventist non-trinitarians (meaning those who share the beliefs of the author of this study). Needless to say, the latter do not regard Christ as “a “god” of lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father” – neither do they regard Him as “some sort of derived or created semigod”. These non-trinitarians say that Christ is equal to the Father – God Himself in the person of the Son. This is exactly the same as was believed by the early Seventh-day Adventists – i. e. those who lived during the time of Ellen White’s ministry and who believed that Christ is truly the Son of God. Again we shall see this in [chapter 13](#).

Whidden also said

“Obviously, what is in mind here is not Christ being generated by the Father as a divine being, **at best a diminished or semideity.** Rather, the writer is presenting

Christ as being “begotten” as the “firstborn Son” of God *in the Incarnation.*” (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity, 'Biblical objections to the trinity'* page 101, 2002)

Here we come back to the thought that Christ is only said to be begotten because He became human – also to the straw man of saying that those who believe Christ to be truly the Son of God (begotten of God in eternity) are saying He is “at best a diminished or semideity” . As Whidden also said

“In the literary context of Hebrews 1, Christ is a Son of God in the sense that He, **who is the eternal, fully divine Son**, has become “begotten” as the “firstborn” **in the flesh of humanity** so that He might have the redemptive preeminence over the “angels” who worship Him.” (*Ibid*)

Whidden again refers to the pre-existent Christ (for some reason) as “the eternal, fully divine Son” – yet still maintains that the word ‘begotten’ only refers to His human status.

He also says

“It is obvious that “begotten” in Hebrews 1:5 **refers to Christ's appointment by the Father to the office of high priest of the heavenly sanctuary.** Once more the context strongly suggests that Scripture is not using “begotten” in any sense of the Father God generating a Son **who is a lesser God**, but with the connotation of Christ being made the divine/human high priest.” (*Ibid page 102*)

From what is said here by Whidden, it does appear that his main purpose is to demean (belittle) the faith of past and present non-trinitarians who say, in accordance with Scripture, that because Christ is begotten of the Father He is God Himself in the person of the Son. The latter is not a demeaning of Christ but a setting Him forth in His true position as God's own Son.

On the next page the comment is made

“In other words, Scripture terms Jesus as “begotten Son” **in the sense of His incarnate humanity and His intimate, dependant relationship to His Father during this period of His human vulnerability.**” (*Ibid page 103*)

In other words again, Christ is only referred to as a “begotten Son” because of the incarnation.

He had said previously (this was with respect to

“Furthermore, other anti-Trinitarians also want to make essentially the same point – that Jesus is not merely a human being, **but some sort of semi – or demigod who in some sense derived His divine nature from the Father somewhere in the dimly comprehended ages of eternity past. Such concepts about Jesus reflect the classic thinking of Arianism.**” (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, page 59, *The full and eternal deity of Christ – part II*, 2002)

On page 94 he said in similar fashion

“Another important consideration involves how we interpret the Bible. **Here the issue pertains to whether we should interpret some passages literally or whether we may treat them more figuratively.** Maybe we could illustrate it this way. While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, **do we really want to take such expressions in a totally literal way? Or would it be more appropriate to interpret them in a more metaphorical way that**

draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood?" (Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, Biblical objections to the trinity, page 94)

On the same page it is said

"As noted above, the gist of the anti-Trinitarian interpretation of this text claims that God the Father has literally generated, or "begat," a divine being (the Son) sometime in the ages of eternity past *as some sort of semidivine person*. The Arians teach that it was an act of direct creation. The semi-Arians suggest that Jesus sort of split off from the nature of the Father to form a separate divine person. Thus both groups consider Jesus, the Son, to be an inferior "god," not a true and eternally preexisting being such as the Father"" (*Ibid*)

A very serious implication

Under the heading of "Apparent Contradictions", it said in our Sabbath School lesson quarterly for the second quarter of 2008 (this is the same study where we noted above it was said that no matter which of the three persons who came He would still be called the Son of God)

"Notwithstanding the clearest statements about Jesus' deity and equality with God the Father, we still encounter passages that call for explanation. One example occurs in what is undoubtedly the most beloved and well-known text in all the Bible, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his *only begotten* son.' " ***The problem is, How can the text say Jesus was "begotten" if He was eternal? Did someone beget Him, just like the rest of us?***

The expression "only begotten" is one word in the Greek language: *monogenes*, ***occurring nine times in the New Testament, with five of those references applying to Jesus and all five in the writings of John (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) (Seventh-day Adventist Standard Sabbath School Quarterly, page 17, Tuesday April 8th 2008, 'The Mystery of His Deity')***

The study then says

"It is significant that all five references occur in the writings of the very author ***who from the start of his Gospel seeks to establish the deity of Jesus Christ***. Indeed, he commences precisely on that point: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (*John 1:1*)."

In His gospel, John did establish the deity of Christ but it was also to show that a divine person had truly become flesh (truly human) – also that this personage was none other than the divine Son of God (see John 20:30-31). This was in opposition to many (like the Docetae) who at the time of him writing his gospel said that Jesus only 'appeared' to be human. It was also written in opposition to those (like Cerinthus) who were saying Christ was not really divine. As John wrote

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 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

Notice that John did not say he had written his gospel to show that Jesus was God – - or to say that He was divine or to show that He was 'God the Son' (as say the trinitarians) – but that he had written it so that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, ***the Son of God***".

The above lesson study then leads its readers to conclude

“It would have been incredible that this Jewish writer would have attributed the title of Deity to someone **he considered a created being.**” (*Seventh-day Adventist Standard Sabbath School Quarterly, page 17, Tuesday April 8th 2008, ‘The Mystery of His Deity’*)

If this is implying that the begotten concept leads to the belief that Christ is a created being then this is one huge misrepresentation of what is believed by those who accept (and those who in the past have accepted) that Christ is truly the Son of God - meaning in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father. They do not believe that Christ is a created being. They believe He is God Himself in the person of the Son.

The study for that day concluded

“The weight of scholarly opinion favors the view that *monogenes*, linguistically, does not place emphasis on begetting or begotten, **but rather on the oneness of a kind, on the idea of uniqueness.** How does this idea, too, help us better understand the great sacrifice made for us at the Cross?” (*Ibid*)

Again we return to the thought of 'monogenes' only meaning 'unique'. We covered this in [chapter 11](#) so we will not comment further here.

Even as early as 1869, J. G. Matteson wrote (this typifies what was the denominational belief of early Seventh-day Adventists)

“Christ is the **only literal Son of God. “The only begotten of the Father.”** John i, 14.” (*J. G. Matteson, Review and Herald, October 12th 1869, ‘Children of God’*)

He then added

“**He is God because he is the Son of God;** not by virtue of his resurrection.” (*Ibid*)

This was the standard belief in Seventh-day Adventism. This was the faith endorsed by Ellen White. It was because Christ is begotten of God He is God – meaning also He is truly the Son of God.

Why was Jesus chosen?

In the March 2011 edition of the ‘Signs of the Times’, an article was published called “Why was it Jesus?” It was written by Steve Case. After quoting John 3:16 which says “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” etc he wrote

“Did you catch the first part? The fact that Jesus came to earth **is built on the foundation of God the Father’s love for us!**” (*Steve Case, Signs of the Times, March 2011, ‘Why was it Jesus?’*)

This sounds to be in keeping with what the Scriptures say (John 3:16 etc) and what we have seen has been revealed through the spirit of prophecy. As we shall now see though, this becomes confusing because Case says that

“**While God the Father didn’t have a baby Boy named God the Son,** we use these terms to help us understand that **the parts of the Godhead are separate** yet closely linked, the way a father and son bond together.” (*Ibid*)

Again we return to the role-playing idea – therefore how can it be said that the fact that Jesus came to earth “is built on the foundation of God the Father’s love”? If there is no real

Father, then to whom is Case referring? It could be to any of the three. Any of them could have chosen to role-play the Father.

No one who believes that Christ is begotten of God actually believes that God had a “**baby Boy**” but note this means that if ‘the Son’ is not really a son, then ‘the Father’ is not really a father. Why then does Case say (see above) “**The fact that Jesus came to earth is built on the foundation of God the Father’s love for us**”? If all three are exactly the same – and there is no real father, no real son, no real holy spirit - why attribute Christ’s coming to earth as being the result of “**the Father’s love for us**” (or better said, the divine person role-playing the part of the Father)? This does not make sense. Why not say it was because of the Holy Spirit’s love or the Son’s love – or the trinity’s love? The whole matter becomes totally confusing. In fact as we shall see later, Case says the coming of Christ to earth it was a ‘trinity decision’.

Note Case says too that the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are used only to denote the “**the parts of the Godhead are separate yet closely linked**”. Here these two divine personages of the Father and the Son are called “**parts**”. Case also said that these “**parts**” are “**separate**”. What he means by this he does not explain but it does appear to be in opposition to the current theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our official belief today, as is stated here by Ekkehardt Mueller, Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute, is that “... **each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two**” (*Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 8, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*). This is what makes any Godhead belief trinitarian. If this was not said then it would not be a trinity belief. As we noted this in detail in [chapter 4](#) we will not go into it again here.

Notice too that in quoting John 3:16 and saying “**we use these terms (Father and Son) to help us understand that the parts of the Godhead are separate yet closely linked, the way a father and son bond together**”, Case seems to be overlooking the fact that John was recording the words that Jesus actually spoke to His listeners. In other words, it was not “**we**” who decided to use these terms but Christ Himself and the Father (see Matthew 3:17, 17:5, John 3:16, 9:35-37 etc).

Case later admitted

“I don’t know of a specific verse in the Bible that explains **how** Jesus was the Member of the Trinity that was chosen to come to earth to live and die. What I do find is that all Three Members of the Godhead have been involved all along.” (*Ibid*)

He also said

“I don’t know **how** the Trinity decided that it would be Jesus who would come to earth, but I do know that all Three Members of the Godhead have been involved in our salvation from the beginning to the end!” (*Ibid*)

The reason why Case does not know of a verse that says or explains these things is because there isn’t one. This again is the role-playing idea. As we also noted above, for some reason Case said that Christ coming to earth “**is built on the foundation of God the Father’s love for us**” – which does sound somewhat confusing – seeing that any one of them could have been ‘the Father’ (if the role-playing idea is true). It is also confusing because Case is saying here that it was a ‘trinity’ decision and not just the decision of one person.

This reasoning was much the same as we noted above and in [chapter 5](#). We saw that in the book ‘Seventh-day Adventists Believe’ it said

“The Father **seems to act** as source, the Son as mediator, and the Spirit as actualizer or applier.” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe, page 30, 2005, 'The Godhead'*)

It also said on the same page

“In the godhead, **final authority resides in all three members.**” (*Ibid*)

This means that the reason why Christ came to earth cannot be traced back to one person's love (such as the Father) but to the love of all three. In our Sabbath School quarterly for the 4th quarter of 1998 it said

“Entirely through Their own initiative, **the Godhead arranged for One among Them to become a human being.** They did so in order to (1) provide us with our Substitute and Surety, (2) make God's ways plain, (3) restore us to our pre-sin perfection, and (4) settle the debate about God's justice.” (*Sabbath School Quarterly, 4th quarter 1998, page 30, 'Immanuel, God with us'*)

On page 36 it said

“At precisely the right time and in the right way, the three Members of the Godhead put into operation a plan They had devised before the world was created. **They surrendered a portion of Themselves**—the Divine Son—to become the Saviour of the world.” (See Gal. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:18-21.)

Through the spirit of prophecy though, when saying that the restoration of man from his fallen state began in the courts of Heaven, Ellen White wrote

“There **God decided** to give human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which **He** regarded them. **He** "so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (*Ellen G. White, Australian Union Conference Record, 1st April 1901, 'An important letter'*)

Here we are told that the ‘giving’ was done by a person (singular) – namely God the Father (“God decided”). He gave His Son. The following words then followed

“The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption. In order to fully carry out this plan, **it was decided that Christ, the only begotten Son of God**, should give Himself an offering for sin. What line can measure the depth of this love?” (*Ibid*)

If the previous paragraph was ignored (omitted), it could be reasoned that the Godhead chose to send the Son but this is not what is being said here. Whilst it does say the Godhead was stirred and gave themselves to the saving of mankind, the previous paragraph said it was God who “decided” to send His only begotten Son. This must mean ‘the Father’. It was not the Godhead that had a son to give but the Father. Here again, in this decision making, is seen the pre-eminence of the Father.

As Ellen White went on to say

“**God** would make it impossible for man to say that **He** could have done more. With Christ **He** gave all the resources of heaven, that nothing might be wanting in the plan for man's uplifting.” (*Ibid*)

Notice here who was doing the giving. It was God the Father. It was He who gave His Son – His only son.

“Those who engage in the work of God's cause today will meet just such trials as Paul endured in his work. By the same boastful and deceptive work Satan will seek to draw converts from the faith. Theories will be brought in that will not be wise for us to handle. ***Satan is a cunning worker, and he will bring in subtle fallacies to darken and confuse the mind and root out the doctrines of salvation. Those who do not accept the Word of God just as it reads, will be snared in his trap.*** Today we need to speak the truth with holy boldness. ***The testimony borne to the early church by the Lord's messenger, His people are to hear in this time:*** "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8)." (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 43, 1907, 'Exhortation to faithfulness to church members and elders*)

In [chapter 25](#) we shall see that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told that the Son of God was 'the only being' in the universe who could come to earth and pay the penalty of sin. This invalidates the idea of role-playing – meaning that it nullifies the reasoning that any of the three could have come and died. This means that not a human being, not an angel, nor the Father or the Holy Spirit could have paid the price of our redemption but the Son of God only. It was not therefore a question of **who** should come but **if** the Son should come. This was the decision that had to be made.

In chapters [13](#) and [14](#) we shall see that during the time of Ellen White's ministry, the faith of Seventh-day Adventists was that Christ was truly begotten of God therefore He is truly God's Son. This did not make Him some sort of a lesser god, or a semi-divine god (as was said by Whidden – see above) but was said to be, because He was begotten of God, God in the person of the Son – a divine being equal to God the Father. We shall see in [chapter 14](#) that this faith was not only endorsed by Ellen White but was that which God revealed through her. She confirmed that what Seventh-day Adventists were teaching about Christ – that He is truly God's Son (begotten of the Father) - is the truth.

[Proceed to chapter 13](#), 'Concerning Christ – the beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists'

Chapter thirteen

Concerning Christ – the beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists

We noted in the [Preface](#) to this study that the underlying issue in our Godhead debate is whether or not the early Seventh-day Adventists were correct in their theology. This is when we were non-trinitarian and when we were teaching that Christ is truly the Son of God. This is the crucial issue in this debate. Were our early Seventh-day Adventists correct in what they were teaching or were they wrong?

In the [Preface](#) Jerry Moon is quoted as saying

*“As one line of reasoning goes, either the pioneers were wrong and the present church is right, **or the pioneers were right and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth.**” (Jerry Moon, ‘The Trinity’, chapter, ‘Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history, page 190)*

When all is said and done, this really does sum up our present situation. This is why we need to make up our minds regarding which way it is. This is the purpose of this study. It is to help people decide who in this controversy is right and who is wrong.

In [chapter 14](#) we shall see that Ellen White did say that what Seventh-day Adventists were teaching concerning Christ (when they were teaching that in eternity He was begotten of the Father) was the truth. This is why she never spoke out against this teaching. To some, this will be a startling realisation but it is the truth.

The focus of this chapter will be on the beliefs concerning Christ that as a denomination we taught whilst we were under the auspices of God’s messenger to the remnant, namely Ellen G. White. This being established, we shall then be able to compare these findings with what our church today is teaching. The latter is how our beliefs are presently stated in our fundamental beliefs – also in our recent publications and our Sabbath School lesson studies etc. We shall see that these beliefs have changed considerably.

One more thing before we move on.

Just because our early Seventh-day Adventists were teaching a certain belief does not make it correct. It must also be said that just because today we teach a certain belief, this does not make this belief correct. Regardless of the belief, also by whom and when it was believed – it must be checked with the Scriptures to see if it is true. This must be borne uppermost in mind.

Early Seventh-day Adventists and their rejection of the trinity doctrine

In defence of their ‘God is three-in-one’ teaching, trinitarians usually claim that unless the trinity doctrine is accepted to be correct, then the divinity of Christ is not correctly expressed. This cannot be true because as we all know, the trinity doctrine cannot be found in Scripture (see [chapter 3](#) – ‘Godhead not trinity’). This means that all that needs to be done to depict the divinity of Christ correctly is to describe it as it is spoken of in Scripture – which is totally silent concerning God being a trinity (as expressed by the trinity doctrine).

Prior to the trinity doctrine being brought into our beliefs, we spoke of Christ's divinity as it is expressed in the Bible. In other words, we believed what the Bible says – no more, no less. As we noted previously, the trinity doctrine is simply human speculation – albeit it is said to be based upon what the Scriptures reveal.

Before we review what our early church did believe and teach concerning Christ, we shall take note of some of the statements made regarding our once non-acceptance of the trinity doctrine. We shall begin with J. N. Andrews

J. N. Andrews

"This doctrine [the trinity doctrine] **destroys the personality of God and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord**. The infamous, measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history **might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush**." (J. N. Andrews, *Review and Herald*, March 6th 1855, 'The Fall of Babylon')

Uriah Smith

"**The doctrine called the trinity** claiming that God is without form or parts; that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the three are one person, **is another** [false doctrine]." (Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, July 10th 1856, 'Communications')

D. W. Hull

"The inconsistent positions held by many **in regard to the Trinity**, as it is termed, has, no doubt, been **the prime cause of many other errors**." (D. W. Hull, *Review and Herald*, November 10th 1859, 'Bible doctrine of the divinity of Christ')

J. N. Loughborough

"Question 1. "What serious objection **is there to the doctrine of the trinity?**"

Answer. "There are many objections which we might urge, but on account of our limited space we shall reduce them to the three following: 1. **It is contrary to common sense**. 2. **It is contrary to scripture**. 3. **Its origin is Pagan and fabulous**." (Review and Herald, November 5th 1861 'Questions for Brother Loughborough')

W. C. Gage

"Having noticed some of the evil effects of the doctrine of immortal soulism, and the errors growing out of it, we propose to refer briefly to **another erroneous belief**, equally popular and quite as unscriptural, if not fully as mischievous in its tendency, **namely Trinitarianism**." (W. C. Gage, *Review and Herald*, August 29th 1865, 'Popular errors and their fruits No.5')

Joseph Bates

"My parents were members of long standing in the Congregational church, with all of their converted children thus far, and anxiously hoped that we would also unite with them. But they embraced some points in their faith that I could not understand. I will name two only: their mode of baptism, **and doctrine of the trinity**." (Joseph Bates *The Autobiography of Joseph Bates* page 204, chapter 17, 1868)

R. F. Cottrell

"This [the trinity doctrine] has been a popular doctrine and regarded as orthodox ever since the bishop of Rome was elevated to the popedom on the strength of it. **It is**

accounted dangerous heresy to reject it; but each person is permitted to explain the doctrine in his own way. All seem to think they must hold it, but each has perfect liberty to take his own way **to reconcile its contradictory propositions; and hence a multitude of views are held concerning it by its friends**, all of them orthodox, I suppose, as long as they **nominally assent to the doctrine.**

For myself, I have never felt called upon to explain it, nor to adopt and defend it, neither have I ever preached against it. **But I probably put as high an estimation on the Lord Jesus Christ as those who call themselves Trinitarians.** This is the first time I have ever taken the pen to say anything concerning this doctrine." (R. F. Cottrell, *Review and Herald* 1st June 1869 'The Doctrine of the Trinity')

James White

"The inexplicable Trinity that makes the Godhead three in one and one in three, is bad enough; but that ultra Unitarianism **that makes Christ inferior to the Father is worse. Did God say to an inferior, "Let us make man in our image?"** (James White, *Review and Herald* November 29th article 'Christ Equal with God' 1877)

D. M. Canright

"And then the Bible **never uses the phrases, "trinity," "triune God," "three in one," "the holy three," "God the Holy Ghost,"** etc. But it does emphatically say there is only one God, the Father. **And every argument of the Trinitarian** to prove three Gods in one person, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, all of them of one substance, and every way equal to each other, and all three forming but one, **contradicts itself, contradicts reason, and contradicts the Bible.**" (D. M. Canright, *Review and Herald*, August 29th 1878, 'The personality of God')

A. J. Dennis

"What a contradiction of terms is found in the language of a trinitarian creed: "In unity of this Godhead **are three persons, of one substance,** power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." There are many things that are mysterious, written in the word of God, but we may safely presume **the Lord never calls upon us to believe impossibilities. But creeds often do.**" (A. J. Dennis, 'Signs of the Times' May 22nd 1879, page 162 article 'One God')

J. H. Kellogg

"Our reviewer seems to be somewhat displeased at our reference to the doctrine of the trinity, a doctrine which is confessedly in the highest degree **unphilosophical, unreasonable, and unreconcilable with common sense,** which leads us to conclude that we were not incorrect in supposing him to be a believer in the doctrine." (J. H. Kellogg, *Review and Herald*, August 19th 1880, 'The soul - no 2. Reply to Dr. Kellogg's rejoinder')

Concerning the trinity doctrine, these were the type of sentiments generally expressed in our publications but as we shall now see, the rejection of this teaching did not lead to Seventh-day Adventists rejecting the divinity of Christ. This they upheld with zeal and tenacity.

Early beliefs concerning Christ

In 1967, Russell Holt wrote a term paper for Dr. Mervyn Maxwell. In this paper he referred to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (concerning Christ) up to the time period of the death of James White – meaning up to 1881. He said

“A survey of other Adventist writers during these years reveals, **that to a man, they rejected the trinity, yet, with equal unanimity they upheld the divinity of Christ.**” (Russell Holt, “The doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination: Its rejection and acceptance”, A term paper for Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, 1969)

Holt then wrote of the pioneers’ beliefs

“**To reject the trinity is not necessarily to strip the Saviour of His divinity.** Indeed, certain Adventist writers felt that it was **the trinitarians who filled the role of degrading Christ’s divine nature.**” (*Ibid*)

Holt captured the picture perfectly.

Throughout the entire time of Ellen White’s ministry – also for decades beyond - the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a non-trinitarian denomination. This did not stop them believing though, as it is described in the Scriptures, in the full and complete divinity of Christ. In other words, although they did not believe and teach the trinity doctrine, these past Seventh-day Adventists did believe that Christ is God. It was not believed that He was some sort of ‘secondary god’ (or a god).

In our past literature, this same truth (that Christ was fully divine) was pointed out over and over again. One person to convey this thought was J. H. Waggoner - the father of E. J. Waggoner of 1888 Minneapolis General Conference fame.

Concerning Christ and the atonement – also when defending and expounding the faith of Seventh-day Adventists - he wrote (this was a work that was expanded upon over the years and had a number of issues)

“Many theologians really think that the Atonement, in respect to its dignity and efficacy, rests upon the doctrine of a trinity. **But we fail to see any connection between the two.** To the contrary, the advocates of that doctrine really fall into the difficulty which they seem anxious to avoid.” (J. H. Waggoner, ‘The Atonement in Light of Nature and Revelation’, 1884 Edition, chapter ‘Doctrine of a Trinity Subversive of the Atonement’)

He explained

“Their difficulty consists in this: **They take the denial of a trinity to be equivalent to a denial of the divinity of Christ.** Were that the case, we should cling to the doctrine of a trinity as tenaciously as any can; **but it is not the case.**” (*Ibid*)

Again this is perfectly correct. Amongst Christians it is commonly thought that if a person is a non-trinitarian then he or she does not believe in the divinity of Christ. As Waggoner says here though, this “is not the case”.

He then said

“They who have read our remarks on the death of the Son of God know that **we firmly believe in the divinity of Christ;** but we cannot accept the idea of a trinity, as it is held by Trinitarians, without giving up our claim on **the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption.**” (*Ibid*)

Although we will not speak at length here regarding the reason why Waggoner spoke of the trinity doctrine as being subversive of the atonement, it should be enough to say that trinitarians do not believe that a divine person died at Calvary. They believe instead that only human nature died – thus giving humanity, as atonement with God, only a human sacrifice. This is why Waggoner said, in effect, that to accept the trinity doctrine would be the same as

“giving up our claim on the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption”.

This is one of the reasons why today we know the trinity doctrine is error. It denies that the atonement has been made by a divine person. This is because it says that a divine person did not die at Calvary. We shall cover this aspect of this Godhead debate in [chapter 25](#).

In his original article (1863), J. H. Waggoner had written

“The divinity and pre-existence of our Saviour are most clearly proved by those scriptures **which refer to him as “the Word.”** (J. H. Waggoner, *Review and Herald*, October 27th 1863 ‘The atonement’)

After quoting John 1:1-3 he then said

“This expresses plainly **a pre-existent divinity.**” (*Ibid*)

Begotten of the Father

In 1867, after quoting John 1:1, John 1:18 and John 3:16, D. M. Canright wrote

“According to this, **Jesus Christ is begotten of God in a sense that no other being is; else he could not be his only begotten Son.** Angels are called sons of God, and so are righteous men; but **Christ is his Son in a higher sense, in a closer relation, than either of these.**” (D. M. Canright, *Review and Herald*, June 18th 1867, ‘The Son of God’)

At that time (1867), this was the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was said that because Christ is begotten of God, He is truly God’s Son.

Canright then added

“God made men and angels out of materials already created. He is the author of their existence, their Creator, hence their Father. **But Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father’s own substance.** He was not created out of material as the angels and other creatures were. **He is truly and emphatically the “Son of God,” the same as I am the son of my father.**” (*Ibid*)

Canright denies that Christ is a created being (made like men and angels etc). He says that Christ “**was begotten of the Father’s own substance**” therefore He is truly God’s son. There is no comparison between these two beliefs (created and begotten). They are as different as can possibly be. The first (created) says He is not God whilst the second (begotten) says that He is God.

In the *Review and Herald* of June 1867, there is recorded a conversation that took place - on a train journey - between two Seventh-day Adventists (a man and a lady) and two Congregationalists. Upon realising that the lady was a seventh-day Sabbath keeper, the older of the Congregationalists attempted to persuade her that Sunday was the correct day of rest. The result was that by her reasoning, this Congregationalist was totally silenced.

The younger Congregationalist then asked the Seventh-day Adventist lady if she believed in the divinity of Christ (this he did to try and say that Christ had the right to change the Sabbath to Sunday). At this point, the other Seventh-day Adventist, a man named Johnston, decided to join in the conversation. He explains

“I now thought it was my turn to join in; so I replied, **Why, yes sir. We believe that Christ is all divine; that in him dwelt “the fullness of the God-head bodily;”** that

he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, **the express image of his person**, up holding all things by the word of his power," &c., &c." (*Review and Herald, June 25th 1867 Bro. Johnston, letter to Uriah Smith,*)

Note again this was in 1867. There is no doubting that even though they did not hold to the trinity doctrine, these very early Seventh-day Adventists believed in the full and complete divinity of Christ. This was because they believed that Christ was begotten of God therefore believing He was truly the Son of God and truly divine. As was said above, Christ was not regarded as some sort of 'secondary deity' – albeit as we shall see, their non-trinitarian faith was very often misunderstood.

The next year (July 1868), an answer was given to someone who was simply referred to as "A. S." It appears that he wanted confirmation that Seventh-day Adventists believed in the divinity of Christ. The reply to him said

"To A. S. You are correct in saying **we do not deny the divinity of Christ**. If those who assert such a thing **are acquainted with our faith they know better**; if they do not know they are guilty of speaking evil of the things they know not." (*Review and Herald, July 14th 1868*)

In other words, if a person was acquainted with the faith of Seventh-day Adventists, they would know very well that as a denomination we did believe in the divinity of Christ – even though we did not accept the trinity doctrine.

James White and the divinity of Christ

In 1871, James White wrote in the Review and Herald of a conversation he held, on a train journey, with a Christian missionary. This missionary had spent almost twenty-four years in China. James White spoke very highly of the sacrifices that this man must have made. He reported though

"This missionary seemed very liberal in his feelings toward all Christians. **But after catechizing us upon the trinity, and finding that we were not sound upon the subject of his triune God**, he became earnest in denouncing unitarianism, which takes from Christ his divinity, and leaves him but a man." (*James White, Review and Herald, June 6th 1871, 'Western Tour'*)

The missionary was obviously a trinitarian. He also knew that Seventh-day Adventists were not trinitarian. For this reason, on this very subject, he sought to 'catechize' James White (catechize means to teach Christian dogma).

James White then added

"Here, as far as our views were concerned, **he was combating a man of straw.**" (*Ibid*)

So why was this said by James White? He explains

"**We do not deny the divinity of Christ**. We delight in giving full credit to all those strong expressions of Scripture which exalt the Son of God. **We believe him to be the divine person addressed by Jehovah in the words, "Let us make man."** (*Ibid*)

Here we come back to the same point. This is that although as a denomination we were not trinitarian, we did not deny the divinity of Christ. We just expressed Christ's divinity as it is described within the Scriptures – which would of course, be without using the trinity doctrine

to do it. As we established in [chapter 2](#), the trinity doctrine is not stated in Scripture. It is just a man-made assumption.

The husband of Ellen White went on to say

“Give the Master ***all that divinity with which the Holy Scriptures clothe him.***” (*Ibid*)

Again this is stated very clearly. James White never accepted the trinity doctrine, yet he always believed in the full and complete divinity of Christ. There is no record of him changing from this belief. James White is appealing to believe only what the Scriptures tell us.

He also said

“Our adorable Redeemer ***thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*** and let all the people say, Amen!” (*Ibid*)

James White upholds the spirit of prophecy

The following week, also in the Review and Herald, James White spoke of the trinity doctrine. This time it was with respect to his wife’s writings.

This article (a series of articles called ‘Mutual obligation’), was an appeal for Seventh-day Adventists, particularly the ministry, to appreciate the fact that God had given to us a wonderful calling. Obviously though, with that calling, there comes responsibility. Hence there is a mutual obligation. In his article James white wrote

“God has wonderfully blessed us, and has laid us under the most solemn obligations that we hardly realize. And prominent among especial blessings enjoyed by Seventh-day Adventists, ***is the manifestation of the spirit of prophecy.***” (*James White, Review and Herald, June 13th 1871, ‘Mutual obligation’*)

He then wrote at great length about what had been achieved in Seventh-day Adventism – also of the unity that existed between ourselves - even though we had come from so many different backgrounds and denominations. He put the cause of this as the manifestation of the gift of prophecy amongst us. He wrote in conclusion

“***Without this gift, we are more exposed to scisms than other bodies.*** With this gift, received and heeded, we are enjoying unity of faith and that efficient action which unity gives, ***such as is not enjoyed by any other body.*** We have nothing in ourselves to boast of. By the grace of God we are what we are.” (*Ibid*)

He then went on to speak of those who oppose this gift – or at least the belief that God had given this gift to his wife. He said that when people can show from her writings that she was leading people away from God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, also from their duties as Christians, such as the keeping of the Ten Commandments etc, then they would have “a reasonable excuse for their persistent opposition” that God was speaking to His people through her. He followed this by saying

“When the opposition can find in all her writings one unchaste word, ***one sentence that lowers the character of God, of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit,*** or the standard of Christian holiness, or that leads from the sacred Scriptures as a rule of faith and duty, then it will be time to warn the people against them. Until they can meet the subject fairly, their sneers are hardly worth noticing, as it is both difficult and unpleasant to review and answer a sneer.” (*Ibid*)

Did you notice here that James White did not say “of the character of the Holy Spirit”? Read it again and you will see what I mean.

Now note something very interesting – particularly as far as our study is concerned. He wrote next.

“We invite all to compare the testimonies of the Holy Spirit through Mrs. W., **with the word of God**. And in this we do not invite you to compare them with your creed. That is quite another thing. **The trinitarian may compare them with his creed, and because they do not agree with it, condemn them**. The observer of Sunday, or the man who holds eternal torment an important truth, and the minister that sprinkles infants, may each condemn the testimonies' of Mrs. W. because they do not agree with their peculiar views. And a hundred more, each holding different views, may come to the same conclusion. But their genuineness can never be tested in this way.” (*Ibid*)

By James White, this is the admittance that Ellen White’s writings – which he considered were written by the leading of God’s Holy Spirit - were contrary to the ideas of trinitarianism. This is just as they would be contrary to the idea of Sunday-keeping, the immortality of the soul and infant baptism etc.

Ellen White had a tremendous respect for her husband – also for the work he did in helping to establish the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In one testimony, after explaining how burdened he was with the work, she said

“God has given us both a testimony which will reach hearts. He has opened before me many channels of light, not only for my benefit, but for the benefit of his people at large. **The Lord has also given my husband great light upon Bible subjects, not for himself alone, but for others. I saw that these things should be written and talked out, and new light would continue to shine upon the word.**” (*Ellen G. White, Pamphlet PH159, 1872, Testimony to the church*)

A strange statement

In the book 'The Trinity' (published by our denomination to 'so say' answer the questions that have arisen in this trinity debate), there is concerning James White (the husband of Ellen White) what I would call a very strange statement.

It is maintained throughout the book that those who hold to the belief that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father are depicting Him as some sort of a semigod. As Woodrow Whidden put it (we noted these in [chapter 12](#))

“Is it not quite apparent that the problem texts become problems only when one assumes **an exclusively literalistic interpretation of such expressions as “Father,” “Son,” “Firstborn,” “Only Begotten,” “Begotten,” and so forth?**” (*Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, ‘Biblical objections to the trinity’ page 106, 2002*)

He had said earlier

“Far from suggesting that the Father generated or begat the Son **as some sort of derived or created semigod**, the imagery of Father and Son points to the **eternal and profound intimacy** that has always existed between the first and second persons of the Godhead as divine “equals” through all eternity (past, present, and future)” (*Ibid, page 97*)

It can be seen from this that Whidden is saying that those who believe that Christ is truly the Son of God, meaning that in eternity He was begotten of the Father, believe that He is “some sort of derived or created semigod”.

Now note something that was said by James White. This was in the year of his death (1881). He wrote in the ‘Review and Herald’

“In his exaltation, before he humbled himself to the work of redeeming lost sinners, **Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God**, because, in the work of creation and the institution of law to govern created intelligences, **he was equal with the Father.**” (James White, Review and Herald, 4th January 1881, ‘The Mind of Christ’)

He then said

“**The Father was greater than the Son in that he was first.** The Son was equal with the Father in that **he had received all things from the Father.**” (Ibid)

This is definitely a non-trinitarian statement – meaning a statement believed by a non-trinitarian. This is because it is said that the Father “was first”. This is the belief that Christ came after the Father because He was begotten of the Father (brought forth of the Father), hence He, the Son, “received all things from the Father”. This is the begotten concept.

This means that Whidden would say that James White believed that Christ was “some sort of derived or created semigod” (see Whidden above – ‘The Trinity’ page 97).

Now let me share with you this ‘strange statement’. From the same book ‘The Trinity’, it says on page 14 in the ‘Endnotes’ of the Introduction

“Among the notable Arians or semi-Arians **were James White** (1821-1881), Joseph Bates (1792-1872), J. H. Waggoner (1820-1889), Uriah Smith (1832-1903), and E. J. Waggoner (1855-1916).” (The Trinity, page 14, ‘Endnotes’, 2002)

The next words are the ‘strange’ statement. It follows on by saying

“**James White ultimately confessed the full deity and eternity of Christ**, and Uriah Smith evolved from an Arian to a semi-Arian position.” (Ibid)

Why I say this is a strange statement is that even up to the year of his death (1881), James White was saying that the Father “was first” (meaning the Son was second) and that everything that Christ was and possessed He received from the Father (see above). This is the begotten faith. It is that Christ is truly (really) the Son of God and that the Father is truly (really) the Father of Christ. Yet Whidden says that all who believe such a thing believe that that Christ is “some sort of derived or created semigod” (see above). So why in this very same book does it say that “James White ultimately confessed the full deity and eternity of Christ”?

This is a very good question. Could it be that it would seem very strange to say that the husband of the chosen messenger of God believed and taught that Christ was “some sort of derived or created semigod” therefore it was thought to be prudent to paint a ‘good picture’ of him? Obviously it would not look very good to have the husband of Ellen White saying that Christ was “some sort of derived or created semigod” (see Whidden above).

Interesting also is that it did say in the same paragraph

“E. J. Waggoner, a semi-Arian, **came very close to confessing the full deity of Christ**”. (*Ibid*)

We shall see later that the views of Ellet Waggoner were exactly the same as James White so why say James White “ultimately confessed the full deity and eternity of Christ” and in the same paragraph say that E. J. Waggoner “came very close to confessing the full deity of Christ”? I believe the answer has already been given. To say that the husband of Ellen White did not believe in the full divinity of Christ (meaning that Christ was some sort of semigod) could have been very embarrassing.

If James White confessed the full deity of Christ then so did E. J. Waggoner. It can't be both ways (one believing in the full divinity of Christ but not the other). Later we shall see in detail what Waggoner believed.

More on James White and the divinity of Christ

When commenting on the difference in beliefs between Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh-day Baptists (this was in 1876), James White wrote

“The principal difference between the two bodies is the immortality question. **The S.D. Adventists hold the divinity of Christ so nearly with the trinitarians that we apprehend no trial here.**” (*James White, Review and Herald, Oct 12th 1876, 'The two bodies - The Relation Which the S.D. Baptists and S.D. Adventists Sustain to Each Other'*)

Concerning Christ, James White regarded the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists as being on a par with the beliefs of Seventh-day Baptists. This was even though the Baptists were trinitarian.

He also said the next year (1877)

“Paul affirms of the Son of God that **he was in the form of God, and that he was equal with God.** “Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Phil. 2:6. **The reason why it is not robbery for the Son to be equal with the Father is the fact that he is equal.**” (*James White, Review and Herald 29th November 1877, 'Christ Equal with God'*)

He also made it clear that

“**If the Son is not equal with the Father,** then it is robbery for him to rank himself with the Father.” (*Ibid*)

It is quite obvious that James White believed in the full and complete divinity of Christ – even though like his fellow Seventh-day Adventists he rejected the trinity doctrine. Unfortunately, as normally happens, this rejection led to many misunderstandings. We shall see this now.

Misunderstandings

In 1878, a reader of the Review and Herald asked if Seventh-day Adventists were Unitarians or trinitarians. The answer was given

“Neither. **We do not believe in the three-one God of the Trinitarians** nor in the low views of Jesus Christ held by unitarians.” (*Review and Herald, June 27th 1878 'To correspondents'*)

The reply then said

“We believe that Christ was a divine being, not merely in his mission, but in his person also; that his sufferings were penal and his death vicarious.” (Ibid)

Again this is very clearly stated. We were not trinitarian but we did believe that Christ was divine.

Under the heading “Christ not a created being”, a reader of the Review and Herald asked

“Will you please favor me with those scriptures which plainly say that Christ is a created being? (Question No. 96, Review and Herald, April 17th 1883, The commentary, Scripture questions, ‘Answers by W. H. Littlejohn’)

With regards to what was taught (concerning Christ) by early Seventh-day Adventists, this person was obviously under a serious misapprehension. Again this was probably because we were not trinitarian.

It is commonly stated by trinitarians that those who refuse to accept their ‘three-in-one’ theology must believe that Christ is a created being. This is probably why Seventh-day Adventists were often said not to believe in Christ’s divinity. This is a misunderstanding based upon faulty reasoning and a serious lack of knowledge. This same misunderstanding still exists today. To say that Christ is begotten of the Father is not to say He was created. Christ was begotten **of** the Father (brought forth of the Father’s own substance as Canright put it – see above), not created by Him. To say He is begotten is to say also that He is God.

W. H. Littlejohn who answered this question said

“You are mistaken in supposing that S. D. Adventists teach that Christ was ever created. They believe, on the contrary, that he was “begotten” of the Father, and that he can properly be called God and worshiped as such.” (Ibid)

Littlejohn then went on to explain that Seventh-day Adventists did not accept the trinity teaching but believed that Christ was truly the Son of God. As a denomination, Seventh-day Adventists have always taught that Christ is God. Our past publications testify to this fact.

In a book published three years after its author’s (a Seventh-day Adventist minister) untimely death in a railroad accident it said

“The Word then is Christ. The text speaks of His origin. He is the only begotten of the Father. Just how he came into existence the Bible does not inform us any more definitely; but by this expression and several of a similar kind in the Scriptures we may believe that Christ came into existence in a manner different from that in which other beings first appeared; That He sprang from the Father’s being in a way not necessary for us to understand.” (C. W. Stone, The Captain of our Salvation, page 17, 1886)

This was the general teaching in Seventh-day Adventism.

More misunderstandings

In 1889, the Methodist Church published a book opposing our Sabbath (Saturday) belief. The Methodists obviously upheld Sunday as God’s appointed day of rest. The author of the book was a man by the name of the Rev M. C. Briggs.

It was E. J. Waggoner, then co-editor of the ‘Signs of the Times’ with A. T. Jones, who took the responsibility of defending our seventh-day Sabbath faith. Before doing so though he

defended, in 6 consecutive articles in ‘the Signs of the Times’, what were then, regarding the divinity of Christ, the views of Seventh-day Adventists.

So why did Waggoner deem it necessary to do this – seeing that the book was aimed at denying the seventh-day Sabbath?

It was because in the preface to the book, the Rev. Briggs had said that along with our other ‘wrong teachings’, we, as a denomination, denied that Christ was divine. So why did Briggs make this allegation? More than likely it was because we were not trinitarian!

In defending what was then our denominational belief, Waggoner wrote (note that this was one year after the now famous 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session)

“But when the doctor [Briggs] states that Seventh-day Adventists deny the divinity of Christ, **we know that he writes recklessly.**” (E. J. Waggoner. *Signs of the Times*, March 25th 1889, article ‘The Divinity of Christ’)

He also said

“We are fully persuaded in our own mind that he [Briggs] knows better; but be that as it may, **the statement has been made so often by men who professed to know whereof they were speaking, that many have come to believe it;** and for their sakes, as well as for the benefit of those who may not have given the subject any thought, **we purpose to set forth the truth.**” (*Ibid*)

It is more than likely that the members of the other denominations – which in the main were trinitarian - were passing it around to one another that because we were not trinitarian we did not believe in the divinity of Christ. This can be described as ‘usual practice’. Even today the trinitarians amongst us are saying the same of the present-day non-trinitarians. Nothing changes when it comes to gossiping. The truth is still being distorted. One action (gossiping) normally goes hand in hand with the other (wrong information). We can see from the above that this misrepresentation of our beliefs, particularly concerning Christ, had become common practice.

Waggoner went on to say

“We have no theory to bolster up, and so, instead of stating prepositions, **we shall simply quote the word of God, and accept what it says.**” (*Ibid*)

It would be reasonable to believe that this “theory” Waggoner spoke of here, although he did not explain it, was the convoluted reasoning of the trinitarians. Waggoner was stating that concerning the divinity of Christ, we, as a denomination, simply accepted what the Bible says.

He further explained

“We believe in the divinity of Christ, **because the Bible says that Christ is God.**” (*Ibid*)

Could this have been put more plainly? Note Waggoner’s use of “We”. He was obviously meaning Seventh-day Adventists as a denomination.

Prior to making this statement, Waggoner had quoted John 1:1. This is the verse of Scripture which says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Waggoner then quoted verse 14 (which says “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” etc) and made this comment

“Indeed, we have never heard of anyone who doubted that the evangelist has reference to Christ in this passage. **From it we learn that Christ is God.**” (*Ibid*)

It is not possible to say this more clearly - or more simply - than is said here. As has already been stated, there is no need for complex, long-winded convoluted reasoning. All that needs to be done is to accept what the Scriptures say. There is no need of a trinity doctrine to correctly depict the divinity of Christ.

In his series of articles, Waggoner said so much more about Seventh-day Adventists believing that Christ was God Himself in the person of the Son but space here prohibits quoting any more. It is evident though that even though they rejected the trinity doctrine, the past non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists believed – as Waggoner said - that “**Christ is God**”.

E. J. Waggoner – ‘Christ and His Righteousness’

The year following his rebuttal of the unfounded allegations of the Methodists, E. J. Waggoner wrote a book called ‘Christ and His Righteousness’. It was published in 1890 and is said to depict his message at the now famous 1888 General Conference session held at Minneapolis. It is quite possible that when Waggoner wrote this book, he had in mind both of these past experiences – meaning the Minneapolis conference (1888) and the Methodist accusations 1889).

In fact in an email in 2002, the recently deceased (July 2011) Robert Wieland said to me

“E J Waggoner's CHRIST AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS (CHR) **is a re-print of his articles published in the Signs of the Times beginning in January of 1889.** Dr Froom maintained that Mrs W told him **it was based on her stenographic notes taken during the actual Minneapolis Conference. It is indeed the closest work we have that brings us to his 1888 presentation.** One could easily see that Froom's statement is correct, because Waggoner would hardly have time to unpack his luggage from Minneapolis to get this printed in the Signs so soon, if it were not based on such notes.” (*Robert J. Wieland, email to Terry Hill 2nd June 2002*)

With regard to Christ, the beliefs written in Waggoner's book was then, in 1890, the common (standard) beliefs held within Seventh-day Adventism. This means that it depicted what was then the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This is why no one objected to Waggoner's reasoning - either at Minneapolis or when his book was published. Ellen White never objected to Waggoner's reasoning. In fact as we shall see later, she endorsed it.

Here are a number of statements made in the book by Waggoner

“The Word was “in the beginning”. **The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase.**” (*E. J. Waggoner, ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, page 9, 1890*)

“It is not given to men to know **when or how the Son was begotten**; but we know that **He was the Divine Word**, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created.” (*Ibid*)

“There was a time when Christ **proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father** (John 8:42 and 1:18) but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning. But the point is that **Christ is a begotten Son and not a created subject.**” (*Ibid pages 21-22*)

Over and over again Waggoner said that Christ was begotten in eternity therefore He was truly the Son of God.

With regards to the identity of the Son of God, Waggoner wrote such as

“This name [God] was not given to Christ in consequence of some great achievement but it is His **by right of inheritance.**” (*Ibid page 11*)

Waggoner here is referring to the begotten concept – meaning that in eternity, Christ came forth of the Father therefore He is properly called God. He explained

“A son always rightfully takes the name of the father; **and Christ, as “the only begotten Son of God,” has rightfully the same name.** A son, also, is, to a greater or less degree, a reproduction of the 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.**” (*Ibid*)

“It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the “only begotten Son of God,” and therefore **the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be.**” (*Ibid page 12*)

“Christ “is in the bosom of the Father;” **being by nature the very substance of God and having life in Himself, He is properly called Jehovah, the self existing one ...**” (*Ibid page 23-24*)

Here it is said that because Christ is the only one who has been brought forth (begotten) of the Father He is unique. We spoke of Christ’s ‘uniqueness’ in [chapter 11](#). This was when we studied the Greek word ‘monogenes’ – which in the KJV is translated ‘begotten’. It is because Christ is begotten of God that He is God Himself in the person of the Son – not a person (a god) of lesser deity.

Waggoner then added

“The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15), **but Christ is the Son of God by birth.**” (*Ibid*)

This statement is very important. We shall return to it later. It is a comparison as to why, within the Scriptures, God’s people, angels and Christ, are all given the title ‘Son of God’. Note here that instead of the word ‘begotten’, which is the way throughout his book Waggoner had described the origins of Christ, here he uses the word “birth”. In his book, many are the statements saying that Christ was begotten of God.

From the above we can see that Waggoner also said that Christ is “properly called Jehovah”. He also said that as the Son of God, He “rightfully takes the name” of God – not because of what He has done but because it was His “by right of inheritance.”

In 1899 Ellen White wrote

“Jehovah is the name **given** to Christ. “Behold, God is my salvation,” writes the prophet Isaiah; “I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times 3rd May 1899, ‘The Word made flesh’*)

The next year she wrote (with the thought of inheritance in mind)

***"By right of inheritance the universe belonged to Christ,* but for this world he battled and fought; and by a terrible struggle he obtained the territory. When he yielded up his life on Calvary, he drew back into favor with God this world, which was lost. It is here that the saints of the Most High will reign." (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 11th January 1900, *Tempted in all points like we are Part IV*)**

This begotten sentiment expressed by Waggoner, also the inheritance aspect of it, was then the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This is why at the General Conference session held at Minneapolis (1888) it was not questioned or challenged - not by Ellen White or anyone else. It was also this faith (belief) that in company with Ellet Waggoner and Alonzo Jones, Ellen White went across America preaching for three years following the 1888 General Conference session – which would probably have gone on for much longer if the church had not split them up. This was when they sent Ellen White to Australia (which EGW later said was not in keeping with God's will) and invited Ellet Waggoner to England. Thus 10,000 miles separated Waggoner and Ellen White. This is possibly the way the church wanted it.

In 1903, Waggoner answered a person who had sent in a number of questions regarding what was believed by Seventh-day Adventists. Under the heading "What do you believe?", he wrote

"A CORRESPONDENT has sent us, with a few introductory words, a series of fourteen questions, prefacing each with the inquiry, "Do you believe?" Before answering them in detail, we wish to say that what we or anybody else may or may not believe is a matter of no consequence to anybody except the individual believer himself; for nobody's belief of a thing makes it more worthy of credence, and unbelief by anybody in the world does not make the thing disbelieved less worthy of belief. In short, it is a waste of time either to inquire or to tell what this one or that one believes; for our faith must not be based upon some other person's faith, nor be in any way affected by it; but solely on the Word of God. So in answering these questions we shall make no reference to what we believe, but tell simply what we know from God's Word. Of course it will be understood that we do not write anything that we do not firmly believe; but the fact that it is so, and not that we believe it, is the reason for setting it forth. We shall answer the questions in order as they come: —

1. Do you believe that Christ was a God, and the Son of God, or that He was only a good man?"

What does the Bible say of Him? and what did He say of Himself? ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*** "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." John i. 1, 14. ***He was in the form of God, and equality with God was His by right.*** Phil. ii. 5, 6. He is ***"the Christ, the Son of the living God."*** Matt. xvi. 16,17. ***He frequently declared that God was His Father,*** saying on one occasion, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" John xiv. 9. ***The Jews charged Him with making Himself God, and He did not deny it, but defended the claim.*** John x 30-38. Finally read what God the Father Himself has called Him: Of the angels He saith, "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." ***But unto the Son He saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom."*** And, "Thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands; they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fall." Heb. i. 7-12. These words God the Father addresses to Jesus

Christ.”(E. J. Waggoner, *Present Truth – British edition*, 23rd July 1903, ‘The editor’s private corner’)

He then added

“I believe all that; if anybody does not, I shall have to leave him to settle it with the Lord.” (Ibid)

Needless to say, along with Seventh-day Adventists in general, Waggoner stayed with what the Bible has to say concerning Christ – no more, no less. This is how it was then with Seventh-day Adventists.

In [chapter 14](#) we shall see that concerning Christ, Ellen White endorsed the Sonship beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. She said we were teaching the truth concerning Christ's pre-existence. We shall also see that she experienced the misunderstanding of others to the non-trinitarian faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It is in fact a very interesting chapter.

[Proceed to chapter 14](#) - 'Ellen White endorses the Sonship beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists'

Chapter fourteen

Ellen White endorses the Sonship beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists

We noted in the previous chapter ([chapter 13](#)) that the belief of early Seventh-day Adventists was that in eternity, Christ was begotten (brought forth) of the Father. This was not the belief of the few but the denominational belief - meaning it was the predominant belief within Seventh-day Adventism. This means that the accepted denominational view was that Christ is God in the person of the Son. We noted also that because of their belief that the trinity doctrine is not Scriptural, early Seventh-day Adventists rejected it. It is not necessary to believe in the trinity doctrine to believe that Christ is God. All that needs to be done is to believe what the Bible says – which does not say anything about God being a trinity of persons.

The combination of these beliefs (the belief that in eternity Christ is begotten of God, plus the rejection of the trinity doctrine), often led to other Christians, mainly the trinitarians, accusing us of not believing that Christ was divine. As we have seen from [chapter 13](#), this appears to have been an ongoing problem.

In this chapter we shall see that Ellen White herself experienced these misunderstandings. We will also see she said that what Seventh-day Adventists were then teaching about Christ (the begotten concept), is the truth concerning His pre-existence.

Ellen White experiences the misunderstandings of others to the non-trinitarian faith of Seventh-day Adventists

Here is where this study of what we once believed (before we adopted the concepts of the trinity doctrine) becomes very interesting – also very important.

In 1893 Ellen White wrote

*“In this country [New Zealand], the denominational ministers **tell the most unblushing falsehoods to their congregations in reference to our work and our people.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 5th December 1893, ‘An appeal for the Australasian field’)*

She followed this by saying

*“Whatever false report has been started, **is circulated by those who oppose the truth, and is repeated from church to church and from community to community.** The circulators of these falsehoods take no pains to find out whether or not they are true, **for many of those who repeat the reports, though not the framers of them, still love the false reports, and take delight in giving them a wide circulation.**” (Ibid)*

This is very often the scenario today. From person to person, gossip and lies tend to ‘travel’ much faster than the truth. Notice here the false reports were going from church to church (denomination to denomination). Those of the other denominations appear to have taken pleasure in sending around this misinformation to each other (another human trait).

She then added

“They do not, like honest, just men, come to those who are accused, and *seek to find out what is the truth concerning what they have heard in regard to their faith*; but without inquiry they spread false statements in order to prejudice the people *against those who hold the truth.*” (Ibid)

Unfortunately it is human nature (usual practice) to talk about the beliefs of a person without going directly to that person to find out the truth of what he or she really believes. Thus error after error is repeated and circulated. The correct thing to do is to go to the person directly and ask about their beliefs - not spread misinformation which is often only tantamount to lies.

Note well the latter words. The very strong inference is that Seventh-day Adventists were then teaching **“the truth”**. We shall now see it is more than just an inference.

Ellen White then gave an example of what she had written by explaining

“For instance, an effort was made to obtain the use of the hall at a village four miles from Hastings, where some of our workers proposed to present the gospel to the people; but they did not succeed in obtaining the hall, because a schoolteacher there opposed the truth, *and declared to the people that Seventh-day Adventists did not believe in the divinity of Christ.*” (Ibid)

Here, in this particular instance, is the reason why Seventh-day Adventists were not allowed to hire the hall. It was said again that as a denomination, we **“did not believe in the divinity of Christ”**. Note very importantly that the schoolteacher mentioned here was said by Ellen White to have **“opposed the truth”**. Very likely, you the reader can sense what she says next.

She went on to say

“This man may not have known what our faith is on this point, but he was not left in ignorance. *He was informed that there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists.*” (Ibid)

Allow yourself to mediate here upon what God's elected messenger is saying. Read it again if necessary. Her words are unmistakably clear.

Ellen White is very clearly stating that concerning Christ's pre-existence, the belief of Seventh-day Adventists (meaning that in eternity He was begotten of the Father) is **“the truth”**. These were her words not mine.

It is quite obvious that concerning Christ, Ellen White knew exactly what Seventh-day Adventists were teaching. It would be ridiculous to reason otherwise - yet never once did she say that this was error. In our quest for the truth, this fact should be regarded as of major significance. It was this begotten faith concerning Christ that Ellen White was here endorsing as **“the truth of Christ's pre-existence”**.

Today though, in opposition to what was said here by Ellen White, our present church leadership is saying that this ‘begotten belief’ is not the truth – meaning it is false doctrine (heresy). This is why, so they say, that as a denomination we now oppose it.

In the 'Adventist Review' its then editor William Johnsson wrote

“Adventists beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of present truth. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.”

(William Johnsson, Adventist Review, January 6th 1994, Article 'Present Truth - Walking in God's Light')

He went on to say

“Many of the pioneers, including James White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner held to ***an Arian or semi-Arian view*** - that is, the Son at some point in time, before the creation of our world, ***was generated by the Father.***” (*Ibid*)

Johnsson was here referring to our past ‘begotten faith’ concerning Christ – which as has been said above was, during the entire time of Ellen White’s ministry, the preponderant faith of Seventh-day Adventists (as we have seen in [chapter 13](#)). The belief was that because Christ is begotten of God, He is God in the person of the Son.

Johnsson then said of this belief

“Only gradually did this false doctrine give way to the Biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen Whites writings in statements such as “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. (Desire of ages p 530)” (*Ibid*)

Our past begotten faith, as endorsed as the truth by Ellen White, is here termed “***false doctrine***”. This today is the official view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In effect they are rejecting what was said by Ellen White. This is when she said that “***that there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists***”.

These remarks by William Johnsson (saying that Seventh-day Adventists have changed their beliefs about Christ because of what was written by Ellen White – particularly what she wrote in ‘The Desire of Ages’) is very much of a misleading statement. After she wrote this book – right up to the time she died (meaning between 1898 and 1915) - there is no evidence of this happening. This ‘change’ did not come about until decades after she was dead. This was when she was not around to say that people were misusing her writings to make her say something she did not mean to say.

This statement that “***In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived***” we dealt with in [chapter 5](#) so we will not go into it again in any detail here. We showed there that this life is originally the Father’s life that comes to us through the Son. This life does not originate in the Son but in the Father. Christ is the mediator of the Father’s life.

Unfortunately, this sort of remark from William Johnsson is how it is today within Seventh-day Adventism. It is being promulgated amongst us, mainly by our leading brethren and theologians (and very often the ministry in general), that what was said by Ellen White to be the truth concerning the pre-existence of Christ, meaning that He is truly the Son of God and therefore God in the person of the Son, is error (false doctrine). The question is – what and who will you the reader believe?

Current ‘official’ opposition to the begotten concept

This ‘official’ opposition to the begotten concept is expressed in our Seventh-day Adventist Handbook of Theology (this was with reference to the Greek word ‘monogenes’ which is often translated ‘begotten’). It says

“In a similar vein, monogenes ***does not contain the idea of begetting but rather of uniqueness*** and, when applied to Christ, emphasizes His unique relationship with the Father. On the other hand, Hebrews 1:5 ***gives no idea of physical or spiritual***

generation.” (Fernando Canale, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia*, Volume 12, page 125, ‘The doctrine of God’)

It then concludes

“There is, therefore, **no ground within the biblical understanding of the Godhead for the idea of a generation of the Son from the Father.**” (*Ibid*)

This “generation of the Son from the Father” is an expression used for the begotten concept.

Here, in our 'Handbook of Theology', the Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially denying that Christ is truly the Son of God. This is in opposition to what God has revealed through the Scriptures and through the spirit of prophecy. As we have just seen, Ellen White said this faith – that Christ is begotten of the Father - is the truth. She also said that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. In this study, we have seen this over and over again.

Ellen White endorses the ‘Minneapolis message’ of Waggoner and Jones

As we noted in [chapter 13](#), the main emphasis of Ellet Waggoner's message at Minneapolis was that Christ was begotten of God therefore according to this reasoning He is God in the person of the Son. In his book 'Christ and His Righteous' - which is said to be representative of his message at this General Conference session - he said such as

“The Word was “in the beginning”. **The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase.**” (E. J. Waggoner, ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, page 9, 1890)

“It is not given to men to know **when or how the Son was begotten**; but we know that **He was the Divine Word**, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created.” (*Ibid* page 9.)

“It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the “only begotten Son of God,” and therefore **the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be.**” (*Ibid* page 12)

“There was a time when Christ **proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father** (John 8:42 and 1:18) but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning. But the point is that **Christ is a begotten Son and not a created subject.**” (*Ibid* pages 21-22)

“Christ“ is in the bosom of the Father;” **being by nature the very substance of God and having life in Himself, He is properly called Jehovah, the self existing one ...**” (*Ibid* page 23-24)

At that time, no one sought to refute this Sonship belief – not even Ellen White. This is because it was then, in 1888, the standard belief in Seventh-day Adventism. This we also noted in [chapter 13](#).

Ellen White had nothing seriously negative to say about Waggoner's message. In fact as we shall now see, she endorsed it as a message that God had sent to His people (to the world in fact).

Whilst residing in Australia (this was in 1895 – 2 years after her experiencing the misunderstanding mentioned above that we taught that Christ is not divine), Ellen White sent a testimony to Battle Creek saying

“The Lord in his great mercy sent a most precious message to his people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. **This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour**, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimony to Battle Creek 1st May 1895 written from Hobart, Tasmania, Australia to O. A. Olsen, MR 1100 Vol. 14, also Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers page 91*)

This is the very same message concerning Christ and His righteousness that we have seen in Waggoner’s book of the same name (see above and [chapter 13](#)). It was to uplift the crucified Christ.

She also said

“Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to **his divine person**, his merits, and his changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. **This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world**. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.” (Ibid)

Take note she said that Seventh-day Adventists “needed to have their eyes directed to his [Christ's] divine person”.

Ellen White consistently wrote that the message of Waggoner and Jones at Minneapolis was the truth. Note the following (take special note of the second sentence)

“The Lord wrought in our midst, but some did not receive the blessing. **They had been privileged to hear the most faithful preaching of the gospel**, and had listened to the message God had given His servants to give them, with their hearts padlocked. They did not turn unto the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul, but used all their powers **to pick some flaws in the messengers and in the message, and they grieved the Spirit of God**, while those who did receive the message were charmed with the presentation of the free gifts of Jesus Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Volume 16, No 1216, 1889*)

“**The Lord has raised up Brother Jones and Brother Waggoner to proclaim a message to the world to prepare a people to stand in the day of God**. The world is suffering the need of additional light to come to them upon the Scriptures,—additional proclamation of the principles of purity, lowliness, faith, and the righteousness of Christ. This is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Ellen G. White, *The 1888 Ellen White 1888 materials, chapter 215, 1987*)

“Some have made confession, yourself among the number. Others have made no confession, for they were too proud to do this, and they have not come to the light. They were moved at the meeting by another spirit, **and they knew not that God had sent these young men, Elders Jones and Waggoner, to bear a special message to them, which they treated with ridicule and contempt**, not realizing that the heavenly intelligences were looking upon them and registering their words in the books of heaven.

The words and actions of every one who took part in this work will stand registered against them until they make confession of their wrong. Those who do not repent of their sin will, if circumstances permit, repeat the same actions. I know that at that time (at the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session) **the Spirit of God was insulted**, and now when I see anything approaching to the same course of action, I

am exceedingly pained.” (Ellen G. White, Letter to Uriah Smith, 19th September 1892, written from North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia)

“The message given us by A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner **is the message of God to the Laodicean church, and woe be unto anyone who professes to believe the truth and yet does not reflect to others the God-given rays.**” (Ibid)

“In rejecting the message given at Minneapolis, men committed sin. They have committed far greater sin by retaining for years the same hatred against God’s messengers, by rejecting the truth that the Holy Spirit has been urging home. By making light of the message given, they are making light of the word of God. Every appeal rejected, every entreated unheeded, furthers the work of heart-hardening, and places them in the seat of the scornful.” (Ellen G. White, Article read in the Auditorium of the Battle Creek Tabernacle to a large assembly, at the General Conference of 1891, Manuscript 30 1890)

“The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; **it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence.**” (Ibid)

Some may say that Ellen White was only endorsing the part of Waggoner’s message where he said that we are saved by Christ’s righteousness alone (without our own works) but this would be nonsensical. The emphasis that Waggoner was making was that Christ’s righteousness is the only righteousness that God will accept as substitute for our sinfulness. Why? Simply because Christ is God. This is why at the very beginning of his book (‘Christ and His Righteousness’), Waggoner sought to establish Christ’s righteousness. This he did by explaining that Christ is God’s own Son (begotten of God) and that by right of inheritance, He (Christ) inherited everything that God is. In other words, Christ is God in the person of the Son – and is properly called Jehovah. It is also why Waggoner emphasised that Christ is not a created being (like angels and humans are) but was brought forth of the Father’s own substance. This was then the denominational faith (preponderant belief) of Seventh-day Adventists.

In agreement with Waggoner

Waggoner’s message at Minneapolis would have been just as we have seen it in his book ‘Christ and His Righteousness’. Here I would like to remind you of an extract from it. Remember, Waggoner repeatedly emphasised that Christ was begotten of the Father therefore He was truly the Son of God (see above). This was exactly the same view as held by Ellen White.

What you may not know is that on occasions Ellen White resorted to using the words of others to explain what God had shown her. Due to her lack of formal education, she sometimes found difficulty in finding the right words to express herself. Thus she would either quote what someone else had written - or modify what someone had written – to explain what God had shown her. I would now like to share with you an example of this being done by her.

In his book ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, Waggoner had expressed the faith of Seventh-day Adventists this way (we noted this in [chapter 13](#))

“It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the “only begotten Son of God,” and therefore **the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be.**” (E. J. Waggoner, ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, page 12, 1890)

Throughout his book, as we have previously noted, Waggoner had stated that Christ was begotten of the Father but for some reason, as we shall see in the following statement, he resorted in one place to using the word 'birth'. This is when he wrote

"The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15), **but Christ is the Son of God by birth.**" (*Ibid*)

Now compare this with a statement made **5 years later** by Ellen White. This was in 1895 – which was **just a few weeks after** sending the letter we have read a portion of (see above) to Battle Creek endorsing Waggoner's message at Minneapolis.

She wrote in the 'Signs of the Times'

"A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- **not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person**, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation'*)

It is quite obvious that Ellen White is expressing here exactly the same sentiments as Waggoner expressed in his book 'Christ and His Righteousness'. It is also reasonably obvious that she is using Waggoner's words (although changing the phraseology slightly).

On two fronts this shows that Ellen White agreed with the begotten faith concerning Christ.

The first is because she plainly says He is begotten (not created or adopted) whilst secondly she is repeating what Waggoner said and using his words. This shows emphatically that concerning Christ, Ellen White endorsed the 'begotten faith' of Seventh-day Adventists. This is why just two years earlier (1893) she had said that there was not a people on earth who held "**more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists**" (see above). In 1895, this was still the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. Ellen White was here endorsing it. She is saying it is the truth. How much more plainly can this be said?

She also added these words

"John said, "We have seen, and do testify that **the Father sent the Son** to be the Saviour of the world." **The Son of God took upon him human nature**,--"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "God was manifest in the flesh." (*Ibid*)

Again Ellen White speaks of Christ, in His pre-existence, as being a son. She is also speaking of Him in His pre-existence as God.

Just 6 weeks after making the above 'begotten statement', Ellen White further endorsed this Sonship truth. This time she phrased her words a little bit differently. She wrote

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, **gave his only begotten Son**, tore from his bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 9th July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People'*)

Instead of saying - as she did in her previous statement - that Christ was "**begotten in the express image of the Father's person**" (see above), here she says He was "**made in the**

express image of his person". This does not mean that Ellen White believed that Christ was a created being (no more than did her fellow church members, including Waggoner, who also held to this begotten concept) but that He was God Himself in the person of the Son. This is the begotten concept.

She then added (note the reference here to Ephesians 3:20 and Romans 8:32)

"He is willing to do more, "more than we can ask or think." An inspired writer asks a question which should sink deep into every heart: "**He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"** (*Ibid*)

There can be no doubt that Ellen White believed that Christ is truly the divine Son of God. She believed Him to be God's "own Son".

Inspired of God

Ellen White had no doubt that what what she had written was of the Lord.

In 1906 she wrote to a brother in the church regarding the controversy over Ballenger's sanctuary teaching. As will be seen though, what she wrote cannot be limited to only the sanctuary and nothing else. It covered the whole spectrum of her ministry (meaning her 'calling' as someone given the gift of the spirit of prophecy) and her writings. She wrote saying

"Bible truth is our only safety. I know and understand that we are to be established in the faith, in the light of the truth given us in our early experience. At that time one error after another pressed in upon us; ministers and doctors brought in new doctrines. We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance. Companies of devoted men and women assembled for this purpose. **The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.**

As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. **I would be taken off in vision, and explanations would be given me. I was given illustrations of heavenly things, and of the sanctuary,** so that we were placed where light was shining on us in clear, distinct rays.

All these truths are immortalized in my writings. The Lord never denies His word. Men may get up scheme after scheme, and the enemy will seek to seduce souls from the truth, **but all who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in in these last days.**" (*Ellen G. White, Letter to W. W. Simpson, Letter 50, January 30th 1906*)

Notice the remarks about "points of our faith" and "All these truths". This was not just concerning the sanctuary. The latter remarks are in keeping with why God gave the gift of prophecy to His church. It was to stop us being deceived by all the false teachings that by various means and methods, Satan will attempt to inculcate into the church (see Ephesians 4:8-15) .

She ended her letter by saying

"I am thankful that the instruction contained in my books establishes present truth for this time. These books were written under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. I praise the Lord with heart and soul and voice, and I pray that He will lead into all truth those who will be led. I praise Him that He has so wonderfully spared my life up to this time, to bear the same message upon the important points of our faith that I have borne for half a century" (Ibid)

Ellen White knew that Christ was begotten of the Father. This is why she wrote so plainly saying it. It goes without saying therefore that she would have regarded this as one of the "important points of our faith". Note that these things were said by her in 1906, which was 8 years following the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'. In this book, Ellen White did not mean to convey anything different than she had always said about Christ. Those who say that in the book 'The Desire of Ages' she did say things about Christ that was contrary to what she had said previously are misunderstanding and misinterpreting her words – whether deliberately or accidentally.

She also said at a Bible School in 1890

"We want to know that it is truth; and if it is truth, brethren, those children in the Sabbath School want it, and every soul of them need it. This is what we want." (Ellen G. White, Remarks at the Bible School, February 7, 1890 'Lessons from the Vine', Manuscript 56, 1890)

If Christ was not begotten of God Ellen White would not have said He was begotten. As it is, she did say it (see above). This she said is the truth.

Having noted these things, some may still insist that that Ellen White changed her mind about Christ (thus denying that the Lord had been leading her to say them) but notice here something she wrote the previous year (1905) to her granddaughter.

"I am now looking over my diaries and copies of letters written for several years back, commencing before I went to Europe, before you were born. I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have these things to revive past history, that they may see that there is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written." (Ellen G. White, Letter to Mabel White, Letter 329a, pages 1 and 2, November 16th 1905, Manuscript Releases MR No. 532)

Notice this was in 1905 – 10 years following on from when she wrote those 'begotten' and 'made' statements (see above). She said that by that time she had written "one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence". This was also 7 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'.

Regarding Christ being the begotten Son of God she also wrote in 1901

"Satan has made men and women his prisoners, and claims them as his subjects. When Christ saw that there was no human being able to be man's intercessor, He Himself entered the fierce conflict and battled with Satan. The First begotten of God was the only One who could liberate those who by Adam's sin had been brought in subjection to Satan. The Son of God gave Satan every opportunity to try all his arts upon Him." (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 125, Dec. 9, 1901, 'The Unchangeable Law of God')

As used here, the term "The First begotten of God" can only have application to the pre-existence of Christ, not the incarnation.

In a General Conference Bulletin the same year that Ellen White wrote these “begotten” and made statements (see above) Alonzo Jones wrote of Christ

“He who was born in the form of God took the form of man.” In the flesh he was **all the while as God, but he did not appear as God.** “He divested himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of man” “The glories of the form of God, he for awhile relinquished.” (A. T. Jones, *General Conference Bulletin, March 4th 1895, ‘The Third Angel’s Message – No. 23’*)

Needless to say (noting this was written in a General Conference bulletin) this was then, in 1895, the standard faith amongst Seventh-day Adventists. It was confirmed through the spirit of prophecy – although it must be said that regarding Christ being begotten of the Father, Ellen White never used the word “born”.

Four years later, this time at a General Conference session, Jones said

“He was born of the Holy Ghost. In other words, **Jesus Christ was born again.**” (A. T. Jones, *Sermon preached on March 6th 1899 at the General Conference Session in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, see Review and Herald, August 1st 1899, ‘Christian perfection’*)

Notice this was one year after 'The Desire of Ages' was published. Concerning our Saviour, this book had not changed the views of Jones.

In an article that is generally believed to be with reference to the Minneapolis Conference, Ellen White penned this statement.

“Messages bearing the divine credentials have been sent to God's people; the glory, the majesty, the righteousness of Christ, full of goodness and truth, have been presented; the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ has been set forth among us with beauty and loveliness, to charm all whose hearts were not closed with prejudice.” (Ellen G. White. *Review and Herald, 27th May 1890, ‘Living channels of light’*)

Ellen White saw nothing wrong with the way that Ellet Waggoner had presented the person of Christ at Minneapolis. She fully supported his beliefs – also of Jones. They were the beliefs of the denomination as a whole.

In fact publicly in 1906, in the *Review and Herald*, Ellen White addressed herself to what was believed by Seventh-day Adventists concerning the two separate personalities of God and Christ. She wrote

“He who denies the personality of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, is denying God and Christ. “If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.” **If you continue to believe and obey the truths you first embraced regarding the personality of the Father and the Son, you will be joined together with him in love.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, 8th March 1906, ‘A God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed’*)

There would have those reading this statement who had been Seventh-day Adventists for 20 or 30 or 40 years or more. They could not have read it and believed that Ellen White was saying that what they believed about God and Christ (which was that in eternity Christ is begotten of the Father) was error. They would have taken it that they were being commended for their faith – to hold on to it even. As she said, **“If you continue to believe**

and obey the truths you first embraced regarding the personality of the Father and the Son, you will be joined together with him in love”.

Note that this was 8 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'. Ellen White was not saying that in this book she had written views of Christ that were contrary to what was then the faith of Seventh-day Adventists (that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father), yet in the Seventh-day Adventists Bible commentary it says

“The idea that *Christ was “begotten” by the Father* at some time in eternity past *is altogether foreign in the Scriptures*” (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 5, page 902, 1966*)

Obviously Ellen White did not think so. She believed that Christ was truly the Son of God (begotten of the Father). To deny that Christ is begotten of the Father is to deny the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy.

As we noted previously in [chapter 6](#) (this was regarding the hatred of the Jews towards Jesus when He claimed God as His father – see John 5:18)

“Jesus knew that the Jews were determined to take his life, yet in this discourse *he fully explained to them his Sonship, the relation he bore to the Father and his equality with him. This left them without an excuse for their blind opposition and insane rage against the Saviour.*” (*Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy, volume 2, page 172, ‘Jesus at Bethesda’*)

How can these words be mistaken? They are so easy to understand. If we do not accept that Christ is truly the Son of God then we too shall be left “without an excuse”.

A letter to a disbelieving brother

In the same year (1895) that Ellen White wrote to the General Conference upholding Waggoner's message at Minneapolis, also the same year she said that Christ “**begotten in the express image of the Father's person**” – also “**made in the express image of his person**” (see above), she wrote a letter to Harmon Lindsay. He was treasurer for two periods for the General Conference. He also held other administrative financial posts. He had attended the 1888 General Conference session and from what is said here by Ellen White, had obviously rejected the message brought to the conference by Waggoner and Jones. What you see here are extractions from the letter (the paragraphs are not all continuous).

“Since the meeting at Minneapolis, you have followed in the tread of the scribes and Pharisees. *Never will you have greater evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit than you had at that meeting. Again and again the Spirit of the Lord came into the meeting with convincing power,* notwithstanding the unbelief manifested by some present *but you were deceived and prejudiced, and manifested the spirit of those who refused to acknowledge Christ.* You have followed in their tread, and have refused to acknowledge the mistakes and errors *in resisting the message the Lord in mercy sent you.*” (*Ellen G. White, Letter to Brother Harmon Lindsay, May 1st 1895, written from Tasmania Australia, 1888 materials, Chapter 161, page 1345*)

“Afterwards, at the Conference meetings held in Battle Creek, though evidence after evidence was given you, *you refused to accept the message sent you by God.* You would not humble your pride and repent; your wrong attitude remained unchanged.” (*Ibid*)

“You have rejected the message the Lord has sent you, **not because it was an error**, but because you set your feet in the path of unbelief followed by the men of Nazareth.” (Ibid, page 1346)

“With many others you have been smitten with blindness. The infatuation of the ruler of the powers of darkness has been upon you. But it is no light matter for you to close your eyes that they will not see and your ears that they will not hear, and to darken your understanding that you will not be convinced of the manifestations of the Spirit of God. **It is a dangerous thing to call the work of the Spirit of God the work of Satan.**” (Ibid)

“My brother, the rebuke of God is upon you; **for you have discarded the truth.** Light has come to you again and again since the Minneapolis meeting, **but in rejecting the message God has sent, you have rejected Him.**” (Ibid)

With regards to Jones and Waggoner, who apart from Ellen White were the two main speakers at Minneapolis, she said this to Lindsay

“God has given Brother Jones and Brother Waggoner a message for the people. You do not believe that God has upheld them, **but He has given them precious light, and their message has fed the people of God. When you reject the message borne by these men, you reject Christ, the Giver of the message.** Why will you encourage the attributes of Satan? Why will you and Brother Henry despise God's delegated ministers, and seek to justify yourselves? Your work stands revealed in the sight of God. “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?”” (Ibid)

As I am sure you will agree, these are very strong words. It is obvious that Ellen White never saw very much wrong with the message brought by Waggoner and Jones at Minneapolis. Certainly she saw nothing seriously wrong with it. No stronger words could be used than to say that to reject this message was to “reject Christ”.

Seventh-day Adventists today would do well to take note of the message that God sent through these two young men at Minneapolis. If we fail to heed it, then we can expect the same testimony that Ellen White wrote to Lindsay to apply to us. As Ellen White said, we cannot reject truth without rejecting the One who sent it.

Unfortunately, late in life, Lindsay Harmon left the Seventh-day Adventist Church and joined the Christian Scientists (see Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 10 page 703, 1966 edition).

A possible falling away

In 1892, Ellen White wrote to Uriah Smith saying

“It is quite possible that Elder Jones or Elder Waggoner may be overthrown by the temptations of the enemy; but if they should be, **this would not prove that they had had no message from God, or that the work that they had done was all a mistake.**” (Ellen G. White, letter to Uriah Smith, September 19th 1892)

She also added

“But should this happen, how many would take this position, **and enter into a fatal delusion because they are not under the control of the Spirit of God.** They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and cannot distinguish between the fire they have

kindled, and the light which God has given, and they walk in blindness as did the Jews.” (*Ibid*)

At first, Uriah Smith was one of those who opposed the message of righteousness by faith that Waggoner and Jones had delivered at Minneapolis. This is probably why Ellen White wrote to him in such a manner. Eventually Smith realised his mistake and made full confession.

We can see from the above that Ellen White fully supported the message that Waggoner and Jones brought to Minneapolis. She said it was a message sent from God. Yet she did not overlook the possibility that those who brought the message may fall away. This though, she said, would not invalidate their message. The message itself would still be the truth.

Not completely correct

Ellen White never agreed with Waggoner of every detail of his message – although obviously she did agree with him in principle. She wrote to the General Conference saying

“Dr. Waggoner has spoken to us in a straightforward manner. ***There is precious light in what he has said. Some things presented in reference to the law in Galatians, if I fully understand his position, do not harmonize with the understanding I have had of this subject; but truth will lose nothing by investigation***, therefore I plead for Christ's sake that you come to the living Oracles, and with prayer and humiliation seek God. ***Everyone should feel that he has the privilege of searching the Scriptures for himself, and he should do this with earnest prayer that God will give him a right understanding of His word, that he may know from positive evidence that he does know what is truth.***” (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 15, November 1888, To the 'Dear Brethren Assembled at General Conference'*)

She did say this though

“***Some interpretations of Scripture given by Dr. Waggoner I do not regard as correct.*** But I believe him to be perfectly honest in his views, and I would respect his feelings and treat him as a Christian gentleman. I have no reason to think that he is not as much esteemed of God as are any of my brethren, and I shall regard him as a Christian brother, so long as there is no evidence that he is unworthy. The fact that he honestly holds some views of Scripture differing from yours or mine is no reason why we should treat him as an offender, or as a dangerous man, and make him the subject of unjust criticism. We should not raise a voice of censure against him or his teachings ***unless we can present weighty reasons for so doing and show him that he is in error.*** No one should feel at liberty to give loose rein to the combative spirit.” (*Ibid*)

As we can see from the above, Ellen White's remarks were in connection with Waggoner's presentation of Christ's righteousness in relation to the law in Galatians – also some of his “interpretations of Scripture”. As she also said later

“I know it would be dangerous to denounce Dr. Waggoner's position as wholly erroneous. This would please the enemy. I see the beauty of truth in the presentation ***of the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law*** as the doctor has placed it before us. You say, many of you, it is light and truth. Yet you have not presented it in this light heretofore. Is it not possible that through earnest, prayerful searching of the Scriptures he has seen still greater light on some points? That which has been presented harmonizes perfectly with the light which God has been pleased to give me during all the years of my experience.” (*Ibid*)

She also said concerning Waggoner and Jones

“I believe without a doubt that God has given precious truth at the right time to Brother Jones and Brother Waggoner. Do I place them as infallible? Do I say that they will not make a statement or have an idea that cannot be questioned or that cannot be error? Do I say so? No, I do not say any such thing. Nor do I say that of any man in the world. But I do say God has sent light, and do be careful how you treat it.” We want the truth as it is in Jesus.” (*Ellen G. White, Remarks at the Bible School, February 7, 1890 ‘Lessons from the Vine’, Manuscript 56, 1890*)

Needless to say, from what we have seen above, Ellen White did agree wholeheartedly with Waggoner on the fact that in eternity Christ is begotten of God. Of this there can be no doubt. It was just that certain Scriptures Waggoner had used, particularly with regards to the law in Galatians etc, she saw in a different light than Waggoner. What these were she did not say.

What we do know is that she agreed where Waggoner had said in his book (‘Christ and His Righteousness’) that Christ was begotten of God in eternity, also that **when** Christ was brought forth of God is unknown (not revealed). We shall see this now.

Christ’s pre-existence cannot be measured by any means known to humanity

In 1899, in the Signs of the Times – also with reference to Christ saying “Before Abraham was I am” (note very importantly that this was written **the year following** the publication of her supposedly trinitarian ‘The Desire of Ages’), Ellen White said

“Here Christ shows them that, altho they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 3rd May 1899 ‘The Word made flesh’*)

She then added

“The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures.” (*Ibid*)

There is an unmistakable implication here that Ellen White was saying here that as a separate personality from God, the personality of the Son had a beginning of existence. Certainly she was saying He was begotten in eternity – which cannot be measured by time (at least as we know it).

This was much the same as was said by Waggoner in his book ‘Christ and His Righteousness’. He had written

“The Word was “in the beginning”. The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase.” (*E. J. Waggoner, ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, page 9, 1890*)

He then said with respect to **how** the Son of God was begotten

“It is not given to men to know when or how the Son was begotten; but we know that He was the Divine Word, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created.” (*Ibid*)

“We know that Christ “proceeded forth and come from God” (John 8:42) but it was **so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man.**” (*Ibid*)

Ellen White said the very same thing using different words (see above)

Shortly following the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, Ellen White preached a sermon in which she said

“Angels of God looked with amazement upon Christ, who took upon Himself the form of man and humbly united His divinity with humanity in order that He might minister to fallen man. It is a marvel among the heavenly angels. God has told us that **He did do it**, and we are to accept the Word of God **just as it reads**.”

And although we may try to reason in regard to our Creator, **how long He has had existence**, where evil first entered into our world, and all these things, we may reason about them until we fall down faint and exhausted with the research when there is yet an infinity beyond.” (*Ellen G. White, Sermon, December 1st 1888, The Des Moines Seventh-day Adventist Church, Iowa, ‘The minister’s relationship to God’s Word’, Sermons and talks, Volume 1 page 65*)

This faith - that in eternity Christ was brought forth of the Father - was once the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It is also the truth which God has revealed through Ellen White. It is that Christ is God essentially. He is God in the person of the Son.

A very strange statement

We have seen from the above – also from the previous chapter ([chapter 13](#)) - that the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists has always been that Christ is God. This was the message that Waggoner at Minneapolis repeated over and over again. Whilst we will not be repeating all that he said here (enough has already been shown to make the point), his emphasis on Christ being God has been summarised perfectly in a book called 'The 1888 message – An Introduction'. It was written by Robert J. Wieland who died recently (July 2011). He made this statement

“In his small book, *Christ and His Righteousness* (1889, 1890), Waggoner repeats **thirty-one times his belief in the full, eternal deity of Christ**. The widely promoted idea that he was an Arian or a semi-Arian is refuted by this and other evidence.” (*Robert J. Wieland, The 1888 message – An Introduction, page 45, chapter ‘Christ, the heart of the 1888 message’, 1980, Revised 1997*)

I have read Waggoner's book on numerous occasions but I must admit that I have never actually counted the times he said that Christ was fully divine. Having said that, the one thing I know is that this is something he repeated over and over again. It was the entire emphasis of his message. This is why he said that Christ's righteousness avails for us.

The two terminologies ‘Arian’ and ‘semi-Arian’ are always open to interpretation. If the reader wishes to know what they mean they would best ask the people who use them. This is because they are given so many different interpretations it is impossible to know what they mean unless an explanation is given each time they are used.

What we do know for sure, as we have seen above, is that Waggoner did not believe that Christ was a created being but was God in the person of the Son. This cannot be questioned. As we have also seen from this study, in agreement with Wieland's statement, Waggoner's views (and others view's) have been completely misrepresented to mean that because it is believed that Christ is begotten of God then our Saviour's complete and full

divinity is denied. Even Ellen White herself met with these same misunderstandings and refuted them (see above her experience in New Zealand).

Even today (also as we have seen above), these 'begotten' views are still being misrepresented. This is where I come to this 'strange statement'. As has just been said, no one could possibly refute that Waggoner believed that Christ is God and not a created being yet in his book 'Ellen White and Salvation', Woodrow Whidden makes this comment

“The question then becomes [Did Ellen White agree with Jones and Waggoner enough on the issues of 1888 so that it can be said that they were in substantial agreement?](#)”

Ellen White's hearty support of Jones and Waggoner is unquestioned. The key issue, however, seems to be whether this strong support meant *total* support for all their theological positions. [For instance, did she support their view that Christ was a created god \(Arianism\)?](#)” (Woodrow Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation, Chapter eleven, page 90, 'The Significance and Meaning of Minneapolis and 1888', 1995*)

Let's be honest here. After reading all that Waggoner said concerning Christ, how is it possible to draw the conclusion that he believed and taught that Christ “[was a created god \(Arianism\)](#)” yet this is what the readers of Whidden's book are led to believe (note particularly Whidden's use of the small 'g').

If Waggoner had taught that Christ is “[a created god](#)”, can you imagine Ellen White saying that his message was from God and that to reject it was to reject Christ (which she did say)? Of course not! Can you imagine also, if this begotten concept is teaching that Christ is “[a created god](#)” (and remember this begotten concept was the faith of Seventh-day Adventists throughout the time of Ellen White's ministry) that Ellen White never once spoke out against it? This would be totally impossible to believe. Christ's identity (that He is God) is the core belief of Christianity itself. To deny His full and complete deity is to deny the gospel.

In fact if Waggoner's message at Minneapolis was that Christ is “[a created god](#)”, this would have made his entire message null and void. His message of righteousness by faith was built solely on the foundation that Christ is God and that only deity could pay the price of our redemption.

Concerning Waggoner's message at Minneapolis, Ellen White said that those who heard it “[had been privileged to hear the most faithful preaching of the gospel](#)” (see page 245 of this study). If she believed Waggoner was teaching that Christ is a created being (a created God), how could she have said such a thing? The answer is that she would not have said it. Waggoner taught no such thing. This much is obvious.

It can only be concluded also - if this 'begotten faith' makes Christ “[a created god](#)” - that it was not only throughout the time period of Ellen White's ministry that we were teaching this so-called heresy to the world but also for decades beyond. This is because it remained the faith of Seventh-day Adventists for decades after Ellen White had died. We shall see this in chapters [15](#), [16](#) and [17](#).

This latter conclusion - that for about 100 or so years we were teaching the world that Christ is a “[a created god](#)” - I find rather bizarre therefore without giving it a second thought it must be dismissed as not even being worthy of consideration. As we have seen so clearly (see [chapter 13](#) especially), the begotten belief of our early Seventh-day Adventists was that Christ truly is God.

There is also something else to consider here. This is that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told

"If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them.*"** "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. ***None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption." (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 524, 'Snares of Satan')

This having been said, can you imagine Ellen White - if Waggoner had taught at Minneapolis that "Christ was a created god" (see Whidden above) - endorsing his message as we have seen that she did do. If Waggoner had taught that Christ was created she would probably have called him a "natural man" (someone not spiritually minded).

After everything we have read above regarding that which Ellen White did say about Waggoner and his message at Minneapolis this would be unthinkable. If it had been taught that Christ was created, no matter how highly He (Christ) was exalted, it would have made Waggoner's message at Minneapolis completely impotent (powerless).

Prior to making the above statement, Whidden also wrote (under the sub-heading 'Deity and the Trinity')

"Ellen White decisively believed in the full deity of Christ. She can be characterized as Trinitarian in her convictions, even from her earliest years (QOD 641-646; Ev 613-617)."*(Woodrow Whidden, Ellen White on Salvation, Chapter eight,, page 60, 'The nature of Christ and salvation', 1995)*

It is true to say that Ellen White always taught the full deity of Christ but to say she was trinitarian is saying something else. A person does not need to be a trinitarian to hold to the belief that Christ is God. All that needs to be done is to believe what the Bible says about Him – which as has been said previously, is totally silent about God being a trinity – at least as depicted by the trinity doctrine..

We have no evidence from Ellen White's writings that she believed in the trinity doctrine. All that we know for sure is that she said that there are three persons of the Godhead. This is not a confession of the trinity doctrine but a simple stating of the Bible facts – no more, no less.

Whidden continues

"What is truly remarkable about her Trinitarian views is that she held them at a time when many of the leading nineteenth-century Adventist ministers had strong Arian influences. Arianism is an ancient heresy which denies that Jesus has existed coeternally with God the Father. ***It teaches that Christ was created, and thus there was a time He did not exist.***" (Ibid)

Here we return to the ambiguity of terminologies.

The word 'Arian' is used to mean so many different things that it is impossible to nail it down to any one belief. Here Whidden uses it to mean that Christ was a created being. As we have seen though, Seventh-day Adventists have never taught any such thing. We have always believed that He is God in the person of the Son.

"Furthermore, it is of some interest to note that among these anti-trinitarian ministers was none other than her own husband. James White came from the Christian

Connexion Church, which had strong Arian tendencies, **and some of his early statements revealed an anti-Trinitarian bias** (Webster 34).” (*Ibid*)

I would say that James White had something more than just an “anti-Trinitarian bias”. He out-rightly rejected the trinity doctrine but he did believe in the full and complete deity of Christ. This was not just in his 'early days' but even in the year of his death. We saw this in [chapter 13](#).

Later in his book Whidden wrote

“But despite these strong influences, Ellen White went on her own independent way, **quite willing to go against the grain of the Arianism that was abundantly apparent among Adventist ministers of her time** (*ibid*).

We have noted above that concerning Christ, Ellen White never went against what was Seventh-day Adventist denominational view of Christ. In fact as we have seen in this chapter, she did say in 1893, “...there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th December 1893, 'An appeal for the Australasian field'*)

How is it possible to conclude from this that Ellen White was in disagreement with what was taught in early Seventh-day Adventism? It cannot be concluded. It would be impossible.

Whidden further comments

“**She never reprimanded or directly corrected any of these persons for their Arian views**, but she became increasingly explicit in her own forthright declarations of Christ's full deity and her clear affirmations of the trinity.” (*Ibid*)

Of course she didn't rebuke the beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists concerning Christ. She agreed with them – albeit these views were not that Christ is a created being - if this is what is meant by the term “Arian”. Again it can only be said that nowhere in her writings can be found a confession of the trinity doctrine – no more than can it be found in the Scriptures (see [chapter 2](#)).

“For the purposes of this study, it needs to be clearly stated that **by the time of the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, Ellen White was forcefully affirming the full, eternal deity of Christ.**” (*Ibid*)

Ellen White had always taught that Christ is God. Her writings are in complete harmony with Scripture.

Conclusion

Concerning Christ, Ellen White knew exactly what was taught by Seventh-day Adventists. To believe otherwise would be ridiculous. In fact as we have seen above in this chapter, she did say that “there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists”. How much more of an accolade can anyone give to what was once taught by Seventh-day Adventists (their begotten faith)? Ellen White emphatically said that the belief that Christ is begotten of God is the truth. We even saw that she made statements to this end (this was just two years after stating that Waggoner's message was from God). She said

“A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- **not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of**

the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation'*)

Whilst 6 weeks later she repeated (although she did phrase her words a little bit differently)

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, **gave his only begotten Son**, tore from his bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 9th July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People'*)

In chapters [26](#) and [27](#) of this study, we shall see that in the early 1900's, not only did Ellen White further endorse the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists concerning God and Christ but also gave warnings that wrong beliefs concerning both of these divine personalities were on their way into Seventh-day Adventism.

In [chapter 15](#) we shall see that after Ellen White had died, although not all of our leadership were completely happy concerning this 'begotten faith' (that Christ is truly the Son of God), it was this faith that for further decades continued to be the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

[Proceed to chapter 15](#), 'The Sonship of Christ – leadership dissatisfaction'

Chapter fifteen

The Sonship of Christ – leadership dissatisfaction

After the death of Ellen White in 1915, it was not long before those who were discontented with our begotten belief concerning Christ were attempting to make changes to it.

The 1919 Bible Conference

In 1919, four years after the death of Ellen White, a Bible Conference was organised. This was the first of its kind held in Seventh-day Adventism. It took place at Takoma Park Washington, D. C.

Not everyone was allowed to attend. Only carefully selected high ranking personnel were given invitations. This did not include the 'ordinary' Seventh-day Adventist minister, hence for this reason – also because the dialogue that took place at the conference was not made available to those who were not in attendance (it was decided at the end of the conference not to allow the dialogue to be made public) – it is often referred to as the 'secret' Bible council.

In 1974, the transcripts of this conference were 'discovered' in the General Conference archives. This is why today we are aware of the dialogue that took place at this conference – although not all of it.

Unfortunately, because space is limited, very little of it can be quoted here although it will be seen that it was at this conference that the beliefs then held by us concerning Christ came under attack from our leadership. Remember, it was only those of our top ranking leadership who were allowed to attend this conference. It was they – the 'hand-picked personnel' - who were doing the attacking. It was not the lay person or the ministry in general.

As Michael Campbell noted when commenting on this conference

“The meetings were closed to anyone except those invited by the General Conference Executive Committee specifically so that they would feel free to express their viewpoint without fear of recrimination.” (Michael W. Campbell, Adventist Review, January 28th 2010, 'Sifting Through the Past')

Why these leading Seventh-day Adventists should feel recrimination from their brethren if they had openly expressed their viewpoint is not explained therefore it is left to the imagination. One would assume that it was because they would fear criticism from the majority for holding it. Why else would they feel recrimination?

Campbell later said

“Most of the differences among the participants of the conference revolved around issues in Adventist eschatology, issues such as the identity of the “king of the north” in Daniel and problematic dates in the sequence of prophetic chronology.”

This is far from being true. As we shall see later, a major part of this conference was taken up with what we then taught concerning the person of Christ – in particularly the begotten concept. Why Campbell should omit telling this to the 'Review readers' I have no idea. Again it is left to the imagination. I did try to contact him to ask him to explain it but my efforts failed.

Campbell then added

“Most Adventists today would quickly yawn and lose interest if they were somehow transported back in time to the 1919 Bible Conference.”(Ibid)

Why this is said is another mystery – and hopefully a statement which is not true. As has been said already, the main issue discussed at the conference is the very same issue debated today within Seventh-day Adventism – the begotten concept concerning Christ.

Campbell makes it sound as though what was discussed at this conference has no relevance today to Seventh-day Adventism – which as we can see from this study is hardly the truth. Even if this conference did only concern “issues such as the identity of the “king of the north” in Daniel and problematic dates in the sequence of prophetic chronology” (Adventist eschatology – the study of end-time events), I would still like to think that Seventh-day Adventists today would be interested (not “quickly yawn and lose interest”). After all, isn't our very existence as God's remnant people based upon an understanding of the end time prophecies of the book of Daniel. If what Campbell says is true (that “Most Adventists today would quickly yawn and lose interest”), then I would say that as a denomination we were in a very dangerous condition. It could even be interpreted as a denial that the prophecies concerning end-time events were important today to Seventh-day Adventists. How does this make us look today?

Something else I find rather strange - seeing that Campbell fails to tell his readers about the discussions concerning Christ (the same discussions as we are having today denominationally) - is that he did his dissertation on the subject of the 1919 Bible Conference. A footnote at the end of the article says

“Michael W. Campbell is pastor of the Montrose and Gunnison Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Western Colorado. **The 1919 Bible conference was the subject of his doctoral dissertation.**” (Ibid)

So why he did not mention Prescott's presentations on Christ and the ensuing discussions (particular whether or not Christ was begotten) is again left to the imagination.

An article by Arthur Patrick explains

“Michael W. Campbell's just-completed study, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology," offers this gripping observation at the end of the third chapter:

Finally, several speakers, most notably W. W. Prescott, emphasized the importance of progressive revelation. Truth is progressive and Adventists needed a Bible Conference to continue to mine the depths of God's word, they argued. Adventist thinkers were feeling the pressure of a number of doctrinal conflicts that made it advantageous to discuss theological issues candidly yet behind closed doors. The 1919 Bible Conference was ultimately an opportunity for leading thinkers in the church to seek both theological unity and spiritual revival. (Arthur Patrick. ATissue article, 'Michael Campbell on the 1919 Bible Conference: New Light on a Persisting Controversy')

Again we see this idea that whatever was discussed at this conference would be best discussed “[behind closed doors](#)”. When this happens amongst God's people, there is obviously something very seriously amiss – something even attempted to be hidden. Why would it be advantageous to discuss these things in secret – meaning without the vast majority of Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world knowing what was discussed? One is left to wonder. Obviously it was something that our leadership did not want to discuss in the open. The fact that the stenographer's notes of the discussions were kept secret also tells a story.

Interestingly, Michael Campbell makes this observation

“Although the transcripts were never published, **there is no evidence to suggest that they were “hidden” or kept “secret” by church leaders.** (Michael W. Campbell, *Adventist Review*, January 28th 2010, ‘Sifting Through the Past’)

If you would like to [click here](#) and scroll down to the sub-section “The 1919 Bible conference fears and reservations”, you will see that at the end of the conference, the decision of the delegates was not to make public the discussions. Is not this hiding them or keeping them secret?

Bert Haloviak, the Assistant Director of the office of Archives and Statistics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reported in 1979

“The General Conference Committee on April 5, 1918, adopted a resolution calling for a Bible and History Teachers' Council of six weeks' duration to begin July 1, 1918. Bible and history teachers from SDA colleges and junior colleges, leading editors and “such other leading men” **as the GCC might designate**, were invited to attend. **A committee of seven selected some 40 delegates** and assigned approximately 67 Bible and history topics to be considered.” (Bert Haloviak, *A paper presented at the meeting of Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Scholars in New York City November 14, 1979 ‘In the Shadow of the Daily’, ‘Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History teachers Conference’*)

Although this conference was originally planned to take place in 1918, it was postponed because of the war. As Haloviak explained

“When the war situation caused cancellation of the proposed Conference, the General Conference Committee recommended **one similar in scope to be held in 1919.**” (Ibid)

A. G. Daniells who was then the General Conference president – also chairman of the conference - said in his opening address to the delegates

“I think I can state the action of the General Conference Committee with reference to the personnel of the Conference. It was to be **the members of the General Conference Committee in America who could attend; the Bible and history teachers in our colleges, junior colleges, and seminaries**; and a number of **our leading editors in this country.**” (A. G. Daniells. *Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park in Washington D.C. July 1st 1919, page 10*)

This was a 'very select' gathering of leadership – which if they so wished could have a very strong influence on what was taught in our colleges and schools – also published in our periodicals and other official church publications etc.

Daniells later said to the delegates

“Another thing is that a good many people feel very much afraid of what we are going to do. They wonder if we are going to fix up a creed for them to subscribe to. They are much disturbed about it.” (Ibid page 11)

Concerning this Bible conference, there was obviously a lot of ‘strong feeling’ among Seventh-day Adventists. Some were worried as to what their church leaders were proposing to do. Daniells then added

“The secrecy alarms them. We have never had anything like this before, and they are very fearful. Some almost felt we ought to abandon the plan, and stop because of this difficulty.” (Ibid)

It was the “**secrecy**” of this conference that was alarming many Seventh-day Adventists. From what Daniells said here, there were very strong feelings that this conference should not take place. Nothing of this nature had ever before been seen in Seventh-day Adventism.

We will now take a brief look at some of the discussions that took place at this conference. This will give us an insight on what some wanted to ‘happen’ within Seventh-day Adventism. Keep in mind that this was just 4 years after the death of Ellen White.

Presentations and discussions

The format at the conference was that W. W. Prescott, a leading administrator in Seventh-day Adventism, would lead out in a series of morning presentations on the person of Christ. Later in the day, amongst the delegates, open discussions would take place concerning what Prescott had presented.

Prescott’s first presentation was on July 2nd. This was followed by a presentation on Bible Prophecy. After an intermission, A. G. Daniells opened the afternoon session. He said

“The way is now open for any who wish to do so to ask Professor Prescott questions concerning the topic of the morning.” (A. G. Daniells. Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D.C. July 2nd)

W. E. Howell said in response to Elder Daniells invitation

“I would like to ask Professor Prescott if he is willing to enlarge just a little on the point of the “beginning” as he explained it this morning.” (W. E. Howell, ibid)

Prescott replied to Warren Howell’s question by saying

“Taking the first chapter of John, the third verse: At a certain point where finite beings begin time, it does not mean that that is where the word began. When the scriptures says, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God,” it does not mean that when you get back to that point that we denominate the beginning, then looking back into eternity, you can point to the time when the word was.” (Prescott, ibid)

Here was an attempt to change what was then the ‘begotten in eternity’ concept concerning Christ. This is the concept that had been held by Seventh-day Adventists throughout the entire time period of Ellen White’s ministry. It is that Christ is truly the Son of God.

Herbert Lacey replied

“Can we go one step further and **say that the word was without beginning?**” (H. Lacey, *ibid*)

Prescott responded

“I was going to raise the question. Are we agreed in such a general statement as this, that the Son of God **is co-eternal with the Father?** Is that the view that is taught in our schools?” (Prescott, *ibid*)

Instead of answering this question, C. M. Sorenson replied

“It is taught in the Bible.” (C. M. Sorenson, *ibid*)

Many would disagree with Sorenson. They would say that this ‘co-eternity’ belief cannot be found stated in the Bible. This is why it was not the denominational belief of Seventh-day Adventists. The preponderant belief was, in accordance with Scripture, that in the days of eternity, Christ proceeded forth and came out from the Father. It is this that is taught in the Bible. This ‘begotten’ belief did not depict Christ as any less than God, neither did it make Christ some sort of a demigod. It was believed that because Christ is begotten of God, then He is God Himself in the person of the Son.

W. W. Prescott responded concerning this co-eternity

“**Not to teach that is Arianism.** Ought we continue to circulate in a standard book a statement that the Son is not co-eternal, that the Son is not co-eval or co-eternal with the Father? **That makes him a finite being.** Any being whose beginning we can fix is a finite being.” (Prescott, *ibid*)

This of course is not true. The begotten concept is not that Christ was created (“a finite being”) but that He came out from God (meaning from God’s own substance). We have seen this in previous chapters.

In 1907, a reader of the 'Signs of the Times' asked (amongst other things)

“If those that believe on His name were begotten of God, then **how is Jesus the “only-begotten of the Father”?**” (Signs of the Times, February 20th 1907, ‘Questions’)

The answer was returned

“**Christ was not begotten in just the way in which men are.** He Himself declares. “I proceeded forth and came from God.” John 8: 42. Just how this all is we do not know, but we do know this, **that He was THE Son of God in a sense that no other was, because He was God;** and yet just as truly are those who believe in Him begotten of God and become His children. 1 John 3: 1.” (*Ibid*)

During the time of Ellen White's ministry, this would have been typical of the answer given to those who enquired about what was believed concerning Christ by Seventh-day Adventists. The above was the belief generally held within Seventh-day Adventism. This reveals that those holding to the begotten concept believed that Christ is God in the person of the Son thus Prescott's remarks about “Arianism” (meaning that Christ is “a finite being”) was very misleading (false in fact). Note above it was confessed that Christ is God.

Prescott continued his remarks by saying

*"We have been circulating for 40 years a standard book which says that **the Son is not co-eternal with the Father. That is teaching Arianism.**" (W. W. Prescott, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D.C. July 2nd)*

Here Prescott is referring to what was still then, in 1919, the denominational faith (beliefs) of Seventh-day Adventists. This belief is that in eternity past, Christ was begotten of the Father – meaning that Christ is truly the Son of God. In [chapter 13](#) we established that this was then the denominational faith. As we have also seen, this 'begotten' faith did not make Christ any less a divine person than God the Father but showed Him to be God in the person of the Son.

Although Prescott does not mention the name of this "standard book", it was more than likely Uriah Smith's 'Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation' that he had in mind. This is a book that in order to bring it into harmony with what was to **eventually become** the 'new theology' of Seventh-day Adventism (which has since developed into trinitarianism) was totally rewritten from cover to cover. This took place in the 1940's.

Within Seventh-day Adventism, Smith's book was considered to be a 'classic'. This is why it could not be confined to the archives. In fact some even thought it to be an 'inspired work'.

Throughout his book, Smith had presented what had consistently been, during the time of Ellen White's ministry, the denominational faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is why there was no objection to it – and the reason why it had been circulated for over 40 years.

This belief would be referred to as non-trinitarianism – or as some would say (rather ambiguously) – especially with regards to Christ being begotten of the Father in eternity - semi-Arianism. Prescott was here calling it 'Arianism' – which is very misleading. People usually equate 'Arianism' with the belief that Christ is a created being. In his book, Smith did not speak of Christ as such – neither has the Seventh-day Adventist Church held such a belief. We believed then in the full and complete divinity of Christ. Christ was regarded as deity (God in the person of the Son).

In his book 'Looking unto Jesus' – which was published the very same year as Ellen White's 'Desire of Ages', Smith wrote (this is the begotten concept)

*"With the Son, **the evolution of deity, as deity, ceased.** All else, of things animate or inanimate, has come in by creation of the Father and the Son — **the Father the antecedent cause**, the Son the acting agent through whom all has been wrought. No ranks of intelligences, it matters not how high, above or below; no orders of cherubim or seraphim; no radiant thrones or extensive dominions, principalities, or powers, but were created by our Lord Jesus Christ." (Uriah Smith, Looking unto Jesus, page 13, chapter 2, 'Christ as Creator' 1898)*

Smith believed that Christ was deity. This cannot be questioned. Notice here the Father is given the pre-eminence ("the Father the antecedent cause"). This was the same as he had said the year earlier which was

*"GOD alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be — a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity — appeared the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. This uncreated Word was the being who, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. **His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe.** It is set forth in such mysterious expressions as these: "His [God's] only*

begotten Son" (John 3: 16; John 4:9), "The only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), and, "***I proceeded forth and came from God.***" John 8: 42.

Thus it appears that by some divine impulse, or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared. (Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, March 16th 1897, 'The mind of Christ')

Remember though, the begotten concept is that Christ is God in the person of the Son – the ***one and only*** begotten Son. This is why Smith had said "***With the Son, the evolution of deity, as deity, ceased***".

This was the begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was that Christ is deity. He is God.

Returning our thoughts to the editing of Smith's 'Daniel and the Revelation' - all of the statements alluding to this 'Sonship' (begotten) concept (that Christ was begotten at a point in eternity) were removed (edited out). In order for this to be accomplished, the book was re-written from cover to cover. It was reissued in 1944 – still under Smith's name – even though the 'rewriting' had been carried out by a team of Seventh-day Adventists. This is probably the version that most Seventh-day Adventists have on their bookshelves (the 1944 version). It was certainly not as written by Uriah Smith. This is why when quoting from this book, people will often say - "Uriah Smith said" - when in fact it was not Uriah Smith who said it at all. Such is the result of issuing a book, in Smith's name, that was edited to say things he did not say.

Referring to the begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventists (which said that Christ was begotten in eternity and not co-eternal with the Father), Prescott then asks

"Do we want to go on teaching that?" (Ibid)

It is evident here that Prescott is acknowledging that this 'begotten in eternity' concept was still the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists – else why would he say "***Do we want to go on teaching that?***" Remember though – throughout the entire time period of Ellen White's ministry, this had been the faith of God's remnant people. In fact it was still the denominational faith at the time of this Bible Conference (1919) – and would be for decades to come. We shall see this in the chapter you are reading now – also in chapter 16 and 17.

With respect to Prescott's remarks – also in opposition to what Prescott had said - C. P. Bollman responded

"I would like to ask, Do you think it is necessary, or even helpful in the defining of Christian doctrine, to go outside of the New Testament for terms to use in the definition?" (Bollman, Ibid)

Bollman also said

"The scripture says Christ is the only begotten of the Father. Why should we go farther than that and say that He was co-eternal with the Father? And also say that to teach otherwise is Arianism?" (Ibid)

Here Bollman was defending what was then, in 1919, the Seventh-day Adventist denominational faith. He was objecting to it being termed 'Arianism' – which is understandable because as we have just noted, 'Arianism' is generally thought to be the belief that Christ is a created being.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Seventh-day Adventists believed and taught no such thing. Their 'begotten' faith depicted Christ as God Himself in the person of the Son.

Prescott's remarks were obviously very misleading – and probably very objectionable to some of the delegates. Prescott appears to have been attempting to demean the begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

In his reply, Prescott said

“There is a proper sense, as I view it, according to which ***the Son is subordinate to the Father***, but that subordination is not in the question of attributes or of His existence. ***It is simply in the fact of the derived existence***, as we read in John 5:26:”For as the Father hath life in himself, ***even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself.***” (*Ibid*)

Note Prescott's remark to what he terms Christ's “derived existence”. Here he is admitting, just as was taught within Seventh-day Adventism throughout the time period of Ellen White's ministry, that the Son has His source in the Father. This is the begotten concept. Prescott was not disputing this belief.

He then added

“Using terms as we use them, ***the Son is co-eternal with the Father. That does not prevent His being the only-begotten Son of God.*** We cannot go back into eternity and say where this eternity commenced, and where that eternity commenced. ***There is no contradiction to say that the Son is co-eternal with the Father, and yet the Son is the only-begotten of the Father.***” (*Ibid*)

Even though Prescott was trying to have the delegates accept the idea that Christ was co-eternal with the Father (as opposed to begotten at a point in eternity), he was still maintaining that Christ is a begotten Son (derived from the Father).

It appears therefore that Prescott's intention was not to rid the Seventh-day Adventist Church of its faith in Christ as begotten of the Father (a true Son) but wanted to establish our Saviour as co-eternal with the Father (instead of being begotten at a point in eternity).

If this had been upheld (meaning the begotten concept plus the co-eternity of Christ) it would be the same as saying that Christ was everlastingly (eternally) begotten of the Father – which is the belief purported by the orthodox trinity doctrine (the version held by the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations). Perhaps this is why later we ‘dropped’ this begotten concept altogether and came up with a trinity doctrine that says all three persons are co-eternal with each other (none begotten or proceeding) and who are exactly the same. This avoided having the same version of the trinity doctrine as held by the Roman Catholic Church – therefore avoiding an obvious condemnation.

In response to Prescott's remarks, C. P. Bollman replied

“I think we should hold to ***the Bible definitions.***” (*C. P. Bollman, Ibid*)

Prescott responded to this comment by saying amazingly (as do the trinitarians) that it was better to stay with ***non-Scriptural language.***

He said

“We take the expression ***co-eternal, and that is better.***” (*W. W. Prescott, Ibid*)

Nowhere in the Scriptures does it say that Christ is “co-eternal” with the Father. It is not Scriptural language. This is trinitarian language.

What we can say, as we have been told through the spirit of prophecy, is that

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, *is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.*” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 116, Dec. 19, 1905, ‘An Entire Consecration’, see also *The Upward Look*, page 367)

With regards to the begotten concept, the one thing that most people overlook, particularly the Seventh-day Adventists trinitarians, is that regarding Christ it is not ‘time’ that is important but who He is. In other words, what is important is who He is and where He came from (origins) – not when He came to be.

Look at it this way. Say you have a child. What makes him or her ‘your child’? Is it **when** this child was born or **from whence this child came** (his or her origins)? Do you see my point? It is not time (when the child was born) that makes the child truly yours but the fact that the child is **of you**.

The Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy are very clear. Christ came out from the Father (He is of the Father). This is what makes Him the Son of God. This is also what makes Him God Himself in the person of the Son. It is not a case of ‘when’ (time) but ‘from whom’. This is why Prescott was not afraid to say that Christ derived His existence from the Father – although he did get hung up on the co-eternity belief – which if accepted would bring us into line with the other trinitarian denominations – which I would suspect were his intentions.

It appears that Prescott had modified his beliefs from what they were when Ellen White was alive. In 1896, also in keeping with what was then the faith of Seventh-day Adventists, he had written

“As Christ was twice born, - once in eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and again here in the flesh, thus uniting the divine with the human in that second birth, - so we, who have been born once already in the flesh, are to have the second birth, being born again of the Spirit, in order that our experience may be the same, - the human and the divine being joined in a life union.” (W. W. Prescott *Review and Herald* April 14th 1896, ‘The Christ for today’)

There is so much that was said at the 1919 Bible conference that would be of interest to us today, particularly in the light of our present Godhead controversy but space is very limited. There is though one other thing I would share with you.

In reply to all these comments concerning the co-eternity of Christ, a high-ranking minister by the name of Caviness said

“I missed a good deal of this discussion and *I do not know whether the idea is that we are to accept the so-called Trinitarian doctrine or not.*” (L. Caviness, *Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park in Washington D.C. July 6th*)

Even though Caviness had “missed a good deal” of the discussions, he quickly concluded that attempts were being made to persuade the delegates to adopt certain concepts of the trinity doctrine. This clearly shows that at the time of this Bible conference (1919), our denomination was **still a non-trinitarian** denomination. Notice how Caviness referred to the trinity doctrine as being “the **so-called Trinitarian doctrine**”. He did not seem to regard it with much respect.

Following this remark, Caviness proceeded to explain just why he thought that the trinity doctrine was unscriptural. As a defence of his beliefs he used the Gospel of John. This he maintained was written particularly to explain the deity and the humanity of Christ.

With reference to what he obviously regarded as being the crux of the debate – as do most non-trinitarians - he said

“As I understand it, *his* [Christ’s] **statement of the deity rests upon his Sonship**, and I do not think there is any one thing through the book of John that is more constantly referred than the Sonship. **I cannot believe that the two persons of the Godhead are equal**, the Father and the Son, -- that one is the Father the other the Son and that they **might be just as well the other way around.**” (*Ibid*)

This equality spoken of here is obviously meaning, as is said by our present-day trinitarians – that no matter which of the divine persons came, the one who did come (whichever one it is) would be called the Son of God. This is as it is in the belief of a role-playing Godhead – which we spoke of in [chapter 12](#). Notice that Caviness said that Christ’s claims of deity rested “[upon his Sonship](#)”. This was the ongoing belief in Seventh-day Adventism – i.e. because Christ is the Son of God He is divine, He is God (deity). This is why this belief was so important to us.

Following the remarks of Caviness - which were much more than has been quoted here (he upheld what was then the begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventists) - there was a pause in the discussions. Daniells spoke to the delegates but what he said we are not told. The only thing written by the stenographers was

“Elder Daniells here made some suggestions as to the delegates **not becoming uneasy** because we are studying a subject that **we cannot comprehend. He asked that these be not transcribed.**” (*Stenographer’s notes, ibid*)

What Daniells said to the delegates is left to the imagination but what he said later is very interesting. He counselled them

“Perhaps we have discussed this as long as we need to. **We are not going to take a vote on Trinitarianism or Arianism, but we can think**”. Let us go on with the study. (*A. G. Daniells, Ibid*)

For expanded details of the dialogue that took place at this Bible Conference, see sections 35 and 36 of the Detailed History Series [here](#)

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

To read the discussions in their entirety go here (the Seventh-day Adventist archives)

<http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=19&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True>

After the death of Ellen White, the begotten concept concerning Christ continued for decades. It was a concept that was deeply rooted within Seventh-day Adventism. This is hardly surprising. It had been the faith of our denomination since its beginnings. It would take a long time to erase it from our beliefs. This we shall see now and in the next two chapters.

Truly the Son of God – a continuing belief of Seventh-day Adventism

It will now be seen that for decades after the death of Ellen White, the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God (the begotten concept) was the continuing denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was not just the belief of the few.

To accomplish this we shall take a note of what it was that during this time period was written in our Sabbath School Lesson studies. This reveals not only what the members of the

Seventh-day Adventist Church were being taught but also what was taught to non-members alike. Apart from it being an 'internal' Bible study, the Sabbath School is also an outreach to those not of our faith. It is to inform and teach people of what we, as Seventh-day Adventists, believe to be the truth.

In a Sabbath School quarterly study in 1917 (this was two years after the death of Ellen White and two years before the 1919 Bible Conference), it said in the notes with reference to John 1:1, 2 ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.")

*"We may allow our thoughts to go back to that revealed "beginning," **when only the self-existent Father and His only-begotten Son were in existence.**" (SS lesson quarterly, 3rd quarter 1917, Topical Studies, page 4, lesson 1 for July 7th 1917, 'Foundation Principles of the Gospel')*

Notice it says here not just 'beginning' but "revealed beginning". In other words, the 'beginning' spoken of by John (John 1:1) was said to be referring to a point not when God began (God does not have a beginning) but from the point of the revelation of God (from when God expressed Himself)

How God had His existence prior to what has been revealed in John 1:1 we have not been told. Speculation therefore is pointless. God Himself has no beginning – therefore it cannot be speaking of His beginning. It must be, as the above 1917 lesson study states - "that revealed "beginning,"".

As John Bertram Phillips translated John 1:1

*"At the beginning **God expressed himself. That personal expression, that word,** was with God and was God, and he existed with God from the beginning." John 1:1 J. B. Phillips New Testament*

This translation is saying that "the Word" is God's "personal expression" of Himself. This again fits into the begotten concept. As Ellen White once put it

*"The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be "**the express image of His person.**" "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **Here is shown the personality of the Father.**" (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No.7, page 62 1906 'Come out and be Separate', see also Bible training school, 1st March 1906, 'The Father, Son and Holy Ghost'*)*

Christ is God's personality shown – "the express image of His person". He is therefore the embodiment of God's person. As Ellen White again put it

*"Christ was the embodiment **of God himself.**" (Ellen G. White, *the Present Truth [British edition], 18th February 1886, 'The sufferings of Christ', see also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 3 page 186, 1878)**

She also wrote in the 5th Volume of the Testimonies (this was said with respect to Philip saying to Jesus "Show us the Father" – see John 14:8)

*"Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, **the image of the invisible God.**" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 5, page 739, 'The character of God revealed in Christ'*)*

Christ in personality is not the invisible God. He is “the image” and embodiment of the invisible God (see Colossians 1:15) – invisible to us because of our sinful condition.

Returning our thoughts to the previously quoted statement in the Sabbath School lesson study, notice that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned (only the Father and the Son). It appears therefore that in 1917, the Holy Spirit was still not considered a divine being like the Father and the Son (it said “when **only** the self-existent Father and His only-begotten Son were in existence”). Obviously Ellen White saying that the Holy Spirit is a person had not led the church to believe He was a person in exactly the same sense as God and Christ are persons.

The lesson notes continued

“God here inhabited eternity. He was then **the “true God,” the “living God,”** the “everlasting King,” or “King of eternity.” Jer. 10: 10, including margin. **Here is where God began His revelation of Himself**, and here finite minds must stop. But in this eternity of the past, God was, **and with Him was His Son—the Word.”** (SS lesson quarterly, 3rd quarter 1917, Topical Studies, page 4, lesson 1 for July 7th 1917, ‘Foundation Principles of the Gospel’)

Here it says that “the “true God,”” was with “His Son—the Word”. This is reminiscent of John 17:3. Notice too again it says “where God began **His revelation of Himself**”.

In answer to the question “Through whom and for whom did the Father purpose to create a vast universe?” (Colossians 1: 13-17 cited) the study notes then said

“**God might have remained alone with His Son.** But, instead, He purposed to create other beings to enjoy His love and revealed goodness.” (*Ibid*)

This again reveals that it was still being taught in our Sabbath School quarterlies - in 1917 - that Christ, in His pre-existence, was God’s true Son. It also shows that by this time, the Holy Spirit was still not regarded as a divine being like the Father and the Son. It says that God was “**alone** with His Son”.

This is only the same as we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator’s will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. **Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God**, was one with the eternal Father,--one in nature, in character, and in purpose,-- **the only being** in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (*Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, page 493, ‘The origin of evil’*)

The same was also said in Patriarchs and Prophets

“**The Sovereign of the universe was not alone** in His work of beneficence. **He had an associate--a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes**, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” John 1:1, 2.” (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 34, ‘Why was sin permitted’*)

Notice Ellen White does not say 'co-workers' (plural) but “co-worker” (singular). It was also said

“Christ, the Word, **the only begotten of God**, was one with the eternal Father--one in nature, in character, in purpose--**the only being** that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (*Ibid*)

In previous chapters we have seen that we have been told that Satan was next to Christ. The Holy Spirit was not mentioned. We shall discuss the person of the Holy Spirit in chapters 18, 19 and 20. Here she says that Christ was the “only being” who could enter into all the counsels of God.

Into the 1920's

In 1920 (this was the year following when he led out in the studies on the person of Christ at the 1919 Bible Conference), W. W. Prescott wrote a book called ‘The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for use in Colleges and Seminaries’. The title obviously reveals Prescott’s purposes for writing it.

In one place he wrote

“We may conceive the Father existing from eternity and possessing infinite powers, simply because he wills so to exist, without any cause external to himself, eternal and infinite and underived; and of the Son existing with the Father from eternity, and possessing to the full the Father’s infinite powers, **but these received from the Father, existing because the Father wills him so to exist, eternal and infinite and derived. This conception will account for the entire language of the New Testament about the Son of God.**” (*W. W. Prescott, The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries, page 20, 1920*)

He continued the next paragraph saying

“The Son is equal to the Father in everything **except that which is conveyed by the terms Father and Son.**” (*Ibid*)

Prescott differentiates between the Father and the Son. He is saying they are not exactly the same. He explains his reasoning concerning Christ

“He is equal to the Father in that he shares to the full the Father’s existence from eternity and his infinite power and wisdom and love. **But inasmuch as the Father possesses these divine attributes from himself alone**, whereas **the Son possesses them as derived from the Father**, in this real sense and in this sense only, **the Father is greater than the Son.**” (*Ibid*)

This was written the year **following** the 1919 Bible Conference. Prescott was still maintaining that the Son of God possesses His divine attributes as “**derived from the Father**” whereas the Father (he says) has these attributes inherently within Himself. Here again is the begotten concept. It is that Christ possesses all that He is (and has) by right of inheritance (as the Son) whilst the Father is the source of the Son.

According to Prescott, it was because Christ received all from the Father that in a “**real sense**” (and in this sense only) “**the Father is greater than the Son**”. In other words, apart from the fact that Christ is begotten of the Father, there is no difference between the Father and the Son. This was also the view of early Christianity.

This also had been the begotten ‘faith’ of Seventh-day Adventists. What Prescott was endeavouring to change was that Christ did not come ‘out of the Father’ at a point in eternity but was derived of the Father eternally – which as has been said, is reminiscent of the orthodox trinity doctrine.

Prescott also explained

“Yes; there still remains the chief idea, viz., **personal existence and powers derived from another person**. And this idea is **plainly embodied in John 5:26**, and in other express assertions from the lips of Christ describing his own relation to God.” (*Ibid*)

The text Prescott is referring to is where Jesus said

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath **he given to the Son to have life in himself**,” John 5:26

On this point, Prescott’s reasoning was the same as that of Ellen White. This is when she said (after quoting from the opening of John’s gospel)

“The world’s Redeemer **was equal with God**. His authority was **as the authority of God**. He declared that he had **no existence separate from the Father**” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 7th Jan 1890, ‘Christ revealed the Father’*)

She also said the next month

“**Christ came to reveal the Source of his power**, that man might never rely on his unaided human capabilities.” (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 18th February 1890, ‘How to meet a controverted point of doctrine’*)

Here can be seen a certain harmony between what was said by Ellen White and what was said by Prescott although Ellen White never said that Christ, as a separate personality from the Father, is co-eternal with the Father.

We noted in chapter 10 and 14 that in 1899, with reference to Christ saying “Before Abraham was I am” (John 8:58), Ellen White said

“Here Christ shows them that, altho they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, **yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation**.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 3rd May 1899 ‘The Word made flesh’*)

She then added

“The existence of Christ before His incarnation **is not measured by figures**.” (*Ibid*)

In other words, there is no way – in human terms - to measure Christ’s pre-existence (as a separate personality from God). Divinity alone knows the answer to this one (says Ellen White). This is why we should not conjecture (see Deuteronomy 29:29). The important thing to know is that He is God Himself in the person of the Son.

This very same belief was reiterated in 1920 by W. H. Branson. By then, he had been the president of a number of conferences – and was later to become vice-president of the General Conference. Prior to doing so (1920-1930), he was president of the African Division. In the October 12th edition of the ‘Signs of the Times’ he wrote an article called ‘Jesus Christ – Creator and Lawgiver’. He began the article by saying

“**Far back somewhere in the eternity of the past**, before any of the worlds and suns now comprising the vast universe were created, before angels or men were brought into being, **God, who had existed from all eternity, brought forth a Son**. This Son was “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.” Colossians 1: 15. Paul declares that He was “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” Hebrews 1: 3.” (*W H Branson, Signs of the Times, October 12th 1920*)

He then went on to say

“God bestowed upon His Son all the glory He Himself had, and made Him a coworker with Him in all His subsequent acts. He was to be one with the Father, exercising the same power, bearing the same titles, and sharing equally in the glory that should come to the Father through the things He should create.” *(Ibid)*

Here again we see the begotten concept. This was still then, in 1920, the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

After explaining that it was Christ who created all things, - also that Christ was the wisdom of God as spoken of in Proverbs chapter 8 (we noted this in [chapter 10](#) of this study), Branson went on to say,

“After the fall of man, God the Father appointed Christ as His agent, through whom He would bring about the redemption of the race. The entire work of carrying out the plan of redemption was turned over to Him. God the Father has always kept in the background. He has never revealed Himself to man at any time; for no man, while in sinful flesh, can see His face and live. He has always revealed Himself through Christ, His Son. "No 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. **Hence wherever we find any act attributed to God, we may know at once that it was accomplished through His Son, Jesus.”** *(Ibid)*

This we noted in previous chapters – particularly that since the fall of man, God has never directly communicated with us – meaning that all communication has come through the Son (a mediator).

The 1921 Sabbath School lesson studies

In the Sabbath School quarterly for the first quarter of 1921 it said

“Paul, after his conversion, declared that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9: 20), and so he continued to preach (2 Cor.1: 9). **By a voice from heaven, God Himself bore testimony to the same fact.** 2 Peter 1: 16, 17. Our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary is still declared to be **"Jesus the Son of God."** Heb. 4: 14.” *(Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 1st quarter 1921, Our Personal Saviour Jesus Christ, page 17-18, lesson 6 for February 5th 1921, ‘The Son of God’)*

The inevitable conclusion was that

“God sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour (John 3: 17), and the future of every man depends upon **his attitude toward this Son of God** (John 3: 18).” *(Ibid page 18)*

Here once again Christ is spoken of as a Son **prior to the incarnation**. This said the lesson study was confirmed by the voice of the Father at the transfiguration of Jesus (see Matthew 17:5).

In answer to the question “What announcement was made concerning Jesus before His birth?” (Luke 1: 35 cited) the study explained

“Adam was a son of God by creation (Luke 3:38), being made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). He was in fellowship with the life of the Creator. Through sin, he became "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18), **and lost his place as a son of God.”** *(Ibid)*

It then added

“Only one who stood in the relation of divine Son could restore man to his place as a son (Gal. 4:4, 5), and bestow upon him the privilege of being once more in the true sense a child of God. Our hope of salvation from sin, and restoration to permanent fellowship with God, finds a sure foundation *in the fact that God sent His only-begotten Son to be our Saviour.*” (Ibid page 18-19)

Here again Christ is spoken of as a son **prior to coming to earth**. Notice it says that He is the **“Only one who stood in the relation of divine Son”**. Take note also of the comparison between Adam being **“a son of God by creation”** and Christ who is described as God’s **“only-begotten Son”** – also that Christ came to restore fallen humanity as sons of God (in a true sense a child of God).

I say this because the next question asked “What testimony was borne by John the Baptist concerning Jesus?” (John 1:34 cited). The notes said

“Christ is Son of God, not in the sense in which angels, as a class of beings, are designated by this name, but as He who has taken His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Ibid)

This comparison of the angels (as the sons of God) to Christ (as the Son of God) plus the fact that the redeemed are also called the sons of God (as seen in the previous quote – see also Romans 8:14 and 1 John 3:1) was the same comparison as we previously noted was said by Seventh-day Adventist writers whilst Ellen White was alive – particularly E. J. Waggoner. We also noted in [chapter 14](#) that it was the same as was written by Ellen White herself. As she said in 1895

“A complete offering has been made; for “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,”-- *not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father’s person*, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th May 1895, ‘Christ our complete salvation’)

The 1921 Sabbath School lesson study is saying exactly the same. The study notes continued concerning Christ

“The greatness of His position is proportionate to the excellency of the name of Son. This name He has not obtained by favor nor attained by effort, *but inherited by indefeasible right*. . . . **He is Son. Which of the angels was ever so addressed? To speak of the angels as sons and yet say that not one of them individually is a son may be self-contradictory in words, but the thought is consistent and true. . . . (Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 1st quarter 1921, Our Personal Saviour Jesus Christ, page 17-18, lesson 6 for February 5th 1921, ‘The Son of God’)**

The emphasis here is that Christ did not attain to the position of Sonship because of what He personally achieved but was His by right of inheritance. In other words, His Sonship was His inheritance.

In the next quarterly it said (making reference to Hebrews 5: 5, Luke 1: 32, Heb. 2: 16-17 and Acts 13: 33)

“Here the fact is again emphasized that the priesthood of Christ is based upon, and grows out of, *His unique relation to God as the only begotten Son, arising from*

His inherent nature rather than from a merely arbitrary choice.” (SS Lesson Quarterly, 2nd Quarter 1921, lesson 7 for May 14th 1921, ‘Christ Our Priest — After the Work of Melchizedek’)

Here again is clearly seen the ‘begotten faith’ of Seventh-day Adventists. This is where the lesson notes refer to Christ as being “the only begotten Son, *arising from His inherent nature*”. His ‘uniqueness’ is the fact that He is God’s one and only Son. He is of the very nature of God.

In 1925, A. S. Maxwell wrote in ‘The Canadian Watchman’

“Christianity has been built upon the fundamental belief that Jesus Christ was indeed the only begotten Son of God. On this foundation stone has been erected the beautiful structure of the Christian plan of salvation.” (A. S. Maxwell, *The Canadian Watchman*, April 1925, ‘Certainties of the gospel’)

I am sure that throughout this time period many more statements similar to this could be found.

Into the 1930’s

In 1930, this same begotten faith was still the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This can be seen in the fourth quarter’s lesson studies for that year.

In answer to the question “What was He [Christ] declared to be?” (the first part of Romans 1:4 cited) the lesson study said

“Jesus was the Son of God before He was born of the Virgin Mary.” (SS Lesson Study, 4th quarter 1930, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 5, lesson 1 for October 4, 1930 ‘Servants of the Son’)

This is very plainly stated. In fact it is said in a way that cannot be misunderstood.

There are those today (Seventh-day Adventists) who say that Christ is only called a son because of His birth at Bethlehem – meaning the incarnation (we noted this in [chapter 12](#)) - but here we can see that our church in 1930 was still teaching that He was a son in His pre-existence (“before He was born of the Virgin Mary”). This latter concept (Christ a son in His pre-existence) is today condemned by our church as error. Such is the turnaround in thinking of Seventh-day Adventists. Remember, this was written in our Sabbath School lesson studies in 1930 – which was 15 years after the death of Ellen White, also 32 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’. In other words, after having ‘The Desire of Ages’ amongst us for 32 years, it had still not changed our denominational beliefs concerning Christ. He was still taught to be truly the Son of God – God Himself in the person of the Son.

The study then said of Christ

“He was the only-begotten Son of God from the days of eternity.” (*Ibid*)

The next year (1931), under the subtitle ‘The Son of God’, the Associate Editor of the ‘Australian Signs of the Times’ wrote

“Time and time again Jesus spoke of God as “My Father,” and He used that expression in a very special and, indeed, unique sense. He intended it to be understood that He was the Son of God—not merely a son of God as Adam was by creation, or as Christians are by redemption and adoption, but the Son of God, the only being to whom that title could be applied in its unique sense.” (A. M. Fraser,

Australian Signs of the Times, August 21st 1931, 'Christ's testimony concerning Himself')

The evidence is overwhelming. Even into the 1930's, in our official publications such as the Sabbath School lesson studies and 'Signs of the Times' etc, we were still teaching that Christ, in His pre-existence, is truly the Son of God. In [chapter 16](#) we shall see it was the same in 1936 and beyond. Notice Fraser says that Christ is the only One who could have the title Son of God applied to Him "in its unique sense". This reminds us of our study on 'monogenes' (see [chapter 11](#))

Did this previous quote remind you of anything you have read previously? It should do. We noted that through the spirit of prophecy we have been told that

*"A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- **not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person**, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation')*

This is exactly the same sentiment as expressed above by A. M. Fraser. It is that Christ is the only begotten of the Father therefore He is the Son of God in a sense that no other being in the universe can be.

This was exactly the same though as Ellet Waggoner had expressed in 1890 when in his book 'Christ and His Righteousness' he wrote

*"It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the "only begotten Son of God," and therefore **the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be**. The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15), **but Christ is the Son of God by birth**."(E. J. Waggoner, Christ and His Righteousness, page 12)*

This was the ongoing begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventism. It was the faith that Ellen White endorsed as being the truth concerning Christ. As Waggoner also said

*"Christ "is in the bosom of the Father;" **being by nature the very substance of God and having life in Himself, He is properly called Jehovah, the self existing one ...**" (Ibid page 23-24)*

[Proceed to chapter 16](#), 'The Sonship of Christ – official Seventh-day Adventist theology'

Chapter sixteen

The Sonship of Christ – 1936 official Seventh-day Adventist theology

Surprising as it may seem to some, the ‘begotten faith’ concerning Christ, taught by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive (meaning our denominational faith) was held by us through to 1936 and even beyond. This is easily proven by what was taught, during this time period, in our Sabbath School lesson studies.

The 1936 Sabbath School lesson studies

As far as this Godhead study is concerned – which is dealing with the theology and the history of Seventh-day Adventism - the 1936 Sabbath School lesson studies are very important. This is particularly with respect to the final quarter’s set of lessons. This is because as we shall see later, these particular studies, by the General Conference, were endorsed as the official faith of Seventh-day Adventists. These were studies therefore that were taught throughout the world to non-Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh-day Adventists alike. It was then, in 1936, our denominational faith (beliefs).

Truly a son – truly God

In the 4th quarter’s lesson of 1936, under the sub-heading “Deity of Christ” (the main heading was ‘Deity and Pre-existence of Christ’), the lesson study for October 24th asked this question

*“Of whom **was Christ begotten?** (Sabbath School lesson study, 4th quarter, Lesson 4, October 24th 1936, page 12)*

With respect to our Godhead study, this question is of major significance. This is because it shows that even in 1936, the ‘begotten faith’, held by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive, was still then the accepted denominational faith of its members – which was 21 years after her death. We know this was the accepted (official) faith because this is exactly what was being taught in our Sabbath School lesson studies for that year (1936) – as the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This much is unmistakable and irrefutable. We shall see this later.

The above question (“Of whom **was Christ begotten?**”) was asked of all those who participated in these lesson studies – meaning those participating as students and those who were teaching the studies. It must also be remembered that these very same studies went around the world to Seventh-day Adventists and non-Seventh-day Adventists alike – not simply as teaching what was accepted by ‘the few’ as the truth concerning Christ but as detailing what was then, in 1936, the denominational faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This ‘begotten faith’ therefore was still, in 1936, the world-wide faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

As we shall see later, because these studies were endorsed by the General Conference, it can be safely assumed that in the late 1930’s this was still our denominational faith. This means that this faith must have been the accepted denominational faith (preponderant faith) even in the 1940’s. The reason why I say this is because no denomination can change the

preponderant belief of its entire worldwide membership overnight. It does take time - also death.

Look at it this way.

If our church leadership decided today they wanted to change the day we regard as the Sabbath' (the seventh-day of the week - Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday), how long do you think this would take to achieve (if it could be achieved)? Obviously it would not happen overnight. It would take decades of subtle promoting to do it – and then it would need to be done in a way that was imperceptible to the average person. In other words, it would have to be done gradually over a very long period of time – with many of the 'old stalwarts' of our original faith having died off. This is how it was with the begotten concept – meaning that Christ is truly the Son of God. It took time and subtle reasoning in our publications – also death - to change this faith denominationally but to a very great degree it has been changed.

As containing the answer to this 'begotten' question ("Of whom was Christ begotten"), the lesson study cites Psalms 2:7 and John 1:14. This means that the expected answer is that Christ was begotten of God (the Father). This is in direct contrast to what is taught today by Seventh-day Adventists.

The fact is that today (2011), 75 years on from 1936, our church is saying that this 'begotten concept' is false doctrine (heresy). They say that Christ is not begotten therefore He is not really a son. It is said, mainly by our scholars, that this Sonship teaching demeans Christ. This is something that as God's remnant people we did not say for the first 100 plus years of our history – 70 years of which was when God spoke to us through His elected servant Ellen White. During this time period, we regarded Christ's Sonship as absolutely vital to our denominational faith. One reason was that it says that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. Another reason is that any other belief would make null and void our then understanding of God's sacrifice and the atonement.

The lesson study then quotes from the spirit of prophecy saying

"He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the *express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind.*" - "Ministry of Healing," p. 422." (Ibid)

This was the reason why the 'begotten concept' was so important. Christ is said to be the "**express image of the invisible God**". It was God (deity) revealing God. The study further quotes Ellen White as saying

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. *Christ alone is 'the express image' of the Father*; but man was formed in the likeness of God." (Ibid)

As we shall now see, the entire point of this particular section of the lesson study was to show that Christ is literally begotten of God (the Father) therefore showing He was truly both the Son of God and God Himself (in the person of the Son). Notice it says that only Christ ("**Christ alone**") is the express image of the Father. No mention is made of the Holy Spirit. Never in the Scriptures is He said to be the express image of the Father's person. Never is He said to be begotten of the Father. This can only be said of Christ. He is the only begotten of God.

The lesson quarterly then notes (because the Son is begotten of the Father)

"Hebrews 1:4 tells us that the Son's name, God, was "a more excellent name" than the angels received, **because He obtained it "by inheritance,"** that is, as "heir of all things." (Ibid)

Christ received this "inheritance" because He was begotten of the Father. This is why some of the early Christian writings say "very God from very God" ('true God from true God'). We also noted (in [chapter 13](#)) that this was the same faith as spoken of by E. J. Waggoner in his book 'Christ and His Righteousness'.

The study also said

"A son is the natural heir, **and when God made Christ His heir, He recognized His sonship.**" (Ibid)

Note the study says that "**when God made Christ His heir**". This is obviously with reference to Christ's pre-existence – when He was originally begotten of the Father. This is referring to a point in eternity when this happened. This is when the Father "recognized His [Christ's] sonship".

The Sabbath School lesson study concludes

"This is why the Son bore **the same name as His Father.**" (Ibid)

Here again we see the past 'begotten faith' of Seventh-day Adventism. It is that Christ is truly (literally) the Son of God and is therefore God Himself in the person of the Son. As God says of Christ, 'my name is in Him' (see Exodus 23:21). We noted in [chapter 9](#) that Christ is the God of the Old Testament – also the 'angel' who led the Jews through the wilderness etc. It is also the same as Waggoner said in his book 'Christ and His Righteousness' (see [chapter 13](#)).

With reference to Matthew 1:23, the lesson study later said

"Here again the Son is called by the **Father's name, "God."** This is **because He "was God."** John 1:1." (Ibid)

This is exactly the same as was taught by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive – that Christ "was God". Particularly we noted this in [chapter 13](#).

After saying that the apostle Paul affirmed the deity of the Son, the lesson says

"Paul's language is equivalent to John's when the latter says, "The Word was made flesh." John 1:14. He affirms that the Jesus who was "born of a woman" **was really God.**" (Ibid)

Here is the main emphasis of the study. It is that Christ "**was really God**". Throughout this 1936 Sabbath School study it was stressed over and over again that because Christ is the Son of God He is God. This was no different than what had always been believed by Seventh-day Adventists. We have seen this in previous chapters.

From this we can see that remarks saying that the 'begotten concept' depicts Christ as "some sort of derived or created semigod" – "a "god" of lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father" - as made by those such as Woodrow Whidden in the book 'The Trinity' (see [chapter 12](#) of this study) - are not only completely unwarranted but also totally misrepresentative of what is really believed by those who accept that the Scriptures say that Christ is truly the Son of God.

The witness of the Father

This same 1936 lesson study then asks (with reference to the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration)

“What public announcement of **His Son's deity** did the Father make on two different occasions?” (*Ibid* page 12)

As Matthew 3:17 and 17:5 (the baptism of Christ and His transfiguration) is cited as containing the answer, we can see that it is being said that the Father confirmed “**His Son's deity**” by calling Him ‘His Son’ (“this is my beloved son”). Again this is the very same ‘begotten faith’ that throughout the time of Ellen White’s ministry was held by Seventh-day Adventists. It was because Christ is the Son of God, He must be divine. The Jews who had heard the claim of Jesus reasoned exactly the same way (see John 5:18). They said He was claiming to be equal with God. We took note of this in [chapter 6](#).

Christ’s origins

The lesson study then helps us to realise just what it was concerning Christ’s ‘origins’ that Seventh-day Adventists believed and taught in 1936.

After asking “What testimony concerning His deity did Christ Himself give”, also citing John 16:27, 28 and 8:58 as containing the answer, the study notes said

“The direct statement of Jesus, “I came forth from the Father,” **reads literally, “I came out of the Father.”** Putting with this, His testimony in John 10:38, “The Father is in Me, and I in Him,” we have His **personal witness that He truly was “begotten of the Father,”** as John says in 1:14.” (*Ibid*)

This is another striking realisation. This reveals that in 1936, Seventh-day Adventists still maintained - just as they had done so during Ellen White’s ministry - that Christ literally “came out of the Father”. This is what is meant by “begotten of the Father”.

Note the emphasis that the words of Jesus (as found in John 10:38) reveal that Christ “**truly is “begotten of the Father”**”. How much clearer could this be to show what was being taught in 1936 within Seventh-day Adventism? This was still then, at that time, the authorised (official) denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. We shall confirm this later.

This was also an affirmation of deity. The fact that Christ ‘came out’ of the Father is showing that He is God but notice that the study cites John 8:58. This is where Jesus said to the Jews “before Abraham was I am”. This is when the Jews, realising what Christ was claiming, took up stones to kill Him.

From the days of eternity

On the next page, the lesson study asks the following question (this was under the heading of ‘Pre-existence of Christ’)

“When does the prophet say **the life of the Son began?** Micah 5:2. margin.” (*Ibid*, page 13)

This is extremely revealing. It shows that in 1936 it was still the preponderant belief of Seventh-day Adventists that the personality of the Son had a beginning (see Ellen White in [chapter 10](#) and [14](#) where she says that Christ’s “divine life could not be reckoned by human computation” neither “measured by figures”) but as we have seen so many times previously in this study, this did not make Him a lesser divine being than God.

It is because Christ is begotten of God that He is God Himself in the person of His Son. Throughout the entire Sabbath School study, this was the stress of its author(s).

The lesson study then says

“While we cannot comprehend eternity - without beginning and without ending - yet it is dearly affirmed here that the life which Christ possesses is **“from the days of eternity.”**” (*Ibid page 13*)

This is a reference to Micah 5:2 but not exactly as quoted in the KJV. Instead of the words “from everlasting” as used in the KJV, the margin notes are employed (“**from the days of eternity**”). This was common practise within Seventh-day Adventism. It was also done a number of times by Ellen White.

In ‘The Desire of Ages’ (this was with reference to Jesus saying, “Before Abraham was I am” - John 8:58) she wrote

“Silence fell upon the vast assembly. **The name of God**, given to Moses to express the idea of **the eternal presence**, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be **the self-existent One**, He who had been promised to Israel, “whose goings forth have been from of old, **from the days of eternity.**” Micah 5:2, margin. (*Ellen White, The Desire of Ages, page 469, ‘The light of Life’*)

Note the use of the “margin” reading instead of the KJV text.

In this same book she had also said previously concerning Mary the mother of Jesus

“She is of the lineage of David, and the Son of David must be born in David's city. Out of Bethlehem, said the prophet, “shall He come forth . . . that is to be ruler in Israel; **whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.**” Micah 5:2, margin.” (*Ellen G. White, ‘The Desire of Ages, page 44, ‘Unto you a Saviour’, 1898*)

Ellen White also quoted the margin reading of Micah 5:2 in Patriarchs and Prophets (see page 697 - ‘The Coming of a Deliverer’).

The words “**from the days of eternity**” (margin notes) - rather than ‘from everlasting’ as in the KJV text - were far better suited to what was then the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The words ‘from everlasting’ would tend to obscure the concept that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father. This is probably why, in such an important book on the life of Christ which was to go to non-Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world, that Ellen White used the margin notes – although she did not always use them. In this Sabbath School lesson study, this phrase, “**from the days of eternity**”, was used four times.

The 1936 lesson study also said

“Cumulative evidence that **the Son existed with the Father before creation is abundant in the Scriptures.** In the few passages we have studied here, we find that Christ was with the Father “before the world was,” **“from the days of eternity,”** “before the foundation of the world,” “before all things.”” (*Ibid*)

It then explained

“He was therefore **no part of creation, but was “begotten of the Father” in the days of eternity, and was very God Himself.**” (*Ibid page 13*)

Over and over again this 1936 lesson study conveyed the belief that Christ was truly begotten of the Father therefore He was considered to be truly the Son of God - also as this lesson stated, "very God Himself".

The lesson concluded concerning what the Scriptures tell us about Christ and His deity

"The teaching of the scriptures in this lesson is little short of over whelming in its marvelous meaning to us in the personal life. The Lord Jesus Christ, **the Son of God, and God Himself**, who existed with the Father "**from the days of eternity**," who made the world and all things therein—even this Jesus "gave Himself for our sins," and by believing **on the name of this Son of God**, we obtain the gift of eternal life, and may share it with Him throughout the eternal ages, world without end." (*Ibid*)

That Christ is truly begotten of God was, according to this 1936 lesson study, the overwhelming evidence that He is none other than God Himself. This 'begotten' faith, as it was explained in our Sabbath School lesson quarterlies in 1936, was undoubtedly a continuation of the faith of our pioneers and early Seventh-day Adventists.

As we shall now confirm, in 1936 and beyond, this was still the 'official denominational faith' of Seventh-day Adventists.

The 1936 Sabbath School Lessons – 'the truth' says the General Conference

In the Review and Herald of December 17th 1936, a reference was made to the set of lesson studies that were being studied that very quarter (the 4th quarter 1936). These are the lessons that we have just been quoting from above. The title of the series of lessons was "Bible Doctrines". This was the first of **7 separate consecutive quarters** (almost two years) of lesson studies designed to teach what was then **the doctrines held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church**. This was 44 years prior to the official adopting of the trinity doctrine into our fundamental beliefs (1980).

After making the appeal that the time had come when we should take what we learn from our Sabbath School lesson studies to a further audience than our Sabbath School classes and teachers etc, it was said by G. A. Roberts (who apart from being the president of the Southern Union Conference held other senior offices)

"Has not the time come when each Sabbath school student who studies the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath school lesson should recite or teach that Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath school lesson **to some one who is without its blessing of truth** - to a neighbor, to some friend, to a group in a cottage meeting, as a Sunday night sermon in a tent or hall, or in some other way to some other persons?" (*G. A. Roberts, Review and Herald, December 17th 1936, 'The Sabbath School Lesson'*)

There was undoubtedly a very strong 'push' for Seventh-day Adventists to share their denominational faith with others. This was the faith as found in these lesson studies.

Roberts then added

"Should not each Sabbath school pupil lift up his eyes and look on the field of his own neighborhood or circle of acquaintances that is white to harvest, and carry to that field **the message contained in the present Sabbath school lessons**? Should not each thus become an open channel as well as a reservoir of truth?" (*Ibid*)

This is the key issue. These Sabbath lessons were meant to be shared with those **not of our denomination**. It was to show the world what we, as a denomination, believed.

This was an appeal not only with reference to the studies of **that particular quarter** but also to the ones that were to follow **for the next six quarters**. As has been said, these were designed to cover **all** the essential doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism.

This appeal said

“The opportunity of a lifetime is now before us **to teach the truth** to our neighbors and communities, **for the Sabbath school lessons on Bible doctrines are well adapted to that very purpose.**” (*Ibid*)

The same author then made clear

“The outline at the close of each lesson will helpfully guide in the matter; and as the present lessons on doctrines **are fully authenticated by the lesson committee of the General Conference Sabbath School Department**, any one can know that what he teaches as he presents the lesson as a Bible reading or a sermon **is correct.**” (*Ibid*)

Here we have the ultimate proof that the ‘officially approved faith’ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1936 was still that Christ is truly begotten of God (the Father) – also that because of this He is a true Son (as seen in the lesson studies we have reviewed above). As it says here, these lessons were “the truth” – also that they were “fully authenticated by the lesson committee of the General Conference Sabbath School Department”.

Notice too that it says that if anyone teaches these doctrines as presented in the lesson studies they can know that what they are teaching “is correct”. This is probably quite a realisation to those who say that the ‘one time’ begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventists was error (false doctrine) – or that by this time (1936) it had disappeared from Seventh-day Adventism. Quite obviously it had not disappeared – neither was it believed to be error.

There then followed an appeal that every Sabbath School teacher should be an instructor of the truth to those seeking baptism

“With the instruction gained from week to week, when several quarters have passed **the Sabbath school teachers should be competent instructors for baptismal classes**, and can easily take charge of such classes for the evangelists. **If there is no evangelist or pastor, the Sabbath school teacher can prepare candidates for baptism from the membership of his Sabbath school class, and then request that a minister be sent to baptize them.**” (*Ibid*)

According to what is said here, if the Sabbath School teacher instructed an individual in the teachings found in these 1936 lesson studies, this would be preparation for baptism. These beliefs were obviously regarded as of prime importance – also that a belief in them was a prerequisite to church membership. It leaves one to wonder what would have been the result if a prospective baptismal candidate had said that he (or she) did not believe that Christ was begotten of God (God’s true Son) – as is said today in official Seventh-day Adventism? Would they have been refused baptism and thus refused church membership?

The lesson studies – invaluable

Very interesting is that the following January (1937), also in the Review and Herald, there was an advertisement for a binder in which to keep these Sabbath School studies. As we shall soon see, this was because of a directive given at the previous 1936 General Conference held at San Francisco.

It said in the Review and Herald concerning this binder

“It will preserve all your lesson pamphlets, covering Bible Doctrines as outlined in the Sabbath school lessons for seven full quarters. These lessons have been prepared under ***the careful supervision of the Sabbath School Department***, and you will want to keep them. ***They are invaluable for continuous reference.***” (*Review and Herald, January 14th 1937, ‘Preserve your Lesson Quarterlies on Bible Doctrines’*)

Again we can see that these sets of lesson studies were said to contain ***the truly authentic faith of Seventh-day Adventists***. This is as it was during the time period leading up to the 1940’s. Notice how much care was taken in the preparation of these studies. They were said to be “invaluable for ***continuous reference***”. Not so today it seems.

General Conference endorses the Sabbath School lesson studies on “Bible Doctrines”

At the General Conference Committee meeting on December 6, 1935, it was reported under the heading of “Sabbath School Lesson Manuscripts”

“The Sabbath School Department ***desiring special help in their Lessons Committee*** during the time when they will be considering the manuscripts for the lessons on Bible doctrines, it was

VOTED, That I. H. Evans, W. H. Branson, O. Montgomery, M. E. Kern, F. M. Wilcox and W. E. Howell ***be appointed to read the manuscripts and sit with the Sabbath School Department Lessons Committee*** when consideration is given to the lessons on Bible doctrines,” (*General Conference Committee Minutes, December 6th 1935*)

These were the lesson studies that were to commence from the 4th quarter 1936. These leading figures of Seventh-day Adventism (mentioned above) were voted to give “***special help***” to those compiling them (the Sabbath School Department). This reveals how important these studies were, at that time, to the General Conference. They obviously did not wish them to contain error. As we shall now see, these studies were intended to ‘tell the world’ what was believed by Seventh-day Adventists.

Prior to the above lesson studies being published (the 4th quarter of 1936 through to the 2nd quarter of 1938), they were also spoken of at the General Conference Session held previously that year (1936) in San Francisco. It was during the final day’s proceedings that this discussion took place.

After discussing a number of other items, there followed recommendations concerning the Sabbath School work. This included the “urging greater efforts toward the reaching of Sabbath School goals and standards” also “greater care in the selecting of Sabbath School teachers and officers”. There was obviously concern that our teachings in our Sabbath School lesson studies should be presented correctly. Other recommendations were made including the encouraging of branch Sabbath Schools.

In the afternoon session, the future Sabbath School Lessons came up for discussion. These were for the 7 consecutive quarters on “Bible Doctrines” spoken of above.

In the Review and Herald report of the conference it said

“Beginning with the fourth quarter of 1936, the Sabbath school lessons for the denomination for ***seven consecutive quarters*** are to cover ***the essential doctrines of this message***. It was recommended that our people everywhere be encouraged ***to use these lessons as a basis for conducting Bible readings and cottage***

meetings in the homes of neighbors and friends, and that Bible training classes be organized in every church for this purpose.” (*Review and Herald, June 18th 1936, Report of the final day’s session at the 1936 General Conference held at San Francisco, ‘The Sabbath School Lessons for 1936’*)

We can now see why these Sabbath School lesson studies were so very high profile. It was said at the General Conference session in 1936 that they were to cover “**the essential doctrines**” of our message. These studies were also recommended as a basis for conducting Bible studies and organised cottage meetings etc. They were in fact then, the ‘officially taught doctrines’ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Note again - this is 1936.

In the official report of the conference detailing the recommendations it said

“Beginning with the fourth quarter of 1936, the Sabbath school lessons for **seven quarters will cover the essential doctrines of our faith**; therefore, We recommend,

1. That in connection with the study of this important series of lessons, our people throughout the world be encouraged to use these lessons as **a basis for conducting Bible readings and cottage meetings in the homes of their neighbors and friends.**

2. That in preparation for this advance step, **Bible training classes be organized in all our churches**, as outlined by the General Conference Home Missionary Department.

3. That our publishing houses be requested to provide suitable loose-leaf folders for the use of those who desire to keep on file **the series of Sabbath school lessons on Bible doctrines.**” (*Review and Herald, June 18th 1936, ‘Proceedings of the General Conference, Thirty-second Meeting’*)

From these few remarks it can be seen that this set of Sabbath School studies on the doctrines of our church was indeed very highly rated. This was not ‘just another’ (an ordinary) set of Sabbath School lesson studies. Note too they were continued over 7 quarters, meaning from the 4th quarter of 1936 to the 2nd quarter of 1938.

Four weeks later in the *Review and Herald* - this time under the title of ‘Home Missionary Department Meetings’ - it spoke of the recent councils of the secretaries of the Home Missionary Department.

It said

“All these departmental meetings interspersed through the General Conference session **were marked by an earnest spirit of study to solve perplexing problems**, and by intense desire to improve every moment of the opportunity afforded for binding off the discussions and plans developed in the pre-council, thus conserving and preserving the deliberations of the entire council **for the future guidance of leaders in the layman’s missionary movement when they will be widely separated throughout the great world field.**” (*Grace D. Mace, Review and Herald, July 16th 1936, ‘Home Missionary Department Meetings’*)

The report then stated

“A great deal of time was required for the consideration of a topic of unusual interest, —how to make the most effective missionary use **of the Sabbath school lessons on Bible doctrines which the Sabbath School Department has provided to be used beginning with the fourth quarter of 1936 and covering a period of seven**

consecutive quarters. The chairman explained that these lessons are prepared in a form which provides a simple outline for a Bible reading on each doctrinal subject.”
(Ibid)

The chairman was then reported as saying

"For years there has been a demand from many parts of the field for a series of doctrinal Sabbath school lessons framed in such a way that **our church members could use them as outlines for Bible studies in the homes of friends and neighbors.** Now that we have such a set of lessons, **we should thank God,** and improve the opportunity to lead all our people into the broad field of Bible evangelism.”
(Ibid)

He followed this by saying

“It is estimated that there are about 100,000 Sabbath school teachers in our churches throughout the world, who will stand before their classes each week and give instruction on all doctrinal subjects. It would be wonderful if these hundred thousand Sabbath school teachers would spend a little time each week **in teaching the lesson to groups of people or to individuals upon whose pathway the light of truth has not yet dawned.**” (Ibid)

These lesson studies were obviously regarded as a blessing from God – therefore having His divine approval. It was said that “we should thank God” for them. As we can also see, these lesson studies were also very much in demand from “the field”.

The chairman also added

"But this is not all that we should aim to accomplish. Every member of each Sabbath school class should be encouraged to make contact with some person who is seeking for a better understanding of God's word, **and in an informal way give him a Bible study each week on the lesson which he has already studied and received personal instruction upon in the Sabbath school class.** What can we do, brethren, to lead the entire 'church at study' into the place where it becomes the entire 'church at work'?" (Ibid)

After reading the above, it should go without saying that by the General Conference, these sets of studies on “Bible Doctrines” were rated as extremely important – especially as an outreach to non-Seventh-day Adventists. They were to be used as teaching ‘the truth’ to all those who had not yet received our message. According to the General Conference (this was as the 1940’s approached), this set of studies contained the “essential doctrines” of the faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We can safely assume therefore that in the 1940’s, these same doctrines were still the faith of our denomination - worldwide.

As has been said previously, it would be impossible overnight to change the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world. To achieve this would take quite a long time – decades even.

Today, over 70 years after the publication of this set of lesson studies, this begotten concept concerning Christ has almost been obliterated – although not quite. There are still those who hold to it. In other words, some Seventh-day Adventists today still believe that Christ is truly the Son of God. As time passes, this number is increasing. God will always have His people who remain loyal to His revealed word.

An interesting observation

In passing and as a matter of interest, I will now share something else with you. Whilst to some this may not seem very significant, I personally regard it as saying something very important.

In the final set of studies on “Bible Doctrines” (this was in the Sabbath School lessons for the 2nd quarter of 1938) it had as a sub-title to one section

“CHURCH MEMBERS SHARE FELLOWSHIP OF FATHER AND SON” (*Sabbath School Lesson Studies, Bible Doctrines, Lesson 9 for May 28, 1938, page 26*)

You may be asking “why do I regard this as significant?” I will explain.

Ask yourself this question – Why did not the lesson study say “Church Members Share Fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit”?

The obvious answer is that just as it was during the time of the pioneers, the Holy Spirit was still not regarded as a divine person like God and Christ are persons. To any thinking person, this statement will now become very significant.

In fact near the beginning of the lesson study we have been looking at it said

“NOTE.—The Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son, that is, as the Son's representative. The Spirit "proceedeth from the Father," to do His work in the earth.” (*Ibid page 11*)

It then says

“**Hence the Father sends the Spirit, and the Son sends the Spirit.** The Son speaks what the Father gives Him to speak, and the Spirit speaks what the Son gives Him to speak. **The Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.** How could there be more perfect accord, more complete unity? (*Ibid*)

As we shall see in chapters 18, 19 and 20, that the Holy Spirit was both God and Christ omnipresent was the faith of the non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists. By 1936, this belief had not changed.

In chapter 17 we shall see that in our official publications during the 1940's and beyond, this begotten concept concerning Christ was still being taught. This is why we know, also from reviewing the above, that the following statement is truth mixed with error

“Not only did Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*, believe until his death in 1903 that Christ had a beginning, **but during the first decades of this century there were many who held on to the view that in some way Christ came forth from the Father**, i.e., he had a beginning, **and was therefore inferior to Him.**” (*Gerhard Pfandl, 'The doctrine of the trinity among Adventists', 1999*)

This is definitely truth mixed with error. As we have seen from the above, the continuing faith of Seventh-day Adventists for decades following the death of Ellen White was that Christ is truly begotten of the Father and is therefore truly God's Son (which is the truth of the statement) but the error in this statement is that this begotten faith made Christ to be inferior to the Father. As we have seen above, the begotten concept made Christ God in the person of the Son therefore equal to the Father (not inferior to Him). This latter allegation is just a misrepresentation of the facts. Such though today is how our past history, also our past

theology, is misrepresented by our church leadership. Unfortunately, many Seventh-day Adventists are believing these misrepresentations.

[Proceed to chapter 17](#), 'The Sonship of Christ - the continuing belief of Seventh-day Adventists'

Chapter seventeen

The Sonship of Christ - the continuing belief of Seventh-day Adventists (1940's onward)

We have noted in chapters [13](#) and [14](#), that during the time period of Ellen White's ministry – also right through to the end of the 1930's/beginning of the 1940's, it was the preponderant belief within Seventh-day Adventism that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father, meaning that He was truly the Son of God. In this chapter we shall see that this same belief was taught within our publications in the 1940's and onwards.

The 1940's

In 1940 (this was two years after the last of the Sabbath School studies on 'Bible Doctrines' - see [chapter 16](#)), in a letter to the General Conference objecting to the trinity doctrine, Judson Washburn wrote with reference to this teaching

*“This monstrous doctrine transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church **is seeking to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel's Message.**” (Judson Washburn, *The trinity, Letter to General Conference in 1940*)*

To some, this may seem rather surprising but the trinity doctrine, even in 1940, was still not part of the fundamentals beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists – which obviously it wouldn't be seeing that it was still then being taught officially in Seventh-day Adventism that at some point in eternity Christ came out of the Father (see [chapter 16](#)). As Washburn said, the trinity doctrine then, in 1940, was only *“**seeking to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel's Message.**”*

Judson Washburn had been one of the leading evangelists in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1875 he had been baptised by James White and was a close friend of Ellen White. He had kept her informed of the progress of the work in the world wherever it took him. He knew and understood perfectly well the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. Having been baptised as early as 1875, he would have known many of the pioneers. He would also have agreed with the 1936 studies on the Godhead (see [chapter 16](#)). It was this 'faith' that he had always taught. By the time he wrote this letter to the conference, Washburn had been a member of our church for 65 years. He knew exactly what was believed and taught by Seventh-day Adventists.

In the Review and Herald of August 23rd the next year (1941), there was an editorial called 'Christ's claims concerning Himself'. It was the second in a series called 'The faith of Jesus' and was written by Frederick Lee, associate editor of the 'Review and Herald'. It began

*“**Christ made stupendous claims concerning Himself.** This should be clear to anyone who has read the four Gospel records of His life. The Christian religion **must stand or fall on the claims of Christ.**” (F. Lee, *Review and Herald, August 21st 1941, 'Christ's claims concerning Himself'*)*

A truer statement has never been made. Christ is the very foundation of the Christian faith.

It then said

“All men must decide personally whether or not they believe that Christ, though being the son of man in fact, **is likewise the Son of God in reality.**” (*Ibid*)

Who is Christ? This is the testing question. Is He really who He claimed to be – the divine Son of God? According to the Associate Editor of the Review He is. He said that Christ is “the Son of God **in reality**”.

In 1941, this ‘Sonship’ faith was still the preponderant faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The author of the article then added

“**Christ believed Himself to be the Son of God, and declared it on many occasions** either directly or by inference, and allowed others to address Him in this manner. **This is a chief tenet in the faith of Jesus that one must assent to in mind and accept in spirit in order to receive the marvelous benefits which Christ offers to men.**” (*Ibid*)

Following this – also after saying that even after the influence of Christ’s life for two thousand years, mankind is still hesitating to declare that Christ is “the Son of the living God” (see Matthew 16:16) - the author wrote.

“**Nevertheless the controversy concerning the divinity of Christ** has raged within the ranks of the Christian church from postapostolic times down to the era of Modernism. **Those who hesitate to acknowledge Him as the true Son of God** apparently have no reluctance in acclaiming Him to be the world’s perfect man, seemingly not realizing that by so doing they are quite inconsistent and are proclaiming a paradox.” (*Ibid*)

Note the remark – “the true Son of God” – also that Christ’s claim to divinity is integrally linked to His Sonship. In other words, if Christ is the Son of God then He must be divine. He must be God. Lee then said

“How could Christ, with all He claimed to be, be untrue in those claims and still be perfect? **Either Christ is what He claims to be or He is the world’s worst impostor.**” (*Ibid*)

Saying that Christ is the “true Son of God” is saying also that He is truly divine. As the author said, Christ was either who He claimed to be – the Son of God – or He is the “world’s worst impostor”.

Referring to the baptism of Jesus and the words of the Father saying "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee - I am well pleased" (see Luke 3:22) the article said

“These words no doubt awakened within the soul of Christ a conviction that was ever present with Him, **that He was indeed the Son of God** come into the world to fulfill those prophecies which foretold the coming of Him who was with God before the foundations of the earth were laid and who should come to redeem men from the thralldom of sin and death. Following this awakening, **the first challenge He had to meet was concerning His Sonship**, for the devil, who met Him in the wilderness, hurled at Him not once, but twice, the insinuating words. "Thou be the Son of God." Matt. 4:3, 6.” (*Ibid*)

The author concluded

“Let us hasten to suggest that Christ looked upon God *as His Father in verity and not merely in the spiritual sense in which we speak of God as our Father today.* No one can read Christ's words without being certain of this.” (Ibid)

Notice here the emphasis that the author is placing upon saying that Christ is **“indeed the Son of God”** – also that Christ **“in verity”** (in truth) looked upon God as His father. As Lee says, this is not as we call God our Father (**“the spiritual sense”**). As he said (we have noted this previously), the very first challenge Jesus met as His ministry began **“was concerning His Sonship”** (“if you are the Son of God” said Satan).

The article later said (this was after detailing some of the numerous times that Jesus was called the Son of God – also that He claimed this title for Himself)

“In the Gospel of John it is recorded that Christ referred to Himself as “the Son” or “the Son of God” *more than twenty times.*” (Ibid)

There can be no dispute regarding the point that Lee was making. He also said

“Christ was rejected of His people and condemned to die *because He claimed to be the Son of God.*” (Ibid)

As we have seen in [chapter 6](#), the reason why the Jews said that Christ was worthy of death was because He claimed to be the Son of God. They said that by making this claim, He was making Himself equal to God (see John 5:18). They knew exactly what He was claiming.

In 1943, in an article called ‘He must have been God’ (sub-heading – ‘Twenty-Two Claims to Deity’), J. C. Stevens wrote (this was after saying that some people say that Christ was only a good man and not divine)

“*But if He were not divine, if He were not the Son of God as He so often claimed to be, then it would put a strain on one's faith to believe that He was a good man, or a saint, because His claims would have been untrue, misleading, and deceptive—claims that could be made only by an impostor.*” (J. C. Stevens, *Signs of the Times*, 2nd February 1943, ‘He must have been God’)

As we know, Christ was no deceiver or impostor. This is why when He said He was the Son of God He meant it. In reality, there is no reason to believe otherwise. Note again the link between Him being the Son of God and being divine. Each time the two go hand in hand.

Stevens then goes on to list 22 claims that Christ made (concluding Christ to be deity) – number 5 of which said

“*He claimed to be the Son of God, not denying that He was also the Son of man.* Of the blind man whom He had healed, He asked, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God ? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, *Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.***” John 9:35-37. He” (Ibid)**

We dealt with this encounter in [chapter 6](#).

On page 14 - after listing the 22 claims of Christ - also in conclusion of his study (as opposed to what is believed by trinitarians), Stevens said

“Now after all these claims, there is but one choice: we must either believe He was what He claimed to be, or that He was a mad blasphemer; but He was exactly what He claimed to be. *He was the Son of God. He was divine.*** And when He died**

on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sins of the world, **His was not a human sacrifice, but a divine one. He was the Son of God in human form.** What a wonderful Saviour! He is able to save to the uttermost! (*Ibid*)

Note the words “His was not a human sacrifice, but a divine one”. This is a denial of the trinity doctrine. Trinitarians say that at Calvary only the human nature of Christ died and not a divine person. Thus they say we only have – and only need for atonement – a sacrifice which is human. Note here again the emphasis on Christ being the Son of God. It is unmistakable. It is this that makes him divine.

In the same issue of the ‘Signs of the Times’, in the ‘Bible School’ section, there was a Bible Study called ‘Christ’s pre-existence and Deity’. This shows what was taught in 1943 by Seventh-day Adventists (Arthur S. Maxwell was then the ‘Signs’ editor). In the Bible study the question was asked

“Did Christ exist **before He was born of the Virgin Mary?** (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, 2nd February 1943, ‘Signs Bible School’, ‘Christ’s pre-existence and Deity’*)

After giving the answer as being found in Colossians 1:17, Youngs added this note

“NOTE.—“Before the world was.” That is, from eternity, before this world was created. Jesus, praying the Father in John 17: 24, said, “for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” Before the creation of this world, or the starry heavens, even before an angel was brought into existence by the creative hand of God, **God begot His Son, Jesus Christ, of His own substance.**” (*Ibid*)

We see here that the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God (begotten of God) was still, in 1943, being taught in our periodicals. This was in the form of a Bible study. Notice again that Christ’s claim to divinity is integral to Him claiming to be the Son of God.

After quoting John 10:30 and 33, Youngs says (this was in answer to question 13 - ‘Why did the Jews persecute and put to death the Lord Jesus?’)

NOTE.—The Jews of Christ’s time **would not accept His claim to divine Sonship.** They were willing to accept Him as a great prophet. They were willing for Him to have the temporal throne, and to deliver them from Roman bondage. **But whenever Jesus laid claim to divinity, and called Himself the Son of God,** or made Himself equal with God, they persecuted Him, and then finally put Him to death. The only explanation of Christ is that He was God revealed in human form. He is the I AM of ancient Israel.” (*Ibid*)

Again we can see that this begotten concept makes Christ equal to God – not inferior to Him. The article says that the Jews recognised Christ’s claims.

In 1944, in the ‘Canadian Signs of the Times’, there was published an article written by its editor. He had been working for our church since his youth in the early 1900’s.

In this article he wrote

“**Jesus was born again** nineteen centuries ago.” (*Robert B. Thurber, Canadian Signs of the Times. December 1944, ‘Ring out, bells of Heaven!’*)

To be “born again” a person would already needed to have been born at least once. He then added

"Sometime, in infinity before that, He was "begotten" of His Father. Whatever that may mean, and more than that, we do not know. And wise is the man **who refrains from speculating on what has not been revealed about divinity.**" (*Ibid*)

He later said in the article

"Our first birth was similar to His second birth; **our second birth may be similar to His first;** except that He is **the "first begotten" and the "only begotten."** God "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I Peter 1:3." (*Ibid*)

Note - this was in 1944. This is exactly the same faith as was held by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive. It was still highly prominent, in 1944, in Seventh-day Adventist literature.

In the 'Signs of the Times' in 1946, in a section called 'Bible Lessons' (this was a short study called 'God of the universe'), this question was asked (again this obviously reveals the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists at that time)

"In what particular is the Father superior to all?" (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, January 1st 1946, 'Bible Lessons' – 'God of the universe'*)

The answer was given

"As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5:26." (*Ibid*)

The study then explains

"The superiority of the Father lies in the fact that He is **the source of all life.** No creature in the vast illimitable universe of God may boast of underived life." (*Ibid*)

We studied this in [chapter 5](#). There we took note that both the Bible and the spirit of prophecy reveal it is the Father who is the 'great source of all'. We also saw that they both say that the Father has the pre-eminence – the pre-eminence of a father in a true father-son relationship. Here it is said that the Father is superior because **"He is the source of all life"**. During the time of Ellen White's ministry, this was the faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

The study then asks

"Who only possesses immortality?" (*Ibid*)

The answer is given

"Which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; **who only hath immortality,** dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. 1 Timothy 6:15, 16." (*Ibid*)

This was obviously meant to be referring to the Father. We know this because under the heading 'Son of God', the study asks

"Who is the First-born of every creature? In whose image is the Son?" (*Ibid*)

The answer is returned that Christ is **"the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature."** Colossians 1:15." (*Ibid*)

The study then asks a very important question – also one which is very significant as far as our study is concerned. This is

“When was the Son brought forth?” (Ibid)

This shows that in 1946, in one of our major publications (the Signs of the Times), the begotten concept concerning Christ was still being officially taught. This is further endorsed by the answer given which is that Christ is the wisdom of God brought forth as spoken of in Proverbs chapter 8 (Proverbs 8:22-30 quoted). We reflected on this in [chapter 10](#) of this study

After quoting these verses from Proverbs 8 Youngs added

“Before any other creature was given life, God brought forth His Son, His only-begotten Son, made of His own divine substance and in His express image. Christ was “first-born.” (Ibid)

This again is the begotten concept. It is that in eternity God brought forth a Son of “His own divine substance” and in “His express image”. This was the “first-born” of heaven.

As regarding Christ being the first born of Heaven, we have been told through the spirit of prophecy (this was with reference to the dedication of the baby Jesus)

“The dedication of the first-born had its origin in the earliest times. God had promised to give the First-born of heaven to save the sinner. This gift was to be acknowledged in every household by the consecration of the first-born son.” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 51, ‘The Dedication’)

The Bible study (in the Signs of the Times) then said

“The Son was given self-existent life. He was made immortal; that is, He was given perpetual life within Himself.” (Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, January 1st 1946, ‘Bible Lessons’)

Once again we see the begotten concept. It is that as a personality separate from the Father, Christ received His immortality by virtue of His inheritance (because He was brought forth – begotten - of the Father – very God of very God as the creeds say).

Christ was naturally immortal. This was the inheritance He received from His Father. This is why no one could take His life from Him – but He could voluntarily lay it down (voluntarily give it up).

As Jesus said concerning His life

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” John 10:18

This must have been in His pre-existence. This again shows the pre-eminence of the Father in a true father-son relationship. Christ could not lay down His life without the permission of His Father. We spoke of this pre-eminence in [chapter 5](#).

The study then asked

“With what attitude did the Son regard the Father?” (Ibid)

The answer was given in the words of Jesus to His disciples

"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: **for My Father is greater than I.**" John 14:28

There can be no mistaking that this begotten concept concerning Christ (that He was truly the Son of God) was still being taught within Seventh-day Adventism in 1946.

This was the same in 1949. Under the heading of 'Heaven's first family' Dallas Youngs wrote

"According to the Bible **the Father is the First Cause, the source of all power**; the Son is the active agent in all creation and is the Redeemer; while the Holy Spirit is the representative of both the Father and the Son." (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, 15th February 1949, 'Seekers after truth', No. 7, Heaven first family*)

This again is the begotten concept (the Father "the First Cause"). The Father is the source of all life etc.

With reference to Daniel 7:9 and its author referring to the Father as the 'Ancient of Days' the article said

"Here Daniel calls God the Father the Ancient of Days. **This would seem to indicate priority, in point of time, over any other being in the universe. He is the source of all life**, light, and power. He is without beginning and without end. He possesses life within Himself. He enjoys absolute, unconditional immortality. He has life unborrowed and undervived. **That is to say, He is dependent upon no other for His continuance of life.**" (*Ibid*)

The Bible is very clear that the Son of God is equal to the Father (Philippians 2:6, John 1:1) so what is meant by "priority" here is that the Father is the "First Cause" – or it could be said - the first amongst equals.

A misleading statement

In the Introduction to the book 'The Trinity', co-authored by Woodrow Whidden John Reeve and Jerry Moon it says

"Whereas Arianism and anti-Trinitarianism were very strong among many of the pioneer Adventist leaders, **the Trinitarian view of the Godhead had become the standard view by at least the 1940's, if not earlier. In fact, the view is now the position duly voted in our official statement of the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.** The most recent action took place at the General Conference session of 1980 in Dallas, Texas." (*Introduction to the Seventh-day Adventist publication 'The Trinity', co-authored by Whidden, Moon and Reeve, page 8, 2002*)

There is no way that the "the Trinitarian view of the Godhead", as we hold it today (2011), "had become the standard view by at least the 1940's". This is impossible. As we have seen in [chapter 16](#), our official view, as stated in our 1936 Sabbath School lesson studies, was that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father. This was the view that was still predominant as we went into the 1940's and leading into the 1950's. This is seen above in this chapter. The above statement therefore, in our denominational book 'The Trinity', is a very misleading statement.

The 1950's

Even into the 1950's it was still taught within Seventh-day Adventism that Christ was a son (a literal son) prior to coming to earth.

In an article called 'Was Christ divine', later repeated in the Australian Signs of the Times 6 years later in 1959) Robert H. Pierson wrote

"Some Christian writers may not teach that Jesus was God, but certainly the inspired writers of the New Testament taught that He was, is, **and ever will be the eternal Son of God.**" (Robert H. Pierson, *Australian Signs of the Times*, October 1953, 'Was Christ divine?')

The article later said

"To whom was God the Father speaking on this sixth day of creation week? The New Testament writer John makes it clear it was Jesus, **the Word, the Son of God, who was "with God" in the beginning** and without whom "was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3, 14.) Furthermore the inspired writer declares that He was very God Himself. (Verse 1)" (*Ibid*)

The conclusion was

"Yes, Jesus knew from whence He, as the divine Son of God, came, and He likewise knew that, **as God's only Son**, He was destined to return to His Father." (*Ibid*)

In the 'Signs of the Times' of June 1954 – in answer to the question 'How is it that Christ has power to forgive sins the same as does the Father?' - it said

"Christ has this power because it was **given Him of His Father**. It is resident in the fact that **Christ is God (divine) the same as is God the Father.**" (*Signs of the Times*, June 1954, *Bible Answers*, 'How is it that Christ has power to forgive sins the same as does the Father?')

It then said

"He belongs to the divine family **because He is the only begotten Son of God. God gave His Son all the powers and prerogatives of deity.** "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5:26." (*Ibid*)

Then, after saying that we should remember "that Christ **did not begin His existence** at the time of His birth of the virgin", also after quoting Colossians 1:14-15 which describes Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature", it says

"**Christ, as Paul says, was "first born."** He was before any creature in the universe. Of course we do not believe that He was born in the sense that humans are propagated, **but He was given existence in the divine way**" (*Ibid*)

Here again is the begotten faith. It is that in eternity in a way not revealed by God – meaning unknown and unexplainable by humanity - Christ proceed forth (was begotten) of the Father. Again this is in one of our main publications (the 'Signs of the Times').

The study then adds

“He is of the same essence and substance as the Father. He partook of the same divine powers, among which was the power to forgive sins.” (Ibid)

We can see therefore that even in 1954, in our major publications, the begotten faith was still being taught.

Again in 1954, this time under the heading ‘Christ, the Son of God’, our Sabbath School lessons spoke of the ***“Evidence of His Divine Sonship”***. (*Sabbath School Quarterly, 3rd quarter, lesson 2, July 10th 1954*)

There was also a heading which said ***“The Son of God Becomes the Son of Man”*** (*Ibid*) – obviously meaning that in His pre-existence, Christ was truly a son (truly the Son of God). It also asked questions such as ***“What did Jesus claim concerning His divine sonship?”*** - John 10:36 cited.

In 1956 it said in the third quarter’s lesson study - ***“Why was it necessary for the Son of God to clothe His divinity with humanity? Heb. 2:14-18. Compare John 1:1, 14.”*** (*Sabbath School Quarterly 3rd quarter 1956, July 7th ‘The incarnation’*)

All of these statements and questions in the Sabbath School lesson study (1954 and 1956) are speaking of Christ as a son prior to coming to earth - meaning prior to the incarnation. This was the begotten faith of Seventh-day Adventists – the same faith that today many are saying is true. This is opposed to what is officially taught within Seventh-day Adventism today (2011) which is that Christ is not begotten of God therefore He is not truly the Son of God.

In 1960, R. T. Knight wrote in the 'Signs of the Times'

“Jesus Christ was God from all eternity. The wise man speaking of Christ said: “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” Proverbs 8:23.

Someone has said: "God is one, but He is not solitary. Since God is love, it follows that the Godhead is a society. The love of God must have had an object before the creation of man. ***The eternal object of the eternal love of the eternal Father was the eternal Son. God was Father from all eternity, therefore Christ was Son from all eternity. Eternal Fatherhood involves eternal Sonship.***" (*Robert T. Knight, Australian Signs of the Times, November 1962, ‘Jesus Christ’*)

Here again we have the eternal Sonship idea but the important thing to note is that Christ is still considered truly the Son of God. Note the latter sentence in the quote.

An interesting 1970 understanding

In January 1970, an article was published in the Australian ‘Signs of the Times’ called “How many Gods in the Godhead?”. It was written by a man called J. D. Beyers. He appears to have written this as a rebuttal to the beliefs of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They believe that Christ is a created being and not God. As most people know, they are adamantly against the trinity doctrine, although not for the same reason as the non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists are against it.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are against this teaching because it says that Christ is God. The Seventh-day Adventists non-trinitarians say that Christ is God in the person of the Son. This though is as this is described in the Scriptures and not as in the trinity doctrine – which we know is a belief not stated in Scripture. Beyers did say that in his study he would only use the ‘New World Translation’ of the Scriptures - which is the translation used by Jehovah’s Witnesses. This was obviously done to ‘prove his point’ by using their Bible.

Byers said that the Unitarians accuse trinitarians of forming a belief based upon "a three-headed idol" of the Babylonians. He then says that seeing that Satan was "the ruler of Babylon", he could have invented it based upon what he knew was the truth about God – which is very reasonable thinking. He then says

"Because of this, I prefer to avoid the term "Trinity," which does not appear in the Bible, using instead the Scriptural word "Godhead," which is derived from the Greek Theotais, and means literally "the state of being God," or "divinity". Speaking of the Saviour, the Bible says, "It is in Him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily." Colossians 2:9. **Could He be otherwise than divine, if He possesses the maximum of divinity in Himself?"** (J. D. Beyers, *Australian Signs of the Times*, January 1970, 'How many Gods in the Godhead?')

After a lengthy explanation showing from Scripture that Christ was truly God, he then answers the question "Was Christ created?" In his reply Beyers says

"He was with God the Father in the beginning. (John 1:1.) If Christ had a beginning, and the Father created Him, then prior to that, His Father existed entirely alone. Now the Scripture says that "God is Love." 1 John 4:8. But love itself cannot exist unless there is someone or something to love." (*Ibid*)

This is a very common reasoning amongst the trinitarians but it is only human logic. He later says (and this is what makes his article very interesting)

"It is no accident that Jesus is called the only begotten Son of God. **What God begets is God**—just as surely as what man begets is man, or what beast begets is beast. What man makes is not man, and what God makes or creates is not God. If Smith begets a son, that son, too, is Smith, and when he is a man, those two Smiths are equals, though different in many ways. **In God's case the begetting itself is eternal and is thus different from any earthly begetting.**" (*Ibid*)

This is in keeping with the orthodox trinity doctrine – not the version held today by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It says that Christ is **everlastingly begotten** of the Father. It is also in keeping with where the creeds say that 'Christ is God from God, true God from true God'. This is a mixture of the two teachings (a) Christ begotten of the Father and (b) Christ is co-eternal with the Father.

Apart from anything else, this shows that the begotten concept was still being taught, in 1970, in our periodicals

Near the end of His article Beyers wrote

"All of the above Scripture readings would be meaningless unless we admit that there is **a mysterious unity in the Godhead that transcends any human relationship.** At our earthly level, perhaps the closest we can come to any comprehension of this unity, is in the marriage tie. Man and wife, though "one flesh" are yet two separate individuals. **The Father and the Son are not one being, nor one divine person,** but they, with the Holy Spirit, **are one God.**" (*Ibid*)

Again very interestingly he says in his follow up article the next month (this mainly concerned the Holy Spirit)

"In our article last month, we discussed **the status of the Son of God, showing that as the only-begotten of the Father,** He, too, is a divine being—a separate personality—yet having a mysterious oneness with His Father, which includes the sharing of such titles as "Alpha and Omega," the "I AM," and "Jehovah." (J. D. Beyers,

Australian Signs of the Times, February 1970, '... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit')

An observation concerning the gradual changeover

In an article called 'Questions on Doctrine and "Questions About Christ"', there is found this very interesting comment (this was concerning our gradual changeover from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism)

"When and how did these transformation take place? *I'm not sure we can tell.* The earliest version of the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (1932) describes "the Godhead, or Trinity," as consisting of "the Eternal Father," "the Lord Jesus Christ," and "the Holy Spirit." ***The 1980 revision of the Statement curiously omits the word Trinity***, but clearly affirms and further develops the idea. Belief 2 asserts, "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit a unity of three co-eternal Persons," and Beliefs 3, 4, and 5 deal, respectively, with "God the Eternal Father," "God the Eternal Son," and "God the eternal Spirit.'" (Richard Rice, 'Questions on Doctrine and "Questions About Christ"', Footnote No. 6 page 2)

Richard Rice is professor of theology and philosophy of religion at Loma Linda University, California. In 1969 he received from Andrews University a Master of Divinity degree, also respectively in 1972 and 1974 an MA and PhD in Christian theology from the University of Chicago. He also taught at La Sierra University in California.

In his article he also said (this was concerning changes of wording in our church hymnals)

"One of the church's most significant liturgical sources also points to a doctrinal transition. Looking at the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal of 1985 alongside the 1949 Church Hymnal it replaced, ***we surmise that there were reservations among Adventists about the concept of the Trinity in the late '40s but that these reservations were largely overcome within the next three decades. The 1949 publication altered a number of familiar Christian hymns in order to remove their Trinitarian references. The 1985 publication restored the Trinitarian references to these hymns.*** Thus, the closing line of "Holy, Holy, Holy" in the 1949 hymnal —"God over all who rules eternity"—becomes in the 1985 hymnal "God in three persons, blessed Trinity!" ***The 1949 version of "Come Thou, Almighty King" deletes a stanza that begins with the words "To Thee, great One in Three, Eternal praises be."*** ***The 1985 version restores that stanza.*** The 1985 publication also adds ***no fewer than ten new hymns containing straightforward Trinitarian language.*** Consequently, we can now sing the following lines: "Praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Spirit, three in One" (in hymn 2); "Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name You" (in hymn 30); "The Trinity whom we adore, forever and forever more" (in hymn 148)." (*Ibid*)

I believe we have seen in this study that it would be very difficult to say that by the late 1940's the trinity doctrine had become part and parcel of the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. It took much longer than this for this teaching to become the norm. Thus it can be said that there were more than just "reservations among Adventists about the concept of the Trinity". It is true to say though that "the next three decades" (1950', 1960's and 1970's) saw the trinity doctrine slowly being accepted by many, although not all, Seventh-day Adventists.

I am sure though, as has been said in the 'Introduction' to this study, that if many knew what the term 'trinity' really meant they would deny this teaching. In fact I am sure also that the same amount of Seventh-day Adventists - because of their beliefs concerning Christ and the plan of redemption - are not really trinitarians at all even though they call themselves such.

From the above we can see that when we were a non-trinitarian denomination, we changed the trinitarian wording in hymns to suit our non-trinitarian theology. After we became trinitarian we 'put back' the trinitarian wording.

There have been many significant changes to the words of our hymns to suit the 'new trinity theology' but one very noticeable one was in the song "Holy, Holy, Holy".

In the 1826 original, Reginald Heber had written as the final line in the first and last verses - "God in three persons, blessed Trinity!" - but in our early 'Christ in Song', also in our 1941 Advent Hymnal we omitted the last verse and changed the words in the first verse to read - "God over all, Who rules eternity." This obviously suited what was then our non-trinitarian theology. In the revised 1985 edition of our hymnal, which was 5 years after the trinity doctrine was voted in for the first time as part of our fundamental beliefs (1980) we changed back the words to as they had been originally written by Reginald Heber (meaning putting back the trinitarian wording). Note that in the 1941 edition of our hymnal, the non-trinitarian wording was retained.

In an article called 'The Making of the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal', Wayne Hooper wrote

"By 1981 the Seventh-day Adventist Church Musicians' Guild urged certain General Conference officers to allow preparation of a new hymnbook *to begin immediately.*" (Wayne Hooper, 'The Making of the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal', online article, www.iamaonline.com/worshipmusic/The%20Making%20of%20the%20Seventh.htm0)

This happened one year after the trinity doctrine was first voted into the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism (1980). Wayne Hooper was the co-ordinator of the new hymnal project.

A detailed article, written by Blair Andrew on the change of wording in our church hymnals can be found here

www.scribd.com/doc/25094743/SDA-Church-Hymnals-Change-by-Blair-Andrew.

One final but 'very startling' realisation

What I am calling a 'startling realisation' is that if someone today within Seventh-day Adventism teaches that Christ is begotten of God, as we have seen was taught in our publications for decades after the death of Ellen White – even being officially endorsed by our church in 1936 as the truth concerning Christ's pre-existence (see [chapter 16](#)) - it is quite possible that this person would be frowned upon by our church, probably be called 'a heretic' – and more than likely be made the subject of church discipline. It may even be that for holding such a belief they would be disfellowshipped from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Even ministers could have their ministerial credentials withdrawn for believing such a thing. Is not this a startling realisation? This shows how dramatically, over recent decades, that the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists have changed.

In [chapter 18](#) we shall be taking a look at what the Scriptures say concerning the Holy Spirit.

[Proceed to chapter 18](#), 'The Holy Spirit - what the Scriptures say'

Chapter eighteen

The Holy Spirit - what the Scriptures say

In the present Godhead debate within Seventh-day Adventism, one of the major problem areas is regarding the Holy Spirit. Most it seems believe that He is a person but not all agree as to what is meant by 'person'.

Some Seventh-day Adventists, mainly the trinitarians amongst us, say that the Holy Spirit is a person exactly the same as the Father and the Son are persons whilst others, mainly the non-trinitarians, are saying that His nature cannot be understood by humanity. This is why, say the non-trinitarians, it is not correct to say, as do the trinitarians, that He is a person exactly like the Father and the Son.

Unfortunately – also adding to the confusion - is that today in our Sabbath School lesson studies we are saying that none of the three personalities of the Godhead are individual persons, at least not like you and I are individual persons. We also noted in [chapter 3](#) that we officially say today that we do not know what God looks like. This is even though the Scriptures say that God Himself said that He would make us in His own image (see Genesis 1:26).

As we noted in [chapter 4](#) it said in a 1998 lesson study

“The word persons used in the title of today's lesson must be understood in a theological sense. If we equate human personality with God, we would say that three persons means three individuals. But then we would have three Gods, or tritheism. But historic Christianity has given to the word person, when used of God, a special meaning: a personal self-distinction, which gives distinctiveness in the Persons of the Godhead without destroying the concept of one ness. This idea is not easy to grasp or to explain! It is part of the mystery of the Godhead.” (Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4th Quarter 1998, Lesson 3, October 12th 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit')

According to this reasoning, because of their acceptance of the trinity doctrine (that the 'one God' is three inseparable divine personalities in one indivisible substance), Seventh-day Adventists are now saying that none of the three persons of the Godhead are individuals like as we are individuals. This is more than just “the mystery of the Godhead”. It is not in keeping with what we have seen is revealed in the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy.

As we also noted in [chapter 4](#)

“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, "If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.” (Ellen G. White, Early Writings, page 54)

It was also said later

"I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, "I am in the express image of My Father's person." (Ibid page 77)

This appears to be far from in keeping with what was said in our Sabbath School quarterly (see above). Interestingly, Ellen White never said this of the Holy Spirit. In other words, she never said she 'saw' the Holy Spirit or was told that He had a form of His own. We shall return to this point in [chapter 20](#).

In this chapter we shall be taking a look at what the Scriptures say concerning the Holy Spirit (sometimes called the Holy Ghost) whilst in chapters [19](#) and [20](#) we shall be reviewing what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. Hopefully, putting all of this together, we can arrive at a well balanced understanding of this 'mystery person'.

The problem

Most would agree that much of what is believed today by Christians regarding the Holy Spirit is based upon New Testament revelation – particularly the words of Jesus as recorded in the gospel of John.

These are such as

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" ... "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." ... But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:" ... "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 14:16, 14:25-26, 15:26, 16:7

From this - also from reading other texts that are very similar to them - many Christians have come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is a person. By 'person' I mean a person in exactly the same sense as the Father and the Son are persons (or like you and I are persons).

As been said above, others take an alternative view. They will say that although the Holy Spirit is a person, the Scriptures do not depict Him as a person exactly like the Father and the Son. In total contrast to both of these conclusions, a few regard the Holy Spirit as simply the power or the influence of God. The latter is certainly not the view of this writer.

This writer takes the view that the Holy Spirit is a person but because His nature cannot be understood by humanity (because God has not revealed it), we do not have the right to say He is a person exactly the same as God and Christ are persons. We shall now take note of how the author of this study arrives at these conclusions.

The Holy Spirit a person

First we shall take a look at the Scriptures which indicate that the Holy Spirit is a person. These are such as

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30

We conclude from this that because the Holy Spirit can be grieved (distressed, upset, made sad etc) He must be a person.

Luke wrote

“But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart **to lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” Acts 5:3

It is impossible to lie to ‘something’ – meaning just a power or influence. This is another reason why the Holy Spirit must be a person.

Jesus said to His disciples

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; **but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.**” John 16:13

Luke also wrote

“Then **the Spirit said unto Philip**, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” Acts 8:29

“While Peter thought on the vision, **the Spirit said unto him**, Behold, three men seek thee.” Acts 10:19

These Scriptures tell us very clearly that the Holy Spirit hears, speaks and reveals. The conclusion is that He must be a person.

Paul also wrote

“The Spirit itself **beareth witness with our spirit**, that we are the children of God:” Romans 8:16

He later added

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself **maketh intercession for us with groanings** which cannot be uttered.” Romans 8:26

The Holy Spirit intercedes for us therefore this must show Him to be a person. Note Paul says He intercedes with “groanings which cannot be uttered”. Perhaps a better word for ‘groanings’ would be ‘sighs’ (that cannot be uttered) or perhaps even better - as the Weymouth translation puts it - “But the Spirit Himself pleads for us in **yearnings that can find no words**”.

We must also remember that Jesus said

“For the Holy Ghost shall **teach you** in the same hour what ye ought to say.” Luke 12:12

The apostle Paul also wrote

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but **which the Holy Ghost teacheth**; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

Just a little earlier he had written

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us **by his Spirit**: for the Spirit **searcheth all things**, yea, **the deep things of God**. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so **the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.**” 1 Corinthians 2:9-11

From this we can see that just like the spirit of man knows the things of man, it is the Spirit of God who knows the things of God. In other words, the spirit is the 'knowing' part of a person.

The author of this study believes that if we could understand the nature of the human spirit (“the spirit of man”), this would help us immensely in understanding the Holy Spirit. For an explanation of the human spirit, please see section 3 at the following link.

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBHS.htm>

It will be seen that the current reasoning of Seventh-day Adventists regarding the human spirit is that it is the breath of life. This author believes that the Scriptures do not allow for such a conclusion.

A poor way to study the Scriptures

In an attempt to justify their beliefs, those who believe the Holy Spirit to be an individual divine being like God and Christ usually quote such Scriptures as we have just read above. Very interestingly, they seldom present the texts of Scripture that show He is not a person in the sense we normally perceive ‘a person’ to be.

This is a very poor way to study the Scriptures. I say this because if we are to present an honest study of any subject (whatever it is) then we must include all the texts that are relevant to what we are studying and not just some of them.

In other words, we must not use selected texts of Scripture to so say ‘prove’ what we want people to believe whilst at the same time ignore the Scriptures that lend themselves to being contrary to that belief – or would modify that belief. This is being dishonest. In this study, both sides of the argument are presented.

This study admits that the Bible does not provide answers to all the questions that people ask regarding the Holy Spirit (thus to an extent the Holy Spirit remains a mystery person) but it is an honest and overall study of what the Scriptures reveal.

Within every believer

With regard to the Scriptures that fail to speak of the Holy Spirit as a person (as we would normally think of a person to be), take for example something that Jesus did shortly after His resurrection.

After showing His disciples the nail marks in His hands and feet - also after saying to them “Peace be unto you”, He

“ ... **breathed on them**, and saith unto them, **Receive ye the Holy Ghost**” John 20:22

Anyone who is honest could never say that Jesus “breathed” on His disciples a person as we normally perceive a person to be – meaning a person like Himself and His Father (or like you and me).

When referring to the coming of the comforter, Jesus said to His disciples

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; **for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.** I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.**” John 14:17-18

The Scriptures tell us (as Jesus said here to His disciples) that when a person accepts Christ as his or her Saviour, then the Holy Spirit dwells within them (see Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19 and 2 Timothy 1:14 etc) – yet as we can see from what was said by Jesus, it was He Himself (in some form) who would be within a person. This was obviously not physically but by His Spirit. We shall return to this thought later.

The Holy Spirit dwells within every person who is born of God (born again). This is how a person’s character is changed - also because of which, his (or her) behaviour becomes Christ-like. It is only by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that any of us can keep the commandments of God (see Ezekiel 36:24-27, Hebrews 8:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:16 etc).

The apostle Paul said to the believers in Corinth

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that **the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?**” ... “What? know ye not that your body is **the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,** which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19

Paul also wrote to Timothy

“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost **which dwelleth in us.**” 2 Timothy 1:14

This is something that throughout this study we need to remember. It is that the Holy Spirit dwells within every believer at the same time (see Ezekiel 36:24-27 and Romans 8:9 etc). This means He is within hundreds of thousands of Christians at the same time - perhaps even millions. Does this sound as though He is a person like God and Christ (or like you and me)? This indwelling is not metaphorical. It is real (literal). The Holy Spirit does not dwell within the unconverted (see Proverbs 15:29). Through the Holy Spirit, Christ dwells within every Christian. This is how Paul could say “Christ liveth in me” (see Galatians 2:20)

It can easily be seen why many of the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism had difficulty in regarding the Holy Spirit as a person. How can a person like God and Christ dwell within multitudes of people at the same time? He must in some way be different from the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit given, sent, taken away and belonging

The Scriptures reveal that the Holy Spirit does not function independently from God (separate from Him) but is used by Him. This is shown quite a number of times.

Jesus said

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father **give the Holy Spirit** to them that ask him?” Luke 11:13

It is the Father who **gives** the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul also wrote

“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also **given unto us his holy Spirit.**” 1 Thessalonians 4:8

In the Old Testament, David wrote

“Cast me not away from thy presence; and **take not thy holy spirit from me.**” Psalms 51:11

The prophet Isaiah penned these words

“But they rebelled, and vexed **his holy Spirit** [God’s Holy Spirit]: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? **where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?**” Isaiah 63:11

We can see from the above that the Holy Spirit is sent, given and taken away. We can also see that He ‘belongs’ to God (“**his** holy Spirit”).

Paul also said

“But 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.” Romans 8:9

Notice here it says that having the Holy Spirit within is the same as having the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ within. Whilst Ellen White was alive – and even for decades afterwards - this was the belief of Seventh-day Adventists

The apostle Paul also said

“But if the **Spirit of him** [the Father] that raised up Jesus from the dead **dwell in you**, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies **by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.**” Romans 8:11

It was the Father who raised Jesus from the grave (see also Galatians 1:1). Note also that Christians will be raised to life by the Spirit of God **dwelling within them**. This is the same as having Christ within.

Paul also wrote

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us **by his Spirit**: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, **but the Spirit of God.**” (1 Corinthians 2:9-11)

Before we allow this text to lead us jump to a conclusion, we need to ask a very important question. That question is, if to witness to the human spirit the Holy Spirit must be a person, does not this mean that to receive this witness, our spirits (the human spirit) must also be a person? Again this is logical reasoning, but where does it lead us? It would lead us to believe that our spirits are another person separate from ourselves. This of course would be absurd reasoning. Why therefore do we conclude that the Holy Spirit is another person separate from, also the same as, the Father and the Son? If from reading this Scripture this is believed, then our reasoning is not consistent. In this respect, what we apply to the Holy Spirit must be applied to the human spirit.

Under the inspiration of God, Paul is saying here that it is only the Spirit of God that knows the things of God. Likewise he says, it is the spirit of man that knows the things of man. Here we see that the spirit is the ‘knowledgeable’ part of the person (the knowing part) whether it

is of God or the human. We shall return our thoughts to this Scripture when we review what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy.

We can see from the above that the Holy Spirit 'belongs' to God (it is God's Spirit) and is used by Him (given and taken etc) as He pleases.

Never 'from the Holy Spirit'

It is very interesting that in each of Paul's introductions to his letters, he only says "from God the Father and from Jesus Christ" (or words that are very similar). Never does he say 'from the Holy Spirit'. For this there must be a very good reason.

He says such as

"Grace be unto you, and peace, *from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*" 1 Corinthians 1:3

This 'omitting' of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the following introductions - Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1: 2, Titus 1:4 and Philemon 1:3. There are also other places in Paul's writings where he refers to the Father and the Son together but not the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 11:30-31, Ephesians 6:23, Colossians 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 etc).

In the introductions to their letters, James, Peter, Jude and John did exactly the same as Paul. They also said from God the Father and Jesus Christ but never included 'from the Holy Spirit' (see James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1-3, 2 Peter 1:1-2, Jude 1:1, 1 John 1:3).

This consistent omission, especially from these introductions, must be considered strong evidence that the Holy Spirit is not a person in the sense that God and Christ are persons (that His nature cannot be understood by humanity). If the New Testament writers had believed He was a person like God and Christ, then surely they would have included Him in their introductions. What reason could they have for omitting Him?

As we can clearly see from the Scriptures, it was not just once or twice that the Bible writers omitted the Holy Spirit (from these introductions) but ***every single time***. As has been said already, there must have been a reason for this omission.

If these inspired writers did believe the Holy Spirit to be a person like God and Christ, then it is very strange indeed that in these introductions they did not mention Him – especially as they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit led these writers to write this way – which must be admitted, apart from anything else, is very interesting.

We could look at this in another way. This is that if God wanted us to think of the Holy Spirit as another person like Himself and Christ, then why didn't He have these writers say from the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit? This seems a fair and reasonable question.

It can only be reasonably concluded that if these inspired writers did believe the Holy Spirit to be a person like God and Christ, they would have included Him in their introductions. There must have been a reason for every one of these writers, each under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not including Him.

Reasoning from John's letters

When John's epistles are read (these were penned over half a century after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) – and remember that like the other Bible writers he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - it becomes apparent that just like them, he did not regard the Holy Spirit to be a person like God and Christ. Let me share what I mean.

John wrote

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: **and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ** ... Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, **from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father**, in truth and love ... Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath **both the Father and the Son.**”¹ John 1:3, 2 John 1:3, 2 John 1:9

If the Holy Spirit is a person in the same sense as God and Christ are persons, then why in these Scriptures did not John mention Him? Why mention only the Father and the Son? There must have been a reason for John writing this way.

John also said that those who deny the Father and the Son are anti-Christ but does not say this regarding the Holy Spirit.

He wrote

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, **that denieth the Father and the Son**. Whosoever **denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father**: he that acknowledgeth **the Son hath the Father also**. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, **ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.**” 1 John 2:22-24

Again John makes no mention of the Holy Spirit so again we must ask why not – especially if the Holy Spirit is supposed to be a person like God and Christ? Isn't it anti-Christ not to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person like God and His Son? The answer is 'apparently not' - although Jesus did say that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable (see Matthew 12:31).

John also records in his gospel (which was written around the same time period as his epistles), that Jesus said that life eternal is to know Him (Jesus) - also the only true God who had sent Him – although He never mentioned anything about knowing the Holy Spirit.

He records Jesus as praying

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

Jesus did not say that we should 'know the Holy Spirit'. Why not - if the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Himself? Is it not life eternal to know the Holy Spirit? Again it must be said - apparently not!

All of these are very important observations. In our study, all of this must be taken into consideration. It is easy to see why so many people do not accept the Holy Spirit to be a person with individuality the same as God and Christ.

More reasoning from the Scriptures

In the Bible, the Father and the Son are sometimes revealed as sitting upon a throne (see Psalm 47:8, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 3:21, 12:5 etc) but the Holy Spirit is never depicted as doing so. Why not - if He is a person like God and Christ?

The same could be said as revealed in the spirit of prophecy writings. Nowhere in them is the Holy Spirit depicted as sitting upon a throne yet the Father and the Son are often described as doing so. For this there must be a very good reason. This is why we need to think these things through.

In the Bible, neither God nor Jesus are ever seen expressing their love for the Holy Spirit although they are seen expressing their love for each other (see John 10:17. John 14:31, John 15:9-10). Neither is it shown where the Holy Spirit expresses His love for the Father and the Son. Why not - if He is a person like God and Christ?

The Bible never says that the Holy Spirit loves fallen humanity although it does tell us that both the Father and the Son love us (see John 3:16, 14:21, 15:9, Romans 5:7-8, Romans 8:39, 1John 3:1 etc). Never are we told to love the Holy Spirit but we are called to love the Father and the Son (see Deuteronomy 6:5, Joshua 23:11. Matthew 22:37, John 14:21, 14:23). If the Holy Spirit is an individual person just like God and Christ are both individual persons, then why are we not encouraged to love Him - also why doesn't the Bible say that He loves us?

We also read in the Scriptures of the sacrifice made by the Father and Son (see John 3:16, Ephesians 5:2, Hebrews 10:12, 1 John 3:16, 1 John 4:9-10) but never is the Holy Spirit depicted as making a sacrifice. Why not - if He is a person like God and Christ?

There is also something else very important to consider here. This is that we are never told to pray **to** the Holy Spirit but we are told to pray **for His presence**. There is no record of Jesus directing His prayers to the Holy Spirit or talking to Him – neither are we told to speak or pray to the Holy Spirit. Why not - if He is a person like God and Christ?

Note something else very important - which should be very relevant to our reasoning. When talking to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: *for he shall not speak of himself*; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” John 16:13

It is only reasonable to ask here - if the Holy is a person like God and Christ, why doesn't He speak of Himself? I ask this because God and Christ speak of themselves.

There is also something else to consider here. This is that if the Holy Spirit is a person like the Father and the Son, does He have a spirit as do the Father and the Son? In other words, does the Holy Spirit have a spirit? Remember – as we have seen above – both the Father and the Son have a Spirit (see Romans 8:9). Surely, if He were a person like God and Christ, the Holy Spirit would have a spirit like God and Christ. As has been said previously, we need to reason these things through.

The Comforter – God the Father and Christ omnipresent

Shortly before the crucifixion, Jesus was explaining to His disciples that although He was going away, they would not be left comfortless. He said that He would be with them – albeit obviously not in a bodily way.

During this conversation, Philip said to Him “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (see John 14:8). Jesus replied by saying

“... 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? Believest thou not that ***I am in the Father, and the Father in me***? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that ***dwelleth in me, he doeth the works***. Believe me that ***I am in the Father, and the Father in me***: or else believe me for the very works' sake.” John 14:9-11

Shortly after this Jesus said

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you ***another Comforter***, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; ***for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you***.” John 14:16-17

Notice that Jesus said the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) would be “in” His followers. He then said

“I will not leave you comfortless: ***I will come to you***.” John 14:18

It is very plain to see that when Jesus said the “Comforter” is coming He said that it was ***He Himself who would come***. Obviously this was not in bodily form because bodily He was in Heaven with His Father pleading His blood on our behalf (Acts 2:39, 7:56, Hebrews 8:1, 12:2). The Scriptures also tell us that in bodily form He will return to earth (Matthew 26:64, Acts 1:10-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Revelation 1:7 etc). There is therefore a difference in Jesus coming as the Comforter and Jesus coming bodily (that which we refer to as the second coming of Christ).

Jesus also went on to say to His disciples (this was after he was asked “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (See John 14:22)

“... 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

From what Jesus said here to His disciples, it is evident that with the coming of the Comforter it would be both God the Father and Christ who came (“***we will come unto him***”) yet not bodily. This is because bodily, they would both still be in heaven. This is why early Seventh-day Adventists believed that the Holy Spirit was not another person with individuality like God and Christ but was both of them (God and Christ) omnipresent. In other words, the Holy Spirit was said to be the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (see Romans 8:9) – a real holy spirit.

Jesus also gave this promise to His followers – one that very often we claim to day. He said

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

From this promise, it is evident that the coming Comforter was Jesus Himself but in another form from what He was on earth. This appears to be undeniable.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament we find many references to the Holy Spirit. These are such as

“The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” 2 Samuel 23:2

“And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.” Numbers 11:25

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;” Isaiah 61:1

“And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.” Ezekiel 11:5

In the New Testament, we find Peter making this comment

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching 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.” 1 Peter 1:10

Here we are told that the Spirit which was in the prophets of the Old Testament was none other than “the Spirit of Christ”. In other words, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of the Lord – God’s Spirit) was the Spirit of Christ omnipresent. It was Christ who was speaking through the Old Testament prophets. It was He who was present with them.

As John wrote

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: **for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**” Revelation 19:10

As we have seen in [chapter 9](#) (‘The Old Testament God - the ‘I AM’), it was not the Father who throughout Old Testament times was communicating directly with fallen humanity but Christ. He was the mediator between God and man.

When reflecting on his sin concerning Bathsheba, David wrote

“Cast me not **away from thy presence**; and **take not thy holy spirit from me.**” Psalms 51:11

This is Hebrew parallelism. The idea is that a thought is complimented by another thought (saying the same thing) using different words. Thus David is saying that to take away the Holy Spirit is the same as God (Christ) removing His presence. It was this same Spirit that Christ breathed upon His disciple after the crucifixion (see John 20:22). It was Christ’s own Spirit.

One final thought

There is one final thought to consider here. This is that in the book of Revelation John wrote

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the **throne of God and of the Lamb.** In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of

the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: **but the throne of God and of the Lamb** shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.” Revelation 22:1-3

He also wrote

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

Here John is given a glimpse into the future. This is when sin and its results are a thing of the past. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit. Why not - if He is a person like God and Christ (like “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb”)?

In the Book of Revelation - when speaking of ‘how things will eventually be’ - there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. Only the Father and the Son (God and Christ) are brought to view. In fact even when the Revelation was given to John, the Holy Spirit was not mentioned. It says

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, **which God gave unto him**, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it **by his angel unto his servant John**: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.” Revelation 1:1-2

God gave the revelation to Christ – and the angel gave it to John. No mention is made of the Holy Spirit. Why not? There must be a reason.

Conclusion

Reasoning from the above Scriptures, whilst it may be concluded that the Holy Spirit is a person, it could never be reasoned that He is a person like God and Christ (or like you and I) are persons. Needless to say His nature we cannot understand. God has never revealed it. What we do know is that if we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within then we have the presence of the Father and the Son within – although not bodily. This is because physically and bodily they are both still in Heaven.

The nature of the Holy Spirit therefore is a mystery. Perhaps it was G. I. Butler who, when writing to John Harvey Kellogg, summed up perfectly the mystery of the Holy Spirit. He explained to Kellogg

“It is not a person walking around on foot, or flying, as a literal being, in any such sense as Christ and the Father are – at least, if it is, it is utterly beyond my comprehension or the meaning of language or words.” (G. I Butler, letter to J. H. Kellogg April 5th 1904)

Kellogg had come to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person like the Father and the Son are persons. This is main reason why he said he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine – which when Kellogg confessed it in 1903 was not one of the denominational beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Here the one-time General Conference president was attempting to show the senior physician in Seventh-day Adventism that he was wrong in this belief. In later sections we shall see why Kellogg reasoned this way. We shall see also that Ellen White condemned what Kellogg was teaching.

In chapters 19 and 20, regarding the Holy Spirit, we shall be taking a look at what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy.

[Proceed to chapter 19](#), 'The Holy Spirit - spirit of prophecy comments (part 1)'

Chapter nineteen

The Holy Spirit - spirit of prophecy comments (part 1)

Amongst Seventh-day Adventists, it is a well known fact that Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit is a person – which unfortunately for many people appears to bring an end to all other discussion on the topic. I say ‘unfortunately’ because this is not the correct way to understand what God has revealed through the spirit of prophecy. This is regardless of the subject matter.

The correct way to study Ellen White’s writings is exactly the same way as the Scriptures should be studied – which is to make an extensive research of all that has been revealed through them. Only in this way will a well balanced understanding be acquired. A failure to do this will result in a rather dwarfed, misshapen view of what has been written. This will not be very much better than a deception.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, we shall in this chapter – also in the next - be taking quite a broad look at what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy – at least as far as our present denominational Godhead debate is concerned. As you can imagine, it would be far too much to include Ellen White’s thoughts regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. Even now there are two chapters.

It is important to note therefore that rather than anything else, this present study is mainly concerned with the identity of the Holy Spirit. This is the issue in our current denominational Godhead debate.

Within early Seventh-day Adventism

Within early Seventh-day Adventism, it was not generally taught that the Holy Spirit is a person – at least not like it is taught today – although it was said that this is the presence of God and Christ. Even after God had revealed through Ellen White that the Holy Spirit is a person (this was around the end of the 19th century/beginning of the 20th century), the evidence is that Seventh-day Adventists still did not regard Him as someone with individuality like God and Christ (or like you and me). They still regarded Him as both God and Christ omnipresent. That belief did not change.

It is easy to understand why these early Seventh-day Adventists reasoned this way. As we noted in [chapter 18](#), so much is said in the Scriptures that would nullify any idea that the Holy Spirit is a person – at least as we normally perceive a person to be – that at the best it can only be said that His nature is a mystery. This is why the Holy Spirit was not regarded as a person in the same sense that God and Christ (or you and me) are considered persons.

It was only during the decades immediately following the death of Ellen White (1915) that the idea began to develop amongst certain of our leadership that the Holy Spirit is an individual person (being) like God and Christ (we shall see this in [chapter 22](#)). The general consensus appears to have been that whilst the Holy Spirit may be a person, He is the personal presence of both the Father and the Son whilst they (the Father and the Son) were bodily in Heaven. In other words, the Holy Spirit was said to be both God the Father and Christ omnipresent (the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ).

After decades of promotion from our leadership, this 'new view' (that the Holy Spirit is a person in the sense that God and Christ are persons), eventually took hold amongst Seventh-day Adventists. This enabled the development and acceptance of a certain rendering of the trinity doctrine - which for the very first time in our history in 1980 was officially voted into our fundamental beliefs. This took place at the General Conference Session held at Dallas, Texas. This was 136 years after our beginnings as a movement of people (1844) – which was also 65 years after the death of God's messenger to the remnant – namely Ellen G. White.

During the time period of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915) - also for decades after her death - the Seventh-day Adventist Church had been a strictly non-trinitarian denomination. This was not only because of our denominational beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit but also because it was believed that Christ was truly the divine Son of God – meaning in eternity He was begotten of the Father.

These beliefs prohibited the idea of God being a trinity (God is three persons in one indivisible substance or essence) – which is a concept of God not spoken of in the Scriptures or in the spirit of prophecy. The latter is also a reason why the trinity doctrine was rejected by early Seventh-day Adventists. It was said to be unscriptural – certainly not something revealed in God's Word

We shall now see what Ellen White had to say concerning the Holy Spirit. Hopefully this will help us to further understand His identity – although perhaps not His nature. This is an interesting study although admittedly it is very long (2 chapters). What price though can we put on understanding the truth?

A typical 1890 understanding of the Holy Spirit

In 1890, in the October 28th edition of the Review and Herald, Uriah Smith, who was then editor of the paper, answered a question from a reader. The question was

*"Are we to understand that the Holy Ghost is a person, **the same as the Father and the Son**? Some claim that it is, others that it is not." (Review and Herald, 28th October 1890, 'The Question chair')*

I would ask you to notice what is actually said here. It is asked if the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) is a person "**the same as the Father and the Son**".

Uriah Smith answered by saying

*"This Spirit is the Spirit of God, **and the Spirit of Christ**; the Spirit being **the same whether it is spoken of as pertaining to God or Christ**." (Ibid, Uriah Smith)*

This was typical early Seventh-day Adventist reasoning. It was that the Holy Spirit is both God and Christ omnipresent. Smith follows on by saying

*"But respecting this Spirit, the Bible uses expressions which **cannot be harmonized with the idea that it is a person like the the** (sic) **Father and the Son**. Rather it is shown to be **a divine influence from them both**, the medium which represents their presence and by which they have knowledge and power through all the universe, **when not personally present**." (Ibid)*

As has been said previously, it is quite understandable that the Holy Spirit was not regarded by early Seventh-day Adventists as a person. There is so much in the Scriptures that shows Him not to be a person in the sense we normally consider a person to be. We noted this in [chapter 18](#). This is why it was said He was not a person. It was simply considered He was

either a person or not a person. There was not perceived an 'in between' belief. We shall see what this is later.

Smith continued

"Christ is a person, now officiating as priest in the sanctuary in heaven; and yet he says that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is there in the midst. Matt. 18:20. **How ? Not personally, but by his Spirit.** In one of Christ's discourses (John, chapters 14, 15, and 16) this Spirit is personified as 'the Comforter,' and as such has the personal and relative pronouns "he," "him," and "whom," applied to it. **But usually it is spoken of in a way to show that it cannot be a person, like the Father and the Son.** For instance, it is often said to be "poured out" and "shed abroad." But we never read about God or Christ being poured out or shed abroad." (*Ibid*)

Again there is an emphasis that the Holy Spirit was not a person but the comparison was - "**like the Father and the Son**". This is why the Holy Spirit was not thought to be a person. In other words it was reasoned, the Holy Spirit was either a person like the Father and the Son or He was not a person at all. We shall see that through Ellen White, God did reveal differently.

Uriah Smith also made an interesting comment in his '*Synopsis of the Present truth – A brief exposition of the views of S. D. Adventists*' (here he was referring to false ideas regarding the second advent of Jesus)

"But Christ charges us not to be moved by their "lo here's " or "To there's ; " for the coming of Christ is not to occur in the " secret chambers " where spiritual circles are held, or death-bed scenes transpire, nor in the work of conversion by the Holy Spirit (**in which sense Christ is "always" with his people**), nor in "the desert" where the Mormons have erected their pseudo heavenly kingdom; for his coming is to be as literal and visible as the lightnings flashing across the heavens, and all will know it for them selves." (*Uriah Smith, 'Synopsis of the Present truth – A brief exposition of the views of S. D. Adventists', page 184-5, 1884*)

Smith believed that the Holy Spirit was the (spiritual) presence of Christ with his people even though physically and bodily He (Christ) was with His Father in the heavenly sanctuary. Smith reasoned that by the means of the Holy Spirit, "Christ is "always" with his people". We shall see later that this was the view of the Holy Spirit given to us through the spirit of prophecy.

An ongoing view

In both the 1919 and 1938 edition of the book 'Questions and answers', the question is asked

"Some say **the Holy Spirit is a person; others say He is a personality**; and others, a power only. **Till how long should this be a matter of discussion?**" (*Questions And Answers Volume 11, 1919, page 36, 1938 editions, page 33*)

In answer to this question, Wilcox, who was one of the editorial contributors of the 'Signs', also Professor of Biblical Exegesis of the Faculty of the College of Media Evangelists Loma Linda California, wrote

"The personality of the Holy Spirit will **probably be a matter of discussion always.**" (*Ibid*)

As we can see for ourselves today, Wilcox was obviously correct in his prediction. It is still a debate concerning person and personality etc.

He then says

“Sometimes the Spirit is mentioned as being 'poured out,' as in Acts 2. All through the Scriptures, the Spirit is represented as being **the operating power of God**” (*Ibid*)

He later says

“The reason why the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as a person, **it seems to us**, is that it brings to us, and to every soul that believes, **the personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ**”. (*Ibid*, also see 1919 edition page 37, 1938 edition page 34)

Note the words “it seems to us”. This was generally the view of Seventh-day Adventists. It is that the Holy Spirit is the “personal presence” of Christ.

Immediately following this, Wilcox quotes from John chapter 14. This is where Jesus said that with the coming of the comforter, He Himself (Jesus) would come to the disciples (John 14:18). Wilcox also quotes verse 23 of the same chapter where Jesus said that by the means of the comforter, the Father would also come and dwell within the believer (John 14:23).

Wilcox then says

“But both the Father and the Son come **by the Holy Spirit**” (*Ibid*)

The nature of the Holy Spirit a mystery

In the summer of 1891, Ellen White replied to a letter she had received from a man named Chapman. He held to views of the ‘Holy Ghost’ – also of the 144,000 (see Revelation 7:4 and 14:1) – which were not in keeping with what was then generally believed by his fellow church members. It was because of this that he was refrained from taking employment in our church. Instead he was urged to take up the canvassing work.

In her letter to Chapman, Ellen White urged him to come into unity with his fellow church members. Note these remarks she made

“Brethren should not feel that it is a virtue to stand apart because they do not see **all minor points** in exactly the same light. If on fundamental truths they are at an agreement, **they should not differ and dispute about matters of little real importance.**” (*Ellen G. White, letter to Brother Chapman June 11th 1891, Manuscript Release volume 14, No. 1107*)

“To dwell on perplexing questions that, after all, **are of no vital importance**, has a direct tendency to call the mind away from truths which are vital to the saving of the soul.” (*Ibid*)

“Brethren should be very modest in urging **these side issues** which often they do not themselves understand, **points that they do not know to be truth and that it is not essential to their salvation to know.**” (*Ibid*)

“When there is difference of opinion on such points, **the less prominence you give to them the better it will be for your own spirituality and for the peace and unity that Christ prayed might exist among brethren.**” (*Ibid*)

The emphasis here is on “minor points”, “matters of little real importance”, “perplexing questions”, “side issues”, “points that they do not know to be truth” and things that are “not essential” to salvation (not vital to the saving of the soul). It is quite obvious therefore that whatever Ellen White was referring to, she did not regard it as being very important. Note too she said to Chapman that the less prominence he gave to his ‘differences of opinion’ with his brethren then the better it would be for him - also for his fellow church members.

Before addressing his belief concerning the Holy Spirit (she did not mention again the 144,000) she wrote

“I have been shown that it is the device of the enemy to lead minds to dwell upon some **obscure or unimportant point, something that is not fully revealed or is not essential to our salvation.**” (*Ibid*)

After saying that these obscure and unimportant points often “serve to make matters more obscure than before” – also that it confuses “the minds of some who ought to be seeking for oneness through sanctification of the truth” she wrote in the next paragraph

“Your ideas of the two subjects you mention do not harmonize with **the light which God has given me.**” (*Ibid*)

In other words, Chapman’s beliefs were contrary to what God had revealed through spirit of prophecy. She then immediately added

“**The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not clearly revealed**, and you will never be able to explain it to others **because the Lord has not revealed it to you.**” (*Ibid*)

This is straight to the point and very easy to understand. In fact a child could understand it.

Now we know what Ellen White regarded as being so unimportant. It was the “**nature of the Holy Spirit**”. Why was it unimportant? It was simply because, as Ellen White so clearly said, “**the Lord has not revealed it**”. We cannot regard as important something which God has not revealed. If it had been important to us, God would have revealed it.

It is only common sense to say that if God does not reveal something (whatever it is), then it cannot have a bearing upon our salvation. If God knows that something is necessary for our salvation He would reveal it. Here it is being said that an understanding of **the nature** of the Holy Spirit is not essential to the saving of the soul.

This leaves us to conclude that the trinity doctrine is not essential to salvation. This is because if we cannot understand the nature of the Holy Spirit, then we cannot possibly formulate a trinity doctrine – especially one like the Seventh-day Adventist version. How can it be said that the Holy Spirit is a person like God the Father and the Son if we cannot understand His nature? This would not be possible.

Ellen White added concerning the Holy Spirit

“**You may gather together scriptures and put your construction upon them, but the application is not correct.** The expositions by which you sustain your position are not sound. You may lead some to accept your explanations, but you do them no good, nor are they, through accepting your views, enabled to do others good” (*Ibid*)

We should always remember that just because someone uses Scripture to ‘establish’ their belief does not mean that what they believe is correct. Here she is telling Chapman that no matter what Scriptures he put together he still would not come up with the right answer. That

really is an eye-opener.

She then said to Chapman

"It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in My name." (Ibid)

Take careful note of Ellen White's words. She said that it was "not essential" to "know" or "define" "just **what**" the Holy Spirit is. What she did tell Chapman was that the Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit (which he was disputing) - also that this is the Comforter and the Spirit of truth.

After quoting the words of Jesus where He had spoken of the coming of the Comforter as found in John 14:16-17 she explained

"This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter." (Ibid)

Please note this carefully. It really is very important.

Ellen White does not say that the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself in bodily form but the omnipresence of His "Spirit". We are not told here either that the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) is another person like God and Christ but we are clearly told that this is "the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ".

That God the Father and Christ both have Spirits is borne out by Scripture. As the apostle Paul said

"But 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." Romans 8:9

Those who attempt to reason how it is possible that the Holy Spirit is "the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ" would do well to heed the counsel that Ellen White gave to Chapman.

After quoting John 16:12-13 she wrote

"There are many mysteries which I do not seek to understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of these points, silence is golden. Piety, devotion, sanctification of soul, body, and spirit -- this is essential for us all. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" [John 17:3]". (Ibid)

We need to accept that some things are beyond our ability to understand – especially regarding the Godhead. The nature of the Holy Spirit is obviously one of them. Chapman was told that regarding this matter - "silence is golden". These words are just as applicable to us today.

Ellen White then relates what Jesus said **is essential** for us to know. This is that we "know" both the Father ("the only true God" as Jesus called Him) and Jesus who had been sent by the Father.

Note very importantly that Jesus said nothing about 'knowing' the Holy Spirit (see John 17:3). This is even though He had just spoken at great length to His disciples concerning His coming (see John chapters 14, 15 and 16).

So why didn't Jesus say that eternal life was to know the Holy Spirit? We need to give this question very serious consideration. It is obviously tied in with the fact that we cannot understand His nature.

A call for unity

In her letter to Chapman, Ellen White appealed for unity amongst the brethren. This in fact was the emphasis throughout her letter.

She said to Chapman such as

"I hope that you will seek **to be in harmony with the body.**" (*Ibid*)

"You need to come into harmony with your brethren." (*Ibid*)

"It is your duty to come as near to the people as you can, and not to get as far away from them as possible, and by your interpretation make a difference that should not exist." (*Ibid*)

She ended her letter to Chapman with this counsel

"Now, my brother, it is truth that we want and must have, **but do not introduce error as new truth.** I would be glad to write further on this point, but must drop the subject now. **God wants us to be a unit.**" (*Ibid*)

It is obvious that if Chapman had promoted his views - which were not in harmony with the main body of Seventh-day Adventists - this would have caused division.

I would ask you to notice this though.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Ellen White appealed for Chapman to come into harmony with his brethren. This would necessitate him accepting that the nature of the Holy Spirit could not be understood – also as many believed that the Holy Spirit (the Holy Ghost) was the personal presence of God and Christ when they (God and Christ) were bodily in heaven. This is because this was what was generally believed amongst Seventh-day Adventists – therefore Ellen White was appealing to Chapman to believe the same.

At that time within Seventh-day Adventism (1891), the Holy Spirit was certainly not thought of as an individual person like both God and Christ are individual persons (or like you and I are individual persons). We shall take further note of this in chapters 20, 21 and 22. From the above remarks we can also conclude that Ellen White did recognise a core census of beliefs amongst Seventh-day Adventists.

Some may say that during the years that followed, meaning between 1891 and when she died (1915), Ellen White either changed her views or was given added (new) light on the nature of the Holy Spirit but as we shall now discover, this is far from being true.

No change of view

In her book 'Acts of the Apostles' (1911), which was published 20 years after she had written to Chapman - also 13 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages' - these words can be found

"It is not essential **for us** to be able to define just **what** the Holy Spirit is." (*Ellen G. White, 'Acts of the Apostles' pages 51, 1911*)

By 1911, when the book 'The Acts of the apostles' was released, Ellen White had been God's messenger to the remnant for 67 years. This means that at that time, she was drawing upon this same amount of revelation from God. This was just 4 years prior to her death. Obviously by that time (1911), God had still not revealed the nature of the Holy Spirit.

It was mentioned above that this was 13 years after the publication of the book 'The Desire of Ages'. This was noted for a specific reason. It is because many people say – obviously the trinitarians amongst us – that in this book, Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity (the version held by Seventh-day Adventists that says the Holy Spirit is an individual person like God and Christ) but how could this be if 13 years after this book was published, Ellen White was still saying that we are unable “to define just **what** the Holy Spirit is”?

In 'The Desire of Ages' therefore, she could never have meant to imply that the Holy Spirit is an individual person like God and Christ – therefore in this book she could never have spoken of God as a trinity as purported by the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine.

I would ask you to notice something else here.

In her letter to Chapman, Ellen White had told him that it was not essential for **him** to be able to define “just **what**” the Holy Spirit is but notice here in 'Acts of the Apostles' she says it is not necessary “for **us**” to know. She was making this latter statement inclusive of all who would read her book. This particularly would be Seventh-day Adventists.

She then went on to say

“Christ tells us that the Spirit is the Comforter, "the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father." It is plainly declared regarding the Holy Spirit that, in His work of guiding men into all truth, "He shall not speak of Himself." John 15:26, 16:13.”

Jesus must have had a very good reason for making this remark (that the Holy Spirit will “not speak of Himself” - John 16:13). We need to give these things very serious consideration. If we fail to do this we shall never be able to understand them.

These words of Ellen White are more or less the same as she had written to Chapman 20 years previously. It is clear that they are based upon what she had said to him. During this time period (1891-1911), which included when her book 'The Desire of Ages' was published (1898), she had obviously not received new light on this subject, neither had she changed her views.

She then went on to say in 'Acts of the Apostles'

“The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them.” (Ibid)

This should be very simple to understand but she did add as a warning (very similar to her counsel to Chapman)

“Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church.” (Ibid)

She then said

“Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.” (Ibid)

Concerning the Holy Spirit, again we are warned about putting “a human construction” on certain Scriptures. This was a warning not to draw conclusions that God never intended to be drawn. Ellen White is saying the same as she said to Chapman. This is that regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit, “silence is golden”.

Ellen White gave this warning even though **13 years earlier** she had said in ‘The Desire of Ages’

“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the **third person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.” (*Ellen G. White, ‘The Desire of Ages’ page 671 chapter ‘Let not your heart be troubled’ 1898*)

From the above we can see that whilst Ellen White did say that the Holy Spirit is a person, she also made it clear that God had not revealed His nature. In other words, she did not say that the Holy Spirit is an individual person exactly the same as God and Christ but she did make it clear that He is the “omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ” (see above).

She very interestingly added

“It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given **His Spirit** as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress **His own character** upon His church.” (*Ibid*)

It is Christ's Spirit within that is the Holy Spirit within. Note the reference of Christ's character. She later wrote

“**The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ.** It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church.” (*Ibid page 805, ‘Peace be unto you’*)

She did say though

“The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ's name. **He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.** We may have the Holy Spirit **if we ask for it** and make it [a] habit to turn to and trust in God rather than in any finite human agent who may make mistakes.” (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases Volume 20 MR No. 1487*)

We can see here that the Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit yet it is **“a distinct personality”**.

In summary we can say that Ellen White was still saying, in 1911 that it was not essential (not important) to understand **the nature** of the Holy Spirit. She also warned that no attempts should be made to define it. She even said if we did try to define it we would get it wrong (simply because God has not revealed it).

If Seventh-day Adventists had heeded this counsel, the trinity doctrine would not have been included in our fundamental beliefs. Certainly it cannot be said that the inclusion of this three-in-one belief has strengthened the church (see Ellen White above where she said that fanciful views of the Holy Spirit will not strengthen the church). By the amount of antagonism it has created, this trinity teaching can only be said to have weakened our denomination.

Whilst Ellen White was alive, we were united on the subject of the Godhead but today we are seriously divided on it. It is the bringing in of beliefs contrary to what was once taught by Seventh-day Adventists – also believing things contrary to what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy - that has been amongst the major causes of this division.

The Holy Spirit - Christ's Spirit

In 'The Desire of Ages' Ellen White quoted John 22:22. This is where it says

"And when He had said this, **He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:** Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 805, 'Peace be unto you'*)

As we noted in [chapter 18](#), this took place after the resurrection of Christ but before His ascension. She then added

"The Holy Spirit was not yet fully manifested; for Christ had not yet been glorified. The more abundant impartation of the Spirit did not take place till **after Christ's ascension.** Not until this was received could the disciples fulfill the commission to preach the gospel to the world. But the Spirit was **now given** for a special purpose." (*Ibid*)

She then said

"Before the disciples could fulfill their official duties in connection with the church, Christ breathed **His Spirit** upon them." (*Ibid*)

We are told here that Jesus breathed upon these disciples "His Spirit" yet He said "receive ye the Holy Ghost" (the Holy Spirit). Note that Jesus did not say "receive me".

The initial reception of the Holy Spirit was for the benefit of the organisation of the church. The later 'pouring out' at Pentecost was therefore for the fulfilling of the gospel commission.

This remark that "Christ breathed **His Spirit** upon them" was in keeping where she wrote to Chapman concerning the Holy Spirit (as we noted above)

"This refers to the **omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ**, called the Comforter." (*Ellen G. White, letter to Brother Chapman June 11th 1891, Manuscript Release volume 14, No. 1107*)

This gives us a great deal to ponder. Certainly it is not in keeping with the trinity doctrine or that which is generally taught today within Seventh-day Adventism.

It is also written in Volume 8 of the Testimonies

"The Saviour has oft visited you in Battle Creek. Just as verily as He walked in the streets of Jerusalem, **longing to breathe the breath of spiritual life** into the hearts of those discouraged and ready to die, has He come to you." (*Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 8, page 67, 'Counsels often repeated'*)

Concerning the Holy Spirit, what we teach today is decidedly different to what God has revealed through the spirit of prophecy. It is also different to what was taught by the brethren during the time of Ellen White's ministry. They did not then regard the Holy Spirit as a person

like God and Christ are persons – even though they eventually came to believe He is a person.

In 1892, after referring to the same passage of Scripture ("He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."), Ellen White wrote

"Jesus is waiting to breathe upon all his disciples, and give them the inspiration of his sanctifying spirit, and transfuse the vital influence from himself to his people." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 3rd October 1892, 'Faith brings Light')

She later added

"Christ is to live in his human agents, and work through their faculties, and act through their capabilities. Their will must be submitted to his will, they must act with his spirit, that it may be no more they that live, but Christ that liveth in them." (*Ibid*)

These words obviously allude to where Paul wrote

"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 Holy Spirit dwelling within is the same as having Christ living within. Christ dwells within us by means of the Holy Spirit. To have the Holy Spirit is to have Christ's Spirit.

In 'Early Writings' Ellen White wrote of what God had shown her concerning the 2300 days and the second phase of Christ's ministry (Christ moving from the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary to the Most Holy place). She wrote

"There I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, "My Father, give us Thy Spirit." Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace." (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 55, 'Experience and views')

She then wrote of those who did not realise that Christ had moved from the Holy Place

"I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, "Father, give us Thy Spirit." Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children." (*Ibid*, page 56)

Such is the danger of not accepting the truth when it is presented to us.

From what we have seen written by Ellen White above, it is very clear that the presence of the Holy Spirit is the presence of Christ - yet not bodily. Bodily, Christ is in the sanctuary mediating on our behalf with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ omnipresent.

Ellen White also commented in 1896

"The Holy Spirit is a **free, working, independent agency**." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*. 5th May 1896 'Operation of the Holy Spirit made manifest in the life')

She then added

"The God of heaven **uses his Spirit as it pleases him**, and human minds and human judgment and human methods can no more set boundaries to **its** working, or prescribe as to the channel through which **it** shall operate, than they can say to the wind, "I bid you to blow in a certain direction, and to conduct yourself in such and such a manner." (Ibid)

By "independent", Ellen White cannot mean that the Holy Spirit chooses Himself what to do because she does say that He is used by "the God of heaven ... as it pleases him". This independence therefore is not from God's 'ownership' but from God the Father's bodily presence. As Ellen White said, God "uses his Spirit".

"Christ gave his followers a positive promise that after his ascension he would send them **his Spirit**." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 26th October 1897, 'Words of comfort – No.2')

Notice whose spirit is the Holy Spirit. It is Christ's Spirit. She then wrote

"Go ye therefore," he said, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father [**a personal God**], and of the Son [**a personal Prince and Saviour**], and of the Holy Ghost [**sent from heaven to represent Christ**]: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

When it came to the Holy Spirit, Ellen White never said "a personal" anything. It was only with regard to the Father and the Son that she used the word "personal". Read it again and you will see what I mean.

She also said later in the article (this was after referring to the coming of the Comforter)

"Christ desired his disciples to understand that he would not leave them orphans. "I will not leave you comfortless," he declared; "**I will come to you**. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; **but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also**."" (Ibid)

This 'coming' is obviously in a spiritual sense and not physically (as at the second advent).

The Holy Spirit – Christ but not in bodily form

Concerning Christ coming as the Comforter but not in bodily form, Ellen White wrote such as (this was after saying that Jesus said to the Jews "Before Abraham was, I AM" – see John 8:58)

"Christ was using the great name of God that was given to Moses **to express the idea of the eternal presence**." (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript No. 1084*, February 18, 19th, 1895, page 21)

"**Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally**; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His father, and send the Holy Spirit to be **His successor on earth**. The Holy Spirit is **Himself divested of the personality of humanity** and **independent thereof**. He

would represent **Himself as present** in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent.” (*ibid*)

Note first of all the final remark of Ellen White. She says that Christ “would represent Himself as present” everywhere as “**the Omnipresent**”. This is as the Holy Spirit. We can also see here that she is making it very clear - just like she said in her letter to Chapman - that the Holy Spirit is the “**omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ**” (see above). We can see therefore how Christ is present everywhere at all times in all places.

Note also that she said that this divine personality (the Holy Spirit) was **Christ Himself** not “cumbered with” but “**divested of the personality of humanity**” also “**independent thereof**”.

Cumbered means troubled, restricted, hindered, or obstructed by etc., therefore Ellen White is saying that the Holy Spirit is the person of Christ (the Spirit of Christ) unrestricted and unhindered by the humanity which at His ascension He took into Heaven. Remember, we noted above that she said the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ omnipresent. It was not the Holy Spirit that took upon Himself humanity but the Son of God. He is the One who became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

When we remember also she said that Christ was claiming to be “**the eternal presence**” (this is when Christ claimed the name ‘I AM’ John 8:58 – see above), it is hardly surprising that Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit is the presence of Christ Himself – albeit not in bodily form (minus His humanity).

As Ellen White wrote in ‘The Desire of Ages’

“The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, **but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof.**” (*Ellen G. White, ‘The Desire of Ages page 669, ‘Let not yet your heart be troubled’*)

She then added

“**Cumbered with humanity**, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ.” (*ibid*)

Divested means ‘stripped of’ (free from) or ‘disassociated from’. This again is telling us that the Holy Spirit is Christ yet not in bodily form (Christ stripped of His human nature). Again she says that Christ’s Spirit (the Holy Spirit) can function independently from His human nature. This is exactly the opposite of how it is with humanity. Our spirits, without the human body, are inanimate – just as the human body without the spirit is dead (see James 2:18).

She followed with these words

“By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense **He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.**” (*ibid*)

This is very interesting because how much closer can a person get to anyone than actually being with them as Jesus was with His disciples when on earth (like you and I are with each other)? Yet Ellen White says here that by leaving them and sending the Holy Spirit, Jesus would be “**nearer to them**” than when He was here on earth with them. This would only be possible if in some way the Holy Spirit was Christ Himself.

From this – also from what we have seen above said by Ellen White - she is obviously saying that the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself but without His humanity (without His human

nature). She said that the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) is the “omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ” (see above).

Two paragraphs later she added concerning Jesus (this was with respect to His disciples who after His ascension would suffer persecution and death)

“He encouraged them with the promise that in every trial **He would be with them.**”
(*Ibid*)

She also wrote (concerning those who later for standing for the truth would be banished to prisons and lonely islands etc)

“He comforts them **with His own presence.** When for the truth's sake the believer stands at the bar of unrighteous tribunals, **Christ stands by his side.**” (*Ibid*)

Here we can see that although a person Himself, the Holy Spirit is the very presence of Christ. He is the Comforter. He is the one who stands by our side. It is Christ - without His human nature. It is His Spirit. It is Christ Himself in another form.

She later added (very interestingly)

“The disciples still failed to understand Christ's words **in their spiritual sense,** and again He explained His meaning. By the Spirit, He said, **He would manifest Himself to them.**” (*Ibid, page 670*)

It is obvious that after the ascension, Christ would not be bodily and physically present with His followers but He promised He would be present (“manifest Himself to them”) in a “spiritual sense”.

Here it is said that this was not understood by the disciples. It appears that this is not understood either by our current leadership and theologians – although the non-trinitarians understand it. We believe that the Holy Spirit is Christ present in a spiritual sense.

We have also been told through the spirit of prophecy

“The reason why the churches are weak and sickly and ready to die, is that the enemy has brought influences of a discouraging nature to bear upon trembling souls. **He has sought to shut Jesus from their view as the Comforter,** as one who reproveth, who warns, who admonishes them, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 26th August 1890, ‘The righteousness of Christ’*)

Here we are told it is the work of Satan to ‘shut out’ the view that Jesus is the Comforter. If the Holy Spirit is seen as someone other than Christ Himself omnipresent, then Satan’s objective will have been achieved.

That the Comforter is the very presence of Christ is paramount in the writings of Ellen White. In ‘The Desire of Ages’ we find these words

“The Saviour has not promised His followers the luxuries of the world; their fare may be plain, and even scanty; their lot may be shut in by poverty; but His word is pledged that their need shall be supplied, and He has promised that which is far better than worldly good, -- **the abiding comfort of His own presence.**” (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 367, ‘Give Ye Then to Eat’*)

If we have the Holy Spirit – then we have [Christ's "own presence"](#). Of this much we can be sure.

[Proceed to chapter 20](#), 'The Holy Spirit - spirit of prophecy comments (part 2)'

Chapter twenty

The Holy Spirit - spirit of prophecy comments (part 2)

We noted in [chapter 18](#) that at the last supper, Judas (not Iscariot) said to Jesus “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (See John 14:22)

Jesus replied “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.” (See John 14:23)

From what Jesus said here to His disciples, it is evident that when the Comforter came it would be both God the Father and Christ that came (“**we will come unto him**”) yet not bodily. This is because bodily, both God the Father and Christ would still be in heaven. This is one of the reasons why the early Seventh-day Adventists believed that the Holy Spirit was not another person with individuality like God and Christ but was both of them (God and Christ) omnipresent. In other words, the Holy Spirit was said to be the Spirit of both God and Christ (see Romans 8:9). This is why it can easily be seen why it was difficult for them to accept that the Holy Spirit is a person.

As we have been told through the spirit of prophecy though

“He that believeth in the Son, *hath the Father also.*” He who has ***continual faith in the Father and the Son has the Spirit also.*** (Ellen G. White, Bible Training School, 1st March 1906, ‘The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost’)

Notice here we are told nothing about having “**continual faith**” in the Holy Spirit. What we are told is that if we have faith in the Father and the Son, then **we have the Holy Spirit**.

In 1891, Ellen White penned these words

“I will not leave you comfortless; *I will come to you.*” The divine Spirit that the world's Redeemer promised to send, ***is the presence and power of God.*** He will not leave his people in the world destitute of his grace, to be buffeted by the enemy of God, and harassed by the oppression of the world; but he will come to them.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 23rd November 1891, ‘The Comforter’)

She then added

“The world cannot see the truth; *they know not the Father or the Son,* but it is only because they do not desire to know God, they do not wish to look upon Jesus, to see his goodness, his love, his heavenly attractions. Jesus is inviting all men to accept him; and wherever the heart is open to receive him, ***he will come in, gladdening the soul with the light and joy of his presence.***” (Ibid)

Notice we are told here that the world “**know not the Father or the Son**”. Again nothing is said about knowing the Holy Spirit. Again we see the Holy Spirit described as the presence of Christ.

The Holy Spirit the presence of Christ

In 1892, Ellen White wrote

“The work of the holy Spirit is immeasurably great. It is from this source that power and efficiency come to the worker for God; **and the holy Spirit is the comforter, as the personal presence of Christ** to the soul.” (*Ellen G. White, Home Missionary, 1st November 1893, Our need of the Holy Spirit. The source of the believer’s power, see also Review and Herald 29th November 1892, ‘The perils and privileges of the last days (concluded)’*)

She also wrote 16 years later

“The religion of Christ means much more than the forgiveness of sin. It means taking away our sins, and **filling the vacuum with the Holy Spirit**. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with **the abiding presence of Christ**.” (*Ellen G. White, Bible Training School, 1st October 1908, ‘True Worship’*)

In 1894 she wrote regarding the parable of the labourers (Matthew 20:1-16) and the final judgment scene

“The righteous are represented as wondering what they have done for which they are to be so liberally rewarded. They had had **the abiding presence of Christ in their hearts**; they had been imbued **with his Spirit**, and without conscious effort on their part; they had been serving Christ in the person of his saints, and had thereby gained the sure reward. (*Ellen G. White. Review and Herald, 3rd July 1894, ‘Parable of the laborers’*)

Again we see it said that the Holy Spirit is “the abiding presence of Christ” – also “his Spirit”.

Here now is a very interesting quote. It is an immense help in understanding how we are to regard the Holy Spirit. This is with reference to the time when, after the thousand years in Heaven are ended (meaning after the millennium), God raises the unrighteous to life.

We are told

“**The presence of Christ having been removed**, Satan works wonders to support his claims.” (*Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 1911 Edition page 663 ‘The Controversy ended’*)

Note here what is removed? It is the “presence of Christ”.

This cannot mean the bodily presence of Christ because this had been withdrawn from the earth over 3000 years previously. It can only be concluded that this “presence” is the Holy Spirit. Allow me to explain.

This final and total withdrawal of Christ’s presence (the Holy Spirit) from this earth happens prior to the **return of Jesus**. This is why at that time, there will be a time of trouble like there never was before (see Daniel 12:1). In other words, there will be no Holy Spirit to hold the unrighteous in check.

As is written in ‘The Great Controversy’ concerning Christ

“When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.

The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 614, 1911 edition, 'The Time of trouble')

She later said

“God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn.” (*Ibid*)

Referring back to the penultimate quote, we are told that after the thousand years are finished - when the unsaved/unrighteous are raised to life - there is still no “presence of Christ” to hold them in check yet here she says “the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn”.

This “presence of Christ” removed therefore is obviously the withdrawal of both the Holy Spirit and His controlling influence. To put this in another way, remove the Holy Spirit and you remove the presence of Christ. It is one and the same thing. As we have been continually told through the spirit of prophecy, the Holy Spirit is the “presence of Christ” (see above).

Changing the subject slightly - this same “presence of Christ” (the Holy Spirit) is also that which gives God’s people their power. As Ellen White wrote in 1903

“God calls upon His people, many of whom are but half awake, to arouse, and engage in earnest labor, praying for strength for service. Workers are needed. Receive the Holy Spirit, and your efforts will be successful. Christ's presence is what gives power.” (Ellen G. White, *The Central Advance*, February 25th 1903, 'Power for service')

Here again the presence of the Holy Spirit is equated with the presence of Christ. This was written 5 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'. This was no different than that which Ellen White had always believed. Take for example her remarks in an address delivered at the close of the Australian Bible School on December 13th 1892. She said

“The best recommendation you can carry with you of this school and its influence is a well-ordered life and a godly conversation. Wherever you may be, maintain the principles that you have been studying here. Wherever you go, carry on the good work of searching the Scriptures, and the Lord Jesus will always be at your right hand to help you.” (Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo* 15th January 1893, 'The source of our strength')

She then added concerning Jesus

“He is a merciful high priest pleading in your behalf. He will send his representative, the Holy Spirit; for He says, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” (*Ibid*)

Ellen White is quoting here from John 14:18. Note whom Jesus said (and Ellen White is emphasising) would be coming as the Comforter (the Holy Spirit). It was the “Lord Jesus” Himself. This is why she said “the Lord Jesus will ***always be at your right hand*** to help you”.

The same author then concluded concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (this time with reference to John 14:23)

“By the Spirit **the Father and the Son** will come and make their abode with you.” (*Ibid*)

Here we are told very clearly - just as the Bible says - that when the Holy Spirit dwells within it is the presence within of both “**the Father and the Son**” (see John 14:18, 23). This was obviously not bodily because bodily they are both still in the sanctuary in Heaven. They are present by their Spirit (see Romans 8:9).

As Ellen White in ‘The Desire of Ages’ said concerning Jesus

“After His ascension He was to be **absent in person; but through the Comforter He would still be with them**, and they were not to spend their time in mourning.” (*Ellen G. White, ‘The Desire of Ages’, page 277, ‘Levi – Matthew’*)

Again we see Ellen White saying that whilst Jesus was “**absent in person**” (whilst He was bodily in the heavenly sanctuary) He would “**still be with them**” here on earth. This is why He said to His disciples (we often claim this promise)

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

So how can this be if bodily and physically Jesus is in Heaven? It can only be if the Holy Spirit is Christ omnipresent. Notice that Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit was the “**light of His [Christ’s] presence**”. The Holy Spirit therefore is as the presence of Christ. It is the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ.

“As by faith we look to Jesus, our faith pierces the shadow, and we adore God for His wondrous love **in giving Jesus the Comforter**.” (*Ellen G. White, MR Volume 19, No. 1405, ‘Excerpts from diary July 6th – 31st, 1892’*)

The Holy Spirit – a manifestation of Christ Himself

The following words were found in the ‘Southern Watchman’. This was in the same year as ‘The Desire of Ages’ was published.

“None will keep the law of God unless they love Him **who is the only begotten of the Father**. And none the less surely, if they love Him, will they express their love and obedience to Him. **All who love Christ will be loved of the Father, and He will manifest Himself to them. In all their emergencies and perplexities, they will have a helper in Jesus Christ.**” (*Ellen G. White, Southern Watchman, 13th September 1898, ‘Christ’s representatives’*)

Note there is nothing said about the Holy Spirit loving those who keep God’s commandments. Note too that which Ellen White says about Jesus being manifested to those who obey God – also that Christ is “**the only begotten of the Father**”. She then added

“**That Christ should manifest Himself to them, and yet be invisible to the world, was a mystery to the disciples. They could not understand the words of Christ in their spiritual sense. They were thinking of the outward, visible manifestation.** They could not take in the fact that they **could have the presence of Christ with them, and yet He be unseen by the world.** They did not understand the meaning of **a spiritual manifestation.**” (*Ibid*)

Here again we see that the Holy Spirit is “**a spiritual manifestation**” of Christ – as opposed to an “**outward, visible manifestation**” that the disciples experienced when Jesus was on earth the first time, also that we shall all experience at His second coming.

In 1905 Ellen White wrote

“Those who believe the truth should remember that they are God's little children, that they are under His training. Let them be thankful to God for His manifold mercies and be kind to one another. They have **one God and one Saviour; and one Spirit -- the Spirit of Christ** -- is to bring unity into their ranks.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B No. 4 page 23, 'The publishing work at College View' 1905*)

Note whom or what Ellen White says is the “one Spirit”. She says it is “the Spirit of Christ”. In ‘The Great Controversy we find these words

“When on His resurrection day these disciples met the Saviour, and their hearts burned within them as they listened to His words; when they looked upon the head and hands and feet that had been bruised for them; when, before His ascension, Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands in blessing, bade them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel,” adding, **“Lo, I am with you alway”** (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:20); when on the Day of Pentecost the promised Comforter descended and the power from on high was given and the souls of the believers thrilled **with the conscious presence of their ascended Lord** -- then, even though, like His, their pathway led through sacrifice and martyrdom, would they have exchanged the ministry of the gospel of His grace, with the “crown of righteousness” to be received at His coming, for the glory of an earthly throne, which had been the hope of their earlier discipleship? “(*Ellen G. White, Great Controversy, page 350, 'Light Through Darkness'*)”

Take note of whom it was that Ellen White said the believers recognized the Holy Spirit to be. It was “the conscious presence of **their ascended Lord**. It was none other than Jesus Himself.

In 1897, Ellen White wrote a letter to a Mrs. Wessels. Her husband had turned away from God which had placed a very large burden upon her. Note some of the things Ellen White wrote to her in encouragement

“Keep cheerful. **Do not forget that you have a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which Christ has appointed.** You are never alone. If you will listen to the voice that now speaks to you, if you will respond without delay to the knocking at the door of your heart, **“Come in, Lord Jesus, that I may sup with Thee, and Thee with me,”** the heavenly Guest will enter. When this element, which is all divine, abides with you, there is peace and rest. It is the kingdom of heaven come nigh unto you.” (*Ellen G. White to Mrs. Wessels, Letter 124, March 7th 1897*)

“What saith our Saviour? “I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.**” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, **and will manifest myself to him.**”

“When trials overshadow the soul, remember the words of Christ, remember that **He is as an unseen presence in the person of the Holy Spirit,** and He will be the peace and comfort given you, manifesting to you that He is with you, the Sun of Righteousness, chasing away your darkness.” (*Ibid*)

Notice very carefully Ellen White’s words. She said that Christ is as an “unseen presence **in the person of the Holy Spirit**”.

She also added

"If a man love me," Christ said, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will come unto him**, and make our abode with him." Be of good cheer; light will come, and your soul will rejoice greatly in the Lord." (*Ibid*)

Here again we can see it affirmed, just as the Scriptures tell us, that when the Holy Spirit dwells within, it is the same as having the Father and the Son dwelling within – although not bodily or physically.

Ellen White also wrote in 1892

"The Saviour is our comforter. This I have proved Him to be." (Ellen G. White, July 16th 1892, *Manuscript Releases Volume Eight No. 548, 'How Ellen White Bore Suffering'*)

Eleven years later she penned these words

"I urge our people to cease their criticism and evil speaking, and go to God in earnest prayer, asking him to help them to help the erring. Let them link up with one another and with Christ. Let them study the seventeenth of John, and learn how to pray and how to live the prayer of Christ. **He is the Comforter**. He will abide in their hearts, making their joy full." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 27th 1st 1903, *'The meaning of God's providences'*)

She wrote the previous year

"When God's people take the position that they **are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Christ Himself abiding within**, they will so clearly reveal Him in spirit, words, and actions, that there will be an unmistakable distinction between them and Satan's followers. (Ellen G. White, *MS. 100, 1902, Notebook Leaflets, page 79, 'The church school question'*)

We can see therefore that it would be impossible to have the indwelling of the Son (or the Father) without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it would be impossible for Christ or the Father to dwell within a person if the Holy Spirit was not within. The Holy Spirit is both the Father and the Son omnipresent. It is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (see Romans 8:9).

Even in what we call 'Old Testament times' it was the spirit of Christ that spoke through the prophets. As we are told in the first book of the Conflict of the Ages series

"It was the Spirit of Christ that spoke through Enoch; that Spirit manifested, not alone in utterances of love, compassion, and entreaty; it is not smooth things only that are spoken by holy men. God puts into the heart and lips of His messengers truths to utter that are keen and cutting as a two-edged sword." (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets page 86, 'Seth and Enoch'*)

This is in keeping with where the Scriptures say

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching 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." 1 Peter 1:9-11

The Holy Spirit is a person

In 1906 Ellen White penned these words

“The Holy Spirit always leads to the written word. **The Holy Spirit is a person; for He beareth witness with our spirits** that we are the children of God.” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 20 1906*)

“**The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits** that we are the children of God.” (*Ibid*)

“**He must also be a divine person**, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. “For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man, which is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man, **but the Spirit of God.**” (*Ibid*)

Here we are very clearly told that the Holy Spirit is definitely a person - also that He witnesses to “our spirits”. Must we now conclude though that our spirits exist separately from ourselves as another person from and like ourselves – just as many people conclude that the Holy Spirit exists separately from God the Father and Christ (meaning that He is a divine being with individuality like God and Christ)? Obviously not – but what we can see here is that the Holy Spirit is “a divine person”.

As we have been told in ‘Special Testimonies Series B No. 7’

“**There are three living persons of the heavenly trio**; in the name of these three great powers--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit -- those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No. 7 page 63, November 1905*)

The trinitarians see this as a trinitarian statement but as we shall see in [chapter 23](#), it actually shows that Ellen White was not a trinitarian. Just because Ellen White (or anyone else) says that are three persons of the Godhead, this does not make them a trinitarian. To be a trinitarian, one must believe that all three make up the one God and that each are inseparably connected to each other in one indivisible substance. As we shall see in [chapter 24](#), Ellen White believed no such thing. In fact she said exactly the opposite.

She also wrote in 1901

“**Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**. It is the fulfilment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, with His Son, and with His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? **Then co-operate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf**. Doing this you will reveal to the world the principles of righteousness.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times, 19th June 1901, ‘Christ’s prayer for us’*)

As we have already established, God has not revealed the nature of the Holy Spirit (see [chapter 19](#)) therefore this nature cannot be understood by humanity. This means that it cannot be said, on the basis of the writings of Ellen White, that the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Christ (or like you and me) are persons. From the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White, what we know for sure is that He is both God and Christ omnipresent.

In 1899, Ellen White spoke these words

"We have been brought together as a school, and we need to realize that the Holy Spirit, **who is as much a person as God is a person**, is walking through these grounds, that the Lord God is our keeper, and helper. He hears every word we utter and knows every thought of the mind." (*Ellen G. White, Ms 66, 1899, p. 4. Talk, April 15, 1899*).

When Ellen White said here that "God is a person", she must have been referring to the Father. Remember though, even though she says that the Holy Spirit "is as much a person as God is a person", she still said that we cannot understand His nature (see [chapter 19](#)).

She also wrote in 1900

"The work is laid out before every soul that has acknowledged his faith in Jesus Christ by baptism, and has become a receiver of the pledge **from the three persons** -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (MS 57, 1900)." (*Ellen G. White, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Volume 6 page 1074*)

The next year she wrote a letter to the Australasian field. In it she said

"The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and **the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption.**" (*Ellen G. White, Australasian Union Conference Record, 1st April 1901, 'An important letter', see also Review and Herald, 2nd May 1912, 'Sanitariums as centers of influence and training'*)

"In order to fully carry out this plan, it was decided that Christ, **the only begotten Son of God**, should give Himself an offering for sin. What line can measure the depth of this love?" (*Ibid*)

This 'giving' must not be taken as though it was a committee decision. In the previous paragraph it said

"There [in the heavenly courts] **God decided** to give human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which **He** regarded them. **He** "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" (*Ibid*)

This is the Father giving His only Son (John 3:16, Romans 8:3).

"The Son of God, who is the express image of the Father's person, became man's Advocate and Redeemer. He humbled Himself in taking the nature of man in his fallen condition, but He did not take the taint of sin. As the second Adam He must pass over the ground where Adam fell, meet the wily foe who caused Adam and Eve's fall, and be tempted in all points as man will be tempted, and overcome every temptation in behalf of man." (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases Volume 20 MR No. 1487*)

Regarding the Holy Spirit she said in the next paragraph

"The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ's name. **He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.** We may have the Holy Spirit **if we ask for it** and make it [a] habit to turn to and trust in God rather than in any finite human agent who may make mistakes." (*Ibid*)

Never in the Scriptures - or in the spirit of prophecy - is the Father or the Holy Spirit referred to as begotten. This applies exclusively to the Son of God. This is why He is the only One

who in His own right can truly be called the Son of God. This is why He is unique. We dealt with this in [chapter 11](#).

In 1906 Ellen White spoke these words

“Here is where the work of the Holy Ghost comes in, after your baptism. **You are baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.** You are raised up out of the water to live henceforth in newness of life--to live a new life. You are born unto God, and you stand under the sanction and the power of **the three holiest beings in heaven**, who are able to keep you from falling. You are to reveal that you are dead to sin; your life is hid with Christ in God. Hidden "with Christ in God"--wonderful transformation. This is a most precious promise. When I feel oppressed and hardly know how to relate myself toward the work that God has given me to do, **I just call upon the three great worthies**, and say: You know I cannot do this work in my own strength. You must work in me, and by me, and through me, sanctifying my tongue, sanctifying my spirit, sanctifying my words, and bringing me into a position where my spirit shall be susceptible to the movings **of the Holy Spirit of God upon my mind and character.** And this is the prayer that every one of us may offer.” (*Ellen G. White, sermon preached on Sabbath afternoon, October 20, 1906 at the Congregational Church, Oakland, California*)

This was a sermon preached in 1906 by Ellen White recorded by a stenographer. I did notice that parts of this sermon were later published by Ellen White but not where she says “the three holiest beings in heaven” or “the three great worthies”. Some have suggested that because these were only stenographers notes they should not be trusted.

The Father and the Son

In Ellen White’s writings there can be found a number of ‘three persons’ statements concerning the Godhead (more than I have quoted here) – meaning there is no doubt that she said that Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead – but never did she say He has a nature just like the Father and the Son. She maintained that His nature is a mystery not revealed by God. This is where we should leave it – not insist – as purported by Seventh-day Adventists in their trinity doctrine - that He is a person like God and Christ.

Having said this, it must also be recognised that there are also a multitude of statements from Ellen White’s writings that speak of the Father and the Son but do not mention the Holy Spirit. Whilst these are far too many to quote here, we will quote some of them. They are such as

“Who is able to describe the last scenes of Christ's life on earth, His trial in the judgment hall, His crucifixion? Who witnessed these scenes?--**The heavenly universe, God the Father, Satan and his angels.**” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 12th July 1899, ‘A crucified and risen Saviour’*)

Notice Ellen White does not say that the Holy Spirit witnessed the crucifixion. She appears to include everyone – even “Satan and his angels” – but not the Holy Spirit. This was written one year after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'.

Seven years later in 1906, these words were found in the ‘Signs of the Times’

“In the Bible every duty is made plain. **Every lesson reveals to us the Father and the Son.** The Word is able to make all wise unto salvation. The Word is able to make all wise unto salvation. In the Word the science of salvation is plainly revealed. Search the Scriptures; for they are the voice of God speaking to the soul.” (*Ellen G. White,*

Signs of the Times, 10th October 1906, 'Blessed are they that do', see also 8th Volume Testimonies page 157 'Letters to physicians')

No mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

Here is a similar quote. This is with reference to when Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan

"With what intense interest the whole universe watched the conflict that was to decide the position of Adam and Eve. How attentively the angels listened to the words of Satan, the originator of sin, as he placed his own ideas above the commands of God, and sought to make of none effect the law of God through his deceptive reasoning! How anxiously they waited to see if the holy pair would be deluded by the tempter, and yield to his arts. They asked themselves, **Will the holy pair transfer their faith and love from the Father and Son to Satan?** Will they accept his falsehoods as truth? They knew that they might refrain from taking the fruit, and obey the positive injunction of God, or they might violate the express command of their Creator." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 12th May 1890, 'God's requirements in grace, the same as in paradise'*)

Again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White must have had a reason for omitting Him.

In the 'Great Controversy' are found these words. They are written on the very last page – with reference to when sin and sinner will be no more.

"And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character." (*Ellen G. White, Great Controversy page 678, 'The Controversy ended'*)

No mention is made of revelations of the Holy Spirit – only "of God and of Christ".

Just a matter of weeks after the close of the 1888 General Conference session held at Minneapolis, these words were found in the Review and Herald

"We are nearing the close of another year. Christmas and New Year's will soon be here. Let us candidly and carefully review our life during the year that is about to pass, with its burden of history, into eternity, and consider the many tokens we have had of the favor of God in the blessings he has bestowed upon us. **The most unspeakable gift which God could bestow upon the world was the gift of his beloved Son.**

We do not half appreciate the grandeur of the plan of salvation. **He who was one with the Father** stepped down from the glorious throne in heaven, laid aside his royal robe and crown, and clothed his divinity with humanity, thus bringing himself to the level of man's feeble faculties. "For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." **Infinite was the sacrifice on the part of the Father; infinite the sacrifice of the Son!**" (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 11th December 1888, 'The inestimable gift'*)

"God is love. The evil that is in the world comes not from his hands, but from our great adversary, whose work it has ever been to deprave man, and enfeeble and pervert his faculties. But God has not left us in the ruin wrought by the fall. Every faculty has been placed in reach by our Heavenly Father, that men may, through well-directed efforts, regain their first perfection, and stand complete in Christ. In this work God expects us

to do our part. We are his--his purchased possession. **The human family cost God and his Son Jesus Christ an infinite price.**" (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies on Education*, page 21, 'The true higher education', 1897)

There is no mention of a sacrifice made by the Holy Spirit. In fact she even said

"Can anyone consider the condescension of God in preparing the gospel feast, and its great cost, and treat the invitation slightly? No man, nor even the highest angel, can estimate the great cost; **it is known only to the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *The Bible Echo*, 28th October 1895, 'The Gospel Invitation')

The Holy Spirit is not included.

Note too the following. In 1897 Ellen White wrote

"As the angels beheld the overmastering anguish of the Son of God, the words were spoken, "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent." **Father and Son have clasped their hands**, and are mutually pledged to fulfill the terms of the everlasting covenant, to give fallen man another chance." (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases Volume 12*, No. 999, 1897)

Then, with regards to the words of Jesus "It is finished"

"When Christ spoke these words, He addressed His Father. Christ was not alone in making this great sacrifice. It was the fulfillment of the covenant **made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the earth was laid. With clasped hands they entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the substitute and surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan's sophistry.**" (*Ibid*)

Did you notice nothing is said about clasping hands with the Holy Spirit? These same thoughts were transposed into 'The Desire of Ages'. Referring to when Christ first returned to Heaven on the resurrection morning we have been told

"Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. **They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race.**" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 834, 'To my Father, and your Father')

Two years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', much the same was said in the 'Youth's Instructor'

"As the divine Sufferer hung upon the cross, angels gathered about him, and as they looked upon him, and heard his cry, they asked, with intense emotion, **"Will not the Lord Jehovah save him? Will not that soul-piercing cry of God's only begotten Son prevail?"** Then were the words spoken: "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent. **Father and Son are pledged to fulfill the terms of the everlasting covenant.** God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christ was not alone in making his great sacrifice. It was the fulfilment of the covenant made **between him and his Father** before the foundation of the world was laid. **With clasped hands they had entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan's**

sophistry." (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 14th June 1900, 'The price of our redemption Part III')

Again no mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

The following are other 'Father and Son' statements. As you read them, ask yourself why Ellen White would not have included the Holy Spirit. Ask yourself (thinking about what you personally believe) if you would have included the Holy Spirit.

Note also that like some of the other previous quotes, the first five are with reference to the time period after we have been redeemed from the earth.

"The sinner could not be happy in the companionship of the saints in light, with Jesus, with the Lord of hosts; for on every side will be heard the song of praise and thanksgiving; and honor will be ascribed **to the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 24th October 1912, 'The Measure of Light Given Measures Our Responsibilities')

"I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Revelation 21:22. The people of God are privileged to hold **open communion with the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 1911 edition, 'The Controversy Ended')

"We may all win heaven; **we may all be welcomed to the city of God by the Father and the Son**; we may all wear the crown of immortality." (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 21st November 1911, 'Christ our Pattern')

"In that day [Christ's Coronation Day] the redeemed will shine forth in **the glory of the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 21st November 1906, 'The Results of Forgetting God')

"Through the eternal ages the offensive character of sin will be seen in **what it cost the Father and the Son**, in the humiliation, suffering, and death of Christ." (Ellen G. White, *Bible Training School*, 1st December 1907, 'Wonderful Love')

"In the beginning **the Father and the Son had rested upon the Sabbath** after Their work of creation." (*Ibid*, page 769, 'In Joseph's Tomb')

"The most convincing argument we can give to the world of Christ's mission is to be found in perfect unity. Such oneness as exists between **the Father and the Son** is to be manifest among all who believe the truth." (Ellen G. White, *Bible Training School*, 1st February 1906, 'One, even as we are one')

"Through the efficacy of the atonement made, man may return to his allegiance. Through accepting the righteousness of Christ, he may become loyal to the law of God, **united to the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 3rd May 1906, 'The Great Controversy')

"In the Bible every duty is made plain. Every lesson **reveals to us the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 10th October 1906, 'Blessed are they that do')

"Those to whom God reveals by his Spirit the truths of his Word will be able to testify to an understanding of that mystery of godliness which from eternal ages has been hid **in**

the Father and the Son." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 19th August 1909, 'As ye have received so walk')

"The great gift of salvation has been placed within our reach **at an infinite cost to the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 21st November 1912, 'Peril of Neglecting Salvation')

"He expired on the cross exclaiming, "It is finished," and that cry rang through every world, and through heaven itself. The great contest between Christ, the Prince of life, and Satan, the prince of darkness, was practically over, and Christ was conqueror. His death answered the question as to whether there was **self-denial with the Father and the Son.**" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 5th January 1915, 'The Mighty and the Inspiring Conflict')

"By daily communion with God he [the minister who has made a full consecration] becomes mighty in a knowledge of the Scriptures. His fellowship **is with the Father and the Son**; and as he constantly obeys the divine will, he becomes daily better fitted to speak words that will guide wandering souls to the fold of Christ." (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 23, 1915, 'Called with a Holy Calling')

"I write this that all may know that there is no controversy among Seventh-day Adventists over the question of leadership. **The Lord God of heaven is our King.** He is a leader whom we can safely follow, for He never makes a mistake. **Let us honor God and His Son**, through whom He communicates with the world." (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 8*, page 238, 'Be on guard', 1904)

"The enmity that God has put in our hearts against deceptive practises, must be kept alive, because these practises endanger the souls of those who do not hate them. All deceptive dealings, **all untruthfulness regarding the Father and the Son**, by which their characters are presented in a false light, are to be recognized as grievous sins." (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B No.2* page 10, *The great controversy*)

"Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with himself, even the oneness which exists **between him and his Father.** The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God." (Ellen G. White, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1st July 1900, 'Unity among believers')

"Think of the importance Christ places on unity. He prayed that the oneness existing between **Him and His Father** might exist among His followers, that the world might know that **God had indeed sent His Son into the world to save sinners.** How shall this prayer be answered?--By every believer putting away evil thinking and evil speaking." (Ellen G. White, *Pacific Union Recorder*, 13th March 1902, 'Christlike service')

"He [Christ] desires the union between those who work for Him to be as close as the union **between Him and His Father.** Those who have felt the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit will heed the lessons of the divine Instructor, and will show their sincerity by doing all in their power to work in harmony with their brethren." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 29th October 1901, 'Judge not. No. 1')

If you had written these statements, would you have included the Holy Spirit? If so, ask yourself why Ellen White didn't.

I believe the weight of evidence is overwhelming. We are not told that in eternity we shall have fellowship with the Holy Spirit – only that our fellowship will be with the Father and the

Son. There must have been a reason for Ellen White writing this way so many times. Note that each of these statements was made in the early 1900's – meaning after 'The Desire of Ages' was published. It is no wonder that in the spirit of prophecy we find these words

"The Father and the Son alone are to be exalted." (Ellen .G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, July 7th 1898, 'God's word our study book, No. 2')

"Would the sinner, who hated God and would not yield to the overtures of mercy on earth, enjoy everlasting life with Christ and the Father? Could he who despised the companionship of the Father and the Son on earth come into fellowship with them in heaven?" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times* 5th January 1891, 'What is involved in neglect of salvation?')

Everywhere present

Although God Himself is in Heaven, He is present everywhere by His Holy Spirit.

"The greatness of God is to us incomprehensible. "The Lord's throne is in heaven" (Psalm 11:4); **yet by His Spirit He is everywhere present.** He has an intimate knowledge of, and a personal interest in, all the works of His hand." (Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 132, 'Science and the Bible', 1903)

"The Bible shows us **God in His high and holy place**, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. **By His Spirit He is everywhere present.**" (Ellen G. White, *Ministry of healing*, page 417, 'A true knowledge of God')

"Above the distractions of the earth **He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey;** and from His great and calm eternity **He orders that which His providence sees best.**" (Ibid)

Here we are told that as a person, God is in Heaven yet we are also informed that by the Holy Spirit "He is everywhere present".

If it were not for the Holy Spirit, God would not be everywhere present. This shows us that although the Holy Spirit is a person, we cannot understand His nature. It is totally beyond the comprehension of humanity.

Ellen White wrote in 1900

"Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf, **but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world;** the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit striking the cords the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart." (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 50*, 1900)

She had also said in a letter 4 years earlier

"The Spirit is freely given us of God if we will appreciate and accept it. And what is it? -- **the representative of Jesus Christ.** It is to be our constant helper. **It is through the Spirit that Christ fulfills the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."** (Ellen G. White, *Letter 38*, 1896, *To S. N. Haskell*, May 30, 1896)

Christ is in Heaven pleading His blood to the Father. He is interceding for us. The Holy Spirit is also interceding. He is both God the Father and Christ everywhere present.

“The office of the Holy Spirit is to control all our spiritual exercises. **The Father has given his Son for us that through the Son the Holy Spirit might come to us, and lead us unto the Father.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 3rd October 1892, ‘Faith brings light’)

“**It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us**; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 388, ‘The crisis in Galilee’)

The life and soul of Christ

In the early 1900's we find these spirit of prophecy statements. These were written in the backdrop of Ellen White saying that the Holy Spirit is a person.

“All who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to God's service will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. **Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit**, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth **its** highest energies to work in heart and mind.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 6*, page 306, ‘Medical missionary work’)

“**The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul.** We do not now see Christ and speak to Him, but His Holy Spirit is just as near us in one place as another. **It works in and through every one who receives Christ.** Those who know the indwelling of the Spirit reveal the fruits of the Spirit, -“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.” (Ellen G. White, *The Bible Echo*, 17th June 1901, ‘Words of comfort’)

“Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, **who was to take his place.** This Comforter is the Holy Spirit, --**the soul of his life**, the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. **With his Spirit** Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 19th May 1904, ‘The promise of the Spirit’)

Conclusion

Whilst on this topic much more could be quoted from the writings of Ellen White, there can be no doubt that she spoke of the Holy Spirit as a divine person – also as the third person of the Godhead. What we can see also is that she made it clear that the Holy Spirit is the presence of Christ – meaning that the Holy Spirit is the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ.

As she wrote here

“**The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ**; it is His representative. Here is the divine agency that carries conviction to hearts.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter to a minister in Stanmore, Sydney, N.S.W.*, Written September 13, 1895, from Granville, N.S.W.)

“**The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ**, which is sent to all men to give them sufficiency, that through His grace we might be complete in Him.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter to Jacob Christiansen, captain of the mission ship Pitcairn*, Written January 2nd 1894 from Melbourne Australia)

As she also said – in agreement with Scripture – that when the Holy Spirit dwells within it is the same as having both the Father and the Son dwelling within – although obviously not bodily (see above).

“The teacher must be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then the mind and spirit of Christ will be in him, and he will confess Christ in a spiritual and holy life.” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 9th February 1892, ‘On the way to Australia: Visit to Honolulu’)

The nature of the Holy Spirit remains a mystery known only to divinity. This is why we should not conjecture (as is done in the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine) that He is a person like God and Christ (or like you and I) are persons. This would be going beyond what God has revealed.

The one thing that I would conclude is that regarding the Holy Spirit, the spirit of prophecy writings are on a par to the Scriptures. What I mean is that in some places it can be taken that the Holy Spirit is a person whilst other places speak of the Holy Spirit as very unlike what we would think a person to be. This is why I conclude from both sets of inspired writings that whilst the Holy Spirit is a person, He is not a person in the sense of an individual like God and Christ or like you and I are persons. He is rather the Father and Son omnipresent when they (the Father and the Son) are both physically in Heaven. Personally speaking, I gather from this that we will never 'see' the Holy Spirit but we may all experience Him in our lives..

As stated in [chapter 18](#), what has been said in this study (of the Holy Spirit) may not answer all of our questions concerning the Holy Spirit but it is a balanced view of what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. God bless you as you mediate on the deeper things of God's word.

In [chapter 21](#) we shall see that during the early 1900's there was a controversy concerning the Godhead beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. In particular it concerned the Holy Spirit - which in a very real sense caused a controversy concerning God and Christ.

[Proceed to chapter 21](#), 'An early 1900's Godhead controversy and crisis'

Chapter twenty-one

An early 1900's Godhead controversy and crisis

Up until the early 1900's, there was no controversy concerning the Godhead within Seventh-day Adventism. Throughout the first 60 years of Ellen White's ministry only harmony existed.

A commonly held belief

During the early 1900's – in keeping with what has been revealed through the Scriptures and through the spirit of prophecy – the continuing belief amongst Seventh-day Adventists was that God the Father is the source of all being whilst Christ, because the Scriptures say He is the only begotten of God (see John 1;18, 3:16 etc), was believed to be the divine Son of God. For this reason the Son was also said to be fully and completely divine – equal with God – the 'I AM'. He was considered to be God Himself in the person of the Son.

The Holy Spirit was believed to be the personal presence of both the Father and the Son when they (the Father and the Son) were bodily in Heaven – or to put it another way - the Holy Spirit was said to be both God and Christ omnipresent. This was in keeping with the conclusions drawn in our study of the Scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit (see [chapter 18](#)) - also as substantiated through the spirit of prophecy (see [chapters 19](#) and [20](#)).

Early fundamental beliefs

Under the heading “FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS”, it said in our 1905 yearbook

“Seventh-day Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to **certain well-defined points of faith**, for which they feel prepared to give a reason "to every man that asketh" them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as is known, **entire unanimity throughout the body**. They believe: —

1. **That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being**, the Creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal; infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and every where present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139: 7.

2. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, **the Son of the Eternal Father**, the one by whom he created all thing's, and by whom they do consist;" (1905 Seventh-day Adventist year book, page 188, 'Fundamental principles')

By the early Seventh-day Adventists, the “one God” was considered to be the Father – not the trinity God as purported in our present (2011) fundamental beliefs. This is because the trinity doctrine, which depicts all three divine personalities existing inseparably together as ‘one compound God’, was rejected as not being supported by Scripture.

For this same reason many Seventh-day Adventists today still reject this three-in-one teaching. Nowhere in the Scriptures can it be found. It is simply an assumption - said to be

based upon Scripture - but fails to measure up to what God has revealed. We shall see more of this in the chapters which follow.

Christ was considered to be literally the Son of God. This was because He was said to be begotten in eternity of the Father - therefore God in the person of the Son. This means that God and Christ were considered to be two separate individuals.

In the above published beliefs, it is easily spotted that there is no separate belief for the Holy Spirit. This would have been due mainly to the fact that He was not thought of as an individual person exactly like God and Christ. This is even though it came to be believed that He was a person. Again this is in harmony with the conclusions drawn in chapters 18, 19 and 20 of this study.

Notice also – again very importantly - that these beliefs were said to be a summary of the faith held with “entire unanimity throughout the body”. This then was the early 1900’s denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This is very significant.

In our Yearbooks

As they are stated above, these fundamental principles remained in all of our Yearbooks from 1905 until 1914. This statement was first published in our Yearbook in 1889 but was not included again until 1905. It was not until 1931 that a revised (new) set of fundamental beliefs was included.

As it says in the book 'Seventh-day Adventists believe'

“Through the years Seventh-day Adventists **have been reluctant to formalize a creed** (in the usual sense of that word). However, from time to time, for practical purposes, we have found it necessary to summarize our beliefs.

In 1872 the Adventist press at Battle Creek, Michigan, published a "synopsis of our faith" in 25 propositions. This document, slightly revised and expanded to 28 sections, appeared in the denominational Yearbook of 1889. **This was not continued in subsequent issues, but it was inserted again in the Yearbook in 1905 and continued to appear through 1914.** In response to an appeal from church leaders in Africa for "a statement [that] would help government officials and others to a better understanding of our work," a committee of four, including the president of the General Conference, prepared a statement encompassing "the principal features" of belief as they "may be summarized." **This statement of 22 fundamental beliefs, first printed in the 1931 Yearbook, stood until the 1980 General Conference session replaced it with a similar but more comprehensive, summarization in 27 paragraphs, published under the title "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists."** (Seventh-day Adventists believe, page iv, 'A word about the 27 Fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists)

In 1905, in the Review and Herald of May 25th it said (under the heading of 'The year-book')

“THE new Year-book for 1905 is an excellent missionary publication because k furnishes inquiring people **the belief of the denomination in a concise outline of its fundamental principles**, together with a comprehensive history of the church, and displays its present general organization. It is especially good to place in the possession of people who have heard much derogatory to Adventists and their work, and who have formed the opinion that they are a small and unimportant denomination with a pessimistic doctrine; for it contains facts that will convince honest, conscientious people that the denomination has a message for this time, and that it is prospering in the work whereunto it is called. It is also of great importance to all members of the

faith, as it supplies them in convenient form with the information they 'Constantly need in connection with the work of the church.

Let every church-member secure a copy of this book and study it, and use it for the enlightenment of his neighbors. (Review and Herald, May 25th 1905, 'The Year-book')

It also said in the Australasian Union Conference Record

"A LIMITED number of copies of the Year Book for 1905 has been received. In addition to the information usually contained in this book, is found a valuable historical summary of Seventh-day Adventism, its rise and progress; the leading principles and doctrines of the denomination; and a full historical statement of the progress of the cause since 1845." (Australasian Union Conference Record, August 1st 1905)

Much the same was said in the 'Canadian Union Messenger' (this was under the heading – "The new year book. 1905 - In Many Respects Superior to Any Heretofore Published")

"In addition to these important improvements, ***the new Year Book will contain the Fundamental Principles of the belief of the church***, a clear and concise review of the Rise and Progress of the denomination, with the historical data pertaining to the organization and the institutions of the same.

"These Fundamental Principles together with the history of the rise and progress of the denomination ***will be of great service in missionary work***, for there is a constant demand from honest, inquiring people not of our faith, for "***a statement of the belief of Seventh-day Adventists***," which could not heretofore be supplied in a condensed form, ***but can now be furnished in the form of the statement of the Fundamental Principles of the denomination, separate and apart from any semblance to a creed.***" (Canadian Signs of the Times, March 16th 1905, 'The New Year book. 1905)

It later said

"The new book, therefore, will be a good pamphlet for missionary purposes, ***and the very best ever issued for our own people***. Not only every worker, but every family in the denomination, should have a copy for reference and study, ***and thousands of copies should be placed in the hands of honest, inquiring people not of our faith.***" (Ibid)

It also said in 'Echoes from the field'

"In addition to important improvements, ***the new Year Book will contain the Fundamental Principles of the belief of the church***, and a clear, concise review of the rise and progress of the denomination, with the historical data pertaining to the organizations and the institutions of the same." (Echoes from the field, March 8th 1905, 'Notes and Items')

As can be seen here, in 1905 there was no denominational controversy over our Godhead beliefs (the consensus belief was as stated in our Yearbook) so what began the early 1900's controversy?

The Godhead controversy begins

This early 1900's Godhead controversy began with a man named John Harvey Kellogg. He was a world-famous physician – also the leading physician of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church. As we shall see later, Ellen White referred to this controversy as a crisis. To her therefore it was no small matter.

Over the years Kellogg developed some very strange ideas about God. He came to believe that God's presence was everywhere – which in one sense is very true – but he came to believe that God was actually 'in' everything. This was not a sudden belief. He had tended towards it for many years. The difference now though was, he had put these views into print. He had published them in his book 'The Living Temple'. This is what had caused the controversy – and the crisis. The book was published in 1903.

Two years later at the 1905 General Conference session, Ellen White had quite a lot to say concerning Kellogg's book. During one talk she said to the delegates

*"This subject has been **kept before me for the past twenty years**, yea, for **more than twenty years**. Before my husband's death, Dr. Kellogg came to my room to tell me that he had great light." (Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference, Ms 70, 1905, pp. 3, 4. "A Message of Warning,")*

James White had died 24 years previously in 1881. She then said concerning Kellogg

*"He sat down and told me what it was. It was **similar to some of the views that he has presented in Living Temple**. I said, **"Those theories are wrong. I have met them before.** I had to meet them when I first began to travel." (Ibid)*

We can see that Kellogg's ideas and teachings in 'The Living Temple' were no surprise to Ellen White. She also went on to say

***"Ministers and people were deceived by these sophistries. They lead to making God a nonentity and Christ a nonentity.** We are to rebuke these theories in the name of the Lord." (Ibid)*

Later I am going to return our thoughts to this statement. It is very important.

Kellogg believed that God was actually (literally) in the things of nature – meaning he believed that the Creator was actually in the flowers, in the trees and in the grass etc. This is not pantheism but it is very similar to it. Ellen White condemned Kellogg's teachings. This was especially when he claimed that in her writings she was teaching the same thing.

Ellen White openly denied Kellogg's assertions. She made it very plain that her writings were being misrepresented and abused. These misrepresentations she included in what she referred to as the 'alpha of deadly heresies'. We shall see this later in this chapter. Note for now she said that by his beliefs, Kellogg was making non-entities of both God and Christ.

She concluded

*"As I talked about these things, laying the whole matter before Dr. Kellogg, and showing him what the outcome of receiving these theories would be, **he seemed to be dazed**. I said, **"Never teach such theories in our institutions; do not present them to the people"**. (Ibid)*

We shall see later that in order to justify himself for his beliefs (that God was actually in things), Kellogg said that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. This is a teaching that at that time, in 1903, was not general confessed by Seventh-day Adventists. This was even though the word 'trinity' was used at times to collectively describe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The trinity doctrine itself – that the ‘one God’ is three persons indivisibly (inseparably) united in one substance (one essence) – was not part of the professed beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists – and would not be for many decades to come. Certainly it was not believed, at this time, that the Holy Spirit was a person exactly like God and Christ are individual persons – which Kellogg came to believe. This is why he said he had come to believe in the trinity.

Before we consider Kellogg’s confession, we shall be taking a look at what he had written in his book (‘The Living Temple’). This will give us a very important insight as to what it was he was teaching. It will also tell us what Ellen White was condemning – also why Kellogg said that believing the Holy Spirit to be a person like God and Christ would resolve the ‘problem’ of what he had written in his book.

It can be seen from the above that the controversy was basically three-fold. Kellogg believed that (a) God was actually in nature (a similar belief to pantheism but not exactly the same) (b) that the Holy Spirit was a person with individuality like God and Christ and (c) Ellen White, in her writings, was teaching the same as he was teaching. First we shall see what Kellogg had written in his book. It is somewhat lengthy but very interesting. Compare it with your view of God.

The Living Temple

The following extracts from Kellogg’s book are quoted with very little comment. This is because the highlighted parts will more or less speak for themselves. These extracts will help the reader to understand why Ellen White spoke out so vehemently against this book. They will reveal that Kellogg was teaching that God was actually (personally) present in the things of nature. In fact he was teaching that God is in everything. This is not pantheism but it is close to it (pantheism says that “all is God” – ‘pan’ = all, ‘theism’ = God). Please note the ellipses in some of the statements – meaning that parts of the sentences have been omitted. This has been done to make easier reading. As I said, it is a long read.

Under the sub-heading “God the Explanation of Nature” Kellogg wrote on page 28 of his book.

“God is the explanation of nature, - not a God outside of nature, but in nature, manifesting himself through and in all the objects, movements, and varied phenomena of the universe.” (J. H. Kellogg. The Living Temple, page 28, ‘The Mystery of life’)

He went on to say

“Says one, “God may be present by his Spirit, or by his power, but certainly God himself cannot be present everywhere at once.” We answer: **How can power be separated from the source of power? Where God’s Spirit is at work, where God’s power is manifested, God himself is actually and truly present.**” (Ibid)

Kellogg foresaw the objections to this so he explained

“Said an objector, “God made the tree, it is true, just as a shoemaker makes a boot; but the shoe-maker is not in the boot; so God made the tree, but he is not in the tree.” **The objector overlooked the fact that the process of tree-making in the living tree, is never complete so long as the tree is alive...** Suppose now we have a boot before us -- not an ordinary boot, **but a living boot**, and as we look at it, we see little boots crowding out at the seams, pushing out at the toes, dropping off at the heels, and leaping out at the top -- scores, hundreds, thousands of boots, a swarm of boots continually issuing **from our living boot** -- would we not be compelled to say, **“There is a shoemaker in the boot”**”? So there is present in the tree a power which creates

and maintains it, **a tree-maker in the tree, a flower-maker in the flower, - a divine architect who understands every law of proportion, an infinite artist who possesses a limitless power of expression in color and form**; there is, in all the world about us, **an infinite, divine, though invisible Presence**, to which the unenlightened may be blind, but which is ever declaring itself by its ceaseless, beneficent activity.” (Ibid, pages 28-29)

Here it is said that the Creator was actually 'in' the things He had created.

Under the sub-heading “Infinite intelligence a personal being” Kellogg then says (realising it might be said that by this reasoning he was failing to depict God as a personal being)

“But,” says one, “this thought destroys the personality of God, Do you not believe in a personal, definite God?” Most certainly. An infinite, divine, personal being is essential religion. Worship requires some one to love, to obey, to trust. Belief in a personal God is the very core of the Christian religion.” (Ibid, page 29)

He then wrote by way of explanation

“The conception of God as the All-Energy, the infinite Power, an all-pervading Presence, is too vast for the human mind to grasp; there must be **something more tangible, more restricted**, upon which to center the mind in worship. It is for this reason that Christ came to us **in the image of God's personality**, the second Adam, to show us by his life of love and self-sacrifice the character and the personality of God. **We can approach God only through Christ.”** (Ibid, page 29-30)

Here we are told that God is “too vast” (too big) for us to imagine – therefore to have a focus (a centre) of worship, “Christ came to us in the image of God's personality”. We will now see what Kellogg meant.

After quoting such Scripture as Isaiah 40:12 which says “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” Kellogg explained (notice the analogies Kellogg uses to show the size of God)

“Here is a most marvelous description of God. His hand, his arm, his bosom are mentioned. He is described as “sitting on the circle of the earth,” he metes out heaven with the span, he holds the waters in the hollow of his hand; **so there can be no question that God is a definite, real, personal being.** A mere abstract principle, a law, a force could not have a hand, an arm. **God is a person, though too great for us to comprehend**, as Job says, “God is great and we know him not.” Job 36 : 26. **A hand large enough to hold the waters of the earth in its hollow would be as large as the earth itself.** Hence no human eye could ever see more than a very small fraction of it at a time. A span great enough to mete out even the earthly heavens would cover at least 9,000 square miles. **Try to form a conception of a hand of such proportions; when outstretched, the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger would be 9,000 miles. The height of a person is nine times the length of the span, so the height of a being with such proportions must be at least 81,000 miles.** It is just as easy to conceive of a person filling all space as of a person having a height equaling ten times the diameter of the earth.” (Ibid page 32)

Here it is said that God is so big that we could only see “a very small fraction” of even His hand at any given time. Kellogg continued

“This great being is represented as sitting on the circle of the earth. The orbit of the earth is nearly two hundred million miles in diameter. **A being so great as to occupy a seat of such proportions is quite beyond our comprehension as regards his form. The prophet recognizes this, and so diverts our attention away from speculation respecting the exact size and form of God by showing us the absurdity of trying to form even a mental image, intimating that this is closely akin to idolatry.** See verses 18-21. He then shows us where to find a true conception of God, **pointing us to the things which he has made:”** (*Ibid*)

“Discussions respecting the form of God are utterly unprofitable, and serve only to belittle our conceptions of him who is above all things, and hence not to be compared in form or size or glory or majesty with anything which man has ever seen or which it is within his power to conceive. In the presence of questions like these, we have only to acknowledge our foolishness and incapacity, and bow our heads with awe and reverence **in the presence of a Personality, an Intelligent Being to the existence of which all nature bears definite and positive testimony, but which is as far beyond our comprehension as are the bounds of space and time.”** (*Ibid* pages 32, 33)

Kellogg is saying that we cannot imagine the structure of God – meaning we cannot imagine what He actually looks like or His size. He says it is beyond the imagination of mankind. This is very similar as was said in the ‘Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist theology’. As we noted in [chapter 4](#) it said concerning God

“In Himself He is real and has a form, yet that divine reality and form completely **surpass the reality and capability of comprehension of the highest intelligences.”** (*Fernando L. Canale, Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 113, ‘Doctrine of God’*)

This may not be exactly the same as what was said by Kellogg but it is headed in the same direction. Kellogg also said

“It is important that we should recognize the fact that God creates every man. We often fall into error by a careless or superficial use of terms, - we say that "nature does this or that," forgetting that nature is not a creator. What we call " nature " is simply the picture of divine activity which we see spread out about us in the universe. **God is not behind nature nor above nature; he is in nature,** - nature is the visible expression of his power. **"Christ is all, and in all."** Col. 3:11.” (*J. H. Kellogg. The Living Temple, page 40 ‘The Mystery of life’*)

On the next page, this time under the sub-heading ‘Creation a Continuous Process’, Kellogg penned the following words. It was to show that God was actually in a person continually forming him. He wrote

“God not only forms a man from the dust of the ground, but continues to form him as long as he lives; and the moment the creative process ceases, the walls of the temple totter and fall, its timbers fall apart, and the whole edifice crumbles back to dust.” (*Ibid, page 41*)

After explaining the structure of the human body and how every piece ‘fitly joins together’ Kellogg wrote on page 52

“In this permanence of form and feature we have a physiological proof of the existence within the body of some power superior to the material composition or substance of the body, which exercises a constant supervision and control whereby individual identity is maintained. This can be nothing less than the Power which builds, which

creates, - ***it is God himself, the divine Presence in the temple.***" (J. H. Kellogg, 'The Living Temple, page 52, 'A general view of the Temple')

From the above we can see that Kellogg was really saying that God was not only far bigger than the earth itself (much too big for us to imagine) but also that we cannot understand what He looks like. He was also saying that God Himself was ***actually present*** in the things He had made. It is no wonder Ellen White objected to what this physician was teaching. It is no wonder either that she said he was making God and Christ to look non-entities – non-personal beings. So how did Kellogg say 'this God' was actually in nature. As we shall see later, he said it was by the Holy Spirit.

Ellen White misrepresented

In 1904, which was the year after Kellogg released his book, Ellen White said

"I am so sorry that Living Temple came out as it did, and was circulated, and the worst of it -- that which struck right to my heart -- was the assertion made regarding the book: "It contains the very sentiments that Sister White has been teaching."" (Ellen G. White, Talk given on May 18th 1904, Sermons and talks, Volume one, page 341, Manuscript 46, 1904, 'The Foundation of our Faith')

She added

"When I heard this, I felt so heartbroken that it seemed as if I could not say anything. Had I said anything, I would have been obliged to speak the truth as it was." (Ibid)

This was one of the major problem areas in what Ellen White described as 'the alpha'. Kellogg was saying that what he had written in his 'Living Temple' was only the same as what she had written. Ellen White strongly refuted this claim.

After saying that the sentiments found in Kellogg's book were those which at the beginning of her public work she was bidden to speak out in warning against she said

"Living Temple contains the Alpha of these theories. The Omega would follow in a little while. I tremble for our people." (Ibid)

According to Ellen White, Kellogg's teachings were the beginning (the Alpha) of false teachings that would infiltrate Seventh-day Adventism. Notice here she made it clear that other wrong teachings would follow. She said in fact that the "Omega would follow in a little while".

Ellen White must have regarded this "Omega" as a frightening deception. She said that because of its coming she trembled for future Seventh-day Adventists. Have you ever considered what this "Omega" may be? Ellen White did say it would "follow in a little while" – and this was said by her 107 years ago in 1904.

It is quite possible that what was happening in "the Alpha" would also happen in the "Omega" – meaning that Ellen White's writings would be used to substantiate beliefs not held by her. In other words, her writings would be misused (abused) to support something she did not believe.

The need to be sanctified

In the year 1900, shortly after returning from Australia, Ellen White wrote to the officers of the General Conference saying

*“It seems impossible for me to be understood **by those who have had the light but have not walked in it.**” (Ellen G. White, Letter 139, Written to the officers of the General Conference from St. Helena, California, October 24th 1900)*

She then added

*“What I might say in private conversations would be so repeated as to make it **mean exactly opposite to what it would have meant had the hearers been sanctified in mind and spirit.**” (Ibid)*

*“**I am afraid to speak even to my friends,** for afterwards I hear, Sister White said this, or Sister White said that. My words are so wrested and misinterpreted that I am coming to the conclusion that the Lord desires me to keep out of large assemblies and refuse private interviews. **What I say is reported in such a perverted light that it is new and strange to me. It is mixed with words spoken by men to sustain their own theories.**” (Ibid)*

Here is the grave danger. We must study what Ellen White has said and not mix her words with our own to support what we believe to be true. This is an abuse of Ellen White’s writings. This is something that Kellogg was doing. He was making it appear that Ellen White was saying things she did not really say.

An area not for discussion

Kellogg’s initial ‘problem’ was that he was trying to define where God’s presence is. In other words, it was all to do with the Holy Spirit – which then, in the early 1900’s, was regarded as the personal presence of God and Christ.

With regards to defining God and where His presence is, Ellen White said (this was in the same talk where she said she was “sorry that Living Temple came out as it did” – also that “The Omega would follow in a little while” - see above)

*“There are some things upon which we must reason, and there are other things that we must not discuss. In regard to God -- **what He is and where He is -- silence is eloquence.**” (Ellen G. White, Talk given on May 18th 1904, Sermons and talks, Volume one, page 343, Manuscript 46, 1904, ‘The Foundation of our Faith’)*

Note she said “what He is”. Remember, this is all tied in with “the Alpha” spoken of by Ellen White – also the coming “Omega”. She then added

*“When you are tempted to speak **of what God is,** keep silence, because as surely as you begin to speak of this, you will disparage Him.” (Ibid)*

She then added in warning

*“Our ministers must be very careful not to enter into controversy **in regard to the personality of God. This is a subject that they are not to touch.** It is a mystery, and the enemy will surely lead astray those who enter into it. We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world.” (Ibid)*

Seventh-day Adventists have well and truly ignored this warning. We know this because as a denomination, we have adopted a teaching which attempts to define God (what God is). This of course is the doctrine of the trinity. If we had heeded the above counsel, this three-in-one teaching would not have been brought into the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism. As it is, it is now an integral part of our fundamental beliefs.

In continuing her counsel, Ellen White made it clear that

“God is a person and Christ is a person.” (Ibid)

She also said

“Christ is spoken of in the Word as **“the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person.” (Ibid)**

These remarks were made in the backdrop of Ellen White saying that no attempt should be made to explain what God is etc. Obviously we are being told that this is as far as we should go. This is to say that God (the Father) and Christ are both persons - two separate individuals – with Christ being “the express image” of God’s person.

Notice very importantly that Ellen White makes no mention here of the Holy Spirit as being a person. She then said

“I was forbidden to talk with Dr. Kellogg on this subject, **because it is not a subject to be talked about.** And I was instructed that certain sentiments in Living Temple were the **Alpha of a long list of deceptive theories.**” (Ibid)

As most would realise, the trinity doctrine is ‘tied in’ with God’s presence and personality. It was integral to “the Alpha”. We know this because in order to justify his beliefs, Kellogg said that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. Notice Ellen White said that Kellogg’s beliefs concerning God was “the Alpha of a **long list of deceptive theories**”. The trinity doctrine distorts many truths concerning Christ and His ministry. We shall see more of this in chapters 24 and 25.

In 1905 she wrote concerning Kellogg

“I have seen that Satan's power over him has not been broken. Those who choose to sustain the man who so greatly dishonors God and has stood directly in the way of His work, will themselves become so deceived that their work will not be accepted by God. I have felt reluctant to say these things, but I know the Lord would not have souls endangered any longer by Dr. Kellogg. Tares have been sown in the minds of God's people, and as a result of this some have given up the truth, some have become infidels. The misrepresentations that Dr. Kellogg has made of the work God has given me to do, have made them infidels.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 116, 1905, to J. H. Kellogg, April 22, 1905)

Here was the early 1900’s Godhead crisis. It was that one of the most influential people within Seventh-day Adventism – namely John Harvey Kellogg - would be teaching his beliefs to all who came under his influence. As we can see from above, Kellogg’s teachings were very seriously affecting others – and he did have his followers - but this is another story. Satan was controlling what Kellogg believed. This physician therefore was obviously a dangerous man to heed.

Needless to say, because he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine, Kellogg would certainly have been teaching the same to others. He would have done this to justify his

beliefs. He would also have been saying that what he had written could be supported by the spirit of prophecy writings.

This really was a crisis. Many considered Kellogg a 'leading light'. Certainly he was popular both within and without the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Kellogg confesses the trinity doctrine

Kellogg's book was discussed at the 1903 autumn council of the General Conference Committee - the outcome of which was decided when two testimonies, both condemning what this book was teaching, were received from Ellen White. In consequence, Kellogg said that he would withdraw his book from the open market and revise it. This was particularly in regard to its theological content.

Kellogg discussed his book with A. G. Daniells (then the General Conference president). In this conversation – also in an attempt to justify himself for what he had written in it - Kellogg said that because he had **recently come to believe in the doctrine of the trinity**, he could now explain much better his beliefs – meaning how God was actually 'in things'.

We are aware of this conversation because the president wrote to W. C. White (Ellen White's son) saying

"He [Kellogg] then stated that **his former views regarding the trinity** had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement but that **within a short time he had come to believe in the trinity** and could now see pretty clearly where all the difficulty was and believed that he could clear up the matter satisfactorily." (*Letter, A. G. Daniells to W. C. White Oct 29th 1903*)

Up to this time (1903), just like the vast majority of past – also then present - Seventh-day Adventists, Kellogg had been a non-trinitarian. In fact in our publications he had even spoken out against the trinity doctrine. Now though, in 1903, he was making the confession that "**within a short time**", he had come to accept this teaching.

The reason why Kellogg said that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine was so that He could say – without making it look as though he meant the Father - that God was 'in things'. To say the Father was 'in things' was to make God appear to be a non-entity (a non-personal being).

Daniells continued concerning what Kellogg had told him

"He told me that he now believed in **God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost** and his view was that it was **God the Holy Ghost and not God the Father** that filled all space and every living thing." (*Ibid*)

This was a dramatic switch in beliefs for Kellogg (meaning his Godhead beliefs not the belief that God was in things). It was also out of harmony with what was then believed by the majority of Seventh-day Adventists. Allow me to explain.

Within the Scriptures there is no such terminology as "**God the Son**" or "**God the Holy Ghost**". Neither did Ellen White use such wording. This is trinitarian language - not Scriptural language.

In the Scriptures - also throughout the spirit of prophecy - Christ is called 'the Son of God' (not God the Son) whilst the Holy Ghost is called 'the Holy Spirit' or 'the Spirit of the Lord' or 'the Spirit of God' etc (not God the Holy Spirit). In other words, the Holy Spirit is depicted as belonging – just like the human spirit belongs to a human being.

Prior to his 'conversion' to trinitarianism, Kellogg would have believed that the Holy Spirit was the **personal presence of both God the Father and the Son** when they - the Father and the Son - were both bodily in Heaven. Putting it in another way, Kellogg would have believed that the Holy Spirit was both God and Christ omnipresent – not a separate individual from them and like them. This particular belief we have discussed in the previous three chapters.

Now though, by reason of his new found theology (trinity theology), Kellogg had managed to 'separate' the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. This is something he could not have done when believing that the Holy Spirit was both God and Christ omnipresent (the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ).

Kellogg had now come to believe that the Holy Spirit was a person in His own right (an individual being like God and Christ). We know this because Daniells told W. C. White that Kellogg had said that it was "God the Holy Ghost", that "filled all space and every living thing" and "not God the Father".

We can see therefore that Kellogg's confession (of coming to believe in the trinity doctrine) was because he was attempting to define where God's presence is. It was also these theories that brought about the early 1900's crisis within Seventh-day Adventism. It appears that Kellogg claimed to have come to believe in the trinity on the basis he believed that the Holy Spirit was a person like God and Christ – although this is not all there is to the trinity doctrine. In fact if left there (that there are three persons of the Godhead), this could be interpreted as a belief in tritheism (a triad of Gods).

Is the Holy Spirit a person or not?

In a letter to G. I. Butler (who on a number of occasions had been General Conference president but was then the Southern Union Conference president – also a member of the General Conference Committee) Kellogg challenged what was then, concerning the Holy Spirit, the generally held belief of Seventh-day Adventists. He did this after our church had refused to publish his book ('The Living Temple').

Kellogg wrote to Butler saying

*"As far as I can fathom, **the difficulty which is found in the Living Temple**, the whole thing may be simmered down to this question: **is the Holy Ghost a person? You say no.**" (Letter, Kellogg to G. I Butler, October 28th 1903)*

This appears to have been the leading question. Here was also the difference in beliefs between Kellogg's new found faith (what he termed the trinity doctrine) and the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Remember, Satan was leading Kellogg (see Ellen White comments above).

As we have noted previously, whilst the belief of Seventh-day Adventists was that the Holy Spirit is a person, He was certainly not regarded as a person with individuality like God and Christ. Kellogg obviously reasoned differently. He said

*"I had supposed the Bible said this [the Holy Spirit is a person] for the reason that the personal pronoun he is used in speaking of the Holy Ghost. Sister White **uses the pronoun he** and has said in as many words that the Holy Ghost is the **third person of the Godhead.**" (Ibid)*

This is very interesting because by this time (1903), Ellen White had referred to the Holy Spirit as a 'person' a number of times. She had even said in 'The Desire of Ages'

“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of **the third person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 671, ‘Let not your heart be troubled’)

By 1903 (when Kellogg made his trinity confession) - which was five years after ‘The Desire of Ages’ was published - Kellogg obviously knew about this statement. He also may have known of other spirit of prophecy statements saying the same thing (that the Holy Spirit is a person) although quite a number of these were not released until later.

Why then, it must be asked, did Kellogg not specifically say that Ellen White had said that the Holy Spirit was a person? Why did he say that she had said “**in as many words that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Godhead**” - making it look as though she had not specifically said it?

It could be reasoned that there was a doubt in Kellogg’s mind as to whether or not Ellen White meant that the Holy Spirit did have individuality like God and Christ. His objective though was to try to make people believe that Ellen White was saying the same as he was saying – and remember - Ellen White did say that Kellogg was under the influence of Satan and that he (Kellogg) was using her writings to say something she did not believe.

Kellogg certainly disputed with the way that Seventh-day Adventists regarded the Holy Spirit. We know this because he said in his letter to Butler

“How the Holy Ghost can **be the third person and not be a person at all** is difficult for me to see.” (Kellogg to G. I. Butler, Letter dated October 28th 1903)

Kellogg was obviously challenging the way that Seventh-day Adventists regarded the Holy Spirit – which was that whilst He was a person, this was not in the sense that God and Christ are individual persons. This is why he was saying it was difficult for him to see how the Holy Spirit was a person and yet not be a person. With Kellogg, it was either one or the other. For whatever reason, he could not reason an alternative (an in between) belief. Remember here, as said Ellen White, Satan was leading Kellogg.

Kellogg also wrote to Butler saying

“**I believe this Spirit of God to be a personality you don’t.** But this is purely a question of definition. I believe the Spirit of God is a personality; you say, No, it is not a personality. Now the only reason why we differ is because we differ in our ideas as to what a personality is. Your idea of personality is perhaps that of semblance to a person or a human being (Letter from J. H. Kellogg to G. I. Butler, February 21, 1904).

Kellogg was claiming that what Ellen White taught in her writings was the same as he was teaching. With respect to this, Butler wrote to Kellogg saying

“So far as Sister White and you being in perfect agreement, I shall have to leave that entirely between you and Sister White. **Sister White says there is not perfect agreement; you claim there is.** I know some of her remarks seem to give you strong ground for claiming that she does. I am candid enough to say that, but I must give her the credit until she disowns it of saying there is a difference too, and I do not believe you can fully tell just what she means.” (G. I Butler, letter to J. H. Kellogg April 5th 1904)

Butler then went on to say that regarding the words of Jesus that Ellen White had been quoting much of lately (this is where Jesus said we must eat the flesh and drink the blood of

the son of man – see John 6:51-58) - these were to be taken spiritually and not literally. He did say though

“His spiritual nature should be imparted to us, really and actually. It is necessary to any genuine conversion. This I fully believe. ***God dwells in us by His Holy Spirit,*** as a Comforter, as a Reprover, especially the former. When we come to Him, we partake of Him in that sense, because ***the Spirit comes forth from him; it comes forth from the Father and the Son.***” (*Ibid*)

As expressed here by the president of the Southern Union Conference, we can again see the generally held early 1900’s faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was that the Holy Spirit comes forth from both “**the Father and the Son**” (God and Christ), concluding therefore that this divine personality is the personal presence of them both (the Father and the Son) when they are both bodily in Heaven. This was the conclusion drawn in chapters 18, 19 and 20.

Butler was expressing the belief that the Holy Spirit is a person but not a person like God and Christ are persons. We can see this because concerning the Holy Spirit, he said to Kellogg

“It is not a person walking around on foot, or flying, as a literal being, in any such sense ***as Christ and the Father are*** – at least, if it is, it is utterly beyond my comprehension or the meaning of language or words.” (*Ibid*)

Note very importantly that this was **6 years** after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’, thus it appears that by this time (1904), this book had not led this conference president to become a trinitarian – even though the present trinitarians amongst us say that in this publication Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity. This is something worthy of serious consideration. If in this book Ellen White had been regarded as speaking of God as a trinity, then surely those early 1900’s Seventh-day Adventists would have noticed it?

My studies have revealed that Ellen White’s ‘Desire of Ages’ never did change the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists – at least not whilst Ellen White was alive to personally defend what she had written. In common with many others, I believe that today, in our present Godhead crisis, just as it was in “**the alpha**”, her writings are being misrepresented (abused) to say something she never intended to say (as Kellogg was doing). Could this be “**the Omega**” – or at least a part of it? Ellen White did say that this was part and parcel of ‘the Alpha’.

The main problem

We noted in the previous chapters that when a person experiences conversion, the Holy Spirit dwells within. Up to that time, the Holy Spirit is not within a person. Kellogg’s views taught differently. He taught that the Holy Spirit was within everything and everybody all of the time. He said that by the Holy Spirit, God was literally everywhere.

This was the main problem. It denied the gospel. It denied that until a person accepts Christ as Saviour, he or she is Spirit-less. In other words, in Kellogg’s reasoning, there is no need of conversion only development. Ellen White saw the dangers and she spoke out against them.

In a talk where she made reference to Kellogg’s ‘Living Temple’, also relating how she had to meet similar sentiments during her younger years, Ellen White spoke of the danger in believing that the Holy Spirit dwelt within everyone. She said

“In Living Temple the assertion is made that God is in the flower, in the leaf, in the sinner.” (*Sermons and Talks, Volume 1 Ms. 46, 1904, MR 900 page 343*)

In particular, it was the latter that was the problem with Kellogg's beliefs. As Ellen White went on to explain

"But God does not live in the sinner. The Word declares that He abides only in the hearts of those who love Him and do righteousness. **God does not abide in the heart of the sinner;** it is the enemy who abides there." (*Ibid*)

Notice first of all that although Kellogg had said (after he had published the book) that he believed that it was not God the Father that was in everything but the Holy Spirit, Ellen White interpreted him as saying that God was in everything, including "in the sinner". Thus it was that in the thinking of Ellen White, wherever the Holy Spirit is present, God Himself is present. This was the early 1900's theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In Ellen White's notebook leaflets were found these words

"Let not the theory be presented that God would dwell in the soul-temple of a wicked man. **No greater falsehood could be presented.**" (*Ellen G. White, Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library, 'Be Earnest and Steadfast'*)

With reference to Kellogg's beliefs and the gospel, Ellen White made it very clear that

"If God is an essence pervading all nature, **then He dwells in all men;** and in order to attain holiness, **man has only to develop the power that is within him**". (*Ellen G. White 8th Volume Testimonies, 'The essential Knowledge' page 291 1904*)

In other words, if the Holy Spirit dwells within everyone, there is no need for conversion. She then added

"These theories, followed to their logical conclusion, **sweep away the whole Christian economy.**" (*Ibid*)

Amongst other things, W. W. Prescott objected to Kellogg's book for the very same reason. He wrote to Kellogg saying

"You will also recall that a fundamental objection which I raised against the teaching of "The Living Temple" was **that it regarded the body of every man as a temple of the Holy Ghost, or a temple of the living God, regardless of any personal faith in Christ, thus breaking down the distinction between the believer and the unbeliever.**" (*W. W. Prescott, letter to J. H. Kellogg, June 9th 1904*)

Later in the same letter he wrote

"There is a use of scripture terms in the book which is, to say the least, very loose, and which opens the way for a wrong conclusion. An example of this is found on page 442: "The Spirit of truth, which created man, which dwells in him." According to scripture the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, is the special gift of God to believers through the ministry of Christ, the High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary. **Your use of the term recognises no distinction between believer and unbeliever, and makes the Spirit of truth an indwelling presence in all men.**" (*Ibid*)

Ellen White had this to say in 1905

"There has been growing up a spirit of criticism, and a lack of faith in the gospel ministry, and this has continued until the present time. **Now the publication of "Living Temple" has brought about a crisis. If the ideas presented in this book**

were received, they would lead to the uprooting of the whole construction of the faith that makes Seventh-day Adventists a chosen, denominated people.” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 48, 1906, written November 18th 1905, ‘A Great opportunity slighted’)

Much could be written here about what Ellen White had to say concerning Kellogg’s beliefs (mostly condemning them) but enough has been shown here to understand what she believed was the problem. Before closing though I would like to make this point.

One final consideration

We have seen it said by Kellogg that by coming to believe that the Holy Spirit was a person the same as God and Christ are persons he had solved ‘the problem’ of his ‘Living Temple’ theories – concluding in the process that it was the Holy Spirit who was in the things of nature and not the Father. To some, this would be saying that this was making the Holy Spirit a non-entity but notice what Ellen White said. She wrote (this was concerning what Kellogg had told her he believed)

*“Ministers and people were deceived by these sophistries. **They lead to making God a nonentity and Christ a nonentity.** We are to rebuke these theories in the name of the Lord.” (Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference, Ms 70, 1905, pp. 3, 4. "A Message of Warning,")*

You may have read this previously but have you ever wondered why Ellen White did not say that Kellogg was making the Holy Spirit a nonentity? Why only God and Christ?

Take a look now at the following statements. They were all made in the backdrop of Kellogg’s publication of ‘The Living Temple’ (note the highlighted parts)

*“Satan is not ignorant of the result of trying **to define God and Jesus Christ in a spiritualistic way** that sets **God and Christ as a nonentity.** The moments occupied in this kind of science are, in the place of preparing the way of the Lord, making a way for Satan to come in and confuse the minds with mysticisms of his own devising. Although they are dressed up in angel robes they have made **our God and our Christ a nonentity.** Why?--because Satan sees the minds are all fitted for his working. Men have lost tract of **Christ and the Lord God,** and have been obtaining an experience that is Omega to one of the most subtle delusions that will ever captivate the minds of men.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript Release Volume 11, No. 891, Diary August 1904)*

*“”And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” All through the Scriptures, **the Father and the Son are spoken of as two distinct personages.** You will hear men endeavoring **to make the Son of God a nonentity.** He and the Father are one, **but they are two personages.** Wrong sentiments regarding this are coming in, and we shall all have to meet them” (Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park Washington D. C., May 25th 1905 Review and Herald 13th July 1905, ‘Lessons from the first Epistle of John’)*

*“Again and again we shall be called to meet the influence of men who are studying sciences of satanic origin, through which Satan is working **to make a nonentity of God and of Christ.**” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 6th August 1908, ‘Circulate the publications No. 1’, see also Testimonies Volume 9, page 68 ‘Literature in service 1909)*

The Father and the Son each have a personality. Christ declared, "I and my Father are one." Yet it was the Son of God who came to the world in human form." (*Ellen G. White, 9th Volume Testimonies, page 68 1909, 'Literature in service', see also Review and Herald 6th August 1908 'Circulate the publications No. 1)*

"Heavenly angels are waiting to cooperate with those who work on the side of truth and righteousness. The enemy of souls is working diligently to bring in his so-called science ***that will make of God and of Christ a nonentity.*** His delusions are flooding the world, ***but we cannot conceive of what will be in the future.***" (*Ellen G. White, Sermons and Talks Volume 1, 1906, MR 27, Sermon September 9th 1905, Los Angeles, California*)

Ask yourself this question. Why each time did Ellen White say that Satan was attempting to make ***only God and Christ nonentities?*** In other words, ***why did she not include the Holy Spirit?*** Is it not Satan's ploy to have us believe wrong things concerning the Holy Spirit? I would suggest the reason why Ellen White did not say that the adversary was attempting to make the Holy Spirit look a nonentity was that she did not consider Him to be an individual person in the same sense as she considered God and Christ to be individual persons. What other reason could there have been?

In chapters [23](#), [24](#) and [25](#), it will be seen that Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian. One of the first things we shall see is that when writing concerning Kellogg, she condemned illustrations that made God appear to be three-in-one – which is rather significant seeing that Kellogg claimed to have come to believe in the trinity doctrine. Before this, in [chapter 22](#), we shall see something of how our beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit underwent change.

[Proceed to chapter 22](#), 'A changing Holy Spirit – also a changed attitude towards other denominations'

Chapter twenty-two

A changing Holy Spirit – also a changed attitude towards other denominations

Our study on the Holy Spirit would not be complete unless we catch a glimpse of how our beliefs became changed from what we taught whilst Ellen White was alive to what is generally taught today within Seventh-day Adventism – which is in fact two entirely different teachings.

As has been said so many times previously, during the time of Ellen White's ministry, the belief of Seventh-day Adventists was that the Holy Spirit is the personal presence of the Father and the Son when they (the Father and the Son) were bodily in Heaven. It can be said also that although it came to be generally believed He was a person (the third person of the Godhead), He was not considered to be of exactly the same nature as God and Christ (seeing that He was both God and Christ omnipresent). In other words, the Holy Spirit was not thought to be a separate being from and like God and Christ but was both of them omnipresent. From what we have read in the previous four chapters, this latter view is quite understandable.

This 'old view' was a non-trinitarian view – which obviously did not sit very well with those who wanted to bring in the trinitarian concepts of the Godhead now held by Seventh-day Adventists. This is why they sought to change it.

Two major hurdles to overcome

With regard to Seventh-day Adventists becoming trinitarian, two of the major hurdles that needed to be overcome were their beliefs concerning Christ and their beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit.

With regard to the initial 'push' to change our beliefs regarding Christ, this happened at the 1919 Bible Conference. We noted this in [chapter 15](#) so we will not go into this in detail here. We now need to see how our beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit began to change.

Just as our beliefs concerning Christ did not become changed overnight (at least not as a denomination – meaning the preponderant view), neither did our beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit change overnight. It did take time and death.

Amazing assertions

One person who appears to have contributed significantly to the changeover in beliefs was LeRoy Edwin Froom (1890-1974). He is said by some to have been one of our denomination's leading theologians and historians. Others refute these claims. This is not only in respect of Froom's theological skills but also of his ability to correctly portray Seventh-day Adventist history.

Some have drawn the conclusion that Froom's understanding of our history is not as accurate as it could and should have been. In fact the truth of the matter is that he seriously misrepresented our history – especially concerning what we once believed regarding the Godhead. He made it appear that the preponderant belief in early Seventh-day Adventism

was trinitarianism whilst the fact of the matter is that it was non-trinitarianism. You can read more about this in section 42 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

Concerning his own efforts to promote the 'new view' of the Holy Spirit, Froom related in his book 'Movement of Destiny' (note the dates to which he refers)

"May I here make a frank personal confession? When, back between 1926 and 1928, I was asked by our leaders to give a series of studies on the Holy Spirit, covering the North American union ministerial institutes of 1928, I found that, aside from priceless leads found in the Spirit of Prophecy, there was practically nothing in our literature setting forth a sound Biblical exposition in this tremendous field of study." (LeRoy Froom 'Movement of Destiny', page 322 1971 'Decades of Varied Advances Follows 1888')

He then added

"There were no previous pathfinding books on the question in our literature." (Ibid)

This is really very important. Note very carefully what Froom is actually saying.

Froom is saying that up to 1928, which was **13 years after** the death of Ellen White – also **30 years after** the publication of 'The Desire of Ages' - which was **84 years after the beginning** of Seventh-day Adventism (using 1844 as a starting point), he said he found "practically nothing" in our literature that set out a sound Biblical exposition on the Holy Spirit. He even said that all he could find in the spirit of prophecy were "priceless leads".

The latter statement is quite an assertion - especially in the light of what we have seen in chapters 19 and 20 that Ellen White said about the Holy Spirit.

Froom is saying that God, through the spirit of prophecy, had been comparatively silent about one of the most important aspects of the Christian faith – namely the Holy Spirit and His work. In one sense, this is a serious indictment of God Himself. This is inasmuch as it is actually saying that during the 71 years of Ellen White's ministry, God 'held back' on revealing through her the most important aspect of bringing about our salvation. As we know though, God did not hold back. That which He has revealed may not answer all of our questions but through Ellen White He has told us plenty. Certainly it is ample enough for our Christian experience and our salvation.

It is the same with Froom's assertions that regarding the Holy Spirit he could find "practically nothing" in our past publications. Even a superficial study of our books and periodicals etc will reveal that early Seventh-day Adventists had plenty to say on this subject. This can be seen in sections 31 and 32 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

So what did Froom mean by his remarks?

What Froom is really saying is that in our publications he could not find views of the Holy Spirit that as a denomination we hold today – meaning a trinitarian type of view. All of the views he found were **non-trinitarian** – which led him to admit

"I was compelled to search out a score of valuable books written by men outside our faith - those previously noted - for initial clues and suggestions, and to open up beckoning vistas to intensive personal study." (Ibid)

Froom admits that in pursuit of the truth concerning the Holy Spirit he went to the writings of those of **other denominations**. These denominations would have been mainly trinitarian and those whom Seventh-day Adventists have historically referred to prophetically as 'Babylon' (see Revelation 14:8 and 18:1-5).

This reminds me of Ellen White's counsel when she said

"There is danger that the false sentiments expressed in the books that they have been reading will sometimes be interwoven by our ministers, teachers, and editors with their arguments, discourses, and publications, under the belief that they are the same in principle as the teachings of the Spirit of truth." (Ellen G. White, 9th Volume Testimonies, page 68 1909, 'Literature in service', see also Review and Herald 6th August 1908 'Circulate the publications No. 1)

Concerning the Godhead, Ellen White had no problem with what was believed and taught by Seventh-day Adventists. In fact she endorsed these beliefs – particularly those beliefs concerning Christ (see [chapter 14](#)). Admittedly through her we were led to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person but this did not change what was the 'bottom line' belief. As can be seen in our past publications, even when the Holy Spirit was not regarded by many as a person, He was still said to be both God and Christ omnipresent. There is no evidence that this changed - at least not whilst Ellen White was alive. In other words, even when considered to be a person, the Holy Spirit was still believed to be both God and Christ omnipresent.

A startling thing to do

What Froom did was a startling thing for any Seventh-day Adventist to do – even more so for someone who in our church was regarded as a well-respected theologian. To obtain the view of the Holy Spirit for which he was seeking (which does appear to be a trinitarian view), he bypassed the writings of early Seventh-day Adventists and went to the teachers of 'Babylon'. He even said that the writings of God's messenger – namely Ellen White - were inadequate for his purposes.

This means that Froom went to the teachings of those who are vehemently opposed to everything that constitutes the distinctive beliefs of our God given last day message. These beliefs include the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday), the sanctuary truth, the investigative judgement, the state of the dead and the spirit of prophecy etc. All of these beliefs, as well as the belief that our denomination is God's chosen vehicle for the proclamation of His last day message before Jesus returns, are totally rejected by those to whom Froom went to seek for what he believed was the truth about the Holy Spirit.

Please reason with me for a moment. If these denominations rejected all of the aforementioned truths held by Seventh-day Adventists - saying they were not Scriptural and not supported by the Word of God (heresy and anti-Christ even) - then why would God have revealed to them the truth about the Holy Spirit? In other words, why reveal this truth to them and not to Seventh-day Adventists – even though we were His remnant people and even though He had His own messenger amongst us? Does this make any sense?

This though, in the decades immediately following the death of Ellen White, is where our church leadership was leading us. They were leading us to believe that the church members who were alive throughout Ellen White's ministry had it all wrong about the Holy Spirit whilst the other denominations that rejected our God-given message had it all right. In other words, they were leading us to accept the beliefs of those who rejected our end time message.

So it was that this idea that the Holy Spirit was a person in exactly the same sense as God and Christ are persons was another of the major steps in changing the Seventh-day

Adventist Church from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism. This change also brought us 'more into line' with the mainline evangelical denominations – which for the most part, if not all, were trinitarian.

It was this eventual changeover to trinitarianism that helped us to be proclaimed 'Christian' by the evangelicals. This was after having been regarded, throughout the time of Ellen White's ministry, as a non-Christian cult or sect. If we had remained non-trinitarian, then the evangelicals would never have accepted us as being Christian. This much is absolutely certain.

Froom then wrote

"Having these, I went on from there. But they were decided early helps. **And scores, if not hundreds, could confirm the same sobering conviction that some of these other men frequently had a deeper insight into the spiritual things of God than many of our own men then had on the Holy Spirit and the triumphant life.** It was still a largely obscure theme." (*Ibid*)

Whilst here denigrating "our own men", LeRoy Froom, elevates those not of our faith. Notice he said that the subject of the "Holy Spirit and the triumphant life" (which I assume means how to overcome sin and witness for Christ) was a "largely obscure theme" within past Seventh-day Adventism – meaning that it was not something that was in the forefront of our teachings. This is obviously an extremely disparaging thing to say about our early Seventh-day Adventists – especially as at the same time Froom was exalting those who in the main rejected our God-given message of a return to the 'keeping of the commandments of God' – which included the remembrance of the seventh-day Sabbath etc.

Froom went on to say that whilst these men of the 'other denominations' did not understand our God given message, they did know God. He also said that they were amongst 'God's reserves' and His 'other shepherds'. He also said that when **we failed to be the front-runners in uplifting Christ and His righteousness as the fullness of the Godhead** (meaning of course as Christ is depicted in the trinity doctrine), they – those of other denominations - did the work that we should have done.

He also said

"Hundreds of thousands of hungry hearts have turned to these other godly men for spiritual help and deeper understanding of the things of God **that we should ever have given to the world in the highest and fullest form of presentation. But we faltered for a time, and failed to do what we should have done.**" (*Ibid*, page 322)

Again Froom is seen as belittling early Seventh-day Adventists. This obviously included those of our early leadership who were responsible for the work

The above assertions by Froom are very serious. He is saying that what our early people had failed to do, these 'other men' of other denominations had achieved. This is even though they rejected our God given message. Needless to say, for reasons probably best known to himself, Froom had a very high regard for these 'other men'.

Ellen White's son saddened.

Shortly following the release of Froom's book 'The Coming of the Comforter' (1928), a man by the name of H. W. Carr wrote a letter to W. C. White (Ellen White's third son). He was asking what Ellen White's views were on the Holy Spirit. Ellen White had died in 1915.

The response of W. C. White is well worth noting. This is because amongst other things, it reveals that when this letter was written (1935), this change in thinking regarding the Holy Spirit was still in its initial stages – being promoted of course by our leadership. It also reveals that by this time (1935), the trinity doctrine was far from being established within Seventh-day Adventism. It is also proof that even though Ellen White had said that the Holy Spirit was a person, everyone did not accept this to mean that this mysterious divine personality was a person like God and Christ were persons. As we shall see, not even her own son believed it. It will become evident also that W. C. White did not accept that his mother believed that the Holy Spirit was a personal being like God and Christ.

With regard to the Holy Spirit, Carr had asked Willie White to explain what views his mother had held. This was obviously because of the debate being brought about, amongst Seventh-day Adventists, by the attempted change in beliefs. Seeing that Fromm's book ('The coming of the Comforter') had been released 7 years before Carr wrote this letter to W. C. White, it is reasonable to believe that in this Holy Spirit debate, this publication was a contributory factor.

Carr wrote to W. C. White quoting from the spirit of prophecy. He said

"In the first pages of Great Controversy it is stated that the 'Father had an associate - A co-worker...**The only being that could enter into all the councils and purposes of God.**' 'The Father wrought by His son in the creation of all heavenly beings...He holds supremacy over them all.' 'Sin originated with Satan, **who next to Christ** had been most honoured of God, and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. **Next to Christ he was first among the hosts of God.**' 'The Son of God had wrought the Fathers will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven.' **The Son of God was exalted above Satan** as one in power and authority with the Father.' Christ created Satan. Ez.28:15." (H. W. Carr, letter to W. C. White, 24th January 1935)

Carr was pointing out the fact that Ellen White had said that in the hosts of Heaven, it was not the Holy Spirit who was next to Christ but Satan. As she had said, "Next to Christ he [Satan] was first among the hosts of God".

Carr is also pointing out that Ellen White had said that Christ was the "**only being that could enter into all the councils and purposes of God**" – suggesting that she could not have regarded the Holy Spirit as a "being" like God and Christ.

Carr added (this tells us that this push to change our beliefs regarding the Holy Spirit was coming from our leadership)

"It is urged by **some of our leaders** now that The Holy Spirit is a third person **of the same nature** of the Father and Son, a member of the heavenly trio, cooperative in creation and **personally active with the Father and Son.**" (Ibid)

Notice the emphasis on "same nature".

Here we can see it said that it was our then current (1935) leadership who were attempting to change our beliefs regarding the Holy Spirit. This was the transitional time within Seventh-day Adventism. As we noted in [chapter 15](#), it was also our leadership who were attempting to change our beliefs concerning Christ. This push was initially carried out at the 1919 Bible Conference.

Carr then said to W. C. White

“For many years I have used these statements of Sr. White in combating **false teachings relative to defining the Holy Spirit**. “Will you kindly tell me what you understand was **your mother’s position in reference to the personality of the Holy Spirit?**” (*Ibid*)

Carr obviously knew what was generally believed and taught within Seventh-day Adventism. He also believed that this was supported by Ellen White’s writings. This is that the Holy Spirit was not a person of the same nature as God and Christ but is the personal presence of the Father and the Son when they (the Father and the Son) were bodily in Heaven. He is saying that our leaders were presenting a ‘new view’.

Carr finished his letter by saying

“I know Brother White you would not depart from your mother’s teachings, **and that you have as perfect an understanding of them as any one**. I shall appreciate your opinion very much. Assuring you of the high esteem and respect I have had from my childhood in your father, mother and family, I am very truly yours in this blessed faith.” (*Ibid*)

Six weeks later White replied to Carr saying

“In your letter you requested me to tell you what I understand to be my mother’s position in reference to the personality of the Holy Spirit. **This I cannot do, because I never clearly understood her teachings on the matter.**” (*W. C. White to H. W. Carr, letter, April 30th 1935*)

On the part of Ellen White’s son, this may seem a rather ‘odd’ thing to say – especially as he was responsible for the overall care and indexing of his mother’s writings – plus the fact that he was her son - but look at his explanation to Carr. He said

“There always was in my mind some perplexity regarding the meaning of her utterances, **which to my superficial manner of thinking, seemed to be somewhat confusing**. I have often regretted that I did not possess **that keenness of mind that could solve this and other perplexities**. And then remembering what Sister White wrote in “Acts of the Apostles”, pages 51 and 52, “regarding such mysteries which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden”. I thought best to refrain from discussion and have endeavored to direct my mind to matters **easy to understand**”. (*Ibid*)

Here Ellen White’s son is saying that regarding the Holy Spirit, he could not quite grasp what his mother believed.

Now let’s reason this through.

W. C. White was Ellen White’s third son. He had managed his mother’s writings – and was still doing so in 1935 when Carr wrote his letter. In fact he is partly responsible for the indexing of her writings. Certainly he was not ignorant of her views. Can you imagine over the years how many times he had heard his mother preach - also the number of Bible studies that he had attended with her? Can you imagine also the number of private discussions that he had with his mother about matters of a spiritual nature - probably even concerning the Holy Spirit? These are obviously inestimable.

I believe it is reasonably obvious that if Ellen White had regarded the Holy Spirit as simply a person like God and Christ are persons – which is the belief taught today within Seventh-day Adventism - then Willie White would not only have known about it but he would also have understood this quite easily. After all, many Seventh-day Adventists today believe it without

a problem. Certainly it would not have been beyond W. C. White's capabilities to fathom it – yet here he says that he could not quite get to grips with what his mother believed. This is absolute proof that he did not believe that his mother regarded the Holy Spirit as simply another divine being like God and Christ. It also tells us that it was not his belief either. He obviously viewed what she believed as a much more complex matter – even too complex for him.

He continued

“There are many Scriptures which speak of the Father and the Son *and the absence of Scripture making similar reference to the united work of the Father and the Holy Spirit or of Christ and the Holy Spirit*, has led me to believe that the spirit without individuality *was the representative of the Father and the Son throughout the universe*, and it was through the Holy Spirit that they dwell in our hearts and make us one with the Father and with the Son.” (Ibid)

Whilst Ellen White was alive, this was the standard belief of Seventh-day Adventists. It was that whilst the Holy Spirit was regarded as a personality, He was not thought of possessing “individuality” exactly like the Father and the Son. In other words His nature was different than the Father and the Son. To Seventh-day Adventists, the Holy Spirit was both God and Christ omnipresent – not another ‘being’ of the same nature as them. This is the same as was said by Butler to Kellogg (see [chapter 21](#)).

W. C. White was correct in saying that there are many texts of Scripture that speak of God and Christ together but do not include the Holy Spirit. We noted this in [chapter 18](#). One very important place is in the New Testament writer's introductions. They all say ‘from God and Jesus Christ’ but not from the Holy Spirit. There must be a reason why the Holy Spirit was omitted from all these introductions. If He had been included, then He would have been made to look a person like God and Christ but as it was, under the inspiration of God, all of these Bible writers excluded Him.

The proof that W. C. White did not regard his mother as teaching that the Holy Spirit is a person in the same sense as God and Christ are persons is also borne out by the following statement he made to Carr. He wrote

“The statements and the arguments of some of our ministers *in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit is an individual as are God the Father and Christ, the eternal Son, have perplexed me and sometimes they have made me sad.*” (Ibid)

Now what is this telling us?

It is telling us that in 1935, there were those of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry who were trying to introduce a trinitarian concept of the Holy Spirit into Seventh-day Adventism – also that it was saddening Ellen White's son. Obviously by then (1935) it was not generally believed that the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Christ. It is also emphatic proof that W. C. White believed that his mother did not regard the Holy Spirit as a person like God and Christ are persons – else why make this statement? This much really is obvious.

It seems that in irony of this realisation (that some of our ministers were attempting to make the Holy Spirit to be a person like God and Christ) W. C. White said to Carr

“One popular teacher said “We may regard Him (the Holy Spirit) as *the fellow who is down here running things*”. (Ibid)

Could W. C. White have been referring to LeRoy Froom? It is possible.

This today is the way that many Seventh-day Adventists regard the Holy Spirit. They see Him as an individual person like the Father and the Son who is here on earth directing God's will in the affairs of men. Again it can only be said that if Ellen White had believed that the Holy Spirit was simply another person like God and Christ, then W. C. White would have had no problem in understanding it but as it was, he said her could not quite understand what she did believe.

To read these letters between W. C. White and Carr please see here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SB-Othersarticles.htm>

A changed attitude toward other denominations

Without question there is a growing number of Seventh-day Adventists today who believe that since the time of the early Seventh-day Adventists, there has been a tremendous change of attitude on the part of our denomination towards the other denominations – also vice-versa.

That this relationship has changed is not in doubt. Whereas we once regarded these other denominations as the 'Babylon' of Bible prophecy and that God's people, prior to the second coming of Christ, should separate themselves from these organisations (meaning come out of them and into the truth proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists), this is not so distinctively taught today within Seventh-day Adventism. It is also the belief of many that our distinctive doctrines - such as the Sabbath, the investigative judgement and the state of the dead etc - are not, as they used to be, urged today upon non-Seventh-day Adventists. This 'changed attitude' was not something that came about overnight. It did take decades to form.

In the Ministry magazine of March 1966, Leroy Froom wrote an article called "New approaches Imperative for a New Day", which, as we shall now see, is a title that speaks for itself.

In this article he said

*"Today the old largely negative approach -- emphasizing chiefly the things wherein we differ from all other religious groups - **is past, definitely past.** (LeRoy Froom, Ministry, March 1966, "New approaches Imperative for a New Day")*

He then added in confirmation of what he had just said

***"And that is as it should be"** (Ibid)*

We must stop here for a moment and reason together.

If as Seventh-day Adventists we do not emphasise our difference in beliefs (in comparison to these other denominations), meaning how we regard as truth the perpetuity of the law of God, the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as opposed to Sunday, the sanctuary teaching, the investigative judgement that began in 1844, the nearness of Christ's return, the biblical view of the state of the dead etc - then how can we get our God given message across to those of other denominations? Obvious to relate, this would not be possible. This is because these beliefs are integral to the message that God has given to us to pass on to the Christians of other denominations. If we do not pass on these beliefs then we will not be passing on God's end time message.

In brief, if as God's remnant people we fail to emphasise these beliefs, we would be failing to do what God has called us to do.

This 'not emphasising' was definitely the beginning of our newly found relationship with the other churches – and it is indispensable today to the continuation of it. If we were to emphasise these beliefs now, especially if we stressed that in the finality (meaning just before Christ returns) those who reject the Seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) will receive 'the mark of the beast' - which was once regarded as a very important part of our message - then we would quickly lose this 'present standing'. Certainly 'the fires of persecution' against us would once again be lit.

Froom, in his article, referred to what were then our non-trinitarian beliefs, also to what he claims were past faulty beliefs concerning the atonement etc.

He then said

"Not until these constricted views were corrected, and that fact made known publicly in scholarly circles, did the old prejudices melt that had been based on those **faulty minority views**. The old canard about our being an "**anti-Christian cult**" was abandoned by the informed, **and we were conceded to be truly Christian** -- despite our Sabbath and sanctuary emphasis, and our position on conditional immortality."
(*Ibid*)

In his book 'Movement of Destiny', these "**faulty minority views**" is how Froom describes the one time non-trinitarian 'faith' of Seventh-day Adventists. Froom claimed it was just a 'minority view', meaning the view of the 'few'. Today though, the truth of the matter is being made known – meaning that this was the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists – also that it was fully endorsed by Ellen White. These were not as Froom says, "**faulty minority views**" – in fact they were neither "**faulty**" nor those of the "**minority**". They were the truths held by the vast majority.

Notice too how Froom said that we were once regarded by these other denominations as "**an anti-Christian cult**". This is how it was throughout the time period we did not uphold the trinity doctrine. Notice too he says that this image was eventually "**abandoned by the informed**". This was after we had become more or less established as a trinitarian denomination – at least by our leadership, even if not by the laity. This was in the mid 1950's when recognising us as a truly Christian denomination, the 'evangelicals' offered to us the right hand of fellowship - which our leadership very gratefully accepted,. This is because of what our leadership told these other denominations we believed – not because of what was believed by the majority of the laity.

You can read about this in section 50 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

An apostasy from our God given task

There are those today of course who say that this 'being accepted' by the other denomination was a 'good thing' but others disagree. This was exactly the same as it was in the 1950's.

As one Seventh-day Adventist minister said (this was in 1959)

"This is a most interesting and **dangerous situation**." (M. L. Andreasen, letter No. 6 to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1959, 'The Atonement')

He then added

“As one official who was not in favor of what was being done stated to me: "***We are being sold down the river.***" ***What a sight for heaven and earth!*** The church of the living God which has been given the commission to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven and call men ***to come out of Babylon***, is now standing at the door of these churches ***asking permission to enter and become one of them***. How are the mighty fallen!" (*Ibid*)

Andreasen concluded

“This is more than apostasy. ***This is giving up Adventism***. It is ***the rape of a whole people***. ***It is denying God's leading in the past.***" (*Ibid*)

This I believe says everything. There is no need for more comment.

One final point

In 1960, LeRoy Froom sent a letter to Otto Christensen. In this letter he gives us evidence that regarding the Holy Spirit it was his (Froom's) own personal efforts that helped to bring about this change of beliefs. It shows us clearly too that as the 1930's approached, there were those who were defending and upholding the beliefs of the early Seventh-day Adventists – meaning the belief that the Holy Spirit was not a person of the same nature as God and Christ were persons. This also shows us that there was decided resistance to this change.

This is when Froom said in his letter

“May I state that my book, THE COMING OF THE COMFORTER was the result of a series of studies that I gave in 1927 – 1928, to ministerial institutes throughout North America. You cannot imagine ***how I was pummelled by some of the old-timers because I pressed on the personality of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead.***" (*L. Froom, letter to Otto Christenson, 27th October 1960*)

Froom is saying that when in the late 1920's he introduced this new concept regarding the Holy Spirit into Seventh-day Adventism, he was “***pummelled by some of the old-timers***". These “***old timers***” would have been those who believed in the theology held by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive. This was when the Holy Spirit was not deemed to be a person like God and Christ but was the omnipresence of them both when they (God and Christ) were not physically (bodily) present – meaning when they were both still in the Heavenly sanctuary.

In our publications, as time passed, the ‘new view’ of the Holy Spirit was promoted more and more. Today it is just accepted as a fact by Seventh-day Adventists but if what the Bible and the spirit of prophecy say about the Holy Spirit is studied as it should be studied, it would clearly be seen that the ‘old view’ – the view held by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive – is the correct view of the Holy Spirit – which when included with the Sonship belief, completely invalidates the trinity doctrine.

In chapters [23](#), [24](#) and [25](#) we shall see that Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian.

[Proceed to chapter 23](#), ‘Ellen White not a trinitarian – spirit of prophecy condemnation of three-in-one explanations of God’

Chapter twenty-three

Ellen White not a trinitarian – spirit of prophecy condemnation of three-in-one explanations of God

In our present denominational Godhead debate, the trinitarians are saying that Ellen White was a trinitarian whilst the non-trinitarians are saying she was not. The question is – who is right and who is wrong – and more importantly, how do we decide?

In this chapter – also the next two chapters – we shall be looking at certain statements made by Ellen White which clearly show she could never have embraced the trinity doctrine – at least not the orthodox version or the version currently held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See [chapter 3](#) for an explanation of the differences between these two versions.

No confession of the trinity doctrine

The one thing we know for sure is that nowhere in the writings of Ellen White can there be found a confession of the trinity doctrine – any version of it. All that can be found are statements that the trinitarians say ‘fit nicely’ into a trinitarian concept of God – and I agree – Ellen White did make statements that would fit nicely into a trinitarian concept of God.

On the other hand – and counterbalancing the latter statement - there are quite a number of other statements she made that can only be fitted into a non-trinitarian concept of the Godhead. By the trinitarians, these statements are not usually brought to the fore. We shall quote some of these later – also in the next two chapters. In fact in the previous chapters to this study, we have already seen statements from her writings that would never fit into a trinitarian view of God – whether orthodoxy or not.

As of yet, I have never come across one spirit of prophecy statement that I could say belongs solely in a trinitarian concept of the Godhead – meaning a statement that could not be used in a non-trinitarian view. In other words, all that I have found would ‘fit nicely’ into non-trinitarianism. It is obvious to me therefore that the trinitarians are being very selective in their quoting of Ellen White – meaning that they quote the ‘seemingly trinitarian’ statements but usually ignore the ones that are decidedly non-trinitarian (would fit only into a non-trinitarian concept of God).

This is not a correct way to study a person’s writings – particularly those of someone who was blessed with the gift of prophecy. If we are to understand what God has revealed through Ellen White, then we need to make an overall study of her writings. This is the only honest thing to do. We are not to be selective in our quoting just to make her writings fit our own particular beliefs. This is being dishonest.

Some say that Ellen White's views developed over the years and that because of 'greater light', many of her earlier statements have been invalidated. This though nullifies the belief that she was inspired to write as she did. It reduces what she wrote to being 'just her own opinion'. It also leads to the belief that some of her later writings may have been the same (erroneous).

Very often it is said that what Ellen White wrote in 'The Desire of Ages' led our denomination to become trinitarian but as we shall see in this chapter, years after this book was published she was condemning views of God that expressed Him as a three-in-one entity.

Concerning Christ (conclusions from previous chapters)

In the previous chapters we have seen it clearly said by Ellen White that in eternity Christ was brought forth of the Father – meaning that He is truly the Son of God (see in particular chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 14).

We noted she said in 1895

“A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- **not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person**, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 30th May 1895, ‘Christ our complete salvation’)

She also wrote 6 weeks later (more or less repeating what she said above but using different words)

“The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, **gave his only begotten Son**, tore from his bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind.” (Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald* 9th July 1895 ‘The Duty of the Minister and the People’)

In the first statement, Christ is said to be “a Son **begotten** in the express image of the Father's person” whilst in the second it says He was “**made** in the express image” of the Father's person. This does not mean that Christ is said to be a created being but that in the days of eternity He was brought forth of the Father. This is made patently clear by reading other spirit of prophecy statements – especially where we are told that Christ is God Himself (the I AM) in the person of the Son.

We were also told in the ‘Signs of the Times’ with reference to Christ saying “Before Abraham was I am” (note very importantly that this was written by Ellen White **the year following** the publication of her supposedly trinitarian ‘The Desire of Ages’)

“Here Christ shows them that, altho they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, **yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation**. The existence of Christ before His incarnation **is not measured by figures**.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*. 3rd May 1899 ‘The Word made flesh’)

This is saying that as a separate personality from God (the Father), the personality of the Son had a beginning of existence – albeit this existence cannot be measured by any means known to humanity. This is the same as saying that in eternity Christ was brought forth (begotten) of the Father.

Shortly following the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, Ellen White preached a sermon in which she said

“Angels of God looked with amazement upon Christ, who took upon Himself the form of man and humbly united His divinity with humanity in order that He might minister to

fallen man. It is a marvel among the heavenly angels. God has told us that **He did do it**, and we are to accept the Word of God **just as it reads**.

And although we may try to reason in regard to our Creator, **how long He has had existence**, where evil first entered into our world, and all these things, we may reason about them until we fall down faint and exhausted with the research when there is yet an infinity beyond.” (Ellen G. White, Sermon, December 1st 1888, The Des Moines Seventh-day Adventist Church, Iowa, ‘The minister’s relationship to God’s Word’, Sermons and talks, Volume 1 page 65)

It is clearly stated here that we cannot measure the length of time that Christ, as a separate person from God the Father, has had an existence – meaning we cannot know exactly when, in eternity He was brought forth of the Father. It was also made clear that

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, **is truly God in infinity, but not in personality**.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 116, Dec. 19, 1905, ‘An Entire Consecration’, see also *The Upward Look*, page 367)

In other words, God and Christ are two separate personalities, or, to put it another way again – Christ in personality is not the infinite God but the Son of the infinite God – meaning that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. This is why it can be said He “**is truly God in infinity, but not in personality**”. In opposition to this, the trinitarians will often use the phrase “God the Son” – a phrase not found, either in the Scriptures or the spirit of prophecy writings.

Please note that the above was written **7 years after** the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’. This previous statement would not fit into a trinitarian concept of God.

The youth were told in 1897

“From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. They were two, **yet little short of being identical; two in individuality**, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character.” (Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor 16th December 1897, ‘The new commandment part 1’)

Again this would not fit into a trinitarian concept of God – especially as far as the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine is concerned. This version says that all three divine personalities are exactly the same. This is the whole point of Seventh-day Adventist trinitarianism.

Trinitarians would never make such statements as the above. This is because each and all of these statements belong to a non-trinitarian concept of Christ.

Confirmation in history

In previous chapters we have also seen that regarding Christ, Ellen White endorsed the begotten belief of early Seventh-day Adventists. She said very plainly that as a church we were telling the truth concerning His pre-existence (see [chapter 13](#)). Obviously, because she believed the same herself, she would endorse these beliefs. This is what was revealed to her by God.

The previous chapters have also revealed that through Ellen White it has been said that the Holy Spirit is the personal presence of both the Father and the Son when they – the Father and the Son – were still bodily in Heaven. In other words, the Holy Spirit is both God and Christ omnipresent, not a person of the same nature as God and Christ (see [chapters 19 and 20](#)).

The trinitarians amongst us seem to ignore the evidences of these 'non-trinitarian' statements. They tend to quote the 'trinitarian looking' statements and then say that these show that Ellen White was a trinitarian. As has been said though, this is not an honest way to understand what God has revealed through her – neither is it a very intelligent thing to do. If we are going to take her writings as being authoritative, we must take into account all that was said by her – not just some of it. A decision must be made then, based upon the weight of evidence method.

The trinity doctrine explained

Before we continue to show that Ellen White was not a trinitarian, it is important that we remind ourselves – albeit only very briefly - of what constitutes the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine. We can then compare this with what was said by Ellen White. This is also important in relation to the next two chapters.

In a denominational book which officially expresses the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church it says

“There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons (Seventh-day Adventists Believe ... An exposition of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, page 23, 2005)

It then describes this unity (trinity) “one God” by explaining

“God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. ***He*** is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. ***He*** is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation” (*Ibid*)

On page 9 of the July 2008 Biblical Research Institute (BRI) newsletter ‘Reflections’ – also in explanation of the above trinity belief - there was given a Bible study on the trinity doctrine. It was written by Ekkehardt Mueller and called - “One God and Three Persons”. This was part and parcel of a report of the ‘trinity congress’ held by our denomination in Australia in 2008. It explained that the conclusion of the congress was that the Seventh-day Adventist belief of God being a trinity is correct. We spoke of this in [chapter 3](#) – ‘Godhead not trinity’.

Mueller wrote

“There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), however, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all called God (Matthew 27:46, John 20:28: Acts 5:3-4). Consequently, we do not worship three Gods, but one God who reveals Himself in and consists of three “persons”. (*Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 9, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*)

This is typical trinity reasoning. It goes beyond what God has revealed in the Scriptures but without it (this reasoning) there would be no such thing as the trinity doctrine - at least not as it is generally known today.

Mueller added

“The three persons share one indivisible nature.” (*Ibid*)

This is the basic premise of any version of the trinity doctrine. Ekkehardt Mueller also said

“Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two.” (*Ibid*)

Please take careful note of the second sentence. We shall return to it later. It is very important. It is saying that no matter what the circumstances, none of the three persons can ever become separated from each other. This is because together they make the 'one God'.

This is typical trinity theology. It is also the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine. It is that the three divine personalities exist together as the one compound God and in one indivisible substance are inseparably connected to each other. As most would realise, this is something not revealed in Scripture – and certainly you have never read anything like it in the spirit of prophecy. It is just human speculation – a speculation that does not stand the test of Scripture. This will be seen in this chapter, also in chapters [24](#) and [25](#).

We also noted in [chapter 3](#) that it now appears to be official Seventh-day Adventist theology that we have no idea as to what God looks like. As it says in the 'Seventh-day Adventist Handbook of Theology'

“In Himself He is real and has a form, yet that divine reality and form completely surpass the reality and capability of comprehension of the highest intelligences.” (Fernando L. Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 113, 'Doctrine of God'*)

Canale explains

“For instance, when God says that He has an arm (Exodus 15:16; Psalm 89:13), He does not mean that He has exactly or univocally what we call an arm. The expression signifies that God’s reality is capable of performing all that can be performed by a human arm and infinitely more.” (*Ibid*)

We can see here that God is said not to have arms like us but He can do things that we do with our arms. The conclusion is

“We cannot conceive or imagine the actual structure of God’s reality that allows Him to perform these acts.” (*Ibid*)

As has been said previously (see [chapter 4](#)), if God does not have arms like we do then perhaps He does not have a face, body and legs like we do. If this is the case then what is said here is correct. We cannot imagine what God looks like. For further reasoning see [chapter 4](#) – 'The trinity doctrine and spiritual views'.

Ellen White condemns three-in-one illustrations of God

One particular statement - often used by Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians to so say show that Ellen White was a trinitarian – actually does the opposite. In other words, it proves she was not a trinitarian. This is where she said (this was written concerning John Harvey Kellogg and his beliefs – see [chapter 21](#))

“There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit-those who receive Christ by living faith are baptised, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No.7, page 62 1906 'Come out and be Separate'*)

I wonder how many times this statement has been used to show that Ellen White was a trinitarian? Obviously by now (2011) this is inestimable.

Correctly understood though, this statement is not a trinitarian statement but one that is non-trinitarian. In its context, which we shall see now, it refutes the idea of the 'one God' existing

as three-in-one – at least as described by the trinity doctrine. In other words, Ellen White penned these words in opposition to believing that the ‘one God’ is a triune entity – not in favour of it. Allow me to explain.

We noted in [chapter 21](#) that Kellogg confessed in 1903 that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. This was contrary to what was then believed by Seventh-day Adventists. Ellen White wrote testimony upon testimony concerning Kellogg – many of which condemned what he was teaching.

Some say that regarding Kellogg’s teachings, Ellen White was simply condemning his belief that God was actually ‘in things’ (a belief akin to pantheism) but as we shall now see, she actually condemned the trinitarian view of God.

Before we look at this testimony, it may be necessary to remind ourselves that in order to explain what God had shown her, Ellen White at times would use words written by someone else – sometimes modifying them. This she did in this particular testimony we shall be looking at now – the one concerning Kellogg. This tells us a great deal as to what she was referring to in this testimony.

In this testimony she made statements such as

“I have not been able to sleep during the past night. Letters have come to me with statements made by men who claimed to have asked Dr. Kellogg if he believes the testimonies that Sister White bears. **He declares that he does, but he does not.**” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 60 ‘Come out and be separate’*)

“This large work and its sure results are plainly presented to me. **I am so sorry that sensible men do not discern the trail of the serpent. I call it thus; for thus the Lord pronounces it.**” (*Ibid page 61*)

“Wherein are those who are designated as departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, **departing from the faith which they have held sacred for the past fifty years?** I leave that for the ones to answer who sustain those who develop such acuteness in their plans for spoiling and hindering the work of God.” (*Ibid*)

In the last statement, note particularly the highlighted part. This was the problem area. It was a departing from the long-held faith of Seventh-day Adventists – which in 1905, when this was written, was non-trinitarian.

Jumping towards the end of the testimony, we can see the reason for her writing these things **when she did**. She explained

“**I write this because any moment my life may be ended.** Unless there is a breaking away from the influence that Satan has prepared, and a reviving of the testimonies that God has given, souls will perish in their delusion. **They will accept fallacy after fallacy, and will thus keep up a disunion that will always exist until those who have been deceived take their stand on the right platform. All this higher education that is being planned will be extinguished; for it is spurious.** The more simple the education of our workers, the less connection they have with the men whom God is not leading, the more will be accomplished.” (*Ibid*)

Note here the reference to “higher education”. Obviously it is something that Ellen White regarded as drawing people away from the simplicity and the truth of the gospel. See the final sentence.

Prior to this she wrote (remember this testimony was concerning Kellogg)

"I am instructed to say, The sentiments of those who are searching for *advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted.*" (Ibid page 62)

She followed this by saying

"Such representations as the following are made: "The Father is as the light invisible; the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad." "The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life. Another representation: "The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power." (Ibid)

As most Christians will probably realise, all of these illustrations, along with others that are very similar, are those used by trinitarians in an attempt to describe God's being as three-in-one. This undoubtedly shows that Ellen White was making reference here to the trinity doctrine. This will be confirmed later as we dig deeper into the content of this testimony. Trinitarians use these types of illustration because from the Scriptures they have no real evidence to support their reasoning.

Very interestingly, these three-in-one illustrations did not originate with Ellen White. We know this because as they are written here, they can also be found in a book written in 1858 by the Rev. William Boardman.

This book, 'The Higher Christian Life', was a worldwide success. In fact the 1870's 'Higher Life' movement in England, which promoted holy Christian living, actually took its name from it. This reveals the popularity of this publication. Along with Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey, Boardman held evangelistic campaigns promoting Christian holiness.

In his book, Boardman used these three-in-one illustrations to help explain the relationship between the three personalities of the Godhead. This was to particularly show how the fullness of the Godhead dwelt within each of them. These were the personalities that he said (using his words) comprised "the living" and "triune God" - meaning the trinity God. We shall see this now.

Concerning these three-in-one illustrations, Boardman wrote (in his book this was all in upper case)

"The Father is as the light invisible. The Son is as the light embodied. The Spirit is as the light shed down." (W. Boardman, *The Higher Christian life, part 2, chapter 1, page 102, 'For me: what then must I do?'*)

"The Father is like the dew in invisible vapor. The Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form. The Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life." (Ibid page 103)

"The Father is like to the invisible vapor. The Son is as the laden cloud and palling rain. The Spirit is the rain — fallen and working in refreshing power." (Ibid page 104)

There is very little difference between how Ellen White phrased these illustrations (see above) and the words of Boardman. It is obvious that she copied them from his book. As we read on, this becomes even more obvious.

With reference to these illustrations Boardman admitted

“These likenings are all imperfect. They rather hide than illustrate the tri-personality of the one God, for they are not persons but things, poor and earthly at best, to represent ***the living personalities of the living God.***” (Ibid)

As we shall soon see, Ellen White agreed in part with this statement (at least where Boardman says that these illustrations are imperfect) but she definitely did not agree with where he said “***the living personalities of the living God***”. This is trinitarianism. We shall come back to these words shortly.

Boardman then wrote concerning these illustrations

“So much they may do, however, as to illustrate the ***official relations of each to the others*** and of each and all to us. And more. They may also illustrate the truth that all the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, ***dwells in each person of the Triune God.***” (Ibid)

Here was the purpose of these three-in-one illustrations. It was to show that the fullness of God dwells in each of the three personalities of what Boardman described as “***the Triune God***”. Trinitarians often claim that unless this type of illustration is used, then each the three will not be seen as possessing this fullness.

Please note that according to Boardman, this “***living God***” (see above) is the “***triune God***” - meaning a compound entity (as in the trinity doctrine). Note too he says that these illustrations do “***illustrate the official relations of each to the others***”. This making the three ‘the one God’ is seen by trinitarians as protecting and depicting the belief that all three are the same God.

Ellen White did not see it this way - far from it in fact. As we noted above she said (note the very first words of this paragraph)

“I am ***instructed to say,***” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 62 ‘Come out and be separate’ 1905*)

Here Ellen White is saying that it was not her own opinion that she was voicing but instruction from God. This is when she said (again as we noted above)

“The sentiments of those who are searching for ***advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted.***” (Ibid)

Then, after quoting the three-in-one illustrations (as we have seen them quoted above) she wrote

“All these spiritualistic representations are ***simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God can not be compared with the things His hands have made.*** These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. ***The Father can not be described by the things of earth.***” (Ibid)

These are very strong words – and remember – God had instructed her to say these things. This means that through Ellen White, God was condemning the use of three-in-one illustrations used by trinitarians to describe His being.

Notice first of all how Ellen White described these three-in-one “***representations***”. She called them “***spiritualistic representations***”. As we noted in [chapter 4](#), Ellen White spoke of ‘spiritual views’. This is when in ‘Early Writings’ she made such statements as

"I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, "If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist." (Ellen G. White, Early Writings, page 54)

"I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, "I am in the express image of My Father's person." (Ibid page 77)

"I have often seen that the spiritual view took away all the glory of heaven, and that in many minds the throne of David and the lovely person of Jesus have been burned up in the fire of Spiritualism." (Ibid)

As was said in [chapter 4](#), it is only reasonable to believe that these 'spiritual views' denied the belief that both God and Christ have forms of their own – meaning that they are two separate individual persons – each with their own individuality.

Continuing our thoughts concerning Ellen White quoting Boardman - by quoting more or less the exact words from Boardman's book, we can see very clearly that as did Boardman, Ellen White was making reference to the trinity doctrine (the "triune God" as Boardman called Him). We can see therefore that Seventh-day Adventists were being told, in 1905, that illustrations that attempt to make God's being as three-in-one were wrong. In fact Ellen White says that they are all "imperfect" and "untrue". How much more of a plain testimony could Seventh-day Adventists receive about not depicting God as a three-in-one entity (a trinity)?

In this Kellogg crisis, it was the doctrine of the trinity that was in question. Of this there is no doubt. This is why concerning Kellogg' and his beliefs, Ellen White cited these three-in-one illustrations.

Notice who Ellen White said could not be described by using the things of this earth. She said it was "the Father" - the infinite God as she so often called Him. He is the one who was believed by Seventh-day Adventists - prior to our denominational conversion to trinitarianism - to be the source of life (the great source of all). This included the Son who was believed to have been begotten - brought forth - of Him.

As Ellen White once wrote

"The world's Redeemer was equal with God. His authority was as the authority of God." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 7th Jan 1890, 'Christ revealed the Father')

She then added

"He declared that he had no existence separate from the Father." (Ibid)

In the orthodox trinity view, the Son is everlastingly begotten of the Father whilst the Holy Spirit is said to proceed from the Father or from the Father and the Son. Thus the Father is viewed the source. This is what these views depicted. This is why Ellen White said that the Father could not be described by the things of earth.

At first glance, the above three-in-one illustrations may look harmless. In fact they could be thought to be reasonably representative of what was then believed by Seventh-day Adventists. This is because the denominational belief was that Christ is begotten of God –

meaning that He has His source in the Father – also that the Holy Spirit proceeds from them. So what was the problem? Why did Ellen White condemn these illustrations?

These illustrations depicted the ‘one God’ (the living God as Boardman called Him) as existing as three indivisible inseparable persons. In other words, according to this reasoning, there is a ‘oneness’ between the three that makes them indivisible (inseparable). It was the explanation of this ‘oneness’ (as the one God) which was the major problem area for Ellen White – not the ‘threeness’. It is exactly the same in our current Godhead crisis.

Ellen White did say very clearly that there are three persons of the Godhead. This is not in dispute. Never though (as did Boardman and trinitarians in general) did she say they existed in a oneness which is indivisible as depicted by the trinity doctrine. In other words, she did not say that the three personalities of the Godhead existed inseparably together constituting the ‘one God’ (one compound or unity God). We shall now see how she refutes this three-in-one idea.

A most comprehensive statement

Following on from his three-in-one illustrations of God - Boardman made the following statement (note the capitalised words are as they are in Boardman’s book)

“The Father is **all the fulness of the Godhead INVISIBLE.**

The Son is **all the fulness of the Godhead MANIFESTED.**

The Spirit is **all the fulness of the Godhead MAKING MANIFEST.”**

(William Boardman, The Higher Christian Life, part ii ‘How attained, chapter 1, page 105, ‘For me: then what must I do?)

In similar fashion, Ellen White wrote (this was following on from her condemnation of Boardman’s three-in-one illustrations – also elaborating on what was said here by Boardman)

“**The Father is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight.**” *(Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No.7, page 62 1906 ‘Come out and be Separate’)*

Notice she does not say as Boardman did that the Father was invisible (see above). She said that the Father “**is invisible to mortal sight**”. This is saying two different things. It is actually saying that God is a visible person – which is totally opposite to what was said by Boardman.

In fact Boardman said in another place

“The Father is the fulness of the Godhead **in invisibility, without form, whom no creature hath seen or can see.**” *(William Boardman, The Higher Christian Life, part ii ‘How attained, chapter 1, page 100 ‘The Holy Trinity’)*

We have seen previously (see [chapter 4](#) and above) that Ellen White did say that the Father had a form – although she was not allowed to see it. God is only invisible to us – because we are sinful. Heavenly beings see Him (Matthew 18:10)

Ellen White continued (again elaborating on what was said by Boardman – see above)

“**The Son is all the fulness of the Godhead manifested.** The Word of God declares Him to be “**the express image of His person.**” "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have

everlasting life." **Here is shown the personality of the Father.**" (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No.7, page 63 1906 'Come out and be Separate'*)

This fits exactly with the begotten concept of Christ – still held by Seventh-day Adventists at that time (1906). It is that Christ is the personality of the Father shown (the express image of God's person – see Hebrews 1:1-3). Christ is God in the person of the Son – in His pre-existence.

She then wrote concerning the Holy Spirit (again with Boardman's words in mind – see above)

"The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, **is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead**, making manifest **the power of divine grace** to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour." (*Ibid*)

Here it was explained that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in all three divine personalities yet illustrations that make God appear three-in-one, as in the trinity doctrine, were condemned.

Conclusive evidence

I would ask you to note now something which is really very important. This shows conclusively that Ellen White was not a trinitarian. Boardman concluded in his book concerning the three persons of the Godhead

"The persons are not mere offices, or modes of revelation, but **living persons of the living God.**" (William Boardman, *the Higher Christian Life, part II 'How Attained, chapter I, 'For me: then what must I do? Page 105)*

This is undoubtedly a trinitarian statement. It says there are three "**living persons of the living God**" – meaning that this one '**living God**' comprises of three persons (three-in-one as in the trinity doctrine). This is the same as officially taught within Seventh-day Adventism today. It is our Fundamental Belief No. 2.

Ellen White concluded her testimony in similar fashion but note her **very important modification to Boardman's words**. This clearly reveals she was not a trinitarian. She wrote

"**There are three living persons of the heavenly trio;**" (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No.7, page 62 1906 'Come out and be Separate'*)

It is the way that Ellen White modified Boardman's statement that is extremely important for us to note. It is also highly significant in the present trinity debate within Seventh-day Adventism.

Boardman had said that the three personalities were "**living persons of the living God**". Ellen White changed this to read "**living persons of the heavenly trio**". This is saying two entirely different things.

So what is the difference?

The difference is that Boardman's statement is trinitarian whilst Ellen White's statement is not. In other words, Boardman spoke of God as being three-in-one (three "**persons of the living God**") whilst Ellen White did not. She just spoke of the three as a "**heavenly trio**" - not as Boardman said that they made up "**the living God**" (the one compound trinity God). In

other words, Boardman said that God is a trinity whilst Ellen White removed the trinitarianism from his words.

Here therefore, regarding the Godhead, directly from the pen of Ellen White, which Seventh-day Adventists believe was motivated by the leading of God's Spirit, was an all-encompassing and very important statement. Obviously it also depicted what then, in 1906, was believed by Seventh-day Adventists. This belief was definitely non-trinitarianism.

Many have used this "[three living persons of the heavenly trio](#)" statement to so say prove that Ellen White was a trinitarian but this cannot be done. This is because she does not say as Boardman did that all three personalities are all united into one indivisible God (essential trinitarianism) but that they were just a "[trio](#)". This is as far as the Scriptures go because in them no mention is made of how the three have their existence together (see [chapter two](#) – 'The silence of God').

Her statement that there is a trio of divine personalities of the Godhead falls far short of trinitarianism. In fact as we have seen in this testimony, she condemned the three-in-one illustrations that made God appear triune. Obviously in this testimony, Ellen White was not upholding trinitarianism but condemning it.

It must be recognised here that Ellen White took what many would say was a genuine (authentic) trinitarian statement and changed it into one that was non-trinitarian. Here therefore is a question.

A very important question

If as some say that Ellen White was a trinitarian (remember this testimony was initially written in 1905 and reproduced in the testimonies in 1906 which was 8 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'), then why did she change (modify) Boardman's statement in the first place? In other words, if she was a trinitarian – and she believed that God wanted Seventh-day Adventists to regard Him as a trinity of persons – then why didn't she just leave Boardman's statement as it was written – as a trinitarian statement? Why remove the trinitarianism and make it non-trinitarian – after all, what Boardman said about God is exactly the same as what today's Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians are saying?

It can only be concluded that Ellen White removed the trinitarianism because it was not in keeping with what God had shown her (remember she said "I am instructed to say"). This was in keeping with her condemnation of the three-in-one illustrations used by Boardman. In other words - all the way around in this testimony - Ellen White removed from Boardman's words the trinitarian oneness. This shows that by her statement – "[There are three living persons of the heavenly trio](#)" – she was advocating a non-trinitarian view of God and in the process condemning trinitarianism.

Ironically, the trinitarians amongst us are using this statement to so say prove that Ellen White was a trinitarian – when in reality it does exactly the opposite. This was happening in 'the Alpha' – meaning Ellen White's writings were being used to say something she did not intend her words to mean (see [chapter 21](#)). Correctly understood, this testimony shows that Ellen White condemned the trinity doctrine. As we shall see later, what she wrote the same year shows that she believed that this teaching was going far beyond what God has revealed.

From my own personal studies, I have drawn the conclusion that Ellen White wrote this entire testimony with reference to the trinity doctrine. I say this because as we have already seen in [chapter 21](#) – also here - this was obviously a concern in the early 1900's crisis within Seventh-day Adventism (with Kellogg).

Interestingly, Seventh-day Adventists today are saying the same as Boardman – that there are three “**living persons of the living God**”. This is the very thing that was being condemned in this testimony.

Kellogg interview

On October 7th 1907, Elder G. W. Amadon and Elder A. C. Bourdeau interviewed John Harvey Kellogg. This was with regards to his beliefs and his association with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This was held at Kellogg’s home and was recorded by J. T. Case and a Mr. Ashley.

Near the end of the interview, Kellogg said concerning his book

“All I wanted to explain in *Living Temple* was that this work that is going on in the man here is not going on by itself like a clock wound up, but it is the power of God **and the Spirit God that is carrying it on.**” (*Interview, October 7th 1907, Elder G. W. Amadon and Elder A. C. Bourdeau interviewed John Harvey Kellogg at Kellogg’s house*)

Kellogg then added

“Now, I thought I had **cut out entirely the theological side of questions of the trinity and all that sort of things.** I didn’t mean to put it in at all, and I took pains to state in the preface that I did not. **I never dreamed of such a thing as any theological question being brought into it.** I only wanted to show that the heart does not beat of its own motion but that it is the power of God that keeps it going.” (*Ibid*)

Obviously Ellen White did not see things the way that Kellogg viewed them. Note Kellogg’s reference to the trinity doctrine.

From what we noted in [chapter 21](#) was confessed by Kellogg, we know that he attempted to justify his beliefs by saying he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. He had said that ‘God the Holy Spirit’ was everywhere, including in the things of nature. He also had said that Ellen White’s writings upheld his beliefs. This was denied by Ellen White.

As Daniells related to W. C. White regarding what Kellogg had said to him

“He [Kellogg] then stated that **his former views regarding the trinity** had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement but that **within a short time he had come to believe in the trinity** and could now see pretty clearly where all the difficulty was and believed that he could clear up the matter satisfactorily.” (*Letter, A. G. Daniells to W. C. White Oct 29th 1903*)

Daniells continued (concerning what Kellogg had told him)

“He told me that he now believed in **God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost** and his view was that it was **God the Holy Ghost and not God the Father** that filled all space and every living thing.” (*Ibid*)

There can be no doubt that Kellogg knew that theology was involved – particularly trinitarian theology. This was obviously a major part of the controversy.

Divine counsel ignored

Enough has been said above to show that Ellen White condemned the type of illustration that makes God appear to be three-in-one. As we shall now see, in order to explain their

trinity God, Seventh-day Adventists have completely ignored this counsel. This is even in our Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly.

In 2007 it said in the 2nd quarter's study

*"What analogies—such as **a triangle or a three-pronged fork** — can help someone understand the idea of **how one God can be composed of three equal Persons?** What other examples might help us better understand this **deep truth?**" (The Seventh-day Adventist Lesson quarterly, 2nd quarter 2006 Sunday March 26th page 7)*

I wonder what Ellen White would have said about likening God to "a three-pronged fork". At least the illustrations from nature that we have just seen she condemned were somewhat more sophisticated (see above).

The next year, in an article called 'A picture of God', Trudy Morgan-Cole wrote

*"In an attempt to make it easier for us to understand, the Trinity has been compared to many things: **a braided rope, a three leafed clover, even a banana!**" (Trudy Morgan-Cole, Signs of the Times April 2007, 'A Picture of God')*

The footnote at the end of the article says "If you'll look at a slice of banana carefully, you'll see that it has three sections". This I believe is becoming disrespectful. It is no wonder God instructed Ellen White to say

*"All these spiritualistic representations are **simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God can not be compared with the things His hands have made.** These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man." (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 62 'Come out and be separate' 1905)*

Trudy Morgan-Cole continues

*"**Some people suggest that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** are like three individuals in a family. **Others say it's more like the** three roles a single person can play in his life: **The same man may be a husband, a father, and a teacher,** yet still be the one individual." (Trudy Morgan-Cole, Signs of the Times April 2007, 'A Picture of God')*

The last example is interesting. It is depicting "one individual" as having three modes of existence. This idea was rejected by historic Christianity as modalism – a belief supposedly promoted by a third century theologian named Sabellius. This view loses sight of the three persons of the Godhead. It simply says that the three persons are three different modes of the one person.

She continues

*"But every analogy falls short. The Three Persons of the Godhead are far more closely united than any three human beings, even in a family, can ever be. **There can never be disagreement or disunity among the Trinity, because They are One.** Yet They are more distinct and separate **than a single individual playing three different roles.** Nothing in our human experience provides an exact parallel to the nature of God, because God is so completely different from us." (Ibid)*

If there can never be any "disunity among the Trinity", then it would have been totally impossible for Christ to have sinned – at least and take the responsibility for it. Certainly it

denies that in making the decision for Christ to become incarnate a risk was taken concerning His existence. We shall speak of this in [chapter 24](#).

In the same year (2007), Linda Mei Lin Koh wrote an article in the Review explaining how to put across our fundamental beliefs to children. She wrote regarding the trinity doctrine

"If you're trying to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, show them an egg and ask them to break it open to look at its composition. Ask them, 'How many parts make up this egg?' ***Talk about the shell, the yolk, and the white and how they form one unit.***"
(Linda Mei Lin Koh, *Adventist Review*, November 22, 2007 *Growing God's love in our children* sub-title, 'Kid-friendly ways to teach our fundamental beliefs')

She further explains

"Or you may give children three colored strands of yarn—red, yellow, and blue. Ask them to braid them together. The three colors blend together to form a complete braid. ***Explain that the red piece of yarn is like God the Father, who loves us and forgives our sins; the yellow color is like God the Son, who created the world and died on the cross to save each one of us; and the blue is like God the Holy Spirit, who comforts us when we are discouraged and helps us enjoy a happy life by teaching us right from wrong.*** Three different strands, but they work together as one whole." (*Ibid*)

Again we can see this becoming disrespectful. It is describing God by using things of this earth. It can also be seen that to 'establish' their belief, the trinitarians, instead of simply quoting Scripture, feel the necessity of using these types of 'three-in-one' illustrations.

We can see from these quotations (from our official publications) that the council we have been given by God not to describe Him by using three-in-one illustrations has been completely ignored. God has been likened to triangles, bananas, eggs and pieces of coloured yarn. In fact in the first example shown above (in our Sabbath School lesson study quarterly for March 2006 comparing God to a three-pronged fork), Ellen White's counsel was deliberately tampered with (sentences omitted) to hide this counsel. You can see this in section 55 of 'The Detailed History Series' here (under sub-heading 'Where we are today - tampering with the testimonies')

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

In chapters [24](#) and [25](#) of this study we shall discover further evidence that Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian.

[Proceed to chapter 24](#), 'Ellen White not a trinitarian – the risk factor'

Chapter twenty-four

Ellen White not a trinitarian – the risk factor

In my pursuit of discovering what trinitarians really do believe, I asked an orthodox priest to help me. He sent me the following quote which he said I could freely share with others.

He explained (speaking as an orthodox trinitarian)

“We maintain rather the *invariability of the Godhead* (its simplicity and unity) in the sense that *no action can lead to ontological change*; namely in this case that the Word, one ousia with the Father and the Spirit, *never leaves the Father's side even when He joins with our human nature in the Incarnation.*” (*Email, Father Gregory Hallam, Orthodox Priest, to Terry Hill, 16th May 2007*)

If this is the first time you have encountered trinitarian theology, this reasoning may seem very strange but this is what is believed by trinitarians. It is that Christ, even whilst He was here on earth, was also with His Father in the one substance (“one ousia”) of God. In brief - He “never leaves the Father's side”.

This very same theology can be seen in a hymn (a Christmas carol) that was written by a 7th century trinitarian monk named St. Germanus. It is called ‘A Great and Mighty Wonder’. The second verse says (this is obviously with respect to the incarnation of Christ and the belief that God is a trinity of persons – three-in-one)

“The Word becomes incarnate *and yet remains on high*,
And cherubim sing anthems to shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again: “To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!””
(*St. Germanus, ‘A Great and Mighty Wonder’*)

Here again we can see it said, as did the orthodox priest, that the divine Christ, even in the incarnation, remains united with (not separated from) the Father – meaning that He always remains in the one substance of God alongside His Father. It can be said therefore, according to this reasoning, that when on earth He was still “on high” with His Father.

This is typical trinitarian reasoning. It is that the ‘one God’ consists of three persons; also that regardless of the circumstances, none of the three can ever be separated from each other — not even in the incarnation.

As we noted in [chapter 4](#), Ekkehardt Mueller wrote in explanation of our denominational version of the trinity doctrine,

“*There is only one God* (Deut. 6:4), however, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all called God ...Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, each person of the Godhead *is inseparably connected to the other two.*” (*Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 9, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*)

Notice that Mueller says that each of the three persons “is inseparably connected to the other two”. This would mean that they would still be connected to each other during the incarnation. This is only the same as was said above by the orthodox trinitarians. It is basic trinity reasoning.

The risk factor

When I first became a Christian, it was not only Christ's death at Calvary that revealed to me the depth of love that God has for fallen humanity but also the 'risk factor'. What I mean is that I came to realise that God, in allowing His one and only Son to become incarnate, put at risk His (the Son's) eternal existence.

This to some may seem a startling realisation but it is the truth that God has revealed in the Scriptures and through the spirit of prophecy.

Unfortunately, by our adoption of the trinity doctrine, this risk belief is almost obliterated. This is because as has been said above – also in previous chapters - the trinity doctrine says that all three divine personalities are inseparably connected together as the 'one God' therefore it is impossible, in trinity theology, for there to have been any risk – at least to any of the persons of the Godhead. In trinity theology, whatever the circumstances, none of the three can ever be separated from each other let alone cease to exist.

Did Ellen White believe such a thing? Did she believe that Christ was inseparable from the Father? Did she believe there was no risk in Christ becoming incarnate? As we shall now see, the answer is a definite no. In fact she said exactly the opposite.

Exiled from the Father

In the Youth's Instructor in 1897, which was the year previous to the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', Ellen White wrote

“It is important that we each study to know the reason of the life of Christ in humanity, and what it means to us, -- **why the Son of God left the courts of heaven,-- why he stepped down from his position as Commander of the heavenly angels**, who came and went at his bidding,--why he clothed his divinity with humanity, and in lowliness and humility came to the world as our Redeemer.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 21st January 1897, 'Christ's Mission to Earth')

Here the youth were clearly counselled to understand **why** the Son of God vacated Heaven and came to earth. This very same counsel is just as applicable to us today.

This next quote tells us that the Son of God literally exiled Himself from His Father. It says

“A way is opened before everyone in the office to engage from the heart directly in the work of Christ and the salvation of souls. **Christ left heaven and the bosom of His Father** to come to a friendless, lost world to save those who would be saved. **He exiled Himself from His Father and exchanged the pure companionship of angels** for that of fallen humanity, all polluted with sin.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 3*, page 190, 'Laborers in the Office')

In helping us to understand that the Son of God did physically and bodily vacate Heaven, how much stronger and plainer language could have been employed? Clearly we have been told that the Son of God “**exiled Himself from His Father**”. There is certainly no intimation here that the Son cannot be separated from the Father – as is said in trinitarianism (see (Ekkehardt Mueller etc above).

In 'The Desire of Ages' we find these words (this was after explaining that the cost of our redemption will only be realised when we stand with our Redeemer before the throne of God)

"Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember **that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss.**" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*. Page 131 'The Victory')

Here again we see the emphasis that Christ literally vacated Heaven (He had exiled Himself from the heavenly courts) but this time it is added that in doing so He became involved with "the risk of failure and eternal loss". If the Son did not bodily and physically leave Heaven, then this statement would not make any sense. Clearly Ellen White did not prescribe to the trinitarian view of the three persons existing inseparably as the 'one God' (three-in-one theology).

She also said in 1891

"**Christ stepped down from his exalted throne, left the royal courts**, clothed his divinity with humanity, and became a man among the children of men;" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*. 15th June 1891 'He that Hath an Ear, let Him Hear')

Over and over again, we have been told that in taking to Himself human nature, the Son of God literally vacated Heaven.

Note well the following statement

"If Christ had studied his convenience, **he would never have left heaven to come to our world to die**, to hang upon the accursed tree for us." (Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald*, 10th June 1890, 'Conditions for Obtaining Eternal Riches')

If Ellen White believed as do orthodox trinitarians that the divine Son of God, even in the incarnation, was still on high with His Father, this statement would not make any sense. Certainly she was not a trinitarian, at least not in any sense that the term is used today.

Later in that same paragraph she gave advice that we would all do well to heed. It was that

"God has given us reasoning faculties, **and he wants us to use them.**" (*Ibid*)

Later that same year (1890), in 'the 'Signs of the Times', we find these words

"**Jesus left heaven**, laid aside his glory, **left the communion and adoration of the sinless angels**, and for our sake humbled himself, even to the death of the cross." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 22nd December 1890, 'Are We Representatives of Christ?')

There is no philosophical trinity reasoning here. We have been told through the spirit of prophecy that the Son of God literally (bodily and physically) vacated Heaven.

We noted in [chapter 23](#) that Ellen White was instructed by God to speak out against the type of illustrations that depicted Him as three-in-one. We also noted that the trinity doctrine teaches that the three personalities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparably connected to each other (see Ekkehardt Mueller above)

It is this 'trinity reasoning' that tells us that Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian. This is because from her above statements we can know for a certainty that she would never

have subscribed to such a belief. This is also because, as we shall see now, she said that in becoming incarnate, the pre-existent Son of God could have sinned and in consequence, if He had sinned, would have lost His eternal existence. In other words, if He had sinned, Christ would have become **eternally** separated from the Father – which trinitarians say is impossible – even in the incarnation. Most definitely Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian.

“Think of how much it cost Christ to leave the heavenly courts, and take his position at the head of humanity. Why did he do this? -- Because he was the only one who could redeem the fallen race.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 9th March 1905, ‘God’s purpose for us’)

Ellen White and the ‘sin factor’

Over and over again Ellen White spoke of the possibility of Christ sinning.

She wrote such as

“Those who claim that it was not possible for Christ to sin, **cannot believe that He took upon Him human nature.** Christ was actually tempted, not only in the wilderness, **but all through his life.**” (Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo*, 1st November 1892, ‘Tempted in all points like as we are’, see also *Signs of the Times*, 10th October 1892, ‘Draw from the source of strength’)

“In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation in every form, **He gave us a perfect example.**” (*Ibid*)

The latter is a reference to Hebrews 4:15 which says

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; **but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.**” Hebrews 4:15

Repeatedly Ellen White said exactly the same thing – that because in His humanity Christ had taken on our liabilities and limitations, He could have sinned. She wrote in 1890

“It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battles as man, in man’s behalf.” (Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald* 18th February 1890, ‘How to meet a controverted point of doctrine’)

We can see from this that the battles Christ had with Satan were very real. They were not encounters that were without risk. This was no play-acting. It was the real thing.

After saying that in Christ was no propensity to sin, Ellen White also wrote in 1895

“He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 8*, 1895. written to Brother and Sister W. L .H. Baker, North American workers in Australia, probably from Sunnyside, Cooranbong, New South Wales)

In confirmation of this she wrote

“The temptations to which Christ was subjected were a terrible reality. As a free agent **He was placed on probation, with liberty to yield to Satan’s temptations**

and work at cross-purposes with God. If this were not so, if it had not been possible for Him to fall, He could not have been tempted in all points as the human family is tempted.”(Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 26th October 1899, ‘*Against principalities and powers*’)

It would appear that in Ellen White’s reasoning, the possibility of Christ sinning was a very big issue. She made the point over and over again that if He could not have sinned, then He could not have been like us therefore He could not have become our saviour. Note that this was written one year following the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’. This is the book in which, according to the trinitarians amongst us, Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity – and which according to the trinitarians, led the Seventh-day Adventist Church to become trinitarian.

This view, that Christ had the “**liberty to yield to Satan’s temptations and work at cross-purposes with God**” is not always the view published by Seventh-day Adventists.

In one article called ‘Making Himself equal with God’, Dr. Weiss who is professor emeritus of religious studies at Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame, Indiana wrote (this article supported the belief that God is a trinity – as depicted in the trinity doctrine)

“The Son can not only work on Sabbath. He can also judge (5: 22, 27), and he can give life “to whomever he wishes” (5: 21, 26). Both activities, as already said, are God’s exclusive prerogatives. On the other hand, the Son does nothing by himself. **Everything he does, he does together with, and according to the will of the Father** (5: 19, 30). His activity is totally subordinated to the Father. **He does not have an independent will.**” (Dr. Herold Weiss, *Spectrum’ magazine*, 12th August 2011, ‘*Making Himself equal with God*’)

There is a strong implication here that it was not possible for Christ to go against His Father’s will but as we have been told in the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy (see above), Christ could have done so. In other words, He could have sinned.

Here Weiss says that Christ “**does not have an independent will**” yet we are told through the spirit of prophecy Christ “**was placed on probation, with liberty to yield to Satan’s temptations and work at cross-purposes with God**”. To have been able to work at cross-purposes with God, it would have necessitated Christ having an independent will.

What though would have happened to Christ if He had sinned? This is the question that seems to cause the biggest problem for many people – especially the trinitarians amongst us. Did God say anything through Ellen White on this particular subject?

Certainly He did. We shall take a look at this now – and we will see that it is totally in keeping with what happened to Adam when he sinned. We shall also see that because of what was said by Ellen White, it could not have been possible for her to have believed in the trinity doctrine.

Ellen White and the 'risk' factor

Here will be quoted a number of statements from the pen of Ellen White. As these statements speak for themselves, they will be quoted with very little comment.

In her supposedly trinitarian book ‘The Desire of Ages’ (which according to trinitarians depicts God as a trinity but not so according to the non-trinitarians), Ellen White wrote (this was after saying that in Heaven Satan had hated Christ because of the position he held – which as we have seen so many times in previous chapters was as the Son of God)

“Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion **God permitted His Son to come**, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life’s peril **in common with every human soul**, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, **at the risk of failure and eternal loss.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*. Page 49 ‘Unto you a Saviour’)

She also wrote in the same book

“Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God. Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, **but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss.**” (Ibid page 131, ‘The victory’)

Orthodox trinitarians would never admit to this belief. In ‘The Desire of Ages’, Ellen White referred to this ‘risk factor’ at least twice.

The very same year this book was published she said (if Satan had managed to tempt Christ to sin)

“Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 9th 1898, see also *Selected Messages Book 1* page 256)

This does not leave a great deal to the imagination (if Christ had sinned). Three years previous we were counselled

“Remember that Christ risked all; “tempted like as we are,” he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict.” (Ellen G. White, *General Conference Bulletin 1st December 1895 ‘Seeking the Lost’*)

At this time (1895), because Ellen White allowed this to be used as a denominational week of prayer reading, this appears to have been the generally accepted belief within Seventh-day Adventism. This was the same year as she said that Christ is “a Son **begotten** in the express image of the Father’s person” (‘Signs of the Times’) – also when she said He was “**made** in the express image” of the Father’s person (‘Review and Herald’). We noted this in [chapter 23](#).

The year following the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’, Ellen White wrote in the ‘Signs of the Times’

“Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, **the Godhead was still His own.** His Deity could not be lost **while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, 10th May 1899, ‘Christ glorified’)

We can only reason here that Ellen White was saying that if Christ had not been faithful and true - meaning if He had sinned - He would have lost His deity. How else can this statement be reasoned?

In a letter written **two years after** ‘The Desire of Ages’ had been published – we find this written concerning Christ

“He became subject to temptation, **endangering as it were, His divine attributes.** Satan sought, by the constant and curious devices of his cunning, to make Christ yield

to temptation.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 5, 1900, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventists Bible Commentary Volume 7 page 926)

This shows that Christ’s divine attributes could be affected. Seven years earlier in 1893 it was said regarding the death of Christ

“If one single sin had tainted His character the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber, and the world with its burden of guilt would have perished.” (Ellen G. White, Ms. 81, 1893, p. 11, Diary entry for Sunday, July 2, 1893, Wellington, New Zealand)

This is a mind-blowing realisation. Can we possibly imagine how God would have felt if His Son had sinned – also that to remain true to His own word He would have needed to leave the stone of the tomb in its place? This is especially so when we realise that He had the power to remove it and to call His Son back to life. How would we feel if we were placed in such a position?

This is no different than what was written two years later. This is when we were informed

“Christ has found his pearl of great price in lost, perishing souls. He sold all that he had to come into possession, even engaged to do the work, and run the risk of losing his own life in the conflict.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 119, 1895)

This could only be referring to the pre-existent divine Son of God. Ellen White went on to say that because this was done by Christ, then how should we regard our fellow human being? This is quite a thought.

There is no doubt that Ellen White would not have subscribed to the trinitarian view of the Son of God - which says that even in becoming incarnate it was still not possible for Him to lose His eternal existence. This shows us that she could never have believed the trinity doctrine to be true.

In disagreement with Waggoner?

In his book 'Christ and His Righteousness, Waggoner had written of the incarnate Christ

“His humanity only veiled His Divine nature, by which He was inseparably connected with the invisible God and which was more than able successfully to resist the weaknesses of the flesh.” (E. J. Waggoner, Christ and His Righteousness, page 28, 'God manifest in the flesh')

If by this Waggoner had meant that the divine Christ could not have lost His eternal existence, then as we can see from what we have read above, Ellen White would have disagreed with him. She believed Christ could have lost His eternal existence. What she did say in contrast was

“Satanic agencies confederated with evil men to lead the people to believe that Christ was the chief of sinners, and to make Him an object of detestation. But the priests and rulers failed to realize that in Christ divinity was enthroned in humanity. Christ’s humanity could not be separated from His divinity.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, April 14th 1898, 'Christ and the Law')

This shows us again, as was said above by Ellen White, that if Christ had sinned, which the Scriptures say was possible, then He (the incarnate divine Christ), would have paid the price of the transgression. It would not have been the case, as some have reasoned, that if Christ

had sinned only His humanity would have been lost whilst He – the divine Christ - would have returned to His father in Heaven 'mission failed'.

Those who reason this way believe that Christ was only 'in humanity', meaning manipulating His humanity like a puppeteer who has his hand inside a puppet. This is not a correct way to look at the incarnation. This is because it makes it look as though the divine person of Christ was separate from His humanity (like the puppeteer is separate from the puppet). This idea is akin to pantheism – also very similar to Kellogg's view of God being 'in' the things of nature. This is not how it was with Christ in the incarnation. As was explained by Ellen White

*“By his obedience to all the commandments of God, Christ wrought out a redemption for man. **This was not done by going out of himself to another, but by taking humanity into himself.**” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 5th April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh’, see also Signs of the Times April 26th 1899)*

If the divine Christ had failed (sinned) in His humanity then He, as well as His humanity, would have been forever lost. As we read above, “Christ’s humanity could not be separated from His divinity”.

Not one heretical sentence

Regarding this ‘risk scenario’, some may say that over the years Ellen White changed her mind but there is nothing in her writings to suggest such a thing. In fact in 1905 – which was 7 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’- she wrote in a letter to her granddaughter

*“I am now looking over my diaries and copies of letters written for several years back, commencing before I went to Europe, before you were born. I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have these things **to revive past history, that they may see that there is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.**” (Ellen G. White, Letter to Mabel White, Letter 329a, pages 1 and 2, November 16th 1905, Manuscript Releases MR No. 532)*

Concerning what she had written, Ellen White did not see herself as changing her mind about anything. She knew what God had revealed to her and she had faithfully written it out.

We can see that this risk factor, in Ellen White’s thinking, was not a ‘side issue’. It was something that was very important to her. We can also see that even after ‘The Desire of Ages’ had been published, she was still saying, as she had done in her earlier writings, that in becoming incarnate, Christ had risked His eternal existence. How is it possible therefore to say - as some do - that in this book Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity? This is impossible. She could not have done so.

Essential yet incomprehensible oneness

In 1906, in the midst of the Godhead crisis within Seventh-day Adventism, Ellen White wrote (note also this was the same year as the special testimony we have just spoken of above was published)

*“There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was **one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid.** This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory.” (Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 5th April 1906 ‘The Word made Flesh’)*

Here we are told that prior to the creation of our world there was a certain 'oneness' between the Father and Christ. Here therefore, Ellen White is directly addressing trinity issues.

Notice very importantly that the Holy Spirit is not included in this oneness. This is more than likely because during the time period of Ellen White's ministry, Seventh-day Adventists did not regard the Holy Spirit as a personal being – at least not as they regarded God and Christ to be personal beings. We have noted this previously. Note the date here. It was 1906, 8 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'.

It was then explained (and this really is very important so please note it well)

*"This truth [the pre-existent oneness that Christ had with God His Father], **infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths**, while it is enshrined in light, **unapproachable and incomprehensible.**" (Ibid)*

Here we are told that whatever constituted this pre-existent 'oneness' between the Father and the Son (and it must be stressed here that Ellen White did say it existed), it is something that is "enshrined in light, **unapproachable and incomprehensible.**" This is obviously with regards to the impossibility of the human mind to comprehend it.

This is where Seventh-day Adventists should leave it – meaning as something not revealed and completely beyond our ability to understand. This is why the oneness as portrayed in the trinity doctrine is only an assumed oneness. Certainly it is not something that can be proven from Scripture – neither did God reveal it through Ellen White. We can see this from the previous statement.

It should also be obvious that Ellen White was not referring here to the oneness that God and Christ had with regards to their oneness in eternal purpose in the salvation of mankind. We can also say that this oneness was not with respect to the love that they both have for humanity or their oneness in personal characters. This is because none of these things would be "**incomprehensible**" to the human mind but would easily be understood. Certainly none of these things could be termed "**unapproachable**".

It must be accepted that this oneness spoken of here must refer to the ontological existence of Christ with the Father (their divine being or the way that they exist) – which is something not spoken of in Scripture. This I believe is only reasonable to conclude. As has been said, Ellen White was addressing trinity issues but she certainly was not promoting God as a trinity.

In the testimony concerning Kellogg where Ellen White condemned using three-in-one illustrations to describe God (see [chapter 21](#)), she made, concerning the Godhead, what I believe to be her most comprehensive statement. As we have seen though, it did 'fall short' of a trinity doctrine although some do use this statement today to try to show that Ellen White did believe that God is a trinity. This is a serious misuse (abuse) of her writings.

This early 1900's crisis within Seventh-day Adventism had everything to do with the doctrine of the trinity. Remember too that Kellogg's views were also that which Ellen White referred to as containing the 'alpha' of heresies.

In [chapter 25](#) we shall encounter other beliefs of Ellen White – beliefs that would make her strictly non-trinitarian.

Not total silence

In our 'current' literature, I cannot find very much written concerning the risk factor but the following is what I have discovered.

In 1995, Joel Salri and Gerald Wheeler wrote an article published in the 'Ministry' magazine called 'God organized for our salvation'. In this article it said concerning God

"He put the universe in jeopardy by coming as a human being and dying for us. But the divine love of the Trinity was determined to risk every thing to save us."
(Joel Salri and Gerald Wheeler, Ministry, July/August 1995, 'God organized for our salvation')

Nothing more was said about this "jeopardy" or "risk" so we are left to ponder the statement.

In an article called 'A trinitarian view of the cross', John C. Johnson wrote in the 'Ministry' magazine in 2009

"John 3:16 says that God the Father gave His only Son, and Brown notices that in this verse, the role of the Father becomes prominent. In this act, the Father gives His Son and risks, as Moltmann would argue, the very consistency of the inner-trinitarian life itself." ." (John C. Johnson, Ministry, February 2009, 'A trinitarian view of the cross')

What this risk involved again is not stated but because of Johnson's apparent belief that the Holy Spirit is a person in the same sense as the Father and the Son are persons he continued by saying

"The Holy Spirit also takes part in this risk during those few short hours at the Cross. If the Father risks something by standing by idly, then the Holy Spirit has just as much at stake." (Ibid)

Again there is no mention of what is risked exactly but at least this is the admittance that 'something' was risked.

This was much the same as Roy Adams wrote in a Christmas time edition of the 'Review' (obviously the incarnation would be in people's minds). He was then Associate editor.

In the Review of December 2007, he had written an editorial called 'A Cosmic "Gamble"'. In it he had said (this was after giving certain earthly examples of risks taken by various people in life)

"That's what Jesus did. That's the cosmic "gamble." I use the word advisedly, as you notice; yet there's something to it—something deep, amazing, mysterious. ***It comes through in that extraordinary statement by Ellen G. White in her classic on the life of Jesus.*** Take time, if you will, to ponder it, to grasp a little of its profound significance—the italics are mine:

"Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners.

Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 49).

And to think He took such incredible risk for the likes of us! That's awesome;

incomprehensible; beyond astonishing. (Roy Adams, Review, December 20th 2007, 'A Cosmic Gamble')

Again there is no mention of what constituted this risk but again at least it is mentioned.

Based on the reasoning that God is omniscient (therefore knew that Christ would not fail) certain of the Review readers took umbrage at the thought of Christ's entry into humanity as being a "gamble", thus they made their views known to Adams. In response to this, in the April 2008 edition of the Review, Adams again addressed this 'not usually addressed' issue.

This article is extremely well written. It is brief but certainly well worth reading. To be valued correctly it needs to be read as a whole. Here though are some of the things he wrote (space does not allow it to be quoted here completely).

With regards to the view that it was impossible for Christ to sin he said

"To say there was no risk in the Incarnation is to argue the **biblically untenable position** that it was impossible for Jesus to sin. If that were the case, **then we'd be into divine playacting of the most cynical kind**. And Jesus' 40-day fast in the desert, His all-night prayer vigils, and His agony in *Gethsemane* **would all amount to a cruel farce.**" (Roy Adams, Advent Review, April 17th 2008, 'An impenetrable mystery')

He then added

"No one is talking here about God being surprised by anything. The issue is not that God in His foreknowledge was unaware of the final outcome. The unassailable point, rather, is that *it all could have turned out differently*. **Reality is not all cut and dried**. And if Jesus was at all an example for us, He had to have come with **the same freedom** we all have as **humans to choose God's will or to reject it.**" (Ibid)

Adams said in conclusion

"To say there was no risk would be to say that Jesus could not sin just because God knew that He would not." (Ibid)

It must be admitted that in the light of God's omniscience, this is a very mysterious and 'mind-boggling' subject but it is one that needs addressing. This is why I wrote a series called 'The Unaddressed Issue' (which it usually is). You will find it here.

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBU1.htm>

In an attempt understand what is thought to have been risked in Christ becoming incarnate – because our trinity doctrine says that the three personalities of the Godhead are inseparably connected together as the "one immortal God" (which on the face of it does appear to invalidate any risk to any of the members of the Godhead) - I have attempted to converse with certain of our leading brethren but the answers I have received have varied between 'no risk' , 'we do now know what would have happened to Christ if He had sinned' whilst others have said to me that they 'do not wish to pursue the conversation'. The latter, whilst shelving the issue for a while, does not face up to answering the question – and it does need to be addressed.

My personal view, based upon what is revealed in the Scriptures concerning what God says about those who sin – also that which God has revealed through the spirit of prophecy about

what would have happened to Christ if He had sinned – is that Christ would have forfeited His eternal existence. As I have said previously, this shows us how much God loves us – meaning that in attempting to save us from our sins, He was willing to give up His one and only Son for all eternity. What wondrous love! Can the human mind plumb its depths? I would say no. It is beyond the depths of human understanding. We can only contemplate it with awe-struck wonder.

Charles Longacre summed up this risk factor. He said

“If it were impossible for the Son of God to make a mistake or commit a sin, then His coming into this world and subjecting Himself to temptations were all a farce and mere mockery. If it were possible for Him to yield to temptation and fall into sin, then He must have risked heaven and His very existence, and even all eternity. That is exactly what the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy say Christ, the Son of God did do when He came to work out for us a plan of salvation from the curse of sin.” *(Charles Small Longacre, paper titled 'The Deity of Christ' submitted to the Bible Research Fellowship, January 1947)*

Conclusion concerning Ellen White and the risk factor

What conclusion can be drawn from what we have seen above was said by Ellen White?

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Ellen White was not a trinitarian. This is because the trinity doctrine forbids this risk factor. In other words, if God is a trinity as purported in our fundamental beliefs (meaning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute the ‘one God’ - therefore they are inseparably connected to each other), then it is impossible for any of the three to lose their eternal existence. Ellen White obviously disagreed with this reasoning.

Proceed to [chapter 25](#), ‘Ellen White not a trinitarian – a divine person died at Calvary’

Chapter twenty-five

Ellen White not a trinitarian – a divine person died at Calvary

In this chapter we shall discover another reason why Ellen White was not a trinitarian. It is simply because she believed that at Calvary, a divine person died. This may seem a rather strange thing to say but the truth of the matter is that this is not believed by trinitarians. They believe it was only the human nature of Jesus that died.

So here is the question – who or what died at Calvary?

Did only humanity die at Calvary?

Over the years I have spoken to a number of Seventh-day Adventist ministers concerning who or what died at Calvary. All of them appear to believe that the divine person of Christ did not die – only that His human nature died. Almost all of them, in justification of their belief, have appealed to Ellen White. They usually quote where she said to the youth of her day (as regarding what happened at Calvary)

***“Humanity died: divinity did not die.”** (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor* 4th August 1898, see also *Youth’s Instructor* 3rd January 1905)*

As we shall see, this is a very much misused (and abused) statement - but the trinitarians amongst us use it to give credence to their three-in-one belief. This is how it was in what Ellen White described as ‘the Alpha’ (see [chapter 21](#)). This was when she said that John Harvey Kellogg - who as we noted came to believe in the trinity doctrine – was misusing her writings to say that God was actually in the things of nature.

The reason why the trinitarians do not believe that a divine person died at Calvary is basically two-fold. First they say that because the pre-existent Christ is immortal He cannot die whilst secondly they say that because He is part of the three-in-one trinity God, He is always alive (always has His existence in) the one substance (one being) of God. This we noted in [chapter 24](#) so we will not go into this in detail here.

Only a divine person

We shall see now that contrary to the belief of the trinitarians, Ellen White said that not only did a divine person die at Calvary but also that it was only a divine person who could have made the atonement. In fact she said that not even an angel could have paid the price of our redemption - let alone mere human nature.

In the 3rd Volume of the Spirit of Prophecy we find these words

***“Not one of the angels could have become surety for the human race: their life is God’s; they could not surrender it.”** (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 21st June 1900, ‘The price of our redemption part IV’)*

This testimony went on to say

"The angels all wear the yoke of obedience. They are the appointed messengers of Him who is the commander of all heaven. **But Christ is equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man's freedom.**" (*Ibid*)

These words are not easily misunderstood. A 'third-grader' should quite easily understand them – although whether they are believed or not is something else.

Here we are told that only a divine person - One equal with God - could "pay the ransom for man's freedom". It is said that He was the only One who could surrender His life. How else can these words be understood?

It was then added regarding the pre-existent Christ

"He is the eternal, self-existing Son, on whom no yoke had come; and when God asked, "Whom shall I send?" he could reply, "Here am I; send me." **He could pledge himself to become man's surety; for he could say that which the highest angel could not say,** -- I have power over my own life, "power to lay it down, and . . . power to take it again." (*Ibid*)

Once again it is emphasised that no one less than a divine person could pay the price of man's redemption. Not even the highest angel could pay it let alone a human being – so we are told through the spirit of prophecy.

In 1908 (10 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages') the following was published in the 'Signs of the Times'

"The Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. **His heart was moved with infinite compassion** as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the times, 4th November 1908, 'When sin entered', see also, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 63, 'The Plan of Redemption'*)

Notice here of whom it is being spoken. It is the **divine** Son of God - "heaven's glorious Commander". Later we find it said

"In all the universe there was but One who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, **only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression.**" (*Ibid*)

It was "only one equal with God" who could make the atonement. This was the pre-existent divine Son of God. Again we are informed

"None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law, and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin--sin so offensive to a holy God that **it must separate the Father and the Son.**" (*Ibid*)

Again I would ask you to note the emphasis – this is that in releasing mankind from the bondage of sin and death (two inseparable bedfellows) – "it must **separate** the Father and the Son". Trinitarians say that regardless of circumstances this is impossible.

As we have noted previously, the Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians say that

"Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, each person of the Godhead **is inseparably connected to the other two.**" (*Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research*)

Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 9, 'Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study')

Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian. Again we see her saying that no one but the pre-existent divine Son of God could pay the penalty for sin. It was He, who dying in the agonies of Calvary, personally took the full punishment of it – not just His human nature.

In her book 'Early Writings', she explained

"The angels prostrated themselves before Him. **They offered their lives.** Jesus said to them that He would by His death save many, that **the life of an angel could not pay the debt.**" (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, Spiritual Gifts, Page 150, 1882*)

She then added concerning the divine Son of God

"His life alone could be accepted of His Father as a ransom for man" (*Ibid*)

Again these are words that are not easily misunderstood. Only the life of a divine person – the divine Son of God – would be accepted by the Father as the redemption price. No one else could do it. She later wrote

"Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. And the heavenly host sang a song of praise and adoration. They touched their harps and sang a note higher than they had done before, for the great mercy and condescension of God in **yielding up His dearly Beloved to die for a race of rebels.**" (*Ibid*)

Again there can be no mistaking these words. It was the pre-existent divine Son of God who had to die.

In 1899 (the year after 'The Desire of Ages was published) Ellen White wrote

"Nothing less than the life of Christ would atone for man's transgression." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 15th November 1899, 'The Law Revealed in Christ'*)

To the youth she wrote in 1887

"The power of an angel could not make an atonement for our sins. The angelic nature united to the human could not be as costly, as elevated, as the law of God. **It was the Son of God alone who could present an acceptable sacrifice. God himself became man, and bore all the wrath that sin had provoked.**" (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 31st August 1887 'Search the Scriptures'*)

Note the remark concerning "God Himself". Ten years later she said

"Because divinity alone could be efficacious in the restoration of man from the poisonous bruise of the serpent, **God himself, in his only begotten Son, assumed human nature,** and in the weakness of human nature sustained the character of God, vindicated his holy law in every particular, and accepted the sentence of wrath and death for the sons of men." (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 11th February 1897 'The mind of Christ'*)

Again note the remark concerning "God Himself".

We can see that through the spirit of prophecy it has been made abundantly clear that to redeem mankind from sin, it was necessary for **a divine person to die.** This was the pre-existent Son of God. **He was the only one who could make the atonement.** It was God

Himself in the person of the Son. No wonder Jesus said to Philip “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (see John 14:9).

Admittedly not everyone may believe what was said here by Ellen White - or believe that it came from an inspired person – but I cannot see how her words can be misunderstood. It was a divine person who died at Calvary – not just human nature.

“Think of how much it cost Christ to leave the heavenly courts, and take his position at the head of humanity. Why did he do this? -- **Because he was the only one who could redeem the fallen race.”** (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 9th March 1905, ‘God’s purpose for us’)

“The fallen race could be restored **only through the merit of Him who was equal with God. Though so highly exalted,** Christ consented to take upon Him human nature, that He might work in behalf of man, and reconcile to God his disloyal subject.” (Ellen G. White, *Messenger*, 26th April 1893, ‘Chosen in Christ’)

In Volume 2 of the Spirit of Prophecy we find these words

“The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver. **He knew that his life alone could be sufficient to ransom fallen man.** He was of as much more value than man as his noble, spotless character, **and exalted office as commander of all the heavenly host,** were above the work of man. He was in the express image of his Father, **not in features alone, but in perfection of character.”** (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 2 page 9, *The first Advent of Christ*, 1877)

On the next page we find the same thought

“The divine Son of God was the only sacrifice of sufficient value to fully satisfy the claims of God’s perfect law. The angels were sinless, but of less value than the law of God. They were amenable to law. They were messengers to do the will of Christ, and before him to bow. They were created beings, and probationers. **Upon Christ no requirements were laid. He had power to lay down his life, and to take it again. No obligation was laid upon him to undertake the work of atonement.** It was a voluntary sacrifice that he made. His life was of sufficient value to rescue man from his fallen condition.

The Son of God was in the form of God, and he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. **He was the only one, who as a man walked the earth, who could say to all men, Who of you convinceth me of sin?** He had united with the Father in the creation of man, and he had power through his own divine perfection of character to atone for man’s sin, and to elevate him, and bring him back to his first estate.” (*Ibid* page 10)

“Before the foundations of the world were laid, **Christ, the Only Begotten of God,** pledged Himself to become the Redeemer of the human race, should Adam sin.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*. August 2nd 1905)

This was no different than she had written 15 years previous which was that

“The law cannot lower the standard or take less than its full demands, therefore it cannot cleanse us from one sin; **but God’s Son, who is one with the Father, equal in authority with the Father, paid the debt for us.”** (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 29th July 1890, ‘Reasons for having courage’)

How a divine person can die

How it is possible for a divine person to die is an age old enigma (mystery). It is something that from logic is not easily explained - yet if Ellen White is to be believed, if the human race was to be redeemed, it had to happen.

In answering this question, Ellen White explained

“Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and **clothed His divinity with humanity**, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, **that dying in humanity** He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 97, 1898, p. 5. To "My Brethren in North Fitzroy," November 18, 1898)

Please take very careful note of these words. As far as our study is concerned they are extremely important.

Here we have been told **how** a divine person can die. Ellen White said it was by becoming incarnate (see John 1:1 and verse 14) and then surrendering His **divine personage** to **His human nature**. Notice she did not say that the Son of God surrendered His divine nature to His humanity but surrendered **Himself** to it. This is a very important difference.

In other words, by the acquiescing **of Himself** (His divine personage) to His human nature, the divine person of Christ was able to do that which He could not do in His pre-existence as God. The latter was when He had His existence in divine nature alone. In brief, this is saying that by taking on human nature (becoming incarnate), the divine Son of God could die. As she went on to explain

“**He could not have done this as God**, but by coming as man, **Christ could die.**”
(*Ibid*)

Again these words are quite easy to understand

Here we are told that in becoming incarnate, the divine Son of God could do something which He could not do prior to becoming incarnate – or to put in another way – when existing in His divine nature alone (as God), the Son of God could not die but by the adopting of human nature He could die. This was the end purpose of the incarnation. It was to provide atonement with God for the entirety of mankind (see Hebrews 2:16-18).

Only one person in the incarnate Christ

From the spirit of prophecy writings, many statements could be produced saying that we cannot understand how the incarnation was achieved but I am sure we do not need to be reminded of this fact here. I would think that this is realised by most who will read this article. What I would like to share with you is where we have been told concerning the incarnation

“Was the human nature of the Son of Mary **changed into the divine nature of the Son of God?**” (Ellen G. White, September 3rd 1904, Letter 280a, to ‘Ministers, Physicians, and Teachers’)

Ellen White answered this question by emphatically stating

“**No**; the two natures were mysteriously blended **in one person** -- the Man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (*Ibid*)

I would ask you to note here that although there were two natures in Christ (one divine and one human), these were blended together to form only “**one person**”, In other words, **each nature was not a person.**

Again she said in 1899 (the year following the publication of 'The Desire of Ages')

“There is ***no one who can explain the mystery of the incarnation of Christ.*** Yet we know that He came to this earth and lived as a man among men. ***The man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty, yet Christ and the Father are one.***” (Ellen G. White, letter 32, 1899, Manuscript 140, 1903, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary page 1129)

As she also explained to the youth 4 years earlier in 1895

“The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that ***the helpless babe*** in Bethlehem's manger ***is still the divine Son of God?***” (Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor 21st November 1895)

Here is the nub of the matter. Although the divine Son of God took upon Himself our human nature, this 'holy thing' (see Luke 1:35) – meaning the person of Jesus - was still the divine Son of God. In other words, this “**one person**” of two natures is the divine Son of God incarnate. He is not someone other than the divine Son of God.

Reason with me for a moment. As far as the person of Jesus is concerned, who and what were involved at Calvary? There was (a) the incarnate divine personage of the Son of God. There was (b) divine nature and (c) human nature. As has been said, each nature was not a person.

Now who and what did Ellen White say died at Calvary? If you remember she said

“Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, ***that dying in humanity*** He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 97, 1898, p. 5. To "My Brethren in North Fitzroy," November 18, 1898)

She added

“***He could not have done this as God,*** but by coming as man, ***Christ could die.***” (Ibid)

This is a very important statement. It is telling us emphatically that at Calvary a divine person really did die. Now we know who and what died at Calvary. It was (a) the incarnate personage of the divine Son of God and (c) His human nature. This means that (b) divine nature did not die. We shall return to this point later.

Did Ellen White really believe that a divine person died at Calvary?

In the Signs of the Times in 1879 Ellen White wrote

“***Jesus had united with the Father in making the world.*** Amid the agonizing sufferings ***of the Son of God,*** blind and deluded men alone remain unfeeling. The chief priests and elders revile God's dear Son while in his expiring agonies. Yet inanimate nature groans in sympathy with ***her bleeding, dying Author.***” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 15th February 1883, see also Signs of the Times 21st August 1879 'The Sufferings of Christ')

Here we are told very plainly who died at Calvary. It was the One through whom the Father had created the world. It was the divine Son of God, the “Author” of creation. She later said

“Christ is in despair! He is dying! His Father's approving smile is removed, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. **They could only behold in amazement their loved Commander suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law.”** (*Ibid*)

Who was this “loved Commander”? Needless to say it was the pre-existent divine Son of God.

Here is a very important question - if the divine person was not really suffering or dying at Calvary (as in trinitarianism), how could the Father's approving smile be removed from Him or how could the angels desire to help their creator? As trinitarians say, the divine person (the Son of God) was still alongside His Father in the ‘triune substance’ of God. If the latter was true, the above words would make no sense at all. For these words to make any sense it would have to be believed, as was said by Ellen White, that Christ had “exiled Himself from His Father” (see [chapter 24](#)) – which is something not believed by trinitarians.

Ellen White was definitely not speaking here as a trinitarian. She believed that the Son of God (a divine person) was separated from the Father and that He really did die at Calvary. She certainly did not believe that it was only His human nature that died.

Eighteen years later in the Review and Herald she wrote

“Human passions were raging at the foot of the cross when the earth was bereft of the light of the sun. The Sun of Righteousness was withdrawing his light from the world, and nature sympathized with her dying Author.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 28th December 1897 ‘He was Wounded for our Transgressions’*)

Again we are told it was the “Author” of nature who died. If only the human body of Jesus died - and not the person of the divine Son of God – the words make no sense. A few paragraphs later Ellen White wrote

“Again came the cry, as of one in mortal agony, “It is finished.” “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” Christ, the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory, was dead. The Jewish leaders had crucified the Son of God, the long-expected Messiah, him (so the people had hoped) who was to bring about so many reforms.” (*Ibid*)

In the second volume of the Testimonies we find these words

“Nature sympathized with the suffering of its Author. The heaving earth, the rent rocks, proclaimed that **it was the Son of God who died.”** (*Ellen White, 2nd Vol. Testimonies page 211, ‘The sufferings of Christ’*)

In 1894 the following was published in the 'Signs of the Times'

“In the scenes that transpired at the judgment-hall, and at Calvary, we see what the human heart is capable of when under the influence of Satan. Christ submitted to crucifixion, altho the heavenly host could have delivered Him. The angels suffered with Christ. God Himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 26th March 1894, ‘Christ's victory gained through pain and death’, see also Signs of the Times, July 23rd 1912*)

Wherever we go in the writings of Ellen White, it will always be seen that she clearly said that a divine person died at Calvary. Here she says “[God Himself was crucified with Christ](#)”.

Statements misrepresented (abused) – as in ‘the Alpha’

Having established that Ellen White repeatedly said that a divine person really did die at Calvary, we shall now take a look at the statements that the trinitarians produce to ‘so say’ prove that this messenger of God maintained that a divine person did not die (the trinitarian view).

The first statement appears to be the most popular. This is where Ellen White said

“He who had said, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again,” came forth from the grave **to life that was in himself. Humanity died: divinity did not die.**” ([Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor 4th August 1898, see also Youth’s Instructor 3rd January 1905](#))

Take a very close look at what is being said here.

The entire emphasis here (the context of the statement) is on **the life** that was **in** Christ (“[to life that was in Himself](#)”). This is the life that Ellen White referred to in ‘The Desire of Ages’ as “original, unborrowed, underived” (see page 530). We can see therefore that when Ellen White said here that “[divinity did not die](#)”, she was referring to this life (the divine life or divine nature that was in Christ). She was not referring to Christ’s divine personage. Read it again and you will see what I mean.

There is also another thought here. This is that if the person of the divine Son of God had not laid down His life, then obviously He could not take it up again. This is a thought that should be given very serious consideration – especially by the trinitarians amongst us.

Ellen White then added (which is in complete harmony with the conclusions drawn immediately above)

“[In his divinity](#), Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that he has life **in himself** to quicken whom he will.” (*Ibid*)

We can see therefore that when understood correctly, this “[divinity did not die](#)” statement is referring to the divine life (divine nature) that was in Christ. It is not referring to Christ Himself as a person.

Another statement used by trinitarians to ‘so say’ prove that Ellen White said that a divine person did not die at Calvary is the one we have already looked at above. This is the one that says

“[Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God?](#) No; the two natures were **mysteriously blended in one person**--the Man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” ([Ellen G. White, September 3rd 1904, Letter 280a to ‘Ministers, Physicians, and Teachers’](#))

She followed this by saying

“When Christ was crucified, **it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die**; that would have been impossible.” (*Ibid*)

Again we must ask, did Ellen White mean here that a divine person did not die or did she mean that divine nature did not die – the same as she meant in the previous statement? I

believe the answer is obvious. Ellen White was here referring to the divine nature of Christ – the same as in the previous statement.

Never must a divinely inspired writer be ‘forced’ to contradict themselves therefore it must be accepted that when she said “**Deity did not sink and die**”, Ellen White could not have been referring to a divine person. As we have seen above, over and over again she said that only the death of a divine person could provide the atonement – also that a divine person did die at Calvary. It would be very wrong to ‘force’ her to contradict herself.

It can also be quite easily seen that the context of this statement is “**nature**”. It is a contrast between “**Deity**” (divine nature) and “**human nature**”. This statement therefore is completely in harmony with all the other statements we have read from the spirit of prophecy. It is not saying a divine person did not die at Calvary but that divine nature (divine life) did not die.

As she went on to say though (this was after saying that this great mystery will not be understood in its greatness until after the resurrection)

“**But the enemy is determined that this gift shall be *so mystified that it will become a nothingness*. If believers only knew what this means, the work would be done in our churches that must be done if the members ever enter the kingdom of heaven.” (*Ibid*)**

She then added

“**But when men in responsible positions pervert their reason and give themselves up to Satan’s way of thinking, they will surely stand before the world on Satan’s side**, however great their influence may have been and still is, doing the work that Satan did, led and inspired by his spirit.” (*Ibid*)

This is how it has become today within Seventh-day Adventism. Ellen White’s statements are being misused (abused) to say something that she obviously did not mean to say – and amongst the brethren it is causing a great deal of confusion. We should be very guarded over these things. We should not take notice of those who say that Ellen White said that at Calvary a divine person did not die. This is the reasoning of Satan. It not only makes the atonement “**nothingness**” but also mystifies the whole issue of what really happened at Calvary.

A deception of Satan

Matthew recorded that Jesus explained to His disciples that He “must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (see Matthew 16:21). Matthew then said

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, **Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.**” Matthew 16:22

The response of Jesus was that He said

“... Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: **for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**” Matthew 16:23

When commenting on this exchange of words Ellen White commented

“Peter was naturally forward and impulsive, and Satan had taken advantage of these characteristics to lead him astray. When Jesus had opened before his disciples the fact that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die at the hands of the chief priests and scribes, Peter had presumptuously contradicted his Master, saying, “Be it far from

thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." **He could not conceive it possible that the Son of God should be put to death.**" (Ellen G. White, *Spirit of prophecy Volume 3, page 231, 'Jesus at Galilee'*)

She then added

"Satan suggested to his mind that **if Jesus was the Son of God he could not die.**" (Ibid)

This same suggestion is being made by Satan today – in the form of trinitarianism.

Satan realises that a correct understanding of the atonement is crucial to the Christian experience. This is why he tries so hard to pervert our understanding of it. Note these words from the spirit of prophecy

"Science is too limited to comprehend the atonement; the mysterious and wonderful plan of redemption is so far-reaching that philosophy cannot explain it; it will ever remain a mystery that the most profound reason cannot fathom. If it could be explained by finite wisdom, it would lose its sacredness and dignity. **It is a mystery that One equal with the eternal Father should so abase himself as to suffer the cruel death of the cross to ransom man; and it is a mystery that God so loved the world as to permit his Son to make this great sacrifice.**" (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times, 3rd April 1884, 'Man's obligation to God', see also Signs of the Times, 24th October 1906*)

Note the emphasis again here on Christ's divine Sonship. She continued

"The Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies the Saviour. It is his office to present Christ, the great salvation that we have through him, and the sacred, elevated purity of his righteousness. Says Christ, "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." **The Spirit of truth is the only effectual teacher of divine truth; those who are taught of him have entered the school of Christ. How must God esteem the race, that he gave his Son to die for them, and appoints his Spirit to be man's teacher and continual guide. Satan understands this, and he lays his plans to mar and wound man, the workmanship of God, and to prevent him from enjoying the happiness that this great rebel lost through his disobedience and malice.**" (Ibid)

He need not have died

One thing that proves that Ellen White believed that the divine Christ really did die was a statement where she says He need not have died. This is where she said

"As a member of the human family, he was mortal; but as a God, he was the fountain of life to the world. He could, **in his divine person, ever have withstood the advances of death, and refused to come under its dominion; but he voluntarily laid down his life, that in so doing he might give life and bring immortality to light.**" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, 4th September 1900, 'Christ man's example', see also Review & Herald 5th July 1887*)

She said in the same paragraph

"He died, **not through being compelled to die, but by his own free will.** This was humility. The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man. He brought into his human nature all the lifegiving energies that human beings will need and must receive." (Ibid)

This statement is very important. It shows that Christ need not have died. In other words it was not something that was inevitable. He chose to die – even when He was on the cross. As Ellen White said, "in his divine person" He could have withstood the advances of death but He chose differently. So who died at Calvary? It was the "divine person" of Christ.

The conclusion is

"Wondrous combination of man and God! He might have helped his human nature to withstand the inroads of disease by pouring from his divine nature vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. But he humbled himself to man's nature." (Ibid)

This "He" is the incarnate divine Son of God. It was He (a divine person) who "humbled himself to man's nature". Here we are told that Christ had the opportunity to transfer immortality from "His divine nature" to help His human nature but He chose not to do so. Instead He, as a divine person, acquiesced Himself to His human nature – meaning He chose to die.

As Ellen White continued in saying

"He did this that the Scripture might be fulfilled; and the plan was entered into by the Son of God, knowing all the steps in his humiliation, that he must descend to make an expiation for the sins of a condemned, groaning world. What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination cannot take it in. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh! God became man! It was a wonderful humility!" (Ibid)

Who was it that died? It was He who descended to make expiation for our sins. It was the divine Son of God (the "eternal Word"). No one else descended. It was He who was made flesh and dwelt amongst us (see John 1:14). Notice again that these words are referring to a divine person.

Only the Father

For Christ to be able to exercise divinity, He needed to be awoken from His sleep of death. This 'awakening' could only be done by His Father. In death Christ was unconscious – just as is everyone else who dies. As the youth were told in 1901 (note this was 3 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages')

"He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house as a prisoner of divine justice, and he was responsible to the Judge of the universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, and his Father only could release him." (Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor. 2nd May 1901, 'The Lord is risen')

Here we are told that Christ could not release Himself from the grave. It was the prerogative of the Father whether or not He should live again. If Christ had been alive then obviously He could have rolled away the stone. This was not the problem. The problem was that the divine Son of God was dead.

Some may argue that the divine person was still alive in the tomb but notice these words (remember that the incarnate Christ was only one person)

"Jesus said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." When he closed his eyes in death upon the cross, the soul of Christ did not go at once to Heaven, as many believe, or how could his words be true--"I am not yet ascended to my Father"? The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with his body, and did not wing

its way to Heaven, there to maintain a separate existence, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight.” (Ellen G. White, Vol. 3 *Spirit of Prophecy* page 203, ‘The women at the tomb’ 1878)

It was then added (obviously so that no confusion would ensue)

“All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with his body in the sepulcher; and when he came forth it was as a whole being; he did not have to summon his spirit from Heaven. He had power to lay down his life and to take it up again.” (Ibid)

As we noted above, there was only one person in Christ – albeit He was a person of two natures. It was this ‘one person’ of Christ who was asleep (dead) in the grave.

Something that Jesus said seemingly contradicts what has been said above. This is where it is recorded that he made it plain to the Jews

“... Destroy this temple, and in three days **I will raise it up.**” John 2:19

Jesus was here referring to His human body (“this temple”), not to His divine personage. As we have been told, “The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb **with his body**”.

For Jesus to be able to once again exercise divinity He would need to be awoken from His sleep of death. As we know from the Scriptures, the dead know nothing. This is how it was with Jesus in the grave. He knew nothing. Just like us when we are dead He needed someone to call Him back to life.

With respect to the visit of the angel Gabriel to the tomb of Jesus on the resurrection morning it says in ‘The Desire of Ages’

“The soldiers see him removing the stone as he would a pebble, and hear him cry, **Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee.** They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the rent sepulcher, “I am the resurrection, and the life.” As He comes forth in majesty and glory, the angel host bow low in adoration before the Redeemer, and welcome Him with songs of praise.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 779, ‘The Lord is Risen’)

God needed to call His Son back to life. Then He was able to exercise divinity.

The Scriptures are very clear that it was the Father who raised Jesus to life. Jesus did not raise Himself to life. As the apostle Paul wrote

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, **and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;**)” Galatians 1:1

In the grave Jesus was totally dependant upon His Father for life. As we noted Ellen White said

“He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time ... **and his Father only could release him.**” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*. 2nd May 1901, ‘The Lord is risen’)

Men need to understand

In 1899, the year following the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’, we find these words in the Review and Herald

“Teach the great, practical truths that must be stamped upon the soul. Teach the saving power of Jesus, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 4th April 1899, ‘After the camp meeting’)

“Men need to understand that the Deity suffered under the agonies of Calvary. The Majesty of heaven was made to suffer at the hands of wicked men, -- religious zealots, who claimed to be the most enlightened people on the face of the earth. Men claiming to be the children of Abraham worked out the wrath of Satan upon the **innocent Son of the infinite God.**” (Ibid)

This is one of the “practical truths” that Ellen White said “must be stamped upon the soul”. It was that **“Deity suffered** under the agonies of Calvary”.

Here also we must ask a question. Are the two statements (“the Deity suffered under the agonies of Calvary” and “Deity did not sink and die”) contradictory to each other? Of course not! The contexts supply the meaning of the words. The first is referring to deity as a person whilst the second is referring to deity as a nature. The two statements are not contradictory at all - at least not when read as they should be read.

Again Ellen White refutes trinitarianism. She makes it clear that it was **the divine person** who suffered at Calvary – and not just human nature. As she said to the youth in 1897

“What a love it is that appeals to fallen men! “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” **God showed his love for us by adopting our nature, in the person of his Son. God himself inhabited humanity,** making us partakers of the divine nature, **that by the incarnation and death of his only begotten Son,** our adoption as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ might be fully accomplished. The origin of this wonderful achievement was his own spontaneous love.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 16th December 1897, ‘The new commandment, part 1’)

There is no mistaking that it was God Himself, in the person of His only begotten Son, who died at Calvary.

Nothing new

The erroneous idea that a divine person did not die at Calvary is nothing new. It was spoken against at great length by J. H. Waggoner (the father of E. J. Waggoner). He wrote in his much-read work ‘The Atonement’

“THE great mistake of Trinitarians, in arguing this subject, seems to be this: They make no distinction **between a denial of a trinity and a denial of the divinity of Christ.** They see only the two extremes, **between which the truth lies;** and take every expression referring to the pre-existence of Christ **as evidence of a trinity.**” (J. H. Waggoner, *Review and Herald*, November 10th 1863, ‘The Atonement –part II, The doctrine of a trinity degrades the atonement’)

How true this is today. Most trinitarians still regard the divinity (pre-existence) of Christ as proving God to be a trinity. Joseph Waggoner then said

“The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ **and his divinity; but they are entirely silent in regard to a trinity.**” (Ibid)

This is also very true. Waggoner also added with respect to the teaching of trinitarians

“The declaration, that the divine Son of God could not die, is as far from the teachings of the Bible as darkness is from light. And I would ask the Trinitarian, to which of the two natures are we indebted for redemption?” (Ibid)

Here again we see again the confusion between nature and personality but the point is clear as to what Waggoner actually meant. He is simply asking - are we indebted to human nature for redemption or do we have a sacrifice which is divine? In reply to this question he said

“The answer must, of course, be, to that one which died or shed his blood for us; for “we have redemption through his blood.” Then it is evident, that if only the human nature died, our redeemer is only human, and that the divine Son of God took no part in the work of redemption, for he could neither suffer nor die.” (Ibid)

Waggoner knew what was taught by means of the trinity doctrine. He concluded

“Surely I said right, that the doctrine of a trinity degrades the atonement, by bringing the sacrifice, the blood of our purchase, down to the standard of Socinianism.” (Ibid)

He also wrote in 1867

“I believe the Trinitarian views are unscriptural, and greatly disparage the atonement by denying that the Son of God died;” (J. H. Waggoner, Review and Herald, November 19th 1867, ‘What think ye of Christ?’)

This latter view was also taken by Judson Washburn – a prolific evangelist who knew James and Ellen White very well (in fact he was baptised by James White). When he sensed that the trinity doctrine was trying to be introduced into Seventh-day Adventism (this was in 1940), he wrote an open letter to the General Conference saying (he was here referring to the trinity doctrine)

“This monstrous doctrine transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church is seeking to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel’s Message.” (Judson Washburn, ‘The Trinity’, letter to the Seventh-day Adventists General Conference, 1940)

He later said with reference to the trinity teaching that the divine Son of God did not die at Calvary

“Any doctrine that leads a man to deny that the Son of God died must be an evil doctrine, an anti-Christian doctrine, not from God but from Satan.” (Ibid)

“Seventh-day Adventists claim to take the word of God as supreme authority and to have “come out of Babylon,” to have renounced forever the vain traditions of Rome. If we should go back to the immortality of the soul, purgatory, eternal torment and the Sunday Sabbath, would that be anything less than apostasy?” (Ibid)

“If, however, we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central root, doctrine of Romanism, the Trinity, and teach that the son of God did not die, even though our words seem to be spiritual, is this anything else or anything less than apostasy? and the very Omega of apostasy?” (Ibid)

In drawing his letter to a close, Washburn penned these words

“Brought up from childhood as a Seventh-day Adventist *I am startled, terrified* to know that any man claiming to believe this great Truth should hold any doctrine whose logic would cause him *to deny the death of the Son of God.*” (*Ibid*)

This was Judson Washburn’s main objection to the trinity doctrine. It ‘prohibited’ the death of a divine person. This is why he spoke out against it so vehemently. We too today should do the same. We should also make our voices heard at General Conference level.

We should tender the same thoughts and sentiments as did John Loughborough in 1861. This is when he wrote

“It will not do to **substitute the human nature of Christ** (according to Trinitarians) as the Mediator; for Clarke says, **"Human blood can no more appease God than swine's blood."** Com. on 2 Sam. xxi, 10.” (*John Loughborough, Review and Herald, November 5th 1861, ‘Questions for Bro. Loughborough’*)

As to what is meant here by John Loughborough there is no need for lengthy explanations. This statement speaks for itself. As Ellen White said so clearly (see above)

“Not one of the angels could have become surety for the human race: their life is God’s; they could not surrender it. The angels all wear the yoke of obedience. They are the appointed messengers of Him who is the commander of all heaven. **But Christ is equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man’s freedom.**” (*Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor, 21st June 1900, ‘The price of our redemption part IV’*)

In closing this chapter I would ask you this:-

To whom does this world owe its redemption? To whom does the forgiven sinner owe his or her salvation? If a divine person did not die at Calvary then it is not to a divine person that we owe our salvation. Whoever or whatever died at Calvary paid the penalty for sin. Whoever or whatever died at Calvary made the atonement. We need to think on these things.

Conclusion

Again it can only be concluded that Ellen White was definitely not a trinitarian. No other conclusion is possible.

Ellen White denied many of the things believed by trinitarians. She believed that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father – and was therefore truly the Son of God. She believed that His pre-existence as a person could not be measured by human computation. She believed that He actually vacated Heaven and exiled Himself from the Father – and she really did believe that He died at Calvary. We have also seen that she said that if He had sinned - which she made very clear was possible – the divine person of Christ would have lost His eternal existence. None of these things are believed by trinitarians. The Seventh-day Adventist trinity doctrine forbids such reasoning.

We have also seen that Ellen White condemned illustrations that make God appear to be three-in-one (see [chapter 23](#)). She also said that any oneness that exists between God and Christ could never be comprehended by humanity – which in itself says that the trinity doctrine should never have been formulated.

She also said that the Holy Spirit is Christ not cumbered with humanity. She said that this was the Spirit of Christ omnipresent – the Comforter - also the Father omnipresent. How therefore could Ellen White have been a trinitarian?

As she said

“God has given us reasoning faculties, **and he wants us to use them.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald*, 10th June 1890, ‘Conditions for Obtaining Eternal Riches’)

We now need to go to [chapter 26](#). Here we shall see that in the early 1900’s, Ellen White appealed to Seventh-day Adventists not to change their beliefs. In particular this was their beliefs concerning the sanctuary – also their beliefs concerning God and Christ – which we all know were non-trinitarian beliefs.

[Proceed to chapter 26](#), ‘Keep the faith – early 1900’s counsel’

Chapter twenty-six

Keep the faith – early 1900's counsel

At first, Ellen White was not sure whether to attend the 1905 General Conference session held at Takoma Park but she did say later that God had led her to be there. Of her experience – also of her intentions for attending this gathering - she wrote (she was then almost 78 years of age)

*"I can but feel that the Lord is in my coming to Washington at this time. I have a message to bear. God helping me, **I will stand firm for the right, presenting truth unmixed with the falsities that have been stealthily creeping in.**" (Ellen G. White, Letter 135, 1905)*

By 1905, according to Ellen White, false teachings had been "stealthily creeping in" to Seventh-day Adventism – albeit they had not become part of its denominational faith (meaning they were not generally believed by Seventh-day Adventists). Notice for what it was that Ellen White said she was going to "stand firm". It was for "presenting truth **unmixed with the falsities**". It appears that this is what Ellen White thought she was up against – truth mixed with error. This is the biggest danger of all. It is far more dangerous (deceptive) than an outright lie. An outright lie is much easier to detect.

In defence of the early 1900's faith of Seventh-day Adventism

During the 1905 General Conference session, Ellen White tenaciously defended what was then the faith (beliefs) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As we study what she said to the delegates, one important thing to remember is that this conference took place **7 years after** 'The Desire of Ages' was published. This is the book that the pro-trinitarians say led our denomination to become trinitarian – although this did not happen whilst Ellen White was alive. Please keep this fact in mind. It is very important.

It is also important to keep in mind that at this conference session, Ellen White was defending and upholding what was still then our **non-trinitarian faith** (beliefs). We shall also see that she gave very clear warnings that **wrong views** concerning God and Christ were **on their way** into Seventh-day Adventism.

As we noted in [chapter 21](#), Ellen White said that in his book 'The Living Temple', Kellogg was depicting wrong ideas concerning God and Christ. Never did she say that the views held and taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church were wrong – which is what is being said today by our present church leadership. They are saying that what we taught then concerning the Godhead was error (heresy). This they say is why these beliefs needed to be changed.

Ellen White obviously would disagree. In fact as we noted in [chapter 14](#), she said that our denominational belief concerning Christ was 'the truth'. This was when in our Sabbath School lessons studies – also in our other denominational publications such as periodicals and books – we taught that Christ, because He is begotten of God (brought forth of God), is truly the Son of God (see chapters [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [10](#), [13](#) and [14](#) of this study). It was also said that because He was brought forth of God, He is God Himself in the person of the Son. The Holy Spirit was said to be the presence of the Father and the Son whilst the latter two were bodily

in Heaven. These are the beliefs that our church leadership today say is false doctrine (heresy).

There is no way that Ellen White's remarks at the 1905 conference could be interpreted to mean she was saying that the Godhead beliefs then held by Seventh-day Adventists were error. In fact as we shall soon see, she told the delegates to 'hold on' to their beliefs and not change them.

Before we review what Ellen White had to say at this conference, there is one more important point to mention.

As has already been mentioned, this conference took place **7 years after** the publication of 'The Desire of Ages' – which in itself begs a question. If in this book Ellen White had spoken of God as a trinity – as today's trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists are claiming - then why, 7 years after this book was published, was she telling Seventh-day Adventists not to change their faith – which we all know at that time (1905) was still non-trinitarian? This really is a very important question. A correct answer to it will resolve many of the misunderstandings that today exist in our present Godhead debate.

Those who have studied their denominational history realise that whilst Ellen White was alive, 'The Desire of Ages' never changed the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church about anything. To the non-trinitarians amongst us, this is just one more piece of evidence that during the opening decades of the 20th century, it was not believed by Seventh-day Adventists that in this book she had spoken of God as a trinity. They realise though that the trinitarians amongst us are saying to the contrary. Thus the non-trinitarians believe that the trinitarians are misusing (abusing) the writings of Ellen White.

As we have noted in previous chapters, this is exactly what was happening in 'the Alpha'. Kellogg was trying to justify his beliefs by saying that the things Ellen White had written about God were the same as what he had written in his 'Living Temple'. Ellen White condemned Kellogg's claims. She said that he was misrepresenting her writings.

The author of these notes believes exactly the same is happening today in our present Godhead controversy. He believes that Ellen White's writings are being used (or perhaps better said misused) to support the belief that she taught that God is a trinity – meaning that the 'one God' is a compound entity of three inseparable divine persons in one indivisible substance or essence. Never did she make any such profession. In fact as we have seen in the previous three chapters (if not also in many of the other chapters), Ellen White's writings would never support such a belief. Her writings can only support a non-trinitarian view of the Godhead. We need therefore, as we read this chapter, to bear these things in mind.

New to the faith

There is one more thing to consider here. This is that at this 1905 conference, many of the delegates would not have been with our denomination since its beginnings. These delegates would also have realised that on a number of fronts, the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists were then being challenged.

Perhaps it was with these delegates in mind that Ellen White said in a talk on the afternoon of Tuesday May 16th

“God has given me light regarding our periodicals. What is it? -- He has said that the dead are to speak. How? -- Their works shall follow them. We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work. **They moved forward step by step under the influence of the Spirit of God.** One by one these

pioneers are passing away. The word given me is, **Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 25th May 1905, ‘The work for this time’, address at the 1905 General Conference, May 16th 1905)

She followed this by saying

“Not long ago I took up a copy of the Bible Echo. As I looked it through, I saw an article by Elder Haskell and one by Elder Corliss. As I laid the paper down, I said, **These articles must be reproduced. There is truth and power in them. Men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**

Let the truths that **are the foundation of our faith be kept before the people. Some will depart from the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. ... We are now to understand what the pillars of our faith are, -- **the truths that have made us as a people what we are**, leading us on step by step.” (Ibid)

With reference to the times when she and the other pioneers could not understand the passages of Scripture that they had been studying (this is an important part of the ‘**how**’ our faith had been established) she said

“I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures **in regard to Christ, his mission, and his priesthood.**” (Ibid)

She then added

“A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others **the instruction that the Lord had given me.**” (Ibid)

Needless to say, Ellen White was stressing that it had been God Himself who had given the early Seventh-day Adventists their faith (beliefs). As has been said already, important to realise here is that many in attendance at this conference would not have been at the very beginnings (1844) or even the early decades of Seventh-day Adventism therefore some may not have heard of these experiences. Now though they were being told of these things ‘first hand’.

It is also obvious that Ellen White was making this plain because she knew that at that time (1905), attempts were being made from ‘within’ to change this faith (see above where Ellen White said that “falsities” had been “stealthily creeping in”). She was therefore stressing to the delegates that it was God Himself who had given Seventh-day Adventists their beliefs. For this reason this was an appeal to them to ‘keep the faith’ that she said in their early days God had given to them.

So it was that Ellen White was explaining **how** the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church came to be established (formed or arrived at). This method she said was through prayer, joint Bible study and direct revelation from God.

Note here that at this conference Ellen White was now almost 78 years of age therefore by this time, she had been God’s messenger to the remnant for 61 years (she had received her first vision from God in December 1844 when 17 years of age). By 1905, the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists had become well and truly established.

Ellen White was emphasising to the delegates that their 1905 faith was one that had been **God-given**. There is no mistaking here regarding what she is saying. She says emphatically that with regards to “Christ, his mission and His priesthood”, it was **God Himself** that gave to her “light” that she in turn passed on “to others”. These “others” obviously included the other early Seventh-day Adventists – those who are often called the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism.

As we have already noted, this faith held by Seventh-day Adventists in 1905 was still decidedly **non-trinitarian**. This is how it had been from the beginning. Note also that this “light” that Ellen White said she had been given would extend from the time that she had received it until “the time when we shall enter the city of God”. This light therefore was permanent light, not something that was temporary.

She then added regarding the aforementioned experience

“During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until **all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds, in harmony with the Word of God**. The brethren knew that, when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted, **as light directly from heaven**, the revelations given.” (*Ibid*)

Notice particularly here that Ellen White said that she was in this condition of mind (of which she spoke) until to the minds of the pioneers “**all**” not some of “**the principal points of our faith were made clear**”. Note too she said “**our minds**” and not just her mind.

These “**principle points**” were obviously the “**pillars**” (landmarks) of Seventh-day Adventism that she said should never be changed. These beliefs included what Seventh-day Adventists believed concerning God and Christ – which is the very foundational belief of every Christian denomination. Seventh-day Adventists were no different. Their beliefs concerning God and Christ were foundational to everything else they believed and taught. It would not make sense to say otherwise.

Regarding her visions, note she said that the pioneers accepted this as “**light directly from heaven**”. This is why the pioneers believed that their faith (beliefs) was ‘the faith’ that **God Himself had given to them**. This is obviously the same faith that we shall see later Ellen White said had been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God therefore it should never be changed. It was also ‘the faith’ from which Ellen White said that ‘many’ Seventh-day Adventists would depart. This is something else we shall see later.

Strange as it may seem, our church leadership is saying today that these early Seventh-day Adventists were wrong in what they were teaching about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is why, so our members are being told today, that our fundamental beliefs needed to be changed. This they are being told was to accommodate the doctrine of the trinity – which early Seventh-day Adventists rejected as error.

If Ellen White were here today it is obvious that she would disagree with this reasoning. She said that it was God Himself who had given these early Seventh-day Adventists their faith – and that this is why it should never have been changed.

This is obviously why she said later

“**In the future, deception of every kind is to arise**, and we want solid ground for our feet. We want solid pillars for the building. **Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established**. The enemy will bring in false theories, such as the

doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. Where shall we find safety ***unless it be in the truths that the Lord has been giving for the last fifty years?*** (Ibid)

As she also explained in 1903 (referring back to the very same experience of our very beginnings as a movement of people)

“They [the brethren] knew that when not in vision I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given me. ***The leading points of our faith as we hold them today were firmly established. Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony.***” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 135, 1903, ‘Establishing the Foundation of Our Faith. Typed Nov. 4, 1903)

This was in 1903. There can be no doubt that these “leading points” included what we then believed about God and Christ. After all, this was almost 60 years after our beginnings as a movement of people – and it was 5 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages' – the book that the trinitarians say led our church to eventually become trinitarian. By this time, all of our main (fundamental) beliefs were firmly established. As we know though, this change in beliefs (from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism) took decades to come about. When Ellen White wrote the above, we were still non-trinitarian and we still believed in the Sonship of Christ – meaning it was believed that in eternity Christ was brought forth of the Father – therefore He was God Himself in the person of the Son.

Ellen White continued

“The whole company of believers were united in the truth. There were those who came in with strange doctrines, but we were never afraid to meet them. ***Our experience was wonderfully established by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.***

For two or three years my mind continued to be locked to the Scriptures. In 1846 I was married to Elder James White. It was some time after my second son was born that we were in great perplexity regarding certain points of doctrine. I was asking the Lord to unlock my mind that I might understand His Word. ***Suddenly I seemed to be enshrouded in clear, beautiful light, and ever since, the Scriptures have been an open book to me.***

I was at that time [early December 1850] in Paris, Maine. Old Father Andrews was very sick. For some time he had been a great sufferer from inflammatory rheumatism. He could not move without intense pain. We prayed for him. I laid my hands on his head and said, "Father Andrews, the Lord Jesus maketh thee whole." He was healed instantly. He got up and walked about the room, praising God, and saying, "I never saw it on this wise. Angels of God are in this room." The glory of God was revealed. ***Light seemed to shine all through the house, and an angel's hand was laid upon my head. From that time to this, I have been enabled to understand the Word of God.*** (Ibid)

Unfortunately, there are those who abuse the spirit of prophecy writings. As again was explained by Ellen White

“***There are some who, upon accepting erroneous theories, strive to establish them by collecting from my writings statements of truth, which they use separated from their proper connection, and perverted by association with error.*** Thus seeds of heresy, springing up and growing rapidly into strong plants, are surrounded by many precious plants of truth; ***and in this way a mighty effort is made to vindicate the***

genuineness of the spurious plants.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 136 to Brethren Butler, Daniells and Irwin, April 27, 1906)

Understanding the old landmarks

At the 1905 General Conference, Ellen White stressed that Albion Ballenger, because of what she regarded as his false theories concerning the sanctuary, was leading God’s people to deny what she maintained was the truth that God had revealed to His remnant people.

In an address, also after warning of Ballenger’s teachings, she said

*“Let not any man enter upon the work of **tearing down the foundations of the truth that have made us what we are. God has led His people forward step by step**, though there are pitfalls of error on every side. Under the wonderful guidance of a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” **a truth has been established that has stood the test of trial**. When men arise and attempt to draw away disciples after them, **meet them with the truths that have been tried as by fire**.” (Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park, Washington D. C., May 24th 1905, “A Warning against False Theories,” MR 760)*

Here at this General Conference session, the delegates were being told, in no uncertain terms, that their denominational faith, as they held it then in 1905, was the truth that “**step by step**” God Himself had given to them. She said also that it had “**stood the test of trial**” and had “**been tried as by fire**”. This is very plain speaking. It is also over 60 years after our beginnings (1844).

Some have said that Ellen White was only referring to what we were teaching concerning the sanctuary (meaning in opposition to Ballenger) but this cannot be true. We know this because after appropriately quoting from God’s message to the church at Sardis (this was with respect to ‘holding fast’ to the faith that they then had) Ellen White said

*“**Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast**; they are not remembering how they have received and heard.” (Ibid)*

In principle, this is exactly what God had said to the believers at Sardis (see Revelation 3:1-6). In exactly the same way, Seventh-day Adventists were being told to ‘hold on’ to their faith – meaning hold on to what they then believed in 1905.

Ellen White then added

*“Those who try to bring in theories that would remove **the pillars of our faith** concerning **the sanctuary or concerning the personality of God or of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift without an anchor.” (Ibid)*

Take particular note here of what it was in 1905 that Ellen White included in “**the old landmarks**” and “**the pillars**” of Seventh-day Adventism.

She said it was (a) what was then believed concerning the sanctuary and (b) what was then believed concerning the **personality of God and Christ**. This simply means that what we believed in 1905 concerning these things, Ellen White did include in the “**foundations of the truth that have made us what we are**” (the landmarks and pillars of our denominational faith). It is evident that as well as speaking out against what Ballenger was teaching, she was also

speaking out against the beliefs of Kellogg – whom she said by his beliefs was de-personalising both God and Christ.

The above statement from Ellen White is extremely important to remember. This is because in attempting to justify our changeover from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism, some have said – obviously the trinitarians amongst us - that at no time did Ellen White say that what we believed about Christ was a landmark belief. When we remember that Jesus Himself said that the **very foundation** of His church would be that He was the Son of the living God (see Matthew 16:16), this latter assertion can only be counted as nonsensical.

The foundational belief of any Christian denomination is what is believed concerning the Godhead – particularly what is believed concerning Christ. In fact this is usually ‘top of the list’. We can see therefore that the claim that Ellen White did not include in our landmark beliefs what we believed about Christ is simply not true. How could it be? Everything we taught as a denomination was based upon what we believed concerning our Saviour – particularly our sanctuary teaching.

She later said

“When men come in who would *move one pin or pillar from the foundation which God has established by His Holy Spirit*, let the aged men who were pioneers in our work speak plainly, and let those who are dead speak also, by the reprinting of their articles in our periodicals.” (Ibid)

How plainly can anything be said? Not “one pin or pillar”, from our God given faith, was to be removed. Does this sound as though Ellen White was saying that we were teaching error about God and Christ?

Here at this conference session of 1905, Ellen White was not only defending the beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists but was also saying that the writings of our “aged men” should be reprinted. She emphasised - “let those who are dead speak also”.

She also added

“Gather up the rays of divine light that God has given as He has led His people on step by step in the way of truth. *This truth will stand the test of time and trial.*” (Ibid)

This is far different than what is said today by the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They are saying that concerning the Godhead, the beliefs and teachings of early Seventh-day Adventists is error (false doctrine - heresy). This is why, so they say, that regarding God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, since the early 1900's it was necessary for us to change our beliefs – also adopt the trinity doctrine. This was all done, so our leadership says, to correct the non-trinitarian views of past Seventh-day Adventists.

This contrast between what was said above by Ellen White and what is being said today by our present leadership is remarkable. It must be asked who is telling the truth? Obviously both cannot be.

In the December of 1905, Ellen White sent a letter to a man named Burden. She wrote to him warning

“When the power of God testifies to what is truth, the truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions, contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. *Men will arise with interpretations of scripture which are to them truth, but*

which are not truth. The truth for this time, God has given us as a foundation for our faith. He himself has taught us what is truth. One will arise, and still another with new light, **which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy Spirit.** A few are still alive who passed through the experience gained in the establishment of this truth. God has graciously spared their lives to repeat and repeat, till the close of their lives, the experience through which they passed, even as did John the apostle till the very close of his life. And the standard-bearers who have fallen in death are to speak through the re-printing of their writings. I am instructed that thus their voices are to be heard. They are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time.

We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of scripture, and pile it as proof around their asserted theories. **This has been done over and over again during the past fifty years.**" (Ellen G. White Letter to Brother Burden, December 1905)

Ellen White had in mind here Ballenger's views on the sanctuary doctrine but note her next words. She wrote

"And while the Scriptures are God's word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves one pillar of the foundation that God has sustained these fifty years, is a great mistake. He who makes such an application knows not the wonderful demonstrations of the Holy Spirit that gave power and force to the past messages that have come to the people of God." (Ibid)

She also said in 1903

"God has led us in the past, giving us truth, eternal truth. By this truth we are to stand. Some of the leaders in the medical work have been deceived, and if they continue to hold fanciful, spiritualistic ideas, they will make many believe that the platform upon which we have been standing for the past fifty years has been torn away." (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B No.7 page 38, 'Decided action to be taken now', 1903)

Ellen White had no doubt that what we were teaching then, in the early 1900's, was the truth. If it had not been the truth then her support at this time for the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists makes no sense – neither does here words here.

Again in 1905, after quoting from the opening of the first of John's epistles and saying that "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" Ellen White penned these words.

"From our own personal experience we can speak of the truth that has made us what we are, - Seventh-day Adventists. Truth felt within is most precious, but truth confirmed by the testimony of the word and by the Holy Spirit's power is of the highest value. **We can confidently say, The truth that has come to us through the Holy Spirit's working is not a lie. The evidences given for the last half century bear the evidence of the Spirit's power. In the word of God we have found the truth that substantiates our faith. We have watched the influence of the heresies that have come in, and we have seen them come to naught. God has given us sacred, holy truths. Let us hold them fast. I am instructed to say that we are now to present these truths, in plainness and simplicity, to the people of God."** (Ellen G. White, Letter to G. I Butler, June 23rd 1905)

This cannot be read and believe at the same time that Ellen White was saying that what we believed then concerning Christ (that in eternity He was begotten of the Father) is error – which is what is being said today by our leadership. They are saying that what we were teaching then, in 1905, about Christ, is heresy. As every Christian knows, what is believed about Christ is the main teaching of Christianity.

Notice here what Ellen White had to say about the 'main points' of our faith

“The truths given us after the passing of the time in 1844 are just as certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us in answer to our urgent prayers. The visions that the Lord has given me are so remarkable that we know that what we have accepted is the truth. This was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. **Light, precious light from God, established the main points of our faith as we hold them today.**” (Ellen G. White, Letter 50 to Elder W. W. Simpson, January 30, 1906)

Note well the latter sentence. She must have included in these “main points” what we believed about Christ. Of this there can be no doubt. Note this was in 1906, which was 8 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'. We were still then teaching that Christ is truly God's Son – brought forth of God in eternity.

God and Christ – two separate personages

At the 1905 General Conference session, just as she had been doing since the early 1900's Godhead crisis began, Ellen White repeatedly stressed what was then, particularly concerning God and Christ, 'the faith' (beliefs) of Seventh-day Adventists. This was the very same faith that had been held by our denomination since its beginnings. It was a non-trinitarian faith, meaning a faith that depicted God as one personal being and Christ as another personal being - two separate, distinct personages (not inseparably connected as in the trinity doctrine).

We must ask though, why was this being emphasised by Ellen White? Remember, this was when the Kellogg crisis was at its height and he had said that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. If we bear this in mind, it will provide us with the context of many of the early 1900's Godhead statements made by Ellen White.

Following Kellogg's trinity confession, Ellen White made a great deal of the fact that the Scriptures always speak of God and Christ as two separate, distinct personal individuals, each acting in their own individuality. So too should we. We must never depict them as having any type of oneness which may obscure this fact.

To the delegates at the conference, Ellen White spoke the following words (we noted these in [chapter 2](#) but they are repeated here because they provide important context for a following statement)

“Men may put their own interpretation upon God, **but no human mind can comprehend him. This problem has not been given us to solve.**” (Ellen G. White, Review & Herald. 1st June 1905, 'The work in Washington', Talk to the Delegates of the 1905 General Conference Session, May 19th 1905, see also 8th Volume Testimonies page 279)

She then said

“**Let not finite man attempt to interpret Jehovah. Let none indulge in speculation regarding his nature. Here silence is eloquence.** The omniscient One is above discussion.

Christ is one with the Father, but **Christ and God are two distinct personages**. Read the prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of John, and you will find this point clearly brought out.” (*Ibid*)

The emphasis here is reasonably obvious to see. Ellen White is saying that we cannot explain God – and that all we can say is that the Scriptures reveal both God and Christ as two separate individual persons. In other words, this is as far as the Bible goes. It says nothing of how they exist together (see [chapter 2](#)).

In continuing her talk she said

“How earnestly the Saviour prayed **that his disciples might be one with him as he is one with the Father**. But the unity that is to exist between Christ and his followers **does not destroy the personality of either. They are to be one with him as he is one with the Father**.” (*Ibid*)

This ‘oneness’ spoken of here was obviously not something of a physical nature (nature of being or how God exists). This we know because we do not - and cannot - have between us this particular type of oneness. As Ellen White says here, “the Saviour prayed that his disciples might be one with him **as he is one with the Father**”.

This oneness therefore must refer to the unity of character, love and purpose etc that exists between the Father and the Son. This is the unity that Jesus was praying should be experienced amongst His disciples.

She continued

“By this unity they are to make it plain to the world that **God sent his Son** to save sinners. The oneness of Christ's followers with him is to be the great, unmistakable proof that **God did indeed send his Son into the world to save sinners. But a loose, lax religion leaves the world bewildered and confused**.” (*Ibid*)

From the above, we can see that a great deal of emphasis was made by Ellen White in making sure that God and Christ are regarded as “two distinct personages”. Notice too the emphasis she makes on God really sending His Son (“**God did indeed send his Son into the world to save sinners**”).

In the current official theology of Seventh-day Adventism, this Sonship belief has completely disappeared. It is now officially taught, in our fundamental beliefs, that Christ was never begotten of the Father therefore He is not really a son. In other words, according to Seventh-day Adventist trinity reasoning, God has never had a son to send.

Wrong sentiments making their way into Seventh-day Adventism

To the delegates of the 1905 General Conference session – on Thursday May 25th, which was one week after the talk referred to above - Ellen White again emphasised the belief that God and Christ are two separate personalities. This time she warned that concerning this truth, wrong beliefs were making their way into Seventh-day Adventism. This she did when addressing the delegates on lessons from the First Epistle of John.

Note that this was also **the day before** she warned them of the ‘two-pronged’ attack that was then being made on the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. This is the attack we noted was on the sanctuary doctrine – also on the **personalities of God and Christ** (see above).

In addressing the delegates, Ellen White began by quoting the first three verses of 1 John – verse 3 of which says

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is **with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**” 1 John 1:3

In her address she said

“**There are those who are always seeking for something new.** If they understood aright, they would realize that the newness that they need is that which comes from a daily growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Let us keep firm and unshaken our faith in the message that God has given us for these last days.**” (Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park Washington D. C., May 25th 1905 Review and Herald 13th July 1905, ‘Lessons from the first Epistle of John’)

Again there is an appeal for Seventh-day Adventists to ‘keep the faith’. Very importantly, please compare the first and last sentences of this statement. This “something new” was obviously “new” in contrast to the faith (beliefs) then held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Remember here that our present church leadership freely admits that since the death of Ellen White, our past non-trinitarian beliefs have been discarded and have been replaced by beliefs that are trinitarian. Ellen White however, did clearly say to the delegates that Seventh-day Adventists were to keep “firm and unshaken” in the message that God had given to them - which they were still teaching in 1905. She said nothing about changing this message. In fact she said exactly the opposite. She said that we should not seek for something which was “new”. There is no doubt that to these early Seventh-day Adventists, the acceptance of the trinity doctrine would have been a new belief.

Following this appeal – also after saying that the world was fast becoming like as it was in the days of Noah - she then said to the delegates (and this is obviously the point to where her remarks were leading)

“And truly our fellowship is with **the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**” (Ibid)

She then said

“All through the Scriptures, the Father and the Son are spoken of **as two distinct personages.** You will hear men endeavoring to make the Son of God **a nonentity.** He and the Father are one, **but they are two personages.**” (Ibid)

On Ellen White’s part, there was at this time (early 1900’s) quite an insistence on this one particular point of doctrine. It is that God and Christ are “two distinct personages”. It can only be said again that there must have been a very good reason for her emphasising this belief.

Here we can see again the purpose and the thrust of Ellen White saying that Seventh-day Adventists should “keep firm and unshaken our faith in the message that God has given us for these last days”. She obviously said this to strengthen their long held non-trinitarian faith (God and Christ two separate personages).

The important thing to remember is that Ellen White was here telling the delegates at this conference that **their beliefs were correct.** If she had thought they were wrong in any way,

she would never have spoken to them in such a manner. She was appealing to them to **hold on to their faith** – and not change or discard it. This is why we can see today that to say the faith (beliefs) of these early Seventh-day Adventists was error is an error in itself. Ellen White never regarded the denominational beliefs concerning God and Christ as error – or any other major belief. This is something of which we can be very sure.

Here we can also see the particular ‘problem area’ which Ellen White is addressing. It was all to do with ‘new beliefs’ (a new faith) that would make God and Christ something different than how she describes them here (two separate individual personages). Notice in these statements nothing is said about the Holy Spirit being a distinct personage.

Now very carefully note her next words. She said to the delegates

“Wrong sentiments regarding this are coming in, and we shall all have to meet them.” (Ibid)

It can only be concluded that what was being taught in 1905 by Seventh-day Adventists was the truth – else why tell these early Seventh-day Adventists to hold on to what they believed – and why tell them that wrong views concerning God and Christ were “coming into” Seventh-day Adventism. If Ellen White had thought that their ‘then held’ denominational beliefs were error, this appeal would have made no sense at all.

The delegates at this conference could only have drawn the conclusion that Ellen White was commending their beliefs not condemning them. Remember, this was 7 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’ – also when our faith was still non-trinitarian.

Please remember, she was not saying that what Seventh-day Adventists were then teaching concerning God and Christ was error but that error **would in come later**. In fact she was telling these Seventh-day Adventists to hold on to their beliefs and not change them. Seventh-day Adventists today should be aware of these warnings. They were given for our admonition.

Again it must be said that this ‘oneness’ spoken of here cannot be something of a physical nature. The followers of Christ have no physical unity. They are individual personal beings. This is the same way that the Scriptures depict God and Christ. Never are the latter depicted as a inseparable compound entity - whether including or excluding the Holy Spirit.

Please note again that the above emphasis by Ellen White saying that God and Christ are two separate personalities was spoken by her **7 years after** the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’. Many say that in this book she spoke of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as having a physical unity (as in the trinity doctrine) – making the ‘one compound God’ - but the evidence for such a conclusion is seriously lacking. Here she is emphasising that in the thinking of Seventh-day Adventists, these two divine beings (the Father and the Son) should always be regarded as two **separate** individual beings.

A repeated emphasis

Later in 1905, in a letter addressed to some of the leading personnel within Seventh-day Adventism, also after quoting the words found in the prayer of Jesus in John 17:3 (“And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent”), Ellen White wrote

“In this scripture God and Christ are spoken of separately. They are two distinct persons, but one in mind, one in heart, one in holiness and justice, and purity, and

one in the work of seeking to save the sinful race." (*Ellen G. White, Letter to A. G. Daniells, W. W. Prescott and associates, October 30th 1905*)

Again we see the emphasis on the individuality of the two personages of God and Christ. After the death of Ellen White, the evidence is that both Daniells and Prescott wanted to change the faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

The next day (October 31st 1905), Ellen White wrote in her diary (this was after quoting, John 1:1-4, 14-16 and John 3:34-36)

"In this Scripture God and Christ are spoken of **as two distinct personalities, each acting in their own individuality.**" (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 760, Diary note, October 31st 1905*)

In 'Ministry of Healing' (1905) we find these words

"The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, **and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.**

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son; . . . who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time.

**"Thou art My Son,
This day have I begotten Thee?
And again, I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son?"** Hebrews 1:1-5.

"The personality of the Father and the Son, also the unity that exists between Them, are presented in the seventeenth chapter of John, in the prayer of Christ for His disciples:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that 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 17:20, 21.

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one." (*Ellen White, Ministry of healing, page 421, 'A true knowledge of God'*)

Again we see the emphasis on the individual personages of God and Christ. Two years later in 1907 she wrote

"On Sabbath, April 27, many of our brethren and sisters from neighboring churches gathered in the parlors with the sanitarium family, and I spoke to them there. I read the first chapter of Hebrews as the basis of my discourse. **This chapter clearly indicates the individual personalities of the Father and the Son.** Speaking of the Son, the apostle says, "**God . . . hath appointed [him] heir of all things**, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his

person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

If men and women could be once inspired by a view of the great and grand work that has been accomplished through **God's gift of his Son**, their days would no longer be given up to pleasure-seeking and frivolity. Our ears would no longer be pained by the drunkard's song and the story of crime and wickedness. Men would endeavor to place themselves where they could realize the meaning of the great salvation offered through Jesus Christ. It means life, eternal life to the receiver," (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 1st August 1907, 'Notes of travel No. 2).*

A week later she wrote in the Review and Herald (again from her notes of travel)

"On Sabbath, May 4, **the Lord gave me a message** to our brethren and sisters in San Diego. I based my remarks on the first chapter of Hebrews." (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 15th August 1907, 'Notes of Travel, No. 4 'Labors in San Diego'*)

This message appears to have been given for a specific reason. Note here that Ellen White quoted from the opening verses of the book of Hebrews (which say that the Son is the "express image" of God's person). She then said

"Here the position of Jesus Christ in reference to his Father is brought to view. While they are one in purpose, and one in mind, yet in personality they are two." (*Ibid*)

It is reasonably obvious that if a person is an image of someone then they cannot be the same individual person of whom they are an image. Here Ellen White is again making it abundantly clear that God the Father and Christ are two separate individual personalities. There was obviously a reason for her making this emphasis. She had not done this previous to the early 1900's. Now though, in the early 1900's, she obviously thought it to be imperative.

From the above, we can see that the names 'Father' and 'Son' each have their own significance. In other words, they are not interchangeable. The term 'the Father' is never applied to Christ whilst the term 'the Son' is never applied to the Father. These are two separate, distinct personages – each with a personality of their own – as Ellen White said (see above) – **"two distinct personalities, each acting in their own individuality"**.

This was no different than when she said

"God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son"" (*Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 8, page 268, 'The essential knowledge'*)

Hold fast the faith

In August 1905 Ellen White wrote

"Keep a firm hold upon the Lord Jesus, and never let go. **Have firm convictions as to what you believe.** Let the truths of God's Word lead you to devote heart, mind, soul, and strength to the doing of his will. Lay hold resolutely upon a plain, "Thus saith the Lord." Let your only argument be. "It is written." Thus we are to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. **That faith has not lost any of its sacred, holy character, however objectionable its opposers may think it to be.**" (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 31st August 1905, 'Hold fast that which is good'*)

In the next paragraph she wrote

“Believers must now be firmly rooted in Christ, or else they will be led astray by some phase of error. Let your faith be substantiated by the Word of God. Grasp firmly the living testimony of truth. Have faith in Christ as a personal Saviour. He has been and ever will be our Rock of Ages. The testimony of the Spirit of God is true. **Change not your faith for any phase of doctrine, however pleasing it may appear, that will seduce the soul.**

The fallacies of Satan are now being multiplied, and those who swerve from the path of truth will lose their bearings. Having nothing to which to anchor, **they will drift from one delusion to another, blown about by the winds of strange doctrines.** Satan has come down with great power.” (*Ibid*)

Her appeal was

“I entreat every one to be clear and firm regarding **the certain truths that we have heard and received and advocated.** The statements of God's Word are plain. Plant your feet firmly on the platform of eternal truth. **Reject every phase of error, even though it be covered with a semblance of reality, which denies the personality of God and of Christ.**” (*Ibid*)

Does this sound as though Ellen White was saying to Seventh-day Adventists that what they believed then about God and Christ was error? Of course not! It tells us exactly the opposite. She is telling us that we should never have changed our faith. Two paragraphs later she said

“Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was manifest in the flesh.” (*Ibid*)

In 1905, when Ellen White gave this counsel, this was the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was that somewhere back in the in endless ages of eternity, Christ was brought forth (begotten) of the Father therefore He is truly the Son of God. This was the faith that continued to be believed and taught within Seventh-day Adventism. In fact as we have seen in chapter 16, in 1936 this was still the official faith of Seventh-day Adventists. To a degree, by then, Ellen White's counsel had been heeded.

In 1907, which was two years after this counsel was given, a reader of the 'Signs of the Times' asked (amongst other things)

“If those that believe on His name were begotten of God, **then how is Jesus the “only-begotten of the Father”?** (*Signs of the Times, February 20th 1907, ‘Questions’*)

The answer was returned (presumably by M. C. Wilcox the editor)

“Christ was not begotten in just the way in which men are. He Himself declares. “I proceeded forth and came from God.” John 8: 42. Just how this all is we do not know, but we do know this, **that He was THE Son of God in a sense that no other was, because He was God;** and yet just as truly are those who believe in Him begotten of God and become His children. 1 John 3: 1.” (*Ibid*)

Here again it is emphasised that because Christ is God He is the Son of God in a sense that no other 'son of God' can be. These other 'sons of God' are the angels who were created by God and those of us who become son's of God by adoption.

In a book first published in 1909, which in 1914 had its 6th printing (showing that it was a very popular book within Seventh-day Adventism), James Edson White, the son of Ellen White wrote

“From a reading of John 1:1-3, 10, it will be seen that the world, with all it contains, was created by Christ (the Word), for "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." The angels, therefore, being created, are necessarily lower than Christ, their Creator. ***Christ is the only being begotten of the Father.***” (*James Edson White, Past, Present, and Future*, page 52, Chapter ‘Angels their nature’)

In the Preface there is a note which says

“The sixth edition of this book, issued in 1914, has been carefully revised. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the valuable assistance of C. P. Bollman, J. S. Washburn, and S. B. Horton on the original manuscript; and of W. A. Colcord and wife on the editorial work of this revision.” (*Ibid, Preface*)

It was this begotten faith that very shortly after Ellen White died (1915) was to come under attack from Satan. As we have noted previously in this study, he hated the fact (and still does) that Christ is truly the Son of God.

In [chapter 27](#) we shall be taking a look at some of the warnings that in the early 1900's came through Ellen White.

[Proceed to chapter 27](#), ‘Warnings through the spirit of prophecy’

Chapter twenty-seven

Warnings through the spirit of prophecy

During the early 1900's, warning after warning came to Seventh-day Adventists through Ellen White. These were warnings saying we should not change what were then our denominational beliefs. This, so she said, was because God had given us these beliefs. In other words, according to Ellen White, what was being taught by Seventh-day Adventists during the early 1900's was the truth that God had given to us. We noted these things in [chapter 26](#).

Unfortunately, since these warnings were given, there has been a dramatic change to our beliefs – mainly concerning the Godhead.

A change in Godhead beliefs

Our leadership is saying today that during the time of Ellen White's ministry, the entire spectrum of our denominational beliefs concerning the Godhead was wrong. In other words, during this time period, our beliefs concerning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were false doctrine. This is why, so we are told, it was necessary to change these beliefs. This change of beliefs eventually enabled us to accept into our fundamental beliefs a doctrine not held by our denomination whilst Ellen White was alive. This of course is the trinity doctrine.

By early Seventh-day Adventists, this three-in-one teaching was said to be unscriptural. Today our church is saying it is Scriptural. Such is the ultimate turnaround in thinking.

Our official acceptance of the trinity doctrine took place at the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas Texas. This was the very first time this teaching had been voted into our fundamental beliefs. As a movement of people, this was 136 years after our beginnings (1844). In [chapter 28](#) we shall be taking a look at how this came about.

The author of this study disagrees with the reasoning of our present church leadership. He maintains that the beliefs we held in the early 1900's were correct – meaning that concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our early 1900's teachings was then - and still is - the truth.

In defence of Seventh-day Adventism

In speaking of what God had revealed to her during a night season (this was in 1905 - the year of the General Conference session we spoke of in [chapter 26](#)) - Ellen White wrote

*“The Lord would have us at this time bring in the testimony **written by those who are now dead, to speak in behalf of heavenly things**. The Holy Spirit has given instruction for us in these last days.” (Ellen G. White, May 1905, Manuscript release No. 760)*

She then added

*“**We are to repeat the testimonies that God has given His people**, the testimonies that present clear conceptions of **the truths of the sanctuary, and that show the relation of Christ to the truths of the sanctuary so clearly brought to view.**” (Ibid)*

Note the reference to those who by 1905 had passed to their death. This was regarding their sanctuary beliefs – also what they had written concerning the “[relation of Christ to the truths of the sanctuary](#)”. Ellen White was saying that these truths should be repeated. Notice particularly also that she again made it very clear it was God who had given these beliefs to “His people” (the pioneers and the early Seventh-day Adventists).

She then said

“If we are the Lord's appointed messengers, *we shall not spring up with new ideas and theories to contradict the message that God has given through His servants since 1844.*” (Ibid)

Interestingly, our leadership is saying today that the beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists – at least concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit – were all wrong. Ellen White did not seem to think so. As we noted in [chapter 26](#), she consistently made this type of statement in the backdrop of Albion Ballenger's teachings concerning the sanctuary - also Kellogg's views of the Godhead.

She continued

“At that time many sought the Lord with heart and soul and voice. The men whom God raised up were *diligent searchers of the Scriptures.*” (Ibid)

It appears that Ellen White had a very high regard for our early pioneers – particularly concerning their ability as Bible students. She then said

“*And those who today claim to have light, and who contradict the teaching of God's ordained messengers who were working under the Holy Spirit's guidance, those who get up new theories which remove the pillars of our faith, are not doing the will of God, but are bringing in fallacies of their own invention*, which, if received, will cut the church away from the anchorage of truth and set them drifting, drifting, to where they will receive any sophistries that may arise.” (Ibid)

Again we see Ellen White supporting what was then, in 1905, the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was also a very strong warning not to come up with “[new theories](#)” that would contradict what she termed “[the pillars](#)” of our faith - which in [chapter 26](#) we have seen she said included what was then believed concerning God, Christ and the sanctuary. Notice she says here that these ‘new theories’ would be “[fallacies of their own invention](#)”. This is because she is saying that these “[pillars of our faith](#)” are the truth that God has given to us.

Notice here also that Ellen White said that those who “[contradict the teaching of God's ordained messengers](#)” are “[not doing the will of God](#)”. I would also ask you to note that concerning these “[new theories](#)”, “[sophistries](#)” (which would be “[fallacies of their own invention](#)”) she wrote

“*These will be similar* to that which Dr. J. H. Kellogg, *under Satan's special guidance*, has been working for years.” (Ibid)

As we have seen previously, Ellen White said that by his teachings, Kellogg was making non-entities of both God and Christ although she did not say he was doing this with the Holy Spirit (see [chapter 21](#)). This is even though Kellogg had said that it was the Holy Spirit who was in the things of nature.

We have also seen that in a testimony concerning Kellogg (see [chapter 23](#)) she deliberately avoided saying that the three personalities of the Godhead together constitute the ‘one living

God' (Kellogg said that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine) although she did make it clear that there are "three living personalities of the Heavenly trio" – which as we know is saying two entirely different things (see [chapter 3](#) – 'Godhead not trinity'). Ellen White condemned the way 'trinity oneness' is explained. It is this 'oneness' of course that makes a Godhead belief trinitarian. In other words, if in a Godhead confession there was no reference to this 'oneness' making up the 'one living God', then this belief would not be trinitarian.

Contradicting past teachings

The above spirit of prophecy statements cannot be read without remembering that William Johnsson, 17 years ago in 1994, wrote in the Review concerning the extent that the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists had changed over the years. He said

"Adventists beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of present truth. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord" (William Johnsson, *Adventist Review*, January 6th 1994, Article 'Present Truth - Walking in God's Light')

He went on to say

"Many of the pioneers, including James White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner held to an Arian or semi-Arian view - that is, the Son at some point in time, before the creation of our world, was generated by the Father." (*Ibid*)

Johnsson was here referring to our past beliefs concerning Christ – which during the entire time of Ellen White's ministry was the preponderant faith of Seventh-day Adventists (see [chapters 13](#) and [14](#)). This is the belief that in eternity Christ was brought forth of the Father, therefore because of this He is truly the Son of God. Christ was therefore said to be, because of this begotten belief, ***God Himself in the person of the Son.***

William Johnsson then said of this belief

"Only gradually did this false doctrine give way to the Biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen Whites writings in statements such as "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. (Desire of ages p 530)." (Ibid)

On the part of one of the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Johnsson was then editor of the 'Review'), this is quite an allegation but it is what we are being asked to believe today. It is that concerning Christ whilst Ellen White was alive, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was teaching "false doctrine". This really is a very serious allegation – and it does not seem to sit very well with what was said by Ellen White.

As we have noted in previous chapters, Ellen White's beliefs, especially those she held concerning God and Christ, were the very same as those held in the early 1900's by her fellow Seventh-day Adventists. These were views that by that time – meaning from the early times of our denomination up to the early 1900's - had not changed in one iota. These same views were held by our denomination for decades following her death. These were the very same views that Ellen White said was the truth. We noted all of this in [chapters 13](#) to [17](#).

These were also the beliefs that Ellen White considered as being amongst the "old landmarks" and "pillars" of the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (see [chapter 26](#)). These were also the beliefs she had said the Holy Spirit had substantiated as being the truth. Here though, William Johnsson is calling these beliefs "false doctrine" (heresy).

This is an absolutely amazing declaration. It is saying that all those who believed that Christ is begotten of God and is therefore God's true Son – which just about includes every Seventh-day Adventist who ever lived during the time of Ellen White's ministry – also all the hundreds of thousands who held this same belief after Ellen White had died – were all teaching false doctrine. Does your intelligence allow you to reason in such a manner? This is what our present leadership are asking you to believe.

Can you believe also that throughout the entire 71 years of Ellen White's ministry – which was when God was using this lady to guide His people through to the return of Jesus – that His church was leading people astray by teaching false doctrine concerning the most important teaching of the Bible? If you can then you must ask yourself why God allowed this to continue for so long without doing anything about it. You must also ask why, in the early 1900's, did His appointed servant, namely Ellen White, **commend** Seventh-day Adventists for their beliefs. It must also be asked, as we noted in [chapter 26](#), why she told them to **hold on** to these beliefs – also why, as we noted in [chapter 14](#), that she said that Seventh-day Adventists were teaching the truth concerning Christ's pre-existence?

All of these are very serious questions. This is because our church is saying today that until we changed these beliefs, - also until we began to teach the trinity doctrine (the latter being over 100 years after our beginnings in 1844) – we were leading the world to believe error. This is almost impossible to believe – especially when it is realised that for over 70 of those years we had God's messenger amongst us – and she said nothing about us teaching this so called 'error'.

Johnsson also said in his article

“Likewise, the trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists. Even today, a few do not subscribe to it”. (*Ibid*)

Johnsson's remarks are much the same as was said the year earlier (1993) by George Knight. At the beginning of an article attempting to justify our denominational change of beliefs he wrote

“Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today **if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs.**” (*George Knight, 'Ministry' magazine, October 1993, page 10, 'Adventists and Change'*)

He then said

“More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief Number 2, which deals with **the doctrine of the Trinity.**” (*Ibid*)

This really is something to think about! I say this because concerning the Godhead, Ellen White had 'no problem' with what her brethren believed and taught. She made it clear that these early Seventh-day Adventists had been “[working under the Holy Spirit's guidance](#)” (see above). In contrast to this she said that Kellogg, who had come to believe in the trinity doctrine, had for years been “[under Satan's special guidance](#)” (see above). What a difference! So what does this say about Kellogg's claim to coming to believe in the trinity doctrine – also what does it say about our present leadership who are saying today that the trinity doctrine is the truth and that by rejecting it our early Seventh-day Adventists were in error? For the truth, can we look to someone whom Ellen White says was “[under Satan's special guidance](#)”?

As we have already seen (see [chapter 21](#)), Kellogg's 'false views' did have everything to do with the presence and the personality of God - which as we know is what the trinity doctrine is all about. He also said, in an attempt to justify himself for what he had written in 'The Living Temple', he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine - which then, in 1903 when he professed this belief, was not a teaching held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Obviously Kellogg saw a link between these two beliefs (the presence and personality of God and the trinity doctrine) – as did Ellen White.

In a testimony concerning Kellogg she said that God had instructed her to condemn illustrations that make God appear to be 'three-in-one' as in this teaching (see [chapter 23](#)). Remember too, Kellogg had said he had come to believe that the Holy Spirit was a person in the same sense as God and Christ are persons – which is the same as is being said today by the Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians. We must remember too that in an interview we spoke of in [chapter 23](#), Kellogg said

*"Now, I thought I had **cut out entirely the theological side of questions of the trinity and all that sort of things**. I didn't mean to put it in at all, and I took pains to state in the preface that I did not. **I never dreamed of such a thing as any theological question being brought into it.**" (Interview, October 7th 1907, Elder G. W. Amadon and Elder A. C. Bourdeau interviewed John Harvey Kellogg at Kellogg's house)*

Obviously Ellen White did not see things the same way as Kellogg.

In the previously quoted manuscript Ellen White also wrote

*"Our work is to bring forth the strong reasons of our faith, **our past and present position**, because there are men who, never established in the truth, will bring in **fallacies which would tear away the anchorage of our faith**. Even presidents of conferences will fear to move, as some have done, dictating and commanding and forbidding. **They drive the sheep away into forbidden paths.**" (Ellen G. White, May 1905, Manuscript release No. 760)*

This "past and present position" would have included what was then, in 1905, our denominational beliefs concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. These "forbidden paths" could also mean the area of beliefs that Ellen White said Seventh-day Adventists had no right to study. This is when the previous year in a sermon she said

*"There are some things upon which we must reason, and there are other things that **we must not discuss**. In regard to God -- **what He is and where He is -- silence is eloquence**. When you are tempted to speak **of what God is**, keep silence, because as surely as you begin to speak of this, you will disparage Him.*

*Our ministers must be very careful not to enter into controversy **in regard to the personality of God. This is a subject that they are not to touch**. It is a mystery, and the enemy will surely lead astray those who enter into it." (Ellen G. White, Talk given on May 18th 1904, Sermons and talks, Volume one, page 341, Manuscript 46, 1904, 'The Foundation of our Faith')*

As has been said previously, by the adoption of the trinity doctrine – which is a teaching that attempts to define God - Seventh-day Adventists have well and truly ignored this warning. Ellen White would definitely have regarded this three-in-one teaching as one of those "forbidden paths".

If we had heeded the above counsel, the trinity doctrine would not have been brought into the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism. As it is - it is now an integral part of our published fundamental beliefs.

In continuing her counsel, Ellen White made it clear that

"We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world. *God is a person and Christ is a person.* Christ is spoken of in the Word as *"the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person."* (Ibid)

These remarks were made in the backdrop of Ellen White saying that no attempt should be made to explain God etc. Obviously she is saying that this is as far as we should go. Why? – Simply because it is as far as the Scriptures go. The trinity doctrine goes beyond the revelation of Scripture. It involves itself with philosophical speculation. Notice that Ellen White makes no mention here of the Holy Spirit as being a person – only God and Christ.

She then said

"I was forbidden to talk with Dr. Kellogg on this subject, *because it is not a subject to be talked about.* And I was instructed that certain sentiments in Living Temple were the *Alpha of a long list of deceptive theories.*" (Ibid)

Returning our thoughts to Manuscript release No. 760 (see above) she said in conclusion

"God sends no man with a message that leads souls *to depart from the faith that has been our stronghold for so many years. We are to substantiate this faith rather than tear down the foundation upon which it rests.*" (Ellen G. White, May 1905, Manuscript release No. 760)

Again we need to think seriously about the claims of our current church leadership who are saying that our early Seventh-day Adventists were teaching error (false doctrine) concerning the persons of the Godhead. This is because here Ellen White is saying that any man that does this sort of thing (who leads people away from the early 1900's faith of Seventh-day Adventists) is not sent of God.

For the past 50 years

Just a couple of months prior to the 1905 General Conference session – this was where she emphasised that the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists were correct – also that God and Christ are two separate personalities (see [chapter 26](#)), she wrote in a letter

"We are God's commandment-keeping people. *For the past fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us,* to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the word,--*especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary,* and the message of heaven for these last days, as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. *Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord"* (Ellen White, Letter 95, 1905, To Dr. and Mrs. Daniel Kress, March 14, 1905, see also Special Testimonies Series B. No. 2 page 59 'The Foundation of Our Faith')

Here is reference to the "past fifty years". This would be approximately between 1855 and when this letter was written (1905). It is saying that during this time period, attempts had been made to inculcate into the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism **all kinds of wrong**

beliefs. These we are told were intended to “take the place of the truth” that we were then teaching.

Ellen White never said that what the church was then teaching was error – not about God, not about Christ, not about the Holy Spirit - nor anything else. Is this significant? Does this letter sound as though she is saying that what Seventh-day Adventists were teaching about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit was error? Obviously not! It can only be concluded that she was saying that Seventh-day Adventists were teaching the truth.

Note we are told it was by prayerful study of God’s word that these early Seventh-day Adventists formulated their beliefs. Here is being emphasised just **how** this truth was established. Ellen White said that what was believed by us then was the “truth” and that it had been attested to by “the miracle-working power of the Lord”. Truth never becomes error. If it was true then, it must still be truth today.

Ellen White and the other early Seventh-day Adventists must have cherished these experiences with God. This was especially so with regards to God’s own personal endorsement that their beliefs - which we held then in 1905 - was the truth. This would have included the revelations that God had given through the spirit of prophecy – in dreams and visions - which in turn was accepted as truth by those early Seventh-day Adventists. This is something else we noted in [chapter 26](#).

She then added

“But the way-marks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.” (Ibid)

Again there is an appeal to both the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy (the testimony of God’s Spirit). Ellen White makes it clear that what she then regarded as the “fundamental principles” of Seventh-day Adventism - which obviously would have included what we then believed concerning God, Christ and the sanctuary etc - were based upon “unquestionable authority”. These were the “way-marks” which were to be preserved. Again this was in 1905. Notice she said regarding these principle we were “to hold firmly” to them “with the grip of faith”. Does this sound as though Ellen White is saying there was something wrong with what we then believed? Again - obviously not!

In [chapter 21](#) we took note of what was then the published Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists. These were listed in our yearbooks. Of these it was said that as far as was known, there existed “entire unanimity throughout the body”. Needless to say, in 1905 it was still believed by Ellen White that it was God who had given these early Seventh-day Adventists their beliefs. Nothing had changed. This was 7 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’.

Again she wrote in 1905

“From our own personal experience we can speak of the truth that has made us what we are, - Seventh-day Adventists. Truth felt within is most precious, but truth confirmed by the testimony of the word and by the Holy Spirit’s power is of the highest value. We can confidently say, The truth that has come to us through the Holy Spirit’s working is not a lie. The evidences given for the last half century bear the evidence of the Spirit’s power. In the word of God we have found the truth that substantiates our faith. We have watched the influence of the heresies that have come in, and we have seen them come to naught. God has given us sacred, holy

truths. Let us hold them fast. ***I am instructed to say that we are now to present these truths, in plainness and simplicity, to the people of God.*** (Ellen G. White, Letter to G. I. Butler, 23rd June 1905)

Again it is quite obvious that Ellen White saw nothing wrong with what was then being taught by Seventh-day Adventists. She said that the Bible “**substantiates our faith**” (what was then the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists).

Warnings about leaving the ‘faith’ of Seventh-day Adventists – the omega

The year following the publication of Kellogg’s book (‘The Living Temple’) – also the year after Kellogg had made his trinity confession – Ellen White wrote a letter to the leading physicians of Seventh-day Adventism. They would have been closely associated with Kellogg. She wrote

“Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. ***We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.***” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B, No. 2 page 16, ‘To Leading Physicians’, ‘Teach the Word’ Nashville, Tennessee, July 24th 1904)

In 1904, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was still a non-trinitarian denomination. Apart from anything else, we still rejected the trinity doctrine as a false teaching. Here Ellen White was warning its members not to depart from that faith. Now why would Ellen White do such a thing?

I would offer two very important reasons. One is that she believed the Seventh-day Adventist faith to be a correct faith – confirmed by God - whilst secondly – it was because she knew that wrong teachings concerning God and Christ were **on their way** into Seventh-day Adventism. We noted this in [chapter 26](#).

Very sadly, Ellen White said that many would ignore this warning. She said “**many will depart from the faith**”. This can only mean the faith (beliefs) that was held by Seventh-day Adventists when she made this statement – meaning in 1904. It would be impossible to mean any other faith.

Note too she said that “**The omega will be of a most startling nature**”. In her mind this was obviously not a small matter but a huge concern. We would do well to ask ourselves today - is this “**Omega**” something which has already been accepted by many Seventh-day Adventists or is it still to come in the future?

Ellen White also wrote in 1904, which was 106 years ago

“The Omega would follow ***in a little while. I tremble for our people.***” (Ellen G. White, Talk given on May 18th 1904, Sermons and talks, Volume one, page 341, Manuscript 46, 1904, ‘The Foundation of our Faith’)

If it is said that this “**Omega**” is still future, then it is also being said that prior to the return of Christ - which as we say today is ‘very soon’ - the Seventh-day Adventist Church will ‘very soon’ go into apostasy.

In 1904, when writing to a ‘brother’, Ellen White wrote (this was with regards to the deceptions found in Kellogg’s book ‘The Living Temple’)

“When medical missionaries make their practise and example harmonize with the name they bear, when they feel their need of uniting firmly with the ministers of the gospel, then there can be harmonious action. **But we must firmly refuse to be drawn away from the platform of eternal truth, which since 1844 has stood the test.**” (Ellen White, letter to ‘a brother’, August 7th 1904, See Special testimonies Series B No. 2 page 50)

Here again was an appeal not to be drawn away from “the platform of eternal truth” that had stood the test of time. This is obviously the truth we had held since our beginnings. She then added

“I am instructed to speak plainly. "Meet it," is the word spoken to me. "Meet it firmly, and without delay." **But it is not to be met by our taking our working forces from the field to investigate doctrines and points of difference. We have no such investigation to make.**” (Ibid)

She then explained

“In the book "Living Temple" there is presented **the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.**” (Ibid)

This is obviously a very serious warning. It must not be taken lightly – yet I wonder how many Seventh-day Adventists have even heard of this warning let alone studied to see what it may mean.

So what was the “alpha of deadly heresies”? What did it concern? We shall see this now.

The alpha of deadly heresies (new theories concerning God and Christ)

When Ellen White warned about ‘the alpha’, she was referring to **new views** concerning God and Christ. This is why she said in 1903 to the teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College

“**The new theories in regard to God and Christ**, as brought out in "The Living Temple", are not in harmony with the teaching of Christ. The Lord Jesus came to this world **to represent the Father**. He did not represent **God as an essence pervading nature, but as a personal being**. Christians should bear in mind that **God has a personality as verily as has Christ.**” (Ellen G. White, September 23 1903, To the teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, ‘A Warning of Danger’)

Notice first of all that when Ellen White says “God” she is referring to “the Father”. She said He is a “personal being”. In contrast to this, she said that Kellogg’s views were making the Father look like an “essence pervading nature” - not as Jesus came to present Him as “a personal being”. This was the problem area. Ellen White saw nothing wrong with the ‘old views’ (those views held by Seventh-day Adventists throughout the time of her ministry) but she did have problems with Kellogg’s ‘new’ beliefs.

Kellogg had said that by coming to believe in ‘the trinity’ (see [chapter 21](#)), he had solved the ‘problem’ of what he had written in his book (The Living Temple) but obviously Ellen White did not see it this way. Never did she say that Kellogg was making the Holy Spirit an “essence pervading nature” This was even though Kellogg had said it was the Holy Spirit that was actually in everything. Surely this is very interesting.

It is also very significant because as we noted in chapters [19](#) and [20](#), Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit was the very presence of God – also the personal presence of Christ. This is

why by saying that the Holy Spirit was actually 'in nature', it was the same as saying (to Seventh-day Adventists) that God the Father and Christ were 'in nature'.

It is only reasonable to believe that if Ellen White had believed the Holy Spirit to be a personal being like God and Christ, then she would have said that He (the Holy Spirit) was being made to look a non-entity (an essence pervading nature). As it was, she only said that Kellogg's views were doing this **to the Father and Christ**. Never did she say that concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit that Kellogg was teaching the truth.

It must also be said that never did Ellen White say to Seventh-day Adventists that their denominational beliefs concerning God and Christ were error. If these beliefs had been error, then it is obvious that through her, God would have said something about it – not wait until after she died to lead Seventh-day Adventists to realise it. After all, she was His mouthpiece in the Seventh-day Adventist Church – and she did condemn other people's views concerning God and Christ. Why not condemn the views of Seventh-day Adventists – if they were wrong views? She was quick enough to condemn Kellogg's views.

Through Ellen White, God was speaking to His remnant people. If they were teaching error then why would He not have warned them about it, particularly if it was error concerning Himself, His Son and the Holy Spirit – which our church today is saying is deadly error? Why would He allow His church to go on deceiving thousands and thousands of people throughout the world about the most important teaching of the Christian faith – the teaching that Jesus said was the foundational belief of His church - and do nothing about it (see Matthew 16:13-18 and John 17:3)? Does this make any sense? These surely are very important questions – if our church had been teaching deadly error

More warnings against attempting to define God

No one will deny that the trinity doctrine concerns the 'presence and personality' of God but I wonder how many Seventh-day Adventists realise that this is exactly what Ellen White said that the 'alpha' heresy in Kellogg's 'Living Temple' was all about? Remember too, she constantly linked this heresy found in Kellogg's book with the 'Omega' that she warned was on its way into Seventh-day Adventism.

When Ellen White first received a copy of 'The Living Temple', she placed it in her library. There it remained unread until her son persuaded her to read a portion of it. So it was that together they read the very first chapter and certain other paragraphs.

She said of what Kellogg had written

*"As we read, I recognized the very sentiments against which I had been bidden to speak in warning **during the early days of my public labors**. When I first left the State of "When I first left the State of Maine, it was to go through Vermont and Massachusetts, to bear a testimony against these sentiments. **"Living Temple" contains the alpha of these theories. I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people.**" (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, series B No. 2 Page 53, 'The Foundation of our Faith 1904*)*

She then said

*"I knew that I must warn our brethren and sisters **not to enter into controversy over the presence and personality of God**. The statements made in "Living Temple" in regard to this point are incorrect. **The scripture used to substantiate the doctrine there set forth, is scripture misapplied.**" (Ibid)*

Here was a warning to Seventh-day Adventists that they should not enter into controversy over “[the presence and personality of God](#)”. This is obviously what she regarded Kellogg as doing – and it concerned her immensely.

Notice she said that the Scriptures Kellogg was using to ‘prove his point’ is “[scripture misapplied](#)”. In other words, Kellogg **had used the Scriptures** but had **misapplied them**. This is a warning that just because someone uses Scripture to substantiate their beliefs, this does not mean that they are interpreting Scripture correctly. In other words, when people say ‘sola scriptura’ (Scripture only), this is not proof that they are correct in their conclusions. Kellogg would probably have said that his beliefs were ‘sola scriptura’ but as we have seen said by Ellen White, this did not make them correct.

She also said that these sentiments in Kellogg’s book were the same as those she had encountered and had spoken out against in the early days of her “[public labours](#)”. Now though, in 1904, she was linking these same sentiments with the coming ‘omega’ - which she said Seventh-day Adventists would very soon encounter. It was this realisation that had caused her to tremble!

She also wrote in this same testimony

“I have been instructed by the heavenly messenger that some of the reasoning in the book, "Living Temple," is unsound and that this reasoning would lead astray the minds of those [who are not thoroughly established on the foundation principles of present truth](#). It introduces that which is [naught but speculation in regard to the personality of God and where His presence is](#). No one on this earth has a right to speculate on this question. The more fanciful theories are discussed, the less men will know of God and of the truth that sanctifies the soul” (Ibid page 51)

To say that the trinity doctrine falls into the category of “[fanciful theories](#)” would be something of an understatement. Certainly it is a teaching that cannot be substantiated by Scripture. It is based upon speculation – meaning things that God has not revealed.

In 1905 Ellen White wrote (again this concerned Kellogg’s assertions that his teachings were the same as Ellen White’s)

“This large work and its sure results are plainly presented to me.” (Special Testimonies Series B No 7, page 61 ‘Come out and be Separate 1905)

This servant of the Lord she could see the ‘bigger picture’. In other words her eyes were ‘open’ as to what was going on. She continued

“I am so sorry that [sensible men do not discern the trail of the serpent](#). I call it thus; for thus the Lord pronounces it. Wherein are those who are designated as departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, [departing from the faith which they have held sacred for the past fifty years?](#)” (Ibid)

This was written in 1905. This was when Seventh-day Adventists were still strictly adhering to a non-trinitarian faith – a faith that said that Christ was begotten of God in eternity and that God and Christ were two separate personages. This was part and parcel of “[the faith](#)” that Ellen White said that Seventh-day Adventists had “[held sacred for the past fifty years](#)”. This was written eight years after the publication of the professedly trinitarian ‘Desire of Ages’.

Ellen White was again warning Seventh-day Adventists not to depart from the faith **they then held**. She even said that this was the faith that for the “past fifty years” had been “held sacred”. This is a categorical statement. Can it be misinterpreted or misunderstood?

Her latter quoted statement is no different to what she had said in the same year which was

“Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience until the present time.” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No. 7 page 57 Sanitarium, Cal., Dec. 4, 1905, ‘Standing in the way of God’s Messages’, see also the New York Independent, 27th February 1906*)

This “present time” spoken of here was 1905/6, meaning it was the early 1900’s faith of Seventh-day Adventists of which Ellen White said “Ever are we to keep”. She said also that this was “the faith” that had been “substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God”. Again and again Ellen White endorsed that it was God Himself who gave these early Seventh-day Adventists their faith (their beliefs).

Ellen White spoke of apostasy. She also spoke of holding on to what was believed then, in the early 1900’s, by our denomination. She wrote

“One thing it is certain is soon to be realized,—the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominated faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith. Ever we are to keep the faith that that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience, until the present time.” (Ellen G. White, *New York Indicator, 7th February 1906, ‘Standing in the way of God’s messages’, see also Special Testimonies Series B. No 7 page 57*)

In 1908, as Ellen White’s ministry to Seventh-day Adventists was in its closing stages (she died in 1915), she wrote in one testimony placed under the sub-heading of “Dangers of speculative study”

“There is danger that the **false sentiments expressed in the books that they have been reading** will sometimes be interwoven by our ministers, teachers, and editors with their arguments, discourses, and publications, under the belief that they are the same in principle as the teachings of **the Spirit of truth**.” (Ellen G. White, *9th Volume Testimonies, page 68 1909, ‘Literature in service’, see also Review and Herald 6th August 1908 ‘Circulate the publications No. 1*)

By the term “the Spirit of truth”, Ellen White is obviously referring to the Holy Spirit. Particularly she must have had in mind the truth that God had substantiated through the spirit of prophecy. We can see this because she then added

“The book Living Temple is an illustration of this work, the writer of which declared in its support **that its teachings were the same as those found in the writings of Mrs. White**. Again and again we shall be called to meet the influence of men who are studying sciences of satanic origin, through which Satan is working to make a **nonentity of God and of Christ**.” (Ibid)

This claim of Kellogg – that his beliefs were the same as hers - did seriously trouble Ellen White. This claim was part and parcel of ‘the Alpha’. There is no doubt that it is part and parcel of ‘the Omega’. Satan’s whole aim is to misrepresent God by the misuse of the testimonies given through Ellen White. It is also the work of Satan to de-personalise God.

Warnings of a satanic reformation to come

In another testimony concerning Kellogg and his teachings, Ellen White penned what can only be described as a very serious warning. This was in 1904. At the beginning of it she wrote

*“The truth will be criticized, scorned, and derided; **but the closer it is examined and tested, the brighter it will shine.**” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No. 2, page 54, ‘The foundation of our faith’, 1904, see also Special Testimonies Series B No. 7 page 39, 1906)*

She then added

*“**As a people, we are to stand firm on the platform of eternal truth that has withstood test and trial.** We are to hold to the sure pillars of our faith. The principles of truth that God has revealed to us are our only true foundation. They have made us what we are. The lapse of time has not lessened their value. **It is the constant effort of the enemy to remove these truths from their setting, and to put in their place spurious theories.** He will bring in everything that he possibly can to carry out his deceptive designs. But the Lord will raise up men of keen perception, who will give these truths their proper place in the plan of God.” (Ibid)*

Here again is reference to the early 1900’s faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was this faith that in [chapter 26](#) we noted that we were told should never be changed or discarded. Does it sound as though we are told here that what was being taught then by Seventh-day Adventists was error – as is claimed today by our present leadership? Of course not! There is not even the slightest of intimations that there was something wrong with this faith – else why should Ellen White plead with us in such a manner not to depart from it?

She then went on to talk about Kellogg – and how he was delving into things that God said should not be discussed. This was especially regarding God and where his presence is etc. She said in this testimony

*“**The track of truth lies close beside the track of error,** and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error.*

*About the time that "Living Temple" was published, there passed before me in the night season, representations indicating that some danger was approaching, and that **I must prepare for it by writing out the things God has revealed to me regarding the foundation principles of our faith.**” (Ibid, page 52)*

She then went on to say (this was after saying she was “heart-broken” because it was being said that in ‘Living Temple’ could be found sentiments expressed in her own writings)

*“When I first left the State of Maine, it was to go through Vermont and Massachusetts, to bear a testimony against these sentiments. **“Living Temple” contains the alpha of these theories. I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people. I knew that I must warn our brethren and sisters not to enter into controversy over the presence and personality of God.** The statements made in "Living Temple" in regard to this point are incorrect. The scripture used to substantiate the doctrine there set forth, is scripture misapplied.”*

*“**I am compelled to speak in denial of the claim that the teachings of "Living Temple" can be sustained by statements from my writings.** There may be in this book expressions and sentiments that are in harmony with my writings. And there may*

be in my writings many statements which, taken from their connection, and interpreted according to the mind of the writer of "Living Temple," would seem to be in harmony with the teachings of this book. This may give apparent support to the assertion that the sentiments in "Living Temple" are in harmony with my writings. **But God forbid that this sentiment should prevail.**" (*Ibid* page 53)

This same problem exists today. Ellen White's writings are being used to say that they support the trinity doctrine – the version held today by the Seventh-day Adventist Church - but as we have seen so many times, very often these statements are taken "from their connection" (or as we would say today, taken out of their context). This is done to make them mean something Ellen White never meant to say.

She continued

"Few can discern the result of entertaining the sophistries advocated by some at this time. But the Lord has lifted the curtain, and has shown me the result that would follow. **The spiritualistic theories regarding the personality of God, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy.**" (*Ibid*, page 54)

Surely the trinity doctrine, with all of its needless speculating, can be classed as a spiritualistic theory. Remember too, Kellogg had said that his views could be explained by a belief in the trinity doctrine. She later added (and this is very important)

"The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization." (*Ibid*)

Here is a warning that Satan would suggest that changes were necessary to the early 1900's faith (beliefs) of Seventh-day Adventists. This is exactly the opposite of what was said by Ellen White – which it would be because Satan would be attempting to deceive God's people.

This "great reformation" would be a "supposition". This is because there was no need to change the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This is the entire point that was being made here by Ellen White. Remember that this warning was given when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was still a non-trinitarian denomination. It was also given the year before the 1905 General Conference session. This is where Ellen White told the delegates that they should hold on to their faith and not change it or discard it. Any suggestion of a reformation would certainly be, only a supposition.

Notice here just what would constitute this supposition. It would comprise of a giving up of "the doctrines" that **then** stood "as the pillars of our faith". These were obviously the principle features of our faith – which would have included what we believed concerning God and Christ.

The testimony continued

"Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error." (*Ibid*)

Here we are told what would happen if this 'supposed reformation' did take place. In other words, these would be its identifying marks – if ever it came to pass.

From what we have seen of our history, this is exactly what has happened – meaning that this ‘reformation’ has taken place. We have the evidence of it before our very eyes.

Our ‘one time’ beliefs concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have all now been “discarded”. These were our main beliefs – just as they are the main beliefs of any Christian denomination. Today our leadership call these beliefs ‘error’ and ‘false doctrine’ etc (see [chapter 26](#)). This is why these beliefs have been exchanged for ‘new’ beliefs. Certainly “Our religion” has “changed”. This cannot be denied.

In the warnings given in the early 1900’s, Ellen White said that the faith of Seventh-day Adventists had been given to them by God. This is why she said it should never be changed. Here she says that if this reformation did take place then this faith “would be discarded”. This has certainly happened. This “supposition” therefore has happened. It has been made to look as though a “great reformation” has taken place concerning the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists when in reality it is a rejection of the truth given to us by God. How else can we reason?

Ellen White then went on to say in her testimony (another of the identifying marks if the reformation did take place)

“A new organization would be established. **Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced.** The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath, of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No. 2, page 54, ‘The foundation of our faith’, 1904, see also Special Testimonies Series B No. 7 page 39, 1906*)

It cannot be argued that the beliefs found in our present day publications are far different to those found in the publications of early Seventh-day Adventists. Certainly “Books of a new order” have been written.

Notice here the reference to a “system of intellectual philosophy”. This said Ellen White – if this reformation did take place - is what would be introduced into the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. This aptly describes the trinity doctrine. This is because this teaching is only an assumed doctrine – also as our study shows - not a teaching supported by Scripture. It must remain therefore, only “intellectual philosophy”.

Notice also Ellen White said that if this reformation did take place, the “founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work” yet “The Sabbath... would be lightly regarded”.

Today, as we are fast approaching the time when the Sabbath will be a test for all people on earth, there is very little emphasis on saying to those of the other denominations that they need to come out of their ‘Sunday’ day of rest faith and accept the seventh-day Sabbath else eventually, by their continual rejection of the truth concerning the Fourth Commandment, they will receive the mark of the beast. Unless it is my imagination, this particular part of our message (to come out of Babylon) has almost disappeared. Certainly today it is very much down-played. This is another piece of evidence to show that this reformation has taken place.

This situation has largely arisen because of our so say ‘unity’ with the other denominations. This has come about because of our ‘sameness’ on what many consider to be the ‘saving beliefs’ of Christianity – meaning of course, the trinity doctrine, the belief that Christ is the ‘infinite God’ (as expressed by the trinity doctrine) – and salvation by grace etc – which at the end of the day is only a ‘superficial’ and ‘dumbing down’ (muted/lowering of the intellect) understanding of what really constitutes the gospel. It is now said, by the other

denominations, that because we have come into line with them on these teachings, we are now part of mainstream Christianity. The seventh-day Sabbath is certainly “lightly regarded”. Note that the context of this latter statement is evangelism.

Much could be said here regarding the ‘oneness’ we now have with the other denominations but space is prohibitive. To a very great degree, certainly our acceptance of the trinity doctrine has broken down the barriers between them and us. Prior to our acceptance of the trinity doctrine, these churches (constituting fallen Babylon) would not even accept us as a Christian denomination. It is so much different today. Today we are accepted as being ‘one’ with them. This is a serious position in which to find ourselves.

You can read more about this ‘coming together’ with the other denominations in sections 49 and 50 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/SBDH.htm>

Concerning the ‘supposed reformation’, the testimony continued

“Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but **God being removed**, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure.”
(*Ibid*)

Some may argue that the trinity doctrine does not ‘do away with’ (remove) God but whichever way this three-in-one doctrine is presented, it is nothing more than “**intellectual philosophy**”. The reality of the Scriptures which presents God as an individual personal being - who has a personal Son that He gave as a sacrifice for our sins - is certainly denied by the trinity doctrine – particularly the Seventh-day Adventist version of it. This teaching tends to obscure the reasoning that God and Christ are two separate individual persons – two personages who could have permanently become separated from each other. In fact as we have noted previously, Ellen White did say that by reason of the incarnation, the Father and the Son did become exiled from each other (see [chapter 24](#)). This reasoning is prohibited by the trinity doctrine.

Notice too we are told that “**Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement**”. Those today who have the courage to ‘stand up’ and say that what the early 1900’s Seventh-day Adventists believed and taught is the truth are often ‘sidelined’ for their faith. They are either disfellowshipped or censured. Either way their voice is not officially heard in the church any more.

Ellen White then asked

“Who has authority to begin such a movement? We have our Bibles. We have our experience, **attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. We have a truth that admits of no compromise.** Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth?” (*Ibid page 55*)

Here we are told that what our church was then teaching is “**a truth that admits of no compromise**”. Does this sound as though at this time (the early 1900’s) we were teaching error (false doctrine) – particularly on the most important part of the Christian faith – meaning our beliefs concerning God and Christ? Obviously not! Who could reason such a thing? The answer is our church leadership. They say that what we were then teaching concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit was error – and this is why it had to be changed.

The above testimony was written in the backdrop of Kellogg's apostasy from the truth – also his confession of the trinity doctrine. It concerned a departing from the early 1900's non-trinitarian faith (beliefs) of Seventh-day Adventists. This was when Ellen White was telling our people not to change their beliefs but 'hold on to' them.

This begs a question – and one that Jerry Moon phrased so accurately. He said in the book 'The Trinity'

“That most of the leading SDA pioneers were non-Trinitarian in their theology has become accepted Adventist history, surprising as it sounded to most Adventists 40 years ago when Erwin R. Gane wrote an M. A. thesis on the topic.” (Jerry Moon, 'The Trinity', chapter, 'Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history, page 190)

He continued

“More recently, a further question has arisen with increasing urgency: **was the pioneers' belief about the Godhead right or wrong?** (Ibid)

This is a very good question – and it is one that is most prevalent today within Seventh-day Adventism. He then says (this is the key issue)

“As one line of reasoning goes, either the pioneers were wrong and the present church is right, **or the pioneers were right and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth.**” (Ibid)

This is the question that all of us must be asking. In other words, were our beliefs concerning God and Christ correct during the time of Ellen White's ministry or were they error? Which way will you answer? Ellen White said they were the truth.

Proceed to [chapter 28](#), 'The 1980 General Conference session'

Chapter twenty-eight

The 1980 General Conference session

Before we close this Godhead study – also in keeping with its purposes – it would be beneficial here to see how, for the very first time in the history of Seventh-day Adventism, the trinity doctrine was voted into our published fundamental beliefs. This happened at the 1980 General conference session held at Dallas, Texas.

In order to gain an overall picture of how this was accomplished, we need to look at the background leading up to the formation of these beliefs (then totalling 27 as opposed to the 28 we hold today). To do this we shall quote from an article written by Lawrence Geraty, which was published originally in the Spectrum Magazine of July 1980. It was published again in the June 7th 2009 issue.

Geraty, as a member of the Andrews University Seminary faculty, participated in the writing of this new statement of beliefs. As it says of Geraty in the introduction to the article in the 2009 issue

*“He provides details not only for what took place during the Dallas GC session but **all the committee actions along the way.**” (Bonnie Dwyer, Spectrum, 9th June 2009, ‘A new statement of Fundamental Beliefs (1980))*

The original article can be found here

<http://spectrummagazine.org/files/archive/archive11-15/11-1report.pdf>

The 2009 article can be found here

<http://spectrummagazine.org/blog/2009/06/07/new-statement-fundamental-beliefs-1980>

An incorrect view

At the very beginning of his article Geraty says

*“Friday afternoon, April 25, **while the platform was literally being dismantled behind the president** of the General Conference presiding over the final business meeting of the 1980 session, **the delegates voted to replace a 50-year-old document with a new Statement of Fundamental Beliefs.**” (Lawrence Geraty, Spectrum, July 1980, ‘A new statement of beliefs’)*

As can be seen here, the final vote on our ‘new fundamental beliefs’ was taken as the organisers were rushing to end the conference. In other words, the vote was taken in haste as everyone was thinking in terms of ‘going home’. We shall see this again later as the then president, Neil C. Wilson, addressed the delegates concerning the final vote.

This “50-year-old document” referred to here is the set of beliefs formulated in 1931 that had been included in our Yearbooks from that date until they were replaced by those voted in at the 1980 General Conference session.

Geraty then says

“None of the 27 beliefs were new, of course, but the re-statement was.” (*Ibid*)

This is an incorrect view.

As we have seen in our study, the 1980 fundamental belief concerning the trinity was not held by early Seventh-day Adventists. We have seen in our publications that this teaching was rejected as being unscriptural. We have also seen that even into the 1940's and 1950's, it was still officially taught within our official publications that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father – also that the Holy Spirit was not considered to be a person like God and Christ but was said to be the presence of the Father and the Son when they (the Father and the Son) were still in the sanctuary in Heaven. This totally invalidates the idea of God being a trinity of persons, at least as depicted by the trinity doctrine.

To say therefore that the 1980 statement of beliefs were not new but only a re-statement of the old is far from being true. It was not even the same as the beliefs then stated in our Yearbook (1931 onwards).

So how were our Godhead beliefs previously stated?

Previous statements of beliefs

We noted in [chapter 21](#) that in our Yearbooks from 1905 to 1914 it said (this was under the heading “Fundamental principles of Seventh-day Adventists”)

“Seventh-day Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to **certain well-defined points of faith**, for which they feel prepared to give a reason “to every man that asketh” them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as is known, **entire unanimity throughout the body**. They believe: —

1. **That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being**, the Creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal; infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and every where present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139: 7.

2. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, **the Son of the Eternal Father**, the one by whom he created all thing's, and by whom they do consist;” (*1905 Seventh-day Adventist year book, page 188, ‘Fundamental principles’*)

Note the wording “well-defined points of faith”. There was no ambiguity in the wording of this statement. Note too there was no separate belief for the Holy Spirit.

By the early Seventh-day Adventists, the “one God” was considered to be the Father – not the trinity 'three-in-one God as purported in our present (2011) fundamental beliefs. The trinity doctrine which depicts all three divine personalities existing inseparably together as ‘one compound God’ was rejected as not being supported by Scripture.

From 1914 until 1931, our Yearbooks did not contain a summary of our beliefs. In 1931 a revised version was included. These were written out by one man, namely F. M. Wilcox, which, without any official approving of the wording, was included in our Yearbook.

As Geraty explains (this was after saying that a request had been made for an official set of beliefs to be compiled)

“On December 29 of that year [1930], the General Conference Committee “voted, that the chair [C. H. Watson, the president of the General Conference] appoint a committee of which he shall be a member, to prepare such a statement for publication in the Year Book.” Watson appointed M. E. Kern, associate secretary of the General Conference, E. R. Palmer, general manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, and F. M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review and Herald*. **Wilcox was assigned the task of drafting the statement. The 22 fundamental beliefs that the committee reported were never officially discussed, approved, voted, or formally adopted.**” (Lawrence Geraty, *Spectrum*, July 1980, ‘A new statement of beliefs’)

Two of these people mentioned here, namely Kern and Wilcox, were amongst those who in 1935 were elected by the General Conference Committee to ‘read the manuscripts and sit with the Sabbath School Department Lessons Committee’ to help formulate the set of Sabbath School Lessons that were to explain over 7 quarters (nearly two years) the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. We noted this in [chapter 16](#). We also took note that in the lesson study pertaining to our Godhead beliefs (final quarter 1936), we still taught that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father. In other words, we still taught then, in 1936, that Christ is truly the Son of God.

Geraty went on to explain

“According to Gottfried Oosterwal:

Their publication in the *Yearbook* of 1931, and two years later in the *Church Manual*, **was a personal accomplishment of Elder Wilcox and his group of four**. Realizing that the General Conference Committee or any other church body **would never accept the document in the form in which it was written, Elder Wilcox, with full knowledge of the group, handed the Statement directly to Edson Rogers**, the General Conference statistician, who published it in the 1931 edition of the *Yearbook*, where it has appeared ever since. **It was without the official approval of the General Conference Committee, therefore, and without any formal denominational adoption**, that Elder Wilcox’s statement became the accepted declaration of our faith.” (*Ibid*)

Some say it was F. D. Nichol, Associate editor of the Review, who originally worded this statement of beliefs – and that Wilcox later edited it. Whichever way it was, it was not in any way submitted to the church for approval – not even to the General Conference Committee. At the very best it could only be described as the views of just a few men – men who may have held views contrary to the established faith of Seventh-day Adventists. Note here that according to Oosterwal, Wilcox, realizing that “the General Conference Committee or any other church body would never accept the document in the form in which it was written” handed it directly to our denominational statistician, namely Edson Rogers, who published it in our Yearbook.

Geraty continued

“At the 1946 General Conference session, it was voted that the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, as well as any other portion of the *Church Manual*, **should be revised only at a General Conference session**. The 1931 document, therefore, with minor revisions, continued to represent the fundamental statement of denominational belief.

The 1931 statement was apparently designed to articulate the basic tenets of Adventism for non-Adventists.” (*Ibid*)

So now we know how the 1931 statements of beliefs was formulated, also how it remained that way until 1980 when a 'brand new' set of beliefs was voted in. We shall see later how this was accomplished.

Concerning the Godhead, the 1931 statement read

2. *That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists* of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matt. 28:19.

Some may say that this was a 'trinity statement' but this is not so. This is because there is no mention here of the 'one God' being a compound entity of three persons inseparably connected together in one indivisible substance. It is definitely not a trinity statement – even though the word 'trinity' was used.

The word "Trinity" was used here as a synonym for the word "Godhead" but as we noted in [chapter 3](#), this is extremely misleading. This is because the word 'Godhead' has the basic meaning of 'deity' or 'divinity' and contains no connotations, as does the word 'trinity', of three-in-one. This is why this wording above was so ambiguous. It was left to the reader how to interpret the statement.

Very importantly though, the inclusion into our fundamental beliefs of the word "Trinity" was one step in the trinity doctrine itself being inculcated into the published fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was the first time it had been used in our officially published denominational beliefs.

The next belief (No. 3) said

"That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, lived on the earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our Example the principles of righteousness, attested His relationship to God by many mighty miracles, died for our sins on the cross, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us. John 1:1, 14; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2; 4:14-16; 7:25."

Overall, these two statements would have more or less 'satisfied' the beliefs of the non-trinitarians and the trinitarians. As I said, it was just a matter of interpretation of the statement. It is very ambiguous – meaning that it could be interpreted in a number of different ways.

Important to remember though is that 5 years later in 1936, in a set of Sabbath School quarterlies ordained by the General Conference to explain our fundamental beliefs to the public in general (see [chapter 16](#)), it clearly stated that we still believed that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father. It was also said that the Holy Spirit was the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. These beliefs invalidated the idea of God being a trinity of persons as depicted in the trinity doctrine – particularly the one presently held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This shows that in 1936, even though the set of beliefs included in our Yearbook for 1931 included the word 'trinity', the denominational belief concerning the three persons of the Godhead was still non-trinitarian – at least in contrast to the trinity doctrine.

Like the 1905-1914 statement (see above), in the 1931 statement there was no separate belief for the Holy Spirit although in belief No.2 (see above) He was said to be “the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption”.

Process of revision

Geraty detailed in length the process from start to finish of how the new set of beliefs came to be formulated but it is far too much to quote here.

For the benefit of the study we will note these comments he made.

“Finally, in late 1978, the officers of the General Conference appointed an *ad hoc* committee referred to as “X-1535 *Church Manual* Revision ‘Fundamental Beliefs,’” **and less than two years later the church would have a new Statement of Fundamental Beliefs.** The members of the *ad hoc* committee were all located at the General Conference headquarters in Washington, D.C., with W. Duncan Eva, a General Conference vice president, as chairman.

On August 10, 1979, ***Duncan Eva distributed the committee's preliminary draft to the General Conference officers, division presidents and union presidents in North America.*** In an accompanying letter, Eva noted that formal and substantive changes in the 1931 statement had been made. Formally, the sequence of topics had been altered and paragraph headings had been inserted. ***Substantively, the sections on the Trinity had been expanded from two paragraphs to four,*** and sections had been added concerning angels, creation and the fall, the church, unity in the body of Christ, the Lord's Supper, Christian marriage, and the Christian home and education. ***He also said that before the new statement would be submitted to the full Church Manual committee, it would be presented to “certain professors at the Seminary with whom we will meet in September.” After the Church Manual committee gave its approval, the statement would proceed to the home and overseas officers, the union presidents, the Annual Council, and finally to the General Conference session in Dallas.” (Ibid)***

The revision process was obviously quite lengthy.

Geraty then detailed the process. Concerning his own participation in formulating this set of beliefs he wrote

“... I could not help but think of my colleagues in institutions around the world who are just as qualified, just as interested, and had just “as large a stake” in the church as I did. ***Why didn't the General Conference set up a representative commission to handle the revisions one to which any interested church member could have access, and one which would be given time to do the job right?” (Ibid)***

“On October 16, 1979, the Annual Council adopted without changes and in principle the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs that had in the meantime been passed with only slight modifications by the General Conference *Church Manual* committee. It was sent out to members of the division committees immediately as well as to unions and overseas colleges. It was given to the *Adventist Review* for immediate publication in the hope that as many reactions as possible could be received from the field prior to the General Conference quinquennial session in Dallas. ***Unfortunately, for reasons never disclosed, it did not appear for four months, until February 21, 1980.*** As a result of the statement's distribution at Annual Council and publication in the *Adventist Review*, scores of letters came to Elder Eva most appreciative and suggesting constructive changes.” *(Ibid)*

Each delegate was to receive a copy of the revised beliefs early enough to give these revisions due consideration before coming to the conference but as Geraty says here

“As a delegate, I received my copy of Eva's March 11 letter on March 24. Obviously, many delegates may not have received their copies of the Statement in advance of the session in Dallas, especially if they were from overseas and left home early to travel in the United States as many did.” (Ibid)

In other words, the beliefs were received so late that not much time could be given to a study of them prior to coming to the conference. As Geraty said, some would have not received them before leaving their home for the conference.

Concerning this problem Geraty wrote (note that Duncan Eva was a General Conference vice-president)

“But more letters from the field continued to flood Eva's desk. For instance, one came from Fred Veltman, chairman of Pacific Union College's Religion Department, who was writing after his faculty had spent two department meetings going through the statement and planned at least one more. His letter of March 11 reflected the concern of many thoughtful Adventists:

It may be that when our church was small it was possible to get an accurate representation from the world field if you mailed the recommended statement to the delegates at least six weeks before the session convenes; but it is doubtful whether these delegates have time to get their input from their local congregations prior to the session given the size of the church today and the problems of getting reactions and submitting such reactions back to headquarters in time to make any changes before the session is held. In order for delegates to function legitimately they must not only be informed by the General Conference leadership on the issues which they will be asked to vote upon, but these same delegates need to be informed by the people they represent so that they will know how to perform as delegates in such a way as to honestly represent the field from which they come.” (Ibid)

The latter would be the only honest way to get a consensus of beliefs from the church at large. Geraty went on to explain

“At the first business session at Dallas, delegates expressed shock that the version of the statement to which they had prepared responses had been substantially changed and that, therefore, they were now suddenly unprepared to discuss so crucial a document as a Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. Those who had been involved in formulating the earlier draft felt that the new version was disastrous in form, if not content. Gone was the balance, the beauty and the sensitivity to words. Clumsy rhetoric prevailed. By the time the home and overseas officers had made additional changes during their April 14 meeting in Dallas, just prior to the opening of the General Conference session, three of the sections had been completely rewritten one to more than twice its original length. Twenty-one other paragraphs were significantly altered, either in meaning or style. For instance, the newer version referred to the Scriptures as “infallible.” The paragraph on God was titled “Godhead or Trinity.” (Ibid)

We can see here that since the delegates had last seen the draft of this new statement of beliefs, it had changed considerably.

Geraty then went on to explain about the way discussions took place at the conference but here space is limited. We will note he did say

“As I reflect on the *process* that led up to the adoption of the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs in Dallas, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be involved. I learned a great deal. I imagine the same can be said for all who were involved. The question naturally arises, then, ***why weren't there more involved in the process? There should have been a procedure initiated early enough that would have allowed for greater participation by all interested members. More time would also have allowed members to seek out and interact with the church's theologians.*** They understand the theological and historical nuances of words used in such statements of belief and should have a feeling for balance and form in such declarations. It was incredible to me how few trained theologians were delegates to the General Conference session, when one of the session's most important tasks was the formulation of a Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. This was not by design, of course; it's just that the denomination's political system works to disenfranchise the teacher of religion. ***The lay person is similarly disenfranchised; only one percent of the delegates in Dallas were lay persons.*** To be selected as a delegate to a General Conference session" one needs to be an administrator or a pastor.” (*Ibid*)

This is the problem today within Seventh-day Adventism. The input from the laity is almost non-existent. It is left to the 'higher ups' to make the input – regardless of what is believed by the laity.

Shortly following this, near the end of His article, Geraty wrote

“The part of the process that made me the most uncomfortable was the voting on the floor. ***Obviously, truth is not established by majority vote. Are fundamental beliefs? Maybe.*** But consensus is far more difficult to achieve in theology than it is in policy. It is more than a management problem. It takes accurate information and it takes time. ***I suspect that the process undertaken in Dallas was more helpful for those who participated in it than it was for the product.***” (*Ibid*)

In the way this process is handled and takes place, Geraty obviously believes there is room for improvement

The 1980 General Conference session – the president addresses the delegates

On April 21st, which was approximately mid-way through the 1980 General Conference session, this proposed trinity belief, along with our other fundamental beliefs, was discussed. Prior to this taking place, Neal C. Wilson, then the General Conference president, addressed the delegates by saying

“For some time we have been considering a refinement of our Statement on Fundamental Beliefs. I think you have that document in your hands. No doubt you have done both some studying and some praying.” (*Neal C. Wilson, General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, April 23rd 1980, ‘Seventh Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session’*)

Notice the president used the word ‘refinement’. This implies making a finer distinction of something that is already stated (in this case – that which is already believed). As far as our Godhead beliefs are concerned, this 'new statement' was not a refining of our beliefs but the eventual outcome of a complete change of them. We have noted this in this study in previous chapters.

The president then explained to the delegates

“We have heard a variety of interesting rumors. Some, it is said, understand that the church leaders want to destroy completely the foundations of the church and set the church on a course that would be un-Biblical, **contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism**. My fellow delegates, **there is nothing that is further from the truth.**” (*Ibid*)

Obviously there were some who had very serious concerns regarding the purpose behind the re-wording of our fundamental beliefs – even being worried that our past beliefs were about to undergo change.

The president also said later

“We are not suggesting changing any belief or doctrine that this church has held. We have no interest in tearing up any of the foundations of historical Adventism. This document is not designed to do that, nor to open the way so that it can be done.” (*Ibid*)

“It should be clear that we are not adding anything nor are we deleting anything in terms of historical Adventist theology. We are trying to express our beliefs in a way that will be understood today.” (*Ibid*)

To everyone who has taken the time to study what was once the faith of Seventh-day Adventists, it is obvious that over the years our beliefs have changed (and dramatically) – particularly those beliefs regarding God and Christ – so why the General Conference president made these remarks is left to the imagination. He, more so than anyone else, should have known about this change.

Most of our leadership openly admit that over the years our Godhead beliefs have changed. George Knight even said that because of the extent of these changes, the vast majority of our pioneers would not today be permitted to join our church. As we have seen in previous chapters, this would not just be our pioneers but almost every Seventh-day Adventist there ever was – at least from our beginnings through to 1940’s and 1950’s (refer to chapters 16 and 17 to see how the faith that Christ was literally the Son of God was the ongoing belief of Seventh-day Adventists for decades after the death of Ellen White thus denying the trinity doctrine).

George Knight explained

“Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination’s Fundamental Beliefs.” (*George Knight, ‘Ministry’ magazine, October 1993, page 10, ‘Adventists and Change’*)

“More specifically, **most** would not be able to agree to belief Number 2, which deals with **the doctrine of the Trinity.**” (*Ibid*)

The very next year, which was 14 years after the 1980 General Conference session, William Johnsson (as editor of the Review) unabashedly informed Seventh-day Adventists that

“Some Adventists today think, that our beliefs have remained unchanged over the years, or they seek to turn back the clock to some point when we had everything just right. **But all attempts to recover such “historic Adventism” fail in view of the facts of our heritage.**” (*William Johnsson, Adventist Review, January 6th 1994, Article ‘Present Truth - Walking in God’s Light’*)

“Adventists beliefs **have changed over the years** under the impact of **present truth.** **Most startling** is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.” (*Ibid*)

The latter is referring to the belief once held by Seventh-day Adventists that Christ is truly the Son of God (the begotten concept).

He also said of this belief

“Only gradually did this false doctrine give way to the Biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen Whites writings in statements such as “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. (Desire of ages p 530)” (Ibid)

This “false doctrine” - as William Johnsson calls it - is the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God. This was a crucial aspect of what was once the non-trinitarian faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This was held throughout the entire time of Ellen White’s ministry – also for the immediate decades beyond (see chapters 13 to 17). It was also one of the reasons why the trinity doctrine was rejected.

Note that Johnsson says that our change in beliefs concerning Christ is “Most startling”.

It is suggested, by the trinitarians, that our past non-trinitarians did not believe in the full and complete divinity of Christ but as we also noted, this is nothing but a straw man set up by the trinitarians (see [chapter 13](#)). The past non-trinitarians – just like the non-trinitarians today - believed that Christ is God Himself in the person of His Son. It is obvious here that by this time (1994), the leadership of our church was getting very bold in their erroneous allegations against the early Seventh-day Adventists. We can see though that at least they do admit that our beliefs have changed. This is more than Neal Wilson was doing in his speech.

In an article written in 2002, Angel Manuel Rodriguez – who is the director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute (BRI) - wrote of our once rejection of the trinity doctrine – also of the changed faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

He said

“Some Adventists have discovered that practically all of our pioneers were anti-Trinitarian and have concluded that the church today should reject the doctrine of the Trinity. The truth is that the Lord guided this movement to a more biblical understanding of God. Today, based on the Bible, we affirm the truth of one God in a plurality of Persons.” (Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Article, ‘The Holy Spirit and the Godhead, 11th July 2002)

By saying “we affirm the truth of one God in a plurality of Persons”, Rodriguez is obviously agreeing with our present fundamental belief that the “one God” is a trinity of persons. Note how he says that “the Lord guided this movement to a more biblical understanding of God”. If this were true, it is rather strange that He did not do this whilst He had His servant Ellen G. White amongst us. Why allow His church to teach people error for something like 100 years – and then lead them into the truth after His servant was dead? Wouldn't this be strange – if it were true?

Here again is also the confession that we were once a non-trinitarian denomination. This shows that there have been massive changes to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists – which according to Rodriguez came about because of God’s leading. Many obviously dispute this reasoning. We have even seen in [chapter 23](#) that under instruction from God, Ellen White said that this depicting God as ‘three-in-one’ was a wrong thing to do. She said that these views were misrepresentative and untrue.

Before we move on, there is something very important to note. This is that the non-trinitarians today are **not** saying that we should return to the Godhead beliefs of early Seventh-day Adventists simply because these were the beliefs taught by them. They are

saying we should return to these beliefs because they were - and still are - the truth that God gave to us. This is saying two entirely different things.

Like our other leaders, Rodriguez is also saying that our past beliefs concerning God were not biblical. This is the reasoning that our present leadership is today asking Seventh-day Adventists to believe.

In direct contrast to this, we have seen in previous chapters, particularly chapters 14 and 26, that Ellen White said that what Seventh-day Adventists believed concerning God and Christ was the truth that God had given to us – also that we should hold on to it. Again this is a case of ‘who do we believe’?

The 1980 General Conference session – the delegate’s discussions regarding the trinity doctrine

Prior to the final vote being taken regarding our fundamental beliefs, some of the delegates commented on the proposed fundamental belief No. 2. Some of these comments were made public by reason of the General Conference bulletins published in the Review and Herald.

We begin with Leif Hansen who is reported to have said

“In this discussion of the Trinity, which is always a difficult matter to discuss, I wonder if a certain misunderstanding could be eliminated by saying "a unity in purpose" so that the matter of **physical unity may be eliminated.**” (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, April 23rd 1980, ‘Seventh Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session’*)

It should go without saying that in Hansen’s thinking, a physical unity of the three persons of the Godhead could not be proven scripturally. It also seems that he was concerned that our beliefs should not depict any physical oneness. This is THE main problem in the trinity debate – meaning it is stated by the trinity doctrine that the three personalities physically constitute the ‘one God’ (that all three are inseparably connected in one indivisible substance/essence). This was something we noted in [chapter two – ‘When God is silent’](#).

Neal C. Wilson as chairman replied

“I see your point there. Maybe we ought to make it a unity in **purpose rather than a physical unity.**” (*Ibid*)

The president obviously knew, just as did Leif Hansen, that on this matter of “physical unity”, the Scriptures are totally silent. Anything said in this direction can only be speculation.

J. G. Bennett then said

“The statement about the Godhead and the Trinity goes on **to use the pronoun He.** Later as the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are discussed, we use **the same pronoun He.**” (*Ibid*)

We noted in [chapter 2](#) that the personal pronoun is applied to each of the three divine personalities – namely the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (fundamental beliefs No. 3, 4 and 5). We have also seen it is applied to the trinity three-in-one God (fundamental belief No. 2) – which must be admitted is rather strange. Bennett was querying the very same thing. How can the three be individual persons – also the three collectively be a person? One is left to wonder.

He then said

"I do recognize and accept the Trinity as **a collective unity**, but I **would have a little difficulty in applying the pronoun He to the Trinity or the Godhead.**" (*Ibid*)

I think that this would be the same for most people. How can a 'collection' of people, no matter how many there are, be referred to as 'He'? It is no wonder that Bennett said he would find "difficulty in applying the pronoun He to the Trinity or the Godhead".

It appears that as long as the word 'trinity' was used only in a collective sense, Bennett was quite happy to use it – but not identified as a person. Note he uses the word 'trinity' as though it is synonymous with the word 'Godhead' - which as mentioned in [chapter 3](#) is not a correct thing to do. These are two different words. They have two entirely different meanings. As there is in the word 'trinity', there is no suggestion in the word 'Godhead' of three-in-one.

Regarding the use of the personal pronoun to the word 'trinity', Bennett then added

"For me this has **deep theological implications.**" (*Ibid*)

Bennett was obviously referring to the 'three collectively' being called 'He'.

Nothing more was said about these "deep theological implications" but they obviously bothered Bennett. They also bother people today. This is why this trinity debate still exists within our denomination.

W. G. C. Murdoch contributed to the discussion by saying

"I would suggest that we use the expression "The Godhead or Trinity" rather than "Trinity." (*Ibid*)

This suggestion, if accepted, would have made our fundamental beliefs more or less the same as the 1931 statement of beliefs but this would not have suited those who wanted to depict the 'one God' as a trinity. Obviously, because today we are aware of the outcome of these discussions, we know that Murdoch's suggestion was rejected. Again the two words 'Godhead' and 'trinity' are used as though they mean the same thing even though they are not.

Paul C. Chima made the comment

"I would suggest that when this goes back to the committee, Sister White's writings be studied to see **what term she used to describe God the Father and the Holy Spirit.** Let us use **a lot of her terminology** to define this. Whatever decisions are made and expressions found, let us be content with them." (*Ibid*)

This would have been a rather fruitless exercise. This is because Ellen White never used any inclusive term to describe "God the Father and the Holy Spirit" - except of course to say that there are three persons of the Godhead. I notice here for some reason, the Son of God was not included in Chima's remarks.

W. R. Leshar also commented (this was after saying that the expression "consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" seems to introduce a limiting factor)

"It is much more in harmony with the mystery of God to simply say **there is one God** — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My same observation would apply to the expression "a unity of purpose." We assume that there is a unity of purpose in the Godhead. Still, God is a mystery." (*Ibid*)

He then said

“And we do not know in what ways that unity might exist other than in purpose.”
(*Ibid*)

This latter statement is very true. This is why the trinity doctrine is only an assumed doctrine. It attempts to define this physical unity (oneness) between the three persons of the Godhead when nothing of this has been revealed. This is also why the trinity doctrine should not have been included in the fundamental beliefs of God’s remnant people. We are delving into something which God has not revealed – meaning we are speculating (see [chapter 2](#)).

After accepting all these comments from the floor, Neal C. Wilson then said

“I would like now to appoint a committee to **do some editing** for us **with these suggestions in mind.**” (*Ibid*)

These were suggestions regarding the various fundamental beliefs that had been discussed and not just the ones referring to the Godhead – although obviously they did include the latter.

The final business day

On the final business day of the conference (April 25th), Charles Upshaw asked (this was just before the final vote was taken regarding our fundamental beliefs)

“I have a question on **Article 2, “The Trinity.”** (General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, May 1st 1980. ‘Fifteenth Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session’)

He then said

“I believe when we first studied the document **the term was Godhead.**” (*Ibid*)

These ‘suggested beliefs’ were sent to the delegates before the conference took place (see above). This was so that prior study and thought could be given to them. As of yet I have not come across this document itself.

What I have come across is how these ‘suggested beliefs’ were submitted in the Review and Herald for everyone to see and upon which they could comment. These had been formulated by the General Conference Committee at the 1979 Annual Conference.

Under the heading of “The Trinity”, No.2 belief said

“**That there is one God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **a self-existing Unity in Trinity.** God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, transcendent and immanent, the absolute Reality **whose infinite and personal being** is a mystery forever beyond human comprehension. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:6, 7.)” (*Review and Herald, February 21st 1980, ‘Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists’*)

Here again the personal pronoun is used (“whose”) but not ‘He’ or ‘His’. It also says that the “personal being” of this “one God” is a “mystery forever beyond human comprehension” – which is only the same as saying that the three make up one person.

Upshaw then said

“**My objection to the use of the word Trinity** is the fact that in many Christian congregations it refers to **one God** and also means **one person.** Yet in our

explanation ***we refer to three co-eternal persons, and in Article 13 we refer to a triune God***. I would like to suggest that we either change the title to "The Godhead" or "The Triune Godhead." (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, May 1st 1980. 'Fifteenth Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session'*)

Here is an objection to the word 'trinity' itself. It was because other "Christian congregations" used it to describe the "one God" – which interestingly we now do today. Notice too that the objection was also because this "one God" was described by other denominations as a person.

Upshaw said that we should have just used the term "Godhead" or "Triune Godhead". If this had been done then it would not denote a 'person' or the 'one God'. The personal pronoun could not be applied to 'Godhead'. These terminologies would simply have denoted collectiveness. We know today that this suggestion was rejected.

W. Duncan Eva replied

"We discussed this ***back and forth***. We had both, and we did not like that. Now we have used one of them and this isn't popular." (*Ibid*)

There was obviously frustration creeping in here. He then added

"We had "Godhead" in the old Manual and we didn't like that. I think it would be better just to ask the folk to express what they would prefer. Trinity to me seems to be a perfectly good word, ***even though we don't like some of its connotations***. Many other words have connotations we are not happy with either! (*Ibid*)

So why did this problem exist at the 1980 General Conference session?

For one reason it was because this belief was new to Seventh-day Adventism. It had never been previously discussed like this - at least not at this level. Never before in our fundamental beliefs had we referred to the three divine personalities collectively as 'He'.

It is also because on this point of physical unity, God has been totally silent. This is why this debate is still ongoing. All that we have ever been told is that there are three persons of divinity (of the Godhead). We should leave it there.

In formulating a trinity doctrine, the attempt is being made to define how the three divine personalities have their existence in relation to each other (metaphysics) – and then referring to the three together as 'the one God' (a personal being). This is something that God has never said and why today there is still a debate in progress.

Eva never mentioned what he believed these "connotations" to be but to some they were obviously well known. They were probably the same as the "***deep theological implications***" stated by J. G. Bennett (see above).

This leaves us to wonder how many of the delegates realised that there were implications. After all, the trinity doctrine was eventually voted in as part of our fundamental beliefs – although as we can see, there was certainly reluctance by some to have God depicted as a trinity. As we have seen, all this did take place as the conference was hastily drawing to its close.

Richard Hammill then replied

"We used the word Godhead here earlier because it was a Biblical term. When we really checked it in the Greek New Testament, ***we found it was not an accurate translation***. The word that appears in the King James Version as Godhead ***is really***

Deity. Because it was not a Biblical term, we felt we should leave this word that is Biblical, as it is better understood in the Christian world at large.” (*Ibid*)

We noted this in [chapter 3](#). This is why it is extremely misleading to use the phrase ‘Godhead or Trinity’. This is because there is a suggestion in this phraseology that the two words are synonymous – which they are not.

The report then recorded that Neal C Wilson

“Requested an expression”, also that “No change was indicated.” (*Ibid*)

Wilson then said

“We should have been out of this hall now. Our brethren will be under extreme pressure to get everything moved to the Grand Hall unless we are out within 15 or 20 minutes.”

George T. L. Atiga then moved that the revision of our fundamental beliefs be accepted and that any further editorial matters be referred to the editorial committee.

Neal C. Wilson responded

“There seems to be **quite a number who would like to proceed that way**. The chair will be guided by this group. We have tried to give ample opportunity for expression. **Our time is gone, but I don’t want to force or hurry this** if someone feels that what he wishes to suggest will clearly affect the beliefs of this church. I appreciate that motion and will accept it as soon as we have listened to the few individuals who feel they have something greatly important to say.” (*Ibid*)

Shortly following this he said

“Now I am going to do something that **I dislike to do**, but I feel I must in view of the fact some of our brethren have been charged with the responsibility of getting the equipment set up in the Grand Hall for tonight. **I will ask whether you feel you want to vote now, or discuss this longer.** [The opinion expressed was to vote.]” (*Ibid*)

Wilson then said

“We had a motion, seconded by several, that **we accept this as the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.**” (*Ibid*)

He then added

“May I suggest that we prayerfully study these great truths so that they will become very much **a part of our lives, our homes, and our institutions.**” (*Ibid*)

The report then said

“I will call for the vote. [The motion carried overwhelmingly.]” (*Ibid*)

So it was, in 1980, for the very first time in the history of Seventh-day Adventism – albeit it was a rushed vote - that the trinity doctrine was voted into our fundamental beliefs. The finalised version we can see in our fundamental belief No.2.

As we have just seen, this acceptance did not happen without valid objections being made by some of the delegates. Some who knew of the theology of the trinity doctrine realised that

there were serious implications regarding this teaching. It seems that if the word 'Godhead' had been used (which could never have the personal pronoun applied to it – which would not have suited the trinitarians), then many of the objections would not have been made. As it was, these objections were totally ignored. Now we have a doctrine that describes the 'one God' who is three-in-one.

One important thing to remember

We need to remember here that truth can never become error; neither can error ever become the truth. Each will always remain what it is – either truth or error.

The reason why I say this is because some may think that what we believe today, as a denomination, is only a 'going on' – an expansion or progression (a progressive revelation) – of what we once believed. This cannot be. This is because what we once believed (non-trinitarianism) is diametrically opposed to what we believe today (trinitarianism). In other words, our church is saying today, that what was once our non-trinitarian denominational faith is error (heresy).

This means that no matter what is done with it, whether it is added to, expanded upon, turned inside out or upside down, it will never become what is said today in our fundamental beliefs. In other words, if it was error when Ellen White was alive (which is what is being said by our church today) it is still error today. This is because error will always remain error – no matter what is done to it.

As Ellen White once said

*“The truth of God is not in harmony with the traditions of men, nor does it conform to their opinions. **Like its divine Author, it is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and forever.**” (Ellen G. White, 5th Volume Testimonies, page 62, *The Testimonies slighted*)*

She then added

*“Those who separate from God **will call darkness light, and error truth.** But darkness will never prove itself to be light, **nor will error become truth.**” (Ibid)*

If what Seventh-day Adventists taught whilst Ellen White was alive is the truth, then it is still the truth today – on the other hand, if it was error whilst Ellen White was alive, it is still error today. We need to make up our minds which one it is – either truth or error.

A God-given prerogative

It should go without saying that everyone is blessed with the God-given prerogative to believe what they wish to believe. As for me I will stay with what God has revealed through the Scriptures – also what He has shown me through the writings of Ellen White.

In these inspired writings I find that God the Father, just like His Son, is always spoken of as an individual personal being. I do not find any such philosophical speculation as found in the trinity doctrine. Certainly God is never described as three persons in one indivisible substance who are inseparably connected to each other as the 'one God' (as the trinity doctrine teaches).

I will leave this needless speculating to others because as far as I am concerned, it only serves to cause problems and controversy - also, in various ways, it ultimately destroys the gospel.

This leads us to the [‘Summary and conclusions’](#) of this study

Summary and conclusions

We have come to the place in our study where we need to summarise what we have discovered – also draw some conclusions.

An unmistakable conclusion

The one thing we know for sure is that since the death of Ellen White, great changes have taken place to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. In particular this concerns our Godhead beliefs. Whereas once we took the Bible as it reads and did not involve ourselves with needless speculation – today we do exactly the opposite.

We once believed that Christ was truly the Son of God and that the Father was truly His father but today we say that this is simply figurative language. In so doing we destroy the beauty revealed of a real father giving his real son as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. By saying that the Father and the Son are not who they profess to be, so much is lost from the gospel . This leads people to wonder how much else is said in the Bible that is not really true. It does sow seeds of doubt and scepticism – especially concerning what was said by both God and Christ.

We also once believed that the Holy Spirit was the presence of both the Father and the Son when they (the Father and the Son) were both bodily in Heaven but today we say He is not really a spirit but another divine being like the Father and the Son. It is so sad that we have reduced what God has so plainly told us to figurative language.

We also accept today a teaching that during the time of Ellen White's ministry we rejected as unscriptural. This teaching is that God is a trinity of beings – meaning that He is an indivisible entity of unimaginable form comprising of three inseparable divine persons – even inseparable during the incarnation. As we noted in the early chapters, how God has His existence in the three persons of the Godhead has not been revealed – therefore it is worthless to speculate. All that will happen is that we shall draw the wrong conclusions – as happens with the trinity doctrine.

Our past beliefs also allowed for the Son of God to become eternally separated from the Father (if He had sinned when on earth) but today we say this is impossible. Today we say that God is an indivisible trinity – made up of three inseparable divine individual persons who no matter what the circumstances can ever be separated from each other. This is why the trinity doctrine says that even during the incarnation the Father and the Son never became separated. Such is the folly and sadness of the church attempting to explain what God has not revealed – meaning how together the three divine personalities have their existence.

We also used to teach that it was the divine person of Christ who died at Calvary but today we say it was only His human nature that died. Again this is because, according to trinitarianism, Christ always has His existence in the one substance of God. Here is where the atonement with God is seriously affected. Trinitarians do not say that a divine person made the atonement at Calvary but just that human nature died – which, when all is said and done, is not even a person.

All of this shows how much, over the years, our beliefs have changed. Today they are nothing like they used to be. This is all because of our denominational acceptance of the teaching called the doctrine of the trinity.

We have also noted that the above non-trinitarian beliefs were those that were once taught, during the time period of Ellen White's ministry, by Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world. This was in our official publications - including in our Sabbath School Lesson quarterlies. These were also the beliefs held by Ellen White.

Never once did Ellen White rebuke Seventh-day Adventists for the beliefs they held concerning Christ. In fact as we noted in [chapter 14](#), she endorsed these beliefs. She repeatedly said it was the truth that God had given to us – also that because of this we should cherish it and hold on to it.

Ellen White did foresee that changes would take place concerning what was believed about God and Christ – and she did warn us about it. We noted this in [chapter 25](#) and [26](#). We also noted that she said that Seventh-day Adventists should hold on to their faith – which was then a non-trinitarian faith. She said we should not change or discard it (see [chapter 25](#)). These warnings have been well and truly ignored. We did change these beliefs, now there is confusion and controversy amongst us – which does not paint a very good picture of us to the world.

The question must be asked here – why for over 100 years would God have allowed His church to go on teaching error concerning the most important doctrine of the Bible and not tell us we were wrong teaching it? Does this make any sense? What I mean is, why would God have allowed us to go on teaching that Christ was begotten of God in eternity if it were not true? If this were not true, why didn't God say something about it through Ellen White? Why leave Seventh-day Adventists to go on teaching this for such a long period of time (in the process teaching hundreds of thousands of people false doctrine) – and why tell them in 1905, 7 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', to hold on to this faith – if this faith was wrong?

These are questions that are not easily answered – especially by those who say that during Ellen White's ministry our Godhead beliefs were error (false doctrine). We need therefore to give these questions some very serious consideration.

The weight of evidence

It is my personal belief that when all the evidence is weighed up (meaning when we take into consideration all that we have studied in the previous chapters), the overwhelming conclusion is that the early Seventh-day Adventists were teaching the truth concerning God, Christ and the Holy Spirit – and that this faith was endorsed by God through the spirit of prophecy. This means that in changing these beliefs, which our church freely admits has happened, we have apostatised from the truth given to us by God.

It behooves us therefore to do everything we can to rectify this situation. This is the very least we can do.

The fear of reprisal

No one will teach and preach the truth without Satan attempting to stop them doing it. Our adversary will endeavour by any means to stop the truth being promulgated. We can therefore expect reprisals for telling the truth – and this will come from those within – not just from those outside of our denomination.

In a special testimony concerning the brethren of the Battle Creek Church (this testimony carried the title "Danger of rejecting truth") Ellen White wrote under the sub-heading "Preaching Contrary to Established Doctrines"

“The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, **Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.**”
(Ellen G. White, *Letter to the Battle Creek Church, 'Danger of Rejecting Truth'*, written from “Sunnyside,” Cooranbong, N.S.W. May 30th 1896)

Note these other things she said in this same testimony

“We see here that the men in authority are not always to be obeyed, even though they may profess to be teachers of Bible doctrine.” (Ibid)

“But we see that the God of heaven sometimes commissions men to teach that which is regarded as contrary to the established doctrines. **Because those who were once the depositaries of truth became unfaithful to their sacred trust, the Lord chose others who would receive the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and would advocate truths that were not in accordance with the ideas of the religious leaders.** And then these leaders, in the blindness of their minds, give full sway to what is supposed to be righteous indignation against the ones who have set aside cherished fables. They act like men who have lost their reason. **They do not consider the possibility that they themselves have not rightly understood the word. They will not open their eyes to discern the fact that they have misinterpreted and misapplied the Scriptures, and have built up false theories, calling them fundamental doctrines of the faith.**” (Ibid)

“But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them. That wonderful “I” may attempt to put down the Holy Spirit’s teaching. **Men may for a time attempt to smother it and kill it; but that will not make error truth, or truth error.** The inventive minds of men have advanced speculative opinions in various lines, and when the Holy Spirit lets light shine into human minds, it does not respect every point of man’s application of the word. **God impressed his servants to speak the truth, irrespective of what men had taken for granted as truth.**” (Ibid)

Regardless of what may happen to us, we must not be afraid to speak the truth for God – and it must be done in love. We must not get angry and frustrated when it appears that what we believe to be the truth is rejected.

Many will not openly take a stand for the truth because they know it will affect their popularity. Rather than speak the truth for God, they prefer to remain popular with those around them. Some will remain silent because they know they will lose their position in the church – or perhaps telling the truth will affect their livelihood. None of these things are more important than believing and speaking the truth for God. Buy the truth says God and sell it not. This is the counsel given to us through His written word (see Proverbs 23:23). Many have lost their lives heeding this counsel. They spoke the truth and paid the price.

Are you prepared to give your life for the sake of the truth – or do you consider it too high a price to pay? Jesus stood for the truth and it cost Him His life. Are you prepared to do the same? Jesus said “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37).

“Christ’s ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty and leave results with God.” (Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, page 609, ‘The final warning’)

“Those who in any way hide the truth dishonor God. Upon their garments will be the blood of souls.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 8* page 155, ‘Letters to physicians’)

In conclusion

We have now come to the end of our study. In so doing we have covered all the major aspects of the present Godhead debate within Seventh-day Adventism – even from a historical aspect. It now behooves us to stand for the truth we have found within these pages. It is one thing to acknowledge this truth in the mind (intellectually) but it is another to take a stand for it. There is no fence to sit upon. We either take our stand for the truth or allow error to be promulgated amongst God’s people.

The choice is yours. What will you do? Will you do nothing about it and allow Satan to have his way with our brethren whom he has deceived into believing error - or will you do something about telling them the truth?

In a testimony concerning Kellogg, Ellen White said she hear a voice saying

“... Where are the watchmen that ought to be standing on the walls of Zion? Are they asleep? This foundation was built by the Masterworker, and will stand storm and tempest. Will they permit this man to present doctrines that deny the past experience of the people of God? The time has come to take decided action.” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B No. 7* page 38, ‘Decided action to be taken now’)

Now is the time to take action – not later. As Ellen White once wrote

“If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, **it is doing nothing in case of an emergency.**” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 3*, page 280, ‘The Laodicean Church’)

She then said

“Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God **as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.**” (Ibid)

Concerning our beliefs we really do need to take action – and the sooner the better. None of us can stay neutral and be right with God. As Jesus said

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” Matthew 12:30

Will you speak the truth for God? Will you stand for what is right no matter what people do to dissuade you or what is said concerning you? We need to be counted as on the Lord's side. God bless you as you consider these things – and as you make decisions for Him.

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