

The Trinity Chronicles

The Advent Movement, Ellen G. White and The Godhead

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Prologue

Isaac's Storm

It is Friday, Sept. 7, 1900. It is a hot, humid day in the booming Texas island town of Galveston. The temperature is over 90 degrees and coupled with humidity over 80% it makes for a sticky afternoon. This morning's edition of the Galveston Daily News includes a short article embedded among many other seemingly more important stories. The article, one paragraph long, is from the National Weather Bureau, which reports that a terrible storm has hit New Orleans, Louisiana.

"There was a brief article in the Friday, September 7, 1900 issue of [The Daily News](#) noting that a storm was raging in the Gulf of Mexico; but the reader had to search diligently to find it: nine lines at the very bottom of the page, just above an illustrated ad for Royal Baking Powder. It was datelined Jacksonville, and it described high winds and downing of telegraph wires. The storm was "said to be northwest of Key West, Florida." But at the time it was published the news was already trailing far behind actual events. In fact, the eye of the hurricane was near New Orleans, and moving fast.

At the office of the United States Weather Bureau on the third floor of the Levy Building on Market Street [in Galveston], the meteorologists had been monitoring the reports of the storm. They had already raised the city's storm warning flags." (<http://galvestonhistory.info/blog/?p=44>)

Ace weatherman Isaac Cline, one of the Weather Bureau's top and most promising men, is keeping tabs on the storm, tracking its movements as adeptly as early 20th century technology allows.

The wind has shifted to the North in Galveston, and the seas are beginning to swell. Cline keeps close watch on this unusual phenomenon and records with precise skill every change in barometric pressure, temperature and tide.

"That evening, Cline went to the beach and was astounded by the unusually high tides and roaring surf."
<http://www.galvestonhistory.org/hrc-fact-sheet.htm>

"By midnight September 7 the moon was bright and there was no apparent sign of storm. There was only a slight wind. The weatherman noticed, however, long swells breaking on the beach with an ominous roar, and a tide rising above normal height.

*"The storm swells were increasing in magnitude and frequency and were building up a storm tide which told me as plainly as though it was a written message that a great danger was approaching."
[Cline wrote in his report]*

By dawn Saturday, the high tide, some two feet over normal, began creeping over the lower parts of the island. The barometer slowly dropped, and Cline, contrary to department procedures, harnessed a horse to his two-wheeled cart and headed down to the beach to warn people to seek high ground.
(The Safest House in Town, <http://galvestonhistory.info/>)

The Great Storm hit. People ran for higher ground, but it was too late. Isaac Cline then invited about fifty people to come into his own home, regarded as one of the best built in town for which to weather a severe storm. But even his stout beach home was destroyed by a huge piece of trestle railing, as well as millions of pounds of water forcing itself against the structure. Isaac Cline and his brother Joseph grabbed Isaac's daughters and made a dive for it, clinging for their lives to pieces of floating debris.

At storms end, the booming coastal city of Galveston, Texas was left in a mass of splintered homes and broken lives in the worst weather-related disaster in U.S. History. Over 6000 lives were lost, 3600 buildings were destroyed and the prospect of rebuilding seemed a daunting task at best.

For his part, Isaac Cline became known as a Texas legend for his heroics in sensing the impending danger, and at risk to himself, warning the town to evacuate, saving hundreds or even thousands of potentially lost lives.

Galveston rebuilt, constructed a seawall for protection, and to this day still exists as a small resort town on a gulf island outside Houston.

End of story.

Or is it?

One day, a man named Eric Larsen, who was fascinated by the often overlooked Galveston event, came upon an archived article in the Galveston Daily News written by Isaac Cline in 1891, nine years earlier, as relating to storms in East Texas, piquing his interest. This motivated Larsen to look far more carefully at the event, and so he set out to investigate the various aspects of the story in order to clarify the actual events and chronology of the storm that devastated the Texas island town. If this tidbit of history had been overlooked, he reasoned, then it was possible that there was more to the Great Storm story than was previously published or told.

Larsen rechecked the historical sources and eyewitness testimonies, perusing through archived writings and reports. He then weighed each report and testimony with the actual known facts to come up with a version that is in some ways very different from the commonly told legend of the Great Storm. This research was then written into a book titled "Isaac's Storm", published in 1999.

Eric Larsen's book, while a retelling of the events of the Galveston hurricane, focuses in part on the role of Isaac Cline, the Texas legend.

Here then is a short synopsis of the story according to Larsen's research, which is based in part on testimony from Isaac Cline's brother, Joseph, who was also employed in Galveston by the National Weather Bureau.

Larsen's Story

Isaac Cline was a brilliant young college graduate holding two degrees from Hiwassee College when he joined the Weather Bureau. The Bureau was at that time struggling for credibility because of poor practices and corruption within the organization. In light of this, Cline was regarded as a wunderkind who promised hope and reform.

Nine years before the great Storm, in 1891, Cline had written an article for the Galveston Daily News stating that the island town was not vulnerable to hurricanes based on its prevailing wind patterns and shallow gulf waters. In the article, Isaac Cline wrote that any notion of a hurricane harming Galveston was "an absurd delusion". Cline was committed to this idea, and when storms came to the island, he was always the voice of calmness and assurance. According to Larsen, based on eyewitness reports, this storm was no different.

Now, sometime earlier Isaac's brother, Joseph Cline, was hired on at the Weather Bureau's Galveston office. Joseph, like Isaac, was well qualified as a weather predictor though he stood in his more famous brother's shadow. Isaac Cline was the face of meteorology in Galveston and he certainly let his younger sibling know that in no uncertain terms.

As reports of a strong tropical storm came in from Cuba on Wednesday, four days before it reached Galveston, Isaac Cline was not concerned. He had seen storms hit Cuba before that never tracked west into the gulf, but always tracked north up the Atlantic Coast. However, by Friday the storm had become a hurricane and was battering New Orleans. This should have been a wake-up call for Cline, since it certainly indicated that the storm did not track its usual direction, but instead blew west into the Gulf of Mexico. Cline was still unimpressed. Was he subconsciously filtering his opinions through the bold prediction he made in 1891, that no devastating storm could ever reach Galveston?

On Friday, September 7, the breeze shifted to a north wind and was combined with a rising tide - an unprecedented condition for Galveston, and a sure sign of an approaching hurricane. Again, Isaac Cline was not concerned. Joseph, on the other hand, began to get a sinking feeling that something was terribly wrong, and shared his feelings with the Bureau office and his brother.

In reaction to this, and on the advice of the national office, the Galveston Bureau raised the storm warning flag, but not the hurricane warning flag. Now, this flag was one that flew often throughout the summer months, as summer storms were a common occurrence for the Texas gulf coast.

Around midnight Friday, Isaac Cline is awakened from his sleep by a worry that something is amiss. He lies awake for a short time considering his options, but then returns to sleep. Shortly thereafter, Joseph Cline appears at his brother's house. The younger brother is very worried about the rising tide and the prevailing winds. He tells Isaac that this storm will be a deadly hurricane and that they should warn the town at once to evacuate. An argument ensues, and Isaac tells Joseph that if any decision is made to give a hurricane warning it would come from him and will be his decision, and not Joseph's.

Saturday morning, Isaac Cline returns to the beach. By now the ocean's swells are enormous and rain begins to fall. Cline records on his notepad that this is unusual weather behavior for Galveston. He then goes to his office to send the report to the Washington, D.C. main office. Later, he is met by many frightened Galveston residents who live in the flooded low lying areas of the city (Galveston's highest geographical point was 8 feet above sea level). Cline assures them that there is nothing to worry about, that it is another typical summer storm. The hurricane warning flag is still not raised in spite of the huge waves which are flooding the lower island areas, along with 40 mph winds and heavy rain. Joseph Cline recommends evacuation once again, but Isaac feels that the storm will get no worse, that the worst is passed.

2:30 P.M.- Isaac Cline is just now realizing that that the storm is increasing in strength, and this is becoming a serious problem. The Hurricane flag is now raised, more than 2 ½ hours into the storm. By now there is nothing that can be done. The residents of the island town brace for the worst weather-related disaster to ever hit the United States.

By late that afternoon, some of those whom Cline had assured that the storm was minor are now dead. Others have survived by clinging to debris or finding taller, stronger buildings in the center of town. Ironically, the Levy Building where Cline worked was a several story tall brick building that could have sheltered hundreds of people, and was relatively unharmed by the hurricane.

September 17, 1900- Isaac Cline returns to work after spending nine days trying to locate his missing wife and unborn child. She was found dead under a pile of debris located near the ruins of the Cline house. Cline then files his report with the National Weather Bureau.

In his report, Isaac Cline wrote that “storm warnings” were timely (never using the word *hurricane*), that he was unfamiliar with the event as it unfolded, and that he rode his horse and cart on the beach Saturday morning warning residents to evacuate.

Now, much of the official story was taken primarily from Isaac Cline’s own report. There are Isaac Cline awards given out in Texas, Isaac Cline memorabilia, as well as Cline’s inclusion along side Texas legends such as Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin. As a result of his revealing research, Erik Larsen has become very unpopular with Texas residents since the publishing of “Isaac’s Storm“, since nearly all had accepted the traditional story as being true for a hundred years.

The question is, which story is true? There are several historical facts that do not square with the traditional story of how Isaac Cline dealt with the storm.

1- There were no eyewitnesses or reports of any kind to support Cline’s claim of harnessing a cart and warning the residents.

2- The water and pounding surf was already too high on the beach for him to have done this. According to the official story, at the time Cline claims to have raced across the beach, the “lower parts of the island” were already under water. This would no doubt include the beach.

3- At the time Cline said he was warning the residents to evacuate, he was reported by eyewitnesses to have been assuring the residents in town that no danger was imminent.

4- Cline’s brother Joseph later estranged himself from Isaac because of how he dealt with the Galveston situation, and proclaimed in his own book that Isaac was defiant in the face of the warnings given, costing hundreds and maybe thousands of lives.

5- The head of the National Weather Bureau, Willis Moore, reportedly sent several hurricane warnings to Galveston, recommending the raising of the hurricane warning flag. These warnings were apparently ignored by Isaac Cline, who had dogmatically asserted nine years prior that a hurricane hitting Galveston was not scientifically possible.

As a result of Larsen’s research, many Texas information centers and historians are modifying their accounts of the event, using wording such as “*According to Cline’s own report*, he harnessed a cart and warned the residents”. Some historians, on the other hand, continue to hold to the traditional story in the face of historical evidence and have left their reports unchanged.

How difficult it must be for Cline’s descendants, and for loyal Texans, to read such a condemning story of their legend and hero. There was no blame to be put on the historians, at least up to now, since they were limited in their search for accurate information regarding the event, taking their knowledge from *supposedly* reliable sources, like the National Weather Bureau’s official report, written by Isaac Cline.

Erik Larsen, on the other hand, lives in the modern “information age”, where historical facts, testimonies and reports are as close as a computer, and only click away.

A Lesson for us?

The same can be said of those in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who, before the 1990s, did not have “semi-unfettered” access to Ellen White’s writings, along with the various online study materials. Previously, one would have to scour the vaults of the White Estate, leafing through each individual letter, article and book, and buy several different dictionaries and a multitude of Bible versions in order to research a given topic. Like the Galveston historians, Adventist lay members in the past have been hampered by a lack of abundant information.

Thankfully, for the time being we now enjoy more open access to the writings of Ellen White, as well as digital Greek and Hebrew lexicons and Bible manuscript copies that until this day was previously unheard of. In the minds of some this is unfortunate, since like in the case of Erik Larsen, the true facts of historical matters are no longer under lock and key, open to a very few specifically approved scholars and leaders. The finer points of history can now be brought to light and the facts can speak for themselves. Quotes from Ellen White and other Adventist leaders can now be checked for authenticity and correct context by the average layman.

I originally quoted the Galveston story in order to illustrate this one point. But as I wrote and then re-read the story several other parallels came to view. These points of parallel will be revealed as we go through this story of how the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination came to adopt their current doctrine of God and Christ.

Chapter 1-

The Great Advent Movement

Back in the 1800s, there was a new and dynamic religious movement that carried a special message of hope, faith and salvation. Their message was centered on the soon return of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that message was spreading throughout the world. It was given in earnest by self-sacrificing, honest, Bible students and scholars who gave what they had to reach a dying world with a gospel of hope, and a word of warning.

The movement became an organized church and this "Church Militant" studied diligently for Bible truth as if for digging for buried treasure. The aim was to restore first century Bible Christianity; to finish the Reformation begun by Luther, Tyndale, Huss and others in order to prepare God's people for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. Theological differences were settled by careful study and by the confirmation of God's Spirit of Prophecy as manifested in the words, counsels and warnings of Ellen G. White.

In 1872, the "Little Flock" had written a "Statement of Fundamental Beliefs" which were considered "unanimous" among the believers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church pressed together on these fundamental beliefs, concentrated on applying them in their personal lives and then teaching these principles to others. The church grew exponentially with this "present truth" and through its urgent presentation by men who taught their doctrines with authority, scholarship and faith.

By 1888, the theology and work had come to a head. Two young and zealous "pioneers", A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner, gave what was to be the final message of reformation to the world, a teaching of "righteousness by faith" based on what the apostle Paul referred to as "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" and the transforming power of grace through faith. According to Ellen White, this message was rejected by the corporate church.

Shortly thereafter, men within the movement began to question the inspiration of its prophet, its founders and the platform of truth the movement was founded on.

As the founding pioneers began to die off, both new and old false theories sprung up like tares within the wheat. Ellen White's writings were being manipulated to appear like they taught "new theology". Dr. John Harvey Kellogg published a new book, *The Living Temple*, which claimed Spirit of Prophecy support for a different view of the personality of God in general and the Holy Spirit in particular.

Ellen White made many warnings to the church of that time, including the urgent message not to abandon the platform of truth, the Fundamental Beliefs, that had been established between 1853 and 1903. Sr. White warned that men would come into the church with new theories, and that these theories must be rejected in favor of the foundation which was formed in "the first fifty years" of the church. We were told, "*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.*"

It was a pivotal time for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and our prophet was trying her best to hold back the tide of what appeared to be an unstoppable negative force moving into the church.

In 1915, the year Ellen G. White died, the publishing of the "Statement of Fundamental Beliefs" was ceased. New ideas were being introduced by various theologians. The church would be without a statement of fundamental beliefs until 1931, when a new version which partially and vaguely reflected these new ideas would be published. The baptism requirements took on a new flavor. A church manual, the idea of which the founding pioneers rejected in the strongest possible terms, was published and enforced.

By the 1940s, the church began to "revise" or "helpfully edit" the writings of Ellen White and its founders to reflect the church's "new theological direction". The 1888 message of final reformation was lost in a sea of new theology and self-based legalism. Eventually, the opposite extreme of liberalism would challenge the works-based view and divide the church in heart and mind, even if the members still shared the same pews.

The 1950s saw the rise of ecumenism to heights that had not previously been seen in Adventism. The organization carefully reinvented some of its basic views in a series of meetings with Evangelical "cult hunters" Martin and Barnhouse.

The great train called the Advent Movement had been derailed. Its original mission and message was in large part lost sight of in a quagmire of compromise and well-intentioned, but poor, decisions. What began as the final reformation for the Christian world, the calling out of God's people from spiritual Babylon, became a comfortable, mainstream, Evangelical church. Where the power used to be in the Word of God, it became largely absent amidst the jokes, drums and dramas of mainstream Adventism.

Chapter 2

The Adventist Trinity Story(s)

There is a story that accompanied this change in doctrine, and most who have heard the story do not doubt it, since it comes directly from the church organization itself, just as the official story of the Great Storm came from the state of Texas itself.

As Seventh-day Adventists, like native Texans, we are a loyal people, believing our church to be God's remnant people of Bible prophecy. What other major denomination believes in the importance of "the commandments of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ"? However, in recent times it has become apparent that somewhere along the 150 year way, a mindset of "the ends justifies the means" has arisen. Today, many Adventists do not recognize the church they grew up in, or joined many years ago. Ecumenism has risen among the North American, Australian and European churches. Clowns, rock music, "comedy preaching" and celebration worship have come unashamedly onto the Adventist scene and pulpit.

What many do not realize is that this "ends justifies the means" mentality came in long ago, around the beginning of the 20th century. Many know what the church believes now, but have little knowledge of the foundation that the church was founded upon, the "pillars" of the church.

I, for one, am not fascinated by "conspiracy theories", but like the 1900 Galveston hurricane, there are two stories, one of which can be proven to be true and the other false. That is the situation with how the Seventh-day Adventist church came to accept the Trinity doctrine.

Chapter 3

Story One: the Traditional Story

Story One begins with the pioneer Adventists and their history of Arian, or semi-Arian beliefs. Among those in the know and educated on Seventh-day Adventist history, there is no disagreement on this.

"The evidence from a study of Adventist history indicates that from the earliest years of our church to the 1890's a whole stream of writers took an Arian or semi-

Arian position. The view of Christ presented in those years by Adventist authors was that there was a time when Christ did not exist, that His divinity is a delegated divinity, and that therefore He is inferior to the Father. In regard to the Holy Spirit, their position was that He was not the third member of the Godhead but the power of God." (Gerhardt Pfandl, The History of the Trinity Among Adventists, Biblical Research Institute, 1999)

"Our pioneers clearly held Arian or Semi Arian views in regard to the person of Christ. They under stood "firstborn over all creation" (Col 1:15) and "only begotten Son" (John 3:16) in a literal sense. The Father, therefore, was first and superior, and the Son, who had a beginning sometime in eternity, was subordinate to the Father. A corollary of this view was the belief that the Holy Spirit is an influence or the power of God, but not a person." (ibid)

The founders of the church were adamantly non-Trinitarian, and believed that Christ had a beginning. Arians (not to be confused with "the Aryan Nations" or white supremacists) reportedly believed that Jesus was a created being, a man who was the Son of God by His Holy Spirit, but whose life began in Bethlehem, although it is not clear exactly what the Arians actually believed. "Semi-Arians", which eventually made up all of the pioneer Adventists, believed that Jesus was the literal Son of God, and was "brought forth" from the bosom of the Father in the dateless past, before the creation of the world.

According to the traditional story, the reason for the Arian and semi-Arian bent of the founders was due to the previous religious system they came out of, which were largely anti-Trinitarian churches such as the Christian Connection.

"Two of the principal founders of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Joseph Bates and James White, were originally members of the Christian Connection Church which rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. James White was an ordained minister of that church. When he and Bates joined the Advent Movement, they continued to hold the anti Trinitarian view which they had learned in the Christian Connection Church" (ibid)

Now, according to the official version, Ellen White was being given new light on the personality of God and Christ beginning sometime in the 1880s or 1890s, depending on who is telling the story. This "new light" was that Jesus was not a created being, was fully divine, and that the Holy Spirit was an actual being, and not merely a "power" or "essence" as some of the pioneers supposedly previously believed.

"In the late 1890's Ellen White published articles and books in which she made strong statements supporting the Trinity concept, al though she never used the word "Trinity." (ibid)

This version of the story contends that there was no actual foundational belief in the church that included a "semi-Arian" view; that the issue of the Godhead was "open". As such, Ellen White's "new light" did not contradict "old light", as there was no old light, or established truth, to contradict.

The story goes that James White, the husband of Ellen White, was following this new light, and was growing out of his belief that Jesus was a created being, was not fully divine and "therefore was inferior to the Father".

"However, it is also a historical fact that the understanding of our pioneers

changed over time. For example, (1) In 1846 James White referred to "the old unscriptural trinitarian creed, viz., that Jesus is the eternal God." But in 1876 he wrote that "S. D. Adventists hold the divinity of Christ so nearly with the Trinitarians, that we apprehend no trial here." And a year later he declared his belief in the equality of the Son with the Father and condemned any view as erroneous that "makes Christ inferior to the Father." (ibid)

Story One authors aver that James White began to accept the "Trinitarian" beliefs of his prophetic wife before he died. Ellen White, for her part, was bearing patiently with the rest of the church, waiting for them to "catch up" with the new light she was given. Men like the Arian Uriah Smith, however, were stubbornly digging in their heels, militantly resisting the growing knowledge.

According to some church historians, there was a breakthrough in 1898 when Ellen White published *The Desire of Ages*. In this book, according to tradition, she herself made it perfectly clear that the Trinity doctrine was the truth, and that the church's semi-Arian beliefs were very much in error.

"The breakthrough came with the publication of Ellen White's article "Christ the Life giver" in Signs of the Times in 1897, 20 and the book *The Desire of Ages* in 1898. In "Christ the Life giver" after quoting John 10:18 "No one takes it [life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself," she says, "In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived."²¹ In *Desire of Ages* in the chapter "The Light of Life" she quotes Jesus' answer to the Jews in John 8:58 "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then she comments, 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." (ibid)

Acting on this new information, and because of their devotion to the inerrancy of the Spirit of Prophecy, the church leaders adopted the doctrine of the Trinity, and over the next thirty years, the rest of the church grew to accept it as well. The new "Statement of Fundamental Beliefs" were published, a church manual was written and the requirements of baptism were changed to reflect this growth in knowledge. In 1980, at the Dallas General Conference Session, the Trinity doctrine was adopted as a fundamental belief of the church and has been used as a test of fellowship.

It could now be written, as in the words of university professor and author George Knight:

"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. More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the trinity." - Ministry, October 1993, p. 10.\

Now, the main points of Story One are as follows:

1- The church began as non-Trinitarian, except for Ellen White, who had a vague Trinitarian view of the doctrine of God, but did not support the anti-Trinitarianism of the church as a whole.

"In 1963 Erwin R. Gane broke new ground with his M. A. thesis arguing that most of the leaders among early Seventh-day Adventists held an antitrinitarian view of the Godhead, but that Ellen G. White was an exception. In Gane's words, she was "a Trinitarian monotheist." (Dr. Jerry Moon, Essay- The Trinity Debates: an Overview, referred to for the remainder of this work as "TDO")

2- That the pioneers of the church were ignorant of the “biblical” Trinity and rejected it because they thought it originated in the Roman Catholic Church. The version of the Trinity taught and defended by the modern church is not the same as the creedal orthodox Trinity, which Ellen White and the church strongly opposed.

“A likely reason why she consistently shunned the term “Trinity,” even after she had embraced certain aspects of trinitarian teaching, is the second hypothesis: that she had become aware of two varieties of trinitarian belief, one that she embraced and one that she vehemently rejected.” (Moon, *ibid*)

“In charging that Kellogg, with his “spiritualistic” trinity doctrine, was “departing from the faith”She is clearly distinguishing between two varieties of trinitarianism.” (*ibid*)

3-That Ellen White grew in her understanding of the doctrine of God in the same way she grew in her understanding on the Sabbath and the health message.

“There is ample evidence, however, that Ellen White’s beliefs did change on a number of other issues, so it is entirely plausible that she grew in her understanding of the Godhead as well.” (*ibid*)

4-That her husband, James White, also grew and changed his views on the doctrine of God as well.

“Perhaps her first statement that clearly disagreed with her antitrinitarian colleagues came in 1869 in a landmark chapter, “The Sufferings of Christ,” where in the opening paragraph she asserted on the basis of Heb 1:3; Col 1:19; and Phil 2:6 that Christ in His pre-existence was “equal with God.” Here it became evident that if no one else was listening, her husband was. ***Though James White’s early statements about the Trinity were uniformly negative, by 1876 and 1877 he was following his wife’s lead.***” (*ibid*)

5- That this change in the church began in the 1890s, and was motivated primarily by Ellen White’s “new light” Trinitarian statements made in her book *The Desire of Ages*.

“The breakthrough came with the publication of Ellen White's article "Christ the Life giver" in Signs of the Times in 1897, 20 and the book *The Desire of Ages* in 1898. In "Christ the Life giver" after quoting John 10:18 "No one takes it [life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself," she says, "In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived." (Pfandl, TAA)

6- That eventually the leadership of the church, because of their devotion to the new theological light of Ellen White, changed their view on the doctrine of God as well.

“... Ellen White’s developing understanding exerted a strong influence on other Adventist writers, leading eventually to a substantial degree of consensus in the denomination....” (Moon, TDO)

“The chief individual responsible for our coming to this [trinitarian] position is Ellen G. White.” (Larry Kirkpatrick, Quick Thoughts on the Godhead, GreatControversy.org)

“the course of the denomination was decided by statements from Ellen G. White...,” (Russell Holt, as quoted by Moon, TDO)

7- That Ellen White’s writings have not been altered or manipulated at any time by individuals or committees within the church organization.

“Mrs. White’s writings have not been tampered with as some are teaching today.” (Kirkpatrick,QTG)

“They believe that ...her books have been manipulated and changed. As we have seen the evidence does not support these charges. ” (Pfandl TAA)

8-That non-Trinitarian Adventists are conspiracy theorists who take the facts out of context.

“Citations from the primary sources, extracted from their historical context and repackaged in plausible conspiracy theories, proved quite convincing to many.” (Moon, TDO)

Now, the official story does have its “evidences“, and these are easily available to any reader. Perhaps you have seen these essays, articles and books already. In addition to the articles cited so far, primary sources for the *official* story are *Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* by Moon, Whidden and Reeve, *Movement of Destiny* by Leroy E. Froom and *The Seventh-day Adventist Handbook of Theology, Vol#12*.

We will go over these evidences in brief, but not exhaustively. I will try to keep this book short, relevant and to the point. To that end, I will not redundantly quote every source on every given point. I have found in my research that the official story, with only a couple of notable exceptions, is fairly consistent from author to author, but that each has his own emphasis and quotes his sources slightly differently depending on the point that is being made.

The idea here is to present the true historic picture as it actually happened, which sometimes stands in opposition to the official line, according to the limited resources available. There are certain aspects of the historical facts that do agree with the official story, so while those will not be dwelt upon, they will be acknowledged, such as the fact that the pioneers of the Adventist Church were non-Trinitarian. This both sides agree on. But the primary points regarding how the church changed its position away from that of the founders of the church are very much controverted. These points include those which were listed in the previous section.

A Look at the Authors of Story One

Dr. Jerry Moon of Andrews University recently published an essay through Samuele Bacchiocchi’s ministry website as part of Bacchiocchi’s “Endtime Newsletters”. While Dr. Moon presents this essay as a “brief overview”, this in reality represents the “nuts and bolts” of “Story One” regardless of how much exhaustive detail has been left out. I have found in my research that these “brief overviews” are very revealing in the sense that the author’s very best evidence is put forth, and that the rest is superfluous material that is merely “icing on the cake“. At the very least, we can safely say that whatever the “brief overview“ presents, the expanded story will be more of the same.

Gerhardt Pfandl of the Biblical Research Institute wrote his essay *The History of the Trinity*

Among Adventists in 1999. This essay, like Dr. Moon's, is a synopsis of events that tell the story of how Adventists came to adopt the Trinitarian doctrine. It is available through the General Conference website at the BRI link.

Vance Ferrell, author of *Defending the Godhead*, is known as a staunch ultra-conservative Adventist, a zealous "defender of the faith". He is an independent writer for his own "Harvestime Books" publishing imprint. Br. Ferrell puts out thousands of his small pulp paperback books that are attainable for very little money. His stance on the Godhead issue is claimed to be very exhaustive and uses many quotes from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy to make his points. Unfortunately, his claim of "120 Spirit of Prophecy quotes and 511 Bible verses" is a bit misleading as we will see later. His primary claim is that present-day non-Trinitarian Adventists deny the divinity of Christ and the existence of the Holy Spirit, while at the same time asserting that the mainstream Adventists have accepted a false Trinitarian view of God, effectively making himself the only one who actually has the truth on the matter with his unashamed Tritheistic "threeness" (three gods) view. Because Ferrell is not entirely a supporter of either Story One or of Story Two, we will look at some of the claims of his book in the Appendix.

Leroy Edwin Froom's *Movement of Destiny* is the foundation upon which the traditional story was built, even though later Trinitarians such as Dr. Jerry Moon admit that there are historical problems with the book, as well as the taint of personal bias. Leroy Froom rose to the top of the Adventist publishing world at an early age in the late 1920s and wrote the first truly Trinitarian book published in the church in 1928, *The Coming of the Comforter*. He went on to play a central role in the Evangelical Barnhouse and Martin meetings in the mid-Fifties, from which came the book *Questions on Doctrine*.

Curiously, in spite of its admitted problems with historical inaccuracies and biased reporting, *Movement of Destiny* is still considered a reliable starting point for the examination of the adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine among Adventists. It is probable that we can give much of the credit, or blame, to Froom for the bringing in of the Trinity doctrine, as we will see as the story unfolds.

A Quick Overview of the Facts

I will now give a short synopsis of the events leading to the change of doctrine of the personality of God, then we can examine each point of controversy and test it against the actual facts.

Although James White and Joseph Bates did indeed come out of the Christian Connection, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "semi-Arian" views were arrived at corporately by thorough Bible study and prayer, as well as confirmation by the visions of Ellen White. There actually was no specific name given for the beliefs of the historic church regarding the personality of God, since man-made pigeon-hole terms like "Bitinarian", "Ditheist", and "Unitarian" all fell short of the biblical truth.

The "Arian" (Christ as a created being) side of the equation, represented by Uriah Smith, eventually gave way to a unified belief in the actual begotten sonship and divinity of Christ. This belief was then included as part of the "Fundamental Principles of Faith" from 1872 to 1914. However, the Fundamental Principles of Faith were not voted on as an official GC in session document because of the anti-creed stance of the church, some of whom, including James White and

J.N. Loughborough, believed that a creed, an enforceable list of tenets, would be the first step toward apostasy.

Eventually, new converts began to introduce different theories regarding the Godhead. A couple of primary movers in this area were apparently H.C. Lacey, and later W.W. Prescott, with Trinitarian concepts within Adventism beginning in Australia with the preaching of Lacey. Among those who reportedly listened to Lacey's speeches were A.G. Daniells, Prescott, and Ellen White's copyist, Marian Davis.

Another one of the higher profile characters in the Trinity movement was John Harvey Kellogg, who had married a Trinitarian Seventh-day Baptist wife and gained much of his theology from her Trinitarian Seventh-day Baptist minister. Kellogg then wrote a controversial book entitled *The Living Temple*, which claimed Ellen White's writings to support his new theology. This book was condemned by Ellen White as teaching Pantheism; the view that "God is in everything". She went on to say that her writings were taken out of context and misapplied, and that Satan, not God, was the inspiration of Kellogg's theology.

As part of this experience, Ellen White was shown that other dangerous heresies would come into the church, all claiming to have the support of her writings and the Bible. Mrs. White dubbed *The Living Temple* the "alpha of deadly heresies". In connection with this crisis, Mrs. White then warned the church repeatedly in the following years that men would come in and attempt to change the theology of the church on the issue of the Godhead, or as she put it, "the personality of God and of Christ". Kellogg began to teach the Trinitarian doctrine, saying that it was the basis of his book, and that from a Trinitarian viewpoint, his writings made sense.

A small group of men in the publishing work led by Edson Rogers, F.M. Wilcox, as well as W.W. Prescott and eventually Leroy Froom, brought the Trinity doctrine into the church several years after Ellen White's 1915 death. High profile writers within the church later wrote church history in a way as to show that James White eventually accepted the main points of the Trinity doctrine, when in fact he did not. They also credited the 1872 Principles of Faith to the pen of Uriah Smith, when James White was really the primary contributor. Later, from the 1940s to the 1990s, conference-appointed committees and the Ellen G. White Estate actively re-edited and misquoted the writings of Ellen White, James White and Uriah Smith, among others, to support the Trinity doctrine and the unfallen nature of Christ.

Those are the claims of "Story Two" Are they correct or erroneous?

In short, the main questions to be answered are:

1- What exactly did the church believe about the identity of God, and did it have the full support of Ellen White?

2- Was the non-Trinitarian view of God a fundamental belief of the church and a pillar doctrine?

3- Was Ellen White a "closet Trinitarian" as an early Adventist? Did she only oppose the "orthodox view" of the Trinity while supporting and pushing for another form of Trinitarian doctrine?

4- Did Ellen White ever change her position on the doctrine of God?

5- Did the Trinity doctrine come into the church through Ellen White? Or did Ellen White warn the church not to move from its historic position on the doctrine of God?

6- Did Ellen White bring Trinitarianism into the church through *The Desire of Ages*?

7- Were Ellen White's writings edited or altered to reflect Trinitarianism, either during her life or after she died?

8- Did those who wrote the official story (Story One) leave out pertinent information that would prove their version inaccurate and false?

9- Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while making the Trinity doctrine a test of fellowship, agree on what constitutes the Trinity doctrine?

We will answer these questions one by one using contextually-correct historical quotes from primary sources. We can then attempt to assemble the actual events that led to the adoption of the Trinity doctrine. Having then discovered the truth, we can move forward into the future as a people knowing, if nothing else, the real history behind the church changing its beliefs on this most fundamental issue, the identity of the God it worships. We can then test the biblical veracity of the various Godhead theories and doctrines currently being propagated within Adventism, comparing them to the original Fundamental Principles of Faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Holy Bible.

Chapter 4

The Historic View and Ellen White

Q- What exactly did the church believe about the identity of God, and did it have the full support of Ellen White?

According to history, the Advent movement was “semi-Arian”, a “semi-accurate”, though woefully inadequate, description of the actual doctrine of God held by the pioneers, including Ellen White. The original Statement of Fundamental Principles of Faith, written in 1872, states in its opening preamble:

“In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, **but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them.** (A Declaration of Fundamental Principles, 1872, page 3).

The early Adventist pioneers were distinctly against any type of document which would be construed as acting as a binding creed of any kind. In fact, J.N. Loughborough stated that a creed was the first of “five steps to apostasy.”

“the first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such.” (Loughborough/*Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861)

As such, the original Fundamental Principles of Faith were not a binding test of fellowship, even though it is made plain that the statement represented the fundamental doctrines *unanimously* held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Regardless of its apparent lack of authority in terms of fellowship, it was to be considered the identity of the church in terms of its theology and its doctrine of God. Here then are the first two articles of that statement:

A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists, 1872

- I -

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 everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:7.

- II -

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist; that he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that he dwelt among men full of grace and truth, lived our example, died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in Heaven, where, with his own blood, he makes atonement for our sins; which atonement, so far from being made on the cross, which was but the offering of the sacrifice, is the very last portion of his work as priest, according to the example of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in Heaven. See Leviticus ch. 16, Hebrews 8:4, 5; 9:6, 7.

Now, it is said by some that this statement of faith was not actually anti-Trinitarian and thus left room for expansion into a Trinitarian doctrine. However, those same proponents certainly would by no means accept this as our present statement of beliefs, and refer to this as a non-Trinitarian commentary. The fact that it presents God as a “personal, spiritual Being” is in and of itself completely incompatible with any kind of Trinitarian or Tritheism doctrine, since God is here presented as a single person. The statement also describes attributes of God that are not listed in the description of Christ.

One repeating theme you will see in this book is that churches and their members do not generally act in a vacuum. The thoughts and expressions of one prominent member is almost always in harmony either with another member or with the whole. Such is the case with the non-Trinitarian sentiments presented in the Declaration of Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists of 1872. While one can isolate this statement and try to minimize the non-Trinitarian aspects of it, one should not do that in light of the more overt statements made by the founders and framers of the church themselves which reflect the overall meaning of the 1872 document.

E.J. Waggoner : The Scriptures declare that Christ is “the only begotten son of God.” He is begotten, not created. As to when He was begotten, it is not for us to inquire, nor could our minds grasp it if we were told. The prophet Micah tells us all that we can know about it in these words, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.” Micah 5:2, margin. There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 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. He has by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels; He is “a Son over His own house.” Heb. 1:4; 3:6. And since He is the only-begotten son of God, He is of the very substance and nature of God and possesses by birth all the attributes of God, for the Father was pleased that His Son should be the express image of His Person, the brightness of His glory, and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead.(E.J. Waggoner, Sermon in 1888, also in Christ and His Righteousness)

“In arguing the perfect equality of the Father and the Son, and the fact that Christ is in very nature God, we do not design to be understood as teaching that the Father was not before the Son. It should not be necessary to guard this point, lest some should think that the Son existed as soon as the Father; yet some go to that extreme, which adds nothing to the dignity of Christ, but rather detracts from the honor due him, since many throw the whole thing away rather than accept a theory so obviously out of harmony with the language of Scripture, that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He was begotten, not created. He is of the substance of the Father, so that in his very nature he is God; and since this is so “it pleased the

Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” Col. 1:19 ... While both are of the same nature, the Father is first in point of time. He is also greater in that he had no beginning, while Christ’s personality had a beginning (E. J. Waggoner, *The Signs of the Times*, April 8, 1889).

The Scriptures declare that Christ is “the only begotten son of God.” He is begotten, not created (E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 21).

James S. White- "Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one as he was one with his Father. This prayer did not contemplate one disciple with twelve heads, but twelve disciples, made one in object and effort in the cause of their master. Neither are the Father and the Son parts of the "three-one God." They are two distinct beings, yet one in the design and accomplishment of redemption. (*Life Incidents*, p 343)

“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.” (*The Review & Herald*, January 4, 1881).

A.T. Jones- “He was born of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Jesus Christ was born again. **He came from heaven, God’s first-born**, to the earth, and was born again. But all in Christ’s work goes by opposites for us: He, the sinless one, was made to be sin in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He, the living One, the Prince and Author of life, died that we might live. **He whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity, the first-born of God**, was born again in order that we might be born again (*Christian Perfection*, paragraph 53). (This is also found in *Lessons on Faith*, p. 154.)

“He who was **born in the form of God** took the form of man (*The General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 449).

John Matteson- *Christ is the only literal Son of God. “The only begotten of the Father.” John 1:14. He is God because he is the Son of God; not by virtue of His resurrection. If Christ is the only begotten of the Father, then we cannot be begotten of the Father in a literal sense. It can only be in a secondary sense of the word* (*The Review & Herald*, October 12, 1869).

The following statements from Uriah Smith are proof positive that he gave up his early “full-Arian” stance and came into line with the denominated Fundamental Beliefs of his church.

Uriah Smith- *The Scriptures nowhere speak of Christ as a created being, but on the contrary plainly state that he was begotten of the Father.* (Uriah Smith, *Daniel and Revelation*, p. 430)

“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 the mysterious expressions, “his [God’s] only begotten Son” (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14), and, “I proceeded forth and came from God.” John 8:42 (Smith, *Looking Unto Jesus*, p. 10).

Stephen N. Haskell- *The rainbow in the clouds is but a symbol of the rainbow which has encircled the throne from eternity. Back in the ages, which finite mind cannot fathom, the Father and Son were alone in the universe. Christ was the first begotten of the Father, and to Him Jehovah made known the divine plan of Creation* (Stephen N. Haskell, *Story of the Seer of Patmos*, pp. 93, 94).

Christ was the firstborn in heaven; He was likewise the firstborn of God upon earth, and heir to the Father's throne. Christ, the firstborn, though the Son of God, was clothed in humanity, and was made perfect through suffering (*Ibid.*, p. 98).

R.F. Cottrell - *But if I am asked what I think of Jesus Christ, my reply is, I believe all that the Scriptures say of him. If the testimony represents him as being in glory with the Father before the world was, I believe it. If it is said that he was in the beginning with God, that he was God, that all things were made by him and for him, and that without him was not anything made that was made, I believe it. If the Scriptures say he is the Son of God, I believe it. If it is declared the Father sent his Son into the world, I believe he had a Son to send. If the testimony says he is the beginning of the creation of God, I believe it. If he is said to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, I believe it. And when Jesus says, "I and my Father are one," I believe it; and when he says, "My Father is greater than I," I believe that too; it is the word of the Son of God and besides this it is perfectly reasonable and seemingly self evident." (Review and Herald, 1 June, 1869)*

J.N. Andrews- *"And as to the Son of God, he could be excluded also, for he had God for His Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have beginning of days. So that if we use Paul's language in an absolute sense, it would be impossible to find but one being in the universe, and that is God the Father, who is without father, or mother, or descent, or beginning of days, or end of life. Yet probably no one for a moment contends that Melchizedek was God the Father." (Review & Herald, September 7, 1869)*

James Edson White (son of Ellen White)- *The angels, therefore, are created beings, necessarily of a lower order than their Creator. Christ is the only being begotten of the Father (Past Present and Future, p. 52).*

W.W. Prescott - *"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."(Review & Herald, April 14, 1896)*

In 1915, coincidentally (?) the year Ellen White died, the Declaration of Fundamental Principles, which according to the document itself was agreed to unanimously by the members of the church itself, was not printed in the Adventist Yearbook. The church would be without a statement of beliefs until 1931.

The question now is, did Ellen White support the non-Trinitarian view of the church during her lifetime, or was she, as asserted by the traditional story, the "lone wolf" that held a different view from the church she helped found?

Some proponents of the traditional theory suggest that Ellen White was never non-Trinitarian, but was more of a "closet Trinitarian" or, as E.R Gane put it, "a Trinitarian monotheist". These authors and speakers aver that although she was not anti-Trinitarian, her view of God was "immature" until God gave her new light in the late 1890s. In other words, she did not change her view of God per se, but rather simply grew from an immature view to a mature view. We are then told the church "matured" with her as a denomination, eventually adopting the Trinity doctrine, or as some prefer to call it, "the Godhead doctrine".

So let us now look at Ellen White's statements made during the same time that the pioneers and the church "unanimously agreed" to a non-Trinitarian view of God and a pre-incarnate literal sonship of Christ. Was she supportive of this view or not? Let's examine the evidence.

Ellen White wrote:

Thoughts from, the Mount of Blessing, p.106

"**Our Father** which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Mt. 6:9. To hallow the name of the Lord requires that the words in which we speak of **the Supreme Being be uttered with reverence.**"

Review and Herald, 3/9/97

"**And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**' To render acceptable service to God, it is essential that we should know God, to whom we belong, in order that we may be thankful and obedient, contemplating and adoring him for his wonderful love to men. We could not rejoice in and praise a being of whom we had no certain knowledge; **but God has sent Christ to the world** to make manifest his paternal character. It is our privilege to know God experimentally, and **in true knowledge of God is life eternal.** (Review and Herald, 9 March 1897)

Review and Herald, 11/8/98 (same year as Desire of Ages)

"**There is a personal God, the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son.**"

Patriarchs and Prophets, p.34

"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.**"

Ministry of Healing, p.421

"**The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ**, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each."

Signs of the Times, 05/30/95

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." 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. (The Signs of the Times - 05-30-95)

Desire of Ages, p.21

"**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."

Great Controversy, p.479

"Thus was presented to the prophet's vision the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered "according to his works." **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."

I think it can be unequivocally stated that Ellen White was in lock-step with her colleagues on the doctrine of the Father as "the only true God" and the literal sonship of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. From the "first born" origin of Christ, to God the Father as "the Source of all being", these statements from the pen of inspiration make it clear that far from being a "closet Trinitarian", her views were identical to those of the church at large.

Chapter 5

Disagreement Between the Whites?

Q- Did James and Ellen White Disagree on the Identity of God?

The traditional story also attempts to put a certain amount of disagreement between James and Ellen White, with James eventually adopting his wife's Trinitarian view of the nature and origin of Christ. This of course leads one's mind to the conclusion that had James White not died when he did, he would most certainly have become fully Trinitarian. Let's examine the following comment from Dr. Jerry Moon of Andrews University.

"Perhaps her first statement that clearly disagreed with her antitrinitarian colleagues came in 1869 in a landmark chapter, "The Sufferings of Christ," where in the opening paragraph she asserted on the basis of

Heb 1:3; Col 1:19; and Phil 2:6 that Christ in His pre-existence was “equal with God.” Here it became evident that if no one else was listening, her husband was. **Though James White’s early statements about the Trinity were uniformly negative, by 1876 and 1877 he was following his wife’s lead.**” (Jerry Moon, TDO) (emphasis mine)

But is this true? Please note the similarity between James White’s following 1881 statement and a quote from the pen of Ellen White some seventeen years later, supposedly after adopting a “mature Trinitarian view” of the Godhead.

James White 1881- *“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.**”* (The Review & Herald, January 4, 1881).

Ellen White 1898- *“**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.**”* (The Desire of Ages, pg 21)

Ellen White, in what has been touted as her definitive book on the deity of Christ, *The Desire of Ages*, echoes her husband’s semi-Arian belief that Christ received everything from God and that the Father alone is the source of everything and all being. Since this statement by James White was made shortly before his death, there is little reason to believe that his view of the doctrine of God ever changed, even if traditional story tellers attempt to paint a picture of “following his wife’s lead” on the part of James White.

Chapter 6

What's a Pillar?

Q- Was the Non-Trinitarian View of God a “Pillar”, or “Landmark” Doctrine?

As was laid out in the previous chapter, the non-Trinitarian belief that the Father alone is properly God and that Jesus Christ was His only begotten divine Son was the most basic fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception until at least 1931, with the final change coming as late as 1980. Let us review the first two Fundamental Beliefs of the early Adventist church:

A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists, 1872

- I -

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 everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:7.

- II -

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist; that he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that he dwelt among men full of grace and truth, lived our example, died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in Heaven, where, with his own blood, he makes atonement for our sins; which atonement, so far from being made on the cross, which was but the offering of the sacrifice, is the very last portion of his work as priest, according to the example of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in Heaven. See Leviticus ch. 16, Hebrews 8:4, 5; 9:6, 7.

Now, it has been suggested that although these statements were considered the first two “Fundamental Principles” of the Adventist faith, that at the same time they were not “pillar” or “landmark” doctrines. I find that suggestion very difficult to believe. But even so, when Ellen White mentioned the “pillars” of our faith, did she include a specific belief in the single personality of God and the literal begottenness of Jesus Christ the Son? Many say no, that the “pillars” consisted of only five doctrines, leaving room for “growth” on the doctrine of the personality of God and of Christ. Many cite the following quotation from Ellen White as proof of this assertion:

“In Minneapolis God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This light from heaven by some was rejected with all the stubbornness the Jews manifested in rejecting Christ, and there was much talk

about standing by the old landmarks. But there was evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were. There was evidence and there was reasoning from the word that commended itself to the conscience; but the minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the "old landmarks" when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks. The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The non-immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. **I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.**" (MS 13, 1889; 1888 Materials, p 518 [1889MS] p 441)

Traditionalists say that based on this quotation, the "landmarks" consisted of *only* the following doctrines as mentioned above by Ellen White:

1. the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven;
2. the first and second angel's messages and the third;
3. the temple of God in heaven and the ark containing the law of God;
4. the light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment
5. the non-immortality of the wicked.

However, just because only these doctrines were specifically mentioned at that time does not mean that is all the church and Ellen White considered to be fundamental "foundational" principles of the Adventist Christian faith. It is ironic that some Adventists would use this statement to the effect that they have, for in so doing they echo the methods used by Sunday-keeping Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in defense of their day of worship. How many times have Sunday-keeping Christians quoted Acts 15: 20 in defense of the Sunday?

"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." Acts 15:20

Many Catholics and Evangelicals have said that according to the apostle Peter, there are only 4 "landmark" or "pillar" doctrines, and that these do not include the Sabbath or the non-immortality of the soul. However, Adventists are quick to point out that there are some very serious holes in this argument. Namely, that these "pillar" doctrines also do not include belief in Christ's divinity, the virgin birth, the Resurrection or many other foundational Christian doctrines.

Likewise, Trinitarian Adventists then assert that only those five doctrines were fundamental to the Adventist faith. Likewise, the divinity of Christ, the health message, the resurrection, the virgin birth, etc., are all missing from Ellen White's list of "pillars". Does that mean I am "explaining away" Ellen White's statement by silence? No. It means that these were the special points at issue at that time, which were being controverted. Please read this sentence again:

“I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks....”

Ellen White did not say that this was “all there is”. She said , “I can *call to mind* nothing more ...”. Later, when new challenges arose concerning attacks on the Seventh-day Adventist faith during the Kellogg crisis, she mentioned another “pillar”, or “landmark”, not included in her first statement:

“Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. 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.” (Ellen White, MS 760, p 9,10)

Of course, logic demands that for an old landmark or pillar to be removed, there must have been one to start with. According to Trinitarian Adventist apologists, the Trinity or “Godhead” view was “new light” that was discovered and brought to light in the late 1890s and was not a belief of the church until much, much later. So since this statement was made just five years later, certainly Ellen White could not call “new light” an “old landmark”. And just as certainly, she could not be referring to her own supposed “Trinitarian monotheism” as an old landmark, since even according to Trinitarians she was basically isolated in her “new-found maturity”, waiting for the rest of the church to catch up.

Historical context leaves no other option than to believe that this statement was a reference to the Fundamental Principles of Faith of 1872-1915 which were “unanimously held“ by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and were “semi-Arian” in belief. And that this belief regarding the personality of God and of Christ was indeed a “landmark” doctrine, a “pillar” of the faith of God’s remnant people.

Now, some attempt to deflect this fact by saying that this quote was responding *only* to the Pantheism of John Harvey Kellogg, and that Ellen White was *only* saying that God “was not a tree” (we will address this in detail later). Even if that were true, she still said that there was an “old landmark” regarding the doctrine of God and His Son. This landmark doctrine was not the doctrine of “anti-Pantheism” or “anti-Spiritualism“, but of a pro-active and safeguard truth held by the church, which was that “God is a person” and that “God the Person” is the Father only and that Christ was His actual divine Son. Ellen White’s statement regarding “the personality of God or of Christ” shows that this entails the entire core belief regarding the doctrine of God and was not limited to Kellogg’s Pantheism. Why? Because Kellogg’s pantheistic theory had nothing to do with the personality of Christ, but was according to himself limited only to his view of the Holy Spirit, which was based in the Trinity doctrine.

Ellen White was defending the denominational position regarding the doctrine of God as seen in the following quote, which was made in 1905, seven years after *The Desire of Ages* was published.

“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 are we 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. We need now larger breadth, and deeper more earnest, unwavering faith in the leadings of the Holy Spirit. **If we needed the manifest proof of the Holy Spirit's power to confirm truth in the beginning, after the passing of the time, we need today all the evidence in the confirmation of the truth, when souls are departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.** There must not be any languishing of soul now." (Ellen White Special Testimonies, Series B, no. 7, p57. 4 December, 1905).

It would be unreasonable to believe that the personality of God and Christ was not a pillar, a foundational doctrine, of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the first 90 or so years of the movement's existence. According to the denomination's official statements, it was certainly a fundamental belief "unanimously held" by the brethren...and defended as a landmark doctrine by Ellen White!

Chapter 7

Ellen White's "Closet Trinitarianism"

Q- Was Ellen White a "closet Trinitarian" as an early Adventist?

It is asserted by some traditionalists that Ellen White was never non-Trinitarian. E.R. Gane, in an early dissertation, wrote that Ellen White was a "Trinitarian monotheist".

"In 1963 Erwin R. Gane broke new ground with his M. A. thesis arguing that most of the leaders among early Seventh-day Adventists held an antitrinitarian view of the Godhead, **but that Ellen G. White was an exception. In Gane's words, she was "a Trinitarian monotheist."** (Dr. Jerry Moon, "TDO")

Others aver that while she was not fully Trinitarian because of her "immature" view of God, she was never actually non-Trinitarian either. This is then presented as a growing experience, but at the same time it is also said she disagreed with the non-Trinitarianism of the church:

"There is ample evidence, however, that Ellen White's beliefs did change on a number of other issues, so it is entirely plausible that she grew in her understanding of the Godhead as well." (Moon, TDO)

"Perhaps her first statement that clearly disagreed with her antitrinitarian colleagues came in 1869 in a landmark chapter, "The Sufferings of Christ," where in the opening paragraph she asserted on the basis of Heb 1:3; Col 1:19; and Phil 2:6 that Christ in His pre-existence was "equal with God." (ibid)

This point raised by Dr. Jerry Moon puts Ellen White's disagreement with the church at an early date of 1869, *just six years* after the official formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and *three years before* the first publication of the list of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles. The question is, did her view that Christ was "equal with God" oppose the beliefs of the rest of the

church on this point? Did this belief put her in “clear disagreement with her colleagues“? Did non-Trinitarian Adventists believe at that time that Christ was *not* equal with God, or did they ever?

The answer is no. Several things come to mind in regards to this assertion. First, it is a known fact that Ellen White made “a suitcase full” of non-Trinitarian statements before and after 1869. Second, the majority of Trinitarian apologists for the church claim that she “grew” to be Trinitarian, and that this was not manifested in her writings until the late 1890s. Third and most importantly, there is not a single quote from anyone in the church at any time that states a belief in an “unequal” Christ when understood in its proper context.

The word game that appears to be being played here is that the pioneers believed that Christ’s authority and equality was “given to Him” by God His Father, a fact confirmed by Christ Himself. This is taken by many Trinitarians as evidence that those who believe as such think Christ was “inferior”, since only a “superior” being could bestow authority or life on another.

However, Ellen White was very clear in both *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Story of Redemption* that the Father “ordained by Himself” that Christ would share equality with him and that the Father was the “Source of all being”. The supposed “Trinitarian quote” of 1869, if taken as such, would be out of step with her later writings as well as all of her writings if we were to take this quote as interpreted by the Trinitarian apologists.

This would effectively make her at first Trinitarian (before Adventism), then non-Trinitarian (early Adventism), then Trinitarian again (1869), then non-Trinitarian again (1870s and 1880s), then Trinitarian again (1898 and on), all according to the leading of God. Since we know this is not reasonable, we must learn what her real views were and what the proper interpretation of this quote would be to harmonize with her consistent position.

It is the “inferior Christ” game and accusation that is played with great skill by traditional apologists. However, it must be pointed out that the historic Adventist doctrine of Christ was that, like one’s spouse, Christ was not “inferior” even while he was not the Supreme Being, nor was He “God the person“. If one were to examine the writings of Ellen White (or even the Bible) using the “inferior to God” model put forth by apologists, then Ellen White herself would definitely have to be seen as one believing in the “inferiority of Christ.” We have already seen several quotes from Ellen White where she states candidly that the Father is the “Supreme Being”.

Ellen White was clear that Christ received his equality, and all things, from God himself and was not intrinsically equal to God the Father.

The Story of Redemption, p.13.

“The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that He might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon His Son.... **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. 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.”

Desire of Ages (1898) p 21.

“**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.**”

8 Testimonies for the Church p 268 (1904)

“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.”

These words from Ellen White’s inspired pen, the last two of which were made after her supposed “Trinitarian growth” in the 1890s were identical in thought to the pioneer’s and her husband’s beliefs as revealed in the next two quotes from 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, Nov 29, 1877, Review and Herald)

It is important to note the date in which this statement was made. According to the theologians and apologists, the preceding quote was evidence that James White was “following his wife’s lead” and was becoming Trinitarian. However, you will notice that his “Trinitarian statement” is decidedly anti-Trinitarian, including the words “the inexplicable Trinity that makes the Godhead three in one and one in three, is bad enough...”.

The following statement, made four years later and shortly before his death, shows that James White had no change in theology whatsoever, and that his statement mirrors the previous quotes from Ellen White.

“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.***” (The Review & Herald, January 4, 1881).

As you can see, there was no discrepancy between the theology of Ellen White and that of her husband and her church. Any false accusation of believing in an “inferior Christ” can be equally attributed to both Ellen White and the pioneers, since they all held the same view that Christ “received all things from God”, that God the Father was “the Supreme Being” who “ordained by Himself” that Christ would have equality and that Christ was “the only begotten Son of God”, who was given his authority and power by a power more authoritative than Himself.

These points alone make any kind of association with the Trinity doctrine impossible, since the Trinity in any form denies outright and unconditionally all three of these beliefs. Some have tried to say that the Father merely played a “supreme role”, and that Christ was an intrinsically co-equal being who voluntarily entered into the “role of the son”, taking a voluntarily subordinate position in the Trinity, thus making the Father’s “role” supreme. Proponents of such a view do not have a single Ellen White statement to back up their assertion of her belief in a “role play” Christ. These quotations are clear that Ellen White believed in God the Father as “the Supreme Being”, not a co-equal being who entered into a “supreme role”, that she believed and taught that Christ received “all things from God”, including His authority and His very existence. And counter to the Trinitarian belief that Christ was intrinsically equal but voluntarily subordinated Himself in His humanity only is just the opposite of the doctrine taught by Ellen White.

Chapter 8

Did Ellen White Change?

Q- Did Ellen White ever change her Position on the Doctrine of God?

While some Trinitarian proponents within Adventism claim that Ellen White was always a “closet Trinitarian”, others claim that she *grew* to become Trinitarian, having received more light on the topic.

“There is ample evidence, however, that Ellen White’s beliefs did change on a number of other issues, so it is entirely plausible that she grew in her understanding of the Godhead as well.” (Moon, TDO)

Dr. Moon avers that since Ellen White “changed her beliefs” on a “number of other issues”, then it should be entirely reasonable to expect her to change her beliefs regarding the Godhead. He is partly right. Ellen White came from the Methodist Church, a Trinitarian church. She changed her belief on the Godhead after becoming Adventist to one of non-Trinitarianism. As we look at the growth in understanding and unfolding revelation behind Ellen White on other issues, we see that in each case the change took her further and further from the mainstream Protestant and Roman Catholic- influenced views she grew up with.

“The church that holds to the word of God is irreconcilably separated from Rome. Protestants were once thus apart from this great church of apostasy, but they have approached more nearly to her, and are still in the path of reconciliation to the Church of Rome. ...It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy.” (ST, February 19, 1894 par. 4)

We are asked to believe that in the case of the Godhead, Ellen White herself “lessened the distance” between the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and Rome. This has prompted commentators within Adventism to make such statements as the following:

“While Rome believes much that is false it also teaches much that is true.” Larry Kirkpatrick, www.greatcontroversy.org/gco/orc/kir-godhead.php

“*Nature of God*. A reading of the above statements will show that with respect to their doctrine of God Seventh-day Adventists are in harmony with the great creedal statements of Christendom [Rome], including the Apostles’ Creed, (Nicaea 325 A.D.), and the additional definition of faith concerning the Holy Spirit as reached in Constantinople (381 A.D.)”. George Reid, Biblical Research Institute / Seventh-day Adventists, an Introduction to Their Beliefs.

(Note- It should be understood that the Apostle’s Creed was not written by the apostles of Christ, but refers to the “apostolic succession” of Rome. The language is easily misunderstood on this point.)

However, to adopt the Trinity doctrine, Ellen White would have to have made an unprecedented move *toward* apostate Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Her growth in understanding in other areas of religion were not changes in doctrine, but rather, were advances in application, with each advance taking her farther from the fallen churches, not closer.

One such change in application included which hours to keep Sabbath, but no change in theology was made regarding the Sabbath commandment itself, once it was established by Adventists.

Another area of advancement was in the area of health reform. Ellen White and other Adventists were not aware of certain biblical principles and latest knowledge in terms of *applying*

health reform, and there was growth in this case, but that growth was not a move away from a theological position, health reform, that they already held and were committed to expanding its application. It was this commitment to biblical health reform that fueled the search for biblical principles and knowledge of application. Thus there was no change in theology in this case either.

In each case of Ellen White's "changing views", there was no 180 degree swing in basic understanding. To go from saying that "God is a person" and that Jesus is God's actual "only begotten Son" prior to the incarnation, to the presumed "growth position" that God is not a Being at all but a concept of "a unity" that exists within three co-eternal and co-equal God-beings (as viewed by Adventist tritheists) or the view that Christ and the Father are "One in Being" (the Roman Catholic/Nicene Creed view) that George Reid claims the church accepts, would be an unprecedented shift in theology, taking her from a decided anti-Roman Catholic view to the sharing of the belief of the papacy (one being), the Mormons (three beings) or the apostate Protestant churches (various versions) on the most fundamental of all beliefs, the identity of its deity.

Had Ellen White actually made this shift in theology from "semi-Arianism" to Trinitarianism it would be amazing that her two sons, Willie White and James Edson White, both of whom were greatly committed to their mother's prophetic gift, never became Trinitarians at any time in their lives. Willie White later commented in the 1920s that he was "saddened" by preachers who taught that the Holy Spirit was a separate person from the Father and the Son.

Now, with all of that said, those who retell the traditional story still maintain that Ellen White not only changed her own theology regarding the identity of God, but also brought the church itself to change its theology on the same. They begin by citing certain quotations, taken out of their historic and literary context about having "much to learn and unlearn". These quotes that were originally directed at individuals, fallen churches and the rejection of the 1888 message of Righteousness by Faith are then applied to the doctrine of God, saying that Ellen White was implying the church needed to "unlearn" its theology regarding the personality of God and Christ. But is this true? The next question will answer the first.

Chapter 9

New Light or Old Warnings?

Q- Did the Trinity doctrine come into the church through Ellen White? Or did Ellen White warn the church not to move from its historic position on the doctrine of God?

When we read her many warnings to the church in the wake of the J.H. Kellogg crisis, we do not see a messenger trying to bring new light and new truth, but rather, a prophet taking a stand for the theological status quo of what had been established in the first fifty years of the church's existence:

Testimonies for the Church, p 297 (1904)

"Let none seek to tear away the foundations of our faith--the foundations that were laid at the beginning of our work by prayerful study of the word and by revelation. **Upon these foundations we have been building for the last fifty years. Men may suppose that they have found a new way and that they can lay a stronger foundation than that which has been laid. But this is a great deception. Other foundation can no man lay than that which has been laid.**"

Special Testimonies, Series B, no. 7, p57.
(4 December, 1905, Sanitarium California).

"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 are we 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.*** We need now larger breadth, and deeper more earnest, unwavering faith in the leadings of the Holy Spirit. ***If we needed the manifest proof of the Holy Spirit's power to confirm truth in the beginning, after the passing of the time, we need today all the evidence in the confirmation of the truth, when souls are departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.*** There must not be any languishing of soul now."

New York Indicator, Standing in the Way of God's Messages – 7 Feb, 1906 p 4

"The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1844, after the passing of the time. The languishing souls are to be confirmed and quickened according to his word. And many of the ministers of the gospel and the Lord's physicians will have their languishing souls quickened according to the word. Not a word is changed or denied. ***That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth. Pillars of truth were revealed, and we accepted the foundation principles that have made us what we are -- Seventh-day Adventists, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus.***

MS 135, 1903

Ellen G. White, **The Early Years** Vol 1 - 1827-1862, p 145

"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 **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."

And finally, once again, read the following quotes very closely and carefully.

Ellen White, MS 760, p 9,10 - To Build Upon the Foundation

"Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. 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."

Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 5, p 665- **"The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed . . . Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given".**

According to Ellen White herself, *The Testimonies* were never designed or intended to give "new light", but to lift up that which was already established. The next to last quotation, as noted earlier, clearly shows that the early Seventh-day Adventist Church did in fact have a "pillar of faith" and an "old landmark" regarding the doctrine of God. Her other reference to "the first denominated principles of our faith" is a direct reference to the non-Trinitarian 1872 Fundamental Principles of Faith as published in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks. In 1903, five years after she supposedly "turned the tide" against non-Trinitarianism, she wrote that in their early experience the "whole company of believers were united in truth". How could she write such statements if she was attempting to change the church's theology on its most basic fundamental belief, the identity of its Deity? As was the case with the Galveston hurricane, the facts simply do not add up in favor of the traditional story.

Yet, in spite of these clear statements, those who propagate Story One continue to assert that Ellen White brought "new light" through *the Testimonies* on the doctrine of God that was in direct opposition to the established truth and fundamental beliefs as held by the church.

Would Ellen White change her theology, opposing the beliefs of her husband and the founders in turning away from the established first principles of the denominated faith, at the very same time she was warning the church at large not to? Not likely. Did she warn the church not to move from their foundational principles regarding the doctrine of God? Absolutely!

Chapter 10

The Desire of Ages

Q- *Did Ellen White reflect her own switch to Trinitarianism in her book The Desire of Ages?*

Among those who believe and assert that Ellen G. White became Trinitarian, or already was a “closet Trinitarian“, nearly all use her book *The Desire of Ages* as “irrefutable proof” of this change, citing her “bold new proclamations” that Christ had no origin and that the Holy Spirit is a third separate being and member of “the Godhead”.

Many are not aware that *The Desire of Ages* was not written as a chapter by chapter, page by page work. Rather, it was a book primarily compiled by Ellen White’s copyist, Marian Davis, using excerpts from earlier articles, letters, sermons and manuscripts. These excerpts from Ellen White’s writings were then arranged by the copyist and signed by Ellen White. This is not the stuff of conspiracies, but is a historical fact that, for the most part, is simply left untold to the masses.

Marian Davis and Desire of Ages

Referring to her involvement with *Desire of Ages* Marian Davis provides us with a clear indication of the extensive range of her personal input in the preparation of Ellen White’s books. She writes,

I see that neither in Brother Jones’ letter or yours have I stated definitely what I am doing on the manuscript or why. I have worked for a better opening to the chapters ... The chapters of the old manuscript began too often with some notice of Jesus going here or there, until the book seemed like a diary. [A reference to EGW’s original draft] That has been corrected. Then I have tried to begin the chapters and paragraphs with short sentences, and indeed to simplify wherever possible, to drop out every needless word, and to make the work, as I have said, more compact and vigorous. (Letter, Marian Davis to W C White, April 11, 1897)

A letter by H C Lacey to L E Froom indicates that Marian Davis not only used Ellen White’s writings she had a free hand in making use of other sources also. The letter reads,

“In this connection, of course you know that Sr. Marian Davis was entrusted with the preparation of “Desire of Ages” and that she gathered her material from every available source - from Sr. White’s books already in print, from unpublished manuscripts, from private letters, stenographical reports of her talks etc. - but perhaps you may not know that she (Sr. Davis) was greatly worried about finding material for the first chapter (and other chapters too for that matter) and I did what I could to help her; I have good reason to believe that she also appealed to Professor Prescott for similar aid, and got it too in far richer and more abundant measure than I could render“. (H C Lacey letter to L E Froom Aug. 30, 1945)

In her role as an active contributor to *Desire of Ages* Marian Davis approached Prescott for help. This request led her to insert into *Desire of Ages* faulty exegesis that Prescott supplied. Lacey explains how,

“At that time, Professor Prescott was tremendously interested in presenting Christ as the great “I Am” and in emphasizing the eternity of His existence, using frequently the expression “The Eternal Son”. Also he connected the “I AM” of Exodus 3:14, which of course was Christ the Second Person of the Godhead, with the fulfillment of Jesus in John 8:58, which we all agree to; but then linked it up with other “I ams” in that Gospel - 7 of them, such as “I am the Bread of life” “I am the Light of the world” “I am the door of the Sheep”

etc. all very rich in their spiritual teaching - but which seemed a little far fetched to me especially as the "I am" in all those latter cases is merely in the copula in the Greek, as well as in English. But he insisted on his interpretation. Sr. Marian Davis seem to fall for it, and lo and behold, when "Desire of Ages" came out, there appeared that identical teaching on pages 24 and 25, which, I think, can be looked for in vain in any of Sr. White's published works prior to that time." (Ibid)

In 1910, W. A. Colcord, an associate editor of the Review and Herald, wrote a letter in which he expressed concern that Ellen White's secretaries had placed erroneous interpretations of Scripture into her writings.

"Neither do I think that the comment on Matt.24:20, found on page 630 of "Desire of Ages" correctly represents the thought of the text. What is said there is true, but I am confident that it is not a correct exposition of the text. We pretty well know how some of these things have found their way into her writings. ***Her helpers have ransacked our leading works to get hold of what they thought were the best expositions of Scripture, and woven these things remodeled into the text.***" (Letter from W A Colcord to L A Smith, July 20, 1910, GC Archives)

The Preparation of Desire of Ages

Marian Davis worked for Sister White as a copyist for twenty-five years. Ellen White put a lot of confidence in Marian Davis to do her work faithfully. She was a very hard worker, and labored many times late into the night. She was Ellen White's most trusted and capable copyist. Ellen White had this to say about her work:

"She [Marian Davis] is my book-maker. ... She does her work in this way. She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. *She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.*" (Manuscript Releases, vol. 5 p. 185)

She also wrote,

"I have done scarcely anything on the life of Christ, and have been obliged to often bring Marian to my help, irrespective of the work on the life of Christ which she has to do under great difficulties, *gathering from all my writings a little here and a little there, to arrange as best she can.*—Letter 55, 1894, p. 6." (Manuscript Release No. 728: *How the Desire of Ages was Written*, p. 28)

"*I feel very thankful for the help of Sister Marian Davis in getting out my books. She gathers materials from my diaries, from my letters, and from the articles published in the papers. I greatly prize her faithful service. She has been with me for twenty-five years, and has constantly been gaining increasing ability for the work of classifying and grouping my writings.*—Letter 9, 1903." (Ibid., p. 44)

It is certain that Marian Davis did not write any of Ellen White's books, but she did have a great deal to do with the way they were laid out. Did Ellen White personally approve of every change that Marian made in the structure of the books?

In a personal letter, Ellen White wrote,

"*Marian will go to him [Willie White] for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself.... I have had a talk with her and told her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie.... Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business.*—Letter 64a, 1889, p. 1." (Ibid., p. 22)

In the book, *The Desire of Ages*, certain aspects of how the text was to be arranged was left entirely up to Marian Davis to decide.

“As the work [*The Desire of Ages*] was thought to be nearing completion in 1896, Marian, working on the three general introductory chapters, ‘God With Us,’ ‘The Chosen People,’ and ‘The Fullness of the Time,’ **sought the counsel of Herbert Lacey of the Avondale school on the arrangement of paragraphs**. He was a rather youthful graduate of the classical course offered at Battle Creek College. He made some helpful suggestions in the matter of the sequence of the thoughts presented, which, when it became known, gave birth in later years, when he was known as a seasoned college Bible teacher, to rumors that Lacey had a prominent role in authoring the book. In both oral and written statements he flatly denied such a role (DF 508, H. C. Lacey to S. Kaplan, July 24, 1936).” (*The Australian Years 1891-1900*, p. 385)

In preparing the final portions of *The Desire of Ages* Marian consulted with H. Camden Lacey for advice regarding the arrangement of paragraphs. This caused some to believe that Lacey “had a prominent role in authoring the book.” It was in this year also that W. W. Prescott proofread the book in its final stages. In June of 1896, after counsel with Lacey and Prescott, Marian “had precious matter to insert” into the book. Ellen White wrote,

“In the afternoon Brother and Sister Prescott came. We had a good visit with Sister Prescott. *Brother Prescott was with Marian in the interest of the book ‘Life of Christ.’* [*The Desire of Ages*] *He is reading it, for it is the last reading before publication.*—MS 62, 1896. (*Ibid.*, p. 387)

Arthur White notes:

“So Ellen White and her staff thought; but it did not work out that way. Three or four months later there was more material to be added. Wrote Ellen White on June 1, 1896: ‘In the last discourses reported, *Marian has had precious matter to insert*, and this has necessitated her obtaining a new set of copies with the addition.’” (*Ibid.*, p. 388)

The Counsel of Lacey and Prescott to Marian Davis

In a letter written by H. Camden Lacey to Leroy Froom he speaks specifically about this time period. Leroy Froom had written a letter to Lacey asking him about the events in Australia. He wrote,

“Dear Brother Lacey:... Elder D. E. Robinson of the White Estate, is under the impression, I believe from something told him by you, that over at Cooranbong around 1898 or 1899 you were giving a series of studies on the Trinity and were challenged by some of the brethren. I think Marian Davis was present at that time,...” (Letter written by Leroy Froom to Herbert Camden Lacey on August 8, 1945)

Lacey replied at length,

“Dear Brother Froom:... Well, that was not quite the angle in which I was involved in the studies conducted at Cooranbong way back in 1896. At that time, Professor Prescott was tremendously interested in presenting Christ as the great ‘I AM’ of Exodus 3:14, which of course was Christ the Second Person of the Godhead, with the statement of Jesus in John 8:58, which we all agreed to; but then linked it up also with other ‘I ams’ in that Gospel—7 of them, such as ‘I am the Bread of Life’ ‘I am the Light of the World’ ‘I am the Door of the Sheep’ etc. all very rich in their spiritual teaching—but which those latter cases is merely the copula in the Greek, as well as in the English. But he insisted on his interpretation. **Sr. Marian Davis seemed to fall for it, and lo and**

behold, when the 'Desire of Ages' came out, there appeared that identical teaching on pages 24 and 25, which, I think, can be looked for in vain in any of Sr. White's published works prior to that time!

"In this connection, of course you know that *Sr. Marian Davis was entrusted with the preparation of 'Desire of Ages'* and that she gathered her material from every available source—from Sr. White's books already in print, from unpublished manuscripts, from private letters, stenographical reports of her talks, etc.—but perhaps you may not know that she (Sr. Davis) was greatly worried about finding material suitable for the first chapter. She appealed to me personally many times as she was arranging that chapter (and other chapters too for that matter) and I did what I could to help her; and I have good reason to believe that she also appealed to Professor Prescott frequently for similar aid, and got it too in far richer and more abundant measure than I could render....

"Professor Prescott's interest in the 'Eternity of the Son,' and the great 'I AMS' coupled with the constant help he gave Sr. Davis in her preparation of the 'Desire of Ages,' may serve to explain the inclusions of the above-named teachings in that wonderful book...."

"I have always known that Elder *Uriah Smith was an Arian in belief*, ('Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation' reveal that!) and that *our people undoubtedly generally followed that view*. But we, as a family, had been brought up in the Church of England, and were naturally, may I say, Trinitarians. We just believed it, subconsciously, and I do not remember our ever discussing the question with the brethren who brought us into the Truth, Elder M. C. Israel, and young brother W. L. H. Baker. One thing I do recall is my mother's remarking on the strange language used by our ministers in speaking of the Holy Ghost as 'it' and 'its' as though they thought of the Holy Spirit as an influence, instead of as a Person. That seemed very strange to her, and in a measure to me also (I was about 17 then).

"Now this bring[s] me to the second point in my letter; The angle in which I was involved in that convention at Cooranbong was not the Eternity of the Son, but the Personality of the Holy Ghost.

"Perhaps a few words of historic background may be helpful here:

"As I already stated, I was really a Trinitarian at heart. And I went through Healdsburg College, and Battle Creek College, with a dim sort of a feeling that there was something wrong about our teaching on the Ministry and Personality of the Holy Ghost. (Of course, that term was never used, except in reading from the Bible,—it was always 'Holy Spirit' and referred to as 'it.')

And then *in the Testimonies I noticed that, practically everywhere, the same language was used,—'Holy Spirit' 'it' 'its' etc., as though the 'Spirit of God' were an influence, instead of a Person, the Third Person of the Godhead....*

"On the voyage back to Australia during September 1895, I made that theme, the Personality and Work of the Holy Ghost, a special subject of Bible Study. And I became convinced for myself! So when I was asked to conduct a series of Bible Studies at the 9:00 o'clock hour in a convention in Cooranbong in 1896, *I presented that theme very much to the interest (I well remember!) of Sr. Marian Davis, who took copious notes, and also to that of Elder A. G. Daniells, who was frequently present and expressed conservative appreciation.*

"When the 'Desire of Ages' came out in 1898, Brother Daniells himself called my attention to the expression found on page 671, where the Spirit is spoken of as 'the third person of the Godhead' (I had not at that time seen a printed copy) and made some kindly comments....

"In this same connection I was interested to note the language used in the article 'The Holy Spirit in our Schools' found in 8T. 61, 62, and bearing [the] date 'May 10, 1896' Cooranbong N. S. W., where every time the Holy Spirit is referred to, the pronouns 'He,' 'Him,' 'His' are employed. And He is called a 'heavenly messenger' 'The heavenly guest' repeatedly, and apparently 'the great Teacher Himself.'" (Letter by Herbert Camden Lacey to Leroy Froom on August 30, 1945)

It is apparent that W. W. Prescott and Camden Lacey had some influence upon Marian Davis while she

was preparing *The Desire of Ages*. Both of these men were Trinitarians at this time, and it is obvious that the counsel Marian Davis received from them was pro-Trinitarian. Up to this time Marian Davis was very careful to present the Testimonies as they had been given by the Lord. Yet here it seems that she was influenced by Lacey and Prescott to make minor changes so that it appeared as if Ellen White was teaching the Trinitarian doctrine.

"The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed . . . Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given" (5T 665). This section taken from *The Old Paths Newsletter*, by Allen Stump

In Marian Davis's compilation and arrangement of Ellen White's writings for *Desire of Ages*, it becomes apparent that in a few places there has been a misapplication of the original meaning and intent of the quote being inserted. Here are a couple of examples that are relevant to the current topic.

"The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof." *DA* p 699 (1898)

The above quote in *Desire of Ages* was taken from a manuscript published just 3 years earlier and re-edited to reflect a slight change in meaning. The original reads as follows:

MSR# 1084 – 7; MS 5a, (1895)

"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 [Christ] 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.**"

Ellen White wrote that the Holy Spirit was Christ "Himself", while Davis may have changed the wording to say that the Holy Spirit was Christ's "representative". Now Ellen White sometimes used the word "representative" to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. However, this is one of her clearest statements that while the term *representative* was used, the Holy Spirit was not a "separate being" as that representative, as evidenced by her plain words, which confirm that "*He [Christ] represents Himself* in all places by *His Holy Spirit*", not that another being represents Him.

Some challenge this interpretation by saying that the "Himself" as seen in the sentence "The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of humanity" should be read to mean "He himself, the Holy Spirit, is divested of humanity". Of course since the meaning of the word "divested" means to be stripped of something you have, it makes no sense to interpret this that way, since all would agree that the Holy Spirit never had a humanity to be stripped, or divested, of. This also does not work with the context, which plainly says that Christ represents Himself by "His" Spirit. The entire quote is focused on Christ and how he can be omnipresent, not on the "separate being" of the Holy Spirit. An independent being cannot be the omnipresence of another independent being.

Another extremely important quote that was taken from another of Ellen White's writings and then reapplied is the famous *Desire of Ages* statement that Christ's life was "original, unborrowed, underived". This was the statement that supposedly "changed the denomination's view" of the deity

of Christ and was the thrust behind Ellen White's supposed "bold new stand" for the Trinitarian doctrine.

In *Adventist Review*, January 6, 1994 p10, Pastor W. G. Johnson states:

"Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of 'present truth.' Many of the pioneers, including James White, J.N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and JH 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. Only gradually did this false doctrine give way to the biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen White's writings in statements such as: 'In Christ is life, original, unborrowed and underived' (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530)

Here is the quote that Johnson refers to....

"In Christ is life original, unborrowed, underived." *Desire of Ages*
p 530 (1898)

.....and then the quote as it appeared in the original manuscript that Ellen White actually hand-wrote it in.

(*The Signs of the Times*, April 8, 1897- See Also 1 *SM*, pp. 296, 297)
"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life, which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18), He said. ***In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. 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 Savior.***

As can be clearly seen, Ellen White was in no way trying to say Christ had no origin, but was describing a type of life; an immortality that Christ had inherited as God's Son and a life that man can possess through Christ. The Bible clears up any confusion:

John 5:26

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

These are but a couple of examples of how Marian Davis's arrangement work affected the thrust of *Desire of Ages* in a few places. Ellen White knew what she meant by these statements. She herself had written them originally and therefore had no cause for alarm, since she was not interpreting them as Trinitarians do today. It was mainly after her death, and the deaths of the pioneers, that people began to interpret these writings as Trinitarian, since she was no longer alive to defend her writings from misuse and misapplication as she had with John Harvey Kellogg.

Chapter 11

“Helpful Editing”

Q- Were Ellen White’s writings edited or altered by others to reflect Trinitarianism, either during her life or after she died?

This question is a delicate one. We want to know the truth, but at the same time we need to remain confident in the gift of prophetic guidance God gave His last days people. When this issue is raised., one of the first responses is, “ If altering did take place, then how can we trust any of her counsels and writings“?

I will answer that question in a little a while. But we owe it to ourselves as God’s last days remnant people to know the truth on the matter, decide what impact this has on our view of the relevant teachings that were influenced by such editing, and then demand that it be admitted to and consequently remedied. Some go on record as categorically denying that Ellen White’s writings have been re-edited or altered in any way that would effect the thrust or meaning of her message.

In discussing this with church leaders, they have denied any changes taking place that were without her direct approval. The idea of altering is described as “absurd”, “a false accusation against the church”, “ wild-eyed conspiracy theories”, “destroying the credibility of Ellen White” and on and on. I am reminded of the public anger from native Texans toward Eric Larsen for revealing the findings of his research and Isaac Cline’s role in the 1900 Galveston Hurricane disaster.

While there are many examples of the altering of Ellen White’s writings, ranging from ending sentences in the middle, to using her previously written material out of context in compilations, to actual word changes, the evidence is clear that at the very least the writings of Ellen G. White have been manipulated to steer toward a certain theology that she herself opposed.

Lost and Misrepresented Testimonies

A.T. Jones quoted a member of the General Conference in His “Final Word and a Confession” in 1906 p 13, who stated:

“You know that the Testimonies of Sister White are from the Lord. You know, too, how to distinguish between men’s manipulations of these Testimonies and what these Testimonies themselves actually teach....I do not count it any reproach to him that he recognizes the fact that men do manipulate the Testimonies; and that a distinction must be made between men’s manipulations of them and the Testimonies themselves. It is the sober truth.... It must be recognized that mistakes have been made and are made; that men

do manipulate the Testimonies.”

A.T. Jones and the unnamed G.C. member were adamant against the manipulation of Ellen White’s writings. Jones’ concern was not a specific accusation of altering per se’, but of “manipulation” in a nondescript and general sense. This manipulation involves both the wrongful and out of context use of her writings, as well as any misrepresentation, whether it be out of historic context or changing the actual words or putting mind-leading headings above the text that would lead the reader to believe she was implying some thing she was not.

One particular example of the misuse of headings to create confusing thoughts is found in the devotional compilation book *The Upward Look*. For their entire history, Seventh-day Adventists have rejected Easter as a pagan-based holiday by its very name, Astarte, (the Babylonian goddess of, whose holy day consisted in exchanging colored eggs to represent sexual fertility), and its origin. On page 263 of *The Upward Look*, we find the heading reading “Insights into the Easter Story”.

Conservative Adventists have been noticing in recent years an increase in the celebration of Easter by many mainstream Adventists, complete with ”sunrise services” and “Easter Egg hunts”. While there is little evidence of any kind of organized conspiracy behind the push for Easter sacredness and celebration, it cannot be ignored that the use of such mind-leading headings gives the impression that Ellen White would approve of Easter, since the word is associated with a book that carries her name as the author. This could just as easily have been written to say “Insights into the Resurrection”.

In terms of actual misrepresentation, Ellen White’s own son, W.C. White, made the following admission:

“At the very first of her writing out testimonies to individuals, she made two copies, one to be kept as a record of what she had written, and one to be sent to the person for whom the message was given. As this work became heavy, she sometimes sent the testimony to the person addressed, asking that the recipient make a copy for himself and return to her the original. ***Unwilling to have it made known what Sister White had been shown, some refused to make a copy or to return to her what she had written. Thus some testimonies were lost. And when, as sometimes happened, misrepresentations were made regarding what was in the testimony, she had no written proof as to what the testimony actually said.***” (How Ellen White’s Book were Written, W.C. White , 1935, pp 20,21)

“Willie” White, the original executor of the Ellen G. White Estate, not only openly admits to some of *the Testimonies* being lost, but candidly shares that “sometimes” misrepresentations of her writings were in fact circulated with no way to prove what the originals actually said. This is important, since many of Ellen White’s so-called “Trinitarian statements” are taken from typed or steno-graphed copies for which an original handwritten manuscript has been lost.

Context....

Another area of major concern is that of cutting Ellen White’s writings out of their original context and pasting them in compilations without balancing and harmonizing statements. Sometimes the sentences and paragraphs are cut off in mid stream, often without an ellipsis (...) to show that there is more to the quote that is being omitted.

One example is taken from the book *Evangelism*, where one of her most famous statements about “the person of the Holy Spirit” is pulled from its context without the ellipsis, implying that the thought was complete. Here is the sentence as it appears in *Evangelism*:

“We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds.” *Evangelism*, p 616 (1946)

The original quote is as follows:

“The Lord instructed us that this was the place in which we should locate, and we have had every reason to think that we are in the right place. 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 [the Father] is our keeper, and helper**. He hears every word we utter and knows every thought of the mind.” MSR 487-1

Now, some may not see anything in that alteration to object to. However, three things should be viewed as important. First, No compiler has the right to alter an author’s original statements by using only part of a sentence without the use of an ellipsis to signify such.

Second, taken in context with the whole of Ellen White’s writings, it is clear that when she says “...that the Lord God is our keeper and helper” she is speaking specifically of God the Father. Whenever Ellen White used the term “the Lord God” in any of her writings, it was always a direct reference to the Father only. In the above statement, she is saying that the Holy Spirit is a person *because* God the Father is a person, and taught very plainly that the Holy Spirit is the personal presence, mind and glory of God and of Christ.

Finally, as a research writer, I understand that no qualified 20th century chief editor omits half a sentence without using an ellipsis on accident, especially when, according to the main editor himself, the primary purpose of *Evangelism*, in spite of all the other information contained therein, was to press for acceptance of the Trinity doctrine. I will comment more on that and provide clear source evidence for this assertion later.

Word Changes to Ellen White’s Writings?

But have Ellen G. White’s writings been tampered with in the area of actual word changes? Please check the following example, which is only one of many. In this particular example, the words “it” and “Its”, which Ellen White used to describe the Holy Spirit (much to the chagrin of H.C. Lacey) have been changed to “He”, “His” and “Him” for the compilation book in order to support the teaching that the Holy Spirit is an actual separate being to God and Christ.

Original statement
SIGNS OF THE TIMES, September 27, 1899

We need to pray for the impartation of the divine Spirit as the remedy for sin-sick souls. The surface truths of revelation, made plain and easy to be understood, are accepted by many as supplying all that is essential; but the Holy Spirit, working upon the mind, awakens an earnest desire for truth uncorrupted by error. He who is really desirous to know what is truth can not remain in ignorance; for precious truth rewards the diligent seeker. We need to feel the converting power of God's grace, and I urge all who have closed their heart against God's Spirit to unlock the door, and plead earnestly, Abide with me. Why should we not prostrate ourselves at the throne of divine grace, praying that God's Spirit may be poured out upon us as **it** was upon the disciples? **Its** presence will soften our hard hearts, and fill us with joy and rejoicing, transforming us into channels of blessing.

The Lord would have every one of His children rich in faith, and this faith is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit upon the mind. **It** dwells with each soul who will receive **it**, speaking to the impenitent in words of warning, and pointing them to Jesus, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. **It** causes light to shine into the minds of those who are seeking to co-operate with God, giving them efficiency and wisdom to do His work."

Reprinted statement

YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER (published 1996) P.59

We need to pray for the impartation of the divine Spirit as the remedy for sin-sick souls. The surface truths of revelation, made plain and easy to be understood, are accepted by many as supplying all that is essential; but the Holy Spirit, working upon the mind, awakens an earnest desire for truth uncorrupted by error. He who is really desirous to know what is truth cannot remain in ignorance; for precious truth rewards the diligent seeker. We need to feel the converting power of God's grace, and I urge all who have closed their heart against God's Spirit to unlock the door, and plead earnestly, Abide with me. Why should we not prostrate ourselves at the throne of divine grace, praying that God's Spirit may be poured out upon us as **He** was upon the disciples? **His** presence will soften our hard hearts, and fill us with joy and rejoicing, transforming us into channels of blessing.

The Lord would have every one of His children rich in faith, and this faith is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit upon the mind. **He** dwells with each soul who will receive **Him**, speaking to the impenitent in words of warning, and pointing them to Jesus, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. **He** causes light to shine into the minds of those who are seeking to cooperate with God, giving them efficiency and wisdom to do His work."

When confronted with this and other evidences for tampering, the reaction varies from indignant disbelief to a simple, "Well, I do not consider that altering since it does not change, but clarifies, our theology regarding the Holy Spirit."

That is circular reasoning, since the current theology regarding the Holy Spirit is based largely on Ellen White's use of the word "Him" in describing the identity of God's Spirit. How would those who respond in such a way feel if one were to change all the "Hims" to "its"? But regardless of your view of the Godhead, it cannot be denied that an inappropriate alteration took place.

Upon discovering this, many turn to the Ellen G. White Estate for clarification and reassurance. The following is an actual response from the EGW Estate to this particular paragraph:

Dear _____,

Thank you _____, I wondered whether this related to the book YRP. As you have no doubt observed in your own study, Mrs. White was not consistent in her use of pronouns for the Holy Spirit. Sometimes she used the masculine pronoun "he" and sometimes she used the neuter pronoun "it." Occasionally she used both in the same article.

When the White Estate put together the devotional book Ye Shall Receive Power, the editors decided that a consistent usage in the book would be desirable for the readers and would do no disservice to Mrs.

White's intent. They used the personal pronoun "he," or inserted in brackets ["the Spirit"] where "it" was used in the original source. **However, after the book's publication, further reflection led to the conclusion that making those changes was really beyond the proper editorial role of the White Estate**, and around 1998 or 1999 we instructed the publishing house to change the instances where "he" had been substituted back to "it" in future printings of the book, to reflect Mrs. White's original, though inconsistent, usage. When the CD-ROM was reprinted in the year 2000, it incorporated these changes. (I do not know whether the hard copy of the book has been reprinted yet.) I think you will agree that to cite this as evidence of changing the "doctrinal thrust" of her writings is to ignore Ellen White's usage elsewhere of the personal pronoun and her clear-cut statements that the Holy Spirit is a divine person.

ViceDirector
Ellen G. White Estate
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

That explanation sounds reasonable on the surface and brings comfort to Trinitarian and Tritheist Adventists, who usually go away confident that Ellen White's writings have not been "altered", but only *helpfully edited* in this one regrettable case. However, a couple of things become very noticeable to the honest truthseeker.

First, there has never been a public admission or public apology for this or any other *helpful editing*. Second, to this date the Ellen G. White Estate handles tampering allegations case by specific case and only reveals as much information as is necessary to placate the inquirer without giving a full account of the extent of alterations made to Ellen White's writings and subsequent compilations. In other words, if you ask about tampering in *Ye Shall Receive Power*, then that is all they will admit to or even address. To put it bluntly, if they have not "been caught" then they will not admit it. This of course does not resolve the problem concerning the extent of tampering in regards to other writings, but rather, feeds an atmosphere of distrust in the Spirit of Prophecy writings altogether.

Why does this cause distrust? Because we can logically figure if the tampering were limited only to one book or a couple other examples, it would be easier to just get it out in the open. However, when the desire is to limit the admission to only a few examples in one or two books, or to only that which is brought up at the time, one cannot help but wonder how extensive the problem actually is.

However, the allegations of tampering go beyond just *Ye Shall Receive Power*, and as we have seen, involve personal letters and testimonies, as well as out of original context use of sentences and paragraphs, as we saw in the compilation book *Evangelism*.

A case in point is that while the White Estate admits to the *helpful editing* of *Ye Shall Receive Power* (but only when they are confronted about it specifically), and while they acknowledge that this tampering was an error in judgment on their part, they make no mention of, or apology for, a similar change made to *The 1888 Materials*. Here is the quote as it originally appeared:

"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 His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (The bell is sounding for morning worship. I must stop here) *The 1888 Materials*, p.1538

Here is the same quote after editing for MR volume 11:

“The Spirit is freely given us of God if we will appreciate and accept **Him**, and what is **He**? The representative of Jesus Christ. **He** is to be our constant helper. It is through the Spirit that Christ fulfills His promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (The bell is sounding for morning worship. I must stop here) Manuscript releases Vol.11p.35

The important point here, besides the altering of the quotes themselves, is that in the above letter to the inquirer regarding tampering in *Ye Shall Receive Power*, the White Estate representative did not mention *Manuscript Releases Volume 11*, but limited his response only to *Ye Shall Receive Power*. Apparently, the White Estate has adopted the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. How many more such “editings” are out there that the White Estate does not mention? Pray for reform and a thorough “housecleaning” at the Ellen G. White Estate.

Chapter 12

Missing Information

Q- Did those who wrote the official story “miss” pertinent information that would prove their version inaccurate and false?

One of the primary, and most pivotal, points made by the traditionalists is that Ellen White, her husband and the church at large did not oppose every version of the Trinity, but only a specific “spiritualistic” version. According to this assertion, the anti-Trinitarian view held by the early Adventists was more of a “default” position, and was a new hybrid theology based not in Bible truth or exhaustive study confirmed by God’s Holy Spirit, but in rejection of a single specific view. Supposedly, they did not reject the idea of a “three-being God“ (tritheism), but rejected “the old Trinitarian creed” of specific churches which said Jesus and the Father were the same Person, or that the Father had no form, but was an all encompassing force found in every part of nature.

“A likely reason why she consistently shunned the term “Trinity,” even after she had embraced certain aspects of trinitarian teaching, is the second hypothesis: **that she had become aware of two varieties of trinitarian belief, one that she embraced and one that she vehemently rejected.**” (Moon, TDO)

“In charging that Kellogg, with his “spiritualistic” trinity doctrine, was “departing from the faith”**She is clearly distinguishing between two varieties of trinitarianism.**” (ibid)

“The conceptual key that unlocks the enigma of Ellen White’s developmental process regarding the Trinity is the discovery that her writings describe at least two distinct varieties of trinitarian belief. One of these views she consistently opposed throughout her adult ministry, and the other she eventually endorsed. The

trinitarian concept that she opposed was one that “spiritualized” the members of the Godhead as distant, impersonal, mystical, and ultimately unreal. (ibid)

But is this true? Did the pioneers, Ellen White included, reject only a couple of specific forms of the Trinitarian doctrine while searching for the “biblical Trinity”? Let’s look at the evidence, both from the traditional story and then from history itself.

“The concept that she favored portrayed God as personal, literal, and tangible. She did not initially recognize His trinitarian nature, but when she did, she would describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as real individuals, emphasizing Their “threeness” (individuality) as willing, thinking, feeling, and relational persons, and explaining Their oneness in terms of nature, character, purpose, and love, but not of person. The basis of these differentiations will become clearer as we examine the historical context and process of her developing thought.” (ibid)

Actually what the author is leaving out is that Ellen White’s view not only made God “personal” but made God a person; a singular, actual person. Ellen White writes:

“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. **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.” (1SAT 343.3)

God was “a person”, singular, according to Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As one examines her writings, he sees that she always referred to the person of God as the Father alone, just like the New Testament. The author states that Ellen White did not “initially” recognize “His trinitarian nature“, but there was never a single statement from the pen of Ellen White which ever stated that God Himself has a trinitarian nature, or is made up of three separate beings acting in unity.

Some have made mention to Ellen White’s use of the term “heavenly trio”, and have tried to imply that Ellen White meant the Trinity, but was avoiding the term because of the anti-Catholic bent of the church. But it should be noted that she did not say that the heavenly trio was properly God Himself, or was a group that made up the One God. If it were, then her insistence that “God is a person” is self-contradictory and inconsistent, since “three persons” are not “a person”. If “the heavenly trio” were “the Godhead”, using the errantly-defined meaning of the word, and then the Godhead was God Himself, then God certainly was not a person, but merely the name of a group, a triumvirate government.

Ellen G. White’s words, “God is a person and Christ is a person”, a definitive statement made several years after her supposed “Trinitarian growth”, cannot in any way be harmonized or forced into the Tritheist or Trinitarian view. Trinitarians say, “God is one ‘what’ comprised of three ‘whos’”. The Tritheist says, “God is a unified group made up of three separate divine beings; one ‘them’ made up of three ‘whos’“. There is not room on either side for a God that is “a Person” in addition to Christ who is a separate person from God.

The words, “God is a person”, which Ellen White used several times in her writings, is left out of most if not all Trinitarian Adventist explanations for the church’s acceptance of the doctrine.

“The Old Unscriptural Trinitarian Creed...”

Another area where information has been, well, truncated, is that of the “old unscriptural Trinitarian creed” comment of James White. Story One propagators attempt to link Ellen White’s anti-Trinitarian statements with her husband’s and the church’s stand against “spiritualizers” who believed that Jesus and the Father are the same person, and that God proper had no form (this would be a definite blow to orthodox Trinitarian Adventists even left at its incomplete level).

*“The evidence is that **Ellen White agreed with the essential positive point of James’ belief**, namely that “the Father and the Son” are “two distinct, literal, tangible persons.” Subsequent evidence shows that **she also agreed** with James’s negative point: that the traditional, philosophical concepts held by many trinitarians did “spiritualize away” the personal reality of the Father and the Son. (Moon, TDO)*

So according to the Trinitarian, Dr. Moon himself, Ellen White agreed with her husband’s theology, even if the author leaves that theology vague. Here then is the theology that both Dr. Moon and the White Estate both say that Ellen White agreed with, in their own words:

“Our forefathers consistently were averse to the doctrine of the Trinity as defined in church creeds, notably the Methodist. They saw in it an element that “spiritualized” away both Jesus Christ and God. James White in a letter sent to the *Day Star* and published in the issue of January 24, 1846, speaks of—

“A certain class who deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. This class can be no other than those who spiritualize away the existence of the Father and the Son, as two distinct, literal, tangible persons, also a literal Holy city and throne of David.... **The way spiritualizers this way have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural trinitarian creed.**”
<http://whiteestate.org/books/egww/EGWWc05.htm>

And from Dr. Jerry Moon:

One of James’s polemics against the spiritualizers included a remark about the Trinity that implied a similarity of belief between the spiritualizers and the trinitarians. Apparently some of the “spiritualizers” were supporting their error by reference to what James called “the old unscriptural trinitarian creed.” (Moon, TDO)

Both Dr. Moon and the Ellen G. White Estate end James White’s remark in the middle of a sentence, without the use of the ellipsis. What did they leave out? Let us now look at what it was that Ellen White was actually agreeing with, with the missing words of James White’s *Day Star* statement quoted in full:

““The way spiritualizers have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using **the old unscriptural Trinitarian creed viz., that Jesus Christ is the eternal God**, while we have plain scripture testimony in abundance that he is **the Son of the eternal God.**” (James White, Jan 24 1846, *The Day Star*, emphasis mine)

The traditional story tellers are right that Ellen White agreed with her husband, but they have left out a vital piece of information, that the thing they objected to was that Trinitarians believed Jesus Christ was the Most High God Himself, not the Son of the Most High God. This is a belief that spans every version of the Trinitarian/Tritheist doctrine.

Another area of concern was that the Trinitarian creeds which the White's opposed depersonalized God. Dr. Moon is right in asserting this point.

"In maintaining that the Father and the Son are "real," "literal" persons, the Whites certainly didn't doubt that "God is spirit" (John 4:24), but they insisted that as Spirit, **God is still Someone real**, tangible, and literal; not unreal, ephemeral, or imaginary. They felt that the terms used for Trinity in the creeds and definitions they knew of, **made God seem so abstract, theoretical, and impersonal, that He was no longer perceived as a real, caring, loving Being** [note that even Dr. Moon refers to God as a "Being" and "someone" in the singular. This must have been a slip up]. Thus the attempt to make Him "spiritual" rather than literal, actually "spiritualized Him away," that is, destroyed the true concept of who He is and what He is like." (ibid)

Ellen White's writings confirm this point.

"There is a personal God, the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son." Review and Herald, 8 November, (1898, the same year *Desire of Ages* was published); 6BC p 1068

"The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science claim, 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. As a **personal being**, God has revealed **Himself in His Son**, Jesus, the out-shining of the Father's glory, 'and the express image of **His person**' (Heb 1:3), was on earth found in fashion as a man."MS 124 (1903); MSR, Vol 9 p. 122; Edn p. 131

"God is a Spirit; yet **He is a personal being**; for so **He** has revealed **Himself**."
Signs of the Times 2 August (1905)

As written in the above statements, there is no way for the Trinitarian or Tritheist to explain this in a way that allows for their view. Why?

Look at those quotes again. The same person who is a Spirit is also a tangible personal Being. If Sr. White is referring to the Holy Spirit, then she is saying that the Holy Spirit is Christ's Father, and is the Father. If she is referring to the Father, then she is saying that the Father is a Spirit. We know by the context that she is saying that God the Father is both a Spirit and a personal Being. This fits perfectly with the majority opinion of the church of her day that believed the Holy Spirit was the manifested Spirit of the Father and the Son, and was not a separate person.

She wrote to the church in 1906 to hold to the historical doctrine of God as taught by the church. Please note that this is not a personal letter, but a published article in a denominational periodical-

Review and Herald, 8 March, (1906) p 19

"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. There will be seen that union of which Christ prayed just before His trial and crucifixion."

To Ellen G. White, God was a person; a literal, tangible and singular person. The church had been refuting the Trinitarian error of a non-person God from its beginning up to the twentieth

century, as seen by the dates of the above quotations. Interestingly enough, some Trinitarians do not seem to grasp the fact that any form of Trinitarian or Tritheist teaching by definition makes God a non-person, as James White and others clearly pointed out:

"Here we might mention the Trinity, which does away with the *individual personality of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ*, and of sprinkling or pouring instead of being "buried with Christ in baptism," "planted in the likeness of his death:" but we pass from these fables to notice one that is held sacred by nearly all professed Christians, both Catholic and Protestant. It is, the change of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment..." (James White, Dec 11 1855, Review and Herald, Vol. 7, no. 11, P 85 Par 16)

J. N. Andrews - "The doctrine of the Trinity which was established in the church by the council of Nice, A. D. 325... 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, March 6, 1855, Review and Herald, Vol. 6, No. 24, P. 185)

Dr Jerry Moon of Andrews University admits that Ellen White sided with her husband against Trinitarians, whom were seen as spiritualizers. According to the Whites, to make God more than one person meant to make Him not a person at all, but either a "concept of unity" that existed between three separate beings, or a single being made up of three semi-beings.

Regardless of what spin anyone puts on it, any doctrine of a triune deity means that the deity itself is not a being in the personal sense, and cannot have His own form. Even within the conservative Adventist Tritheist doctrine, God does not have a form because "God" is not a personal Being, but is merely the name of a group. In the orthodox creedal Trinity, which is fast overtaking Tritheism within the Adventist church, the three in one God also cannot have a form, since it is still three separate forms, even though they are referred to as a single entity. The orthodox Trinity doctrine has been illustrated thru out history in various ways; a head with three faces, three identical people sitting at a table, three interlocking rings (the triquetra- which is an ancient occult symbol) and other symbology.

The bottom line is that with the orthodox Trinity doctrine God is an "it", and in the "Tritheistic Trinity" doctrine God is a "they". Both versions believe Jesus to be God Almighty Himself, and thus they make God not a person, but "a unity" of at least two persons and always three.

But the point is made that the various sources whom repeat the traditional story, have left out pertinent information that would prove their own story false (even though a few bury the context in the footnotes). James White's statement is clear and true, that any doctrine which says Jesus Christ is the One true God Himself is denying that God is a person. Adding the context to White's statement is like pulling the keystone out from a cave roof and watching the rocks fall helplessly to the ground.

A Commonly Misdefined Word

The last area we will look at concerning omission of vital information is not so much the leaving out of actual text, but of taking advantage of a misunderstood and incorrectly defined word. I have heard many people use misdefined Bible words before, but to hear such coming from the academic elite who should know better leaves the impression that it must be purposeful, for how can a Greek scholar not know the most basic definition of a given and common Greek word?

Traditionalists are able to find a couple of references to the “*third person of the Godhead*” in Ellen White’s writings, and so they say that Ellen White was teaching the Trinity doctrine. However, there is not a definitive statement that when she uses the term *Godhead* that she is referring to the Trinity, or in any way to multiple persons acting as a single God. If she had, she would have been misusing the word *Godhead*.

Godhead is an archaic Old English term that was translated in the King James Version of the Bible from the following Greek words:

theios-Divine, divinity, godlike
theiotes-divinity
theotes-divinity

Godhead, according to the Bible, is a descriptive word that refers to the Father’s divinity or His divine nature, which Christ manifested the fulness of bodily. The word never had the meaning that is attached to it and propagated by modern Trinitarians or Tritheists, that the *Godhead* is the “God-family”, “God group” or “God committee”. In the Greek, *Godhead* is a reference to the divine nature and divinity of the Father, nothing more.

When one correctly understands the proper translation of this word, then the Bible verses in which it is used flow with reason and applicable meaning:

“Forasmuch as then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that *the divine nature* is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” Acts 17:29 (i.e., the Father’s divine nature cannot be seen and has no form to copy or engrave)

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and *divinity*, so that they are without excuse.” Romans 1:20 (i.e., the “invisible” divinity of God the Father is seen in His creation)

“For *in Him dwelleth* all the fulness of *the Father’s divine nature* bodily.” Colossians 2:9 (i.e., the Father dwelt in Christ by His Spirit., and Christ manifested this indwelling divinity to the fullest)

Another problem is that the understanding of a triune God did not exist in the church until the 4th century A.D.. So how does one attach a Trinitarian meaning to a 1st Century word (Theios) when the Trinity doctrine and the language attached to it did not emerge for another 300 years?

So when Ellen White made reference to “*the third person of the Godhead*”, was she referring to the “God group” as Tritheists and Trinitarians aver, or was she correctly referring to the Father’s divinity and His omnipresent virtue- the Father in the third person? Well, unless she had no grasp of the meaning of common biblical words, she was not making a Trinitarian statement by her use of “*third person of the Godhead*”. It should also be noted that Ellen White never capitalized “third

person” in her writings. The capitals were added by editors much later, almost entirely after her death.

It might help to recognize which common terms used by Trinitarians were never used by Ellen White. The terms *Second Person of the Godhead* and *First Person of the Godhead*, are absent from any of her writings, just as they are absent from the Bible itself. In the inspired writings of Ellen G. White or the Bible, “*God the Father*“, appears more than 140 times in her writings and 25 times in the Bible, respectively. Yet, while Ellen White or the Bible never once used the term “*God the Son*” to describe Jesus Christ, she called him “*The Son of God*” 2513 times and “*only begotten Son*“ over 1800 times. The term “*God the Holy Spirit*” is completely absent from both the writings of Ellen G. White and from the Bible itself. And while she never once made reference to “*God and the Holy Spirit*“, she mentioned “*God and Christ*” nearly 200 times!

Also absent from both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are the words “Trinity”, “Triune”, “Three in one”, and “One in three”. There is a single reference to “The Heavenly Trio”, which gives no context to imply it is the same as the Trinity or that this Trio makes up the One God. She described the Heavenly Trio as “these great powers”, not “these three gods” or “these three beings”. Late in her life, Ellen White definitively described the Heavenly Trio as:

“They have **one God and one Savior; and one Spirit--the Spirit of Christ--** is to bring unity into their ranks.” 9 Testimonies for the Church, 1909, p 189

In this statement, the “one God” is the Father, who is distinguished from the “one Savior”, who is Christ, and the “one Spirit” which is Christ’s own Spirit. Ellen White was neither Trinitarian, nor did she speak using the language of Trinitarianism with the exception of a single term, “third person”, which taken in proper context was not meant in a Trinitarian or Tritheist sense.

Chapter 13

Which Trinity?

Q- *Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while making the Trinity doctrine a test of fellowship, agree on what constitutes the Trinity doctrine?*

The short answer is no, there is no actual consensus as to what constitutes the church's true position on this most important of doctrines. There is, however, a brief outline of a few fundamentals that they appear, on the surface, to share. These are as follows.

- 1- There is one God.
- 2- This one God is comprised of, made up of, or is otherwise represented by three Persons- God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.
- 3- Each of the three Persons is completely co-eternal. This means that none were before another and all were without beginning. Each of the three Persons is co-equal, meaning that each are absolutely identical in authority and ability.
- 4- Jesus Christ is the Almighty God Himself, and that His preincarnate Sonship is only a metaphoric description of a *created role*.
- 5- The Holy Ghost is an actual separate and autonomous person (to the extent that each are autonomous, but at the same time are completely co-dependent and of one substance).

That is where the similarity ends. Within this framework are a myriad of various theories and beliefs, with each considered to be heretical by the other versions of the Trinity doctrine. There are also those within the church who claim to vehemently deny the Trinity doctrine as heretical, unbiblical and Roman Catholic. These basically hold to a *tritheistic* view, that is, three actual separate divine "Beings", but working together as a group with the same goals and purpose. However, as one compares this view to the list above, it is really a variation of the Trinity doctrine, which simply puts its emphasis on the "threeness of God (s)". Here are some sample quotes from various sources within the Adventist church, from both official sources and from self-supporting ministries, regarding the doctrine of God.

Trinitarian

Theologians and scholars within the Adventist academia openly acknowledge as part of their explanation and "traditional story" that Ellen White and the pioneers rejected the creedal orthodox Trinitarian position outright. Yet, this is the position that is promoted by the official sources within the church itself. George Reid of the Biblical Research Institute wrote to the Roman Catholic Church the following regarding the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination:

"Nature of God. A reading of the above statements will show that with respect to their doctrine of God

Seventh-day Adventists are in harmony with the great creedal statements of Christendom, including the Apostles' Creed, (Nicaea 325 A.D.), and the additional definition of faith concerning the Holy Spirit as reached in Constantinople (381 A.D.). ...Shortly before the close of the 19th century, however, as theological development took place, and with the encouragement of Ellen White, **the church moved to a full trinitarian position.** (George W. Reid, *Seventh-day Adventists a Brief Introduction to their Beliefs*, BRI)

Other official sources concur:

“QUESTION 1 What doctrines do Seventh-day Adventists hold in common with Christians in general, and in what aspects of Christian thought do they differ...?”

“1. **In common with Conservative Christians and the Historic Protestant Creeds.** We believe...2. That the Godhead, the Trinity, comprises God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*Questions on Doctrine*, p. 21, 22)

“The origin of the human race is found in a divine council. God said, ‘Let Us make man’ (Gen. 1:26). The plural ‘Us’ refers to the trinitarian Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 80)

“**Do Seventh-day Adventists believe in the Trinity? They do.** Reverently they worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ‘Three Persons in one God. And they do so because they believe this to be the teaching of the Bible concerning God in His relation to this world and the human race.’”(A *Guide to the Religions of America*, by Leo Rosten, p.136, quoting Arthur S. Maxwell, *What is a Seventh-day Adventist?*)

Tritheism

Tritheism, three separate “divine beings” or gods, making up the One God, with each “god” taking a different *role*, is a position generally pushed by more conservative and independent Adventists, but even some of the official sources appear to hold and teach this position as well. This is the view that the academic elite claim that Ellen White “matured into” in direct opposition to her own church. Again, we have seen that this assertion is not true and is based on a spuriously rewritten history of the church.

The first two examples are from official sources, with the first one being a required reading for all Sabbath schools in 1996.

“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.** 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.

“By accepting the roles that the plan entailed, the divine Beings lost none of the powers of Deity. With regard to their eternal existence and other attributes, they were one and equal. But with regard to the plan of salvation, there was, in a sense, a submission on the part of the Son to the Father.” (Gordon Jensen, *Adventist Review*, October 31, 1996, p.12—Week of Prayer readings)

“To me this signifies **the interchangeableness** of the members of the Godhead since they are one in action and purpose.” (J.R. Spangler, *Review & Herald*, Oct. 21, 1971)

"Thus the Godhead is made up of **three distinct** divine Persons, **Beings, and Gods** - making a heavenly trio - united together in one purpose." (Robert Sessler, *The Godhead, 1,2, or 3 Gods?*, p. 28 , emphasis mine)

Both at the same Time?

Yes, as amazing as it sounds, there are some sources that appear to accept and deny both positions simultaneously!

....At times "oneness" can involve the meaning of unity (i.e., John 10:30; 17:21,23). However, if the "oneness" expressed in these texts is conceived only as a gathering of independent "onenesses" that come together in order to form a unity, the specific singleness characteristic of the one Godhead to which they testify is dissolved into a plurality of gods....**In other words, since the God of the Bible is one and not many, all the various revelations about Him presented throughout the Bible refer to the same, one divine reality and not to a plurality of divine beings.** - Handbook of SDA Theology - p.121

And in the very same book-

....The reality of divine forsakenness is possible only when the one God is understood in His biblical, Trinitarian structure, **which involves Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as divine, personal, conscious beings**, mutually interacting among themselves and with the created universe. - Handbook of SDA Theology - p.127

Vance Ferrell, in his book *Defending the Godhead*, claims emphatically that the Roman Catholic Church holds a heretical view of God:

"Although it is beyond the power of man's mind to fully comprehend the Godhead, there are facts revealed that disprove certain ideas that have come down to us from tradition. This book is an outstanding presentation of facts from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy about the Godhead. **A complete refutation of the error of the 'Trinity doctrine'**. --Vance Ferrell, advertisement for "Defending the Godhead"

And the same author states elsewhere that the Catholic Church holds the correct view:

"...the Roman Catholic Church ultimately accepted, partially or entirely, the correct view of Christ's and the Holy Spirit's divinity and membership in the Godhead..." (Vance Ferrell, Tract # DH-201)

Modalism

Modalism (or "Jesus Only") is the belief that the One God is a single Being that manifests Himself in three separate *roles*:

"...In OT revelation, as Yahweh Christ was the Father. In the NT He who was first called "Father" fulfilled another role in which He is called the "Son". In biblical testimony the same Jesus is both Father and Son, but at different times...

"The Father and Son do not exist as separate beings, they coexist as one God..." (*The Trinity Debate* - Part One)

As we have seen thru-out this book, neither Ellen G. White nor the historic Seventh-day Adventist church ever believed or taught any of these theories, rejecting them all as unbiblical.

Chapter14

In Summary...

Having examined each of the points raised earlier, we are now able to draw conclusions regarding the validity of the traditional story regarding the doctrine of God as held and taught by Ellen G. White, and how she related to the rest of her church. Let us review the questions and then answer them in light of the primary source evidence presented in this study.

1- What exactly did the church believe about the identity of God, and did it have the full support of Ellen White?

Answer- The Seventh-day Adventist Church believed that there is One God, the Father, and one Savior Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6). They believed the Holy Spirit was the Presence and Spirit of God and of Christ. These “Principles of Faith” (1872-1915) had the full support of Ellen G. White during the her lifetime and ministry.

2- Was the non-Trinitarian view of God a fundamental belief of the church and a pillar doctrine?

Answer- Yes, it was the most basic foundational belief of the church from 1844 to 1941, nearly 100 years. Ellen White herself wrote that the “personality of God and of Christ” was a pillar doctrine.

3- Was Ellen White a “closet Trinitarian” as an early Adventist? Did she only oppose the “orthodox view” of the Trinity while supporting and pushing for another form of Trinitarian doctrine (Tritheism)?

Answer- No, Ellen White was in full agreement with her church on the doctrine of God from its very foundation. Not only did she openly oppose the orthodox Trinity, which the present church now officially claims to accept, but she along with her husband rejected any doctrine of God that made Christ “the eternal God”, and thus made the One God a non-individual Person.

4- Did Ellen White ever change her position on the doctrine of God?

Answer- No, Ellen White’s view of God never changed and never opposed the church. She did not at any time make a claim to changing her view about God, nor did she ever reprove or correct the church for its non-Trinitarian foundational view.

5- Did the Trinity doctrine come into the church through Ellen White? Or did Ellen White warn the church not to move from its historic position on the doctrine of God?

Answer- Ellen White warned the church repeatedly not to move a pin or pillar of any major doctrines established between 1844 and 1894. She also warned the church that “deadly heresies” about the personality of God would come in after the death of the pioneers. Ellen White stated that the *Testimonies* would not bring in “new light”, and thus she of herself or through her gift of prophecy would not bring in new doctrines.

6- Did Ellen White bring Trinitarianism into the church through *The Desire of Ages*?

Answer- No. In addition to the fact that she made it clear that her writings would not bring in “new light”, one can completely refute the Trinitarian doctrine from *The Desire of Ages* alone. This is in spite of the fact that early Trinitarian-influenced editors were involved in the compiling and editing process of the book.

7- Were Ellen White’s writings manipulated, re-edited or altered to reflect Trinitarianism, either during her life or after she died?

Answer- Yes. It is admitted by the church itself that her writings have been substantively and thoughtfully “re-edited”. It was further admitted by Leroy Edwin Froom that “standard works” were altered to support the Trinity doctrine. And while he did not admit that this involved the writings

of Ellen White, later evidence as found in *Evangelism* proves conclusively that it did indeed include the manipulation of her writings.

“The next logical and inevitable step in the implementing of our unified ‘Fundamental Beliefs’ involved revision of certain standard works so as to eliminate statements that taught and thus perpetuated, erroneous views on the Godhead. Such sentiments were now sharply at variance with the accepted ‘Fundamental Beliefs’ set forth in the Church Manual, and with the uniform ‘Baptismal Covenant’ and ‘Vow’ based thereon, which in certificate form, was now used for all candidates seeking admission to membership in the church.”Leroy Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (1971) p. 422

8- Do those who propagate the official story leave out pertinent information that would prove their version inaccurate and false?

Answer- Yes. It has been shown conclusively and irrefutably that certain writings of the pioneers, including James and Ellen White, have been lifted from their original context and misapplied to imply support for the Trinity doctrine. It has also been proven that compilation books have been arranged without a balancing of quotes from Ellen White that would clarify her views on the doctrine of God.

9- Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while making the Trinity doctrine a test of fellowship, agree on what constitutes the Trinity doctrine?

Answer- No. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have a consensus as to what it believes about the doctrine of God. This is readily apparent if you ask any number of lay persons, leaders or theologians what they believe about God. The position of the church can be more accurately described as an “anti-position” than as a position. As an organization, it is against the clear historic Adventist view of the Father as the One True God, against the actual Sonship of Christ and against the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Christ” or “Christ Himself divested of humanity.”

So What happened?

Now that these questions have been answered and the traditional story has been revealed as a tale comparable to the traditional 1900 Galveston hurricane story, we can now ask the question, “What really happened?”

The truth is, the actual full story will likely not be known this side of eternity, since the primary historian who recounted the events, Leroy Edwin Froom, was known by his own colleagues as biased, and that he “filtered” his chronicling of Adventist history through his own dogmatic commitment to Trinitarianism.

“L. E. Froom in *Movement of Destiny* tried to prove that E. J. Waggoner had become essentially trinitarian, or at least “anti-Arian,” as early as 1888, but only by “special pleading” could he sustain that hypothesis. Nevertheless, *Movement of Destiny* offers a more detailed examination of the primary sources on trinitarianism and antitrinitarianism in Adventism than could previously be found in any one place. For sheer bulk, his work makes a major contribution to the history of the Adventist theology of the Godhead.” (Moon, TDO)

The truth is that E.J. Waggoner was as far from being Trinitarian as any of the other pioneers. Even a cursory reading of his written materials reveals this fact. But in Froom's book, *Movement of Destiny*, Froom was attempting to assert that the 1888 message of Waggoner and Jones was that of the Trinitarian doctrine, and that by accepting the Trinity, the church was accepting the 1888 message. Nothing could be further from the truth, and Jerry Moon is certainly being kind to Froom in minimizing this fact.

But also present in this single comment by Dr. Moon is the admission that even though Froom was not honest and unbiased in his recounting of Adventist history, Froom's book is a "major contribution" to the traditional story based upon its "sheer bulk". Unfortunately, since Froom was the primary historian of the Adventist church from 1924 to 1971, his "rewritten history" has become the standard and primary source of historical content.

This leaves us only with "clues"; bits and pieces of historical evidence from which to try to piece together the true story. And as I stated earlier, there is not really enough information to come to a conclusive and exhaustive scenario without resorting to speculative methods. So instead of even trying to give a complete story based on incomplete information, I will simply give you the clearest "bits" of information. While this will not complete the picture of what happened, it can give us a certain amount of insight into how and by whom the Trinity doctrine came into the church, and whether it came from within the church by intense study and legitimate means or was brought in from outside the church by illegitimate means.

As was suggested earlier, there were only two men in the church during the late 1890s who were openly preaching variations of Trinitarian theology. One of these was John Harvey Kellogg, who wrote *The Living Temple* using many quotes from the writings of Ellen G. White in an attempt to back up the views he originally gained from his Seventh Day Baptist wife and her pastor. Here is a recount of an incident that happened at Battle Creek College according to Sanford P.S. Edwards:

"One day a white bearded gentleman came in and took a seat with the class. It was A.H. Lewis, D.D. LLD., the editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*, church paper of the Seventh Day Baptists... After the class, Dr. Lewis came over and shook hands and said, "You gave a wonderful talk in your class. Is this not an unusual approach to a scientific subject like physiology?...Doctor, do you not think it may be stretching a point, in emphasizing the exact features of God's being? He is a spirit. You talk of His hands, His feet and eyes and ears and tongue just like He were a physical being. God is a presence, an essence; He is everywhere, in the trees, in the flowers, the food we eat. Are you not in danger of getting too narrow a view of God?'"

"The discussion ended with my having learned where Dr. Kellogg...got some, if not all of [his] pantheism. Dr. Lewis was once Mrs. Kellogg's pastor and president of Alfred University, where she got her degree. His paper, the *Sabbath Recorder*, was steeped in pantheism. It came regularly to the Kellogg home. Despite minor inaccuracies in Edwards account (though Lewis was very influential at Alfred University he never served as president), the linking of Lewis and Kellogg is significant. That this influence was more than short-lived is probable in light of the fact that Mrs. Kellogg, a lifelong Seventh Day Baptist, had graduated from Alfred University in 1872, and completed her M.A. degree there in 1885. Lewis served as chairman of the Church history and Homiletics department from 1868 to 1892, and was prominent in Seventh-day Baptist circles." (Dave Fiedler, Hindsight, pp 170-171)

So what is so significant about this information? What does Pantheism have to do with the Seventh-day Adventist Church adopting the Trinity doctrine? Most Trinitarians would say there is

nothing that Kellogg's Pantheism and Trinitarianism have in common. However, as one continues to investigate the Kellogg crisis, it becomes apparent that his Pantheism was indeed grounded in the Trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit, and of God Himself. The following is taken from a letter written by J.H. Kellogg to George Butler in 1903.

"As far as I can fathom, the difficulty which is found in Living Temple the whole thing may be simmered down to the question: Is the Holy Ghost a person? You say no. I had supposed the Bible said this for the reason that the personal pronoun "he" is used in terms of speaking of the Holy Ghost. Sister White uses the pronoun "he" and has said in so many words that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Godhead. How the Holy Ghost can be the third person and not be a person at all is difficult for me to see." (Kellogg, Letter to G.I. Butler, October 28, 1903)

Here, Kellogg echoes the modern Trinitarian Adventist claim that Ellen White taught that the Holy Spirit is an actual separate being to God and to Christ. George Butler on the other hand, denied this claim believing that Ellen White, while using the term "third person of the Godhead" on a few occasions, did not mean this in a Trinitarian or Tritheist sense. Mrs. White, who was being kept informed regarding this interaction between Kellogg and the church makes the following statement in response:

"I am compelled to speak in denial of the claim that the teachings of "Living Temple" can be sustained 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 assertions that the sentiments in "Living Temple" are in harmony with my writings. But God forbid that this sentiment should prevail." (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No.2, pp53-54)

While G.I Butler certainly had his share of problems with the 1888 message, the doctrine of God was not one of them, at least according to Ellen White. Butler represented the views of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it was Kellogg who was departing from the foundation that the church was built on. Mrs. White, while continuing to rebuke Kellogg's "God is not a person" theology, never made any such reproof or correction of George Butler or any of the other pioneers and leaders of the church at that or any other time, since the first fundamental belief of the church was that God was a singular, personal Being with hands, feet, eyes and ears. If the Holy Spirit was a separate personal being, was God, and was "in everything", then that would negate God as a singular personal Being.

The other admitted early Adventist Trinitarian was H.C. Lacey, who was attempting to bring certain aspects of the doctrine into Australia in the mid to late 1890s. As we saw earlier, his teachings had somewhat of an influence on both W.W. Prescott and Marian Davis, both of whom were involved in the compiling and editing of *Desire of Ages*. But it was primarily the teachings and influence of Kellogg that had the most immediate impact, as he began to develop a following within the church, and believers in *The Living Temple*.

As we also saw earlier, Kellogg brought out the most intense warnings from Ellen White, and all of these warnings had a single theme, "the last fifty years":

Testimonies Containing Letters to Physicians and Ministers, (1904)

"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. 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.**"

8 Testimonies for the Church, p 297 (1904)

"Let none seek to tear away the foundations of our faith--**the foundations that were laid at the beginning of our work by prayerful study of the word and by revelation. Upon these foundations we have been building for the last fifty years.** Men may suppose that they have found a new way and that they can lay a stronger foundation than that which has been laid. But this is a great deception. **Other foundation can no man lay than that which has been laid.**"

But tear them away they did, and as Ellen G. White grew older and less involved, retiring to her California home, inroads were beginning to be made through the publishing work. Ellen White would "meet" some of these without specifying particulars, so we do not know exactly what she was addressing in some cases. But we do see warnings regarding "the doctrines of Romanism".

The following statement by Gerhardt Pfandl refers to Pacific Press's publishing of a book by a non-Adventist writer that included the word "Trinity" and taught some semi-Trinitarian concepts.

"The first positive reference to the Trinity in Adventist literature appeared in the Bible Students' Library series in 1892. The Bible Students' Library was "a series of pamphlets, designed for the public, containing brief and pointed essays on Bible doctrines, the fulfillment of prophecy, and other aspects of SDA teachings." Pamphlet number 90 was entitled

"The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity." What is significant is the fact that the author, Samuel Spear, was not an Adventist. The pamphlet was a reprint of an article from the New York Independent of November 14, 1889. While teaching the doctrine of "one God subsisting and acting in three persons." Spear insists on the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. "The subordination of Christ, as revealed in the Bible" he says, "is not adequately explained by referring it simply to His human nature... His subordination extends to His divine as well as His human nature." Although this pamphlet was certainly an improvement on previous positions it still fell short of the true picture of the Trinity...Nevertheless, the fact that it was printed by Pacific Press indicates that the concept of the Trinity was beginning to be accepted by the church.."

(Gerhardt Pfandl, The History of the Trinity Among Adventists, Biblical Research Institute, 1999)

Ellen White spoke later to Review and Herald, making reference to Pacific Press and earlier warnings against what they were publishing that was contradictory to the fundamental beliefs of the church:

"I feel a terror of soul as I see to what a pass our publishing house has come. **The presses in the Lord's institution have been printing the soul-destroying theories of Romanism and other mysteries of iniquity.** The office must be purged of this objectionable matter. I have a testimony from the Lord for those who have placed such matter in the hands of the workers. God holds you accountable for presenting to young

men and young women the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. **Can it be possible that you have not a knowledge of the warnings given to the Pacific Press on this subject?** Can it be possible that with a knowledge of these warnings you are going over the same ground, only doing much worse? It has often been repeated to you that angels of God are passing through every room in the office. What impression has this made on your minds?" {8T 91.2}

Once again, Ellen White does not specify which "soul destroying doctrines of Romanism" were being taught by Review and Herald and by the Pacific Press, but we do know that the only Roman Catholic doctrines that were beginning to emerge within Adventism were the Trinity and two doctrines that came out of it, the unfallen nature of Christ and original sin. But it is significant that it was Pacific Press that printed the very first "semi-Trinitarian" book in the church and it was also Pacific Press that Ellen White mentioned as being previously warned about printing Catholic doctrines. This is even more significant in light of the fact that as we look through the early to mid 1900s it is the publishing work that took it upon itself to end publication of the church's fundamental beliefs and to begin the push for the Trinitarian doctrine.

The first use of the word Trinity in a positive light was in 1913 by FM Wilcox in a supposed "Trinitarian tract" R&H Vol 6, 9 Oct, 1913, p21, but the language used is ambiguous – and is similar to language used by Ellen White and the pioneers to describe non-Trinitarian concepts.

"For the benefit of those who may desire to know more particularly the cardinal features of the faith held by this denomination, we shall state that Seventh-day Adventists believe,-

1. In the divine Trinity. This Trinity consists of the eternal Father, a personal spiritual being, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite in power, wisdom, and love; of 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 one regenerating agency in the work of redemption."(FM Wilcox Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Vol 6, 9 October, 1913)

You see, one of the main problems we have in terms of understanding Ellen White's "Trinitarian statements" is that they are only Trinitarian to Trinitarians. Many of her "Trinitarian statements" were identical or nearly identical to statements made by open and adamant non-Trinitarian authors. So when Ellen White wrote "Life, original, unborrowed and underived", the Trinitarian sees a reference to the non-origin of Christ. However, even though her statements were put into a "nearly Trinitarian" context, Ellen White herself did not see that, since she knew what she meant by the statement, *as originally written*.

Many believe that Wilcox was introducing the Trinitarian doctrine before Ellen White's death, and with her full approval. However, while the word "Trinity" was used (and probably not without protest) the language itself is very close to the original fundamental beliefs of the church. The article does not say that the Trinity is God or that the One God is a triune Being. It does not say, "God consists of...". The Father is still "the eternal Father", and Christ is still "the Son of the eternal Father". The Holy Spirit, while being referred to as "the third person of the Godhead", is still referred to as a "regenerating agency".

Now, Ellen White's use of the word "agency" to describe the Holy Spirit has been interpreted by some to mean she was saying that the Holy Spirit was a separate being in the sense of "a personal agent" like a lawyer or arbitrator, and that the word "agency" always refers to an actual personage.

Vance Ferrell, in his book *Defending the Godhead*, adds a bracketed comment to a *Desire of Ages* quotation in order to make this point:

“The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent [an agent is a person], and without this the sacrifice of Christ would be of no avail.” (*Desire of Ages* as quoted in Ferrell’s *Defending the Godhead*, pg 156)

Ellen White and the pioneers used the term “agency” and “agent” quite often in their writings, and these words were used to describe non-personal things as well as actual persons. Even in modern times, “agent” and “agency” do not always carry the sense of personage, like in “cleansing agent”, “lubricating agent”, “the agency of this car“, etc. The following are quotations from Ellen White which use the word “agency” to refer to non-personal things.

“God has wonderfully prepared the way. **The agency of the printing-press**, with its manifold facilities, is at our command. Bibles and publications in many languages setting forth the truth for this time, are at our hand, and can be swiftly carried to every part of the world.” (RH, January 25, 1906 par. 10)

Through the agency of Romanism, Satan took the world captive. The professed church of God was swept into the ranks of this delusion, and for more than a thousand years the true people of God suffered under the dragon’s ire. (ST, February 8, 1910 par. 4)

“The novelty of the idea excited curiosity, and many came to see and hear. I know that, **through the agency of this boat**, places have been reached where till then the light of truth had never shone,—places represented to me as “the hedges.” **Morning Star has been instrumental in sowing the seeds of truth in many hearts**, and there are those who have first seen the light of truth while on this boat. On it angel feet have trodden. (PH151 79.1)

An intense life is moving all the powers from beneath, and permeating all the schemes which the arch deceiver can invent **through the agency of all the fallen order**. Satanic agencies unite with the youth, and with men of all ages, to crowd life with spurious pleasure and attraction which shall defile the whole mind, and corrupt the whole man. . (BEcho, January 25, 1897 par. 1)

The point is that Wilcox’s article was sufficiently vague enough to come in “under the radar” of the less diligent non-Trinitarians of the church, yet “Trinitarian” enough to please those who wished to incrementally bring the doctrine into the church. Again, the word trinity was used, but then the article itself described a non-Trinitarian personal God, with a subordinate Son and a Holy Spirit that was a “regenerating agency”. Wilcox was no doubt being very careful with his use of language as to not offend anyone.

There would not be another “Trinitarian” article published in the church until 1931 (except for the book *The Coming of the Comforter in 1928*) , when Edson Rogers would bring in a new “Principles of Faith”.

1915, the year of Ellen White’s death, marked the end of the publication of the original fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. According to Leroy Froom, it was “because of differences” (undoubtedly over the personality of God, since that was the only change made to the later one) that Edson Rogers, General Conference statistician from 1903 to 1941, withdrew the list from the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook.

1919 would bring the first open discussion of the Trinity since the early days of Adventism when the doctrine was first studied and firmly rejected outright by “the leading of the Holy Spirit”. W.W.

Prescott was by then very influential in the church, and had become the leading Trinitarian, having given up the first fundamental belief after the death of Ellen White, presumably in part because of the teaching of H.C. Lacey in the late 1890s. Ellen White, having died four years earlier, was not present to defend her views or clarify her meanings and teachings. However, by way of her writings, she spoke “by the Spirit” 14 years prior to the Bible conference:

"One by one the pioneers are passing away. The word given me is, Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced. [...] 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. [...] **Not one pin is to be removed** from that which the Lord has established." (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 25, 1905, paragraph 23)

"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. 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." (*Manuscript Releases Volume One*, page 55, paragraph 1)

“The leading points of our faith as we hold them today (that is, in 1903) were firmly established. **Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony. 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.” (*Ms 135, 1903*)

In spite of the insistence of Prescott, the Trinity was not adopted at the 1919 Bible Conference. However, the chance to “meet it” was not taken advantage of, and President A.G. Daniells simply ended the discussion by saying, “We will not take a vote on [semi] Arianism or Trinitarianism, but we can think.”

If nothing else, this is conclusive evidence that in 1919, four years after the death of Ellen White and 11 years after the publishing of *Desire of Ages*, the Trinity doctrine:

- 1- Was not the accepted belief of the majority of the church.
- 2- Most must not have felt that Ellen White, through *Desire of Ages* and other works, taught the Trinity or else there would have been more support for the doctrine at the Bible conference.

The church was then in doctrinal statement “limbo” for several more years. In 1926, the North American Division (NAD) asked Leroy Edwin Froom to give a series of studies on the Holy Spirit for the North American Union Ministerial Institutes. As a result, in 1928 Froom wrote and published the very first truly Trinitarian book in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, *The Coming of the Comforter*. Because nothing of a Trinitarian nature was to be found within the writings of the pioneers regarding the Holy Spirit, Froom then went to the fallen churches for his theology, as he admitted in his own book, *Movement of Destiny*.

“May I here make a frank personal confession?... 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. 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 had on the**

Holy Spirit and the triumphant life. It was still largely an obscure theme.” (Froom, Movement of Destiny, p.322)

It is amazing that Froom could make such a statement in light of the 1888 message of Jones and Waggoner, which was purely and solely centered on the triumphant life and the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ by faith. Rather than accept the writings of Seventh-day Adventist scholars and theologians -“the brethren of experience”- Froom instead went primarily to Pentecostal holiness preachers of “the renowned Keswick Conferences of Britain...founded to promote practical holiness.”(Movement of Destiny, p. 320).

Froom took many theories and views from the British Pentecostal Holiness people and then, like J.H. Kellogg, propped up his assertions with selected quotes from Ellen White’s writings. Only this time Mrs. White was not around to reprove him for misapplying her writings as she had Kellogg. Ellen G. White, as was shown earlier, had left her warnings in writing, knowing she would be dead by the time this movement made its major moves.

“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 are we 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.” (Special Testimonies, Series B, no. 7, p 57. 4 December, 1905)

“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. 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 (Special Testimonies, Series B, p.40, 1903)

H.C. Lacey, as noted earlier, was the only other admitted early Trinitarian in the Adventist Church. While Kellogg brought his Trinitarianism in from the outside by way of his wife and her pastor, Lacey brought his in from the outside by way of his upbringing and his family.

“I have always known that Elder *Uriah Smith was an Arian in belief*, (‘Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation’ reveal that!) and that *our people undoubtedly generally followed that view. But we, as a family, had been brought up in the Church of England, and were naturally, may I say, Trinitarians.* We just believed it, subconsciously, and I do not remember our ever discussing the question with the brethren who brought us into the Truth, Elder M. C. Israel, and young brother W. L. H. Baker. One thing I do recall is my mother’s remarking on the strange language used by our ministers in speaking of the Holy Ghost as ‘it’ and ‘its’ as though they thought of the Holy Spirit as an influence, instead of as a Person. That seemed very strange to her, and in a measure to me also (I was about 17 then).

“Now this bring[s] me to the second point in my letter; The angle in which I was involved in that convention at Cooranbong was not the Eternity of the Son, but the Personality of the Holy Ghost.

“Perhaps a few words of historic background may be helpful here:

“As I already stated, I was really a Trinitarian at heart. And I went through Healdsburg College, and Battle Creek College, with a dim sort of a feeling that there was something wrong about our teaching on the Ministry and Personality of the Holy Ghost. (Of course, that term was never used, except in reading from the

Bible,—it was always ‘Holy Spirit’ and referred to as ‘it.’) And then ***in the Testimonies I noticed that, practically everywhere, the same language was used,— ‘Holy Spirit’ ‘it’ ‘its’ etc., as though the ‘Spirit of God’ were an influence, instead of a Person, the Third Person of the Godhead....*** (Letter from H.C. Lacey to Leroy Froom, 8/30/1945)

It is noteworthy that Lacey, in speaking of Adventism’s past, says that even in the writings of Ellen White, the Holy Spirit was presented as “an influence instead of a Person“. Where did Lacey get this idea, when books like *Evangelism* and other compilations seem to have Ellen White using “Him” quite often, and say that it is absolutely clear that Mrs. White held a Trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit?

Regardless, we can plainly conclude that neither Kellogg nor Lacey were Trinitarian based on individual study of the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White. Both brought the doctrine in from outside the Adventist faith; Kellogg from the Seventh Day Baptists and Lacey from the Anglican Church. Leroy Froom also admitted that his Trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit was based largely on the teachings of English Pentecostals and other authors outside of Adventism. So in summary one can safely conclude that the trinity doctrine did not come into the church by “legitimate means”, i.e., the study of the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. Neither did it gain the approval of the “brethren of experience”, as expressed by Froom himself in the following excerpt from a letter to Dr. Otto H. Christenson in reference to his book *The Coming of the Comforter*:

“You cannot imagine how I was pummeled by some of the old-timers because I pressed on the personality of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead. Some men denied it- still deny it. But the book has come to be generally accepted as standard. (Letter of Leroy Froom to Dr. Otto H. Christenson, October 27, 1960).

It is significant that not only was his Trinitarian view of God not accepted by many of the elders of the church in 1928, but according to Froom that view was still denied by some when he wrote this letter in 1960. The point is that while there was a time from 1844 to about 1896 when there was no Trinitarianism in the church, it cannot be stated that the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the whole have at any time, even to this day, fully accepted a Trinitarian view. And even among those who claim to be Trinitarian, there are at least three different and completely incompatible views that use the same word to describe their beliefs. We already saw a few comments from primary authoritative sources, or somewhat authoritative, on the various versions of the Trinitarian doctrines.

Now, let us examine each of these views and perhaps attempt to discover the origin of each one, since they are not the same and cannot possibly be rooted in the same sources, even though each claims to be taught and supported by the writings of Ellen G. White and the Bible.

Which Trinity Doctrine does the SDA organization officially accept?

According to my research it was the orthodox trinity that was being pushed into the church beginning in the late 1890s by Lacey and Kellogg, and then later by Prescott, Froom and others. The evidence for this is found not only in the teachings themselves, but in various circumstantial evidences and published statements, including the “Evangelical” meetings between the *Questions on Doctrine* committee and Evangelical “cult hunters”, Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin.

During these meetings, held in the late 1950s, the first order of business was that of the trinity. According to Martin, the Adventists were “shocked” when he supplied a suitcaseful of “Arian” statements made by Ellen White herself:

“When I first met with L.E. Froom, he took me to task for about fifteen minutes on how I could ever possibly think that Adventism was a cult. “Adventism rings true as steel”, I said. “Do you think Arius was a Christian?”

And he was an excellent church historian and he said, “Of course he wasn’t a Christian; he denied the deity of Jesus Christ.”

I said, “So did Ellen White.”

Dr. Froom replied, “What!”

I said, “Yes” and opened up a suitcase and produced at least twelve feet of Adventist publications stacked up and marked for Dr. Froom’s perusal, and for the perusal of the committee to check the sources in there. And they were in mortal shock, I might add, to think it was as pervasive as it was. (Walter Martin, in a video taped conference at Campus Hill Church in Loma Linda, CA, January 1989)

I will break in here to ask the question, how could Leroy Froom be “in mortal shock” at the idea of “twelve feet” of “Arian” statements by Ellen White when he was considered the most knowledgeable Adventist church historian? Let us continue....

“So we adjourned the meeting and they took all the materials with them, and I guess others, and went through the materials. They came back and said, “**Well, a great deal of these things you’re calling our attention to are there, we agree, and we don’t agree with these statements.** They do not reflect orthodox Adventist theology and **we reject it.**” (ibid)

Now, understand that what these men rejected were not the writings of pioneers such as Andrews or Jones, but were specifically Ellen White’s statements taken from her own writings. But regardless, the relevant point here is that if Froom and company had advocated any view of God other than the orthodox Trinity doctrine of the Catholic Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, Martin and Barnhouse would have immediately labeled them cultists and the meetings would have ended before they began. To this day, Walter Martin’s ministerial heir, Hank Hanegraaff, will label as a cult any church which teaches Modalism, Tritheism, or “Godhead” theology, along with any form of non-Trinitarianism. Many churches that claim to be Trinitarian who do not hold to the orthodox view of the doctrine are considered cults by the Evangelical “heretic hunters”, which began with Martin and Barnhouse and has continued to today with Hanegraaff, Ron Rhodes and others.

Another piece of evidence that openly states which version of Trinitarian doctrine was held by the Seventh-day Adventist church is found in a letter written by church historian A.W. Spalding to H.C. Lacey in 1947. Asking specifically about the change in view of the Godhead from the pioneers to the present day. He writes:

“There is to me a twilight zone in this history which I wish to have lighted. Did all the fathers sin? And if so, did they repent? How prove the unity of our faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and **we are Athanasians.**” (Letter from Spalding to Lacey, June 2, 1947)

Here, 28 years after the 1919 Bible conference, Spalding specifically identifies the Trinitarians in the church as “Athanasians”, that is, those who hold to the Catholic orthodox trinity doctrine as recited in the Athanasian Creed. Growing up a Roman Catholic, I recited this creed at every mass

for over 20 years.

It can be accurately stated when one includes the opinions and statements of Froom, Spalding, Kellogg and Lacey, that it was definitely the orthodox Trinity that was accepted and pushed for by the Trinitarian Adventists beginning in relative obscurity in the late 1890s and openly asserted after the death of Ellen White and the pioneers. This is in spite of the fact that leaders within the church have for years tried to convince their members that they do not accept the creedal version.

Froom, in his book *Movement of Destiny* and in the book he helped to compile, *Evangelism*, used snippets from the writings of Ellen G. White to try to show that it was the orthodox trinity doctrine that she led the church into adopting. This is just the opposite of what other historians, including those who use Froom's writings to sustain their opinions, claim is true.

Let us look at another statement made by a major representative within the denomination. In 1967, Bert B. Beach was appointed by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to be the church's representative to the World Council of Churches. While the SDA organization does not hold "full" official membership, Mr. Beach does have a voice in the WCC.

"The SDAC is regularly represented through observers or advisers at WCC and other church meetings. **For many years, an SDA has been a member of the WCC Faith and Order Commission in a personal capacity.** The SDAC has participated in dialogues with the WCC and various religious bodies and since 1968 has been represented at the conference of secretaries of Christian World Communions. "More recently, the SDAC has been represented at the annual conference of U.S. church leaders. Christian World Communions and various churches have responded to the SDA invitation and sent observers to the quinquennial General Conference Sessions." (In the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, p 919 WCC Publications, Geneva, Switzerland.(1991)

Bert Beach co-authored a document with a member of the WCC entitled *So Much in Common*, in which he makes the following statement revealing which Trinity doctrine the Adventist Church actually accepts on an official level.

"The member churches of **the World Council of Churches and Seventh-Day Adventists are in agreement on the fundamental articles of the Christian faith as set forth in the three ancient symbols (Apostolicum, Nicaeno-Constantinopolitum, Athanasium).** This agreement finds expression in unqualified acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Two-Natures." Constitution: World Council of Churches, quoted in *So Much in Common*, p. 40, 107 (1973). Co-authored by Adventist representative to the WCC Dr B.B. Beach and Dr. Lukas Vischer – Faith and Order Secretariat.

There is no question that in spite of claims to the contrary by "Story One" asserters such as Dr. Jerry Moon, Gerhardt Pfandl and others, the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not find their own version of the Trinity that rejected the orthodox view as "spiritualistic" while affirming "a biblical Trinity". The version of the Trinity doctrine that is claimed by the official voices of Adventism is the view that believes Christ and His Father, as well as the Holy Spirit, are "one in Being" according to the traditional creeds. Of course, any statement that the One Being is made up of "three parts" cannot be found in the Bible, let alone find agreement with the writings of Ellen G. White. In fact, according to the previously listed scholars and historians within the church, this is the view that Mrs.

White most adamantly opposed. This is the view that James White called “the trinitarian absurdity”, which these self-same scholars admit that Ellen White fully supported her husband’s view on.

On the other hand, one will also search in vain for the “three separate divine beings that are one in purpose but not in being” Godhead doctrine in the writings of 1920s Adventists, or even as the trinity doctrine progressed into the church during the 30s and 40s. In other words, historians like Dr. Moon try to say that Ellen White and the church were given the “new light” of the “threeness trinity“, or “Godhead doctrine“, even though history shows convincingly that the church, in its official documents, moved not to that tritheistic view but to the orthodox, or Roman Catholic, view of the Trinity. This presents insurmountable problems for Adventist Trinitarians and Tritheists. Why?

1- The Adventist church of the early 20th century through the 1960s claimed “clear” Spirit of Prophecy support for their orthodox (Catholic) Trinitarian beliefs. Leroy Froom even made the admission in *Movement of Destiny* that the main sources for the first Trinitarian book in the church, *The Coming of the Comforter*, were primarily orthodox Trinitarians from outside Adventism, propped up with quotes from Ellen White. Froom could not have learned a “threeness” doctrine from those Pentecostal sources, and as we saw, “cult hunters” like Martin and Barnhouse would not have accepted Adventism as a Christian denomination had they held to anything but the creedal doctrine.

2- Meanwhile, modern “threeness” Trinitarians (Tritheists) claim that the Spirit of Prophecy is not only clear that the orthodox view is unbiblical, but that Ellen White herself openly and consistently opposed that view. But this causes a problem for “threeness” Trinitarians because the church did not at any time in its history officially hold to the “threeness view” they claim Ellen White taught. And both sides use the very same Ellen White quotations in support of their own view!

3- The orthodox Trinitarians, while being the “official” view of the church, cannot account for the many quotations of Ellen White which speak of the separateness and distinctiveness of “God and Christ“, while neither threeness nor orthodox Trinitarians can account for Ellen White’s insistence that God is a Person, not three semi-persons or three separate beings.

4- “Threeness“ Trinitarians, while laying hold of these same quotes regarding the distinguishing of God [the Father] from Christ, have no biblical support for their view of a “God-by-committee comprised of three members”, but also do not have any kind of historical continuity from the pioneers to present, outside their own assumptions. In other words, they have pieced together what they believe Ellen White taught regarding a “threeness Trinity”, but there is no official historical chain to link back to Ellen White in this regard.

However, this is what some conservative Adventists claim is the true view of God- a God by committee. Some even claim without evidence that the tritheistic “Godhead” doctrine was believed by the pioneers of the church! This is done by listing the anti-Trinitarian comments of certain pioneer writers and then pointing out that these comments do not specifically condemn “Godhead” Tritheism. This, of course, is circular reasoning. One could do the same thing with any doctrinal belief; creating a new belief and then saying that since it was not specifically rebuked, it must have

been supported. However, as we have seen in this writing, the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including its prophet, Ellen G. White, were adamant that God is properly a singular Person, and not three separate persons. God is neither a three-part being nor a single being that “morphs” into three different modes of manifestation.

The Day Star quote from James White, presented earlier in the book, averred that the main error opposed by early Adventists was believing that Jesus Christ is “the eternal God“ Himself. This precludes any form of Trinitarian or Tritheism doctrines, since all versions of “one triune God” belief, regardless of how they are stated or how many theological loopholes are claimed, all believe that Jesus Christ is either the One true God or “one-third” of the One true God. These are beliefs that the early SDA church opposed aggressively. Rightly so, since Jesus Christ Himself said to his Father, “And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Another area which proves that the pioneers did not accept the tritheistic “Godhead” doctrine is that they were also very staunch in the belief that God “had form and parts” such as hands, feet and a face. Both Tritheists and orthodox Trinitarians believe that “God” does not have either; the former because they believe that God is a “unity of three divine beings”, which makes God a group, not an individual with parts or form, the latter because they believe that God is a single non-personal thing, but that this single thing is “made up of three semi-beings”.

Trinitarianism makes God a “what” comprised of three “whos”, while Tritheism makes God a “them” comprised of three “whos“. In neither case is God actually a “Him” regardless of any claims to the contrary. That someone can describe God as a “unity of three beings” and then go on from there to refer to God as “Him” is contradictory. If orthodox and “threeness” Trinitarians had to be consistent with their language, the church would not accept these teachings.

But regardless of actual doctrinal implications, both orthodox Trinitarians and Tritheists within the Seventh-day Adventist Church have serious holes in their theories. As suggested earlier, orthodox Trinitarians have the insurmountable problem that Ellen White was very clear that God and Christ were not one in Being, as admitted to and touted as evidence by “threeness” theologians. The problem “threeness” Trinitarians have is there is no historical connection to the early SDA church or any hint of such a teaching within the writings of Ellen G. White.

Like I noted earlier, the real story in its fullness will probably not be known this side of eternity. But we have seen the evidence for and against the traditional story, or Story One, from primary sources with no personal opinions or elaborate explanations really needed. That story does not hold water historically, and even goes so far as to contradict itself on several points.

Let us move forward into the future gaining our revelation and truth from their rightful sources, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, as interpreted by themselves, by actual historical records and by God’s Spirit.

The Texas town of Galveston rebuilt after the Great Hurricane. They brought in extra earth and actually raised the level of the whole city. A sea wall was built for protection against the occasional severe storms that threaten to sweep it away. Can Adventism recover from this deadly heresy that has infested its theology and belief system? Will we raise the level of the church above the threat? Will we “seek the old paths” rebuilding that wall of protection, “God’s teachings in our past history”, which keeps us safe from the severe storms of compromise? Time will tell.

May God, through His only begotten Son bless you by His Spirit.

Appendix

A Review of Vance Ferrell's *Defending the Godhead*

Vance Ferrell, long known among conservative Adventists as a stalwart “defender of the faith”, has published a book entitled *Defending the Godhead* (referred to as “DG” from here on for brevity). The book is one of several “defending” books Br. Ferrell has written, and has used that word in other titles such as “Defending God”, which is a study of God’s character, the non-immortality of the soul

and other associated issues. Like the others, DG is a small pulp-paperback that is cheap to print and easy to distribute.

The Tone and Tenor

As one reads DG, he can feel a bit intimidated at first. The book promises “over 500 Bible references and 120 Spirit of Prophecy quotations” that supposedly will leave no question as to the beliefs of the historic Adventist church, the “pattern of deception” of other non-Trinitarians, and an expose’ of the falsehood of the orthodox Trinity doctrine.

The tone of the book is unmistakably bombastic. I do not remember ever seeing so many exclamation points and bolded lines in a single work. As I read, I could see in my mind’s eye a preacher pounding a pulpit with his fist as he pressed his points, almost yelling through the printed page. For this reason, it was necessary to read the book several times to get over the “intimidation factor” and get down to the brass tacks of his claims, the bottom line of what he was trying to accomplish and the accuracy of his arguments.

First, it should be noted that the author ironically considers himself solidly and adamantly anti-Trinitarian., even while other Adventists who share Br. Ferrell’s view just as adamantly consider themselves fully Trinitarian. One of the major points of his book is to expose the “Trinitarian error” of the Roman Catholic Church.

One thing that the author could be credited with is that he makes no claims to objectivity. His book is a defense of his own point of view, and as such he makes no apologies for the tone or content. In a world of political correctness run amok, it carries a quaint “home spun” frankness that some may find refreshing... if the shrillness and rude tone do not drive you away first.

511 Bible verses and 120 Spirit of Prophecy Quotations!

While the book can be somewhat convincing as it is worded and presented, it becomes clear to the “Berean” studier that it is built upon a sandy foundation of various false presuppositions and pretexts. These pretexts are then propped up by certain Ellen White quotations and “hundreds“ of Bible verses, or at least parts of Bible verses. Most of the Ellen White references are the same quotations repeated several times each from different sources, many of which were re-edited and first published after her death, while his many Bible verses may have a single word or two that appear to support his theory if used out of context.

For example, if the Bible has a reference, or even a perceived reference, to the divinity of Christ *in any way*, or that the Holy Spirit exists *in any way*, he considers that “proof” of his claims. So the claim of 511 Bible verses and 120 Spirit of Prophecy quotes is very misleading. I will touch on this again later in the relevant sections.

But nevertheless, what if one were to print every Bible or Spirit of Prophecy quote that refers to God as a single person? Or every Ellen White reference to Christ as God’s “only begotten Son”? Let’s put it this way, Ellen White referred to Christ as “begotten” over 1800 times! One could also list every time Ellen White or the Bible refer to the Holy Spirit as “it” (again, it would be in the hundreds). Now, combine that with every reference to God as a singular “He” or Him” and you would have literally thousands of Bible texts and thousands (not 120) of Spirit of Prophecy quotes

all proving the semi-Arian views of the Advent pioneers, Ellen G. White, early Christianity and the Bible.

Br. Ferrell's book is based on many assertions and points that are grounded in fallacious presuppositions, upon which he builds his "case" for the tritheistic "Godhead" doctrine.

Some of these assertions include:

1- That to believe Christ had a beginning is to deny His divinity.

2- That the word "eternity" in the writings of Ellen White should be defined as "without beginning".

3- That to believe the Holy Spirit is not a separate individual being is a denial of the very existence of the Holy Spirit.

4- That Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy quotes which show the existence of the Holy Spirit are proof that the Holy Spirit is a separate divine being.

5- That the pioneers only opposed the "Roman Catholic" modalistic Trinity. This implies that they supported Ferrell's "Godhead" view.

6- That the word "Godhead" is defined as a group of divine beings, or "God family".

7- That the Trinity doctrine has only one form, that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Let us examine each of these assertions and see if they are legitimate points or are simply fallacies used to bolster a personal point of view and opinion.

Assertion #1- To deny the eternality of Christ is to deny His divinity.

Author Vance Ferrell's claim that to deny Christ's "eternality" is to deny His divinity is an old Trinitarian accusation and debate tactic, and one the pioneers faced regularly. One of the first things Br. Ferrell establishes in his book is his opposition to "the Trinity". This then allows him to say that the pioneers did not oppose his own view. However, the pioneer founders of the Seventh day Adventist Church did not only oppose a view, they had an established their own view, which they taught and defended. This did not include the idea that Christ was without beginning, and therefore not actually the begotten Son of God. Joseph Waggoner, father of E.J Waggoner, was an original pioneer of the church and responded directly to the accusation that Adventists denied Christ's divinity by denying his lack of origin.

Joseph H. Waggoner - *"Many theologians really think that the Atonement, in respect to its dignity and efficacy, rests upon the doctrine of the 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. Their difficulty consists in this: They take the denial of a trinity [or "Godhead" doctrine] to be equivalent to a denial of the divinity of Christ. Were that the case, we should cling to the doctrine as tenaciously as any can; but it is not the case. **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.** (J. H. Waggoner, 1884, *The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*, pp 164, 165)*

Waggoner was here defending the Adventist Church's belief that the entire being of Christ died on the cross and not His body only. Vance Ferrell would assert that this statement was made only against the modalistic Trinity only and not against the "threeness" Godhead doctrine because Waggoner mentions the Trinity, and Trinitarians, by name. However, the accusation made by the "Trinitarian" is the very same one made by "threeness Trinitarians", that is, that Christ being "God Himself" and thus naturally immortal, could not possibly die in totality. Waggoner's point is that if the human body only died, then we have no divine sacrifice for our sins, but a human sacrifice only. This point applies to all systems of belief that would hold that Christ was the "One God" who cannot die. This would include tritheists and modalists, as well as orthodox Trinitarians.

The bottom line in terms of Christ's divinity is how one defines divinity, and which qualities define it. Orthodox Trinitarians believe that in order for anyone to be "divine" he must be without beginning, omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (everywhere present) and omnipotent (all powerful).

"Godhead" Tritheists find a problem with this definition in that they do not generally accept that the Father and the Son are omnipresent, but that only the third separate being, the Holy Spirit, is omnipresent. Now, if one believes that the three members of "the Godhead" are separate beings that are merely united in purpose, then the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit cannot in any way be considered the omnipresence of another separate being, since they are not connected in terms of being. As such, to orthodox Trinitarians it is the "threeness" Godhead doctrinists who are denying the divinity of both Christ and the Father, since they believe omnipresence is a required defining quality of divinity.

The orthodox Trinitarians would also say that because conservative Adventists believe that Christ came in a fallen nature, they are denying His divinity in that respect as well. Let me explain.

According to Trinitarian belief, God, or any part of God, cannot have a fallen nature, as this would mean the entire Trinity had a fallen nature by virtue of Christ's part in the Trinity even in His humanity. This was an important issue during the 1950s meetings with Evangelicals Martin and Barnhouse, and resulted in the denying of Christ's fallen nature by the Adventist representatives.

Many conservative Adventists have wondered what made Froom and company compromise on the nature of Christ, since that belief alone would not be enough to gain a "cult" classification from the Evangelicals. The truth is that in order to claim a belief of the Trinity doctrine, which was the real issue, they would of necessity need to deny the fallen nature of Christ as well, since the fallen nature of Christ and the Trinity doctrine are not compatible. Both the Adventist And Evangelical contingencies were well aware of the fact that theologically the unfallen nature of Christ and the Trinity doctrine are a "package deal".

Assertion #2- The word “eternity” in the writings of Ellen White should be defined as “without beginning”.

Vance Ferrell and others who share his beliefs, while rejecting the actual omnipresence of Christ, hold that His “having no beginning” is a test of divinity. As was seen in the J.H. Waggoner quotation, this was simply not accepted as a requirement for divinity by the pioneers of the Advent Movement, or Ellen White, who believed that Christ was truly the divine “only begotten Son of God” before creation. But nevertheless, Br. Ferrell goes on to quote Ellen White’s references to Christ being with God from “eternity” as irrefutable proof that Christ had no origin from God the Father, and that neither Ellen White nor the pioneers believed He had a beginning. Not so fast.

What was meant by “eternity” as stated by Ellen White and the pioneers of the Advent Movement? Did “eternity” mean “without beginning”? Not according to the evidence. The following are quotes from several Adventist pioneers, including Ellen White, which help define how “eternity” was used and understood in the 19th century Adventist Church.

“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 & Herald*, 14 April, 1896, p 232 (This statement was made was prior to Prescott’s Trinitarian “conversion” around 1919.)

“We know that Christ “proceeded forth and came 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. “EJ Waggoner- *Christ and His Righteousness*, chapter 2, paragraph 3

Ellen White’s definitive book on the life of Christ, *The Desire of Ages*, opens with a curious comment about the origin of the Son of God.

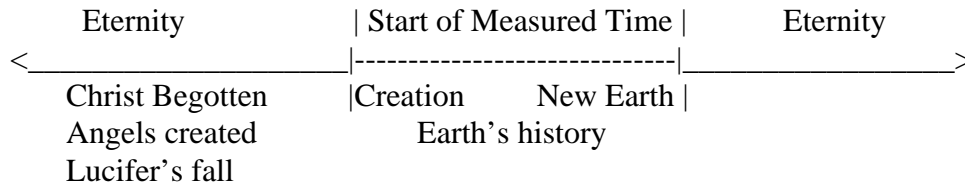
“From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was the image of God, the image of His greatness and majesty, “the outshining of His glory“. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p1

Prescott’s, Waggoner’s and Ellen White’s statements above perfectly illustrate the understanding of the pioneers and Ellen White’s definition of “eternity” regarding the events that took place in heaven, including the begotten, or born, sonship of Jesus Christ. Well-known Adventist scholar J.N. Andrews explained eternity this way:

“But is not eternity, as distinguished from time, unmeasured durations? And is not time, as distinguished from eternity, that part of duration which is measured by the Bible? *J.N. Andrews, Sermons on the Sabbath and the Law. pg 177*

According to the pioneer’s use of the word, events can take place “*in* eternity”, meaning they occurred outside of, and prior to, earthly time as we know it, which was created by God through Christ at the creation of the world: “The morning and the evening were the first day.” This is the first biblical record of the existence of measured time. Thus, any event that occurred prior to this was

considered “in eternity”, or as Ellen White put it “The days of eternity“. It did not mean that the events never happened or that they were not events that took place, as some believe eternity is taken to mean “without beginning“. The chart below illustrates this fact.



The fallacy of Br. Ferrell’s argument is that to have an origin “in eternity” means not have an origin at all. Common sense and inspiration tell us that linear events did in fact take place “in eternity”. Christ’s begottenness, the creation of angels and the fall of Lucifer all happened “in eternity”, that is, prior to the entrance of measured time as we know it.

Assertion #3- To deny that the Holy Spirit is an actual separate being is to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit.

I will reprint a couple of Br. Ferrell’s statements to this effect from his book in order to clarify the fact that he actually believes this...and wants us to believe it as well.

“It is a serious thing to grieve away the Holy Spirit; **how much more serious to deny that He exists!**.... We dare not willfully reject the Spirit or, at the prompting of Satan, **declare that the Holy Spirit does not exist!**” DG, p174. Bold mine

“While the eternity of Christ is under ongoing attack, **the existence of the Holy Spirit is being totally denied!**” Ibid, p25 Bold mine

I am not certain how Vance Ferrell came to such a conclusion. I have never met another Christian that denies the existence of the Holy Spirit, so I am not entirely sure how to respond to such a comment. The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, the writings of the pioneers and contemporary non-trinitarian historic Adventist scholars all accept and teach the existence and importance of the Holy Spirit. The only issue is whether the Holy Spirit is an actual separate person to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

I was especially concerned, however, with Vance Ferrell’s view of the Holy Spirit and his apparent lack of knowledge regarding the tragic errors of John Harvey Kellogg’s pantheistic Trinitarian theology, which Br. Ferrell appears to be following in the footsteps of. On page 25, Br. Ferrell quoted Ellen White and then added his own bracketed side note. Here is how it appears in his book *Defending the Godhead*.

"We cannot render to God supreme love and honor if we do not recognize the Holy Spirit which the Lord sends. The Holy Spirit represents Jesus Christ."- 2 Manuscript Releases, 38. [Written at the time of Kellogg's pantheism theory. Pantheism also denied the Holy Spirit's existence.]

DG,p 25 (Brackets his)

This bracketed statement is an amazing commentary by the author, since it is in opposition to the actual facts. Kellogg's Pantheism was based entirely on the view that the Holy Spirit was an actual person of the Trinitarian Godhead and that God Himself actually lives within all things by the Holy Spirit, the very same view that Br. Ferrell teaches in his book. As we saw earlier, during the Pantheism crisis Kellogg wrote in a letter to G.I. Butler defending *The Living Temple*:

"As far as I can fathom the difficulty which is found in *The Living Temple* the whole thing may be simmered down to one question: Is the Holy Ghost a person? You say no. I had supposed the Bible said this 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 so many words that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Godhead. How the Holy Ghost can be a person and not be a person at all is difficult for me to see." Letter from J.H. Kellogg to G.I. Butler, October 28, 1903

As can plainly be seen in this personal letter from Kellogg to General Conference President George Butler, Kellogg not only did not deny the existence of the Holy Spirit but he held the very same view as Vance Ferrell! Amazingly, the author then goes on to teach his own version of Pantheism that eerily parallels Kellogg's. Six pages (pp 26-32) are dedicated to teaching that physiologically, God the Holy Spirit is at work sustaining all life...from within!

"It is well-known, by microbiologists, that there is not enough genes in DNA to provide the needed information for all the structure and functions of the body (particularly all the different proteins, enzymes and coordinate structures). It is the power of God, through the Holy Spirit [which Ferrell believes is an actual being]- which keeps the complicated mechanisms of the heart, liver, brain, endocrines and other organs working moment by moment." DG, p29, parentheses his, brackets mine.

Like J.H. Kellogg, Vance Ferrell claims that the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, being part of the Godhead, means that the Godhead is residing physically, and working "inside", all living matter on the physical cellular level.

I have suggested that it is the Holy Spirit which works within every created object, keeping it functioning properly. Ibid, p30., Italics his, underline mine

"Apparently, it is the Holy Spirit which is at work within every plant, animal and intelligent being in the universe. (This is not pantheism, which teaches that God *IS* everything.)" Ibid, p29, parentheses his, underline mine

John Harvey Kellogg, when describing and defending his own pantheistic teachings, made the very same argument, claiming that "there is a boot maker in the boot", denying that he ever believed that the boot maker was the boot. Regardless, Ellen White still rebuked this teaching as Pantheism, and dubbed it the alpha of deadly heresies. This made sense, since if one is to say that the Holy Spirit, the third being of a triune God, or "threeness Trinity", is part of the very genetic cellular makeup and function of the creation, then certainly, God the Holy Spirit indeed must be part of the

creation itself. Thus, Br. Ferrell's theory is very much Pantheism of the identical type as that of J. H. Kellogg.

The truth, as given by Sr. White to Kellogg, is that life is sustained by the Father's "power" through His "word", both of which are *functions* of God, but those functions are certainly not the Person of God Himself living inside your cells. This is why during the Kellogg crisis, Mrs. White emphasized repeatedly that God is a Person, an actual singular person with a form. And an actual singular person with a form cannot literally and physically live inside of His creation as an integral part of that creation.

It should also be considered that if what Vance Ferrell says is true, that God the Holy Spirit residing within your body is what keeps it alive and functional, then when the Spirit is fully withdrawn at the close of probation, everything would immediately die! But we know that the wicked are destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming, they do not simply drop dead because God the Holy Spirit has left them without enough genetic material to function.

Assertion #4- That Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy quotes which show the existence of the Holy Spirit are proof that the Holy Spirit is a separate divine being.

The author does not come right out and say, "Any text that speaks of the Holy Spirit is proof that it is a separate being", but his use of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are such that this is what is implied. Of course this is a fallacy of the highest order. It simply does not follow that to prove the *existence* of a Holy Spirit is evidence that the Holy Spirit is a separate divine being to God and Christ. This is one of the ways that the author is able to boast "511 Bible verses and 120 Spirit of Prophecy quotes". He simply makes an irrelevant statement and then finds dozens of irrelevant quotes and verses to back up that irrelevant statement. In this case, finding many verses, texts and quotations which speak of the Holy Spirit as *existing in any way*, and then applying all of those as evidence of the Father's Spirit existing as a separate individual god-being.

Br. Ferrell does the same with the divinity of Christ. He first claims without biblical evidence that divinity is defined by non-origin. Then he applies every text and quote which speaks of Christ's divinity as being proof of His non-origin, filtered through his own prequalification of what defines divinity. I suppose this is a common practice among apologists, but is not one that I approve of personally, since it seems intellectually dishonest. This is not unlike the apologists who claim, without evidence, that the seventh-day Sabbath is only part of the ceremonial law and then give dozens of texts regarding the ceremonial law being abolished that have nothing to do with the Sabbath.

Assertion #5- The pioneers only opposed the "Roman Catholic" modalistic Trinity. This implies that they supported Ferrell's "Godhead" view.

In a way, the author is parroting the traditional story, which says that the church “grew” to this understanding. Unfortunately, Br. Ferrell takes the next step and says this is what the pioneers *always* believed. To my knowledge, Vance Ferrell is the only notable person who has made this claim. In my research for this book, and in fact for my very belief system, I have come up virtually empty in regards to any published works from “threeness” Godhead doctrinists like Ferrell prior to the 1950s. In the tangled web that is the traditional story, this is one of the enigmas that is attached to it.

As we saw earlier, “threeness” Trinitarians within the church claim that Ellen G. White, while always opposing the orthodox Trinity, consistently supported a particular Trinitarian view. We have seen that this was certainly not the case and that Mrs. White was in lock-step with her church in regards to the identity of the one God and the literal sonship of Jesus Christ. However, we return to the fact that it was only the orthodox Trinity that was pushed for by men like Froom, Prescott and Lacey, and that view eventually won out on an official level. Ferrell, in an attempt to prove that the pioneers were “Godhead” tritheists, includes eleven anti-Trinitarian statements by various pioneers. He then points to the use of the word “Trinity” as used in these statements and in effect says, “You see, it was only the Catholic Trinity they opposed. My theology does not use the word Trinity, but ‘Godhead’. And there is no article or sermon by the pioneers that reject the Godhead.”

Again, this is clever (or not so clever) word play by the author. But the truth is, there was no popular tritheistic “Godhead” doctrine for the pioneers to oppose, with the possible exception of the obscure teachings of Mormonism.

This leads us to another misuse of words by the author that I touched on earlier in the book, that of using the word “Godhead” to mean a “God group” or “God family.”

Assertion #6- The word “Godhead” is defined as a group of divine beings, or “God family”.

Our well-educated pioneers no doubt understood the biblical meaning of the word ‘Godhead’ as it is translated from the Greek *Theios*, which is “divine nature” or “godlike”.

- Strong’s #2304- *theios*- godlike, Divine/divinity (neut. as a noun divinity) - divine, godhead. Also #2305- *theiotes*- divinity- godhead.

What is interesting is that in the King James Version this word is capitalized in its uses where it is translated as “Godhead”. The apostle Paul, speaking to the Athenians on Mars hill, told of our adoption to this “unknown God”, and our relationship with Him.

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” Acts 17:29

Paul was telling his audience that since we are adopted by God and are “in Him” it should be obvious that this cannot be drawn or carved into a statue, since God’s divine nature does not have form, but is Spirit (and this Spirit is the Father’s Spirit, not a separate being). Of course the word Godhead need not be capitalized here, since the original Old English translators themselves

understood that “Godhead” was a quality, divinity, and not a personal name or title of any kind. I very much doubt the word godhead was capitalized in the original KJV. We see the word used by Paul in a similar way in Romans 1:20:

“For the invisible things of Him [God the Father] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so they are without excuse.”
Roman 1:20

Here, Paul is saying that we can know God’s power and divinity by His creation. Again, the word Godhead did not need to be capitalized, since it was not used as a proper noun. Nor does this word, in any of its uses within the pages of the Holy Bible, indicate a group of divine beings. Paul was describing qualities that belonged to God the Father, and this godhead, or divinity, is one of His traits.

If Br. Ferrell were to define this word correctly, his book would carry the title “*Defending the Father’s Divine Nature*”. But as it stands, the very title of his book is a mistranslation and misapplication of Bible language.

Assertion #7- That the Trinity doctrine has only one form, that of the Roman Catholic Church.

This is where the book gets very confusing, as it appears the author is not very familiar with the various Trinity versions and which churches believe which version. Vance is correct in saying that the Trinity doctrine is “Catholic”. However, he then goes on to describe a non-Catholic version of the Trinity and attribute it to Catholicism.

I agree that the Roman Church alone should hold the right of definition to the name “Trinity” since it was the Roman Emperor Constantine who played the pivotal role in its formulation by the church of Rome. But the orthodox Trinity that Rome teaches is not the modalistic version of the Trinity that Vance Ferrell appears to impute to it.

There are three major versions of the Trinitarian doctrine, a “Trinity of Trinities” as it were, that we have already seen. I will briefly reiterate for the purpose of clarity.

1- The Orthodox Trinity- One God who is One Being, but is made up of three “persons”. The word “persons” is left vague and in the whole of the teaching can probably be defined as “semi-beings“. The orthodox Trinity teaches that Christ is “eternally begotten”. That is, that He not only is “One in being with the Father”, but that He is being “eternally generated”, almost like a constant projection without end or beginning. According to the orthodox Trinity, which goes back to the 4th century, Christ was “begotten” without actually being begotten and will continue to be begotten through eternity. This is the belief of the Roman Catholic Church and many Evangelicals.

2- Modalism/Seballianism- This means One God being that manifests Himself in three different ways, and that each is “Jesus in one form or another”. This is also called the “Jesus only” Trinity. This belief, which is held primarily by certain Evangelicals and Pentecostals, believes that Jesus and the Father are one in the same, and that Jesus became the Father who became Christ, who

became the Holy Spirit, who will become the Father again. Curiously, this is the doctrine that Br. Ferrell appears to attribute to the Roman Catholic Church.

3- Tritheism or “Godhead” doctrine- There is One God, but this “God” is a committee of three actual and independent divine God-beings working in harmony with each other. The theory holds that each “divine Being”, or God, entered into a specific role for the purpose of salvation. This view is held by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and some conservative Adventists.

Many, if not most, of the adherents and advocates of each of these doctrines use the word “Trinity” to describe their belief. As one can see, not only is there more than one version of the Trinity, but that each version denies that Christ, in His pre-existence, was the actual Son of God. The orthodox Trinity denies this by saying that Christ was never actually begotten, but is an “eternal generation” coming from the Father. Modalism denies the sonship of Christ by saying that He and the Father are one in the same person. Tritheism, or “Godhead” doctrinists, deny Christ’s sonship by saying that He entered into *the role* of a son, but was never begotten by the Father as an actual son prior to Bethlehem. The other things these three doctrines have in common is the belief that God is not a Person with form and parts and that “the Holy Spirit” is the name of an actual separate person.

Other Areas of Concern

Along with the previously examined presuppositions, there are other problem areas in the book *Defending the Godhead*. One of these areas of concern is in the interpreting of what Br. Ferrell calls “problem texts“. Several of the supposed “problem texts” are simple statements that are very clear, with the plainest of meanings.

Seventh-day Adventists grow weary of the lame explanations that non-Adventists put on certain Bible texts that deal with issues such as the immortality of the soul or the Sabbath. For this reason, I would expect better from an experienced Adventist like Vance Ferrell. While space does not allow for an examination of every misinterpreted text in the 208 page book, here is one specific example that even to the surface reader, was either rushed through with little thought, or was answered with a less than honest response.

“But to us there us 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 in Him.” 1Corinthians 8:6

The above passage must mean “**there is but one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ.**” (All we did was to omit the comma after God. As you know, there were no commas in the original Greek. Cf. Luke23:43, where we run into a similar comma problem.)

None should use 1 Corinthians 8:6 to deny the truth of other statements, by the apostle Paul, which confirm the divinity of Christ and that He is also fully God:...” DG, p24 (Parentheses his)

Certainly, Vance Ferrell must be aware that he did far more than simply “omit the comma”. In the above paraphrase of the Bible text, 21 words have been removed, along with all of the commas. The attempt to compare this to Luke 23:43 is a reach at best, a travesty at worst. In Luke 23, the removal of the comma makes a decided difference in the meaning. In this passage it makes no difference whatsoever. No matter how you slice it, the text still says there is one God who is the Father and one Lord who is Jesus Christ. 1Corinthians 8:6 is in perfect harmony with other statements made by the apostle Paul that clearly say that the Father is God and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In fact, every epistle written by the apostle Paul, makes reference to this fact in its opening greeting.

1Thessalonians 1:1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, From God and our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Colossians: 1:1,2

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse. Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 1:2

“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I will not list each and every Pauline greeting here, but you get the idea. The apostle Paul was well aware that there was God, who is the Father, and that there is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God’s Son. Ephesians 4:6 makes a parallel statement to 1 Corinthians 8:6:

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

There is no way to get around such clear statements, and Br. Ferrell should not try to.

The author then attempts to say that people use this to “deny the divinity of Christ.” We have already established in this book that the Adventist pioneers and modern day historic Adventists do not deny the divinity of Christ. But since the very inception of the Trinity doctrine in A.D. 325 at the council of Nicaea, this accusation has been used as a relentless hammer of persecution against those who believe in Christ’s literal sonship and the Supremacy of the Father as the “Source of all being”(G.C. p479).

Another area of deep concern is Brother Ferrell’s apparent lack of knowledge where the writings of Ellen White are concerned. On page 48 of *Defending the Godhead*, we find a couple of very interesting statements, one of which contradicts the plainest of Spirit of Prophecy quotations and another that I cannot even understand his reason for making the statement, since it is so far from reality. Here is the first statement:

“Several times in the Old testament, God speaks of Himself as “us”. Note Genesis 1:26, where the Ones who do the creating of man are plural. Created beings do not create; so the “us” can only refer to the Godhead.” DG p48

The author, who refers to God as calling Himself “us”, has a problem, since if that is the case, Br Ferrell should have written “Gods speak of *themselves* as ‘us’”; an “us” cannot also be a “Himself”. This is a major problem for both Trinitarians and Tritheists. While they wish to say that God is a plurality of beings or persons, they still insist on referring to God as a single person in terms of their language. But be that as it may, Ellen White was clear in regard to Genesis 1:26. She rightly and simply wrote, “God said to His Son, let us make man....”. Certainly there were two divine beings involved in creation, God and His only begotten Son. That way, God is still a “Him”, the Father, and there are two divine beings involved in creation.

The second, and related issue in regards to Genesis is the word “*elohim*”, and the author’s explanation of its meaning. He makes the following comment.

“*Eloheim*” is one of the Old Testament words for “God”. This Hebrew word is plural (“Gods” not “God”) Jewish scholars have never been able to explain this fact. (Ibid. parentheses his)

Vance Ferrell then feels that the words translated “God said, let there be light”, should be translated to read, “*The Gods* said, let there be light.” While I can understand why he mistakenly believes *Elohim* to be plural, at the same time I am not sure how Br. Ferrell could come to such a conclusion regarding the supposed “inability” of Jewish scholars to explain the pluralness of *Elohim*. Jewish religious people, both scholars and non-scholars, have always understood the meaning of the plural in *Elohim* perfectly and without trouble. In fact, even Christian scholars do not see a “plurality of persons” in the word “*Elohim*”, as illustrated in the following entry into Smith’s Bible Dictionary:

“The plural form of *Elohim* has given rise to much discussion. **The fanciful idea that it referred to the trinity of persons in the godhead hardly now finds a supporter among scholars.** It is either what grammarians call the *plural of majesty* or it denotes the *fulness* of divine strength, the *sum of the powers* displayed by God.” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary, p 220, italics his)

Another book on Hebrew grammar and word usage puts it this way:

“That the language has entirely rejected the idea of numerical plurality in ‘*elohiym*’ is proved especially by its being almost invariably joined with a singular attribute” [i.e. a singular adjective or verb]. (*Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, p 399 ,1910)

In other words, the use of surrounding adjectives and verbs determine the proper meaning of *Elohim*, and it *never* means a plurality of beings or persons within the One God of the Bible. But again, how does Vance Ferrell make the claim that “scholars have never been able to explain it”, when nearly every book written by scholars on the subject explain it simply and easily?

Finally, the author presents the 1889 Statement of Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists in the following way:

“In 1889, for the first time, a statement of beliefs appeared in our SDA yearbook.

Here are significant portions of this statement:

I. That there is one God, a personal spiritual Being, the creator of all things, omnipotent..[lists other qualities]..and everywhere present by His representative, the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:7

II. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal father, the one by whom He created all things, and by whom they do consist..[describes the work of Christ on earth and in the heavenly sanctuary..”

Fundamental Beliefs, Nos 1 and 2, 1889 SDA Yearbook. DG pp87-88

Now, it is interesting that Br. Ferrell says this is the first statement of beliefs when the truth is that this statement was first published in 1872 and was penned by James White himself. The 1889 version is the same, but was published under the management of Uriah Smith. Here is the most interesting part of Vance Ferrell's statement, and one that leaves a person scratching their head in bewilderment:

This statement speaks of "One God" who is a "being". The statement is thus claiming that God is one being, when the Son and the Holy Spirit are also God. It is indeed strange that this wording should appear, when nowhere in our doctrinal literature, back then, was anything similar mentioned. DG, p88

This is the truly confusing part, since neither James White nor Uriah Smith, the two authors and publishers of the statement, were *at any time* Trinitarian or Tritheist. It is even more odd that Vance Ferrell would say that the idea that God as a single being was "nowhere to be found in our doctrinal literature". From its very inception until at least 1931, the Seventh-day Adventist Church believed in a single God who is one person and a single being, the Father. This all Adventist scholars agree to, and is plainly apparent in the writings of Ellen G. White and the pioneers. Please read the following quotation from Ellen G. White and judge for yourself if the concept of God as a "personal being" was ever found in the writings of the Adventist pioneers.

God is a spirit; yet He is *a personal being*, for man was made in His image. *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. As a personal Savior He came to the world. As a personal Savior He ascended on high. As a personal Savior He intercedes in the heavenly courts. Before the throne of God in our behalf ministers "One like the Son of man." Daniel 7:13. 9 (Ed 131.1)

Br. Ferrell then ascribes the mysterious appearance of this "Trinitarian" statement to the rejecting of the 1888 message, and implies that Uriah Smith printed this as a sort of "revenge" against Ellen White for supporting Waggoner and Jones. Of course, since this statement of beliefs first appeared in 1872, 14 years prior to the 1888 Minneapolis meeting, and not 1889, Vance Ferrell's remarks are exposed as even more profoundly ridiculous.

To Summarize

When we study the plain words of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, as well as the history of Christianity and of the Advent Movement, we find the truth that in terms of identity God is One Person, the Father. This Father has an only begotten divine Son, Jesus Christ, and the Father and the Son share a Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and Christ. Regardless of how many Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy quotes one has, only this truth can harmonize it all without pulling things out of context, redefining biblical words, rewriting history or compromising the faith and message of God's last days church.

In the past, I have had some respect for Vance Ferrell and have read with appreciation his various books regarding the Investigative Judgment, the Sanctuary, Adventist education and other topics, as well as his ability to distribute the writings of Ellen G. White for an affordable price, so that anyone can partake of God's prophetic message for our day.

However, I must say I am deeply disappointed with *Defending the Godhead*, as it presents much false information, poor scholarship and the twisting of quotes and texts, along with a manifested ignorance of both Christian/Adventist history and of the actual theology held by Trinitarians and Tritheists of all stripes. I pray that Br. Ferrell will reconsider his position by looking deeper into history, as well as God's word, with an open mind and honest heart. That way, he could bring the truth of God's actual identity into his work, causing it to flourish and bless others more fully. I am hopeful that he will move away from his pantheistic theories and embrace the truth as it is in Christ, by His word.

I also pray that the confusion caused by *Defending the Godhead* is minimized somewhat by this review and that it has blessed you.