

THE TRINITY DOCTRINE For Seventh-day Adventists

By Max Hatton

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all of my dear brothers and sisters in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who are willing to diligently search for the truth on subjects such as this. They are the true Seventh-day Adventists – people of the Book. They are people who have a burning desire to know and believe what God wishes us to know and believe and then to share His truths with other erring mortals.

Honour and glory to Him who made us, loves us, and died for us. He is coming back to planet earth soon so that we may be rescued from this dying planet and then share eternity with Him.

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INTRODUCTION

Please note that unless otherwise stated my Scripture quotations will be from the *New International Version*.

There are wonderful blessings in retirement for Seventh-day Adventist Ministers. My own experience has been really wonderful. The first two years of my retirement saw me teaching Bible doctrines to young people at Avondale College here at Cooranbong. For most of my years as a Christian I had a burning desire to share my discoveries related to the Trinity doctrine. I could not seem to be able to make headway with this while teaching so I reluctantly withdrew from it and devoted my time to the writing of a book. Along the way I have had the great privilege of relieving as Church Pastor in six Parishes here in Australia - three in Western Australia (one of them on two occasions), one in New South Wales, and one in Queensland. A couple of other requests for me to fill this position have also come my way but I have not been able to fit these into my schedule. I am sad to report that the joy has been somewhat marred because in recent times I have been invited to a number of Churches that have requested me to run meetings on the Trinity because of members who oppose this teaching. The most recent experience I had in a Church in which I was relieving was in Queensland. A number of dissidents had been bothering the members with attacks on the Trinity doctrine. I ran four Sabbath afternoon meetings, each of ninety minutes duration, on the subject in order to try and clarify the matter for as many as wanted to attend. Incredibly, not one of the dissidents attended any of the meetings, but I think I can safely say that each meeting was attended by at least fifty appreciative members, some coming from other nearby SDA Churches

Unfortunately, some Adventists have chosen to oppose this doctrine, which is a Fundamental Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My research on the matter has convinced me that they have taken their stand without being properly informed. This may be because they have not adequately done their homework and have just accepted what some other agitators have spread around. There is much defective material on the subject being circularised. It seems to have been spread all over the world. Their advertising against the doctrine comes in a variety of forms. I personally have a video and audio tapes as well as more than two dozen books and booklets produced by the dissidents. As I have read and heard much of it I have been unable to refrain from thinking SOS (same old stuff) for most of what is circularised is merely a rehash of what others have prepared. Collectively, this material is like a guided missile which has a triple warhead. The warheads are aimed at the Trinity doctrine and Trinitarians and could be labelled 1, 2, 3 as follows:

1. Biblical arguments.
2. Our leading Pioneers did not believe the doctrine.
3. Ellen G. White did not teach the subject positively..

Their advertising is extensive but their missiles fail on impact. Their attempts to advertise against the subject remind me of a story told by Morris Venden:

A lion met a tiger as they drank beside the pool.

Said the tiger to the lion, "Why are you roaring like a fool?"

"That's not foolish," said the lion, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"They call me king of all the beasts because I advertise."

A rabbit heard them talking, ran homeward like a streak.

He thought he'd try the lion's trick, but his roar was just a squeak.

A fox was walking by that way – had luncheon in the woods.

Moral: Never advertise unless you have the goods.

The clear facts are that the agitating anti-Trinitarians do not have the goods as will become obvious to all those willing to consider the contents of this book. The information I provide is, in some places, in note form, in others the information is considerable. It should be sufficient for anyone desiring a fair-minded appraisal of this very important subject. However, I wish also to draw attention to my book

Understanding the Trinity (available at Seventh-day Adventist book stores). This provides a treatment of the subject based upon Scripture only. It exposes warhead 1 as being entirely out of harmony with the Bible. I strongly recommend the study of this book to those interested in truth. While the book is based upon Scripture only, this book, *The Trinity Doctrine for Seventh-day Adventists*, also takes into account what our Pioneers and Ellen G. White said on the matter (The dissidents rely a lot on a distorted understanding of Sister White's writings). It exposes missiles 2 and 3 to be real fizzers.

I want to say that although this subject may sound rather daunting, complicated, and beyond the understanding of ordinary people, it is not. Please believe me when I say that I am just an ordinary person and that I speak and write in an ordinary way. You will find very little in this work that sounds like the high and lofty language of the Theologians. It is written by an ordinary person for ordinary people. As you progress through the work you will find this to be true. I invite you to try it and see.

Before launching into a study of the subject I must say that I thank God that our Church is strongly in support of the Trinity Doctrine; otherwise I would not have been able to become a member.

AN UNDERSTANDING OF IMPORTANT SUBJECTS REQUIRES DILIGENT, PRAYERFUL STUDY

It was apparently the English preacher Robert South (1634-1716) who claimed, "*If you deny the doctrine of the Trinity, you could lose your soul, but if you strive too hard to understand it, you could lose your wits.*" This doctrine is undoubtedly one of the most difficult on which to gain some understanding. Of course to try and fully understand God is like trying to put together a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle when you only have about 250 pieces of the puzzle. Nevertheless, the principle found in **Deuteronomy 29:29** requires that we seek to understand what God has revealed of Himself. We must then inevitably arrive at conclusions. A faithful study of what Inspiration has revealed to us requires that we must accept the doctrine of the Trinity. We should do so in great humility. We need to be prepared to commit ourselves to spending much time, prayer, meditation, and effort in our study. I can promise that the rewards for doing so are really great. It is my prayer, dear reader, that our gracious God will abundantly bless you as you open your heart and mind to His leading in your study.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR OUR BELIEF IN THE TRINITY DOCTRINE

BELIEF IN THE TRINITY DOCTRINE IS A REQUIREMENT OF SCRIPTURE

- a. There is but one True God – *Isaiah 44:6; James 2:19*, etc.
- b. There are 3 Persons that inspiration reveals to be True God (i.e. God by nature). We are therefore driven to the conclusion that God is a Trinity. It is not something that we have dragged in from Paganism or the Roman Catholic Church as some who attack our Church like to suggest. The Trinity is a Biblical doctrine, a doctrine revealed by God. We believe it and teach it because this is so. We are compelled by God to accept that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all God but there is only One God by nature.

A SIMPLE DEFINITION OF THE TRINITY

The following is perhaps the simplest definition of the Trinity I have seen:

Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and co-eternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹

We could hardly hope to find a more minimal statement than this. However, when its implications are teased out we have a full picture of the Trinity. Obviously, though, to begin with we need to examine the credentials of each of these Members.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING SOURCES

There are many among the agitators who have a peculiar way of going about their theology. They note that almost all of our leading pioneers were not Trinitarians and they then conclude therefore that neither should we be. This is peculiar because we have advanced in a number of matters beyond what our Pioneers believed, as I will reveal later on. How then should we do our theology? Should we, like many of the agitators, gain our beliefs from Ellen White? Or, should we obtain them from the Bible? Many of the people I have referred to seem to do their theology mainly from Sister White but surprisingly, they ignore what she insists upon on this matter. Listen to just one of many statements that could be offered from her:

The Testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. Let all prove their positions from the Scripture and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God.²

Ellen White was a true Protestant and insisted that the Bible is the source from which we must obtain our true beliefs. Nevertheless, because the agitators quote, and quote

out of context, so much from Ellen White, I will reveal what she truly believed on the Trinity also. NOTES

1. James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 1998, page 26.
2. *Evangelism* page 256 (Letter 12, 1890).

CHAPTER TWO

THE CREDENTIALS OF JESUS TO BE A MEMBER OF THE TRINITY

The following is necessarily in note form otherwise this section would reach enormous proportions. Here is where personal perusal of the Scriptures is necessary. The effort, I promise, will be greatly rewarding.

THE FATHER: No one disputes that He is God so we will not investigate His credentials further.

JESUS:

We will examine the evidence from Scripture that reveals the Deity of Jesus and then we will do the same thing with reference to the Holy Spirit, at the same time noting that He is unquestionably a person.

- a. **Jesus is identified as God in both the Old and New Testaments:** See Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13, 14; Hebrews 1:8; Philippians 2:6, etc.
 - b. **Jesus claimed the Divine Name “I AM” which Yahweh used when He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush:** John 8:58 compare Exodus 3:14.
 - c. **In Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily:** Colossians 2:9.
 - d. **Jesus is “The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”** – Revelation 22:13 compare Isaiah 44:6; 48:12.
 - e. **Jesus shares the glory of God:** John 17:5; Matthew 16:27 compare Isaiah 42:8; 48:11.
 - f. **Jesus is the Creator:** Yahweh says He made everything by Himself – Isaiah 44:24. The New Testament states clearly that Jesus was the Creator and that He made everything for Himself – Colossians 1:15, 16; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:10. Quite clearly Jesus is Yahweh God.
 - g. **Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords:** Revelation 17:14; 19:16 compare Deuteronomy 10:17 and 1 Timothy 6:15.
 - h. **Jesus is Eternal:** Hebrews 7:3; Micah 5:2 compare Psalm 90:2; 93:2.
 - i. **Jesus accepts worship:** Worship is for God only – Exodus 34:14; Matthew 4:10; Acts 10:25, 26; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9. Jesus accepted worship – Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:50-52; Hebrews 1:6. To “call upon the name” is related to worship – Genesis 4:26; 12:8; Psalm 116:17; 79:6; Jeremiah 10:25; Zephaniah 3:9; Joel 2:32. This phrase is used with reference to Jesus – Romans 10:13; Acts 9:14; 9:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 22:16; 2 Timothy 2:22.
 - j. **Jesus hears prayers:** Acts 1:24; 7:59, 60; 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9; John 14:14; Revelation 22:20.
 - k. **Jesus is Omnipresent (Everywhere present at the same time):** Matthew 18:20; 28:20.
 - l. **Jesus reveals God to us:** John 1:18; 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3. No mere man can reveal God – only God visible could reveal the invisible God. Jesus was both God and man – John 1:1, 14.
 - m. **A comparison of some NT and OT passages showing that Jesus is Yahweh.**

Hebrews 1:8-12	with	Psalm 102:24-27
John 12:36-41	with	Isaiah 6:1-3, 10
1 Peter 3:14, 15	with	Isaiah 8:12, 13
 - n. **Jesus is “he who searches hearts and minds”** – Revelation 2:23. “you (Yahweh) alone know the hearts of all men” – 1 Kings 8:39, see also Psalm 7:9. Jesus is quite clearly Yahweh.
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- o. **Firstfruits were offered to God** but in Revelation 14:4 they are spoken of as offered to God and the Lamb.
- p. **Saved people will be priests of God and of the Lamb:** Revelation 20:6.

A VITAL POINT THAT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD AND REMEMBERED

Some, influenced by others not properly informed, have been led to believe that the New Testament reveals that Jesus was less than the Father by nature. A close look at the texts concerned reveals that Jesus was less in *position* while a human, not *nature* (Of course I am talking of His Divine Nature). We must not fail to notice that the Trinity is revealed to us in the context of the plan of redemption (covering the whole Bible). Jesus accepted a subordinate position to the Father as the Messiah. When He became a man He was in a far less *position* than God in heaven. The above evidence clearly shows that He was not less than the Father by *nature*. (His Divinity was veiled while He was a man – He did use it on occasions – but never for His personal comfort or purposes). These things will become clearer as we proceed through our study.

I emphasise that *position* is not *nature*. For example, when Jesus said, “*My father is greater than I.*” **John 14:28** – He was saying that the Father in heaven was in a greater position than was His who was then still on the Earth. Some try to make out that this shows that Jesus was less than the Father and therefore the Trinity cannot be true. They confuse *position* with *nature*. This is an immature unacceptable view of the matter. Jesus in His humanity was in a less *position* than the Father who was in heaven.

CHAPTER THREE

ELLEN G. WHITE AND THE PERSON OF JESUS

AN IRONY OF OUR HISTORY

Some Seventh-day Adventists have the erroneous idea that the Trinity is a falsehood while Semi-Arianism is correct in saying that Jesus came into existence as an emanation from the Father at some time in the very distance past. It must be one of the great ironies in the history of our Church when modern SDA Semi-Arians insist that we should be Semi-Arian as a Church simply because most of our early Pioneers were Arian in belief. Arians believe that Jesus was created. Our early believers later moved to Semi-Arianism with the belief that Jesus was born from God. Some of our original Pioneers had carried with them into our Church their Arian convictions from their previous Church affiliation. Some of our early leaders came from a non-Trinitarian group, the Christian Connection. Of course they brought with them other false beliefs also. They were Sunday keepers, non-vegetarians, they had a legalistic attitude toward salvation, and so on. As they progressively studied many things they advanced into greater light. It was even so with their study of the Trinity.

Semi-Arians of the early Christian centuries encouraged their followers to produce catchy jingles in their endeavours to spread their convictions. The following example reveals their teaching clearly:

*If you want the Logos-doctrine,
I can serve it hot and hot –
God begot him and before he was begotten
he was not.*

The above-mentioned irony is seen in the fact that these Pioneers strongly resisted providing a Statement of Belief for fear that it would become a Creed. They did not want their beliefs set, as it were, in concrete. Today, SDA Semi-Arians want to give our Pioneer Arian beliefs Credal Status. Is this not Irony of the highest order? Listen to what Ellen G. White says in contradiction of this situation:

We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.¹

Quite obviously, Ellen White had no burden for the Church to be stuck at the point where we first started. In fact she had a burden that this should not be so. She saw only a few things that were an essential part of our foundation. She believed that these items should not be rejected. Anti-Trinitarianism was not one of these. The following reveals what she said should be maintained:

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 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 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 angel’s 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 nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. This entire cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary. 2

ELLEN G. WHITE WAS NO ARIAN

The SDA Semi-Arians claim that Ellen G. White was in harmony with our early Pioneers who believed in some form of Arianism. See chapters 4 and 5 for a fuller discussion on what Semi-Arians believe. Here it is sufficient for me to say that they contend that Jesus was not eternal but was actually born from the Father. This, they say, means that He is an inferior type of god. Unfortunately, those making these claims cannot have done their homework for it is quite unacceptable to portray Ellen White as having such a concept. She unquestionably believed that Jesus was God full and complete and that He never did have a beginning. A genuine unbiased review of all of her writings reveals that she was, in the maturity of her understanding, definitely anti-Arian and without doubt a Trinitarian.

ELLEN WHITE STATEMENTS THAT CLEARLY DENY ARIANISM AND SEMI-ARIANISM

Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when he was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. 3

[Christ] announced himself to be the self-existent one. 4

In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. "He that hath the Son hath life." The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life. 5

Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore 6

Please notice that Ellen White is here applying **Romans 9:5** to Jesus. She does this in a context where she affirms that "*Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense.*" This unquestionably demolishes the arguments of some who try to depreciate **Romans 9:5** as a reference to the absolute Deity of Jesus.

When the voice of the angel was heard saying, "Thy Father calls thee," He who had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again," "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up," came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Deity did not die. Humanity died, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." In His divinity Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. 7

He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man's freedom. He is the eternal self-existing Son. 8

These are wonderfully solemn and significant statements. It was the Source of all mercy and pardon, peace and grace, the self-existent, eternal, unchangeable One, who visited His exiled servant on the isle that is called Patmos. 9

The greatness of God cannot be measured or comprehended. And that doctrine that denies the absolute Godhead of Jesus Christ, denies the Godhead of the Father; for no man knoweth the Son but the Father. 10

With what firmness and power he uttered these words. The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a converting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the

same attributes. The Jews understood his meaning, there was no reason why they should misunderstand, and they took up stones to stone him. 11

Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." 12

Jehovah is the name given to Christ. "behold, god is my salvation," writes the prophet Isaiah, "I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song." 13

He clothed His divinity with humanity. He was all the while as God, but He did not appear as God. He veiled the demonstration of Deity, which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration of the universe of God. He was God while upon earth, but He divested Himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of a man. He walked the earth as a man. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. He laid aside His glory and His majesty. He was God, but the glories of the form of God He for a while relinquished.
14

Please pay attention to chapter 5, the discussion of "only begotten" (*monogenes*). This clarifies that "only begotten" is a mistranslation of *monogenes*. This word should be translated as "only" or "unique" or something similar. Please see recent Bible translations which provide the correct rendering.

SUMMARY OF THE LIGHT PROVIDED BY ELLEN WHITE

It would be helpful if I should summarize the salient points from the above. Ellen White says:

Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God . . . there never was a time when he was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.

In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.

Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all...

In His divinity Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.

[He has] *absolute Godhead*

He and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes.

He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent.

[He is the] *unchangeable One...*

[His was the] *eternal presence...*

Jehovah is the name given to Christ.

[When on the earth as the God-man] *He clothed His divinity with humanity. He was all the while as God, but He did not appear as God. He veiled the demonstration of Deity...*

CONCLUSION ON ELLEN WHITE, ARIANISM, AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The above statements are plain, clear, and simple. There is no room for confusion or for the slightest doubt that the mature Ellen White was **NOT** in harmony with either of the Arian views of some of her contemporaries. Her statements are decidedly in harmony with the Trinitarian teaching of the Bible.

The Deity of Jesus was absolute; there never was a time when He did not exist. Therefore, all those who deny these truths should note the counsel following.

If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14. None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption. 15

At this point I think it would be beneficial if I should digress and deal with the real problems of Semi-Arianism. This will be our goal in chapters 4 and 5.

NOTES

1. *Selected Messages*, page 37.
 2. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pages 30, 31, 18.
 3. *Evangelism*, page 615.
 4. *The Desire of Ages*, page 469.
 5. *Ibid.* page 530
 6. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1126.
 7. *Ibid.* page 1113.
 8. *Ibid.* page 1136.
 9. *Ibid.* Volume 7, page 955.
 10. *The Signs of the Times*, June 27, 1895.
 11. *Ibid.* November 27, 1893.
 12. *The Desire of Ages*, pages 469, 470.
 13. *The Signs of the Times*, May 3, 1899.
 14. *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1887.
 15. *The Great Controversy*, page 524.
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CHAPTER FOUR

SEMI-ARIANISM AND OUR EARLY PIONEERS

WHAT IS SEMI-ARIANISM?

As the title Semi-Arianism suggests it is a variety of Arianism. That heresy gradually developed in the very early centuries of the Christian era. It proposed that God created Jesus who created the Holy Spirit. Semi-Arianism, on the other hand, claimed that rather than being created, Jesus was born from God. Semi-Arians in the SDA Church today say that the Holy Spirit is not a Person but is the spiritual presence of the Father or Jesus, or of both of them. This diversion from the truth about the Father and Jesus, although condemned as heresy, has managed to pop up here and there down through the centuries.

OUR PIONEERS CONFUSED THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

It seems that at least most of the early leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were contaminated by this teaching. They misunderstood terribly the true facts of the Trinity doctrine. Wherever they obtained their concepts from I cannot guess. I have never read anything from a competent Trinitarian that sounds anything like the garbled ideas our Pioneers gained from who knows where. Maybe some confused the Trinity doctrine with Modalism but they are not the same. On Modalism see later.

The Athanasian Creed, which comes from early Christian centuries, rightly insisted that Trinitarianism does not confuse the Persons of the Trinity. Unfortunately, these Pioneers were apparently not aware that this is so.

Many centuries ago Christians used a triangle to illustrate the relationship of the three Members of the Trinity. At the peak of the Triangle appears the words "The Father," at the left bottom corner, "The Son," and then at the right-hand bottom corner the words, "The Holy Spirit." Down the left-hand side of the triangle we read, "The Father is not the Son" also, "The Son is not the Father." On the right-hand side we find "The Father is not the Holy Spirit," and, "The Holy Spirit is not the Father." Across the bottom of the triangle we find "The Son is not the Holy Spirit" and "The Holy Spirit is not the Son."

Trinitarians have always believed and taught that the Persons of the Trinity must not be confused. Our non-Trinitarian Pioneers were obviously not at all well informed on what they opposed. Some had come into our Church from a non-Trinitarian group called the Christian Connection. I have found that without exception those who attack the Trinity doctrine don't understand what they are attacking. Our Pioneers were no exception. They had some very distorted views on the Trinity doctrine. I have been surprised and disappointed to read the following in their writings where they over and over confuse the Persons:

J. B. Frisbie asked:

How can the Holy Ghost proceed from the Father and the Son, if it is both the Father and Son itself? 1

He also provided a poem that reveals quite clearly his confusion:

*That three be one, and one are three,
Is an idea that puzzles me;
By many a learned sage 'tis said,*

That three are one in the Godhead.

*The Father then may be the Son,
For both together make but one;
The Son may likewise be the Father,
Without the smallest change of either.*

*Yea, and the blessed Spirit be,
The Father, Son, and Trinity;
This is the creed of Christian folks,
Who style themselves true orthodox,
All which against plain common sense,
We must believe or give offense.*

D. W. Hull asserted that a Trinitarian contends:

That Christ and his Father are one person...He also said that Christ being God, "would no more make him the same person with the Father..." He later says that Trinitarians say, "the Father and Son are one person...The Father and Son are spoken of as two separate beings." 2

In 1871 an anonymous writer asserted:

The simple language of the Scriptures represents the Father and Son as two distinct persons... to say that Jesus Christ 'is the very and eternal God' makes him His own Son, and his own Father, and that he came from himself, and went to himself...3

D. M. Canright, when referring to **Revelation 1:8**, stated:

Trinitarians grasp at this text to prove that the Father and Son are only one person. 4

He then asserted:

If Christ is a mediator between the Father and man, how can it be that he and his Father are only one person? This cannot be so. He and his Father are two distinct persons.

The confusion that we discover seems to have been common among the leaders. R. F. Cottrel made similar statements to the above:

We understand that the term Trinity means the union of three persons, not offices, in one God; so that The Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are three at least, and one at most. That one person is three persons, and that three persons are one person is the doctrine, which we claim, is contrary to reason and common sense. 5

So much for the confusion among our Pioneers. How can it be denied that they never did understand the true teaching found in the Trinity doctrine? I would suggest that they were good men, but, like us, they were not without their misunderstandings and prejudices. Like the twelve Apostles, they misunderstood many things at first but they were teachable and God was able to use them and lead them. When the time was ripe, and the necessity arose, the Church moved forward to a greater understanding of these vital matters. We are privileged today to have much greater light on the subjects involved.

I have to say that if I lived back there and had the same concepts of the Trinity that our leaders had, I too would have rejected that doctrine. But I must say as well that what they rejected was not the legitimate doctrine of the Trinity. I have never read even one Trinitarian who had the beliefs that our Pioneers thought were taught by Trinitarians.

That many of our early believers were still not clear about exactly what God was in 1890 comes through in a comment by D. T. Bourdeau. The comment is found in *The Trinity* by Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve. 6

Although we claim to be believers in, and worshipers of, only one God, I have thought that there are as many gods among us as there are conceptions of the Deity.

However, in a comparatively short while the Church worked its way to a true Scriptural understanding of various matters related to the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and became a legitimate Trinitarian Christian Movement.

Sad to say, heresy, like its originator, dies hard. The Bible tells us that the Devil knows that his time is short and is therefore going about like a roaring lion endeavouring to devour whoever he can. – **1 Peter 5:8**. Some who are not really conversant with the facts are still unable to come to terms with the truth on what Inspiration teaches on the Godhead. I am genuinely sorry about that and would like to help these people. However, they are usually very dogmatic and unwilling to listen.

The statement of our Church Historian, George Knight, is sometimes seized upon because he said that our early Pioneers would not be able to join our Church today because of the Trinity doctrine. Of course they would not if they maintained their early stance. However, I have sufficient confidence in their integrity to believe that had they lived long enough they would have advanced with the rest of the Church into the light that we now enjoy. Historian R. W. Schwarz says:

“By the end of the century (1800’s) the Adventist ministry had largely swung over to viewing the Trinity as three coequal, coeternal members of the Godhead, united in substance, purpose and character, but each with His own personality and work.” ⁷

Praise the Lord that our Church has not been stuck with traditions. Our early believers were not content to let this happen and for this reason they steadfastly refused to offer statements of belief for some time fearing that they would achieve the status of a Creed. We see ourselves as continuers of the Reformation and we remain open to a clearer understanding of the Scriptures.

I should also make it clear that the sincerity of many of the people troubling the Church is not necessarily in question for many good people are lured by the seeming logic of the proponents of Semi-Arianism. However, it is nevertheless true that some personality types relish the opportunity to become prominent by their opposition to orthodoxy and they run off with some idea new to them and by various means publish their immature concepts far and near. As I commented in the Introduction, such people advertise but they do not have the goods.

NB. From here on I will abbreviate Semi-Arianism and other extensions of Semi-Arian to SA for convenience sake.

NOTES

1. *The Review and Herald*, Volume 9, March 12, 1857, page 146.
 2. *Ibid.* Volume 14, November 10, 1859, page 194.
 3. *Ibid.* Volume 37, June 6, 1871.
 4. *Ibid.* Volume 30, June 18, 1867, pages 2 and 3.
 5. *Ibid.* Volume 34, July 1, 1869, page 10.
 6. Whidden, Moon, and Reeve, *The Trinity, Review and Herald*, Hagerstown, 2002, page 195.
 7. R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California, 1979, page 168.
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CHAPTER FIVE

SEMI-ARIANISM AND JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD

It will be my sincere endeavour to state as simply as I can the SA teaching as it has been presented to me:

At some time in the mystical past God produced from Himself another lesser god who, while being of the same sort of substance as God was inferior in several aspects. This lesser god was used by the Big God to create everything else. What is offered is a Big God and a little god.

I must explain at this point that, rather than use the Biblical terms, that they do not truly represent by their teaching, I feel compelled to view the Father and the Son, as they represent them, as the Big God and the little god. I mean no offence by this; I simply cannot bring myself to use the Biblical terms for the falsehoods that SA present.

As a result of the human race becoming sinful, according to SA, the Big God sent the little god to become a man so that he could, in dying, pay the penalty for mankind's sin – thus freeing them from condemnation.

In becoming a man the little god somehow lost all the powers he had as a god and was even able to die. The consequence was that while he was a man – even though he was still god – he retained none of the benefits of being god. After he died, the Big God raised him from the dead and he returned to heaven to sit on a throne with the Big God.

Since the return to heaven of the little god, the Big God and the little god stay in heaven but are able to be in touch with the world by means of the Holy Spirit, which they refer to as the “spiritual presence” of the Big God and/or the little god.

HOW DOES THE SEMI-ARIAN TEACHING STAND UP TO INVESTIGATION?

The short answer is that it doesn't stand up well at all. However, we must outline the reasons for its failure so that no doubts should be left to trouble those having questions about this. What we are studying is of the most vital importance and we must come to conclusions about the matters involved. I like the way that William G. Johnsson highlighted the importance of Jesus:

To be wrong about Jesus is to be wrong about everything. But to be right about Him is to be right about what matters most. ¹

THE “ONLY-BEGOTTEN” SON

The Jesus of SA is not the Jesus of the Bible. What we are about to look at is no doubt the most crucial matter in our review. If the SA teaching is wrong on this point it is wrong on all that is built upon it. There is not the slightest doubt that SA is wrong on this point.

The aggressive SA will almost invariably offer a verse, probably *John 3:16*, to prove that Scripture describes Jesus as the “Only-begotten” Son of God. Be careful to note though that one of the older Translations will be offered. Why is this? Because modern Scholarship has shown that the New Testament Greek word *monogenes* does NOT mean “Only-begotten.” What it does mean is something like “unique” or “only” but I emphasize not “Only-begotten.” Naturally, then, out of the need for accuracy, modern Translations reflect a correct understanding of the word.

There are many examples of the use of the word to be found in the literature of the ancient world up to and including the time of the writing of the New Testament. Something like “unique” or “only” is used. The following very interesting comment is found in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, concerning what happened in the Latin Vulgate after New Testament times:

The Old Latin MSS rendered monogenes by Lat. Unicus (“only”) rather than unigenitus (“only Begotten”). In the Vulgate Jerome changed unicus to unigenitus (“only begotten”) for theological reasons, i.e., to ensure the doctrine that Jesus was “begotten, not made.” (In passages that lack this theological interest (Lk. 7:12; 8:42; 9:38) he kept unicus as the translation of Gk. Monoges.) The Vulgate exercised a formidable influence on the AV and subsequent English Translations .2

Linguistic studies have shown that *genes* is not related to the verb *gennao* (to beget) but rather to the term *genos* (class or kind). So, I repeat, the word means something like “unique” or “one of a kind.” It must also be noted that if the Bible writer had wanted to say “only-begotten” he would have used the word *monogennetos*.³ A perusal of any of the up-to-date Greek Lexicons for New Testament Greek will verify these facts. Newman and Nida state unequivocally:

*There is no doubt regarding the meaning of the Greek word used here (monogenes); it means “only” and not “only begotten.”*⁴

When we read *Hebrews 11:17* we learn of Abraham’s near sacrifice of his unique (*monogenes*) son Isaac – see also *Genesis 22:2, 12*. Of course we know that Isaac was not Abraham’s “only” son, but he was the “unique” son in that the promises to Abraham would continue through him.

The record of how *monogenes* was twisted to be understood as “only-begotten” in the early years of the Christian Church is a fascinating one. I cannot include all of the available information here. It seems likely that at about the same time that Jerome fiddled with the Latin *unicus* the word *monogenes* was also fiddled with twisting it to mean “only-begotten.” At about the same time another concept was introduced, the idea of “eternal generation.” If Jesus only came into existence at some time and was a separate god from the Father, this would make two gods and Jesus would not be eternal. So, Jesus was said to be eternally being born. This seemed to the perpetrators to provide a satisfactory conclusion to the problem.

The eternal generation concept became standard doctrine and along with “only begotten” in *John 3:16* was carried through the Roman Catholic Church past the Reformation into many Protestant Churches. Those who fight to perpetuate the error of *John 3:16* (only begotten) don’t seem to realise that they are giving support to Roman Catholic doctrine. William Tyndale ignored it and offered “only” in *John 3:16* in his translation rather than “only begotten.” *The King James Version* was considerably influenced by the Vulgate and maintained the rendering “only begotten.”

Prior to the 20th century it was common practice to render *John 3:16* as “only begotten.” There was quite an uproar when the *Revised Standard Version* was published in 1901 because it offered “only” rather than “only begotten.” Some very unkind and unreal things were said about this version.

Today the majority of recent translations deny the validity of “only begotten” and have something like only or unique in its place. See *The Bible in Basic English, The Contemporary English Version, Good News Translation, International Standard Version, Jerusalem Bible, The Living Bible, The Message, New American Bible, New Century Version, New English Bible, The Revised English Bible, The New International Version, New Revised Standard Version*, and the *World English Bible*.

In the light of all the evidence provided above it would be absolute foolishness for anyone to maintain the belief that Jesus was somehow born from God. Jesus is absolute Deity and Deity **is**, it does not **become**. However, as I read the literature, that is circularised by many rebel Seventh-day Adventists, I find that their whole case rests upon their claim that at sometime in the long ages past Jesus was literally born from God. They don’t have the eternal generation concept so they are left with two gods and Jesus not being eternal. It is vitally important that we become fully conversant with the facts outlined in this chapter.

Please be very clear on this point, if what the dissenters claim were true it would mean that there are two gods - an Eternal one and a mortal one. How far from the truth can you get and still expect people to listen to you? This fact alone reveals that there is no possibility of the dissenters teaching having any validity or credibility.

Please stop for a moment or two and consider the following by Ellen G. White and compare these statements with the claim of the Semi-Arians that there was once a time when Jesus did not exist and then He was somehow born from God ages ago:

[Christ] *announced himself to be the self-existent one.* 5
In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. 6

A FEW EXTRA NOTES FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT WANT TO DO SOME FURTHER STUDY:

Before I go on I will add a little more on the word *monogenes* for those who like to dig a little deeper. An excellent study, *God's Only Son*, was provided by Dale Moody. In it he was quite clear that *monogenes* means something like *only* or *unique*. 7

J. V. Dahms has not agreed with Moody and wrote the article *The Johannine Use Of Monogenes Reconsidered*. He claimed that "only begotten" is the most accurate translation. 8

Gerard Pendrick later wrote the article *MONOGENHE* in which he contradicts and nullifies much of the claims of Dahms. He concludes: "the preceding discussion has shown that in all probability monogenes in John and 1 John means 'only' or 'unique', it is nevertheless certain that the Johannine monogenes came soon to be interpreted as 'only-begotten'." 9

In the year 2000 the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, published *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd Edition. On page 658 we find the word *monogenes*. **Definition 1** is "pert. to being the only one of its kind within a specific relationship, one and only, only." **Definition 2** is "pert. to being the only one of its kind or class, unique (in kind)." Both Dahm and Pendrick are mentioned. 10

We have every right to maintain our claim that *monogenes* means "only" or "unique" in the writings of John. Sadly, as Pendrick insinuates, it's meaning was changed in the period after the New Testament was written. The history of that change is briefly revealed above.

Now let us consider the result of what I have revealed. The Divine Jesus was not begotten neither was He created. These facts are as devastating to the SA case as an exploding Hydrogen bomb would be to any modern-day city. It completely takes away the jumping off point for the teaching that there is a little god. Given a little time to think the defensive SA then tries to retreat to dependence upon Jesus being referred to as "the Son of God" as though Jesus was the literal Son of the Father. We need also to clarify the meaning of this term, so, next we turn to examine what Scripture would have us believe about Jesus when it is used of Him.

The valid facts of Scripture demand that Jesus did not come into existence in any way at any time. He is God and has always existed. Scripture says that Melchizedek, the ancient King of Salem, was made to appear to be like Jesus:

Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. – Hebrews 7:3.

JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD:

In chapter 3 of my book *Understanding the Trinity* I gave considerable attention to the fact that in the ancient world to call someone the Son of God could be to refer to them as God. I also revealed the fact that the Sonship of Jesus was unshared. His was an exclusive Sonship. I quoted Theologian Lorraine Boettner who certified that there are places in the *New Testament* where the Sonship of Jesus revealed the Semitic and oriental ideas of likeness or sameness of nature and equality of being with the Father. I won't repeat that information here. Rather, I want to highlight what I believe is the meaning of the Sonship of Jesus in most places.

THE SONSHIP OF JESUS BECOMES CLEAR TO US WHEN WE CONSIDER HIS ROLE IN THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION.

We must first be very clear of the fact that God has revealed Himself to us in what is termed "the economy of the plan of redemption." This is really what the Bible is all about. The terms "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," are suitable to help us understand the Heavenly Three and their relationship to one Another in the plan of redemption. These terms were descriptions specially suited for the people living in the time and culture when the Scriptures were written more than two thousand years ago.

The Father in a family was the leader. A Son did his father's bidding. The Holy Spirit was recognised to be the ever-present invisible influence of God who was there to help and support them. The titles Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were apt descriptive titles for the Heavenly Trio in the roles they adopted in the plan of redemption. They were understandable descriptions for the people for whom the Bible was first written.

Our study has made it crystal clear that Jesus has always existed. Obviously, He has not always been the Son of God. He could not be the Son of God literally because He is God. He could not be the Son of Yahweh (Jehovah) because He is Yahweh (Jehovah). Ellen White says, "*Jehovah is the name given to Christ.*"¹² His Sonship can only be figurative. Correspondingly, the Father has not always been the Father. These must have been adopted titles suitable for the parts the Two played in the Plan of Redemption. This is how the Two were first introduced to the New Testament world. The Father was the senior controlling member and Jesus the obedient Son who carried out the will of the Father. **This must be** the primary answer to the question "What does it mean to call Jesus the Son of God?"

It will be obvious to all who are well informed that the Three Members of the Trinity are equal in every possible way. Yet for the purposes of the Plan of Redemption they each adopted a particular role. This required Jesus to accept a lesser **position** than the Father. However, **position** is not **nature**. In His Divinity, Jesus was still equal with the Father in nature. Remember that the Bible is written in the context of the Plan of Redemption. That is really what it is all about – the program of God for our salvation.

"*The Record*" of September 7, 1996 contained the Week of Prayer readings for that year. The reading for Wednesday is found on pages 12ff. The article is "*Jesus, the Heavenly Intercessor.*" It was written by Gordon Jenson the then President of Spicer Memorial College in Pune, India. I quote a section of his article found on page 12:

"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."

Consider please the following quotes from the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: 11*

“The Father, Son, and Spirit are equally self-existent. Though each is equal, an economy of function operates within the Trinity.” page 71.

“In the economy of function, different members of the Godhead perform distinct tasks in saving man.” page 31.

“Within the Godhead an economy of function exists. God does not unnecessarily duplicate work. Order is the first law of heaven, and God works in orderly ways. This orderliness issues from and preserves the union within the Godhead. The Father seems to act as source, the Son as mediator, and the Spirit as actualizer or applier.” page 30.

So Jesus bearing the title “Son of God” is in no way revealed to be in any way inferior to the Father. We have no way of knowing how each of these would be referred to outside of the Plan of Redemption.

A thorough study of the Word of God reveals that Jesus adopted many roles in the plan of God for our salvation. He is the Angel of the Lord, Michael the Archangel, the Rock, the Messiah, the Mediator but also the Judge, the Great High Priest but also the Sacrificial Lamb, and also the Shepherd, the Son of God but also the Son of Man, and much more. Yes, He is the Son of God who adopted the subservient role of a loyal obedient Son. As such He was sent by the Father, the Senior Partner in the program of the Trinity, to come and die for us. He willingly adopted this role that made Him less than the Father in **position** but not in **nature**. He was God as well as man on earth, and always will be God in the absolute sense – a member of the Holy Trinity.

The efforts of some to demote Jesus from being Eternal God and a member of the Trinity, to being a sort of demigod, must be condemned and rejected. While doing this they promote a grotesque picture of God giving birth to Jesus which proves to be out of harmony with the revelation supplied us by God. Bible believers will join with Thomas and me in praising Jesus as our Lord and our God – **John 20:28**.

If we may be allowed the luxury to speculate a bit we might expect that if the Scriptures were written today, in our western culture, Inspiration might be expected to use something like the following descriptions for the Three:

The Father might be referred to as the Architectural Managing Director.

The Son could be said to be the Roving Project Manager.

The Holy Spirit might be described as someone similar to a Field Director and Communications Manager.

We do not know how each of the Three Persons would be described apart from the plan of redemption. Probably, when the work of God for our salvation has been completed, we will be given further understanding of these things

NOTES

1. William G. Johnsson, *Adventist Review*, March 19, 1998, page 5.
2. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1986, Volume 3, page 606.
3. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1930, pages 416, 417.
4. Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John*, United Bible Societies, New York, 1980, page 24.
5. *The Desire of Ages*, page 469.
6. *Ibid.* page 530.
7. Dale Moody, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. LXXII, December, 1953.
8. J. V. Dahms, *The Johannine Use Of Monogenes Reconsidered. New Testament Studies*, Vol. 29, 1983, pp. 222-32.
9. Gerard Pendrick, *New Testament Studies*, 1995, Vol. 41 pages 587-600.
10. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd Edition, by Frederick William Danker, the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000.
11. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005 Second Edition:
12. Ellen G. White, *SDA Commentary*, Vol. 7A, page 439

CHAPTER SIX

JESUS WAS GOD IN THE FULLEST SENSE OF THE WORD

The SA would have us believe that God brought from Himself something less than He Himself was. This lesser god (Jesus) was incapable of many things while a man, but was capable of death. We will investigate these matters as we proceed but for the moment we must accept the evidence for the absolute Deity of Jesus. This evidence is abundant as was shown at the beginning of this study.

Isaiah prophesied about the incarnate Jesus more than 700 years before He was born as a man:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6.

Matthew leaves no doubt about who it was that was coming into the world as our Saviour. He clearly revealed the status of the coming Jesus at **Matthew 1:23**:

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, “God with us.”

It is well attested that in ancient times the name of someone was descriptive of their person. When we talk of God’s name being hallowed, we mean that we want Him to be appreciated for who He is. Immanuel was never used as a literal name for Jesus, it was rather a description of who He is – He was God with us. Not a lesser-restricted sort of god mind you, but God in the fullest sense. The evidence for Jesus’ absolute Deity is abundant. I will not attempt to repeat it all here. A rather full presentation is contained in my book *Understanding the Trinity* and objections often raised are answered there. I again suggest that it should be consulted. Jesus is, without any reservations, described as God on many occasions. Here are some examples:

John 1:1 – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

The Revised English Bible reveals the true meaning of these words:

In the beginning the Word already was. The Word was in God’s presence, and what God was, the Word was.

Some SA’s have tried to weaken the last statement of **John 1:1**. They try to assert that it just means that Jesus had some divine quality about Him. Do not be deceived by this. The word “God” is a translation of the Greek word “Theos” which unquestionably means “God.” Had John wanted to just say that Jesus was divine, or had some divine quality, he would have used the Greek word “Theios.” John was in no doubt about what He was reporting and we should not be either.

A damning aspect of the SA case is that in depreciating Jesus’ Deity they are left with the conclusion that there are two gods. A Big God and a little god. They have been known to say that the Father is Almighty God but Jesus is just a Mighty God. They therefore cannot escape the charge of Polytheism that is a belief in more than one god. This in itself is a heresy and is sufficient to throw the SA case on the scrap heap. I need to emphasize that there is but One God by Nature. In order to justify the claim that Jesus was another god one proponent of SA stated that in one sense “there are hundreds and thousands of gods.” He was trying to have us believe that there are a great number of gods in a limited sense. This is an unscriptural invention. Jesus is never said to be god in a limited sense. His Deity is unqualified. He is God full and complete.

Certain people may make gods of wood and stone. Some have made the Devil a god (2 Corinthians 4:4). Others conjure up gods in their minds, while still others think of themselves as a god. The obstinate fact of Scripture that cannot be denied and which demolishes all such fantasies is that in reality there is only one true God – only one God by nature.

The Scriptural truth is that there never has been and never will be any god by nature apart from the Trinity God of the Bible. I will quote just a few texts in order to settle the matter:

Isaiah 43:10 – *Before me no god was formed nor will there be one after me.*

Isaiah 44:6 – *This is what the LORD says – Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty, I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.*

James 2:19 – *You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.*

There are false gods but they are not gods by nature. As Paul said when writing to the Galatians:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. – Galatians 4:8.

It is unquestionably true that some who were acting on behalf of God were called gods. Moses is an example in a legitimate way and the Devil is an example in an illegitimate way.

Exodus 7:1 – *The LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh...”*

2 Corinthians 4:4 – *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...*

The vital point that must be clearly understood is that there is ONLY ONE GOD BY NATURE.

Back to the point – **Jesus is clearly identified as God by Nature in Scripture.**

John 20:28 is the record of the exultant reference of Thomas to Jesus - *“My Lord and my God.”*

Romans 9:5 speaks of Christ as *“God over all, forever praised.”*

Titus 2:13, 14 proclaim Jesus to be *“our Great God and Saviour . . . who gave himself for us.”*

There is not the slightest hint here, or in the other examples quoted in my book, that Jesus was a god of a lesser sort. Jesus Himself professed to be the great “I AM” of **Exodus 3:14** – see **John 8:58**. The Jews to whom He made this claim attempted to stone Him for blasphemy but He managed to escape. “I AM” is the name Yahweh revealed to Moses in order to identify Himself to the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Jesus was the Creator – compare **Isaiah 44:24**, where Yahweh claims to have created without any assistance, with **Colossians 1:15-17** where Paul reports that not only did Jesus create everything but that He made it all for Himself. Jesus also maintains it all. He is clearly revealed to be Yahweh. Don’t be distracted by the reference to Jesus as “firstborn.” This is often a symbolic reference used in the Bible for “pre-eminence” (compare **Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9; Psalm 89:27** and **Job 18:13**) and this is the theme of **Colossians 1:15-18 – NB verse 18**. This is how **The Revised English Bible** translates **Colossians 1:15**:

He is the image of the invisible God; his is the primacy over all creation.

It is interesting to note that the early Church Father Polycarp (c.70-155/160) used the word “firstborn” in the same way as Paul: “Whoever perverts the sayings of the Lord to his own desires and says there is neither resurrection or judgment – he is the firstborn of Satan.” The letter of Polycarp to the Philippians 7:1, 1

Hebrews 1:8-12 is another notable example where Jesus is revealed to have been the Creator. SA get very confused when they read in one place that Yahweh created all by Himself, and then read that God created, and then in other places, such as the one just noted, that Jesus was the Creator. Trinitarians

have no problems with all this for they know that what one member of the Trinity does, has the quality of having been done by all. It is true that God created, Yahweh created on His own, Jesus created, and the Holy Spirit created. All statements are true and there is no confusion but the non-Trinitarian. SA's are nonplussed.

Please refer to my notes provided at the beginning of this study for an abundance of evidence confirming the decision of Christians from the beginning that Jesus is God in the fullest sense. This is not difficult to accept for Jesus read hearts and minds, accepted worship, forgave sins, raised the dead, performed miracles, and hears prayers. We can advertise these things because without doubt we have the goods.

NOTES

1. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers, An American Translation*, Independent Press Ltd., London, 1950, page 242.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

JESUS BECAME THE GOD-MAN

THE INCARNATION

Jesus, who was God (**John 1:1**), took upon Himself humanity as well (**John 1:14**). Make no mistake about it; He was not a 90% god, or 80%, not 50% but 100% God. Paul left no doubt about this when he stated:

In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form – Colossians 2:9.

Jesus took upon Himself humanity in order that He might die for us – **Hebrews 2:14**. Here we have a straight contradiction of the SA case. If Jesus as the little god could die, why did he have to become human to die? Their contention is that when Jesus died both His divinity and his humanity died. We will remind ourselves of these things a little later in this paper.

There is no evidence that Jesus' Deity became ineffective while a man. The SA would have us believe that Jesus was something like a bird that has had it's wings clipped and can't fly anymore. Jesus' attributes of Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Omniscience are what make Him God. These attributes were unavailable to Him when He was a human, the SA say.

This is what R. L. Reymond says in an article he wrote on the incarnation:

It might suggest that the eternal Logos by the act of incarnation was confined to the human body of Jesus of Nazareth. The implication of such a construction of the result of the incarnation is that God the Son, kenotically "emptying" himself, divested himself of his attribute of being always and everywhere immediately present in his universe. But to hold such a view is tantamount to contending that he who enfleshed himself as Jesus of Nazareth, while doubtless more than man, is not quite God. Divine attributes are not, however, characteristics separate and distinct from God's essence that he can set aside when he desires. To the contrary, it is precisely the sum total of God's attributes that constitutes the essence of his deity and expresses his divine glory. Jesus, during the days of his flesh, claimed omnipresence for himself in Matt. 18:20 and 28:20 .1

Jesus was one Person with two natures. Inspiration requires us to accept that there were some things Jesus did in His Divine Nature and some things He did in His human nature. In His human nature Jesus was weak and grew tired – see **Matthew 4:2; 8:24; Mark 15:21 John 4:6**. In His Divine Nature He was Omnipotent. He was able to do such things as calm the wind and the waves with a command – see **Matthew 8:26, 27**. The following comments by Wayne Grudem are very helpful to our understanding of the Incarnation:

*If someone asks whether Jesus, when he was asleep in the boat, was also "continually carrying along all things by his word of power" (Heb. 1:3, author's translation), and whether all things in the universe were being held together by him at that time (see Col. 1:17), the answer must be yes, for those activities have always been and will always be the particular responsibility of the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God. . . Jesus was not just potentially God or someone in whom God uniquely worked, but was **truly and fully God**, with all the attributes of God. He was "a Savior, who is Christ **the Lord**" (Luke 2:11). Those who reject this as impossible simply have a different definition of what is "possible" than God has, as revealed in Scripture. To say that we cannot understand this is appropriate humility. But to say that it is not possible seems more like intellectual arrogance .2*

The above statements are illuminating and helpful but more important for Seventh-day Adventists is the fact that Ellen G. White believed that Jesus still had all of His divine powers available while a man

and at times He used them. The following short study leaves us in no doubt concerning this. First of all we note her comments on **John 10:30**:

It seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, 'I and my Father are one.' The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as He put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes .3

It is evident that normally Jesus lived and thought as a man. It seems that His Divinity was kept below the threshold of His consciousness. When it pleased the Father His Divinity came to the fore and He was able to use His Divine attributes. **John 5:19** and **30** suggest that this was so.

The most convincing way to demonstrate that Jesus maintained His Divine Attributes must surely be to show that He used them on some special occasions. Please enjoy with me the following thrilling encounters Jesus had resulting from the use of His Divine Attributes:

OMNIPRESENCE

At **John 3:13** Jesus said that while He was on earth He was also in heaven. Let me quote from *The Revised English Bible*:

No one has gone up into heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

Unmistakably, Jesus, while on earth claimed that He was in heaven at the same time! It seems probable that Ellen White was referring to this verse when she commented:

Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own...Jesus could yet speak of Himself as the Son of man in heaven. He was ready to take once more His divine glory when His work on earth was done .4

The last portion of **John 3:13**- *the Son of Man who is in heaven* – is not found in all Bible Versions. It is found however, in other leading translations such as *The New English Bible*, *The Jerusalem Bible*, *The King James Version*, and *The New King James Version*. A. M. Hunter clarifies the situation for us:

These words, omitted by some good MSS, may well belong to the true text, as the N.E.B. assumes. They are true to John's thought, which is that Christ does not cease to be with the Father – and so in heaven - even while he walks the ways of earth. 5

In summary we can say that St. Germanus had it right when he wrote in a seventh century hymn:

The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high!

Testimonies to Ministers, page 405 and *The Desire of Ages*, page 23 refer to the times when Jesus appeared in the burning bush, the cloud, and the pillar of fire. His glory was veiled but we must not conclude that His immensity was restricted then. Likewise, there is no reason to assume that the Son of God was no longer Omnipresent during the time of the incarnation. The facts we are studying show clearly that He was still Omnipresent. Remember what Jesus said at **Matthew 18:20** - He promised that where two or three are gathered together in His name "*there am I with them.*" Please note that this is stated in the present tense. In other words it was true of Him while still a man.

Jesus bore humanity while on earth, He bears humanity today. Even though he maintains His humanity today, He promised to be with His followers to the end – **Matthew 28:20**.

At **John 4:46-53** we read the moving account of the healing of the son of the nobleman of Capernaum. Ellen White comments on this incident. Speaking of the Nobleman she says:

*He secured an interview with Jesus, told his errand, and besought the Saviour to accompany him to His home. But already his sorrow was known to Jesus. **Before the officer had left his home, the***

Saviour had beheld his affliction. (Emphasis supplied). 6

There are other illuminating statements such as this. She brings to our attention Jesus' meeting with the paralytic and we read such comments as:

While the paralytic was yet at home, the Saviour had brought conviction to his conscience...Jesus had watched the first glimmer of faith grow into a belief that He was the sinners' only helper, and had seen it grow stronger with every effort to come into His presence. (Emphasis supplied). 7

There are yet further amazing comments related to the incidents involved with the death of Lazarus:

The disciples marvelled at Christ's words when He said, 'Lazarus is dead. And I am glad...that I was not there.' Did the Saviour by His own choice avoid the home of His suffering friends? Apparently Mary and the dying Lazarus were left alone. But they were not alone. Christ beheld the whole scene, and after the death of Lazarus the bereaved sisters were upheld by His grace. Jesus witnessed the sorrow of their rent hearts, as their brother wrestled with his strong foe, death. (Emphasis supplied). 8

It hardly seems necessary to assert that Jesus was not present in the sickroom of Lazarus in the form of a man, He was there as the Omnipresent God.

John 1:47-51 is the account of the meeting of Jesus and Nathanael. Jesus told him that He knew him and saw him before He had met him. Nathanael recognised that what had happened required supernatural qualities in Jesus. In **verse 50** Jesus affirmed that He had used powers not available to other men.

OMNISCIENCE

John 4:1-42 contains the record of the delightful encounter Jesus had with the woman of Samaria. **Verse 29** testifies to the Omniscience of Jesus. "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did," said the woman. Here are Ellen White's discerning remarks on **verse 35**:

He who knew all things perceived that she would make right use of knowledge... (Emphasis supplied). 9

See also **John 21:17** for Peter's similar statement.

He had given them such repeated evidence that He could read the hearts of others.¹⁰

*Christ's heart had said 'How can I give thee up?' He had dealt with Israel as a loving, forgiving father would deal with an ungrateful, wayward child. **With the eye of Omniscience He saw that the city of Jerusalem had decided her own destiny. (Emphasis supplied). 11***

OMNIPOTENCE

Colossians 1:17 and **Hebrews 1:3** reveal that it is Jesus who maintains the Universe as a Cosmos. This must have been true of Him even during the time of the Incarnation. Speaking of His years at Nazareth Ellen White says:

He whose word of power upheld the worlds would stoop to relieve a wounded bird.¹²

He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man's freedom. He is the eternal self-existing Son...¹³

With Christ is Omnipotence. He alone is able to keep that which I have committed to His trust against that day.¹⁴

Only God is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent, so Jesus was God with all of His attributes available while a man on earth. The above facts also show that Jesus was Deity in the fullest sense and that such aberrations as Arianism are totally out of harmony with Inspiration and must be rejected as

serious heresy. There were two sides to the God-man Jesus – He was God’s perfect man and man’s perfect God.

That Ellen White believed in the absolute Deity of Jesus cannot reasonably be denied in the light of all that has been revealed above.

Remember that Pilate was able to refer to Jesus as a man (*Matthew 27:24*) while Paul revealed Him to be “the Lord of glory” (*1 Corinthians 2:8*).

Inspiration requires us to accept that Jesus was God in the fullest sense. There is no way that He could make Himself less than God in Nature. He voluntarily assumed humanity and veiled His Deity. He voluntarily gave up the independent exercise of His Divine attributes and only used them when prompted to by the Father in heaven (see *John 5:19, 30; 6:38* and *8:29*). They were never used for His personal comfort or benefit but only in the interest of others. Unless He had these Divine attributes though, all the temptations that the Devil brought to Him, trying to entice Him to use His Divine powers for His own benefit, would have been meaningless.

The above statements revealing that while on Earth Christ’s Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience were still available to Him are undeniable. However, there are some who rely solely on the following statement in support of their claim that Christ had none of His attributes available to Him as a man. Let us first look at the statement concerned:

*The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.*¹⁵

How can the above statements and this one be reconciled? It seems clear enough that His followers were dependent upon the visible man Christ Jesus with whom they associated for their comfort, blessing, and support. However, as the work spread far and near this support, according to their understanding, could only be limited to an isolated place in the world. It was better for them that the Divine Spirit be their Comforter and that they get to understand that He can be everywhere at the same time. They did gain this mature understanding, as a reading of the Bible book of *Acts* will confirm.

NOTES

1. R. L. Reymond, “Incarnation,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984, pages 555, 556.
 2. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, IVP, Leicester, 1994, page 559.
 3. E. G. White, *Signs of the Times*, November 27, 1893, page 54.
 4. E. G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1129.
 5. A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, page 38.
 6. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 196-198.
 7. E. G. White, *Ibid.* page 268.
 8. E. G. White, *Ibid.* page 528.
 9. E. G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1134.
 10. E. G. White, *Ibid.* Volume 5, page 1125.
 11. E. G. White, *Ibid.* Volume 5, page 1098.
 12. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 74.
 13. E. G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1136.
 14. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases Volume Fifteen*, page 101.
 15. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 669.
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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DEATH OF JESUS

After all the discrepancies we have noted in the SA proposals we now come to a place where they think they can gain a victory. In actual fact this is another place where their contentions run head on into what God has clearly revealed. Their argument is devastated here. They think to score heavily because if God cannot die they insist that the sacrifice of Jesus was just a human sacrifice. On the other hand Trinitarians have to point out that the SA Jesus wasn't really God, he was just a god of sorts. Their god is often referred to as a demi-god. Their little god could die and was therefore a finite being. To them He was a toothless Tiger while a man. Do not forget either that their teaching is a heresy because it causes them to have two gods and this is a miniature form of Polytheism which is paganism.

Matters related to the Incarnation as proposed by the SA may seem simple and convincing to the uninformed. However, they will find no foothold in the minds of those who are sincere and properly informed. The little finite god of the SA cannot stand in the light of what Scripture teaches and would be quite insufficient as a sacrifice to atone for the sin of the world.

We must surely agree with Ellen White who says on page 44 of *Our High Calling*, “*No finite being could make atonement.*”

Websters Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines finite as:

1a: having definite or definable limits b: having a limited nature or existence.

This is a description of the SA concept of Jesus. According to Ellen White Jesus would have had to have an infinite existence. Here now is the Dictionary definition of infinite:

1: subject to no limitation or external determination 2: extending indefinitely: ENDLESS. Etc.

That Jesus had an infinite Divine nature is testified again by Ellen White when she says:

He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man's freedom. He is the eternal self-existing Son... 1

I freely confess that there are many things involved with Jesus being God and man at the same time that are beyond my comprehension. However, if the death of the God-man at the end of His earthly experience causes puzzlement, what about His conception and birth at the other end? How could the great Creator (the Word) become part of a tiny seed in the womb of a little virgin girl? No matter how much time one spends on that confusing event we will still move away baffled by what God would have us believe. Mystified? Yes! Sceptical? No! Because what we are informed about is part of what our gracious God tells us in His Word! So too, we try humbly to understand what happened when Jesus took our place in paying the penalty for our sin.

SA's need to remember that sin is an infinite problem. It has affected the whole of creation, at least on planet Earth. How could any sacrifice that was of less than Infinite value atone for this sinfulness? I would like to know what there was about the SA little god that made it possible for him to atone for this infinite problem in the minds of SA? For my part I can accept and appreciate the delightful way that John Stott describes the situation:

The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives, which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties, which belong to man alone .2

Nothing less than the substitution of the Infinite God could be sufficient to settle the sin problem. A representative Seventh-day Adventist statement on this is found in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe:*

When He became incarnate, Christ did not cease to be God, nor was His divinity reduced to the level of humanity. Each nature kept its standing. "In Him," Paul says, "dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily" (Col. 2:9). At the crucifixion His human nature died, not His deity, for that would have been impossible. 3

We must always remember that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ." – **2 Corinthians 5:19.**

At this point I think it necessary to make some comments related to the full dimension of the problem and how the God-man came to meet it. We need to ask, "Was the fate that the God-man was to substitute for us just death?" Certainly, death is a consequence of sin. But Jesus had to deal with much more than this death for us. We need to remember that it is the Second Death that is the ultimate penalty for sin. At the end of the Age, those who have accepted the benefits of Christ's sacrifice for us will receive the benefit of eternal life. Those who have not accepted Jesus as their Saviour will suffer the separation from God from which there is no resurrection – this is the Second Death. This is really what **Romans 6:23** is talking about. Listen to it:

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Revelation 20:14, 15 explain further:

The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Those who accept Jesus as their Saviour have their name inserted in the Lamb's Book of Life. Obviously then, Jesus saves from the Second Death. We know that Jesus died for us on the Cross of Calvary, but what happened to link that with the Second Death? The movie *The Passion* revealed the terrifying experience and suffering that Jesus went through physically, but it did not reveal His real agony. We can again thank Ellen White for the following insight:

the wrath of God, and the terrible manifestation of his displeasure of iniquity, filled the soul of his Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour, in this hour of supreme anguish, pierced his heart with a sorrow that can never be understood by man. Sin, so hateful to his sight, was heaped upon him till he groaned beneath its weight. The despairing agony of the Son of God was so much greater than his physical pain, that the latter was hardly felt by Him.4

As we try to identify more closely with His final 24 hours we notice that Inspiration makes it clear that His suffering began not on the Cross but in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus went with Peter, James, and John to the garden on the night before His Crucifixion:

*He said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of death . . . Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will. . ." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." – **Matthew 26:38-42.***

Luke amplifies for us the great anxiety and misery that Jesus was experiencing by adding the fact that "being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" – **Luke 22:44.**

Can we have any real appreciation of what was going on there in the garden? Can we for even a moment truly imagine the anguish Jesus felt as the guilt and penalty of the whole world pressed upon Him? He was already experiencing the wrath of God and He could hardly stand up under the enormous load. His agony, His sorrow, is something that you and I never could and never will have to bare. No other man has ever known or really experienced the full consequence of the curse of sin. No other man

than Jesus has ever felt the full wrath of God, Jesus experienced it for us and the most wonderful part of it all is that He did it voluntarily.

We are permitted to gain only a glimpse of what was going on within Jesus during this final period of His life. There are many things that took place while Jesus suffered for us that seem quite paradoxical but they are nevertheless true. God was pouring out His wrath upon Christ but was nevertheless suffering with Him because they are both part of the Triune God. Listen to Ellen White on this:

*God Himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father.*⁵

What happens to one member of the Trinity is experienced by them all for They are all One.

*There are many who have thought that the Father had no part in the sufferings of the Son; but this is a mistake. The Father suffered with the Son...*⁶

Remember too **Acts 20:28**: “*Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*”

On the Cross Jesus offered the heart wrenching agonizing cry, “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*” Jesus, as our sin-bearer, was forsaken but yet all the while the Father was there with Him hidden in the darkness. We thank God then for Jesus’ cry of faith, “*Into your hands I commend my spirit.*” Despite His feelings He remained faithful to the task right to the end.

Can you agree with me that from the time in the Garden of Gethsemane to His death on the Cross, Jesus was more and more experiencing the Second Death which is separation from God? Finally, even from the depths of His Divinity, when the full impact of the experience came to His full realization, He cried out in utter despair “*Why have you forsaken me?*” It seemed as though separation from God was complete. It was as though the Trinity had been rent first, then the rending of His flesh, and then the rending of the Temple curtain from top to bottom. I marvel at what God has done for us and it leaves me in almost astonished silence. Who am I to think to explain what was going on in the heart and mind of the Divine human Jesus? I desperately want to understand and I believe that God wants us to appreciate as much as we can what He has revealed to us. I nevertheless realize my limitations so I leave myself open to further understanding.

If anyone tries to tell you that they can comprehend all that happened in the experience of Jesus in His life and death, do not believe them. Maybe one day God will help us to understand a little more for we shall marvel at what God has done for us throughout the ages of eternity. We will never exhaust the theme. We will eternally remain astonished and yet thrilled by it.

*Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?* Charles Wesley.

BUT IF DIVINITY DIDN'T DIE?

I want to back-pedal a little and respond to a question that will be in some people’s minds. The question is something like this: “*How could the Divinity of Jesus benefit us when His Divinity did not die?*” We need to explore this point a little. Let me ask a question in response: “*Why did the Word become a man?*” **Hebrews 2:14, 15** clarify by showing that Jesus became a man so that He could die for us:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Verse 9 says:

He suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

I think it was Martin Luther who said that the Bible can be summed up in four words:

He took my place.

He could not die as God and had to become a man in order to die. Does this not require that only His humanity died? As we examine other matters in the Scriptural record we will see that the Divine Jesus provided benefits for humans by means of His humanity. In other words His humanity was, in a sense, an instrument of His Divinity. Think of these few examples from among the many that could be provided:

1. Who provided the extra wine for the wedding in Cana? Of course it was the Divinity of Jesus that made the wine available and it was distributed by His humanity – see **John 2:1-11**.
2. **Mark 5:25-35** contains the story of a woman touching the garment of Jesus and being healed. Was it the humanity of Jesus that healed her? **Verse 30** says, “*At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’*”
From the perspective of His humanity Jesus hardly knew what had happened. Do humans normally have such power as was displayed here? Of course not! It was the Divinity of Jesus working through His humanity that provided the healing.
3. What about when Lazarus was raised from the dead? It was the command of the human lips of Jesus that brought the resurrection about. But did His humanity or His divinity provide the power? There is only one possible answer – His Divinity provided the power – see **John 11:38-44**.

Interestingly, Ellen White asserts that “*This crowning miracle, the raising of Lazarus, was to set the seal of God on His work and on His claim to divinity.*” ⁷

It is not difficult to see that Jesus’ Divinity worked through His humanity, which was like an instrument of His Divinity.

Now then, when Jesus died, where did the quality that made His death of infinite value come from? From His humanity? Obviously not. From His Divinity? Yes, of course, it was providing the death of Jesus with that quality. Jesus’ Divinity suffered everything that His humanity suffered, and more, in His dying and death. There was nothing that His Divinity did not suffer as compared with His humanity right up to the point of unconsciousness in death. At the point of death there was no more a living God-man and Divinity had flavoured that death with Divine quality. That is why **1 Corinthians 2:8** can report that the rulers had “*crucified the Lord of glory.*” **Acts 20:28** admonishes, “*Be shepherds of the church of God, which he brought with his own blood.*”

I received a great deal of pleasure in discovering that Wayne Grudem had some further thoughts similar to my own. I think you would enjoy them so I share them with you:

If I type a letter, even though my feet and toes had nothing to do with typing the letter, I do not tell people, “My fingers typed a letter and my toes had nothing to do with it” (though that is true). Rather, I tell people, “I typed a letter.” That is true because anything that is done by one part of me is done by me. Thus, “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). Even though actually only his human body ceased living, ceased functioning, it was nonetheless Christ as a person who died for our sin. This is simply a means of affirming that whatever can be said of one nature or the other can be said of the person of Christ. Therefore it is correct for Jesus to say, “I am leaving the world” (John 16:28), or “I am no more in the world” (John 17:11), but at the same time to say, “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20). Anything that is done by one nature or the other is done by the person of Christ .8

When the final words of Jesus “*It is finished*” (**John 19:30**) were uttered from the Cross, the terrible work of the Devil, working through humanity, was done and seemed to be triumphant. At the same time the wonderful work of God, working through Jesus’ humanity, was finished as well and seemed to have been a failure. However, because of the resurrection, the work of the Devil was shown to be a dismal failure and the work of God was shown to be a magnificent triumph.

I conclude this section by saying that there is one thing absolutely certain – that is that God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus and I humbly acknowledge, “So do I.”

***Upon a life I did not live; Upon a death I did not die;
Upon another’s death, another’s life, I risk my soul eternally.***

NOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1136.
 2. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1986, page 160.
 3. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe, Second Edition, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, ID. 2000.* page 59.
 4. Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, November 25, 1889, page 706.
 5. Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, page 50.
 6. Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, November 25, 1889, page 706.
 7. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 529.
 8. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1994, page 562.
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CHAPTER NINE

WHO RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD?

GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD JESUS RAISED HIMSELF FROM THE DEAD

Are these two statements contradictory? If it were not for the fact that the Trinity doctrine is true they would be. We need to explore this question more fully.

Most *New Testament* writers on the subject simply state that God raised Him back to life – see for example *Acts 2:23, 24*. But we must listen as well to the report found in the *Gospel of John chapter 2:18-22*:

Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” . . . the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said.

Here Jesus was predicting that He would raise Himself from the grave. We also have His words at *John 10:17, 18*:

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.

Do we have a conflict arising from these statements? Did the Father raise Jesus or did the resurrection result from the Divinity of Jesus bringing the God-man back to life? Remember that Jesus, during the time of His life on earth, only used His Divine powers at the instigation of the Father. Additionally, we recall that these powers were never used for His personal comfort or benefit. Jesus says that He had received authority from the Father to both lay down His life and take it again. The Father was no doubt then, involved in the resurrection, but so was Jesus because at that time He could use His Divine powers on His own behalf. When Jesus called Lazarus forth from the grave He used the Divine power that was eternally His. Now He could use that same power on His own behalf. I don't think there is much value in discussing this matter further – a statement from Ellen White should settle the matter for us:

When the voice of the angel was heard saying, “Thy Father calls thee.” He who had said, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again,” “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Deity did not die. Humanity died, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, “I am the resurrection, and the life.” In His divinity Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that He had life in Himself to quicken whom He will. . . Only He who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light and life, could say, “I have power to take it again.” All the human beings in our world take their life from Him. He is the spring the fountain of life (MS 131, 1897) .1

I must move on but before doing so I want to emphasise the statement just reported from the pen of Ellen G. White. SDA Semi-Arians fail badly when they try to condemn SDA Trinitarians because we say that the Divinity of Jesus did not die. I have been scoffed at because of this. However, this is exactly what Ellen White says in the above statement and in many other places. I must pause even for another moment to point out that Mrs. White refers to Jesus as “*He who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light of life.*” Have you heard that expression before? Of course you have, she is referring the words of *1 Timothy 6:16* to Jesus:

who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light...

Ellen White is unmistakably showing that Jesus is the Supreme Deity and as such He was able to take His life back again from the grave. Where does all this leave the SDA Semi-Arians and their proposed little god that they say dies completely and could not raise himself from death and the grave? Their case is devastated and must be thrown on the scrap heap! It is true without a doubt that if you don't have the goods, you shouldn't advertise.

NOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1113.

CHAPTER TEN

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE TRINITY

Trinitarians find no problem in accepting that the Father and Jesus, either individually or together, can come to us through the Holy Spirit. This is not a problem because all three are the One God. What one does has the value of them all doing it. The SA on the other hand have an enormous problem in declaring that the Big God and the little god come to us via the Holy Spirit. To them, when the Spirit comes to us, it is the spiritual presence of either the Big God, or the little god, or both. There is a great breakdown here from the point of view of both Scripture and logic. The SA teach that the Big God and the little god are quite separate individuals. This being so, how can their holy spirit, which clearly comes from the Big God, be said to also come from the little god? There is no Scriptural warrant for this and they also have a great gap in their logic! There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is a Person. Consider please the following brief points certifying the truthfulness of this claim:

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

We do not learn much of His personality in the Old Testament, however, revelation is progressive (Romans 16:25, 26; Ephesians 3:5, 6) and the Old Testament also leaves us in doubt as to the nature of “the Word” (e.g. Psalm 33:6) but the New Testament makes it quite clear that He is a Person and is in fact God – John 1:1-3, etc. We cannot understand much about the personality and nature of the Holy Spirit for He is far different to us. However, the following references insist upon His personality.

- a. **He performs personal actions in association with other persons:** Matthew 28:19; Acts 15:28; Revelation 22:17 – **NB** The Holy Spirit is a separate person from the Father and Jesus – Matthew 28:19 etc.
- b. **He takes the place of Jesus:** John 14:16. Jesus said “another” Comforter would take His place with us. The word “another” is the English translation of the Greek word **allos**, which means “another of the same sort.” Only another Divine Person of the Trinity could take the place of Jesus. An impersonal force could hardly take the place of the Divine Jesus on earth. W. E. Vine clarifies this for us:

“ALLOS (*allos*) and HETEROS (*heteros*) have a difference in meaning, which despite a tendency to be lost, is to be observed in numerous passages. *Allos* expresses a numerical difference and denotes another of the same sort; *heteros* expresses a qualitative difference and denotes another of a different sort. Christ promised to send ‘another Comforter’ (*allos*, another like Himself, not *heteros*), John 14:16.”¹

The Greek word translated “Comforter,” “Helper,” or similar here is *parakletos*. This New Testament Greek word is never applied to other than persons. I could not accuse Jesus of fooling us by saying He would send someone else to take His place when all the while He was coming back to be with us in the guise of the Holy Spirit.

Take your pick:

1. Jesus was genuine when He said another was to come to take His place.
2. Jesus deceived us into thinking He was going when all the time He knew He would be back as the Holy Spirit.

Which did you choose?

- c. **In John chapters 14-16 Jesus many times over deliberately broke the rules of Greek Grammar and referred to the Holy Spirit as “He,” “Him,” etc.** Noted Theologians such as Leon Morris and J. I. Packer have pointed this out. Our own Scholar Woodrow Whidden, says:

“We should observe that while the word “Spirit” (Greek pneuma) is in the neuter gender in Greek, the personal pronoun ekeinos (‘that one,’ or ‘He,’ clearly used to refer to the neuter Spirit) is in the masculine gender. It is this grammatical fact that has led the majority of translators to render the other personal pronouns called for in these passages as ‘He’ rather than ‘it’ or ‘that one’...” 2

The Greek word for “Spirit” is a neuter word and therefore should rightly be referred to as “it” but a perusal of Bible translations will confirm that because of what Whidden has stated Bible translators feel compelled to translate various pronouns as “He” etc. We must either accept that Jesus did this in order to make it clear to us that the Holy Spirit is a Person, or, we have to accept that our perfect Jesus made a number of uncharacteristic blunders.

- d. **He exhibits qualities which evidence personal existence:**
Mind – Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10, **Will** – 1 Corinthians 12:11, **Foreknowledge** – John 16:13, **He speaks** – Acts 1:16, **Commands and Forbids** – Acts 8:29; 11:12; 13:2, 4; (In these verses just mentioned He refers to Himself as “me” and “I.”) 16:6, 7; 10:19, 20, **Appoints** – Acts 20:28, **Vexed and Grieved** – Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30, **Works Miracles** – Acts 2:4; 8:39, **Can be insulted** – Hebrews 10:29 (Can an impersonal force be insulted?), **Blasphemed** – Mark 3:29, **Loves us** – Romans 15:30.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

Most, even those who deny the personality of the Holy Spirit will admit that He is God in some way.

- a. **He is clearly referred to as God:** Acts 5:3, 4. Compare 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 with 6:19 and also 2 Corinthians 6:16. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:11 with 12:28.
- b. **The Holy Spirit is Yahweh:** Compare
- | | | |
|--------------------|------|-------------------|
| Jeremiah 31:33, 34 | with | Hebrews 10:15-17. |
| Psalm 95:7-11 | with | Hebrews 3:7-11. |
| Isaiah 6:9,10 | with | Acts 28:25-28. |
| 2 Samuel 23:2 | with | 2 Samuel 23:3. |
- c. **The Holy Spirit is Eternal:** Hebrews 9:14.

It is futile to try and argue that the Holy Spirit is not a Person and that He is not God. The evidence speaks for itself. We have the goods when we make this claim and we should not hesitate in advertising it.

NOTES

1. **W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, page 60, Oliphants, London, 1950.
2. **The Trinity**, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 2002, page 71.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ELLEN G. WHITE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT JESUS

Some anti-Trinitarian Adventists say that Ellen White teaches contrary to the Trinity and the belief that the Holy Spirit is a Person. They contend that the Holy Spirit is Jesus and/or the Father. I wish to digress for a moment or two to show from Scripture that Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. Here are a few references that clearly show this to be so:

Jesus' birth was due to the Holy Spirit – Matthew 1:20.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Spirit would rest on Jesus – Isaiah 11:1, 2.

John the Baptist was told to recognise Jesus when the Spirit came upon Him – John 1:32, 33.

Acts 10:38 tells of God anointing Jesus with the Holy Spirit.

The record of this happening at Jesus' baptism can be found at Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:31-34.

If we substitute the name "Jesus" for "the Holy Spirit" when He is mentioned; we see how ridiculous the claim that Jesus is the Holy Spirit really is. For example: Isaiah foretold that Jesus would rest on Jesus. After His baptism Jesus was led by Jesus into the wilderness.

We could not possibly accept that the Holy Spirit is Jesus when Ellen White says *The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ's name. He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.* ¹

How could the Holy Spirit be said to personify Christ if He is Christ? If He is a distinct personality, how can we say other than that He is not Christ?

After His baptism Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness – Matthew 4:1. Shall we say that Jesus was led by Jesus into the wilderness?

THE FATHER IS NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the following passages we will substitute the name "Father" or "God" for the Holy Spirit when the Spirit is mentioned:

God has revealed it to us by God. God searches all things, even the deep things of God – **1 Corinthians 2:10.**

No one knows the thoughts of God except God – **1 Corinthians 2:11.**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of God, be with you all – **2 Corinthians 13:14.**

Does God give you God and work miracles among you . . . ? – **Galatians 3:5.**

We have access to the Father by the Father – **Ephesians 2:18.**

You are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by God – **Ephesians 2:22.**

At **John 14:26** Jesus advised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit. Would He be sending Himself?

These are just a sample that illustrates the point that the Father is not the Holy Spirit.

It is quite ridiculous to say that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus or the Father and not a third Person for when Jesus was baptised we have the Father who spoke from heaven, we have Jesus being baptised

in the river Jordan, and we have the Holy Spirit coming down upon Jesus in the form of a dove. How can it possibly be denied that we have Three here?

NOW BACK TO WHAT ELLEN WHITE REVEALS TO US ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The plain truth is that she teaches that the Holy Spirit is a Person of the Godhead who is not Jesus or the Father. He is the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is a person, for he beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God ...The Holy Spirit has a personality; else he could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must be a divine person, else he could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. 2

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...3

Such statements as this are displeasing to the dissenters so they try desperately to change the obvious and clear meaning of it but their case is far less than convincing. The following statement settles the matter:

The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight. The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be “the express image of His person.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Here is shown the personality of the Father.

The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ. 4

I am astonished that some people are either unaware of statements such as these or they somehow distort them. Each of the three Persons in the “heavenly trio” (not a duo) is said to be “all the fullness of the Godhead.” How could this be said of them unless they were each fully God? It could not! Furthermore, they are “three great powers” – not two! Ellen White distinctly says, “there are three living persons.”

Because the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all the One God in Triunity (Trinity), what one does has the value of them all doing it. When the Holy Spirit comes to us it is the same as the Father coming to us, or of Jesus coming to us, or of the whole Three coming to us. The Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the Spirit of Christ – Romans 8:9, 10; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19, etc. Luke 21:15 says Jesus will tell His followers what to say in time of trouble while Mark 13:11 says it is the Holy Spirit Who will do this. This is where some dissidents have become confused. They think that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the same Person or that the Holy Spirit is some force that comes from Jesus and the Father. The truth is that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the same God – not the same Person. Remember the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19, 20 where they are spoken of as separate Persons. John 14:18 tells that Jesus will come to His followers – Verse 23 says that both the Father and the Son will make their abode with believers. Verse 26 indicates that this will be through the Holy Spirit – see also verse 28 first part. There is no need for confusion – there are Three Persons all working in perfect harmony as One God. What One does is inevitably done by them all because They are a Trinity.

Ellen White says that *Jesus is present in the person of His representative, the Holy Spirit. 5*

Could it be made any clearer that the Holy Spirit is not Jesus but that He can represent Jesus? He is clearly a different Person of the Godhead. This fact can be seen in many places. Here is an example:

Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power .6

We should also note that on this same page Ellen White used personal pronouns when referring to the Holy Spirit:

The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth." His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth. . . He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. . .6

Here is another example:

Did you recognize His presence? Did you accord Him the honor due to a heavenly messenger? 7

Ellen White plainly believed that the Holy Spirit is a Person, the Third Person of the Godhead.

What more could we possibly ask for than the evidence available from Scripture and from Ellen White? I'll tell you what else we need! It is a surrendered heart and mind. Only then can we accept the evidence.

Before closing this chapter I want to tell of an old book that I have in my library. 8
At the time of writing G. B. Thompson was the Secretary of the North American Division. Ellen White was still alive at this time. On page 63 of his book Thompson says:

"The Holy Spirit is not merely an influence, or power, or some enthusiasm; but, as the word paraclete suggests, a personality with a mind, thinking, planning, interceding, exerting an influence, wielding a power, awakening enthusiasm."

A little further down on the same page he says:

"The Godhead is incomprehensible. But Christ used a word which means a person, and the Spirit himself, speaking to the church through a chosen instrument, calls the holy Spirit 'the third person of the Godhead.' In view of these statements, if for no other reason, we feel warranted in attributing personality to the Holy Spirit."

So in the time of Ellen White we have the Secretary of the North American Division understanding Ellen White and the Bible to be saying that the Holy Spirit is a Person.

I almost forgot to mention that some anti-Trinitarian Adventists charge that the Church has altered the writings of Ellen White to make them conform to our belief in the Trinity. This reveals a sad state of affairs when people have to resort to this sort of thing. It reveals that the statements we present really do teach the Divinity of Jesus and the Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit. The charge is easily refuted in a paper prepared by Tim Poirier, Those interested should read and/or download the paper "**Ellen White's Trinitarian Statements: What Did She Actually Say?**" by Tim Poirier. This can be found at www.whiteestate.org The photographs of Ellen White originals easily show that the charge of interfering with her writings is just a miserable falsehood.

NOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, No. 20, page 324.
 2. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pages 616, 617.
 3. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 7, page 299.
 4. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Series B*, No. 7, pages 62, 63.
 5. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases Volume 12*, page 145.
 6. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 671.
 7. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, volume 8, page 61.
 8. *The Ministry of the Spirit*, by G. B. Thompson, Review and Herald, Washington, 1914.
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CHAPTER TWELVE

MATTERS RELATED TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

WHAT MIGHT WE EXPECT GOD TO BE?

Illustration: An Amoeba is a microscopic single cell creature. There is a great gap between an Amoeba and a human made up of millions of cells. Shouldn't we expect the gap between a human and the Infinite God to be enormously greater? We would expect God to be vastly more complex than we are. See *Isaiah 40:18, 25*.

WE BELIEVE A LOT OF THINGS WE DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND.

For example, light. Some say it is made up of particles, others say it is composed of waves. Yet others say it is a combination of both. We might not understand light but we believe it does exist. We don't know how could God always have existed? – How can He know the end from the beginning? Christians don't understand these things but we believe them.

DO WE EXPECT GOD TO EXPLAIN HIMSELF FULLY?

Illustrations: God is like a very tall man who stoops down and lisps in a little child's ear. John Calvin (16th century Reformer) referred to the Bible as God's "baby talk." God meets us where we are and reveals Himself to the degree that suits His purpose and to the degree that we can understand. Remember *Deuteronomy 29:29*. He expects us to seek to understand what He has revealed of Himself.

GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO US IN WHAT IS TERMED "THE ECONOMY OF THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION."

We have already noted that 'the terms "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," are suitable to help us understand the Heavenly Three and their relationship to One Another in the plan of Redemption. I will not reiterate the details already provided but just offer a reminder that the titles mentioned are role titles. It is important that we keep this fact in mind.

GOD'S REVELATION TO US OF THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION, INCLUDING AN UNDERSTANDING OF HIMSELF, IS PROGRESSIVE

The Holy Spirit was more fully revealed when Jesus was about to return to heaven. Jesus intercedes for us in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Romans 8:34) and the Holy Spirit intercedes for us on the earth (Romans 8:26, 27). According to Scripture then, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are engaged differently, they are not the same.

God has revealed Himself gradually – it would be too much for us if what He desires us to know were provided all at once.

GOD HAS NOT REVEALED ALL ABOUT HIMSELF

Let us not forget that a complete understanding of God is beyond us. As St. Augustine rightly said: “*If you can understand it, it is not God.*” Remember **Isaiah 40:18**.

Illustration: We can see only one tenth of an Iceberg. Likewise there is much more to God than our finite minds can possibly understand or absorb.

Illustration: A bucket of salt water, sand, and seaweed cannot help us understand all about an Ocean. Likewise, what we know of God is no more than a small part of what could be known of Him.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an adequate definition of what has been revealed in Scripture.

HOW THEN SHALL WE CORRECTLY DESCRIBE THE THREE?

- a. **Subordinationism:** This system claims that Jesus and the Spirit are lesser deities. Some say that God the Father created them.
- b. **Modalism:** This claims that God just manifests Himself in one of three ways on various occasions.
- c. **Tritheism:** The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three separate deities (a form of polytheism).
- d. **Arianism:** The Father created Jesus who created the Holy Spirit.
- e. **Semi-Arianism:** Jesus was born from the Father in the mystical past. The Holy Spirit is not a person but is the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

For good Biblical reasons all shades of Arianism have been condemned as heretical when they have popped up down through the Christian centuries. Today some confused Seventh-day Adventists have been misled into accepting the Semi-Arian system. Remember that if you want to go along with them you have to accept that there is a Big God (the Father) and a little god (Jesus who is not eternal). This is quite unacceptable and is a miniature form of Polytheism.

Sin is an infinite problem. It has affected the whole of creation. How could any sacrifice which was of less than of Infinite value pay for the sin of the whole world?

If Jesus could die in His Divinity He would have to have been of something less in substance than the Father – yet Semi-Arians say He was born from the Father. Would they say that God brought forth from Himself something less perfect than He was? Their greatest problem is that they have not understood the Greek word *monogenes* which the **King James Version** wrongly translated as “Only Begotten” when referring to Jesus at **John 3:16**. The word has been correctly translated as something like “unique” or “only” in modern translations.

- e. **The Trinity:** There are three Persons in One Substance or Essence. God is Three as to Persons but One as to Substance. This must be true if there is only One True God for The Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Only the Trinity doctrine is faithful to Scripture.

Dr. Raoul Dederen, one of the most respected theologians in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, made the following statement:

“the term *Trinity* has been found a most fitting way of referring to the one God who has revealed Himself in the Scriptures as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The concept suggests that within the one essence of the Godhead we are to distinguish three persons who are neither three parts nor three modes of God, but coequally and coeternally God.”¹

Dederen made a somewhat similar statement in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*:

“we must confess that the trinity is one indivisible God and that the distinctions of the persons do not destroy the divine unity. This unity of God is expressed by saying that he is one substance. Nevertheless, in the divine unity there are three co-eternal and co-equal persons, who, though distinct, are the One undivided and adorable God. This is the doctrine of Scripture.”²

More recently we have the following statement from Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute:

“We do not believe in three Gods but one God in three persons. These three personalities participate in one substance. In the divine unity there are three coeternal and coequal persons, who, though distinct, are the one undivided God.”³

Please don't forget that Ellen White said that the Father and the Son were of one substance:

“With what firmness and power he uttered these words. The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a convicting influence attended them, for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, ‘I and my Father are one.’ The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes. The Jews understood his meaning, there was no reason why they should misunderstand, and they took up stones to stone him.”⁴

Imagine the great howl of protest that would have arisen in the 1st century if Christians preached two or three gods to the strictly monotheistic Jews. Quite clearly they taught that there is but One True God. **Matthew 28:19, 20** presents Three Persons embraced in the One Name. See also **Mark 3:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 13:14**, etc.

A very good statement on the Trinity has been penned by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe:

*“God is one in essence, but three in Persons. God has one nature, but three centers of consciousness. That is, there is only one What in God, but there are three Whos. There is one It, but three I’s. This is a mystery, but not a contradiction. It would be contradictory to say God was only one person, but also was three persons. Or that God is only one nature, but that He also had three natures. But to declare, as orthodox Christians do, that God is one essence, eternally revealed in three distinct persons is not a contradiction.”*⁵

Logic and reason combine to assure us that God is a far more complex Being than any other we are acquainted with. It was He who made everything in the vast universe. This thought staggers us when we contemplate the enormity of such a project. Then we remember that as the Astronomers advise, for us to reach the edge of the known universe, travelling at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second) it would take us 10 billion years. The mind boggles as we try to understand the enormity of what we are trying to consider.

The next thought is also astonishing for if we understand Scripture aright it teaches that we would find that when we reached the edge of the universe we would find that God is there also. Beside these things we discover from the Bible that God knows everything – past, present, and future. He knows even the number of hairs that lie atop our heads; He knows when even a small bird falls to the ground. God hears our prayers, perhaps millions of them all at the same time and in a multiplicity of languages.

These are just some of the things that demonstrate to us the wonder of the Being we call God. Is it too much for us to accept that this God would be far more complex than we can understand? Could I suggest that we should expect Him to be more, far more, complex than our small minds can ever hope to contemplate. When we have explored Scripture and have found that it reveals God to be a Tri-unity – Father – Son – and Holy Spirit, should we object to the concept saying “It can’t be true because I don’t understand it.”? Can an ant understand the complexity of a human being? We should thank God for the clarifying revelations of Himself that He has made in Scripture and humbly admit that God is what He is whether we understand all about Him or not. Please join with me in praising Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the Eternal Three in One God.

NOTES

1. *The Mystery of the Trinity*, page 8, *Adventist Review*, August 26, 1993.
2. *Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, page 16, *Andrews University Seminary*

Studies, Vol. VIII, No. 1. January, 1970.

3. *Reflections* page 9, the Biblical Research Institute Newsletter for July, 2008.

4. *The Signs of the Times*, November 20, 1893.

5.. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *WHEN CRITICS ASK*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992, page 367

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

EXAMPLES OF TRINITARIAN TYPE STATEMENTS FROM ELLEN WHITE

*There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.*¹

*the three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*²

Volume 6 of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* quotes from *Manuscript 57*, 1900, on page 1074. Ellen White emphatically refers to the Three Persons and a check of the original shows quite clearly that she wrote “Persons.” I have included this comment because I have read the attempts of some who try to make out that she never refers to the Holy Spirit as a Person. In this they are also quite in error.

At this point it would be appropriate for me to make a few comments on the word “person.” It is an undeniable fact that when we talk about God we are compelled to use human language. We also have to acknowledge that human language is not really adequate to describe Him. There are three who are God and when we want to refer to them we become somewhat confused. We say “They are. . . ?” It seems best to say “persons” but that word is not really adequate for they are not like any persons within the field of our experience. I think it was St. Augustine who said something like this:

“We say persons, not that we want to say persons, but otherwise we would be reduced to silence.”

I think it probable that Ellen White was faced with this dilemma in her endeavours to describe the members of the Trinity. In some of her writings she wrote the word persons but later changed the word to “personalities.” Of course both words refer to persons, as any Dictionary will testify. My contention is that because of her dilemma she used a variety of expressions for the Heavenly Three in lieu of the word persons. Notice the following which show that she used the words “characters,” “powers,” “Godhead,” and “dignitaries” with reference to them.

While noting these interesting facts that I bring to your attention, do not forget that each statement requires a belief in the Trinity.

*The three great and glorious heavenly characters are present on the occasion of baptism.*³

*The three powers of the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are pledged to be their strength and their efficiency in their new life in Christ Jesus.*⁴

*The eternal Godhead – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost – is involved in the action required to make assurance to the human agent.*⁵

*The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption.*⁶

*The eternal heavenly dignitaries – God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit – arming them [the disciples] with more than mortal energy, . . . would advance with them to the work and convince the world of sin.*⁷

Please note well the following which is also very powerful evidence in favour of the Trinity Doctrine and which should convince even the most committed Semi-Arian that their claims that the Church is wrong on this matter is quite out of order:

THE OMNIPOTENT ONE

We need to consider Who is the Omnipotent One according to Ellen White? What does the word “Omnipotent” mean?

The first meaning provided by *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* is – “ALMIGHTY.” The definition provided by *The Readers Digest WORD FINDER* is – “ALL POWERFUL, ALMIGHTY, SUPREME.”

QUESTION – Is it possible to have more than one who is OMNIPOTENT? (i.e. “All Powerful,” “Almighty,” or “Supreme”).

GOD THE FATHER – It is admitted by all that he is Omnipotent.

JESUS – *He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man’s freedom. He is the eternal self-existing Son.* 8

With Christ is Omnipotence. 9

THE HOLY SPIRIT – *The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul.* 10

He knew that truth, armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would conquer in the contest with evil. 11

There is only One who is Omnipotent. It is quite impossible to have Three who are Omnipotent unless they comprise the One God. Ellen White obviously believed in the Trinity because she labelled the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as all being Omnipotent. Many may be mighty or powerful but - **It is impossible to contradict the fact that there cannot be more than one who is Omnipotent or Almighty. The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all One Trinity God. Any thought that Ellen White was not a Trinitarian is impossible to maintain.**

As we noted above the words Omnipotent and Almighty are synonymous. Notice with this in mind the following interesting comment of Ellen White:

“Come out from among them and be ye separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” This is the pledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; made to you if you will keep your baptismal vow, and touch not the unclean thing. . . . 12

I cannot escape the implications of this statement. Ellen White is equating the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with the Lord Almighty here. She is saying that the three Members of the Almighty Trinity will be a Father to true Christians.

Unquestionably, the mature Ellen White was a committed Trinitarian. She never sat down and wrote a detailed description of what she understood God to be. What she did say however is sufficient for us to accept that she believed, in later life, that God is a Trinity comprising Three Divine Persons. No doubt, as a young girl, her understanding of God was quite immature and somewhat deficient. Nevertheless, it grew over time and really blossomed in her later years. When it became time for the matter to be clarified she was right out in front in favour of the Trinity doctrine. Mrs White grew in understanding on many matters and on occasions had to reverse her conclusions. This was so on such matters as when to begin the Sabbath, the Law in Galatians, the “daily” in Daniel 8. These subjects have been well documented and I don’t need to go into them here.

A FINAL FEW WORDS OF COMFORT GAINED FROM THE TRINITY DOCTRINE

The Trinity doctrine helps us to see the full dimension of God’s love. He didn’t send an innocent Third Party to die for us – He came Himself in the Person of Jesus, a Member of the Trinity, and died for us.

What greater exhibition of love could we have than this? See *1 Corinthians 2:8*; *2 Corinthians 5:19*; *Acts 20:28*; *Hebrews 2:14, 15*.

God is complete in Himself. The Trinity teaching makes this clear to us. Before He created anything else, He was able to express and experience love within the confines of the Godhead. He didn't need to create in order to be able to express love as some have erroneously claimed. Nevertheless, God is love and He found great joy in creating a perfect planet to be occupied by perfect creatures. That things have not stayed as He intended is another sad story. The Gospel (a good story) nevertheless reveals that His love will win the day. In a wonderfully loving way God will restore things to what He intended in the beginning. Each Member of the Trinity fulfilling the role He accepted before the World began will bring this about. Praise God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for their great love and blessings shared with us through the Plan of Redemption.

NOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 7A, page 441.
 2. Ellen G. White, *Ibid.* Volume 6, page 1074.
 3. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 6, page 389.
 4. Ellen G. White, *(Australasian) Union Conference Record*, October 7, 1907.
 5. Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, page 148.
 6. Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, page 222.
 7. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, page 616.
 8. Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, page 1136.
 9. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 15, page 101.
 10. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 490.
 11. Ellen G. White, *Ibid.* page 679.
 12. Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 19, 1901.
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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE HISTORY OF THE TRINITY DOCTRINE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

The following statement from our 27 Fundamental Beliefs certifies that Seventh-day Adventists are strongly committed to Trinitarianism.

2. The Trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; 29:29; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:6, 7).¹

Unfortunately, we hear all sorts of accusations made about our acceptance of this belief. Some claim that the doctrine was sneaked into our Fundamentals in 1980. Others insist that we had no such belief certified by the General Conference prior to that date. Claims such as these are way off centre and are spread abroad by persons who are sadly misinformed or uninformed. It is unfortunately true that, as was stated by George Santayana, “*those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*” It is also true that those who have not properly studied the history of the past are bound to repeat the errors of the past. This has been the experience of some in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Church developed its understanding of God moving through falsehoods such as Arianism to an eventual acceptance of the Biblical teaching on the Trinity. This was not without much pain but at least the lessons were learnt by the Church. Not so by some of its adherents. Unfortunately, some groups never move forward from the aberrations they have accepted. It is to be hoped that my endeavour here will enable some to make an informed decision now.

In the formative years of our Church we had no statement of beliefs but it gradually became apparent that such a statement was necessary. Some of our leading pioneers were quite vocally non-Trinitarian. As I have already reported they came from a group that did not believe in the Trinity doctrine. They were initially quite Arian in their belief but gradually moved to semi-Arianism and as the Church matured and settled down it became very clearly Trinitarian.

While there were still many Semi-Arians in the Church it was nevertheless moving into Trinitarianism in the late 1800’s but the matter was not settled in all minds. Samuel Spear, a non-Seventh-day Adventist had an article, *Bible Doctrine of the Trinity* published in the New York *Independent* on November 14, 1889. The Seventh-day Adventist Pacific Press published it as number 90 in the Bible Student Library series in 1892. The pamphlet is defective in some of its statements but this is not the important point. Obviously, to publish the pamphlet would be unthinkable if Trinitarianism was not acceptable among Adventists at the time. This article may be read on pages 115 to 124 of M. L. Andreasen *The Book of Hebrews* Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. 1948.

A statement of some of the points of our faith was published in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, under the pen of F. M. Wilcox the Editor of the paper October 9, 1913. What Wilcox wrote appeared alongside an article by Ellen White which she included in her book *Prophets and Kings*. The following is the section important for our study:

“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”.*²

Ellen White must have been aware of this statement and she in no way commented adversely about it. She apparently just accepted it.

On December 29, 1930, the General Conference Committee voted that a statement of beliefs be prepared by a committee of four, including the General Conference president and the editor of the *Review and Herald* (F. M. Wilcox). This appeared in the 1931 Yearbook and in the Church Manual in 1932. The approval of this statement by the General Conference is evident because in 1946, at the General Conference session, it was voted that the statement could not be altered except at a session of the General Conference. Here is the statement on the Trinity as it appeared in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* :

That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matt. 28:19. 3

Most will quickly observe that although written about 18 years apart the two statements are almost identical. To say that Seventh-day Adventists did not officially believe in the Trinity doctrine until 1980 is clearly without foundation. It is a great pity that uninformed people are willing to spread abroad claims that will not stand up to investigation. It is a case of advertising when you don't have the goods.

The Review and Herald publishers of Washington D.C. published *Getting Acquainted With God* by Otto H. Christensen in 1970. This book has some interesting sections related to the Trinity.

In the same year (1970), Dr. Raoul Dederen had a fine article "Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity," published in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 8, pages 1-22.

There have been bits and pieces in magazines and some papers written for university courses and such-like but no book wholly devoted to the subject had been published in Adventism until my book *Understanding the Trinity* was published by AUTUMN HOUSE Alma Park Grantham, Lincs., England in 2001. The book has been described as "*The best defence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the last fifty years.*" *FOCUS*. I would also like to draw attention to the excellent article "Doctrine of God" by Fernando L. Canale in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist THEOLOGY*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 2000. Published in 2002 is *The Trinity* which is contributed to by three authors, Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John Reeve. They are all scholars in the employ of Andrews University. It is published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown. It contains excellent material on the development of understanding of the Triune nature of God by the early Church and also the growth of understanding among Adventists. Anyone who wants to seriously study the subject will need to examine closely this volume also. Anyone who intends to attempt to continue an opposition to our belief in the Trinity must respond to all of the evidence provided in these sources.

If the abundant material I have provided above together with the sources I have just described is sincerely studied, the opposition arguments of the dissenters should be clarified and left behind as mere peculiarities of our history.

NOTES

1. Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, Review and Herald, Hagerstown, 1988, page 16.
 2. F. M. Wilcox (Editor), *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 9, 1913, page 21.
 3. *The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1931, page 377. The statement also was included in the *Church Manual* in 1932.
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CONCLUSION

It hardly needs to be pointed out that the above is not an exhaustive study but it is nevertheless an adequate presentation of much of the evidence available from the Bible and Ellen G. White, which positively require Seventh-day Adventists to accept that God is a Trinity. This is the inevitable conclusion that we are compelled to come to. I am pleased to be able to say that we have, as a Church, accepted this fact. God is, however, far above us and beyond our complete comprehension. To completely understand all about God we would have to be God. However, the simple fact remains, God has revealed certain things about Himself in His Word. He has made it clear that within the complexity of His Being there is a threeness. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all comprise the One True God. This information we must thankfully accept and we must also be prepared to defend this belief. We cannot, I repeat, hope to understand all about God but we should accept what He has revealed of Himself with gratitude and leave it at that.

It is my sincere prayer that there may be at least some from among the agitators who, having now gained a better understanding of what Inspiration teaches, are prepared to acknowledge and accept what God has really revealed about Himself and are then willing to rededicate themselves to serving Him as loyal members of His Remnant Church.

It is also my prayer that there will be some from among our members, who formerly could only vaguely understand that God must be a Trinity, but who now rejoice in seeing more clearly what God's Word is saying to them about Him. May they now be bolder in affirming that they hold this belief and may they also be more willing to share it with others. Seventh-day Adventists really do have the goods on the Trinity doctrine and we should loudly advertise the fact.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. He made us, He has maintained responsibility for us, He loves us, He died for us, and He is coming again soon to restore for us that which was lost through sin. How can we do other than love, adore, worship, and serve Him? If we lift Him up we can be sure that He will never let us down. I, for one, can testify that this is true.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in one,
Laud, honor, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally.

Amen.

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal No. 72.
