

October 12, 2022

Dear Conference President, Ministerial Director and Pastor,

The pastor wrote the following:

However, of the 10 statements found in the official response from the BRI, statement #6 states, "We appealed to our brothers to reexamine their views on the matter. Since FB no. 2 represents **the consensus of the world church on the doctrine of God**, those who disagree should not occupy leadership positions while attacking our beliefs or promoting views that undermine it. And depending on the situation, they may even forfeit their rights to membership in the church." (October 8 Removal letter – Church Pastor)

The Conference President wrote the following:

We are also aware that there remain a number of names on your leadership team elect who have expressed their support for theological positions **other than what the church teaches** in FB#2. In our last meeting with you we shared the BRI report which makes it clear that any individuals holding differing theological positions should not be in church leadership. That counsel still stands.

If you proceed forward to the second reading of this list without addressing this issue, you will be in "**rebellion against the conference**" (Church Manual p. 40) and we will have no other option than to proceed to the Executive Committee with the matter of your church status, as we previously stated.

For the sake of clarity, we expect the following:

1. All elected leaders be able to support **the teachings of scripture as the Seventh-day Adventist church currently understands** them including FB #2.
2. Any leaders who have previously expressed concern regarding Fundamental Belief #2 should communicate in writing that they have reconsidered their position and able to support **the teachings of the church**, including FB#2- (Letter to _____ Nominating Committee - 10.4.2022 from Conference President and Ministerial Director)

Some difficult things that need to be said:

The doctrine that God has committed to the church the right to control the conscience, and to define and punish heresy, is one of **the most deeply rooted of papal errors** The dense darkness in which, through the long ages of her rule, popery had enveloped **all** Christendom, had not even yet been wholly dissipated. {GC 292.3}

You are defining heresy as expressing support "for theological positions **other than what the church teaches** in FB#2" and threatening the punishment of removal from church leadership and that "they

may even forfeit their rights to membership in the church” if a person conscientiously chooses to adhere to our denomination’s biblically supported position before the introduction of the Trinitarian concept that God is three Persons.

Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who **dare receive nothing**, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church. {GC 596.3}

The reason that there are multitudes in our church, as well as in the other Protestant churches, that dare receive nothing contrary to their creed is because of fear of the papal methods that have been adopted and used to punish those who would dare to place the plain teaching of scripture above the creed of the church. Our pioneers understood these methods. They were put on trial and disfellowshipped from their churches for daring to believe that prophecy revealed that the second coming of Christ was at hand.

After the disappointment, our founders came together to search the scriptures.

Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, “We can do nothing more,” the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a **clear explanation** of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. **A line of truth** extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me. {SpTB02 56.4}

During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until **all the principal points of our faith were made clear** to our minds, in harmony with the word of God. The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given. {SpTB02 57.1}

In the early days of the message, when our numbers were few, we studied diligently to understand the meaning of many Scriptures. At times it seemed as if no explanation could be given. My mind seemed to be locked to an understanding of the Word; but when our brethren who had assembled to study together came to a point where they could go no further, and had recourse to earnest prayer, the Spirit of God would rest upon me, and I would be taken off in

vision and instructed in regard to the relation of Scripture to Scripture. **These experiences were repeated over and over and over again. Thus the truths of the third angel's message were revealed, point by point.** Think you that my faith in this message will ever waver? Think you that I can remain silent, when I see an effort being made to sweep away the foundation pillars of our faith? I am as thoroughly established in those truths as it is possible for a person to be. I can never forget the experience I have passed through. God has confirmed my belief by many evidences of His power. {Ms49-1906.25}

All of the foundational doctrines of our church were arrived at by prayerful study in combination with the direct intervention of God through His prophet, giving a clear explanation of the true meaning of the scriptures. Notice that church rulings had no weight at all in determining what we are to believe and how we are to understand it. God has vested in his church authority "to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work," (see 9T 260.2) but not for the formation of doctrine. That job belongs only to God. "He Himself has taught us what is truth." {Lt329-1905.18}

During this whole process, the mind of Ellen White was locked by God so that it could not be said that she is the source of our doctrine. The current narrative that Ellen White's statements shifted to those of a Trinitarian over the course of her life and therefore our church is now Trinitarian is not true. Because of her condition of mind at the time, Ellen White's personal ideas had zero input in the formation of our foundational doctrines. The unity of the church was achieved because the brethren, knowing of her inability to understand, accepted heaven's confirmation that all the principal points of our faith were in harmony with the word of God. These fundamental truths were all that we needed to take us into the kingdom.

The understanding of God, as expressed in FB#2, was not part of the "line of truth" that God gave this church. The church points to the fact that the doctrine expressed in the wording of FB#2 is also the result of united study. The question is, how was the result of this study confirmed? No longer can the church point to the direct intervention of God as to the truth of this doctrine. Not only is the messenger of God not alive, but nowhere in her writings does she teach of a God who is three Persons. The only authority that we can point to as to the truth of the Trinity doctrine is the authority of the vote of man. In this scenario, unity can only be achieved by mandate or blind submission to the assumptions of men.

The current division in our church is directly attributable to both local and conference leadership attempting to place the voice of the church above the voice of God.

If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity; but **so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension.** {PP 124.1}

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "**Thus saith the Lord**" in its support. {GC 595.1}

You have asked that those who differ in their position on the doctrine of God recant in writing. We will communicate in writing that we have reconsidered our position and that we can support the teachings of the church when the church ceases to appeal to the opinions of learned men, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, and the voice of the majority as the evidence of their position on the doctrine of God and instead provides a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in support for its position.

A plain “Thus saith the Lord” is just that – plain. It does not depend on the theological reasoning and assumptions of scholars. It does not rely on the theologian’s hermeneutical parsing of the text. It is a clear straightforward inspired explanation from the Lord of how we should understand Him. This clear explanation is conspicuously absent from the communications from the BRI, the conference, and the pastor. In its place are assumptions, and threats that unless we affirm the church’s current understanding, we will face the consequences.

Ellen White has written out the “line of truth” that was made plain to her. Our position is in complete harmony with these writings. Here is a list of just some of the clear explanations that have been given to us concerning the doctrine of God.

- The Revelation of God [{RH November 8, 1898}](#)
- The Personality of God [{Ms137-1903}](#)
- MH Chapter 35—A True Knowledge of God [{MH 409}](#)
- 8T Chapter 43—A Personal God [{8T 263}](#)
- 8T Chapter 44—A False and a True Knowledge of God [{8T 279}](#)
- A Personal God [{Ms124-1903}](#)
- 5T Chapter 89—The Character of God Revealed in Christ [{5T 737}](#)
- Revelation of God through Christ [{ST April 11, 1895}](#)
- God Made Manifest in Christ [{ST January 20, 1890}](#)
- The Character of God Revealed In Christ [{Ms23-1898}](#)
- The Revelation of God [{Ms92-1898}](#)

Completely absent in these explanations is the idea that God is three. Instead, we are introduced to a God who is a personal being who has revealed Himself in His Son. When we get to heaven, we will see the face of this God and know Him as Father (see 8T 267.4).

It is the height of arrogance that a church that is wandering in the wilderness, because of her insubordination (see Ev 696.3), should consider that her man-made assumptions concerning the doctrine of God are more Biblical than the foundational teachings that were laid down at the beginning of this movement by the miracle-working power of God Himself. But it is even more disturbing that the leadership of this same church would attempt to use papal methods to enforce adherence to these assumptions. “No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.” {RH Dec. 20, 1892, par. 1}

Church leadership has no right to try to control our conscience with threats and coercion when we have a clear mandate from heaven that “Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.” Please provide even one clear SOP explanation that justifies why we should accept a theological position that is contrary to the foundational truths that God has given to this church

What is sad about this whole controversy is that it could be so easily rectified. If all would do as our pioneers who “accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given,” there would be no cause for division at the _____ Church or any other of the countless places where this controversy rages. There is no lack of counsel from heaven to guide us on this issue. What is lacking is a willingness to be corrected by what God has clearly revealed.

The many contradictory opinions in regard to what the Bible teaches do not arise from any obscurity in the book itself, but from blindness and prejudice on the part of interpreters. **Men ignore the plain statements of the Bible** to follow their own perverted reason. Priding themselves on their intellectual attainments, they overlook the simplicity of truth; they forsake the fountain of living waters to drink of the poisonous stream of error. {RH January 27, 1885, par. 8}

But the leaders of Israel turned from the fountain of true knowledge. They studied the Scriptures only to sustain their traditions and enforce their man-made observances. **By their interpretation they made them express sentiments that God had never given. Their mystical construction made indistinct that which He had made plain.** {CT 438.4}

That which in the counsels of heaven the Father and the Son deemed essential for man’s salvation is **clearly presented** in the Holy Scriptures. The infinite truths of salvation are **stated so plainly** that finite beings who desire to know the truth cannot fail to understand. {CT 438.1}

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each. {8T 268.1}

A great work can be done by presenting to the people the Bible just as it reads. Carry the word of God to every man’s door, urge its plain statements upon every man’s conscience, repeat to all the Saviour’s command, “Search the Scriptures.” Admonish them to take the Bible as it is, to implore the divine enlightenment, and then, when the light shines, to **gladly accept each precious ray, and fearlessly abide the consequences.** {RH July 10, 1883, par. 13}

. . . All who take the word of God as their rule of life are brought into close relationship with one another. The Bible is their bond of union. But their companionship will not be sought or desired by those who do not bow to the sacred word as the one unerring guide. They will be at variance, both in faith and practice. There can be no harmony between them; they are unreconcilable. As Seventh-day Adventists **we appeal from custom and tradition to the plain “Thus saith the Lord,”** and this reason we are not, and we cannot be, in harmony with the multitudes who teach and follow the doctrines and commandments of men. {RH July 10, 1883, par. 16}

What our church, both locally and worldwide, needs now are members that “gladly accept each precious ray, and fearlessly abide the consequences.” What our church needs now are leaders that have the moral courage to stand for the right though the heavens fall. What our church needs now is a willingness to repent of the insubordination that has kept us in the world for so long and a determination to unite on the “line of truth” that was given by God to guide our way home.