

ONE GOD ONE CHURCH

A **New** Approach to Fortify
Membership Against the
Anti-Trinitarian Movement

John C. Witcombe

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Anti-Trinitarian Movement

by

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

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Unless otherwise noted, scriptures are taken from the King James Version.

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INTRODUCTION

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear **God**, and give glory to **him**; for the hour of **his** judgment is come: and worship **him** that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6, 7)

Who is this Creator God that we are to glorify and worship? This God is given singular pronouns—*Him* and *His*. Is this God, then, a singular Person (non-Trinitarian view), or does this God refer to the one God who is a unity of three Persons (Trinitarian view)?

Were you aware that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its founding in 1863, was, on that point, officially a non-Trinitarian denomination? That status changed in 1980 when we voted in an authentic Trinity doctrine¹ as stated in Fundamental Belief #2. That is 117 years as an arguably non-Trinitarian church and 43 years as a Trinitarian church. Given this history, it would be surprising if there wasn't some level of interest or even conflict in our denomination regarding this doctrine.

God will arouse His people; if other means fail, **heresies will come in among them**, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat.... **Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth.** Their faith must be firmly founded upon the word of God so that when the testing time shall come and they are brought before councils to

1. In 1931, the word *Trinity* was inserted into our Fundamental Beliefs, but only as a synonym for the word *Godhead*. “That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father...; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father...; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead...” (1931 *SDA Yearbook*). However, an “authentic” Trinity doctrine must include the idea that three Persons constitute the *one God*, i.e., one God is three Persons. This crucial piece was not incorporated into our official Fundamental Beliefs until 1980.

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answer for their faith they may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.²

Which one might be the heresy—Trinity or non-Trinity? This is an important question, seeing how a true knowledge of God ties in directly to the mission of our church, which is to proclaim the three angels' messages.

The book you are holding tells the stories of some who have found answers to this question. It is the prayer of the author that as you read of their experiences, your knowledge of God will increase.

A knowledge of God and of Christ is **positively essential to salvation**.³

The inspired John declares, “But this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” [John 17:3.] **A right knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ** whom He hath sent **is eternal life** to all who believe.⁴

The title of the book, *One God—One Church*, originated from the following three inspired statements:

Thou believest that there is **one God**; thou doest well.... (James 2:19)

The **one God** of the Bible has but **one church**:

There is but **one church** in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach....⁵

If we leave this **one church**—the Seventh-day Adventist Church—and start a new organization, we apostatize from the truth:

We cannot now enter into any new organization, for this would mean apostasy from the truth.⁶

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2. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 707, 708.
 3. Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares*, p. 265.
 4. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 71, 1897, par. 7.
 5. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 139, 1901.
 6. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 129, 1905.

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

The Seventh-day Adventist Church must rise to the challenge of countering the impact of anti-Trinitarians who are influencing our members to leave the denomination. Anti-Trinitarians have recently been organized into two separate denominations. One church has taken the name “1889 Historic Seventh Day Adventist Church,” and the other has taken the name “Seventh-day Church of Revelation.” They have a persuasive teaching on leaving the church to present to our membership and are effectively using social media platforms to get their message right into the homes of our members.

If we do nothing to fortify our church members against embracing their message, we may face divided congregations and the loss of members. But it’s not that easy to counter the influence of these teachers. And here is why. The anti-Trinitarian’s message is straightforward, and highly persuasive. They might begin by asking the question, “Who is the *one God* of the Bible?” And then, they present two possible answers.

- The first option is that the *one God* of the Bible is the Father.
- The second option is that the *one God* of the Bible is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Since 1980, people who unite with the Seventh-day Adventist Church are expected to affirm the second option when they are voted into membership. Fundamental Belief #2 (FB#2) gives this definition of *one God*: “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.”

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Next, the anti-Trinitarian YouTube preacher will show our church members that the first option has plainly-worded Bible verses that support the position that the *one God* is the Father:

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

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

Then they will show that our Seventh-day Adventist theologians readily acknowledge that there are no plainly-worded Bible texts that articulate the concept that the *one God* is three Persons and that this definition is simply an assumption based upon theological reasoning. They will point out the many statements that say this, such as the following:

The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one [God], is **not explicitly stated** but only **assumed**.⁷

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is **assumed** as a fact by Bible writers.... Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.⁸

The role of the Trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, **nor is there any clear statement of the idea**. But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. **So even though the doctrine of the Trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God**, it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God.⁹

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7. Fernando L. Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, p. 138, "Doctrine of God."
 8. *Adventist Review*, July 30, 1981, Special Issue on Bible Doctrines, p. 4.
 9. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 89.

The three Persons, one God paradox is one of the great mysteries of the Bible, and **is beyond what has been fully revealed in the Scriptures.**¹⁰

We need to point out, too, that apart from this passage, there are other passages, statements based on Greek manuscripts which are not disputed, that support the Trinity. To cite a clear example: Matthew 28:19, "...baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." **But, even this passage from Matthew does not state that they are one—this was only comprehended in the fourth century.** Thus, we may affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, even if **it is a developed understanding based on texts that do not state so explicitly.**¹¹

No text of Scripture specifically says that God is three Persons: but **theological reasoning** on the basis of biblical principles leads to that conclusion.¹²

When our church members see the difference between these two options, many will be inclined to go with the simple definition of the *one God* that is plainly stated in the Bible. After they realize that what they had affirmed when they joined the church—that the *one God* is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is not explicitly stated in the Bible, our members may be inclined to keep listening to those who teach a simple biblical definition—*one God* is the Father.

Once the anti-Trinitarian teacher gains their confidence, they will convince their students to accept the idea that the Son of God had a beginning and that there was a time when He did not exist. They have now entered the realm of speculation because no plainly-worded statements in the Bible or in the Spirit of Prophecy state that the Son of God is not eternal. In fact, the inspired writings plainly state just the opposite:

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10. Dan Augsburg, "The 'Eternal' Three & 'The LORD our God, the LORD is one!' A Bible Study on the Eternal Godhead," p. 22.
 11. W. Larry Richards, NT Department, Andrews University, "1 John 5:7–8: Is the 'Trinity' Found in These Verses? Issue: The Johannine Comma," p. 5.
 12. Kwabena Donkor, *God in 3 Persons—in Theology*, Biblical Research Institute Release—9, May 2015, p. 20.

The Word existed as a divine being, even as the *eternal* Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father.¹³

In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.¹⁴

But by this time, there is very little that we will be able to say to keep these members from eventually leaving the church. They have now embraced the anti-Trinitarian message, and this message will spread throughout the local church and beyond.

This controversy is splitting churches in half. Exhibit A is a recent church business meeting (February 27, 2022), where two elders were tried for their views on the Godhead. As a background, Val was the head elder for many years at his church. In 2019, a church member asked him if he endorsed Fundamental Belief #2. Because the member was not fully satisfied with Val's response, he asked the church board to investigate Val's understanding of the Trinity doctrine. The church board gave that task to the board of elders and thus began a two-year email correspondence.

One of the elders, Eiji (ā'-jee), a retired surgeon, was the spokesman for the elders. The full document of this correspondence is over 400 pages long, so you can see that there were a lot of emails between these two parties. In the prosecution of this inquiry, Eiji valiantly defended the Trinity doctrine.

Toward the end of 2021, he came to the startling conclusion that Val was right after all. Throughout that same year, the pastor, as he was monitoring this email exchange, was finding no fault with Val's position and wrote several times, affirming Val in his views.

On October 28, 2021, the pastor wrote:

13. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Apr. 5, 1906.

14. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 29, 1900.

As I have read through the conversation thus far, I am seeing that Val's understanding is clearly backed by the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and logic.

On Nov. 10, 2021, he wrote the following to the church board:

After over two years of study, the elders find Val in harmony with the fundamental teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Fundamentally, his understanding of the Heavenly Trio is Adventist in its theology. Therefore, the elders recommend that Val be reinstated as teacher/preacher and functioning elder at the Dec. 2021 board meeting.

Shortly after writing this letter, the pastor, after talking with Conference leadership, totally reversed his earlier position and decided to have these two elders resign if they would not affirm the Trinity doctrine. So, on January 7, 2022, he wrote:

Furthermore, the SDA Church believes in the Trinity. Therefore, it is with regret...in talking with Conference leadership, that leaders who do not believe in the Trinity resign their leadership positions. This fundamental belief is key to our church currently.

Val and Eiji felt that it would send the wrong message to the church to resign from serving as elders. It would be an acknowledgment that their views were heretical. Because they did not resign, the board decided to move forward with a church business meeting to determine if Val and Eiji should be censured for one year.

In Chapters 2 and 3, you will read the defense that Val and Eiji presented at their trial. However, with the board of elders, church board, pastor, and the local Conference all wanting to see these two elders removed from office, it was a foregone conclusion that this is what would take place on February 27, 2022.

The church business meeting lasted 6 ½ hours. The vote was... First, before I reveal the outcome, I want you to place yourself in that business meeting. Carefully evaluate the defense that these two elders gave as you read the following two chapters, and then

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tell me, how would you have voted? Would you have voted to
censure Val and Eiji?

Chapter 2

EIJI'S DEFENSE

**Seventh-day Adventist Church Business Meeting
February 27, 2022**

Church discipline is vital for maintaining the integrity of the church. Conducting it in a proper way should result in a positive experience. So, it is our prayer that we all make the best of this experience that we may bring glory and honor to the name of our Lord and the name of His Church.

The reason why Val and I (Eiji) are being tried is because we abstain from affirming the wording of Fundamental Belief #2 (FB#2).

How did this all start? In 2019, a member approached Val with a question as to whether he agreed with FB#2. The answer was not a resounding “yes.” It was requested of the church board to investigate this matter, which was then delegated to the board of elders. The elders have worked on it intermittently since then until today.

Why did it take so long? As most of you know by now, I was the primary elder who investigated Val, and I vigorously opposed his view for most of this period. I had a hard time understanding what he was saying and not because his view was complicated. His view, which is also my view now, is extremely simple, as you will see. It is because of a heart block, rather than a mental block, that I did not understand him for a long time.

All the conversation occurred between Val and the elders with a strong suspicion that Val may hold an anti-Trinitarian view or some variant of it. We interpreted everything he said through this thick filter of suspicion. In retrospect, Val told us the very simple

truth from a plain “Thus saith the Lord” from the beginning. He was cautious not to interject his own words and answered our questions mainly with inspired writings, making us all the more suspicious.

When someone challenges what we have always held to be true, the natural reaction is to erect a stone wall and refuse to listen. While it is certainly wise not to listen to every wind of doctrine and be tossed to and fro, it is equally wise to be aware that Satan can deceive even the very elect unless what we believe is firmly based upon a plain “Thus saith the Lord.”

I would like to tell you loud and clear right now that Val and I are not anti-Trinitarians, where anti-Trinitarians are defined as those who believe that Christ came into existence at some point in time, and the Holy Spirit is not a Person. We fully believe in the three-person Godhead—that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equally God in the highest sense. We positively denounce the anti-Trinitarian view of the Godhead as unbiblical. So you can relax and take off your filter of suspicion that you may be able to hear us out without distorting prejudice.

My presentation is more of a testimony of my personal journey of how I used to be a vigorous defender of FB#2 and how I have come to be unable to affirm its wording anymore.

It is good to start by establishing common ground that we can all agree on. We all believe that the Godhead consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We all believe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God. One is not any more or any less God than the others. We all believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons.

This is common ground that we can start with. Hopefully, nobody raises any more questions regarding these firmly established truths.

There is a considerable amount of miscommunication because we are not speaking the same language on many things related to this subject.

There are three main areas where communication breaks down.

The first one is: what FB#2 means to many Seventh-day Adventists is very different from what it actually says.

The second area in which communication breaks down is that we confuse the meaning of three key terms: *God*, *Godhead*, and *Trinity*. We must clearly understand what these terms mean before we can proceed with a meaningful discussion.

God is a personal Being. There is a personal Being called God. The “*Godhead*” is not a person. The *Godhead* refers to a group of three Persons who equally have the attributes of God. The Godhead consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The word “*trinity*” simply means three-fold. But, when speaking in theological terms, the “Trinity” commonly refers to a belief that there is a personal being called God (not called Godhead), who consists of three Persons. Other than Merriam-Webster, most dictionaries define the Trinity as one God (not the Godhead) consisting of three Persons. This is how the original Catholic Trinity is defined. This is how FB#2 defines it, as you will see. Just so that we are speaking the same language, in our presentation, we will use the term “Trinity” to mean “one God consisting of three Persons.”

God, Godhead, and Trinity—these terms mean three completely different things. I myself had been guilty of mixing up these three terms.

The third area where the communication breaks down is the confusion between the oneness that exists among the three Persons of the Godhead and the distinctness that exists among the three Persons of the Godhead. They are one in their attributes. They are all pre-existent and self-existent. They are all equally God in

the highest sense. But, they are distinct in their personality. By personality, we mean individuality, distinctness, or uniqueness as a person. That is how Ellen White used the word “personality” in her writings.

Here is an example:

The Father and the Son each have a personality. Christ declared: “I and My Father are one.” Yet it was the Son of God who came to the world in human form.¹⁵

The Father and the Son each have a unique identity as a Person. Here is another example:

He who denies *the personality of God and of his Son Jesus Christ*, is denying God and Christ.¹⁶

He who denies the *distinctness* in the personality of God and of Christ is denying God and Christ. This is a strong warning against not discerning the distinctness of individuality between God and Christ.

Now, let’s take a look at FB#2. Let’s start with the second sentence:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal 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. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.** (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2)¹⁷

These highlighted sentences tell us about the attributes of God. They tell us what He is like. These sentences clearly address God as a singular Person. “God is ...” “He is ...” “God, who is love, is ...”

15. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 68.

16. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Mar. 8, 1906.

17. “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” available at <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>, accessed 4/5/22.

Let's take a look at the first sentence now:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.¹⁸

What does the first sentence of FB#2 *mean*? These are the four things that this sentence *means* to many Adventists:

1. There is one God.
2. The Godhead consists of three Persons.
3. The three Persons are all equally God.
4. The three Persons are in unity.

This is perfectly fine. Val and I would agree 100% with these concepts.

Now, let's look carefully at the first sentence of FB#2 and see what it *actually says*, rather than what it *means* to us.

It says, "There is one God:" Notice that a colon follows the statement. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a colon is a punctuation mark used chiefly to direct attention to matter that follows, such as a list, an explanation, a quotation, or an amplification.

So, the first sentence of FB#2 says that there is one God; and He is a unity of three coeternal Persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. People express this same idea in one of several ways.

There is one God [*who is*] [*who is made up of*] [*who consists of*] [*who manifests Himself as*] three coeternal Persons. Or, three coeternal Persons make up one God.

You may not read FB#2 that way. I guess that is a good thing. But, some people *do* read it that way because that is what it says. The following excerpt is taken from our local church website:

18. "Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

Seventh-day Adventists believe a **Trinity of three Persons**—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—**make up one God**.

This next statement is taken from our world church website:

Seventh-day Adventist Christians believe there is **one God**. And that this **one God is three co-eternal beings** who work together in unity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always been and always will be.¹⁹

“This one God *is* three co-eternal beings.” In other words, God is made up of three beings.

You might say, “I don’t read it that way.” But what about the people outside of our church? What about the people who are new to our church? What about the generations that follow us? They would read it exactly the way it is actually stated. The question is, “Is it biblical?”

Hebrews tells us that God sent His Son, who was the express image of His Person.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the **express image of his [the Father’s] person**, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

God is a singular Person.

As a **personal being**, God has revealed Himself in His Son. The outshining of the Father’s glory, “and the express image of His person,” Jesus, as a personal Saviour, came to the world.²⁰

19. “What Adventists Believe About the Trinity,” available at <https://www.adventist.org/trinity>, accessed 4/5/22, emphasis added.

20. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 418.

From my girlhood I have been given plain instruction that **God is a person**, and that Christ is “the express image of His person.”²¹

We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world. **God is a person**, and Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as “the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.” [Hebrews 1:3.]²²

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as **God is a person**, is walking through these grounds.²³

God is a Person. Christ is a Person. The Holy Spirit is a Person. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons.

FB#2 says, “There is one God: a unity of three coeternal Persons.” It is saying: one God (not the Godhead) is a unity of three Persons. Is this in harmony with the inspired statements that say God is a Person? No. When I realized that God is a Person, I knew I had to perform a lot of theological acrobatics to defend FB#2, and none of them worked well.

If there is such a being called “God,” who is a mysterious blending of the three Persons, He is neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. We have just created a fourth being who is not described anywhere in any of the inspired writings. This is why Val and I have to abstain from affirming FB#2.

The term “Trinity” has come to carry mainly positive connotations for many Seventh-day Adventists. For many of us, Trinity means the opposite of the anti-Trinitarian view. Anti-Trinitarians typically believe Christ came into existence at some point in time, and may also believe that the Holy Spirit is not a Person. So, most Seventh-day Adventists accept the Trinity as a good teaching. But, when used as a theological term, “Trinity” means one God consisting of three Persons, which is nowhere stated in the Bible.

21. Ellen G. White, Ms. 137, 1903, Nov. 12.

22. Ellen G. White, Ms. 46, 1904, May 18.

23. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 616, from Ms. 66, 1899, Apr. 13.

The biblical theology of the Godhead is neither Trinitarian nor anti-Trinitarian. We are not anti-Trinitarians, for we believe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God. Nor are we Trinitarians, for we believe God is a Person, not a unity of three Persons.

We all agreed that the three Persons of the Godhead are all equally God in the highest sense of the word.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God.

Let's turn it around.

God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Are they saying the same thing? I thought they were the same until a few months ago. This is where many people get the erroneous idea that God is somehow made up of three Persons.

These two statements are not saying the same thing. The first sentence says that the three Persons are God, which is biblical. But, the second sentence says God is the three Persons, a concept that is not stated in the Bible.

However, once we understand that God is a Person, not a unity of three Persons, we need to answer the question: Who is that Person? Do you have a clear answer to that? I used to believe God could mean the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, or any combination of them. Is the God of the Bible that ambiguous? Do we worship God without knowing exactly who He is?

So, we have an apparent conundrum here. The three Persons are God. But God is a Person. How can these apparently contradictory statements be both true?

Look at these three consecutive paragraphs from *The Ministry of Healing*. The first paragraph says:

The **personality** of the Father and the Son, also the **unity** that exists between Them, are presented in the seventeenth chapter of John, in the prayer of Christ for His disciples.²⁴

What is presented in the prayer of Christ in John 17? The **personality** (distinctness) and the **unity** (oneness) between the Father and the Son. Part of Christ's prayer is in the second paragraph of *The Ministry of Healing*.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; *that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us*: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. John 17:20, 21.²⁵

Now, I want you to pay close attention to this third paragraph.

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. **They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one.**²⁶

How are they one? They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person.

Notice that she says "the Father and the Son" in the first paragraph, but she says "God and Christ" in the third paragraph. God is the Father in personality.

Ellen White clearly separates the oneness that exists in their attributes between God and Christ from the distinctness in their personality (or individuality) between God and Christ. They are one in their *attributes* but distinct in their *personality*.

Let's look at some biblical examples of separating the personality from the attributes of the Persons of the Godhead.

The Apostle Paul says that men and women are equal.

24. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 421.

25. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 421.

26. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 422.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, *there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* (Galatians 3:28)

Paul also tells us that God and Christ are equal.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be *equal with God.* (Philippians 2:5, 6)

Now, notice what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:3.

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

Isn't this verse somewhat contradictory to the ones we just read? But both are true, aren't they? How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory statements? The biblical solution is to separate the attributes and personality.

Man and woman are absolutely equal in their attributes. But, speaking in personality, man and woman are distinct, and man is the head of woman, according to the Bible. Likewise, the Father and the Son are absolutely equal in their attributes. But, speaking in personality, God and Christ are distinct, and the head of Christ is God, according to the Bible.

This distinction between attributes and personality is clearly demonstrated by the Apostle John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

“In the beginning was the Word...” Christ is the Word of God.

“and the Word was with God...” If I say Mr. A was with Mr. B, I am saying Mr. A is not Mr. B, am I not? “The Word was with God.” Does that mean Christ is not God? By no means.

John wrote: “...and the Word was God.” This is the most direct statement in the entire Bible affirming the deity of Christ. Christ is God.

The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness *with His Father*. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. “The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Before men or angels were created, *the Word was with God*, and was God.²⁷

Ellen White says Christ was with the Father from eternity past. “*The Word was with God*” means Christ was *with the Father*.

Notice how John clearly separates the personality of God and Christ from the attributes of God and Christ. Speaking with regard to attributes, Christ is God. Speaking with regard to personality, Christ was *with* a distinct Person called God, and that Person is the Father.

John uses the word “God” to mean two different things—one to describe a particular Person who is called God, the other to refer to a Person with the attributes of God.

Most of you know who Eugene Prewitt is. He is a frequent speaker at GYC (Generation of Youth for Christ), and many of his sermons are on AudioVerse. He teaches at Young Disciple Bible Camp in Inchelium, Washington. He says on his website:

My non-trinitarian friends are certainly right that **there is only one God, the Father**. (See John 17:2, 3). **The word God is used that way very many times in Scripture**. And in those many cases, it means “**the ultimate executive of the universe**.” So there is just one, and that is the Father.

(**There is another sense to the word God** that means simply “**one with the attributes of Divinity**.” That sense would include Jesus, as you see in John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:8. And the

27. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Apr. 5, 1906.

Spirit is the third person of the “Godhead” in that sense. That is why our bodies are temples to the Spirit.)²⁸

Eugene clearly separates the attributes and personality of the three Persons.

This is what our pastor wrote on October 26, 2021:

In my simple mind, it’s not that hard. **God is...the Father.** Jesus is the supreme Revelation of God the Father. The Holy Spirit is the one that works with whom the Father and the Son love—namely us. **All of the members of the Heavenly Trio are God** in the highest sense.²⁹

The pastor also separated the attributes of the three Persons from the personality of the three Persons. In attributes, all three Persons are equally God. One is not any more God than the others in their attributes. But, in personality, God is the Father.

In His prayer for the disciples in John 17, Jesus said:

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

Jesus called His Father the only true God. When Val presented this verse to me, I had a hard time accepting that the Father is the only true God. Many of you raised the same concerns about this statement, as well. Just remember, Val didn’t say it. I didn’t say it. Jesus said it. If the Father is the only true God, what does that make the other two Persons? Not true God? We noted this quotation from *The Ministry of Healing* before. Let’s look at it again.

The **personality** of the Father and the Son, also the **unity** that exists between Them, are presented in the seventeenth chapter of John, in the prayer of Christ for His disciples.³⁰

28. <https://bibledoc.org/contra-men-and-movements/the-godhead-for-seventh-day-adventists/>, accessed 10/17/2022.

29. Ellipsis is in the original writing.

30. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 421.

Remember, Ellen White says, the **personality** and the **unity** between the Father and the Son are presented in His prayer in John 17. In verses 20 and 21, Christ presented the *unity* or oneness that exists between God and Himself. At the beginning of His prayer in verse 3, Christ defined the distinctness in their *personality* where He said His Father was the only true God, and that He was the Christ that God sent.

Ellen White writes:

The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is **truly God in infinity, but not in personality.**³¹

Christ is truly God in infinity, in His infinite attributes. But Christ is not God in personality, she says. Speaking with reference to personality, the Father is the only true God. That is what Christ said. That is what Ellen White said.

Nevertheless, the thought that the Father is the only true God troubled me for a while. What solved this dilemma for me was the truth that God and Christ are absolutely one in their attributes. They are actually identical in their attributes.

From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. **They were two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character.**³²

The Father and the Son are identical in their attributes. Speaking in their attributes, if the Father is the only true God, Christ is also the only true God. Christ was able to show us the Father because He was identical to Him in His attributes. Christ said, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9). Christ was "God with us." (Matthew 1:23). Christ was God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16).

31. Ellen G. White, Ms. 116, 1905, Dec. 19.

32. Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, Dec. 16, 1897.

This is why God and Christ share many names because names, in the Bible, represent character. They are both called Jehovah, I AM, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Savior, the mighty God, the everlasting Father.

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for **my name is in him**. (Exodus 23:20, 21)

When Jesus invited Thomas to thrust his fingers into the wounds of His hands and thrust his hand into His side, Thomas said, “My Lord and **my God**.” (John 20:28)

When Jesus said, “I and my Father are one,” the Jews denounced Jesus, saying, “thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”

The strong denunciation of the Pharisees against Jesus was, “Thou, being a man, makest thyself God;” and for this reason they sought to stone him. Christ did not apologize for this supposed assumption on his part. He did not say to his accusers, “You misunderstand me; I am not God.” **He was manifesting God** in humanity.³³

Christ knew He was not God in personality. But, He knew He was manifesting God in humanity. He is the express image of God the Father. The Son of God is identical to God the Father, except in personality. That is why Christ did not correct Thomas or the Pharisees. Separating the personality and the attributes of the three Persons solves the apparent conundrum. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God. And it is also true that God refers to a singular Person, and that Person is the Father.

Speaking about attributes, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equally God. Speaking about personality, God is the Father. This is rather obvious in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. Don't take my word for it. Confirm it for yourself.

33. Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, Sept. 16, 1897.

Practically all of the Pauline letters start with a very similar greeting. At the beginning of every epistle, Paul defines the personality of God and of Christ so that there is no confusion in the rest of the epistle.

Grace be unto you, and peace, from **God our Father**, and from the **Lord Jesus Christ**. (1 Corinthians 1:3)³⁴

Peter greets his readers in the same way as did Paul.

Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by resurrection. (1 Peter 1:3)

Here are more examples of statements from Paul's letters that identify God as the Father.

God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by **his Son**.... (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

For there is **one God** and **one mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, **one God and Father of all**, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:5, 6)

Matthew 28:19 is one of the most frequently used verses to make a case for the three-in-one God.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Regarding this verse, this is what Ellen White says:

The vows which we take upon ourselves in baptism embrace much. In the name of **the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit** we are buried in the likeness of Christ's death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection, and we are to live a new life. Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ. Henceforth

34. See also 2 Corinthians 1:2, 3; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:3.

the believer is to bear in mind that he is dedicated **to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.**³⁵

When we are baptized in the name of the *Father*, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are dedicated to *God*, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of this discussion, we all agreed that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons. Then we would also agree that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons. God is not a unity of three Persons.

God has promised to be our Father.

What a salvation is revealed in the covenant by which **God** promised to be our **Father**, His only begotten Son our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Comforter, Counsellor, and Sanctifier.³⁶

Even children should be able to know that God is their Father.

Their first lessons should teach them that God is their Father.³⁷

In summary, our theology is very simple.

Also there would be the eternal heavenly dignitaries—**God**, and **Christ**, and **the Holy Spirit**...³⁸

The *Godhead* consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who, in their personality, are called God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Our heavenly Father is the God of the universe, and Christ is the divine Son, the One equal with the Father.³⁹

35. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 98.

36. Ellen G. White, Ms. 15, 1898, Feb. 10.

37. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 460.

38. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 247.

39. Ellen G. White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 21, 1906, Ms. 47.

Chapter 3

VAL'S DEFENSE

**Seventh-day Adventist Church Business Meeting
February 27, 2022**

To begin with, we want to assure the church that we fully believe in the Heavenly Trio—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that the eternal Son of God is God in the highest sense and is without beginning. We also affirm the truth that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead. We believe nothing new or different from what our denomination held during the days of Ellen White.

The letter distributed to the church charges us with the following: “Val and Eiji feel that several of the Fundamental Beliefs (FB) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are problematic, and one is teaching error.”

Here is what this charge is referencing. We believe that modifying a few words would help align Fundamental Beliefs #2, #4, and #5 more closely with FB#1, which mandates that all beliefs be supported by the Bible. Let's look at these changes:

2. The Trinity (The Godhead)

There is one ~~God~~ (Godhead): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. ~~God is~~ (The Godhead are) immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. ~~He is~~ (They are) infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through ~~His~~ (Their) self-revelation. ~~God, who is~~ (The Godhead who are) love, is (are) forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.)

3. God the Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

4. God the Son (The Son of God)

~~God the eternal Son~~ (The eternal Son of God) became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged....

5. God the Holy Spirit (The Spirit of God)

~~God the eternal Spirit~~ (The eternal Spirit of God) was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son...⁴⁰

As you can see, we suggest switching around a couple of words in FB#4 and FB#5, and in FB#2, changing the focus to the Godhead. None of the inspired writings ever refer to the Son by the name “God the Son.” These changes would make our Fundamental Beliefs more easily defensible from the Scriptures.

We believe that the current wording of FB#2 is faulty because none of the associated Bible verses plainly teach that the *one God* is a unity of three Persons. Of the nine verses listed, the only one that uses the phrase “one God,” and identifies this *one God*, is Ephesians 4:4–6.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, *one God and Father* of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4–6)

Based on this scripture, a student participating in a fill-in-the-blank Bible study would answer a question about who is the one God of the Bible with the correct answer—the one God is the Father. Not one of the proof texts associated with FB#2 would

40. “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

lead a student to answer that the one God is a unity of three Persons.

All of our teachings should be plainly and clearly supported by Scripture.

In all the sermons and in all the Bible studies, let the people see that **on every point a plain “Thus saith the Lord”** is given for the faith and doctrines which we advocate.⁴¹

According to Fundamental Belief #1, the doctrines of our church are all to be founded upon a plain “Thus saith the Lord.”

The first fundamental belief says:

The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, *the definitive revealer of doctrines*, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.⁴²

Every fundamental belief that follows this first belief must be based upon a plain “Thus saith the Lord” rather than upon any human assumptions.

What is the difference between an *assumption* and a plain “Thus saith the Lord?”

Revelation 1:10 says: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day...” To declare that the Lord's Day is Sunday would be an assumption because there is not a clear Bible text that explicitly states that the Lord's Day is Sunday. But it is not an assumption to declare that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord because there is a clear Bible text that declares this to be true.

But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God....
(Exodus 20:10)

The church board voted to recommend to the church that we, Val and Eiji, both be put under censure for one year because we

41. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 68.

42. “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

will not affirm the wording of FB#2 that says, “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.”

This declaration that the *one God* is three persons is an assumption because, like the assumption of the Lord’s Day being Sunday, there is no plain “Thus saith the Lord” stating that three Persons make up one God. This concept is called the Trinity.

Adventists believe a Trinity of three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—**make up one God**.⁴³

The Christian religion is not a belief in three separate gods; rather, it is a belief in **one God who is manifested in three Persons** working in perfect harmony with one another.⁴⁴

God has revealed his nature as a Trinity, that is, three coeternal persons, who, though distinct, constitute **The one Divine Trinitarian being**.⁴⁵

We are not alone in declaring that this idea that three Persons make up one God is simply an assumption. Here is what our own Seventh-day Adventist scholars say:

The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one [*God*], is not explicitly stated but only **assumed**.⁴⁶

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is **assumed** as a fact by Bible writers.... Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.⁴⁷

Here is what non-Adventist scholars say:

It is fair to say that the Bible does not clearly teach the doctrine of the Trinity.... In fact, **there is not even one proof text**.⁴⁸

No responsible New Testament scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the

43. Local Seventh-day Adventist Church Website.

44. Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, 2nd Quarter 2006, p. 10.

45. *Reflections*, Biblical Research Institute Newsletter, July 2008.

46. Fernando L. Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, p. 138, “Doctrine of God.”

47. *Adventist Review*, July 30, 1981, Special Issue on Bible Doctrines, p. 4.

48. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 1999, p. 89.

earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer in the New Testament.⁴⁹

The Roman Catholic Church agrees with these Protestant scholars:

Scholars generally agree that there is no doctrine of the Trinity as such in either the Old Testament or the New Testament.⁵⁰

It should be abundantly clear to everyone that this Trinity concept—that three Persons make up one God—is indeed an assumption; there is no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. If we were members of a creedal denomination, then we could be disciplined if we did not affirm this assumption.

A creedal denomination gives its creedal statement the same weight of authority as the inspired word of God, even if the statement contains human assumptions. Fortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is *not* a creedal denomination. Therefore, no member is required to affirm the assumption that is found in FB#2.

In the Foreword to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, voted upon by the World Church in 1980, it states:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed....⁵¹

This is in full agreement with the Spirit of Prophecy:

*The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony.*⁵²

The simple reason that we cannot affirm the definition of the *one God* found in FB#2 is that there is not a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. To do otherwise would be to completely disregard the inspired counsel that we have been given.

49. Anthony T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, London, 1982, p. 87.

50. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard McBrien, general editor, 1995, “God,” p. 564.

51. “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

52. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 416.

Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should *demand* a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.⁵³

It is not safe to base our doctrines on human assumptions.

In this age of the world there is no safety in departing from a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” however wise and correct the **human assumption** may appear.... Of those who place their sophistry above a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” God says, “I will make their wisdom foolishness.”⁵⁴

They are to accept **no human assertion** which is not supported by a plain statement of the word of God.⁵⁵

It is not His plan that His people shall present something which **they have to suppose**, which is not taught in the Word.⁵⁶

However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and **he ought not to guess at anything**.⁵⁷

If we were to affirm FB#2, we would have to accept the **assumption** it presents, but we are told not to do this. *Human assertions, suppositions, assumptions, guessing*—all are forbidden when it comes to what we believe the word of God is teaching.

Here is the baptismal vow that we took when we joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

1. Do you believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit?

There are no assumptions in this baptismal vow. We still affirm the wording of this vow. We took a vow to believe in the three Persons of the Heavenly Trio.

53. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

54. Ellen G. White, Letter 138, 1899, Sept. 13, to S. M. I. Henry.

55. Ellen G. White, Letter 55, 1900, April 8, to J. E. and Emma White.

56. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 174.

57. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 598.

The Trinity teaching was not a part of the vows that we took. The term *Trinity* is associated with the assumption that one God is three Persons, which is not explicitly stated in the Inspired Writings. In contrast, the term *Heavenly Trio* simply refers to the three Persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The church board voted to recommend to the church that we both be put under censure for one year because we would not affirm the assumption of the Trinity. If the church board had respect for the religious liberty and freedom of conscience of the members of our church, they would never have voted to call for this business meeting to censure members regarding their conceptions of God. Each church member has the liberty to read the scriptures and form their conception of God from His inspired Word.

Let the Scriptures be read in simple faith, and *let each one form his conceptions of God from His inspired Word.*⁵⁸

Before voting your conscience, the following questions should be answered:

1. Because our conscience forbids us from affirming the assumption that three Persons make up one God, is it morally right for the church to censure us?
2. Would ratifying the church board's decision to discipline us place our local church at odds with the World Church, which has voted to accept no creed other than the Bible?

We accept not the authority of men's councils; but we go further back, even to the councils of heaven. "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." [Psalm 119:89.] We take a "Thus saith the Lord." Here we stand. A doctrine that has not a "Thus saith the Lord" may be accepted by the whole world, but that does not make it truth. We want truth, and we refuse to run any risk in accepting anything else.⁵⁹

58. Ellen G. White, Letter 214, 1903, Oct. 9, to P. T. Magan and E. A. Sutherland.

59. Ellen G. White, Ms. 39, 1893, May 22.

The Church Manual states: “The reasons for which members shall be subject to discipline are...,” and then it lists fourteen different reasons for which a member can be disciplined. Number one on the list of these items is:

1. Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the fundamental beliefs of the Church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.

Some have interpreted the *Church Manual's* first reason for discipline to mean that a member must, as a test of fellowship, affirm the precise wording of the official Fundamental Beliefs statement. If that were the case, the document itself, rather than the Bible, would become the standard, the creed, by which one's beliefs must be judged. When it comes to Fundamental Belief #2, nearly everyone acknowledges that the formulation is not presented in the Bible as such. It is merely a human attempt to synthesize what is believed to be the teaching of Scripture. This brings us to our question as to the appropriateness of requiring doctrinal conclusions that are not stated in the Bible. The question is, Is it proper to impose our synthesis on our members and discipline those who disagree with our reasoning, even though those members may accept everything the Bible actually says? Which should be the test, the Bible itself or the theologians' ideas of what the Bible means?

A church member must not be required to affirm an *assumption*, *assertion*, or a *supposition*. We have no problem affirming the biblical 1872 Fundamental Principle on the doctrine of God that our church held for many years and which was confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy.

- I - That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:7.

- II - That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist...⁶⁰

But that was written way back in 1872! Isn't truth progressive? Don't we need to move beyond the 19th century in our understanding of God? Yes, we agree that truth is progressive, but not a pin of the foundational principles which have been testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord is to be removed.

We are God's commandment-keeping people. For the last fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to tear down the **foundation principles** of our faith. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists to take the place of the truth which point by point has been testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But **the waymarks which have made us what we are are to be preserved**, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and the testimony of His Spirit. From the great system of truth as it has been presented by God's messengers, **not a pin is to be removed**.⁶¹

We are in harmony with what our church stated in its official Fundamental Principles document regarding the Heavenly Trio for the first one hundred years or so of its history. In light of the admonishment not to remove a pin of our foundational principles, why should a Seventh-day Adventist member who subscribes to the teachings held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church before 1980 now be considered a heretic?

Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove **the pillars of our faith** concerning the **sanctuary**, or concerning the **personality of God** or of Christ, are working as blind men.

60. "A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists," 1872, available at tinyurl.com/2sb7rc79, accessed 3/13/23.

61. Ellen G. White, Letter 232, 1903, Oct. 6, to John Harvey Kellogg.

They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor.⁶²

Notice that the truth about the personality of God is said to be as much a pillar of our faith as the truth of the sanctuary. In this statement, the word “personality” is used to indicate that God is a person. In other words, the truth about the personality of God—that God is a person—should be considered so foundational that an introduction of any theory that would contradict this pillar is analogous to removing an anchoring truth from God’s people and setting them adrift. This would be a great mistake.

We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that *contradicts* the special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of Scripture and pile it as proof around their asserted theories. This has been done over and over again during the past fifty years. And while the Scriptures are God’s Word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves **one pillar of the foundation** that God has sustained these fifty years, is **a great mistake**. He who makes such an application knows not the wonderful demonstration of the Holy Spirit that gave power and force to the past messages that have come to the people of God.⁶³

These clear statements caution us against making any changes that would alter the meaning of the pillars of our faith, such as was done in the wording of FB#2.

Does the current teaching concerning the personality of God harmonize with the pillars of our faith that God gave this church as our only true foundation? Do we think that here, on the borders of the heavenly Canaan, we can lay a new, stronger foundation than has been laid and attested to by God Himself?

62. Ellen G. White, Ms. 62, 1905, May 24. (In context, this statement is speaking in regard to the deceptions that Brother Ballenger was presenting back in 1905. We no longer have a living prophet amongst us to point out the dangers of present-day deceptions, so we must take what has been written regarding past deceptions, and if the shoe fits, wear it.)

63. Ellen G. White, Letter 329, 1905, Dec. 11, to J. A. Burden.

*No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.*⁶⁴

Where are the faithful watchmen that will stand firmly in defense of our principles? “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” May it not be said of us as it was said of Israel of old: “But they said, *We will not walk therein.* Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, *We will not hearken.*” (Jeremiah 6:16, 17)

Where are the watchmen that will maintain the Bible as our *only* standard of doctrines?

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.⁶⁵

Opinions of learned men and the voice of the majority are not to be considered as evidence that FB#2 is true, yet the charge against us is that we refuse to affirm the current voted doctrine of the church. The question is: Why aren't all of us demanding a plain “Thus saith the Lord” before affirming this doctrine? Show us a plainly-worded statement from the inspired sources alone that clearly states that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make up the one God, and we will gladly recant our position.

It was a plain “Thus saith the Lord” that gave us the foundational doctrines of our church on the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the

64. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 17.

65. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

personality of God. “When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after-suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained.”⁶⁶

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.⁶⁷

That which I have written is what the Lord has bidden me write. I have not been instructed to change that which I have sent out. I stand firm in the Adventist faith; for I have been warned in regard to the seducing sophistries that will seek for entrance among us as a people.... I present before our people the danger of being led astray as were the angels in the heavenly courts. **The straight line of truth presented to me when I was but a girl is just as clearly presented to me now.**⁶⁸

May God help us to be able to return to the old paths that God intended His remnant church to walk in—the line of truth that extends to the time when we shall enter the city of God.



The Outcome

After these two defenses were presented and the church members asked their questions in this business meeting, the vote was taken. The outcome of this vote, to the dismay of the pastor and local conference, was NOT to censure Val and Eiji.

66. Ellen G. White, Letter 329, 1905, Dec. 11, to J. A. Burden.

67. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, May 25, 1905.

68. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 26, 1905.

Chapter 4

THE SOLUTION

And so, what is this “*new* approach to fortify membership against the anti-Trinitarian movement”?

The typical approach is to provide the church member who is asking questions on the Trinity with seven or eight documents from the Biblical Research Institute (BRI). If a pastor has the book, *The Trinity* by Whidden, Moon, and Reeve in his library, he might loan that book to his church member. The 676-page book by Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology—God As Trinity*, might also be shared. As you will see in the link, there is no lack of material on the Trinity.⁶⁹

What is noticeably absent in all the BRI documents and in the books is a statement on why replacing the Bible’s definition of *one God* with FB#2’s definition is acceptable.

Bible: “But to us there is but *one God, the Father...*” (1 Cor. 8:6)

FB#2: “There is *one God: ...three coeternal Persons.*”

This is the elephant in the room that our theologians have been unwilling to address. This is the itch that needs scratching. And it is this very itch that the YouTube anti-Trinitarian preachers are willing to scratch. And when they do, many of our members will leave our church and join the anti-Trinitarian movement.

Typically, sharing all the Trinitarian material mentioned above with a church member already investigating this topic is like pouring gasoline on a fire. The reason why this is so is because the Trinity doctrine, as we have seen, is nowhere plainly stated in

69. <https://library.puc.edu/heritage/bib-SDAtrin.html>, accessed 7/26/2023.

Scripture. The more one tries to prove the Trinity, the more this becomes evident.

The common people find it hard to follow the theological reasoning of the scholars. They want plainly-stated truth, straight from God's Word.

How can we prevent our fellow members from embracing the anti-Trinitarian movement? How can we keep them from leaving the Seventh-day Adventist Church? An effective approach to lessen the influence of the anti-Trinitarians—the *new approach*—is to fortify our members with a message on the Godhead based solely on *explicit* statements from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The *new approach* is to embrace the following principle: “Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should *demand a plain* ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”⁷⁰

If we adhere to this principle, we may have a problem with insisting that members affirm that *one God* is three Persons which is, as we noted earlier, nowhere plainly stated in Scripture. Even though we have many books and articles written by our theologians explaining why they think that it is true that *one God* is three Persons, the fact remains that there is no clearly-worded statement of this concept found in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. Therefore, FB#2 remains a precept without explicit or “plain” biblical support, as our theologians readily acknowledge.

So, what are we to do? I'll tell you what I do. I present four sermons founded on the simple and plain reading of God's Word upon which our members can form their view of the *one God* of the Bible. You can find these four sermons in Appendices B, C, D, and E of this book.

By presenting our members with an understanding of the Bible's *one God* based on a clear “Thus saith the Lord,” we will fortify

70. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

them against YouTube anti-Trinitarian preachers who seek to attract disciples to themselves.

But that is the kicker—most church leaders are no more willing to surrender the concept that *one God* is three Persons than are the anti-Trinitarians willing to surrender the concept that the Son of God had a beginning. Even though our church leaders acknowledge that FB#2 is a conclusion reached by theological reasoning, they believe that the doctrine of the Trinity has to be adopted to protect the biblical view of God.

So even though the doctrine of the Trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God, it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God.⁷¹

But does the biblical view of God need such protection? By such a claim, are we not elevating human reason above the plain reading of God's word? When we allow human reasoning to take such precedence, how can we expect to achieve unity on truth?

This same controversy that is causing division and dissension in Val and Eiji's local church is being played out in many congregations around the world. There is a cause for what we see taking place.

Ellen White wrote:

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.⁷²

Those who are exalting human wisdom (theological reasoning) above God's Holy Word are bringing division and dissension into the church. None of us are immune from making this mistake, thereby bringing disunity into the ranks of Adventism.

71. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 89.

72. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124.

Let me appeal to church members who have decided to accept the plainly-worded biblical definition of *one God* and reject the definition that FB#2 provides. Do not leave the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's visible church on earth, and the Spirit of Prophecy counsels us not to pull away and start a new organization.

We cannot now enter into any new organization, for this would mean apostasy from the truth.⁷³

Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world, that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows his supreme regard.⁷⁴

The anti-Trinitarians will have persuasive arguments about why you should leave your local church and join them in their new organization. They will tell you that it is the Seventh-day Adventist denomination that entered into a new organization back in 1980 when FB#2 was voted in as one of our Fundamental Beliefs. Don't fall for this subtle reasoning. This denomination is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and will continue to be so until the end. The sermon entitled "The Vineyard Crisis," presented in Appendix A, offers biblical proof of this statement.

In this next statement, it is evident that the church Ellen White refers to is the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The divisions will be *in* the church. These two parties stay together in the field and grow up together until the harvest that takes place at the end. There is no indication of a new, purer organization forming, separate from the Seventh-day Adventist Church—God's remnant church where rebellion will continually be repeated until the close of time.

73. Ellen G. White, Ms. 129, 1905, Dec. 24.

74. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Sept. 5, 1893.

But divisions will come *in* the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up *together* for the harvest.⁷⁵

The history of the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram is being repeated, *and will be repeated till the close of time*. Who will be on the Lord's side? Who will be deceived, and in their turn become deceivers?⁷⁶

God loves the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, which He established to deliver the final message to this earth. We are not to pull away from this organization:

I greatly desire that every move that is made shall be in accordance with Christ's prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. *We must not pull apart*; for this is not pleasing to God.⁷⁷

Let not the professed people of God think it a privilege to separate from conference organization, that they may show their supposed efficiency. *This is entirely opposed to God's order.*⁷⁸

The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. **Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established.**⁷⁹

Yes, we need to strengthen the pillars God established at this movement's beginning. The pillar on the personality of God must be strengthened by removing all human assumptions. It is not strengthened by entering into any new organization. The anti-Trinitarian groups presently doing this are in apostasy from the truth and need to return to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination—God's remnant church.

75. Ellen G. White, Ms. 32, 1896, Dec. 6.

76. Ellen G. White, Letter 15, 1892, June 27.

77. Ellen G. White, Letter 114, 1906, Apr. 2, To the Brethren Assembled in Council at Washington.

78. Ellen G. White, Ms. 97, 1901, par. 31.

79. Ellen G. White, Ms. 129, 1905, Dec. 24.

Let me end this chapter with an appeal to both Trinitarians and non-Trinitarians. We could answer Christ's prayer for unity if we would set aside our right to cling to our assumptions. Trinitarians assume that one God is three Persons. They have no explicit, inspired statement that plainly declares this idea. Yes, they have Bible references that they think could suggest such a concept, but they have no plainly-worded, inspired statement from either the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy that declares this in unmistakable language.

Anti-Trinitarians assume that if Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, then there must have been a point in time when He came on the scene of action. They, too, have inspired references that could be viewed as supporting this assumption. But again, there is no plainly-worded, inspired statement that clearly states that the Son of God is not eternal.

On these two assumptions, Ellen White was neither a Trinitarian nor an anti-Trinitarian. She never said that God is three Persons, nor did she say that there was a time when the Son of God did not exist. Let's stay with the prophet of God on both of these points.

Men may get up scheme after scheme, and the enemy will seek to seduce souls from the truth, but all who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in these last days.⁸⁰

80. Ellen G. White, Letter 50, 1906.

Chapter 5

FOLLOWING PROCEDURE

As a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, Ken LeBrun early devoted his life to the service of God. After graduating with a theology degree from Southern Missionary College, he worked in West Virginia as a colporteur, a church-school teacher, and a Bible worker. Most of his career, however, was dedicated to pastoral ministry, with a three-year hiatus during which he taught at Weimar Institute.

Early in 2012, while pastoring in a conference in the North Pacific Union, Ken was invited by a pastoral colleague in a neighboring district to assist him in conducting a Sabbath afternoon presentation on the doctrine of the Trinity. He declined the invitation, explaining that he would not be able to present it the way the church currently teaches it. This alarmed the neighboring pastor, who, after some discussion, suggested that Ken invite five pastors to meet with him and evaluate his position. This he did. For three hours at the conference office, he presented the doctrine of God from history and from the inspired writings. The only recommendation the informal gathering of pastors could give was that he seek the input of the denomination's top theologians.

That began a five-year attempt to encourage church leaders to establish a formal process for reconsidering Fundamental Belief #2. Ken wrote to every religion professor he could reach, every level of denominational leadership, and every General Conference Executive Committee member.

In December of 2013, Elder Ramon Canals, at that time ministerial director of the North Pacific Union, invited Ken to speak at the 2013 NPUC Prophecy Symposium at the union office in Ridgefield, Washington. In attendance were pastors, ministerial

directors, administrators, and scholars from all over the Pacific Northwest. Ken was allotted the entire first day of the symposium, in which he covered the history and prophetic implications of the development and enforcement of the doctrine of the Trinity. The response of those in attendance was overwhelmingly positive and affirmative. The Spirit of the Lord was manifestly present.

Over the next few months, as Ken continued to send written appeals to denominational leaders, some returned a polite reply. But the usual response was silence. He did, however, get an encouraging response from one Adventist university professor:

Dear Ken,

I just re-read your analysis and proposal on the Godhead, our fundamental beliefs, and creeds.

I'm in full agreement with what you have written. This issue of the Trinity and the Godhead has been needlessly overshadowed by theological jargon, philosophical speculation, and unbiblical language. The church must reconsider this issue!

Thank you again for sharing your study. It has enriched my thinking.

But the scholar who provided more help than any other single person was Dr. Woodrow Whidden, well known for his definitive writing on the subject, who, staunchly upholding our Fundamental Beliefs, was happy to enter into a discussion. Through a year and a half of email dialog amounting to over 44,000 words, Dr. Whidden patiently corresponded with Ken. Not only did this familiarize Ken with the arguments commonly put forth in support of the Trinitarian formula, but it revealed to him how weak those arguments really are.

But these interactions were only private communications with individuals. The church officially was unresponsive to the repeated requests for dialog. But in September 2014, a spark of hope arrived in an email from the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference:

Dear Pastor LeBrun:

BRI received your letter from the office of Elder Mike Ryan, Vice President of the General Conference. BRI has looked over your letter and your suggestions, and if you would like your suggestions to go to the General Conference Executive Committee, you need to follow the steps in the document that I am sending you.

May you have a blessed day.

Administrative Assistant
Biblical Research Institute

She attached a November 1975 *Ministry* article entitled “Making Views Known,” by Gordon M. Hyde, reporting on the action of the 1970 Annual Council, outlining the procedure for requesting consideration of a theological matter.

So there actually is a procedure for getting a doctrinal subject on the table! Ken determined to follow it to the letter. The first step was to submit a request to the local conference president. So that is exactly what he did:

November 3, 2014

Dear Elder _____,

From a prayerful searching of the Scriptures, I am asking the church to re-study our doctrinal position as stated in Fundamental Belief #2. The Biblical Research Institute has informed me of the proper procedure for requesting doctrinal changes. I am providing you with a copy of the article they sent to me, “Making Views Known,” which explains the steps to be taken, beginning with a written submission to the local conference president. There you will see your part in this process.

I have briefly summarized the matter in the document “Reevaluating the Doctrine of the Trinity,” included in this packet. That paper clarifies the outcome that I am proposing and explains why it is necessary. I have purposely kept each point as concise as possible to provide a quick and readable

overview. For a deeper analysis, please refer to the presentations, correspondence, and documents found on the enclosed Resource Disc.

Thank you immensely for your help!

Sincerely,
Ken LeBrun

No response.

February 11, 2015

Dear Elder _____,

This is a follow-up to my November 3 letter requesting the implementation of a study process according to the provisions outlined in the “Making Views Known” article from the Biblical Research Institute. According to that document, the number two objective of this procedure is to ensure “all reasonable speed” in the process. One hundred days have elapsed since I submitted my request. I trust that we are making some progress.

As you will recall, I am asking the church to remove from our Fundamental Beliefs any explanation of God that is not expressly stated in the Bible. My formal proposal is found on page 5 of the document, “Reevaluating the Doctrine of the Trinity,” included in the November 3 packet.

I am enclosing an updated Resource Disc. It contains a complete record of my written correspondence to date and all the related papers. This disc replaces the one I sent you on November 3.

Thank you for your leadership in this conference and your commitment to the Lord’s service.

Sincerely your friend and colleague,
Ken LeBrun

By April, Ken had still heard nothing back from the administration. So he reached out again, this time to the Vice President for Administration:

April 2, 2015

Dear _____,

I would be interested in knowing the status of the request for altering our fundamental beliefs that I submitted last fall. Do you have any information about where that currently stands?

Thanks so much,
Ken LeBrun

When the conference declined to deal with it, the matter was referred to the North Pacific Union; and the Union also declined to deal with it. Ken then asked his conference president how to proceed. The president replied:

May 12, 2015

Thanks Ken,

We are not prepared to support your request and feel somewhat limited in our ability to appropriately critique your lengthy work.

All of us feel that someone of higher academic standing could be helpful in better knowing how to relate to your request. We are not theologians in comparison to many of our denominational leaders.

I am sorry to deny support for your request.

Sincerely,
[President]

So, what to do now? Ken wrote back to the BRI:

May 13, 2015

Dear Sister _____,

Last September you informed me of the proper procedure for seeking an evaluation of a theological view. I received from you at that time a PDF copy of the document, "Making Views Known" by Gordon M. Hyde, outlining the steps to be taken. In keeping with that policy, I submitted a paper

to my local conference president, outlining my views and requesting an evaluation. I shared with him the Hyde article so he would understand the procedure. Unfortunately, my local conference administration has told me that they will not participate in the process. Point number 11 in the procedure says that I can make an appeal to the next level of the church's organization. Upon that attempt, the North Pacific Union Conference administration told me that they will not review the case without a recommendation from my local conference. A subsequent attempt to obtain the cooperation of the local conference has also failed.

So, what should I do now? Do you have any recommendations for me?

Thank you sincerely for your help.
Ken LeBrun

She replied:

May 20, 2015

Dear Pastor LeBrun:

BRI does not have any additional recommendations for you. We are coming out with 3 Releases on the Trinity that you may want to read. They will be available starting at the GC Session in July 2015.

Administrative Assistant
Biblical Research Institute

But then, another door of hope opened when the conference president asked the newly elected ministerial director to look into Ken's request. In the communication that followed, Ken expressed his concern that if the conference will not evaluate theological matters that are properly submitted by a pastor, what do we expect our lay people to do, who have similar concerns? How can we tell them not to promote their views if there is no legitimate process available for those views to be evaluated by the church?

The ministerial director said he would work on that.

A couple of weeks later, the conference arranged for a retired biblical languages scholar to meet with Ken, to hear him out, and then advise the conference whether or not it would be worth the effort to engage in the formal process outlined by the BRI procedure. After meeting with Ken several times, he sent a report to the administration:

November 10, 2015

Hi _____,

Just a bit of update on studying with Ken. We have had several meetings at the conference office. I have seen five PowerPoint presentations. I have read lots of his correspondence with Whidden as well as Ken's proposal statement.

Though we do not have complete agreement, Ken's documentation is substantial mostly from a historical theological standpoint. His concern about our statement of belief on the Trinity, I believe has some merit especially since some members may face discipline for holding beliefs closer to those held by the SDA Church for more than 50 years.

Most of the concerns, I believe could be addressed by one or more of the following:

- A change in the wording in the fundamental beliefs statement that would clarify the divine heavenly trio in Bible and Spirit of Prophecy wording without reference to trinitarian terminology associated with non-Biblical concepts.
- An agreement on the part of our conference that Ken could explain his understanding to his church in such a way to diffuse aggressive tendency to discipline against those who may want to hold to a belief similar to those of most pioneers of the church.
- The formation of a statement that would uphold the eternal self-existent deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, using Biblical terms that the conference would approve as appropriate clarification to be considered in discipline and might serve as a seminal basis for further study and dialogue on the part of larger committees in our conference and NPUC.

- Grant Ken, study leave with salary and sponsorship to write a Master's thesis or Ph. D. dissertation with a view toward suggesting a change in our fundamental belief's statement.

In my view Ken is a faithful, careful scholar with a significant exposure to literature on the Godhead, both inside the SDA church and outside. He is conscientious about avoiding dissent and controversy. He may profit from greater depth in linguistics and systematic theology, as well as more dialogue with specialists in SDA church history and EGW hermeneutics. However, I believe he is working on a clarification that does not contradict our basic understanding of the Godhead, yet would be more useful in clarifying issues of conflicting beliefs among church members.

Best Regards,
[Scholar]

A couple of weeks later, he sent a second report:

November 27, 2015

Hi _____,

Ken sent me a CD of his correspondence with men at high levels of responsibility at Andrews University, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference and other organizations of significance.

He has worked diligently at sharing and asking for feedback. He has done significant work on his topic. Various ones have written back and praised his efforts, but so far I can see evidence that no one has really given him significant meaningful feedback with the exception of Whidden, who also seems to have faded out of the picture.

There is evidence that the doctrine of the Trinity needs more clarification than we have given it in the past. Ken wants to remain loyal to the church, yet he has perhaps more focus and interest in this topic than I have hereto before ever seen.

I don't foresee anyone in our conference or environs giving him the needed feedback and dialogue that he really needs for his level of work. There may be professors at Walla Walla that would

work with him, but the problem that has surfaced in most of his correspondence is that none can take the time to work with him in a significant way. I do not have Ken's expertise in historical theology, and I am not qualified to evaluate his conclusions in this area. I am impressed with his observations; however, I see little nuances here and there that could be subject to other interpretations.

When it comes to theology, Ken has a very strong, determined, anchored view of Biblical interpretation and Spirit of Prophecy interpretation that to use the word conservative does not describe it completely. I see it as somewhat limited in scope, but he sees deviation from accepting absolute phrases as a departure from the fundamentals of Biblical interpretation of the pioneers and EGW.

I am not qualified to judge him in this area, though his methodology differs from mine.

To explain this in detail would take quite some time.

I would certainly recommend that we get Ken off to graduate school under the direction of the best we have in the denomination. He is worthy of that. We should pull out the stops on financial support for him to do this. He has never been sponsored for studies at the seminary, so he should be eligible for at least that much. He may be able to pick up a stipend for pastoring a small church there around the seminary. He is worthy of support for a Th.D. The denomination needs his work in this area. He wants to work in a cooperative way. Perhaps the NPUC or GC would join somehow in sponsoring him for studies.

Blessings,
[Scholar]

The following week he wrote:

December 3, 2015

Hi _____,

At first I thought the studies with Ken would be fun and informative but I had no idea how extensive and weighty the

issues are. There are many resources and scholarly papers beyond what a committee put together in our conference would have the time and likely background to evaluate.

I understand that this is why you asked me to spend time with Ken. The problem is that after spending significant time and thought, prayer and analysis I can't say that I have a concrete recommendation for a committee beyond paid study leave for Ken.

It is like examining a flower only to discover the microscopic world of cells and atoms. It should be easy to back off and look at the flower; however when there is a basic difference of opinion among botanists and informed naturalists as to whether it is a flower or a weed it is more easy to get lost in the swirl of atoms.

In my opinion this issue is not a small cloud on the horizon. It is more than a strong wind. It has hurricane significance and may be more on the order of a hydrogen bomb.

I would be glad to meet with you, Ken and others to talk if you would like.

[Scholar]

And then four days later...

December 7, 2015

Hi _____,

I know you don't need this burden along with all the others, but God has given and will give you grace to bear and lead. I think Ken and I may be coming close to a proposed solution, temporary though it might be. That would be to recommend a possible statement to be voted by the conference to clarify issues of church discipline regarding teaching on the Godhead.

It has come to my attention that anti-Trinitarian dogma is pervasive, extensive, weighty, and with potential to devastate the church. I am aware that in other SDA churches in the _____ area anti-trinitarianism is threatening to divide. From what I

have read it is a worldwide movement and is infiltrating the SDA church.

One would think that all that is needed is to go by the church manual and discipline accordingly. However it is not that simple due to the fact that the anti-trinitarian people want to use only Bible and, in the SDA church, Spirit of Prophecy statements.

One would think, well that is simple, anti-trinitarianism means that people must be Arian and deny the eternal existence of Christ. That may be true in some cases, but others, and this is where Ken seems to be coming from, hold firm to fact that in Jesus there was life unborrowed and underived and other statements such as the three eternal persons of the heavenly trio. It is the words Trinity, and Three in One that brings concerns and questions.

The power to influence comes in the insistence that the words Trinity and the concept of three individual gods is a pagan concept, and not Biblical.

There is evidence that theologians have worked on this and are working on it. Some at the BRI have done work on it. A few SDA theologians have suggested that our wording could be better in the belief's statement, and there are those who are working on the belief's statements with possible recommendations for change.

Ken's concern is that in the meantime there are those who want to use the wording of Trinity, and Three in One, in the church manual to discipline those who want only to use Bible and Spirit of Prophecy words to describe the Godhead.

Ken and I are working on a suggested wording of a possible action on the part of the conference executive committee that might allow members to believe and teach basic SDA doctrine on the Biblical nature of God, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit yet express it in terms without using "Trinity" and "Trinitarian."

I am sending this to update you on our thinking at this time.

Blessings,
[Scholar]

In February of 2016, the conference vice president called Ken, inviting him to prepare a concise and succinct paper and email it to him in preparation for a preliminary meeting involving himself, the scholar, Ken, and the ministerial director. That meeting would be in anticipation of a larger committee. He named eight suggested individuals—two conference representatives, two professors from Walla Walla University, three pastors, and one retired worker—to make up the larger study committee. This was exciting. It was actually going to move ahead!

Ken was involved in an evangelistic campaign for the next several weeks, which delayed him in preparing the paper. But in the spring, he submitted a six-page discussion of the specific points he had been asked to address.

A few weeks later, conference officials invited Ken to meet with them. In this meeting, they informed him that no large committee would be formed. The administration had decided that the proposal was without merit, and they would not take it any further.

It became evident in this meeting that the real difference in their positions came down to the role of the *church* as the definer of doctrine (the conference brethren emphasized this view) versus the sufficiency of *Scripture* apart from theological interpretation to teach us the truth (emphasized by Ken).

As a consolation, the ministerial director agreed to bring up the subject at the October pastors' clusters for discussion, which he did. On October 16, the pastors met. The atmosphere was the usual joking and jesting. Ken had great anticipation of the pastors taking the time to discuss the issue. But everyone's mind was on the Annual Council vote to be taken that day regarding what to do about the organizational entities that were out of compliance with General Conference policies. (The pastors were hoping the GC Executive Committee would vote down any proposed disciplinary action.)

The last item on the pastors' cluster agenda was the Trinity discussion. The printed agenda contained a list of Jehovah's Witness-type objections—questions Ken was not asking. When the ministerial director brought up the topic, nobody wanted to waste their time on it. They wanted to go to lunch. So with a few negative comments about these offshoot non-Trinitarian groups, they decided not to discuss the subject and they all went to lunch.

What was there left to do? Ken had tried to follow the procedure outlined by the church. But at no level of the organizational structure would the church cooperate with its own prescribed plan. Finally, on November 15, 2016, he wrote to Elder Ted Wilson at the General Conference. In his letter, he reviewed the steps he had taken in attempting to obtain an official, meaningful evaluation of his research by the church. He pointed out to the president that the first stated objective in the BRI-produced procedure is "To demonstrate that the church will welcome the opportunity to examine 'new light.'" Then he said,

I am grateful that God's church welcomes that opportunity. Since it was the General Conference that created the procedure and its invitation, I am certain that the General Conference will honor it, including the provision for appeal.

Some might point out that the church has already evaluated anti-Trinitarian claims. And that is correct. I have read everything I can get my hands on that the church has published on this subject, including the three BRI booklets released in May 2015. My observation is that the church has adequately addressed such things as the divinity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and other related matters for which we *do* have a "Thus saith the Lord." But challenges to the specific theological formula that makes up the doctrine of the Trinity have not been sufficiently answered.

There is an assumption that the statement of one God in three Persons is the only way of explaining the Biblical data without doing injustice to the "Godhead." Yet, at the same time, scholars acknowledge that the required formula itself is never explicitly

mentioned in Scripture and cannot be rationally explained. They tell us to simply accept it by faith.

My study suggests that we would be better off not attempting to explain God with a man-made theological formula. I am proposing that we simply accept what the Bible says and leave it at that. The Bible's own stated explanation, surprisingly to some, does make rational sense. And if God had wanted us to know more than that, He would have told us.

It seems that the doctrine of the Trinity is to the Christian world what the theory of evolution is to the scientific world. Neither one is required by the data itself. And in fact, significant counterevidence confronts each. Yet they are held as inviolable dogma, and as such they are not to be questioned.

The reason I am asking the church to reconsider this is because many dedicated church members are facing church discipline for denying faith in the doctrine of the Trinity as required in Fundamental Belief #2. Cannot the church accept a little less specificity when it comes to a doctrinal position that we admit is not articulated in Scripture and is beyond our understanding?

Instead of resorting to apologetics and approaching this with a determined intent to defend our voted statement, I am asking the church to open-mindedly consider the possibility of a straightforward understanding of the biblical data. Perhaps a study commission could be established, not to refute, but to honestly evaluate, some of these currently unaddressed observations.

Thank you for your dedicated leadership during this perilous time in the history of God's church.

Sincerely and respectfully yours,
Pastor Ken LeBrun

On November 21, 2016, Ken received the following letter from the General Conference Office of the President:

Dear Brother Ken,

Thank you for your letter addressed to Pastor Ted Wilson. As Pastor Wilson is currently out of the country, I am responding to your letter on his behalf.

You have gone to a lot of trouble to carefully follow the steps you've been given from the Biblical Research Institute to present your paper. We're forwarding your letter to that department for their research....

May God continue to bless you.

With kind Christian regards,
Magdiel Pérez Schulz, Pastor, Assistant to the President
c: GC Biblical Research Institute

On May 16, 2017, Ken received a letter from the BRI.

Dear Brother Ken,

Thank you for your paper about the Trinity. We will take a close look at it, and if appropriate, we will pass it to the administration of the General Conference.

Blessings,
Elias Brasil de Souza, Director
Biblical Research Institute

It had been a long journey. But in the providence of God, Ken's research had finally made it to the Biblical Research Institute! Now all there was left to do was to pray that fair treatment would be given to the evidence. If the BRI saw light in it, they would make an appropriate recommendation to the General Conference. Perhaps a study commission would be authorized, with input from the field, to examine every point under consideration.

On August 10, Ken was able to speak with the new administrative assistant at the BRI and inquire about the status of his request. She said she knew the director had the paper, but she didn't know what the status was. He was out of the country, and she would ask him about it when he returned.

Ken called again on August 28. He was told that his paper was on the agenda for the next meeting of the director and his associates, scheduled for the last part of September. “You will probably get a response sometime in October,” the assistant said. Ken asked if they would deal with it in a single meeting or if there would be opportunity for further dialog. She said it could go either way. She told him he was welcome to send another email to the department, and she would forward it to the director. So that is what he did:

August 28, 2017

Dear Sister _____,

Thank you for speaking with me this morning on the phone. Learning a little more about the process and time frame helps me know better how to pray, which I am doing. I am hoping that the BRI personnel will agree that this is a matter deserving careful study by the denomination as a whole.

Thank you for your willingness to pass this additional communication on to the director for me.

What I would really like to see is that the GC Executive Committee would take an action at the Annual Council this year establishing a two-year study of Fundamental Belief #2 in all thirteen divisions of the world field, with an invitation for input from pastors and lay members. The rationale for this has to do with the current communication gap between administrators, theologians, pastors, and laity on this issue. The doctrine has come to us as a top-down directive in which theologians frame a certain wording, GC Session delegates vote it, church publications defend it, local church officers enforce it, and church members must accept it. But thousands of our members around the world would like to see the church reconsider that wording. Mainly because the doctrine as required is nowhere expressed in any Bible passage. And in all of Ellen White’s statements about “the heavenly trio,” “the eternal heavenly dignitaries,” “the three highest powers in heaven,” etc., she never articulates the Trinitarian formula that is now a test of fellowship in the church.

There is currently no forum for a church member to properly express his or her concerns about this, or to enter into any meaningful dialog on the subject with the church. The unfortunate consequence of closed or one-way communication channels is that people then resort to publishing their divergent views on the Internet and through literature, which they distribute indiscriminately. Local church leaders then react with disciplinary action. But the two sides are not open-mindedly listening to each other. I am sure that God wants His church to stand united on this. But genuine consensus can only be accomplished through open, two-way communication.

I do suggest that this discussion be limited to the direct content of Fundamental Belief #2. Nothing but confusion can result when people want to argue about matters that have not been revealed, such as the nature of the Holy Spirit and the nature of Christ's eternity. And so, as Dr. Donkor has correctly pointed out in *God in 3 Persons—in Theology*, p. 18, our Fundamental Belief statement does not elaborate on those things. So let's not waste our time on those points. But the doctrinal statement of the Trinity as it is expressed in Fundamental Belief #2, on the other hand, does deserve careful study because we are enforcing upon our members a definition of the "one God" that cannot be found in any single inspired passage.

You are familiar with the classic example: Matthew 27:5 says that Judas "went and hanged himself." And Luke 10:37 says, "Go, and do thou likewise." Piecing together a doctrine from a string of verses (in which each verse only provides a portion of the picture) can be dangerous. "A" plus "B" doesn't always equal "C." But that is what we have done in Fundamental Belief #2. I am simply requesting an open process of review with honest consideration of evidence. And I'd like to see the Bible itself—just as it reads—be the final arbiter of truth.

Thank you all so very much for your gracious consideration.

Please also consider the attached "Initial Observations on Fundamental Belief #2."

Together with you for a finished work,
Pastor Ken LeBrun

Finally, on October 11, 2017, the Biblical Research Institute issued its official response:

Dear Brother LeBrun,

The Biblical Research Institute has received your paper and due consideration was given to it. Your position about the Trinity, as you clearly show, contradicts the SDA Fundamental Belief No. 2, which expresses the Church's understanding of the Godhead according to Scripture. Despite your arguments to the contrary, BRI scholars maintain that our Church's current understanding of this important topic better expresses the biblical teaching.

In case you insist that your position is the right one, you are free to proceed through the proper channels. That is, you must first present your view to your local field (conference), which will evaluate and decide if there are enough reasons to move it to the next higher organizational level. However, as already said, the BRI scholars see no compelling arguments to depart from Fundamental Belief No. 2.

The BRI has produced some materials on this topic. I'm sending them to you so that you may want to explore further the Church's understanding of the biblical teaching on this matter.

Blessings,
Elias Brasil de Souza
BRI

And that was it. Not a single point that Ken had raised was addressed. Not a single argument was offered as to why the church's position was better. But the church had spoken. There was no higher human authority to which an appeal might be made.

Chapter 6

TELL IT TO THE CHURCH

After the Biblical Research Institute in 2017 rejected Ken's documents, there was no point in pressing things any farther with them. And so he set the matter aside, trusting everything to the providence of God.

God is leading out a people, not a few separate individuals here and there, one believing this thing, another that. Angels of God are doing the work committed to their trust. The third angel is leading out and purifying a people, and they should move with him unitedly. Some run ahead of the angels that are leading this people; but they have to retrace every step, and meekly follow no faster than the angels lead. I saw that the angels of God would lead His people no faster than they could receive and act upon the important truths that are communicated to them. But some restless spirits do not more than half do up their work. As the angel leads them, they get in haste for something new, and rush on without divine guidance, and thus bring confusion and discord into the ranks. They do not speak or act in harmony with the body.⁸¹

Harmony with the body is vital. God wishes for His people to move together. This is one reason for the counsel to receive "no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience."⁸² Not only because wisdom resides in the multitude of counselors, but also because God wants the brethren of experience to have the first opportunity to receive the light. Jesus instructed the healed leper to "say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded,

81. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 207.

82. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 293.

for a testimony unto them.” Mark 1:44. Jesus was trying to give every opportunity for the priests to accept the truth.

If there is a message that God wants His church to receive, He will indicate that fact through His providential workings.

If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine’s flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty.⁸³

The BRI had not pointed out a single problem, from a biblical perspective, with the material Ken had submitted to them. The only basis they gave for rejecting it was that it “contradicts the SDA Fundamental Belief No. 2.” It had become evident that the Fundamental Belief statement, not the Bible, was the standard by which church leadership was testing the material submitted to them.

What made this situation especially difficult was that there was no provision, on any level of church organization, for any meaningful dialog or discussion of the topic. It was a closed subject. Even in a Sabbath School class, to raise any questions about it that might challenge the official position, would be frowned upon as divisive and disloyal.⁸⁴

After receiving the BRI statement, Ken kept the matter to himself, watching and waiting for God to indicate the next step. Years passed. More and more frequently, he would hear reports of church members in other areas being prohibited from holding church office because they would not affirm Fundamental Belief #2. All over the country, and throughout the world field, the same story was repeating itself. By early 2022, as he observed the confusion that many were experiencing, Ken began to think about his responsibility as a minister to be a watchman unto the house of Israel.

83. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 206.

84. The solution to this problem is addressed in the compilation, “How to Handle Controverted Points.” tinyurl.com/yc2r2mb9

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. (Isaiah 56:10)

These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God.⁸⁵

If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.⁸⁶

To agitate when no one cared would only stir up controversy. But to remain silent when honest people were looking for answers would be treachery. Silence on his part would indicate tacit agreement with a doctrinal statement that is upheld merely by ecclesiastical pronouncement. To perpetuate that impression would be cowardly and dishonest.

Ken knew there was only one thing left that he could do. When Jesus said in Matthew 18:17, “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church,” by “church,” Jesus meant the entire body of believers.⁸⁷

“The word of God is not bound.” 2 Timothy 2:9. It is not constrained or delimited by human councils. Events were indicating that it was only right to let the members of the body “prove all things” that they might “hold fast that which is good.” It was time to allow the common people an opportunity to receive the word with all readiness of mind, and search the Scriptures daily, whether those things are so.

Neither the General Conference, through its Biblical Research Institute, nor any other organizational level of the denomination, had shown any willingness to formally interact with any of the points Ken had sent them over the years. So he decided to compile

85. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 211.

86. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 280.

87. See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 441.

several of the papers he had submitted to the scholars and publish them in a book that could be given to the people. The book's title would be *Not a Mystery: Understanding God*. Its main point would be that God Himself has plainly told us, through His prophets, everything He requires us to know about Himself. Instead of engaging in fanciful theological reasoning, we simply need to accept and believe what He has plainly said about Himself. Ten thousand copies of the book were arranged to be printed.

On July 22, 2022, Ken received word that the press had finished printing the books a month before their estimated completion date. He arranged for four boxes to be sent to him by UPS ahead of the full freight shipment to the warehouse. When the first boxes arrived, Ken took out the first book and mailed it to his conference president. He wanted the president to have the most favorable opportunity of receiving it objectively.

When the president received the book, he contacted the Biblical Research Institute and asked them to evaluate it. A 90-minute Zoom conference was arranged between Ken and five scholars from the BRI. For the first 20 minutes, Ken presented a synopsis of the book. For the rest of the time, the theologians asked him questions about his position. It was evident from their questions that most of the men had not read the book. The meeting format was challenging. A scholar would ask five questions in a row, without giving Ken time to answer each one as it came. Ken then provided a biblical answer to each question he could recall, but he couldn't remember all the questions that had been asked. Then the next scholar would ask his list of questions. Ken felt it would have been more productive if they could have discussed one point at a time.

A few days later, the BRI sent their completed report to the conference president. It was not an objective evaluation acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses. In fact, it was very limited in its scope. The BRI director focused only on fourteen unfavorable impressions the committee had regarding the material.

In Point number 6, they said, “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.” It was evident that the official Fundamental Beliefs statement was being used as our denomination’s creed. In his conclusion, the director said, “It is clear that further discussions would not serve any useful purpose.” The BRI was done with it. They had no desire for any additional interaction on the subject.

The ministerial director forwarded the BRI letter to Ken on a Thursday evening and asked him to have a written response prepared by Sunday afternoon. Ken prepared a 7-page response, addressing each of the fourteen points. On Sunday, he gave his response to the ministerial director. Three days later, the conference vice president sent a message instructing Ken to report to the conference office the following afternoon. When Ken arrived the next day, he was ushered into a room with the president and vice president. After a few preliminary words, the president handed him an envelope containing the following letter:

September 22, 2022

Dear Kenneth:

On September 22, 2022, the Conference Executive Committee voted to terminate your employment, effective immediately.

The Executive Committee also voted the following:

1. To recommend the revocation of your ministerial ordination to the North Pacific Union Conference; and
2. To advise the pastors, head elders and school principals / lead teachers to not invite you to speak or teach at any Seventh-day Adventist church or school within the conference.

We are available to answer any questions that you may have regard [*sic*] this decision.

Sincerely,

President

Vice President for Administration

A Conference official would take the pulpit that Sabbath in each of Ken's churches and announce that he had been fired. Each of Ken's Bible studies in the community was to be turned over to someone else. He was to turn in his church keys within the next few days. And he was encouraged to begin worshiping in another church in the valley, so as to limit his influence among his former members. On November 9, the North Pacific Union Executive Committee met and formally revoked Ken's ordination.



After Val and Eiji's church voted not to censure them, they were told by the conference ministerial director to resign from leadership positions; and if they did not resign, their 171-member church would be reduced to company status and the conference executive committee would become the board and take full control of their church. It was just about that time that Pastor Ken LeBrun, in the same conference, published his book, *Not A Mystery*, presenting the same general understanding that Val and Eiji hold on the doctrine of God. It was then that the president of the conference reached out to the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) for help. The BRI agreed to meet with Val and Ken via Zoom. Five scholars met with Pastor LeBrun for an hour and a half, as mentioned above, and then they met with Val for the same amount of time. The BRI wrote a report and sent it to the conference president. The conference leadership asked both Val and Pastor LeBrun to write a response to this BRI report. You can read this correspondence at the following link: tinyurl.com/2k54v8sr

Chapter 7

MY OWN STORY

When I started writing this book, telling the stories of Val, Eiji, and Elder Ken LeBrun, I had no idea that I would have a story of my own to tell. My story will be told through the letters I wrote to my church family and denominational leadership.

But first, let me share with you my call to the ministry. Before I was born, my mother dedicated me to this path. She promised God that if He gave her a son, she would commit him to work for the Lord and call his name John. For the first twenty years of marriage, I resisted this calling. I was offered complete financial support for my family with all tuition expenses paid if I would go to any Adventist university to prepare for pastoral work. On another occasion, I was again invited to join the ministry. I turned down these offers. I did not want to become a pastor. But when the president of the Upper Columbia Conference, Elder Jere Patzer, extended his invitation—contrary to all reason (I was just graduating from Eastern Washington University with a degree in Community Health Education)—I could no longer run from God’s call. I served as a pastor in our denomination for thirty years and nine days.

In my final district, when the conference was down several pastors because of our dire financial situation, I provided pastoral support for ten churches. Reaching one of these churches took my wife and me a little over four hours in travel time, leaving very early on Sabbath morning. Often the roads were covered with compact snow and ice. Talk to any one of these ten churches; talk to the thirteen congregations I have pastored in former districts; talk to the five churches that I raised up in Ukraine; talk to the church

in Ireland, or to the churches in Mexico, Alaska, Nicaragua, Honduras, or Grand Cayman where I have held evangelistic or revival series and see if anyone ever recalls me giving one heretical, dissident message since becoming an ordained pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

In 1990, God gave me a message that I have shared around the world that teaches us to be faithful to our denomination. This message is entitled “The Vineyard Crisis,” which you can read in Appendix A of this book.

Now, here is my story:



October 9, 2022

Dear Friends,

Sharon and I want to share some information that might help you better understand what we have just experienced in our district.

On September 22, 2022, after thirty-two years of denominational service, Pastor Ken LeBrun, who was pastoring a three-church district in his conference, was involuntarily terminated from employment. His ministerial credentials were canceled, and it was recommended to the North Pacific Union Conference that his ordination to the gospel ministry be revoked. He is forbidden to teach or preach in any denominationally-owned facility in his local conference. The reason for this action is because he does not accept the scholar’s assumptions that one God is three Persons as Fundamental Belief #2 teaches. Pastor LeBrun recently wrote a book, *Not A Mystery*, which supports our denomination’s original pillar on the doctrine of God that our church held until 1980.

On October 5, 2022, after thirty years of ministerial service, I, too, was fired and have been forbidden to preach or teach in any church in our conference. Here is my story. When I noticed that

the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) mentioned my name in a letter written to the president of another conference in the NPUC (tinyurl.com/2k54v8sr page 11), I knew that this letter might make its way to our conference. So, I applied for retirement, which was to take place on April 1, 2023.

Indeed, that BRI letter did end up in the hands of my conference president, and I was called in to meet with the administration on October 4. In essence, here is what took place.

They questioned me about my view on the doctrine of God. I let them know that I believed that the one Godhead of the Bible is composed of the eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Holy Spirit. I assured them that this heavenly trio was one in purpose, in mind, and in character.

This was not a sufficient answer for them. Essentially, they were requiring me to say these five words—“one God is three Persons.” They were pressuring me to affirm the assumption of the Trinity doctrine as stated in Fundamental Belief #2 (FB#2). If I would not affirm this statement, then I would be fired and would not be allowed to retire with dignity. I told the conference president that if he could show me where this was plainly stated in the inspired writings, then I would gladly affirm FB#2. Of course, he could not do that because this teaching is nowhere plainly stated in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. But that didn’t seem to matter to them. They were requiring unquestioning compliance with this unbiblical position or face punishment.

Think about this: the time is soon coming when each one of us will be required to say these five words—“the Lord’s Day is Sunday.” If we refuse to say these five words, we will not be allowed to buy or sell.

I was at this time a vice-president of the Northwest Religious Liberty Association. I had served for six years as a First Amendment/religious liberty lobbyist for the NPUC to the State

Legislature here at the Capital building. I have never had my own liberty of conscience so challenged as I had that day.

What does it feel like to be fired from the ministry over the charge of heresy? The following Ellen White dream best expresses our feelings.

That night I dreamed that I was in Battle Creek looking out from the side glass at the door and saw a company marching up to the house, two and two. They looked stern and determined. I knew them well and turned to open the parlor door to receive them, but thought I would look again. The scene was changed. The company now presented the appearance of a Catholic procession. One bore in his hand a cross, another a reed. And as they approached, the one carrying a reed made a circle around the house, saying three times: 'This house is proscribed. The goods must be confiscated. They have spoken against our holy order.' Terror seized me, and I ran through the house, out of the north door, and found myself in the midst of a company, some of whom I knew, but I dared not speak a word to them for fear of being betrayed. I tried to seek a retired spot where I might weep and pray without meeting eager, inquisitive eyes wherever I turned. I repeated frequently: 'If I could only understand this! If they will tell me what I have said or what I have done!' I wept and prayed much as I saw our goods confiscated. I tried to read sympathy or pity for me in the looks of those around me, and marked the countenances of several whom I thought would speak to me and comfort me if they did not fear that they would be observed by others. I made one attempt to escape from the crowd, but seeing that I was watched, I concealed my intentions. I commenced weeping aloud, and saying: 'If they would only tell me what I have done or what I have said!' My husband, who was sleeping in a bed in the same room, heard me weeping aloud and awoke me. My pillow was wet with tears, and a sad depression of spirits was upon me.⁸⁸

We know by experience what this dream felt like to Ellen White. In this dream, Ellen White did not know what she had done or said that was against the "holy order" (leadership?) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In her day, it was not considered heresy

88. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 577, 578.

not to affirm the Trinity doctrine. In fact, affirming the Trinity doctrine was considered heresy. Here is what Elder J. N. Andrews wrote in 1885:

The cause of the fall of Babylon is thus stated: “she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Her fornication was her unlawful union with the kings of the earth. The wine of this, is that with which the church has intoxicated the nations of the earth. There is but one thing that this can refer to, viz., false doctrine. This harlot, in consequence of her unlawful union with the powers of earth, has corrupted the pure truths of the Bible, and with the wine of her false doctrine, has intoxicated the nations. A few instances of her corruption of the truths of the Bible must suffice:

1. The doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul...
2. The doctrine of the Trinity which was established in the church by the council of Nice, a. d. 325. **This doctrine destroys the personality of God, and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The infamous measures by which it was forced upon the church**, which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.⁸⁹

J. N. Andrews continues listing a total of nine false doctrines that constitute the wine of Babylon, including the corruption of the ordinance of baptism and the change of the fourth commandment.

Andrews was not a minor voice in the church. Ellen White called John Andrews “the ablest man in our ranks.” He was an excellent scholar and a prolific writer. As a competent theologian, he could repeat the entire New Testament from memory, knowing most of the Old Testament as well. On top of all this, Elder Andrews could speak at least seven languages!⁹⁰

“Infamous measures”? In years gone by, the church burnt thousands of men and women at the stake for failing to affirm the exact wording of their Trinity doctrine. Today the church

89. J. N. Andrews, *The Three Angels of Revelation 14:6-12*, p. 54.

90. <https://whiteestate.org/pioneer/andrews.asp>

will disfellowship a member or fire a faithful pastor and even revoke his ordination just because he cannot affirm a doctrine that destroys the personality of God and His Son. What would Ellen White and her fellow pioneers have to say about what a local SDA conference did to one of their pastors? Perhaps they would say:

Shall idols be smuggled in? Shall false principles and false precepts be brought into the sanctuary? Shall antichrist be respected? Shall the true doctrines and principles given us by God, which have made us what we are, be ignored?... **These things have gone as far as they should without someone protesting against them in plain words. The Lord's time to set things in order has fully come.**⁹¹

Elder Andrews said that the Trinity doctrine destroys the personality of God and his Son. How does it do that? I explain that in a document where I review Ty Gibson's book, *The Sonship of Christ* (see Appendix F).

Back in the Dark Ages, the Catholic Church punished those who challenged the legitimacy of their primary creedal statement of belief—the Holy Trinity doctrine. This creedal statement had been voted in by the councils of the church, and to speak against it disrupted the unity of the church. The Catholic Church claims that the Trinity doctrine is central to all they teach.

The mystery of the trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the church.⁹²

So you can understand why it was such a serious issue for anyone to question the legitimacy of this doctrine.

The Catholic Church cannot defend this doctrine from the Bible as they freely admit:

Scholars generally agree that there is **no doctrine of the Trinity as such in either the Old Testament or the New Testament.**⁹³

91. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 448.

92. *Handbook for Today's Catholic*, p. 11.

93. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard McBrien, general editor, 1995, "God," p. 564.

Even our own Seventh-day Adventist scholars admit that this idea that three Persons make up one God is not plainly stated in the Bible and is simply an **assumption**:

The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one [God], is **not explicitly stated** but only **assumed**.⁹⁴

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is **assumed** as a fact by Bible writers.... Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.⁹⁵

Reread these revealing statements from the scholars. They all agree that the Trinity doctrine, the idea that God is three Persons, has no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church states that we have no other creed than the Bible. Though it is perfectly acceptable to document what we believe the Bible teaches on each of our doctrines, such as we do in the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, unfortunately, in Fundamental Belief #2, we find a man-made phrase that expresses the Trinity doctrine, “*There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.*” In other words, *One God is three Persons*. This is a man-made phrase, as admitted to by the scholars (noted in the statements above). The Bible says that one God is one Person—the Father (1 Cor. 8:6). If we enforce a man-made phrase, we thereby form a non-biblical creed and go down the steps of apostasy that J. N. Loughborough wrote about.

The Five Steps of Apostasy by J. N. Loughborough

1. Forming a creed, **expressing their faith in man-made phrases** instead of adhering to the word of the Lord.⁹⁶

The conference administration has expressed their faith in the man-made phrase stated in Fundamental Belief #2.

94. Fernando L. Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, p. 138, “Doctrine of God.”

95. *Adventist Review*, July 30, 1981, Special Issue on Bible Doctrines, p. 4.

96. J. N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order, and Discipline*, p. 76, par. 2.

2. Making that man-made creed a test of fellowship, and denouncing all as heretics who would not assent to the **exact wording** of their creeds.⁹⁷

The conference administration requires all pastors to assent to the exact, man-made wording of Fundamental Belief #2.

3. Making the creed a rule by which all heretics must be tried. Many were thus declared sinners whose faith was more in harmony with the direct statements of the Bible than that of those who decreed against them.⁹⁸

The conference administration is treating Fundamental Belief #2 as a creed and is making this creed a rule by which pastors must be tried for heresy.

4. Constituting themselves a tribunal for the trial of heretics, and excluding from their fellowship all who would not assent to their creeds. Not content to debar such from church privileges in this world, they declared them subjects for the lake of fire.⁹⁹

The conference administration has called upon the conference Board of Directors to constitute themselves into a tribunal for the trial of the heretic, John Witcombe.

5. Having thus kindled a hatred in their own hearts against all who did not conform to their creeds, they next invoked and obtained the aid of the civil power to torture, and kill with sword, with hunger, with flame, and with beasts of the earth, those whom they had declared unfit to remain in the world.¹⁰⁰

This is what the Catholic Church did during the Dark Ages. The conference Board of Directors does not have hatred in their hearts for anyone, and they would never seek the aid of civil power to punish a pastor. The most they would do to fulfill this fifth step would be to fire a pastor for heresy, which they did to me on October 5, 2022.

97. *Ibid.*, par. 3.

98. *Ibid.*, par. 4.

99. *Ibid.*, par. 5.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 77, par 1.

In closing, I want to say to our church that the actions of our conference have indeed wounded Sharon and me, but we are not discouraged in the least. Every time the Catholic Church burnt a heretic because he would not affirm the exact wording of their Trinity doctrine, people investigated what it was about the Trinity that a martyr would rather die than affirm this doctrine. If our conference's treatment of us will cause even one person to gain a true knowledge of the one God of heaven, then it is worth it all.

God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God's means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber.¹⁰¹

As you will notice from the following references, Ellen White wrote extensively on the personality of God. In the plain reading of the text, you will not find even a hint of the concept of a Triune God who is composed of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the reason for this absence is because this view of God is not found in the Bible. My understanding of the doctrine of God is clearly presented in the following articles and chapters of the Spirit of Prophecy.

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

101. Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 33, par. 2.

There is not a shadow of difference between what I believe and what Ellen White wrote and believed. For the entirety of my pastoral ministry (30 years), I have affirmed the pre-1980 official fundamental statements on the doctrine of the Godhead. I have never been able to conscientiously affirm Fundamental Belief #2, added in 1980, which brought in the concept that *one God is three Persons*, because it has no plainly-worded “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

John & Sharon Witcombe
pastorjcw@gmail.com

PS. You can download the book, *Not A Mystery*, as a PDF or Kindle at my website: prophecywaymarks.com



October 22, 2022

Conference President

Dear Elder _____,

On October 5, the conference Board of Directors voted to terminate me from the ministry. As of yet, no written statement has been provided to me, explaining exactly why I was fired after thirty years of faithful service to our church. At our meeting on October 4, you were holding in your hand the 27-page BRI Compilation (tinyurl.com/2k54v8sr), and you asked me if I still affirmed what my brother-in-law, Val Ramos, and Pastor Ken LeBrun had written to the BRI. In this correspondence, they question the legitimacy of the scholars' assumption that *one God is three Persons*, as stated in Fundamental Belief #2. Do you really believe that my affirmation of their right to question this theological assumption is a legitimate reason for being terminated?

Because there was nothing Val and Ken had written that was contrary to the inspired writings, I affirmed their writings. And

because of that affirmation, I am considered to be in apostasy and thus required immediate termination.

I don't believe that I am an apostate for the following reasons. First of all, here is what I believe regarding the doctrine of God. I believe that "there are three living Persons of the Heavenly Trio"¹⁰² and that each Person is fully God and eternal. I believe nothing different from what Ellen White believed and taught regarding the doctrine of God. I affirm all the official statements on the doctrine of God from when they were first written out in 1872 up through 1979. In 1980, the church voted to include the Trinity doctrine as Fundamental Belief #2 (FB#2). My conscience does not allow me to affirm the teaching that *one God is three Persons* because of what God said through His prophet, Ellen White, in *The Great Controversy*, page 595:

Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.¹⁰³

God is telling us here that we are not to accept any doctrine or precept that is not **explicitly stated** in the inspired writings.

Our Seventh-day Adventist scholars tell us that there is no plain or explicit "Thus saith the Lord" in support of the Trinity doctrine:

The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one [God], is **not explicitly stated** but only **assumed**.¹⁰⁴

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is **assumed** as a fact by Bible writers.... Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.¹⁰⁵

The role of the Trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, **nor is there any clear statement of the idea**. But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept

102. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 615.

103. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

104. Fernando L. Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, p. 138, "Doctrine of God."

105. *Adventist Review*, July 30, 1981, Special Issue on Bible Doctrines, p. 4.

represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. **So even though the doctrine of the Trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God**, it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God.¹⁰⁶

The three Persons, one God paradox is one of the great mysteries of the Bible, and **is beyond what has been fully revealed in the Scriptures.**¹⁰⁷

We need to point out, too, that apart from this passage, there are other passages, statements based on Greek manuscripts which are not disputed, that support the Trinity. To cite a clear example: Matthew 28:19, "...baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." **But, even this passage from Matthew does not state that they are one—this was only comprehended in the fourth century.** Thus, we may affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, even if **it is a developed understanding based on texts that do not state so explicitly.**¹⁰⁸

No text of Scripture specifically says that God is three Persons: but **theological reasoning** on the basis of biblical principles leads to that conclusion.¹⁰⁹

Non-Adventist Protestant scholars agree:

It is fair to say that the Bible does not clearly teach the doctrine of the Trinity... In fact, **there is not even one proof text.**¹¹⁰

No responsible New Testament scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer in the New Testament.¹¹¹

The Roman Catholic Church agrees with these Protestant scholars:

106. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 89.

107. Dan Augsburg, "The 'Eternal' Three & 'The LORD our God, the LORD is one!' A Bible Study on the Eternal Godhead," p. 22.

108. W. Larry Richards, NT Department, Andrews University, "1 John 5:7–8: Is the 'Trinity' Found in These Verses? Issue: The Johannine Comma," p. 5.

109. Kwabena Donkor, *God in 3 Persons—in Theology*, Biblical Research Institute Release—9, May 2015, p. 20.

110. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 1999, p. 89.

111. Anthony T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, 1982, p. 87.

Scholars generally agree that there is **no doctrine of the Trinity as such in either the Old Testament or the New Testament.**¹¹²

It appears to me that the conference terminated my employment because I refused to go against God's directives conveyed in GC 595. I feel like the church has punished me for holding to this conscientious conviction, which I have consistently maintained over the past thirty years of ministry. A statement from the highest church administrator, Elder Neal Wilson, assured me that I would not be punished if I could not affirm the exact wording of Fundamental Belief #2. Here is that statement, made by the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the 1980 General Conference Session before they voted on FB#2:

They believe it is being prepared as a **club to batter someone over the head**, to try to get people into a narrow concept of theology, not leaving any opportunity for individual interpretation of prophecy, or any individual views with respect to theology or certain areas of doctrine. This also is unfortunate, because this never has been and is **not the intention** of any study that has been given to the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs. Some academicians, theologians, and others have expressed the fear that this statement was being developed **so that the church could confront them with a checklist** to determine whether **they should be disqualified from teaching** in one of our institutions of higher education. **It is very, very tragic when these kinds of rumors begin to develop.**¹¹³

This new Fundamental Belief, FB#2, should not be used as a club to "batter someone over the head." FB#2 should not be used as a part of a checklist to determine whether an employee of the conference or any officer of a local church is qualified to teach. This assurance of the church to not batter members over the head with FB#2, made by the General Conference President while in a General Conference session, has been dishonored by the leadership of our church.

112. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard McBrien, general editor, 1995, "God," p. 564.

113. Fifty-third General Conference Session, 4/21/1980, pp. 8, 9.

I believe that it is important for someone, perhaps even you, as the president of the conference, to identify the heretical views put forth in what Val and Ken wrote to the BRI, seeing that it was their correspondence, which I refused to condemn, that led to my termination.

The BRI could not identify any heresy in their 90-minute interviews with Val and Ken, and yet they wrote the following in their letter of response:

We appealed to our brothers to reexamine their view 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.*¹¹⁴

It may have been this very paragraph that influenced these two conferences to each fire one of their pastors (John Witcombe and Ken LeBrun) and, as in the case of at least one church in Ken's conference, to harass concerned members by requiring them to sign a statement that they affirm Fundamental Belief #2 before they can serve in any capacity in the local church.¹¹⁵

Does failing to affirm the theological assumptions in FB#2 qualify to make someone a heretical apostate who deserves immediate termination? Many church members and I don't think so.

The non-profit corporation, Prophecy Waymarks Publications, of which I am a board member, voted to publish Ken LeBrun's book, *Not A Mystery* (ProphecyWaymarks.com). This book supports the scholars' statements that declare that the Trinity doctrine is not plainly taught in the Bible and presents Ellen White's view regarding the doctrine of God. This book gives support to all those in our church who have chosen to obey the counsel given to us by God in GC 595.

114. Point # 6 in the BRI's official response (tinyurl.com/2k54v8sr page 14).

115. Letter from the president and ministerial director of the conference to the church nominating committee and church board, Oct. 4, 2022. tinyurl.com/bddn3n6a

If our denomination is going to punish church members who are simply obeying the directives of GC 595, they need to clearly explain why it is okay to accept a doctrine that the scholars declare has no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. They need to explain what GC 595 actually means if it does not mean what it so plainly states. Our church members need to hear from leadership how it is that our church administrators’ understanding of GC 595 requires them to enforce upon employees, by threats of punishment, belief in a doctrine that has no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. Our church members need to understand why the church is disfellowshipping members and firing pastors who are standing up for the plainly-worded instruction recorded in GC 595.

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.**¹¹⁶

Truly, nothing can be more plainly stated than what is taught in this statement. It doesn’t matter if the “voice of the majority” or, as the BRI put it, “the consensus of the world church” voted in 1980 to include the Trinity doctrine in our Fundamental Beliefs; the Trinity doctrine is based upon an opinion (assumption) of learned men rather than upon a plain “Thus saith the Lord” and therefore, according to GC 595, should not be embraced by any member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And 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 theologians’ hermeneutical parsing of the text. It is a clear, straightforward inspired explanation from the Lord on how we

116. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

should understand Him. For example, the Bible plainly states that the *one God is the Father* (1 Cor. 8:6). In other words, *one God is one Person*. That is a precept supported by a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” The precept, *one God is three Persons*, is acknowledged to be an assumption made by scholars. It has no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. The Word of God, through His prophesess, forbids me, along with every Seventh-day Adventist member who believes in the inspired writings of Ellen White, from accepting this precept.

I sincerely request that you respond, in writing, explaining why you fired a faithful pastor for believing that he must obey the directives of God rather than the directives of man (Acts 5:29). You have directed me to affirm a doctrine that, even though it has been affirmed by the “voice of the majority,” is still acknowledged to be founded upon the opinions or assumptions of learned men. God has directed me not to accept any doctrine or precept that is not plainly or explicitly stated in the inspired writings. I know I am repeating myself, but I earnestly want you to see the problem here. Church members around the world need a clear explanation for your recent action in terminating a pastor who was simply seeking to be faithful to the instructions of God.

Elder _____, let me summarize this issue for you. Carefully reread the nine statements from the scholars that I have listed above. Their united testimony is that the Trinity doctrine does not have a plain or explicit “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

Now, carefully reread GC 595. God is telling us that we are not to accept any doctrine or precept that does not have a plain or explicit “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

You have three choices:

1. You can throw the scholars under the bus and declare that they don't know what they are talking about. You can declare that the precept that states *one God is three Persons* is explicitly taught and then provide the Bible verse that plainly states this idea.

2. You can throw Ellen White and her GC 595 statement under the bus.

3. Or, you can believe the united testimony of the scholars along with the testimony of the Spirit of God (GC 595), which would then logically require you to throw the Trinity doctrine under the bus.

It is this principle, “the Bible, and the Bible only,” which is clearly articulated and expanded upon in GC 595, that requires us to reject the doctrine of purgatory, the doctrine of baptism by sprinkling, and the doctrine of Sunday sacredness. All three of these doctrines do not have a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in their support. The Trinity doctrine suffers from the same malady. This is why our church, from its very inception, did not embrace purgatory, sprinkling, Sunday sacredness, or the Trinity doctrine as foundational pillars of God’s remnant church movement.

Praying that you will make the right choice,

John Witcombe

cc: Elder Ted Wilson, General Conference President
Elder Ramon Canals, GC Ministerial Director
Elder César De León, NPUC Ministerial Director
Elder Ivan Williams, NAD Ministerial Director

(More letters are posted online: tinyurl.com/bdex83ta)



November 15, 2022

Ramon Canals, General Conference Ministerial Director
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Dear Ramon,

My conference responded to my final appeal by asking the North Pacific Union Conference to revoke my ordination, to which the NPUC voted their approval on November 9, 2022. I did not expect that they would take such extreme measures to cancel someone who cannot conscientiously affirm our scholar's assumptions on one of the foundation pillar truths of our faith—the doctrine of God.

I say *pillar* truth because this topic—the personality of God and His Son—was one of this movement's landmark, foundational pillars, and not a pin was to be moved from this structure of truth.

Those who seek to **remove the old landmarks** are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the **pillars of our faith** concerning the sanctuary, or **concerning the personality of God or of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor.¹¹⁷

And now, after half a century of clear light from the Word as to what is truth, there are arising many false theories to unsettle minds. But the evidence given in our early experience has the same force that it had then. **The truth is the same as it ever has been, and not a pin or a pillar can be moved from the structure of truth.**¹¹⁸

This is why many of us hold to the pre-1980 positional statements on the doctrine of God. We see FB#2 moving a pin and thus sweeping away our original position on the doctrine of God—and we dare not remain silent:

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.¹¹⁹

117. Ellen G. White, Ms62-1905.14.

118. Ellen G. White, Lt38-1906.3.

119. Ellen G. White, Ms49-1906.25.

Let the missionaries of the cross proclaim that there is **one God**, and one Mediator between God and man, who is Jesus Christ the Son of the Infinite God. **This needs to be proclaimed throughout every church in our land.**¹²⁰

To proclaim this truth to “every church in our land,” Ken LeBrun wrote a book entitled, *Not A Mystery*, which I published. This book has been condemned by the BRI and, thus, by the local conferences. As a consequence, Ken LeBrun also had his ordination revoked. I will attach his story.

My final appeal to have the Seventh-day Adventist Church reverse its action of firing me will now include this most recent action of revoking my ordination. I have made my case. I leave this all in the hands of God and will accept whatever outcome He allows.

John Witcombe

cc: Elder Ted Wilson, General Conference President
 Elder _____, _____ Conference President
 Elder César De León, NPUC Ministerial Director
 Elder Ivan Williams, NAD Ministerial Director



November 17, 2022

Dear John,

Please accept my apologies for the delay in getting back to you. I appreciate you reaching out to me and sending all the information regarding the issues that led to your termination as a pastor of the _____ Conference. After reading all the material you sent out and other documents that shed light on this matter, I am sorry to let you know that there is nothing we can do except pray for you. This matter has been dealt with at a local conference level, and I am certain they have taken enough time to pray and work with

120. Ellen G. White, Ms40-1891.78.

you on a solution. May the grace of God and the peace of Christ be with you.

Ramon Canals,
Ministerial Secretary
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



April 6, 2023

Ted N. C. Wilson, President
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Dear Elder Wilson,

Six months ago, I was fired by the _____ Conference and my ordination was revoked by the North Pacific Union Conference. I assume it was because I could not affirm that one God is three Persons. I can only assume this because I still have not received a written statement from my conference leadership stating their valid reason for firing me. According to the North American Division officers and the Union Presidents, the complex doctrine of the Trinity (the assumption that one God is a unity of three Persons) cannot be imposed as a test; therefore, a pastor's failure to affirm this scholarly assumption cannot be used as a valid reason for termination. Here is what they published:

If Adventism is to meet the needs of all people around the world, the landmarks must remain simple and straightforward. The Bible will be our only creed. **Complex theological definitions, the Trinity, for example,** may serve the church well in general but **cannot be imposed as a test** for all Adventists everywhere.

Adventism can expect fresh insights into truth, "present truth" that will enhance the appreciation of old landmarks. Such an

expectation has always been a part of historic Adventism and is reaffirmed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted in 1980. When “present truth” is of a complex nature, however, it may be more helpful for some in the church than for others. In such a case it cannot be imposed on the church as a whole. Remembering our non-Trinitarian past as well as the simplicity of our landmarks should encourage a certain humility in the church and lead us to resist any attempt by one segment of the church to impose its views on the rest.¹²¹

Because the Trinity doctrine “is of a complex nature” and I am of that segment of the church that has chosen only to affirm landmarks that are “simple and straightforward,” doctrines that have a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in their support¹²², the Trinity doctrine must not be imposed upon me and used as a test for my fitness to serve our denomination as a pastor.

The North American Division, in their book, *Issues*, clearly states that we are not to impose complex theological definitions on each other, and it identifies the Trinity doctrine as an example of what they are talking about. I can absolutely affirm the simple landmarks of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but I cannot affirm a complex theological doctrine that has no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. And because of this, I was fired? My understanding of the doctrine of God is in harmony with the historic fundamental principles/beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Because of the fact that the Bible is our only creed, I am willing to affirm the truths contained in the plain reading of the nine Bible texts that are listed under Fundamental Belief #2. Here are the nine Bible references, along with my affirmation of our creed:

121. *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries*,

Authorized by the North American Division Officers and Union Presidents,
Copyright by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, page 50.

122. “Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.” —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

1. Genesis 1:26 “And **God** said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

And now **God said to His Son**, “Let **us** make man in **our** image.” As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator he was of noble height and of beautiful symmetry.¹²³

“And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.” Whom did He address?—The Lord Jesus Christ, who declares Himself to have been with the Father from the beginning.¹²⁴

*I affirm that the Father spoke to His Son saying, “Let **us** make man in **our** image.”*

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

Mark 12:29-34 “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, **Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord**: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: **for there is one God; and there is none other but he**: And to love **him** with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when **Jesus saw that he answered discreetly**, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.”

I affirm that the LORD our God is one LORD; for there is one God; and there is none other but He.

123. Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 47.

124. Ellen G. White, Ms43-1906.6.

3. Isaiah 6:8 “Also I heard the voice of the **Lord**, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

When **God** asked, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for **Us?**” Christ alone of the angelic host could reply, “Here am I; send Me.” [Isaiah 6:8].¹²⁵

I affirm that God spoke these words, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us.

4. Matthew 28:19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the **name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**”

Before the disciples shall compass the threshold, there is to be the **imprint of the sacred name**, baptizing the believers **in the name of the threefold powers in the heavenly world.**¹²⁶

Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God’s spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of **the divine name**, “**The Lord our Righteousness.**” Jeremiah 23:6. Those who are baptized in **the threefold name** of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.¹²⁷

Of the church of Christ it is written “This is the name wherewith she shall be called, **The Lord our righteousness.**” Jeremiah 33:16. **This name is put upon every follower of Christ.**¹²⁸

There are three living persons of the heavenly trio.¹²⁹

This sacred, threefold name, *The Lord our Righteousness*, is put upon every person who is baptized.

125. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 101, 1897, par. 28.

126. Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, p. 148.

127. Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 145.

128. Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 41.

129. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 615.

I affirm that there are three persons in the heavenly trio in whose name we are to be baptized.

5. John 3:16 “For **God** so loved the world, that he gave his **only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I affirm that God gave His only begotten Son to save us from perishing.

6. 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22 “Now he which stablisheth us with you in **Christ**, and hath anointed us, is **God**; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the **Spirit** in our hearts.”

...there would be the **eternal** heavenly dignitaries—**God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit**—arming them with more than mortal energy, and [who] would advance with them to the work, and convince the world of sin.¹³⁰

I affirm that the three eternal heavenly dignitaries are God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

7. 2 Corinthians 13:14 “The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the communion of the **Holy Ghost**, be with you all. Amen.”

I affirm that there are three living Persons in the heavenly trio who are God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

8. Ephesians 4:4-6 “There is one body, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; **One Lord**, one faith, one baptism, **One God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

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

I affirm that the one God of the Bible is the Father. I affirm that there is one Lord Jesus Christ and one Spirit.

130. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 130, 1901, par. 52.

9. 1 Peter 1:2 “Elect according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, through sanctification of the **Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus Christ**: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”

I affirm that God is the Father and that we are sanctified through the Spirit and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

If church leadership desires that I affirm the concept that the *one God* of the Bible is a unity of three Persons, then all they need to do is to provide the Bible verse that plainly states this teaching, and I will affirm this also.

Using anything other than the Bible as a test to determine one’s eligibility for employment or holding church office is out of harmony with the Lord’s counsel.

Very many will get up some test **that is not given in the word of God.**¹³¹

The Lord does not require that any **tests of human inventions** shall be brought in to divert the minds of the people or create controversy in any line.¹³²

“**It is written**” is the test that must be brought home to every soul.¹³³

It is incumbent upon leadership that they provide documentation from our official publications showing that a pastor must affirm the scholars’ assumption that the *one God* is a unity of three Persons and that affirming the doctrine of God using the language of the Bible and the language of Ellen White is unacceptable. The fact is, if we were not a church organization, _____ State law would mandate that the _____ Conference provide such evidence as proof that they had just cause for terminating an

131. Ellen G. White, *General Conference Bulletin*, Apr. 16, 1901, par. 8.

132. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 252.

133. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 300.

employee.¹³⁴ The law also mandates that an employer provide the fired employee, within ten days of termination, a written letter that spells out the just cause for being fired. The church has a moral obligation before God to at least reach the just standard that the law requires of secular employers.

In this letter, I have provided documentation that clearly states that the Trinity doctrine cannot be imposed as a test. Your father, Elder Neal C. Wilson, in 1980, just before the Trinity doctrine was voted in as a part of our Fundamental Beliefs, assured our church that these statements, including statement #2, would not be used as a part of a checklist to determine whether an employee of the conference or any officer of a local church is qualified to teach.¹³⁵

I believe that I was unjustly terminated. I am requesting that a commission be appointed to investigate my case.

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

John Witcombe

cc: Elder _____, _____ Conference President
 Elder César De León, NPUC Ministerial Director
 Elder Ivan Williams, NAD Ministerial Director
 Elder Ramon Canals, GC Ministerial Director

PS: “The role of the trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, nor is there any clear statement of the idea. But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. So even though the doctrine of the trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God, ***it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God.***... As these passages indicate, the idea of the trinity has precedents in the Bible, even

134. _____ Wrongful Discharge From Employment Act, State Code Ann. § 39-2-901, et. Seq.

135. Fifty-third General Conference Session, Apr. 21, 1980, pp. 8, 9.
<https://documents.adventistarchives.org/periodicals/rh/rh19800423-v157-20.pdf>.

though a full-fledged doctrine of the trinity is not to be found there.”¹³⁶

“Human theories and speculations will never lead to an understanding of God’s word. Those who suppose that they understand philosophy *think that their explanations are necessary* to unlock the treasures of knowledge and to prevent heresies from coming into the church. But it is these explanations that have brought in false theories and heresies. Men have made desperate efforts to explain what they thought to be intricate scriptures; but too often their efforts have only darkened that which they tried to make clear.”¹³⁷



April 9, 2023

Dear Pr. Witcombe:

Thank you for your letter to Pr. Wilson. We are referring your documents and letters to the administration of the NAD.

In His service!
Magdiel Perez Schulz
Assistant to the President
Field Secretary

cc: Rick Remmers, Assistant to the President at the North American Division

136. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Andrews University Press, 1985), pp. 89, 90.

137. Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 110.



Concluding Remarks

When I wrote these letters to denominational leadership, I did so, realizing that, most likely, no one would ever respond. What could they say? If they were to admit that there really was no justification for firing Ken LeBrun and me, they would be acknowledging that the Trinity doctrine is an optional belief for Seventh-day Adventists, which, by the way, is exactly what the NAD and its union presidents allowed for in their 1992 book, *Issues*. And what would be wrong with allowing members to be non-Trinitarian? The harlot and her daughters would not be okay with that. To be in good standing with them, they require all to embrace their Trinity doctrine. Soon they will require all to embrace their Sunday Sabbath.

A significant testimony that Ellen White wrote out in 1904 (Ms149-1904) presents a two-phase test that our church will face. The first phase is a test regarding a “superior belief” that was mingled with the truth. Failure to pass this test will lead to a failure to pass the second phase—the National Sunday Law test. The evidence for what I am proposing is found in the next two chapters.

Chapter 8

THE TRINITY DOCTRINE— A SUPERIOR BELIEF

As this book goes to press (August 2023), I still haven't received anything in writing from my conference explaining exactly why I was fired and why they revoked my ordination. However, I did receive the following letter from the NPUC:

November 29, 2022

Dear John Whitcombe [*sic*]

Recently, the North Pacific Union Conference received a recommendation from the _____ Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to recognize and accept the voiding of your ordination from the Seventh-day Adventist pastoral ministry and to record this action on your service record. Consideration was given to this matter at our executive meeting of November 9, 2022, and with sadness the following action was taken:

VOTED, To recognize that through the actions of John Whitcombe [*sic*], he has made void his ordination to the Gospel Ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Therefore, NPUC is revoking his ordination, effective immediately.

We hope, as you have charted a new course in your life, that much of God's grace will be your experience.

Sincerely,
VP for Administration

Just what these actions of mine were that called for such extreme punishment have never been spelled out to me by my conference. They have never accused me of believing or teaching anything of a heretical nature. What I believe and teach on the doctrine of God is in complete harmony with what our denomination officially

taught for 117 years. The only thing of which they can accuse me is that I will not affirm the supposition or assumption of the scholars that is found in Fundamental Belief #2 (FB#2). *The Great Controversy*, page 595, binds my conscience only to affirm a plain, “Thus saith the Lord.”

If conference leadership were to write out their reasons for punishing me, it would likely reveal that they have elevated FB#2 to the status of a creedal statement of belief. This, of course, is contrary to the General Conference’s voted statement on our Fundamental Beliefs, which emphatically states that we have no creed other than the Bible. According to Elder J. N. Loughborough, our church would enter into apostasy from the truth if we ever formed a man-made creed and punished members for not affirming this creed.

This man-made Trinity doctrine is a sophistry that, as J. N. Andrews said, “destroys the *personality* of God, and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹³⁸

And it was ministers that were deceiving the people with these sophistries. I will not tell you what they led to—it may have to come; but I will not tell you now what they led to; but I will tell you what this sophistry leads to: It leads to the *nonentity of Christ, to the nonentity of God, his personality*, and brings in,—what shall I call it?—a sort of *manufactured theory of God and Christ*.¹³⁹

Although this last statement was written in reference to the Kellogg crisis, there are important principles to be found in the counsels relating to that issue that can be applied to present-day sophistries that Satan will try to bring into God’s remnant church.

The *one God* of FB#2, whose singular personal pronouns identify Him as a singular divine Person who is a unity of three Persons, is **not** a personal Being with a physical form. The *one God* of the Trinity doctrine is simply a manufactured theory of God

138. J. N. Andrews, *The Three Angels of Revelation 14:6-12*, p. 54.

139. Ellen G. White, Ms 70a, 1905, par. 11.

that transforms the biblical *one God* into a nonentity. And those who condemn and punish fellow believers who will not embrace this nonentity/manufactured theory of God simply do **not** know the *one God* of the Bible who is our heavenly Father—a personal Being. For this reason, according to John 16:3, they will disfellowship fellow church members, thinking they are doing service for God.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. *They shall put you out of the synagogues*: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, *because they have not known the Father, nor me*. (John 16:1-3)

In the 2015 release of Ellen White’s letters and manuscripts, my wife, Sharon—who is reading through every one of those 50,000 pages—just found some previously unpublished counsel related to the Kellogg crisis that could apply to the issues we are currently facing over the Trinity doctrine.

In this relevant counsel, Ellen White begins by quoting Revelation 2:4, 5, 7-9.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is the in midst of the paradise of God. And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.”¹⁴⁰

And then she writes the following:

Here we see perplexing things are coming in, commingling with the people of God. **Here are two parties presented before us.**

140. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.1.

One party is presented to John as a party that are putting into exercise every human capability under the Holy Spirit of God, and they are encouraged with the greatest promises given to any person that lives—if they are striving to be overcomers. Here is the promise, **if they will stand out from all pretentious claims that will be brought in as truth for this time**, which sentiments it is Satan’s plan to insinuate in minds, as has been done, spiritualistic deceptions for truth. Will the churches of today see and sense their dangers?¹⁴¹

“But are of the synagogue of Satan.” [Verse 9.] Here is a warning **coming to our people**, of assertions from those who claim to be Jews and are not. They claim to stand as believing present truth when they have brought in sentiments that have falsified the truth and have so mingled these **pretentious, superior beliefs** with the truth that, through their **erroneous suppositions** the soul will in future test and trial give up the foundation of the faith for fables. God says to every man, “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” [Mark 14:38.] There is a class that will be prominent who will give up the faith, and the seducing spirits of satanic agencies will overcome them through specious temptations. It is plainly stated of this class that they claim “they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.” [Revelation 2:9.]¹⁴²

This statement speaks of a prominent class within the Seventh-day Adventist Church who will bring in *suppositions* or *assumptions* that will falsify the truth that God has given to this church. Could it be that this is being fulfilled today by a prominent class within our church who believe that the Trinity doctrine is a *superior belief* to what our church officially held on the doctrine of God before 1980?

The Biblical Research Institute states in so many words that the Trinity doctrine is *a superior belief*—“**a more biblical understanding of God**”—to what the founders of our church believed:

141. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.2.

142. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.3.

Some Adventists have discovered that practically all of our pioneers were anti-Trinitarian and have concluded that the church today should reject the doctrine of the Trinity. The truth is that the Lord guided this movement to **a more biblical understanding of God**. Today, based on the Bible, we affirm the truth of one God in a plurality of Persons.¹⁴³

This new *superior belief* is considered to be such a radical change from what our church originally held for over one hundred years that it is thought that most of our pioneers—which would include James and Ellen White—would not even be able to join our church today:

Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's fundamental beliefs. More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁴⁴

According to the testimony from the unpublished writings of Ellen White that we are examining in this chapter, this *superior belief* is a supposition. And the fact is, our scholars actually acknowledge that the Trinity doctrine (*one God is three Persons*) is only an assumption/supposition.¹⁴⁵

In this testimony, it says that by accepting “erroneous suppositions [superior beliefs], the soul will in **future test and trial** give up the foundation of the faith for fables.” Later in this statement, Ellen White writes: “...false professors will carry out the farce, **even to the killing of the righteous**” and she also speaks of “... **the last test to the world...**” Given these two clues, I believe this “future test” will have to do with the fable of Sunday worship. This inspired statement tells us how important is the decision each one of us makes regarding the acceptance or the rejection of this

143. Biblical Research Institute, “The Holy Spirit and the Godhead” <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/the-holy-spirit-and-the-godhead/>

144. George R. Knight, “Adventists and Change,” *Ministry*, International Journal for Clergy, Oct. 1993, p. 10.

145. “While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, **it is assumed as a fact** by Bible writers...” (*Adventist Review*, July 30, 1981, p. 4).

“superior belief.” It could make the difference between whether or not we accept or we reject the mark of the beast when this “future test and trial” is brought to us.

The statement continues:

“Fear none of those things”—the blasphemous claims—“which thou shalt suffer.” Verse 10. When, through pretensions, a work will be done like that of Judas, fear not if you do suffer. Engage in no human worldly policy to save yourselves from betrayal; **yield not at all to Satan’s devising.** He tempted Christ: “‘All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me’ [Matthew 4:9], **I am in possession of the genuine religious sentiments.**” **Answer, No.** “Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Now the Holy Spirit speaketh. Listen: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” [Revelation 2] Verses 10, 11. Here are statements to be presented and taken into the mind. Persecutions will come from the pretentious who are joined to Satan’s army. They say they are Jews but are not.¹⁴⁶

These pretentious ones will claim to be “in possession of the genuine religious sentiments” and will do the work of Judas in betraying fellow members. Church leaders who insist that we affirm their *suppositions* and *superior beliefs* need to be answered with a decided, No.

The statement continues:

“And to the angel of the church of Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast My name, and has not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.” Verses 12, 13.¹⁴⁷

146. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.4.

147. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.5.

We see that some will lose their lives for the truth's sake.

False testimonies will be borne by those who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; and false witness of false professors will carry out the farce, **even to the killing of the righteous.**¹⁴⁸

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Verse 16. There will be raised up **faithful witnesses** who will bring forth the words of truth, sharper than any two-edged sword. Their words will bring in many souls to become true converts to the truth, and men and women will go forth proclaiming the very message for **the last test to the world**, in contradistinction to the party who say they are Jews but who are not. God knows. He says their words are blasphemies. They have heeded seducing spirits and are of the synagogue of Satan. Of some, though, **dwelling “where Satan’s seat is,”** it is said, “Thou holdest fast My name, and has not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth.” Verse 13.¹⁴⁹

I believe that God permitted this counsel, which was given to His church during the past Kellogg crisis, to be discovered now as an encouragement to His “faithful witnesses” who are currently facing disciplinary measures due to their stance on the doctrine of God.

Satan will excite indignation against the humble minority who conscientiously refuse to accept popular customs and traditions.¹⁵⁰

Don’t overlook the fact that this “humble minority” is “**dwelling**” with those who are of the synagogue of Satan—“where Satan’s seat is.” Even though they may be censured, disfellowshipped, or fired from employment, God’s faithful witnesses to the truth—those who reject the *superior beliefs*—**will continue attending their local Adventist Church because the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is God’s Remnant Church of Bible Prophecy.**

148. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.6.

149. Ellen G. White, Ms149-1904.7.

150. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 450.

They will not separate into independent churches and “dwell” only with those who think alike.

The decisions to discipline employees and church members, made by those enforcing their *superior beliefs*, will not be ratified in the courts of heaven. Members who have been disfellowshipped by this group because they could not in good conscience affirm the Trinity doctrine (one God is three Persons) are still members in good standing. Pastors who have had their ordinations revoked over this issue are still ordained ministers of the gospel and will be recognized as such by faithful members. And here is why that would be so:

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church, but if he neglect to hear the church,”—**if he persists in his unreasonable course** and will not be corrected, then there is only one more step to be taken and that is a very sorrowful one—“Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Matthew 18:17. “Verily I say unto you, whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 18:18. **When every specification which Christ has given has been carried out in the true Christian spirit, then and then only, Heaven ratifies the decision of the church, because its members have the mind of Christ, and do as He would do were He upon the earth.**¹⁵¹

First of all, it is not an “unreasonable course” for a minister to affirm the doctrine of God as held by our church for 117 years. It is not unreasonable to believe that *one God* is the Father, as clearly stated in the Bible. It is not unreasonable to refuse to affirm the scholar’s assumption that *one God is three Persons*. What *is* unreasonable is for church leadership to require members and employees alike to affirm the statement that *one God is three Persons* when this teaching is not plainly stated in God’s Word.

Only if the actions align with the mind of Christ will Heaven ratify the decisions made by the church here on earth. And it

151. Ellen G. White, Letter 1c, 1890, par. 5.

should be plain to every Bible-believing Christian that Christ would never require ministers of the gospel to affirm a theologian's assumption over a plain "Thus saith the Lord."

Until we address the issues related to the current wording of FB#2, we will continue to see controversy and agitation spreading amongst our churches. We need to prayerfully consider whether or not we, as leaders in our denomination, are the cause of this division because of our resolute determination to protect the current wording of FB#2. Even while acknowledging that the concept of "one God is a unity of three Persons" is nowhere plainly stated in Scripture, we are using FB#2 as a test of orthodoxy for our members who are convicted that they must adhere to the simple and plain reading of God's Word. It is time to return to the biblical definition of *one God* that we find in 1 Corinthians 8:6: "But to us there is but *one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

And this one God has but one church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because He loves His church, He directs us, by the Bible and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, away from the enemy's sophistries. He wants to keep us from the wine with which Babylon is seeking to intoxicate the world.

God's word to His people is: "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."¹⁵²

152. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 17.

Chapter 9

TRINITY AND THE SUNDAY LAW

Why would Ken LeBrun and I rather be fired from serving as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church than affirm the Trinity doctrine? Neither one of us was financially ready for “retirement.” The day is coming when financial difficulties will be faced by those who refuse to affirm Sunday laws. The majority of us will fail in this coming crisis. Why will that be so?

For the upcoming final crisis facing our world, I believe that this topic regarding the doctrine of God is vital to understand. As a church, we believe that all of our teachings need to be firmly grounded in the Word of God. All of our doctrines will come under the most intense scrutiny. Each of us will need to be able to give a clear, authoritative answer for the beliefs that we hold.

It does not seem possible to us now that any should have to stand alone; but if God has ever spoken by me, the time will come when we shall be brought before councils and before thousands for his name’s sake, and each one will have to give the reason of his faith. **Then will come the severest criticism upon every position that has been taken for the truth.** We need, then, to study the word of God, that we may know why we believe the doctrines we advocate.¹⁵³

Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures and a **most critical examination of the positions which we hold.** God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting. **Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth.** Their faith must be firmly founded upon the word of God so that when the testing time shall come and they

153. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 18, 1888, Art. A, par. 12.

are brought before councils to answer for their faith they may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.¹⁵⁴

Our people individually must understand Bible truth more thoroughly, for they certainly will be called before councils; they will be criticized by keen and critical minds. It is one thing to give assent to the truth and another thing, through close examination as Bible students, to know what is truth. We have been apprised of our dangers, of the trials and temptations just before us, and now is the time to take special pains to prepare ourselves to meet the temptations and emergencies which are just before us.¹⁵⁵

Most of us are not ready to face this crisis.

There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders.... A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error.¹⁵⁶

We will soon be asked to provide biblical support for every truth that we hold. How would we respond if we were asked to provide biblical support for FB#2? As we see in the first chapter of Ken LeBrun's book, *Not A Mystery*, not one of the Bible references listed in the FB#2 statement actually supports this Fundamental Belief (they clearly supported our pre-1980 position on God).¹⁵⁷ It will never do to reply that the teaching that one God is three Persons cannot be understood and so we just blindly believe that this view is true.

154. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 707, 708.

155. Ellen G. White, Letter 20a, 1888, par. 7.

156. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 596, 597.

157. Note: FB#2 defines the Trinity as one God who is a "unity of three Persons" using singular pronouns *He* and *His* to refer to this one God, implying that somehow three Persons blend into one singular Person called God. Prior to the new wording of FB#2 introduced in 1980, Adventists believed that there were three separate, distinct individuals that collectively were known as the Godhead or the Heavenly Trio.

The doctrine of the Trinity lies in Scripture in solution; when it is crystallized from its solvent it does not cease to be Scriptural, but only comes into clearer view. Or, to speak without figure, the doctrine of the Trinity is given to us in Scripture, not in formulated definition, but **in fragmentary allusions**; when we assembled the *disjecta membra* into their organic unity, we are not passing from Scripture, but entering more thoroughly into the meaning of Scripture.... In point of fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is purely a revealed doctrine. That is to say, it embodies a truth which has never been discovered, and is indiscoverable, by natural reason.¹⁵⁸

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, **it is assumed as a fact** by Bible writers.... **Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.**¹⁵⁹

The historic formulation of the Trinity...seeks to circumscribe and safeguard this mystery (not explain it; **that is beyond us**), and it confronts us with perhaps the most difficult thought that the human mind has ever been asked to handle. It is not easy; but it is true.¹⁶⁰

Providing testimony on the personality of God was not beyond the ability of any Seventh-day Adventist member before 1980—which was the date when the doctrine of the Trinity was introduced into our Fundamental Beliefs. Neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy tells us that we must accept by faith the existence of a Triune God. If the Bible writers knew anything about a Triune God, they would have clearly declared such a fact. Such an important teaching would not simply have been assumed or provided only in “fragmentary allusions.”

If we cannot provide biblical references that clearly teach that the one God is three Persons, we will be hard-pressed to convince our interrogators that the reason we are seventh-day Sabbath-keepers is because we base everything we believe on the plain teachings of the Bible.

158. Article “Trinity” from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

159. *Adventist Review*, July 30th, 1981 p. 4.

160. *Adventist Review*, Mar., 2011.

Just as Sunday sacredness cannot be taught from the Bible alone, so the teaching that the one God of the Bible is three Persons in one Person—as is taught in FB#2—is also not found in the Bible, as acknowledged by our theologians:

The role of the Trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, **nor is there any clear statement of the idea.** But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. **So even though the doctrine of the Trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God,** it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God.¹⁶¹

If we say that the *one God* of the Bible is composed of three Persons when there is a clear statement that tells us that the *one God* of the Bible is the Father, then that is like saying that the first day of the week is the Sabbath when there is a clear statement that tells us that the seventh day is the Sabbath.

Here are clear statements that declare the truth on these two issues:

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

Exodus 20:10 “But the **seventh day is the Sabbath** of the LORD thy God.”

The following Q&A, which is taken from a Catholic catechism, shows how both Sunday sacredness and the Trinity doctrine have no scriptural basis of support.

Q. Have you any other proofs that they [Protestants] are **not guided by the Scriptures?**

A. Yes; so many, that we cannot admit more than a mere specimen into this small work. They reject much that is **clearly**

161. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 89.

contained in Scripture, and profess more that is nowhere discoverable in that Divine Book.

Q. Give some examples of both?

A. They should, if **the Scripture were their only rule**, wash the feet of one another, according to the command of Christ, in the 13th chap. of St. John;—they should keep, not the Sunday, but the Saturday, according to the commandment, “Remember thou keep holy the SABBATH-day;” for this commandment has **not, in Scripture, been changed or abrogated....**

Q. Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

A. Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her;—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is **no Scriptural authority**.

Q. **Do you observe other necessary truth as taught by the Church not clearly laid down in Scripture?**

A. The doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine the knowledge of which is certainly necessary to salvation, is not explicitly and evidently laid down in Scripture, in the Protestant sense of private interpretation.¹⁶²

A Protestant—trying to claim that their beliefs are founded on the Bible alone—has no answer to the charge that they have no scriptural authority for the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath. A Seventh-day Adventist who claims that they believe and practice only those truths that are plainly stated in the Bible will be equally stymied if they say that they embrace the mysterious Trinity doctrine of the one-in-three God—a doctrine that is “not explicitly and evidently laid down in Scripture.” A Seventh-day Adventist’s witness as a follower of the seventh-day Sabbath will

162. Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism* (3rd American Edition, 1876). The question about the Church’s “power to institute festivals of precept” is on page 174. The question about “other necessary truths...not clearly laid down in Scripture” is on page 350.

at that time be entirely blunted on account of their adherence to FB#2. If this is our response when we come under fire, I suspect it will not go well for us.

In Christianity today, if one does not profess faith in the Trinity, he is considered to be a heretic:

God in Three Persons: Trinity Doctrine We Barely Understand

All Christians believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. If you do not believe this—that is, **if you have come to a settled conclusion that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true—you are not a Christian at all. You are in fact a heretic.** Those words may sound harsh, but they represent the judgment of the Christian church across the centuries. What is the Trinity? Christians in every land unite in proclaiming that our **God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Those who deny that truth place themselves outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy.** Having said that, I admit that no one fully understands it. It is a mystery and a paradox. Yet I believe it is true.¹⁶³

In the past, thousands have been tortured and killed for refusing to acknowledge the Catholic version of the Trinity God. Prophecy informs us that God's people will experience persecution in the future. When the Sunday law issue is brought to God's people, this will be the time when the greater portion of Seventh-day Adventists will abandon the Sabbath and accept the mark of the beast.

As the storm approaches, **a large class** who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, **abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.**¹⁶⁴

Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and **the great proportion** of those who now appear to be genuine and true **will prove to be base metal....**¹⁶⁵

163. Ray Pritchard, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/god-in-three-persons-a-doctrine-we-barely-understand-11634405.html> (Accessed June 19, 2023).

164. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

165. Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 180.

When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness **when the majority forsake us**, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.¹⁶⁶

Why will this happen to the majority of our members who today believe they would never accept the mark of the beast? Is it possible that if we are willing to accept man's assumptions regarding the one-in-three God of FB#2—which is not explicitly taught in the Bible—we might also be influenced to accept Sunday sacredness—which also is not explicitly taught in the Bible?

Because Ken LeBrun and I do not want to see any of our members fail the Sunday law test, we were willing to risk punishment to bring this issue before God's people. We believe that those who are willing to affirm the Trinity doctrine under threat of being fired or disfellowshipped may also be willing to affirm Sunday sacredness when threatened with economic sanctions. Let me end with this appeal:

My dear friends, for Christ's sake take your stand on higher ground. Every feature of our faith is to be tested in the way that is the most trying. The **pillars of our faith** are to be tested. Sophistry will be brought in as it was to Adam and Eve. You will be strongly tempted; and **unless you have firm faith in the principles of the truth for this time, you will be led astray.**¹⁶⁷

You may believe that clinging to the Trinity doctrine will not predispose you to fail the Sunday law test and be led astray. As for me and my house, we are going to cling to the original pillars of our faith that were established by God. We will be rejecting any and every doctrine or precept that does not have a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.

166. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136.

167. Ellen G. White, Ms118-1904.24.

EPILOGUE

The ministerial director of one conference wrote an article, published by the North Pacific Union, pointing out what he considered to be errors in our understanding. That article and our comments are posted here: tinyurl.com/4wxm2jfy

Toward the end of 2022, the conference where Val and Eiji attend church called a minister out of retirement to pastor their church. His mission was to bring unity between those who support the right of members and leaders to affirm the doctrine of God as once taught by our church and those who insist that Fundamental Belief #2 must be affirmed to serve in any leadership capacity.

The pastor faced quite a challenge. Here is a letter that one person wrote to the board:

March 17, 2023

Dear Church Board,

About one year ago most of the members of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to support and sustain the Christ denying errors of some of the members of the church. Are these members now willing to withdraw that support and allow the disciplinary process to proceed?

If those members who are not willing to sustain and support the beliefs and standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are still in the majority then it is time to ask the Conference to perform their duty to dissolve the church.

I am sure that there are enough loyal members that the Conference will be able to reconstitute the church quickly.

God bless,

Brother _____

The pastor chose seventeen men, including people from both viewpoints, to engage in a reconciliation process. He decided to leave out Val and Eiji from this group of men. The pastor sent a

document out to the church membership and scheduled a church business meeting to vote on whether or not they would approve this document. If the church failed to reach a two-thirds majority approval, then the conference would assume leadership of their church. Here is a letter that Val and Eiji sent out to the church a few days before the meeting:

May 18, 2023

Dear Church Members,

The following is from the document¹⁶⁸ that will be presented for us to vote upon at a church business meeting this coming Sunday:

Our 28 Fundamental Beliefs are not a creed, but serve as boundaries against every wind of doctrine, and are known as our current expression of what Seventh-day Adventists believe. The Bible is our only creed, and the Bible along with the Spirit of Prophecy are God's inspired messages to guide us and keep us united in these last days. Our church leadership should be comfortable with supporting **those beliefs** in their life and teaching.

So, if you do not agree with the Fundamental Beliefs..., then you are welcome as a member of the _____ SDA Church, but will not accept being an officially elected leader.

How can this document claim that the Bible is our only creed when it elevates the 28 Fundamental Beliefs as the boundary against error? Is our protection against every wind of doctrine the 28 Fundamental Beliefs document, or does our protection come from the Word of God and the visions that God gave to Ellen White?

I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the "*last days*"; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and **to correct those who err from Bible truth.**¹⁶⁹

168. tinyurl.com/ykr2ycw5

169. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 78.

This document requires church leadership to “be comfortable with supporting *those beliefs* in their life and teaching.” If *those beliefs* that church leadership is to support are the doctrines that are plainly taught in the Bible and supported by the Spirit of Prophecy, then the Bible is truly our only creed. However, if *those beliefs* are the church’s interpretation of the Bible, then we have elevated the 28 Fundamental Beliefs to a credal position above God’s Word.

The document to be voted upon this upcoming Sunday declares that **the Bible is our only creed**. If that truly is the case, then one’s faithfulness to truth should be tested by the Bible alone and not by any document expressing the church’s interpretation of the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity, as stated in Fundamental Belief #2 (FB#2), goes beyond what the Bible plainly states about the one God whom we worship.

So even though the doctrine of the trinity is **not part of what the Bible itself says** about God, **it is part of what the church must say** to safeguard the biblical view of God.¹⁷⁰

In other words, **the church feels that it is necessary to say more about God than what Inspiration says. Because of this, they gave us, in FB#2, a new extra-biblical explanation of the personality of the one God.** But where has the church ever been authorized to do this? Where has God given the church that prerogative? When we actually look into it, we find that the practice is explicitly prohibited.

Do not try to explain in regard to the personality of God. **You cannot give any further explanation than the Bible has given.** Human theories regarding Him are **good for nothing.**¹⁷¹

FB#2 is a human theory of God. It goes beyond what the Bible plainly teaches us about God. Ellen White would call this

170. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 89.

171. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 94.

fundamental belief “good for nothing.” The church’s official website states the intended purpose of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs:

Upholding the Protestant conviction of Sola Scriptura (“Bible only”), these 28 Fundamental Beliefs **describe how Seventh-day Adventists interpret Scripture** for daily application.¹⁷²

So the 28 Fundamental Beliefs describe **how the church interprets** the Bible’s teachings.

There is nothing wrong with having a document such as this, as long as the document itself is never used as a test of faithfulness to biblical truth. Here is what the preface to the 1872 Fundamental Principles stated:

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

Contrary to how our church once used this statement of our beliefs, the pastor and our local conference are now requiring us, upon threats of punishment, to accept the Bible’s teachings on the doctrine of God **as interpreted by the church**. This raises the paramount question: Is it our duty as loyal church members to accept the church’s interpretation of the Bible’s teachings, or should the individual church member, aided by the Holy Spirit, allow the Bible to be its own interpreter?

The Bible is its own interpreter.¹⁷³

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people,

172. Adventist.org/beliefs, accessed 7/26/2023.

173. Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 207.

when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus.¹⁷⁴

God help us to be Bible students. Until you can see the reason for it yourself and a “thus saith the Lord” in the Scriptures, **don’t trust any living man to interpret the Bible for you.**¹⁷⁵

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.¹⁷⁶

So we see that this is “the selfsame principle” maintained by Rome. In fact:

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.¹⁷⁷

The Protestant Reformation was fought precisely to combat this principle of the papacy. The principle of Sola Scriptura does not simply mean that a church bases its doctrines upon the Bible. It means that no human interpretation of the Bible can be established as an authoritative test of orthodoxy.

Very many will get up some test that is not given in the word of God. We have our test in the Bible,—the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁸

The Lord does not require that any tests of human inventions shall be brought in to divert the minds of the people or create controversy in any line.¹⁷⁹

174. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 331.

175. Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 77.

176. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 596 (italics Ellen White’s).

177. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 293.

178. Ellen G. White, *General Conference Bulletin*, April 16, 1901, par. 8.

179. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 252.

In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. **There is no place for tradition, for man’s theories and conclusions, or for church legislation.** No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ’s servants to teach.¹⁸⁰

The church admits that the Trinity doctrine, as stated in FB#2, “is not part of what the Bible itself says about God.”¹⁸¹ So, we are faced with a choice. Will we teach for doctrines the commandments of men? Or will we, “in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the Bible only?”¹⁸²

Do not carry your creed to the Bible, and read the Scriptures in the light of that creed. If you find that your opinions are opposed to a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” or to any command or prohibition He has given, give heed to the Word of God rather than to the sayings of men. Let every controversy or dispute be settled by “It is written.”¹⁸³

To require a member to affirm what is taught in FB#2 to serve the church in any elected capacity is forbidden by the Spirit of Prophecy. The Bible alone is to be our creed.

The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony.¹⁸⁴

We are being asked to vote between the following options:

Man’s word: **One God is a unity** of three Persons (FB#2).

God’s Word: “But to us there is but **one God, the Father**, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by

180. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

181. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God*, p. 89.

182. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

183. Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 207.

184. Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1885.

whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:6). “**One God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6).

God is a *personal Being*. He is not a unity of Persons, nor is He a theological concept.

From my girlhood I have been given **plain** instruction that **God is a person**, and that Christ is “the express image of His person.”¹⁸⁵

The reasoning that God is not a personal being is greatly dishonoring to Him.¹⁸⁶

FB#2 presents just such reasoning. To vote affirmatively on the document proposed by the pastor would signify an acceptance of the church’s new extra-biblical interpretation (that one God is three Persons) over the explicit Word of God (that one God is one personal Being—the Father). It would elevate a “Thus saith the church” above a “Thus saith the Lord.”

A “Thus saith the Lord” is not to be set aside for a “Thus saith the church”....¹⁸⁷

FB#2 replaces our denomination’s original Fundamental Principle on the doctrine of God that taught that the *one God* is a personal Being—the Father:

I – That there is **one God, a personal, spiritual being**, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139:7.

The title of the document that is to be voted upon this coming Sunday is “_____ SDA Church Path to Leadership Selection.” The document makes it clear that those who cannot support FB#2 will not be selected as leaders. However, the truth is, those who

185. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 137, 1903.

186. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 127, 1905.

187. Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69.

count as error our former statement on the doctrine of God and replace it with man's interpretation are the very ones that should not be teachers and leaders of His people. They are the ones who support tearing down the foundation pillar on the personality of God that God Himself established by His prophet in the day when all our pillar doctrines were given to us.

I am instructed to say that those who would tear down the foundation that God has laid **are not to be accepted as the teachers and leaders of His people.** We are to hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.¹⁸⁸

It is something that cannot be treated as a small matter that men, who have had so much light and such clear evidence as to the genuineness of the truth we hold, should become unsettled and led to **accept theories that rob us of a personal God, putting in His place a farce.**¹⁸⁹

Any Fundamental Belief that would rob us of a personal God is a farce, and, as such, God's people must reject it.

The ministerial director of the conference, who will be at the church business meeting Sunday morning, wrote the following on May 17, 2023, to a church member who had some questions regarding the document to be voted upon:

When we discover questions or find different ways of speaking about these truths, we agree to come together and seek to understand what each other means when we use the phrasing we use. If we can agree in meaning, that is sufficient. And when we have come to understanding and agreement on meaning, the wording should become a minor issue, not worthy of further dispute.

Wording must be used to provide meaning. The wording of FB#2 says that one God is a unity of three Persons. This wording gives rise to the meaning of FB#2, whose intent is to present the Trinity doctrine (one God is three Persons).

188. Ellen G. White, Letter 242, 1903, par. 18.

189. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 117a, 1903, par. 6.

This document that will be voted upon states that only those members who accept what FB#2 means will be allowed to serve in leadership positions. However, what FB#2 means is very different from what our statements on the doctrine of God, previous to 1980, meant. From the document, it is clear that a church member will not be allowed to serve in any leadership capacity if they believe in a pre-1980 statement regarding the doctrine of God. Leaders must affirm that one God is a unity of three Persons, as clearly stated in FB#2.

The ministerial director wrote:

Your question implies a distinction between what the church has historically taught about the Godhead and the current wording of FB#2. This difference is based on a misunderstanding of what FB#2 is intended to say.

FB#2 intends to teach the Trinity doctrine—one God is three Persons. Before 1980, our denomination was non-Trinitarian in its official statements on God—one God is one Person. There is no misunderstanding of what FB#2 intends to say. Documents from the BRI and other official church publications have clearly articulated its intended meaning. Our own church website states: “Adventists believe a Trinity of three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—make up one God.” There is a vast distinction between what our church has historically taught on the doctrine of God and the current Trinitarian doctrine expressed in the meaning of the wording of FB#2.

In summary, here are three false claims made by the conference regarding the Fundamental Beliefs:

1. The 28 Fundamental Beliefs are not a creed.

The conference has to make this claim because we all know that man-made creeds are a bad thing. Yet by their firing of pastors and their threatenings to take over the local church, they are demonstrating the very opposite of the claim they make.

2. Fundamental Belief #2 doesn't mean what it says.

The ministerial director makes it a point to carefully distinguish between the “exact wording” of the published doctrine and the “meaning of FB#2” or “what FB#2 is intended to say.” There can be no difference between what our official Fundamental Belief says and what it means. The fact is, the very reason why the scholars worded it the way they did was precisely because the statement does in fact say exactly what they meant it to say—that one God is a unity of three Persons.

3. Fundamental Belief #2 is just “what the church has historically taught about the Godhead.” The church didn't change its belief or introduce any new doctrine in 1980.

The fallacy of this claim is evident from the fact that an affirmation of previous statements of belief is not acceptable. Men have been removed from leadership positions in the local church and in the conference who fully endorsed all the pre-1980 official statements, including their own baptismal vows. This insistence on affirming the 1980 statement shows that its essential elements are uniquely different from all previous statements.

The pastor's document begins with these words: “As members and leaders within the _____ Church, we recognize that recent events have caused deep pain and division within our church family.” It is so true. Human wisdom, such as we find in FB#2, has been exalted above the plain statements of the Bible, and division and dissension have been the result:

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.**¹⁹⁰

In his accompanying letter, the pastor made this statement:

190. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124.

The document we will be voting on in the Business Meeting is enclosed with this letter. If the document passes with a 2/3's majority we will proceed with the nominating committee selection process... If the document fails, the conference will share the next steps in detail at that time. **But let me say this, if the conference has to step in, I can guarantee that there will be major negative consequences to our church and to our witness in the community.**

That certainly does not speak well of conference leadership! The members of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church should not let the threat of a conference takeover supersede our obligation to stay faithful to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The Bible and the Bible alone must remain our only creed.

Val and Eiji



The church business meeting was held as scheduled on May 21, 2023. The proposed document failed to receive the necessary 2/3 vote of approval, and the conference immediately initiated action¹⁹¹ to dissolve the 171-member church.

The conference president gave the church members “one option.” They were to vote on June 4, 2023, to dissolve their own church. If they failed to do so, the *Church Manual* provides that the conference executive committee would recommend to the upcoming conference constituency meeting “that the church be dissolved.”

Val wrote a letter to the ministerial director of the North Pacific Union, seeking his intervention on behalf of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church. Here was his response:

From: César De León
Date: 5/22/23 11:41 AM (GMT-08:00)

191. See the president's May 21 letter: tinyurl.com/4crnksmf

Hello Val,

Thank you for your message and the documents attached reflecting the processes and events that have transpired in the _____ Church in regard to the Fundamental Belief #2.

I understand the NPUC VP for Administration, Elder _____ has been working closely with your conference. Unfortunately this situation is completely out of my hands, but you are welcome to approach the officers of our union and seek council from them.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will lead every individual that has the potential to make a difference in the outcome of this unfortunate situation.

Blessings and Victories in Jesus,
César De León

The following letter was then sent to the NPUC VP for Administration:

Vice President for Administration
North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
5709 N 20th St.
Ridgefield, WA 98642

May 24, 2023

Dear Elder _____,

We believe that the following motion put forth by our conference is faulty:

“Whereas the _____ Church has been unsuccessful in resolving the divisive doctrinal differences in our congregation and have been unable to elect a nominating committee that supports the teachings and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church, we vote to accept counsel to disband our church with the request that the conference make every effort to reorganize the church as soon as possible.”

There is not a single member in our church who does not fully support the teachings and mission of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church as presented in our only creed, the Bible. Yes, some members have chosen to affirm the following pre-1980 official statement on the doctrine of God, as it was expressed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* up until the year 2010:

1. The true and living God, the first person of the Godhead, is our heavenly Father, and He, by His Son, Christ Jesus, created all things. (Matt. 28:18, 19; 1 Cor. 8:5, 6; Eph. 3:9; Jer. 10:10-12; Heb. 1:1-3; Acts 17:22-29; Col. 1:16-18.)
2. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, and the eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour from sin; and man's salvation is by grace through faith in Him. (Matt. 28:18, 19; John 3:16; Micah 5:2; Matt. 1:21; 2:5, 6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11, 12; Eph. 1:9-15; 2:4-8; Rom. 3:23-26.)
3. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, is Christ's representative on earth, and leads sinners to repentance and to obedience of all God's requirements. (Matt. 28:18, 19; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Rom. 8:1-10; Eph. 4:30.) (Church Manual, 17th Edition, Revised 2005, p. 219)

Affirming this statement on the doctrine of God, which many members affirmed at their baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, does not render them unfaithful to the teachings and mission of our church. This is a gross mischaracterization of our members. The following statement from the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists gives church leaders and members this right to thus believe:

If Adventism is to meet the needs of all people around the world, the landmarks must remain simple and straightforward. The Bible will be our only creed. Complex theological definitions, the Trinity, for example, may serve the church well in general but cannot be imposed as a test for all Adventists everywhere. Adventism can expect fresh insights into truth, "present truth" that will enhance the appreciation of old landmarks. Such an expectation has always been a part of historic Adventism and is reaffirmed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted in 1980. When "present truth" is of a complex nature, however, it may be more helpful for some in

the church than for others. In such a case it cannot be imposed on the church as a whole. Remembering our non-Trinitarian past as well as the simplicity of our landmarks should encourage a certain humility in the church and lead us to resist any attempt by one segment of the church to impose its views on the rest.¹⁹²

In light of this statement from the NAD, we would like to see the following statement put on the agenda for a vote at our June 4 meeting:

“Whereas all members of the _____ SDA Church are faithful to the teachings and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and are valued and appreciated, none will be excluded from holding any church office based on their belief related to a pre- or post-1980 statement on the doctrine of God, as allowed for in the NAD Issues statement. We will refrain from divisive speech to or about each other and will not put down any brother or sister because of their views on Fundamental Belief #2. We agree to extend to others the liberty of conscience that we desire for ourselves.”

Yesterday, we sent this request to our conference president. Could you speak with him about this issue for us?

Sincerely,

Val Ramos

Eiji Minami, MD

cc: Conference President
Ministerial Director
Local Church Members

The president of the conference responded with the following letter:

192. *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries*, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Officers and Union Presidents, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, page 50.

May 26, 2023

Dear Val,

Thank you for sharing your suggestion for an alternative motion.

After careful review and reflection, the decision has been made to continue with the previously proposed recommendation without modifications.

May God bless you in every way.

Yours in Christ,

Conference President



On June 4, a majority of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church members voted to comply with conference leadership and disband their church. The locks were to be changed, and the church closed until a new pastor takes charge of this now-dissolved congregation. During the meeting, the president made it clear that when the church is reorganized as a company, new church leadership will only be selected from those who will affirm the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. In other words, a member must first affirm the scholars' assumption that *one God is three Persons* before they can serve the church in any capacity.

It appears that Fundamental Belief #2 now occupies the position of a creed in this conference. The unprocessed Word of God, where it contradicts established theological pronouncement, will not be tolerated. Unfortunately, as long as God's beloved church continues down this course, she must forfeit the only fortification against the anti-Trinitarian movement that can ever be truly effective. And that is, to take the Bible as it reads.

Note: This book's emphasis on the Father as the *one God* is not to the exclusion of Jesus, but rather as opposed to a non-personal "unity of three co-eternal Persons" being the *one God*. It is not Christ that we are demoting, but rather the fabricated entity known as the Trinity. Jesus is "the exact representation of the Father," "the express image of His person." *That* is the basis of Christ's divine status.

What, again, is that basis? "Jesus...**in calling God 'His own Father,'** had declared Himself equal with God." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 207).

"My authority, He said, for doing the work of which you accuse Me, is that I am the Son of God." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 208).

That's it. "The Scriptures **clearly** indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each." (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 268). We don't need to invent any other explanations.

The problem with uninspired summary statements is just that, they are uninspired, and we end up saying things God has never said. Language such as "three co-eternal, co-equal distinct Persons" is indistinguishable from Tritheism. We are much better off leaving things just the way God has explained them. And furthermore, to conclude that the "unity" of the Three **is the one true God** establishes a god that has never been introduced to us in the inspired writings. The Bible tells us about God the Father. The Bible tells us about Jesus, the divine Son of God. The Bible tells us about the Holy Spirit of God. But the Bible nowhere speaks of a god who is a combined unity of the Three.

Using **the Bible's way of explaining it** elevates Jesus to equality with God; it does not diminish Him. Only as the Son of God can Jesus be truly equal with God without being another God. The Bible presents Jesus as the Son of God. It is, therefore, on that basis that Jesus is one with God and can claim all the authority and titles of God, including *His identity as Jehovah, the only true God, the eternal self-existent One.*

Appendix A

THE VINEYARD CRISIS

Sermon Title: The Vineyard Crisis

Opening Hymn: #74 “Like a River Glorious”

Scripture: Matthew 20:1, 2

Closing Hymn: #596 “Look for the Waymarks”

I received an email from a pastor in the Upper Columbia Conference this week:

Hi, John. Our members are receiving publications regarding Philadelphia as God’s true church. Basically, the call is to come out from the Adventist denomination into another group. Have you heard about it? Do you know of any articles/materials on the subject?

I would appreciate your help.

Signed, Pastor _____

If you don’t like the church, and you think it is messed up, why not check out and join whatever group you wish, or just start your own group? What’s so important about membership in the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church anyway? Just be with Jesus—forget the church.

A few weeks ago, we talked about the priceless Treasure that someone found and then sold everything to obtain. Where did he find this Treasure?

In the field, it says.

Just before the parable of the treasure, Jesus gave a parable of the wheat and the tares growing in a field. What did the field represent?

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one....
(Matthew 13:38)

“The field,” Christ said, “is the world.” But we must understand this as signifying the **church of Christ in the world**. The parable is a description of that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished through the church. True, the Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men; but it is in the church that we are to grow and ripen for the garner of God.¹⁹³

If the field is the church, and if Christ is received when one takes ownership of the field, and without the field, the Treasure cannot be possessed, does this make the field of great value?

You can't get the treasure without getting the field. The two are inseparably connected. Jesus is closely related to the church, just as the head is related to the body. You can't have one without the other.

And he is the head of the body, the church.... (Colossians 1:18)

Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. **Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.**¹⁹⁴

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:47)

Another **obligation**, too often lightly regarded...is the **obligation** of church relationship [*which means membership*].¹⁹⁵

Could we just replace that word “obligation” with “option”? I don't think so!

193. Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 70.

194. Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 268.

195. Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 268.

Uniting with the church, although an important and *necessary act*, does not make one a Christian nor ensure salvation.¹⁹⁶

What does the word “necessary” mean? A requirement, perhaps? Why is uniting with the church a necessary or required act? Because you cannot have the Head if you reject the body. They go together. Reject one, and you are rejecting the Other. You don’t get the Treasure without the field.

“But I just want to be a part of the invisible church,” you say. All of us should seek to be a part of the *invisible* church. Is the field the invisible church in the parable of the wheat and tares? No, it is not the invisible church because the invisible church has no tares within it. So the church, where there are both wheat and tares, is the *visible* church that we are obligated to unite with.

Now, you don’t have to join the church if you don’t want to. God gives each of us free choice. But you must know that in rejecting membership in God’s church, you are rejecting Jesus. And everyone is free to do that.

But the church has apostate tares within it. Yes, and apostate tares do what tares do, and that is why there is apostasy within the church from the highest levels down. Is God aware of that fact? Did He provide an exemption for membership if tares happen to be in the field? The invisible church is to be part and parcel of the visible church. The invisible church is the wheat that is in the field.

But is the Seventh-day Adventist Church today still God’s visible church on earth, of which we are required to be members? What’s wrong with joining the anti-Trinitarian movement or the Reformed Seventh-day Adventist Church or the Historic Seventh-day Adventist Church or any number of groups who have broken away from the denomination?

196. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 16.

The problem with doing that is that God has forbidden us to go down that path.

I tell you, my brethren, the Lord has an organized body through whom He will work.... When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track.¹⁹⁷

I know that the Lord loves His church. It is not to be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms. There is not the least consistency in this; there is not the least evidence that such a thing will be.¹⁹⁸

We are going to look at an important teaching that you may not have noticed before, found in one of the parables of Jesus.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.... These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. (Matthew 20:1-8, 12)

A few years ago, someone came to me with a message that it was now time to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Why leave the church? On that occasion, it was the trademark issue. Have

197. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, pp. 17, 18.

198. Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 51.

you heard of the trademark issue? That issue is basically this: If you are not officially recognized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, you cannot use anything similar to our name in your outreach work.

Little independent groups here and there have used the words “Seventh-day” and “Adventist” as part of their titles and have been taken to court and ordered not to use these words. These folk are usually conservative Seventh-day Adventists who have left the denomination for various reasons.

Jesus dealt with this issue back in His day.

And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, [*if he doesn't cease and desist from using our name, hire a lawyer; take him to court.*] Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us. (Luke 9:49, 50)

I might not agree with taking these folks to court, but neither can I agree that we should leave the church over this issue.

Some time ago, someone sent me a letter that was calling people out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He said that the Holy Spirit dictated and directed this document. Is it possible to show from the Bible that these folks are wrong? What we are going to look at this morning is what I sent to this man. He respected Ellen White, so I took a couple of insights from the book, *Christ's Object Lessons*.

I believe the vineyard parable holds the key to this issue of separation that these people are promoting. In the first six verses of this parable, we notice five time periods mentioned. In verses 8 and 12, another point in time is alluded to.

Let's list these six clock-time references.

- 1) 1st Hour - Early Morning
- 2) 3rd Hour
- 3) 6th Hour

- 4) 9th Hour
- 5) 11th Hour
- 6) 12th Hour - Evening

What is the meaning of the different hours mentioned in the parable?

Answer: The different hours represent different ages of world history.

Through all ages Christ has come to His people, as He represents Himself in the market place at all hours of the day employing laborers for His vineyard, and He says to them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go labor today in my vineyard."¹⁹⁹

Was it that those called at the ninth hour refused to go when the call went out at the third hour? Not if the different hours indicate different ages.

None of those called later in the day were there in the morning. They had not refused the call.²⁰⁰

Who is represented by the very first group, the early morning laborers?

Answer: The Jews were the early morning laborers.

The Jews had been first called into the Lord's vineyard.²⁰¹

Why did the landowner have to return to the market at the third hour to call another group of laborers into the vineyard? Had He failed to hire enough laborers?

Answer: The chosen laborers were sufficient in number to complete the job. The problem was, they became insubordinate to the Owner, and it became evident that the work would not get done by the end of the day with this work crew.

199. Ellen G. White, Letter 24, 1892, Sept. 19, to Uriah Smith.

200. Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 399.

201. Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 400.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (Matthew 23:37, 38)

In every age there is given to men their day of light and privilege, a probationary time in which they may become reconciled to God. But there is a limit to this grace. Mercy may plead for years and be slighted and rejected; but there comes a time when mercy makes her last plea.... That day had come to Jerusalem. Jesus wept in anguish over the doomed city, but He could not deliver her.²⁰²

What church did God call into the vineyard when it became evident that the Jews would not finish the job? Who might the third-hour laborers represent?

Answer: The Apostolic Church.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. (Romans 11:19–22)

Were the early morning workers thrilled to see the new crew come on the job? The third-hour laborers soon abused “their day of light and privilege.” The work in the vineyard was not going well. What group did God call into the vineyard when the apostolic church apostatized into the papacy? Who might be represented by the sixth-hour laborers?

Answer: The Protestants.

Romanists have persisted in bringing against Protestants the charge of heresy, and willful separation from the true church.

202. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 587.

But these accusations apply rather to themselves. They are the ones who laid down the banner of Christ, and departed from “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”²⁰³

The sixth-hour laborers failed to continue the Reformation. They failed to restore apostolic teachings, clinging to many of the errors of the papacy. They also abused “their day of light and privilege.” The second angel’s message of Revelation 14—Babylon is fallen—refers to the Protestant churches.

What group did the Lord call into the vineyard when the Protestant churches failed to move forward in restoring truth? Who might be represented by the ninth-hour laborers?

Answer: I believe the last three-hour segment of the work day—from 9 to 12 has been given to the prophetic movement God raised up in 1844—the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

There will be no overtime. When the twelfth hour comes, the whistle will blow, probation will end. Will our group succeed where all others have failed? Not without special help. If it were not for intervention right at the eleventh hour, we would fair no better than those who have gone before us. However, at the eleventh hour, two hours into our three-hour shift, a new group unites with the ninth-hour laborers. Taking charge under the power of the Holy Spirit, they lead the ninth-hour laborers through to victory. We who have stood in rank and file amongst the ninth-hour laborers will be put to shame, and because of our failure, we will have to take a back seat to the eleventh-hour workers—the zealous souls that they are. Where did I get that thought from?

Stand out of the way, Brethren. Do not interpose yourselves between God and His work. If you have no burden of the message yourselves, then prepare the way for those who have the burden of the message, for there are many souls to come out of the ranks of the world, out of the churches—even the Catholic church—whose zeal will far exceed that of those who

203. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 51.

have stood in rank and file to proclaim the truth heretofore. For this reason the eleventh hour laborers will receive their penny. These will see the battle coming and will give the trumpet a certain sound. **When the crisis is upon us**, when the season of calamity shall come, they will come to the front, gird themselves with the whole armor of God, and exalt His law, adhere to the faith of Jesus, and maintain the cause of religious liberty which Reformers defended with toil and for which they sacrificed their lives.²⁰⁴

The crisis is the national Sunday law, not a trademark issue or any other degree of apostasy:

The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us.... In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church.²⁰⁵

The crisis of the national Sunday law, coming at the eleventh hour, calls forth the eleventh-hour workers who will bring to completion the work in the vineyard by 12:00—the close of probation.

Those who are calling the ninth-hour laborers to leave the team, proclaiming that the ninth-hour work crew has been fired, are simply not authorized by the “Lord of the vineyard” to do so.

So, patience, my friends; God is in control of the harvest field. At just the right time—11:00—He will bring just what He needs into the field, and the job will be finished.

Before the three-hour probationary period expires on each called-out group of workers, a message is given to them.

To the Jews, the message was given by John the Baptist and Jesus.

To the Apostolic Church that had evolved into the papacy, the message was given by the Reformers.

To the Protestants, the message was given by William Miller and other early Adventists.

204. Ellen G. White, *1888 Materials*, vol. 1, p. 378.

205. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 81, 82.

I saw that God would separate the precious from the vile. There would be truth or something from God to call for a decision. The corrupt have no disposition to receive that call for a decision, but are separated from the precious by the precious receiving this truth by the others neglected.²⁰⁶

I sent the following thoughts to the person who wrote me a couple of weeks ago telling me that we must leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church now—that God is finished with this church. I told him that even though there was backsliding and worldliness amongst the Jewish people, an Israelite would know not to join a separatist movement because of the 70-week probationary period of Daniel 9:24.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. (Daniel 9:24)

They also had the unconditional promise that Shiloh would come before the scepter of authority would depart from Judah.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Genesis 49:10)

Their probationary period was unconditional. Even though there was great apostasy—in offering their children to idols—they were still God’s denominated people.

Think about this: If Peter, James, and John had determined that the Jewish temple system had apostatized so greatly that they needed to remove their names from their local synagogue’s membership list and start a new organization with a new temple headquarters, would their names currently be on three of the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem?

206. Ellen G. White, Letter 15, 1857, to Brother Pierce.

No, they would not be there. Jesus chose disciples who were members of the same apostate Jewish church of which He was a member. This Jewish religious organization had until AD 34 before its probation would be over.

It was vital that they not jump ship no matter the corruption of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and no matter how many man-made traditions or theological assumptions had been voted into their Fundamental Beliefs. These three men would never have been called to join Jesus' band of disciples if they had joined a competing Jewish organization. And thus, they would not have been in that upper room to receive the outpouring of the early rain.

For 33 years, Jesus remained in the Jewish denomination of His day. There were Reformed Jews (Essenes) that He could have joined Himself to, but He stayed with the ship until it was time to leave.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are usually thought to have been produced by a group known as the Essenes. And the Essenes are a group that literally abandoned Jerusalem, it seems, in protest... against the way the Temple was being run. So here's a group that went out in the desert to prepare the way of the Lord, following the commands, as they saw it, of the prophet Isaiah. And they go to the desert to get away from what they see to be the worldliness of Jerusalem and the worldliness of the Temple. Now the Essenes aren't a new group in Jesus' day. They too, had been around for a hundred years at that point in time. But it would appear that the reign of Herod, and probably even more so, the reign of his sons and the Roman Procurators, probably stimulated a new phase of life of the Essene community, rising as a growing protest against Roman rule and worldliness.²⁰⁷

If Jesus had joined Himself with a reformed group and called out disciples from this same reformed group, then He would have set an example for us to follow. If we do choose to follow His

207. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/essenes.html>

example, we will stay with the very organization that He raised up through His chosen prophet.

If we willingly leave this denomination and join a new, competing organization, we would no longer be a part of the church militant that will be transforming into the church triumphant. This is why it is so important for a Seventh-day Adventist today to stay in the vineyard with the ninth-hour labor force.

Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have any unconditional prophecies relating to its continuance as God's denominated, visible church on earth? Yes, it does!

The word "church" can apply either to the visible, organized institution or the invisible church. What's the difference? The invisible church is comprised of only wheat, whereas the visible church has tares amid the wheat.

Which church is referred to in this statement from *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 45?

Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant. We are sorry that there are defective members, that there are tares amid the wheat.²⁰⁸

The "living church," which is the "church militant" in this statement, refers to the visible Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

The tares and wheat are now commingled, but then the one hand that alone can separate them will give to everyone his true position.... The pure ore and the dross will no longer commingle.²⁰⁹

The gold and dross will remain commingled within God's living church until the one hand that alone can separate them will give to everyone his true position.

208. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 45.

209. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 235.

Has God predetermined an objective event that will signal when that time of separation has begun? If so, you can know that any movement of separation from the denomination prior to that event would not be ordained of God.

The time is not far distant when **the test** will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us.... In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church.²¹⁰

What is that test? What is the mark of the beast?

Sundaykeeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath. The time will come when this day will be the test, but that time has not come yet.²¹¹

From our study thus far, we know that the Seventh-day Adventist Church—the institution in its present state where both wheat and tares are commingled—is God’s remnant church.

But the church, defective as it is, and enfeebled with so much chaff, is the only object on earth upon which He bestows His highest regard.²¹²

What happens to the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the Sunday law test takes place? It is at this point that the great separation occurs. The wheat is separated from the chaff.

As the storm approaches, **a large class** who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, **abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.**²¹³

Soon God’s people will be tested by fiery trials, and **the great proportion** of those who now appear to be genuine and true **will prove to be base metal.**²¹⁴

210. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 81, 82.

211. Ellen G. White Comments, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 977.

212. Ellen G. White, Ms 43, 1895, par. 9.

213. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

214. Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 180.

Because this “large class,” this “great proportion,” agrees to honor Sunday as the Sabbath of the Lord, they can still buy and sell. They can still maintain the corporate infrastructure of what was once known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Perhaps it will be renamed as the Adventist Church. Thus the church appears to fall, but, in reality, it does not fall. Unsettling events will transpire at that time. The Sunday law test and the loud cry will cause “tribe after tribe” of other sheep to come in and “company after company” of unfaithful tares to leave (see 8T 41.1).

But that is yet in the future. Today, with the evidence we have just reviewed which supports the prophetic destiny of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we can know that any movement towards drawing apart from the organization is not sanctioned by God.

Let me close with this significant statement:

The work is soon to close. The *members of the church militant* who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant.²¹⁵

Membership in the church militant (the visible church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church—where both the wheat and tares are commingled) is of vital importance. To be proven faithful, we must obey the prophet of God, who clearly indicates that we are to maintain membership in this denomination.

215. Ellen G. White, Letter 32, 1892.

Appendix B

IN THE BEGINNING GOD, PART 1

Note: For those pastors who wish to fortify church members against the anti-Trinitarian movement, I provide four sermons (Appendices B, C, D, and E) on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, showing that, while there are three Persons in the Heavenly Trio, yet, there is only one God, and doing this without resorting to the mystery of the Trinity just as Ellen White was able to do. In her writings, she never once employed the Trinity doctrine (one God is three Persons) in presenting the truth about the personality of God. Ellen White was a monotheist, but in all that she wrote (approximately 100,000 manuscript pages, equivalent to roughly 25 million words), she never came close to declaring that one God is three Persons. Ellen White was neither a semi-Arian nor a Tritheist nor a Trinitarian. From the very beginning of her public ministry, God gave her a biblical view of Himself uniquely different from the common Trinity teachings found in the fallen churches of Babylon.

Sermon Title: In the Beginning God, part 1

Opening Hymn: #92 “This Is My Father’s World”

Scripture: Exodus 20:1–3

Closing Hymn: #21 “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”

This morning we will look more closely at a statement that the author of our Sabbath School Lesson wrote on Wednesday’s lesson, January 12, 2022.

Some think that Jesus was merely the instrument through whom God created. This is not possible. First, for Paul, Jesus is the Lord who created the world; He was not a helper.... The Father created and Jesus created (Heb. 1:2, 10; Heb. 2:10). There is

a perfect agreement between Father and Son in purpose and activity. This is part of the mystery of the Trinity. **Jesus created and God created**, but there is **only One Creator, God**—which implies that Jesus is God.

There is a whole lot to unpack in this paragraph. First of all, I believe that the author is right when he says that there is only one Creator God. He states that the Father created and Jesus created. But we know that there are not two Creator Gods in the universe.

So how is it that one Creator God is actually two divine beings? He says that it is the mystery of the Trinity that explains it all. Let's see if the Word of God can unravel this mystery for us.

We'll first go to the story of Moses and Aaron. Moses was Aaron's little brother who had fled to Midian after killing that Egyptian. He had been herding sheep for the past forty years when God appeared to him. Open your Bibles to Exodus 3.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. (Exodus 3:1–5)

Then the Lord proceeded to tell him that it was time for him to return to Egypt to free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. How did Moses respond? We'll pick up the story in verse 10 of Chapter 4:

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, who hath made man's mouth?

Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. **And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.** (Exodus 4:10–16)

Get the picture here: Moses would be to Aaron instead of, or in the place of, God. Aaron would be the mouth of Moses, his spokesman.

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. **Thou shalt speak** all that I command thee: and **Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh**, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. (Exodus 7:1, 2)

A prophet of God is a person who speaks on behalf of God. Aaron is going to be a prophet of Moses, and Moses is going to be “instead of God” to both Aaron and Pharaoh. Jesus, who speaks on behalf of His Father, is called a Prophet in Acts 3:22. Aaron would be the word of Moses just as Jesus is the Word of God. So when Moses and Aaron stood in the palace of Pharaoh, Aaron was vocalizing the words of Moses. Were they Aaron’s words, or were they Moses’ words? Who was speaking to Pharaoh? Moses or Aaron? It was Aaron’s lips that were moving, but they were the words of Moses. Aaron was simply an echo of Moses’ words.

Moses and Aaron were much like me and my Ukrainian translators. Ukraine has been in the news lately. I’ve taken five trips to Ukraine, and each time we would raise up a new church. The green circles on the screen are where we established churches: Mukacheve, Lviv, Lutsk, Donetsk, and Yalta. In each city, my

translator would put up posters around the city like this one. These Ukrainian characters say, “John Witcombe.” The halls would be packed with visitors. We would have two weeks to establish a new church of 60 to 80 new members. At the end of those two weeks, these former communist atheists were so happy to become Seventh-day Adventist members.

Here is a picture of two of my translators, Volodia and Natalie. Notice that Volodia is doing the talking in this picture. In this next picture, I am doing the talking. I was the advertised speaker. There were two of us up front at the podium. But there were not two evangelists. I was the evangelist. My translator was simply my echo. He was my English thoughts made audible in the Russian or Ukrainian language.

Now, with these two illustrations in mind, I have a question for you regarding Exodus 20:1. It says: “And **God spake all these words**, saying...” Who is this God that spake all these words? The first commandment says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before *me*” (Exodus 20:3). In this commandment, to whom is the singular pronoun “me” referring?

We want to positively identify the Lawgiver that is speaking in Exodus 20:3. Who is the Lawgiver?

The **Lord Jesus Christ** is our judge and **our lawgiver**.²¹⁶

In this next statement, we see that God the Father is clearly identified as the lawgiver:

God is a moral governor as well as a **Father**. **He is the Lawgiver**. He makes and executes His laws.²¹⁷

So Jesus is the lawgiver, and the Father is the lawgiver. And yet, there is only one lawgiver, according to James 4:12.

There is **one lawgiver**, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

216. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 7, 1902.

217. Ellen G. White, Ms. 5, 1876.

There is only one Lawgiver even though both the Father and the Son have the title, “Lawgiver.” What actually happened on Mount Sinai resolves this question as to how one lawgiver is actually two divine beings.

Who vocalized or spoke these words on Mount Sinai? Who vocalized the words to Pharaoh? Aaron was the word of Moses, was he not?

The Bible calls the Son of God, “the Word of God.” What does that mean—“Word of God”? Who is “God” in this phrase—“Word of God”? It is the Father. Jesus is “the Word” of the Father. When the Son speaks, it is actually His Father who is speaking through His Son, just as it was Moses who was speaking through Aaron.

As the “Word of God,” Jesus vocalized the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. But it was God who was speaking through His Son. So the “me” in the first commandment would be referring to God the Father, who is speaking through His Son.

The following statements reveal this truth. Carefully follow the pronouns in this statement:

In the councils of heaven it was determined that there must be given to mankind a living exemplification of the law. Having decided to make this great sacrifice, **God** [*the Father*] left nothing obscure, nothing indefinite, in regard to the salvation of the human race. **He** gave to mankind a standard by which to form character. **With an audible voice and in awful grandeur He spoke His law from Mount Sinai.** Distinctly **He** stated what we must do in order to render acceptable obedience to **Him**, and what we must not do if we remain loyal to **His** law... So deep was the **Lord's** interest in the beings **He** had created, so great **His** love for the world, “that **he** gave **his** *only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” [John 3:16.]²¹⁸

218. Ellen G. White, Ms. 48, 1893, May 8.

Did you catch that? The Father spoke with an audible voice on Mount Sinai. Take a look at this next statement:

When the law was spoken, **the Lord, the Creator** of heaven and earth, **stood by the side of his Son**, enshrouded in the fire and the smoke on the mount.... What condescension was this, that **the infinite God should stand side by side with his Son**, while the law, which is the foundation of his government, was given. He would give his people an intelligent knowledge of his will. He does not command men to obey him when they do not understand what he requires. Here was displayed his wisdom, power, and love. **Man was so dear to the Creator of the world that he spoke to him through Jesus Christ, with an audible voice**, giving unmistakable evidence of his presence and majesty.²¹⁹

Moses spoke to Pharaoh with an audible voice, but he spoke those words through Aaron's voice. God the Father spoke His law on Mount Sinai with an audible voice, but He spoke those words through His Son's voice. The Son is the Word of God. One Lawgiver—two divine Beings who bear the title "Lawgiver." The oneness of the "Lawgiver" relates to the fact that the Father is speaking through His Son.

Within the holy of holies, in the sanctuary in heaven, the divine law is sacredly enshrined—**the law that was spoken by God Himself** amid the thunders of Sinai and written with His own finger on the tables of stone.²²⁰

The ten holy precepts spoken by Christ upon Sinai's mount were the revelation of the character of God, and made known to the world the fact that He had jurisdiction over the whole human heritage.²²¹

Who is Christ?—He is the only begotten Son of the living God. He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought,—**as a thought made audible**. Christ is the Word of God. Christ said

219. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Oct. 15, 1896.

220. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 433.

221. Ellen G. White, Letter 89, 1898, Oct. 30, to J. E. White.

to Philip, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” **His words were the echo of God’s words.**²²²

From these statements, we conclude that when Christ declared, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” those spoken words were but an echo of His Father’s voice. The source of those words was the Father. An echo is never the source of a sound. So the “me” referred to in the first commandment is referencing the Father. With this insight we have just looked at, let’s go back to what we read as we began this lesson. Open your Bibles to Exodus 3.

And the **angel of the LORD** appeared unto him in a flame of fire.... (Exodus 3:2)

Jesus is this “angel of the LORD,” which means “messenger of the LORD”; the LORD is His Father.

And when the **LORD** saw that he turned aside to see, **God** called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. (Exodus 3:4)

Notice that it says LORD and not the angel of the LORD, and then it uses the name “God.” That would be God the Father speaking through His Son, the angel of the LORD, just as He did when giving the law on this same mountain where Moses is at this very moment standing.

And then this whole truth of the oneness of Father and Son that is playing out there at the burning bush where the Father is speaking to Moses through His Son would be illustrated in the instructions that were given to Moses:

And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. (Exodus 4:16)

Let’s review what we’ve considered so far. Just as there was one evangelist while two were standing at the podium, and just as

222. Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, June 28, 1894.

there was one spokesman for God standing before Pharaoh—and that spokesman was Moses—while two were standing before Pharaoh, so also is there one lawgiver, while two were standing side by side on Mount Sinai. We could say that there is *one Lawgiver*, and that is God the Father speaking through His Son, the Word of God.

This one Lawgiver is not two Persons in one being. No, we see how this truth that there is only one Lawgiver played out on Mount Sinai. The Father spoke His law through His Son. It all has to do with the oneness of the Father with His Son. This oneness was explained to Philip:

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:8–11)

But this oneness does not make one person from two divine beings.

Christ is one with the Father, but Christ and God are two distinct personages.²²³

Ellen White does not want us to equate their oneness with there being one mysterious divine being or personage. And what does their oneness mean to us?

Christ's oneness with the Father brings us into close union, through the Son of God, with the Father.²²⁴

Let me wrap this up with one more quick review. Because the Son spoke His Father's words, as the Word of God, He can rightfully

223. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 1, 1905.

224. Ellen G. White, *1888 Materials*, p. 869.

be called the Lawgiver just as His Father is called the Lawgiver. But we don't have two Lawgivers. There is only *one Lawgiver* as James 4:12 so clearly states this truth: "There is one lawgiver...."

This leads us to a most significant truth of God's Word regarding the person of God, and that is this: While each of the three members of the heavenly trio, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are each truly God in infinity, there is only one God. Talk about a mysterious head-scratcher! In part two of this two-part sermon, we will unravel this mystery.

Today we laid an important foundation for understanding this truth regarding the person of God. This truth about the person or personality of God is a fundamental pillar of our church.

Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the **pillars of our faith** concerning the sanctuary, or concerning the **personality of God or of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor.²²⁵

This pillar of our faith concerning the person of God and of His Son needs to be standing tall in our church.

And while the Scriptures are God's Word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves **one pillar of the foundation** that God has sustained these fifty years, is **a great mistake**. He who makes such an application knows not the wonderful demonstration of the Holy Spirit that gave power and force to the past messages that have come to the people of God.²²⁶

This topic that we are looking at this morning is a pillar of our church and has to do with our salvation.

225. Ellen G. White, Ms. 62, 1905, May 24.

226. Ellen G. White, Letter 329, 1905, Dec. 11, to J. A. Burden.

A knowledge of God and of Christ is **positively essential to salvation.**²²⁷

The knowledge of God and Christ lies at the foundation of all knowledge.²²⁸

Next week we will build upon what we've looked at this morning and resolve the mystery of the lesson quarterly regarding how both the Father and the Son have the title Creator, and yet there is only one Creator God.

227. Ellen G. White, Letter 191, 1901, May 16, to W. L. Hoover.

228. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1890.

Appendix C

IN THE BEGINNING GOD, PART 2

Sermon Title: In the Beginning God, part 2

Opening Hymn: #1 “Praise to the Lord”

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, 27

Closing Hymn: 86 “How Great Thou Art”

Last week we reviewed a statement that the author of our Sabbath School lesson shared in the January 12, 2022, reading.

Jesus created and God created, but there is **only One Creator, God**—which implies that Jesus is God.

I stated that I believed the author was right when he said there is only one Creator God. He writes that the Father created and that Jesus created. But we know there are not two separate, independent Creator Gods in the Universe. The lesson’s author also states that it is not possible that God created through Jesus. Let’s find out what the Bible has to say about all this.

In the beginning **God** created the heaven and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1)

Okay, but who is this Creator God that Genesis 1:1 introduces to us? Is He the Father, or is He the Son, or is He the Trinity’s three-in-one God?

The singular personal pronouns *he* and *his* are used in verses 5, 10, 16, 27, and 31. Verse 5 says, “And God called the light Day, and the darkness **he** called Night.” From these verses, we see that this God is a personal God because the personal singular pronouns *he* and *his* are used. But, in verse 26, the word “God” is used with plural pronouns.

And **God said**, Let **us** make man in our image, after **our** likeness.... (Genesis 1:26)

Who is “God” in this verse? To whom is He talking? Who are the “us” and “our” in this verse? Can anyone venture an answer?

Here is an inspired commentary on this verse:

After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, **the Father and Son** carried out their purpose, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. **They had wrought together** in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. And now **God says to his Son**, “Let us make man in our image.”²²⁹

So who is “God” in Genesis 1:26? The name “God” has been referring to the Father in all of Genesis, Chapter 1. But as we saw in our sermon last week, the Father speaks through His Son just as Moses spoke to Pharaoh through Aaron.

By the **word of the LORD** were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.... For **he spake**, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. (Psalms 33:6, 9)

Who is “the Word of the LORD”? It is Jesus. In this passage, the Father is speaking this world into existence through His Son. The Bible says that God the Father is the mighty Creator who does all His creating through His Son.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by **his Son**, whom **he** hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom** also **he** [*God the Father*] **made the worlds**. (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

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

But to us there is but **one God, the Father, of whom** [*source*] are all things, and we in him; and **one Lord Jesus Christ, by**

229. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 9, 1879.

whom [or *through whom—the channel*] are all things, and we by him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

The **Father**, the omniscient One, created the world *through* Christ Jesus.²³⁰

Through Christ the Word, a **personal God** created man and endowed him with intelligence and power.²³¹

That is precisely why Genesis 1 uses *personal* singular pronouns.

Because God created all things through His Son, we can rightly call Jesus our Creator, as Hebrews declares:

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. (Hebrews 1:10)

The context of this verse clearly identifies the Lord as being Jesus.

Our Creator is Jesus Christ. He is the Author of our being. He has created the human structure.²³²

So the Father is our Creator, and the Son is our Creator. But as the author of our Sabbath School lesson stated, there is only one Creator God. How do you figure? The Bible teaches us that the Father is the Creator, and He creates all things through His Associate, His only begotten Son; thus, Jesus is also called our Creator.

The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings.... The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. “By Him were all things created,... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.” Colossians 1:16.²³³

230. Ellen G. White, Letter 253, 1903, Nov. 20, to J. H. Kellogg.

231. Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, p. 415.

232. Ellen G. White, Ms. 49, 1897, May 19.

233. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

The human family's unique ability to procreate would illustrate this truth that the Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all things. Notice this fact of biology that was discovered around 100 years ago.

Females have two X chromosomes in their cells, while males have X and Y chromosomes in their cells. Egg cells contain an X chromosome, while sperm cells contain an X or a Y chromosome. This arrangement means that during fertilization, it is the male that determines the sex of the offspring.²³⁴

Adam would procreate new life *through* his wife. Eve would procreate nothing on her own. Eve would be the one through whom new life would be produced per Adam's biological instructions. Fascinating how God set this all up.

Now that we can clearly see that there is only one Creator God and that He is the Sovereign of the Universe who created through His Son, I want to highlight the fact that there is only one Saviour.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.** (Luke 2:11)

Jesus is clearly our Saviour. But now, who is our Saviour in the following passage, the Father or the Son?

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of **God our Saviour**, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.... (1 Timothy 1:1)

This verse says that the Father is our Saviour. The following passage teaches us that both God the Father *and* Jesus Christ are our Saviour:

But after that the kindness and love of **God our Saviour** toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to *his* mercy *he* saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which *he* shed

234. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcell.2019.00388/full>

on us abundantly through **Jesus Christ our Saviour...** (Titus 3:4–6)

After it mentions “God our Saviour,” the passage then uses personal pronouns that refer back to God as our Saviour. These pronouns lead to the statement that “he,” “God our Saviour,” saved us through “Jesus Christ our Saviour.” So the divine person referred to as “God our Saviour” cannot be the same person as the person referred to as “Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Indeed, God the Father is our Saviour, and His Son is our Saviour. The Father saved us by giving His only begotten Son so that we might not perish but have everlasting life.

In review, we do not have two Creators. God the Father is the Creator and creates everything *through* His Son. Thus, Christ is truly our Creator. But He is not an independent Creator. He does nothing of Himself alone. Christ carries out the will of His Father.

Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. **His Son would carry out His will and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father’s will would be fulfilled in Him.**²³⁵

Just as there are not two separate independent Creators, so there are not two separate independent Saviours.

A compact was entered into by the Father and the Son to **save** the world *through* Christ, who would give Himself that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.²³⁶

God the Father was in Christ, His Son, reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19).

But they can each individually be called our Creator, and each individually can be called our Saviour. Don’t miss this amazing

235. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 9, 1879, Art. B.

236. Ellen G. White, Ms. 16, 1890.

truth: the Father was in His Son. Let me fix this truth in our minds with the following statements:

God's love for the world was not manifest because He sent His Son, but because He loved the world He sent His Son into the world that divinity clothed with humanity might touch humanity, while divinity lay hold of infinity. Though sin had produced a gulf between man and his God, divine benevolence provided a plan to bridge that gulf. And what material did He use? **A part of Himself.** The brightness of the Father's glory came to a world all seared and marred with the curse, and in His own divine character, in His own divine body, bridged the gulf and opened a channel of communication between God and man.²³⁷

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.²³⁸

In some way which we cannot comprehend, the Father was truly in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

But in His infinite love and mercy, the Creator sacrificed Himself. **In His Son, God Himself** bore the penalty of transgression....²³⁹

That this redemption might be ours, **God withheld not even the sacrifice of Himself. He gave Himself in His Son.** The Father suffered with Christ in all His humiliation and agony.²⁴⁰

Yes, God the Father was present with His Son, reconciling the world unto Himself.

Let's review what we've looked at so far. There is only one Creator God, even though both the Father and the Son have the title "Creator." There is only one Saviour, even though both the Father and the Son have the title "Saviour." And last week, we discovered

237. Ellen G. White, Letter 36a, 1890, Sept. 18, to J. S. Washburn.

238. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 27, 1893.

239. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 4, 1908.

240. Ellen G. White, Ms. 21, 1900, Feb. 16.

that there is only one Lawgiver, even though both the Father and the Son have the title “Lawgiver.”

This leads us to a most significant truth of God’s Word regarding the personality of God. In fact, it is the cardinal point of this two-part sermon, and that is this: **While each of the three members of the Heavenly Trio, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are truly God, there is only one God.**

First of all, here are the Bible verses that tell us plainly and explicitly that there is only one God:

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

One God and **Father** of all, who is above all...
(Ephesians 4:6)

For there is **one God** [*which would be the Father*], and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus....
(1 Timothy 2:5)

We can see that the *one God* of the Bible is clearly identified as the Father. But Jesus is also God, as we see in John and in Hebrews:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1, 2)

But unto the **Son** he saith, Thy throne, **O God**, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. (Hebrews 1:8)

How can Christ be God and the Father be God and yet there is only one God? Has anyone here wrestled with this question before? Here is a simple explanation:

In Genesis 5:2, God called both Adam and Eve by one name—Adam:

Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and *called their name Adam*, in the day when they were created. (Genesis 5:2)

Though there was only one Adam in person, yet there were two who were called Adam because they were one in reference to their human, finite nature.

Though there is only one God in person, and that one God is the Father, as the Bible plainly declares, yet both the Father and His Son are called God because they are one with reference to their divine, infinite nature.

In the beginning was the Word, and the **Word was with God, and the Word was God**. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1, 2)

Let me apply John 1:1, 2 to Adam and Eve and see if this brings more clarity to this significant passage:

In the beginning was Eve, and Eve was with Adam, and Eve was Adam. The same was in the beginning with Adam.

Eve was not Adam in personality. The man alone was Adam in personality. However, Eve was indeed Adam in nature.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, *is truly God in infinity, but **not** in personality.*²⁴¹

Note: Ellen White uses the word “personality” as defined in the dictionary of her day: “That which constitutes an individual a distinct person, or that which constitutes individuality.”²⁴²

So Jesus is *not* God in personality, just as Eve was not Adam in personality. It is His Father alone who is God in personality or in personhood. Jesus, the eternal Son of this one God, is truly God *in infinity*. That means that in His very nature, in His attributes, He is a divine being, exactly as is His Father. And this divine nature is called God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

241. Ellen G. White, Ms. 116, 1905, Dec. 16.

242. *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*.

are all God in infinity or in nature, just as Adam, Eve, and their children were all Adam in nature.

There was only one Adam personality, just as there was only one Adam nature.

We could rightfully say the following:

There is one Adam: husband (Adam), wife (Eve), and children (Cain and Abel), a family of four persons. Adam (human nature) is mortal, and limited in power and knowledge. Those who are Adam in nature are finite and dependent upon God for everything.

In this statement, Adam is not a person or a personality. Adam is the name God gave to identify the nature of mankind.

Just as there is only one human nature identified as Adam, so there is only one divine nature identified as God. The confusing aspect of all this is the fact that the word *Adam* also is the given name of a specific person, just as the word *God* is also the name of the Father.

The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy use the word *God* to signify the person of the Father *and* to identify the divine nature. There are only these two meanings, as we have just noted. Theologians decided that we needed one more meaning for the word *God*. They say that the phrase *one God* also identifies a singular mysterious divine Trinitarian being²⁴³ who is composed of three divine persons. Since its introduction into the church in the fourth century, this made-up definition has been the cause of significant turmoil. Our Fundamental Belief #2 reflects this third definition:

There is **one God**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal 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. God,

243. "God has revealed his nature as a Trinity, that is, three coeternal persons, who, though distinct, constitute The one Divine Trinitarian being." *Reflections*, Biblical Research Institute Newsletter, July 2008.

who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.

Because this *one God* is given personality by using the personal pronouns, **He** and **His**, this *one God* should only be referring to the Father. If the *one God* was speaking of the divine nature that is shared alike by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then singular, personal pronouns would have to be removed.

Also, what can be somewhat confusing, is the fact that Jesus shares His Father's name. God said that His name is in His Son:

Behold, I send an Angel [the "Angel of the Covenant," the Lord Jesus Christ; "angel" means "messenger"] before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: **for my name is in him.** (Exodus 23:20, 21)

Isaiah provides a couple of God's names that are in His Son: "The mighty God, The everlasting Father."

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Are there two everlasting Fathers in the Universe? No, just as there are not two Gods. The Son bears His Father's name. There is only one everlasting Father and only one God. Jesus bears His Father's name because He is one with God.

The Bible says the Father is the only true God.

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

In the following quotation, it appears that Ellen White is saying that Jesus is the only true God.

You left your friends and comfortable homes and came to teach me how to find Jesus *and believe in Him as the only true God.*²⁴⁴

Are there two only true Gods? Notice how this apparent contradiction is resolved by this next statement:

The Father was represented in Christ, and the attention in education must be of that character that they will look to Him *and believe in Him as the likeness of God.*²⁴⁵

Jesus is the very likeness of God the Father. And thus, Jesus is the only true God just as He is “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). The Son of God is entitled to all these appellations. The Father says that His name is in His Son (Exodus 23:21).

When you read the word “God” in the Bible, it is generally referring to God the Father in person. Here are just twelve of the many references where “God” is identified as the “Father”:

Grace be unto you, and peace, from **God our Father**, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:3)

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

Grace be to you and peace from **God the Father**, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2)

Grace, mercy, and peace, from **God our Father** and Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2)

Grace, mercy, and peace, from **God the Father**, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 1:4)

244. Ellen G. White, Ms 25, 1896, par. 34.

245. Ellen G. White, Lt67-1895.4.

So, when you read the word “God,” as in the expression, “In the beginning God,” or in the phrase, “For God so loved the world,” think of a personal, loving Father who is very engaged with His children down here on planet earth. He engages with us through His Son and through His Spirit because sin has separated God the Father and mankind. Jesus is the bridge between us and the Father. Someday we are going to see the Father face to face.

The oneness of God is not a oneness of person. Here is the only way in which God and Christ are one:

They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, **but not in person.** It is thus that God and Christ are one.²⁴⁶

From my girlhood I have been given plain instruction that **God is a person,** and that Christ is “the express image of His person” [Hebrews 1:3].²⁴⁷

This is the simple teaching of the Bible. The unity and oneness of the Godhead in purpose, mind, character, and nature resolve the mystery as to how the Father and His eternal Son can both carry the titles “Creator,” “Lawgiver,” “Saviour,” and “God” and yet there be only one God—the Father, who does all things through His Son.

246. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 269.

247. Ellen G. White, Ms. 137, 1903, Nov. 12.

Appendix D

WHOSE SON IS HE?

Sermon Title: Whose Son Is He?

Opening Hymn: #341 “To God Be the Glory”

Scripture: John 3:16

Closing Hymn: #240 “Fairest Lord Jesus”

Whose Son Is He? This seems like it would be an easy question to answer. But as you will see in a moment, this question has been most difficult for some. Practically every doctrinal truth found in the Bible has been mixed with error and is being presented as truth by the Christian denominations. The day of rest, the state of the dead, the second coming of Jesus, salvation, the law of God, the Godhead, hell—the enemy has distorted all these Bible doctrines.

Before the return of Jesus, God would restore these Bible truths and raise up a movement that would present these truths to the world. Our pioneers studied and discovered these doctrines under the special guidance of God’s messenger. Our understanding of the Bible’s major doctrines differed from the evangelical churches of that day. Besides the Sabbath, the state of the dead, and hell, we also viewed the doctrine of the Godhead differently from much of Christianity.

The question is: Whose Son Is He? This, of course, was clearly answered in the Scripture reading, John 3:16. Besides answering the question of Sonship, this text also describes your value before God. The purchase price of your redemption is disclosed: God gave His only begotten Son. The more we learn about the Son of God, the greater our understanding of the price paid for our redemption will be, and the more we can appreciate the love of the Father in giving up His Son.

“For God so loved the world that He *gave*...” That word “gave” begs to be explored. One cannot give what one does not possess. A few years ago, I was asked the question: “Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?” I could answer it because I had the authority to give my daughter’s hand in marriage.

When I was in Ukraine on a mission trip, I gave my digital camera for use in the work there, and, on another mission trip to Nicaragua, I gave my computer to help out in the work there. That was okay for me to do because those were my possessions, and I had the right to do with them as I pleased.

In Honduras, we gave our church’s projector to the work. That was not ours to give. And, therefore, by giving that which was not ours, we assumed the responsibility of replacing the item, which we did.

What was the Father and Son’s relationship that allowed the Father to *give* the Son? Open your Bibles to Matthew 21, and we will look at an incident in the life of Jesus that will shed light on this question.

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things?** and **who gave thee this authority?** (Matthew 21:23)

What “things” were they referring to?

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves. (Matthew 21:12)

He had just cleansed the temple, and they were incensed and demanded an answer to their question, “Who gave thee this authority?” In other words, from whence does your authority derive? This was a very significant question. Why is it significant?

This was the very issue over which the great controversy began. Lucifer came to the place where he was no longer willing to submit to the authority of the Son of God. Rebellion in the universe, the great controversy between Christ and Satan, began over this issue—the authority of Christ. It was a matter of a power struggle with Lucifer.

Satan in Heaven, before his rebellion, was a high and exalted angel, next in honor to God's dear Son.... A special light beamed in his countenance, and shone around him brighter and more beautiful than around the other angels; yet Jesus, God's dear Son, had the preeminence over all the angelic host. He was one with the Father before the angels were created. Satan was envious of Christ, and gradually assumed command which devolved on Christ alone. The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon his Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by himself that Christ, his Son, should be equal with himself; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was as his own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was his Son to work in union with himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out his will and his purposes, but would do nothing of himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in him. Satan was envious and jealous of Jesus Christ.... Why should Christ thus be honored before himself?... There was contention among the angels. Satan and his sympathizers were striving to reform the government of God. They were discontented and unhappy because they could not look into his unsearchable wisdom and ascertain his purposes in exalting his Son Jesus, and endowing him with such unlimited power and command. They rebelled against the authority of the Son.²⁴⁸

Satan tried unsuccessfully to get Jesus to bow to his authority in the wilderness of temptation. Jesus knew the priests and elders

248. Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 17–22.

weren't ready or able to hear the answer to their question: "Who gave thee this authority?" Continuing in Matthew 21, we read:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. (Matthew 21:24–27)

After the question about authority, Jesus gave two stories with a common thread running through them. Even though Jesus would not directly answer their question, we can discover the answer to their question in that common thread.

The first story: Matthew 21:33–38.

Hear another parable: There was a certain **householder**, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them **his son**, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

The second story: Matthew 22:1–3.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain **king**, which made a marriage for **his son**, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

What is the common thread in both? Each story has a father and a son as the main characters. How do these stories relate to the original question, “Who gave thee this authority?” Jesus brings closure to the issue by asking them one of His most significant questions ever asked:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions. (Matthew 22:41–46)

They could have gotten the answer from Proverbs 30:4.

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

However, they answered, “David’s son.” Did Jesus agree with their answer? They were partly right. But Christ is far more than David’s son. Christ is *God’s Son*. The very idea that the living God has a Son was a truth revealed by the Father Himself:

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 16:15–17)

Lucifer, while still a citizen of heaven, knew who the Son of God was, but came to resent His authority. Lucifer wanted the position that Christ had.

Satan was envious of Christ, and gradually assumed command which devolved on Christ alone.²⁴⁹

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:13, 14)

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way. (Psalms 2:11, 12)

Lucifer was not willing to kiss the Son, so to speak. He rebelled against the authority structure of God's government. An authority structure in heaven? Yes, indeed.

Satan sought to undermine the confidence of the angels in God's government. He desired the place occupied by Christ, having it in his mind, if he gained this position, to make an effort to take the place of God.²⁵⁰

For the Scriptures say, "God has given Christ authority over all things." (Of course, when it says "authority over all things," it does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority). Then, when he has conquered all things, the Son will present himself to God, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. (1 Corinthians 15:27, 28; *New Living Translation*)

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

An organizational flow chart would place God at the top; the Son of God would be next in authority.

The Son of God was **next in authority** to the great Lawgiver.²⁵¹

249. Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 17.

250. Ellen G. White, Ms37-1903.8.

251. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1872.

Well, Lucifer, he was striving; he had glory in the heavenly courts, but he was striving for **Christ's place next to God**. Next he wanted to be God, but he could not obtain that.²⁵²

His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host.²⁵³

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be **equal with God**. (Philippians 2:5, 6)

Next in authority but yet equal? This was a hard concept for Lucifer and many of the angels to grasp. And so God created man to illustrate this concept. Mankind would be created in the image of God. We would teach angels how this concept works. A husband and wife are entirely equal. So equal are they that they are considered one flesh.

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

At the same time, the wife is next in authority to her husband.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.... (1 Peter 3:1)

...and the head of the woman is the man.... (1 Corinthians 11:3)

Why did God establish it so here on planet earth?

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head [*be in subjection*] **because of the angels**. (1 Corinthians 11:10)

Why is the man to be the head of the home? Because of the angels. The relationship between a husband and wife illustrates the relationship between the Father and His Son—a relationship questioned by many of the angels. We would demonstrate how two can be one—how two can be equals while, at the same time, one is subordinate to the other.

252. Ellen G. White, Ms86-1910.29.

253. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 9, 1879.

From the child's point of view, both Mom and Dad have equal authority. Likewise, from our perspective, the authority of the Father and His Son are totally equal. As we read earlier, "The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He [*the Father*] had invested with authority to command the heavenly host."

It was a very significant question Jesus asked, "Whose Son is the Christ?" As a teenager, I asked a professor at Walla Walla University this question. In essence, here is the answer I received:

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan.²⁵⁴

What do you think of that answer? I thought about this answer and figured they must have drawn straws to see who would take the Son role.

The Sabbath School lesson for April 10, 2008, suggests this concept for their roles:

But imagine a situation in which the Being we have come to know as God the Father came to die for us, and the One we have come to know as Jesus stayed back in heaven. Nothing would have changed, except that we would have been calling Each by the name we now use for the Other.

In other words, in this explanation, God isn't really the Father of Christ. They are only pretending to be related in this way simply for our benefit. I object to this speculative view on the doctrine of God. This is not what I see in Scripture or the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Ellen White wrote:

God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal

254. Frank Holbrook, *These Times*, June 1, 1981, p. 28.

with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son.²⁵⁵

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father....²⁵⁶

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.... (John 3:16)

There never was a time when Jesus was not God's only begotten Son. God gave His Son—an unbelievable sacrifice for the Father. Whose Son is He? He is the Father's Son. Possessed by the Father, as we see in Proverbs 8.

And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting.... When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22–30.²⁵⁷

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Why would we attempt to take away the impact of the Father giving up His dear Son to save us from perishing by saying that He wasn't really His Son—they were just acting out assumed roles? No, God wants us to know how much He truly loves us. He could not have given a greater gift. The fact that He was willing to give His only begotten Son demonstrates His incomprehensible love.

We see that our heavenly Father placed such value upon man, although he had fallen by transgression, that He consented to give **His darling Son** to a life of self-denial, a life of self-sacrifice, a life of shame and an ignominious death, that He might save the fallen race. And the apostle John calls upon us to behold this love.²⁵⁸

255. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 268.

256. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Apr. 1906.

257. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

258. Ellen G. White, Ms. 16, 1887, May 22.

Said the angel, "Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give **His darling Son** to die for them.²⁵⁹

Yes, indeed. Jesus is the *darling Son of God*, as inspiration tells us.

We have such a precious Saviour. He is so, so loved by His Father. God struggled in giving His Son for guilty sinners such as we are. Yet He loved us and knew we would perish if He should withhold His only begotten Son whom He loved. And in giving His Son, He gave Himself.

That this redemption might be ours, **God withheld not even the sacrifice of Himself. He gave Himself in His Son.** The Father suffered with Christ in all His humiliation and agony. He suffered as He saw the Son of His love despised and rejected by those whom He came to elevate, ennoble, and save. He saw Him hanging upon the cross, mocked and jeered at by the passers by, and He hid as it were His face from Him. He saw Christ bearing the sin of the world and dying in the sinner's stead. The human heart knows the love of a parent for his child. We know what a mother's love will do and suffer for her beloved one. But never can the heart of man fathom the depths of God's self-sacrifice.²⁶⁰

O, the cross, the cross! It is set up that we may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Only the cross can measure the length and breadth, the depth and height, of infinite love, **the greatness of the Father's sacrifice** for lost humanity.²⁶¹

259. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 127.

260. Ellen G. White, Ms21-1900.11.

261. Ellen G. White, Ms21-1900.12.

Appendix E

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Sermon Title: The Holy Spirit

Opening Hymn: #264 “O for That Flame of Living Fire”

Scripture: John 14:16–18

Closing Hymn: #260 “Hover O’er Me, Holy Spirit”

A couple of months ago, I presented a two-part sermon on the Father and His Son. This morning we will turn our attention to the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, He goes by several names—the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Spirit.

He is first mentioned in the second verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:2.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And **the Spirit of God** moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

From our two-part sermon titled “In the Beginning God,” do you recall which member of the Heavenly Trio was identified as God in Genesis 1:1?

Yes, we saw that “God,” in Genesis, chapter 1, is clearly the Father. So when it says, “the Spirit *of* God,” who is “God” in this phrase?

That’s right—“God” is the Father, so we could rightfully say that it was *the Spirit of the Father* that moved upon the face of the waters.

Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit as being the Spirit of the Father:

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but **the Spirit of your Father** which speaketh in you. (Matthew 10:19, 20)

The Holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of His [*God’s*] Son”:

And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son** into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Galatians 4:6)

The name “Spirit of God” is used 26 times in the Bible. The name “Spirit of Christ” is used two times in the Bible, and the names “the Holy Spirit” and “the Holy Ghost” are used 96 times in the Bible. These are the descriptive names given to identify the third person of the Godhead.

Here is the statement on the Holy Spirit which is featured in our 28 Fundamental Beliefs:

5. God the Holy Spirit

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ’s life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth.

This fundamental belief highlights the great importance of the work of the Holy Spirit. Without His conviction working upon our conscience, none of us would have any inclination to appreciate the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. We want to understand all that the Word of God reveals regarding who He is and how we can experience His work more fully.

What is the relationship of the Spirit of God to the Father and to the Son? Some in our church teach that way back in eternity past, three divine beings existed who decided at some point in time that they would appoint for themselves metaphorical terms to represent roles that they each would play so that future human beings would be able to relate to them.

Here is what some scholars say:

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, **They also took certain positions or roles** to carry out the provisions of the plan.²⁶²

The term “Son” is used **metaphorically** when applied to the Godhead.²⁶³

In the plan of salvation each member of the Trinity has accepted a particular *role*. It is a role for the purpose of accomplishing a particular goal, not a change in essence or status.²⁶⁴

In other words, the following is what they are teaching:

1. **God**
2. **God**
3. **God**

...at some point in time, transitioned into...

1. **God** the Father
2. **God** the Son
3. **God** the Holy Spirit

I do not find this role-playing concept to be taught anywhere in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. With this concept, a person might think that there are three supreme Gods ruling the universe. We call this concept Tritheism or Polytheism.

This is the biblical phraseology used for the Heavenly Trio:

1. **God** the Father
2. Son **of God**
3. Spirit **of God**

Using Biblical terminology, it is clear that there is only one God, and that this one God is the Father. Christ is the Son of this one God, and the Spirit is the Spirit of this one God.

262. Frank Holbrook, *These Times*, June 1, 1981, p. 28.

263. Ángel Rodríguez, *Adventist World*, Nov. 2015, p. 42.

264. Gerhard Pfandl, Biblical Research Institute, *THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE*, June 1999.

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. **Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.** (Isaiah 44:8)

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, **that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.** (Isaiah 45:5, 6)

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

Have we not all **one father?** hath not **one God** created us?
(Malachi 2:10)

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is **one God;** and there is **none other but he.**
(Mark 12:32)

Seeing it is **one God,** which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. (Romans 3:30)

For there is **one God,** and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)

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

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

Is the Spirit of God a different person from the Spirit of Christ?

No, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ refer to one person: the Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the Godhead. The Bible uses the two terms interchangeably:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that **the Spirit of God** dwell in you. Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ,** he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

And the reason why this is so is because the Father and His Son are “one in spirit, and heart, and character.”

From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. They were two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality, **yet one in spirit**, and heart, and character.²⁶⁵

They are one in spirit because the Father gave His Spirit to the Son:

The Father gave His Spirit without measure to His Son, and we also may partake of its fullness. Jesus says, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Luke 11:13. “If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” John 14:14; 16:24.²⁶⁶

When we receive the third person of the Godhead into our lives, we are receiving the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we will come* unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:23)

The Father and His Son abide in our hearts through their Spirit, who is the third person of the Heavenly Trio.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father; He is the Spirit of the Son; and He is a third person.

How can this be?

The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. Regarding such

265. Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, Dec. 16, 1897.

266. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 477.

mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.²⁶⁷

The Holy Spirit's nature is indeed a mystery. We will never be able to explain it. And yet inspiration is not silent on the subject of the Holy Spirit:

Cumbered with humanity, **Christ** could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that **He** should leave them, go to **His** Father, and send the Holy Spirit to be **His** successor on earth. The Holy Spirit is **Himself**, divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. **He** would represent **Himself** as present in all places by **His** Holy Spirit, as the **Omnipresent**.²⁶⁸

The subject of the preceding paragraph, to whom *all* the pronouns refer, is Christ. We can be certain that the first instance of the pronoun *Himself* refers to Christ because the pronoun *He* in the very next sentence clearly refers to Christ. Thus the preceding pronoun *Himself* can only refer to Christ and not to the Holy Spirit. Therefore this statement is clearly stating that the Holy Spirit is the omnipresence of Christ Himself. This statement is in harmony with the following statements:

The Lord is soon to come. We want that complete and perfect understanding which the Lord alone can give. It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. **We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ.**²⁶⁹

I wish to impress upon you the fact that those who have Jesus abiding in the heart by faith have actually received the Holy Spirit. Every individual who receives Jesus as his personal Saviour just as surely receives the Holy Spirit to be his Counselor, Guide, and Witness.²⁷⁰

In giving His commission to His followers, Christ did not tell them they would be left alone. He assured them that He would be near them. He spoke of **His Omnipresence** in a special way.

267. Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 52.

268. Ellen G. White, Letter 119, 1895, Feb. 18, to J. E. and Emma White.

269. Ellen G. White, Letter 66, 1894, Apr. 10, to W. W. Prescott.

270. Ellen G. White, Ms. 1, 1894, Jan. 5.

Go to all nations, He said. Go, to the farthest portion of the habitable globe, but **know that My presence will be there.** Labor in faith and confidence, for the time will never come when I shall forsake you.²⁷¹

It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, “the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in my name.” “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” [John 14:16, 17]. **This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ,** called the Comforter.²⁷²

How can the Holy Spirit be the presence of Jesus Christ Himself and yet, at the same time, be the third person of the Heavenly Trio?

What saith our Saviour? “I will not leave thee comfortless; **I will come unto you.**” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, **and will manifest myself to him.**” When trials overshadow the soul, remember the words of Christ, remember that **He is an unseen presence in the person of the Holy Spirit,** and He will be the peace and comfort given you, manifesting to you that He is with you, the Sun of Righteousness, chasing away your darkness.²⁷³

Faith in Christ is not the work of nature, but the work of God on human minds, wrought in the very soul by **the Holy Spirit who reveals Christ as Christ revealed the Father.**²⁷⁴

In taking on human nature, the Son of God “could not be in every place personally.” And yet He is “present in all places by His Holy

271. Ellen G. White, Ms. 138, 1897, Dec. 2.

272. Ellen G. White, Letter 7, 1891, June 11, to Bro. Chapman.

273. Ellen G. White, Lt124-1897.10.

274. Ellen G. White, Ms44-1904.4.

Spirit, as the Omnipresent,” who is “His representative.”²⁷⁵ The *gift* of the divine Spirit was *His donation*:

Christ determined to bestow a **gift** on those who had been with Him and on those who should believe on Him, because this was the occasion of His ascension and inauguration, a jubilee in heaven. What **gift** could Christ bestow rich enough to signalize and grace His ascension to the mediatorial throne? It must be worthy of His greatness and His royalty. Christ gave His representative, the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. This **gift** could not be excelled. **The divine Spirit**, converting, enlightening, sanctifying, **would be His donation**, because He would give all **gifts** in one.²⁷⁶

Just as an *eternal* Son is unexplainable, so too is the nature of the Holy Spirit. How can the Holy Spirit be both the third living person of the Godhead and also the Omnipresence of Christ Himself? On these enigmas, silence is golden.

To get more clarity on what has been revealed to us regarding the Holy Spirit, let me read several more statements referencing the mighty third person of the Godhead:

The Holy Spirit is a free, working, independent agency. The God of heaven uses His Spirit as it pleases Him; and human minds, human judgment, and human methods can no more set boundaries to its working, or prescribe the channel through which it shall operate, than they can say to the wind, “I bid you to blow in a certain direction, and to conduct yourself in such and such a manner.”²⁷⁷

The prince of the power of evil can only be held in check by the power of God in the **third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.**²⁷⁸

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 also be a divine person**, else He

275. Ellen G. White, Ms. 162, 1898.

276. Ellen G. White, Ms. 44, 1898, Mar. 29.

277. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 8, 1910.

278. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 617.

could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”²⁷⁹

Though we cannot fully understand the *nature* of the Holy Spirit because inspiration has not revealed that to us, there is much that has been revealed regarding the *work* of the Holy Spirit, and for us, that is far more important. Theory and theology are helpful, as far as they may go, but what is far more important is that we experience the *work* of the Holy Spirit in our minds and hearts.

But God is ever seeking to impress our hearts by His Holy Spirit, that we shall be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come [John 16:8]. We may place our will on the side of God’s will, and in His strength and grace resist the temptations of the enemy. As we yield to the influence of the Spirit of God, our conscience becomes tender and sensitive, and sin that we have passed by with little thought, becomes exceeding sinful.²⁸⁰

The Spirit works in us by bringing to mind, vividly and often, the precious truths of the plan of redemption. We should forget these truths, and for us God’s rich promises would lose their efficiency, were it not for the Spirit, who takes of the things of God, and shows them to us.²⁸¹

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means that sin is taken away, and that the vacuum is **filled with the Spirit**. It means that the mind is divinely illumined, that the heart is emptied of self, and **filled with the presence of Christ**. When this work is done for church members, the church will be a living, working church.²⁸²

When we pray for the descent of the Holy Spirit, we are praying for the very presence of the Father and His Son to be with us through the Holy Spirit.

279. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 617.

280. Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 153.

281. Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 154.

282. Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 154.

We should pray as earnestly for the descent of the Holy Spirit as the disciples prayed on the day of Pentecost. If they needed it at that time, we need it more today. Moral darkness, like a funeral pall, covers the earth. All manner of false doctrines, heresies, and satanic deceptions are misleading the minds of men. Without the Spirit and power of God it will be in vain that we labor to present the truth.²⁸³

In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. 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. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.²⁸⁴

There is no greater power on earth than the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the very presence of the Father and His Son, and they both want to dwell in our hearts through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the mysterious third person of the Godhead. By the Holy Spirit, we become partakers of the divine nature. There is no higher gift that God can give to us.

Let's pray as earnestly for the descent of the Holy Spirit as the disciples prayed for it on the day of Pentecost.

283. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 158.

284. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

Appendix F

TY GIBSON—THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST

Within Adventism, differing views are currently being advocated on the nature of the relationship between the Son of God and the Father. Some scholars and clergy are teaching that the biblical language of “Son” and “Father” is figurative only and must be understood metaphorically; others are advocating that the relationship is to be understood in a more literal manner. An advertisement for Ty Gibson’s book, *The Sonship of Christ*, makes the claim: “Gibson creates a whole new theological lens through which to interpret the Trinitarian versus anti-Trinitarian debate that has been raging through much of Christian history.”²⁸⁵ Given this ongoing debate, even within Adventism, we can very well ask, “Who is teaching the truth regarding the sonship of Christ?”

If ever there was a time when **the writings of every one connected with our work should be closely criticized**, it is now.²⁸⁶

Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith **concerning the sanctuary or concerning the personality of God or of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift without an anchor. Those who claim to be identified with the message that God has given us should have keen, clear spiritual perceptions, that they may distinguish truth from error.... The watchmen are to be wide awake to discern the outcome of all specious reasoning, for **serious errors will be brought in to lead the people of God astray**.²⁸⁷

285. Pacific Press Publishing Association’s June 2019 advertisement mailer.

286. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 127, 1905.

287. Ellen G. White, Manuscript Release #760, pp. 9, 10.

I believe God has provided a correct understanding if we will accept it. Without help from the “visions in the last days,” many will be confused regarding the truth of the sonship of Christ. Therefore, I make no apology for primarily turning to this promised aid in helping us to understand this important matter.

I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. **God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the “last days”;** not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and **to correct those who err from Bible truth.**²⁸⁸

Here is what is taught by some in our church regarding the sonship of Christ:

...the father-son image cannot be literally applied to the divine Father-Son relationship within the Godhead. The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father.... **The term “Son” is used metaphorically when applied to the Godhead.**²⁸⁹

Another important consideration involves how we interpret the Bible. Here the issue pertains to whether we should interpret some passages literally or whether we may treat them more figuratively. Maybe we could illustrate it this way. While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, do we really want to take such expressions in a totally literal way? Or would it be **more appropriate to interpret them in a more metaphorical way** that draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood?²⁹⁰

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, **They also took certain positions or roles** to carry out the provisions of the plan.²⁹¹

Our Seventh-day Adventist pioneers did not believe that the Son of God was a figurative, metaphorical, role-playing Son. Rather, they believed that He was, in reality, the literal Son of God:

288. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 78, emphasis supplied, as in all quotations.

289. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Adventist World*, Nov. 10, 2015.

290. Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, p. 94.

291. Frank Holbrook, *These Times*, June 1, 1981, p. 28.

If we take the liberty to say there is not a literal Ark, containing the Ten Commandments in heaven, we may go only a step further and deny the literal City, and **the literal Son of God**. Certainly, Adventists should not choose the spiritual view, rather than the one we have presented. We see no middle ground to be taken.²⁹²

Christ is the only **literal Son of God**. The only begotten of the Father. John 1:14.²⁹³

There are two vitally important truths regarding the sonship of Christ that appear to be contradictory. The first truth is that the Son of God is eternal—He has existed from eternity.

The Word existed as a divine being, even as the **eternal Son of God**, in union and oneness with his Father. **From everlasting** he was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted him, were to be blessed.²⁹⁴

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, **existed from eternity**, a distinct person, yet one with the Father.²⁹⁵

In speaking of His **pre-existence**, Christ carries the mind back through **dateless ages**. He assures us that **there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God**. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.²⁹⁶

Then there is a second truth—that the Son of God is *begotten* of His Father. From the following statements, we see that Christ is truly the Son of God—“a Son begotten in the express image of the Father’s person” who has held this relationship with His Father from all eternity:

Christ is declared in the Scriptures to be the Son of God. **From all eternity He has sustained this relation to Jehovah.**²⁹⁷

292. James White, *Review and Herald*, June 9, 1851, vol. 1, No. 13, p. 101.

293. J. G. Matteson, *Review and Herald*, Oct. 12, 1869.

294. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Apr. 5, 1906.

295. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Apr. 5, 1906.

296. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 29, 1900.

297. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 22, 1905.

When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission by assuming the likeness of a man, **when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God.**²⁹⁸

A complete offering has been made; for “God so loved the world, that **he gave his only-begotten Son,**”—not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but **a Son *begotten*** in the express image of the Father’s person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.²⁹⁹

Our scholars teach us that the phrase “only begotten Son” in John 3:16 would be better translated as “unique Son.” The words “only begotten” and “unique” used in this verse are both adjectives. Therefore, grammatically, it would be possible to replace the phrase “only begotten” with the word “unique.”

But the word “begotten,” as it is used in Ellen White’s statement above (“...but a Son *begotten*...”), is used not as an adjective but as a past participle verb, which is a verb that indicates a completed action. In this sentence, the word *unique* cannot be substituted for the word *begotten*. If we did, here is what that would look like: “... but a Son *unique* in the express image of the Father’s person...” “Unique” is an adjective and cannot function as a verb, including in its past participle form; it exclusively modifies nouns and cannot be conjugated or employed as a verb.

So, in summary, here are the two seemingly conflicting realities:

1. Christ is the **eternal** Son of God—there never was a time when the Son was not with the Father.

298. Ellen G. White, Letter 303, 1903.

299. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895.

2. And yet, Christ is the **begotten** Son of the Father. Being God's Son speaks of His very nature—"a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person."

According to our human understanding, these two concepts cannot exist together. And perhaps for this reason, Ellen White penned the following important words:

The Lord Jesus Christ, the **divine Son of God, existed from eternity**, a distinct person, yet **one with the Father**. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by him as his right. This was no robbery of God. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way," he declares, "before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth." There are light and glory in **the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid**. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. *This truth*, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible.³⁰⁰

What truth is infinitely mysterious and incomprehensible? It is the truth of the divine Son of God's eternal oneness with the Father. The Eternal Sonship of Christ is a truth that "is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible."

Christ shows them that, although they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, yet **His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation. The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures.**³⁰¹

300. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Apr. 5, 1906.

301. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 616.

The eternal existence of the Father is also not measured by figures.

And although we may try to reason in regard to our Creator, how long He has had existence, where evil first entered into our world, and all these things, we may reason about them until we fall down faint and exhausted with the research when there is yet an infinity beyond.³⁰²

Don't even try to reason this all out. You'll just exhaust yourself! Eternity past is simply beyond human comprehension.

There were some Seventh-day Adventist pioneers who sought to explain what was unexplainable. They spoke where silence is golden. They brought in an explanation that attempted to remove some of the mystery. They sought to dispel the light that this mystery is to remain enshrined within. They approached the unapproachable; they sought to comprehend the incomprehensible. Here is an example of what they wrote:

There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 1:18), but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning.³⁰³

Remember, God “promised to give visions in the ‘last days’... to correct those who err from Bible truth.” Elder Waggoner’s understanding of the pre-existence of the eternal Son of God needed to be corrected. He was teaching that there was a time, way back in the days of eternity, when the Father and His Son were not existing in close fellowship. He was teaching that there was a point in time when they began a relationship of close fellowship. Here is God’s correction to this assumption:

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**

302. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 13, 1888 (7BC 919).

303. E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 21, 22.

God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.³⁰⁴

The context of this phrase, “there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God,” is not addressing the issue of whether the Father and His Son were ever at odds with one another. No, that has never been a matter that needed to be addressed. The issue that is being addressed is Christ’s pre-existence. It could never be said of Eve, in the context of time, that there never was a time when Eve was not in close fellowship with Adam. The time when Eve was not in fellowship with Adam was the period of time before she was brought forth from Adam. While Adam was naming the animals, Eve was not in fellowship with Adam because she wasn’t in existence yet. If her existence was identical with Adam’s, if they had both been fashioned from clay together, only then could it be said that there never was a time when Eve was not in close fellowship with Adam. Based upon Ellen White’s statement, we can conclude that Father and Son are alike eternal.

This is the issue (the eternity of Christ) that Elder Waggoner, Uriah Smith, and many of their brethren needed help with, and they received it on August 29, 1900. As we have seen in the statement above, the incomprehensible mystery of the eternal Son of God is once again set forth.

Our non-Trinitarian brethren today also speculate on this point, using the creation of Eve with the rib coming from Adam to illustrate how the Son of God was begotten. They use the rock cut out of the mountain without hands as another illustration. Ellen White stayed away from all these speculative explanations, and we would do well to do likewise. There is no need to define the word “begotten” as it relates to the Son of God. The word “begotten” is in the realm of truth that “is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible.”

304. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 29, 1900.

Ellen White did not chasten our pioneers for their suppositions, which they believed the Bible warranted. She, on numerous occasions very emphatically and without reservation, endorsed Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*, even though he speculated in his book about there being a point in time in eternity past when the Son was brought forth. This viewpoint, of which Ellen White and God were well aware, was held by many of our pioneers. However, it was not considered a dangerous, heretical view that needed to be corrected before their books went out to the public. Ellen White would subsequently gently correct this erroneous view in her writings.

Then, on the other side of the Trinity debate, we have church leaders who attempt to remove the mystery from the eternal sonship of Christ by teaching that Christ was not the "Son of God by nature before coming to this world," but, rather, that sonship *only* refers to what took place at the incarnation.

The Father, Son relationship in the New Testament, must always be understood in the light of the event of Bethlehem. The only child born into this world with a divine rather than a human father is Jesus. **The title "son" refers to His entry into time and does not deny at all His eternal origins. There are references in the Old Testament to "sonship" but these are always in anticipation of the incarnation.**³⁰⁵

Sonship is not His innate, eternal identity, but rather a role He took up for a purpose.... But all of this meaningful and beautiful gospel theology is lost if we push the Sonship of Christ off into some unique identity that He alone possesses from eternity past. None of Paul's narrative logic makes any sense if we work from the premise that Jesus is God's Son in an ancient, ontological sense.... **It is precisely because Jesus is the offspring of the woman that He is the Son of God. The incarnation was the act by which He became the Son of God.**³⁰⁶

305. J. R. Hoffman, "Is Jesus Jehovah God?" *Ministry*, June 1982, p. 24.

306. Ty Gibson, *The Sonship of Christ*, pp. 108, 119, 128.

Notice that He will “*therefore...be called* the Son [of] God.” It is a conferred title, a missional moniker in Luke’s telling, not a description of His intrinsic, pre-incarnate identity. He will be *called* the Son of God precisely because He was conceived in Mary’s womb by a miracle, as was Isaac, **not because He always was the Son of God by nature before coming to our world.**³⁰⁷

Is this teaching in conflict with the Spirit of Prophecy? Notice the following statement:

Christ is declared in the Scriptures to be the Son of God. From all eternity He has sustained this relation to Jehovah.... In His incarnation he gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God. Said the angel to Mary, “The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee *shall be called the Son of God.*” [Luke 1:35.] **While the son of a human being, Christ became the Son of God in a new sense.** Thus He stood in our world—the Son of God, yet allying Himself by birth to the human race.³⁰⁸

Being *called* the Son of God refers solely to Christ becoming the Son of God in a *new sense* when He became the son of a human being. If the moniker “Son of God” only referred to what would someday take place in the incarnation, and if that was the only meaning for the title “Son of God” in His pre-incarnation existence, then, at His incarnation, the title “Son of God” would not have taken on any “new sense.” The title’s sense and meaning would have remained exactly the same. Only with the understanding that Christ was the Son of God “in an ancient, ontological sense” (original sense), can there be a “new sense” when He came into this world as the incarnate “son of a human being.”

Ty Gibson’s book, *The Sonship of Christ*, beautifully presents the story regarding the Son of God becoming the Son of God in a “new sense” at His incarnation. The “new sense” second Adam, covenantal sonship, is a most precious truth. If Gibson’s book

307. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

308. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 22, 1905.

simply taught this verity, his book would not hurt the cause of truth. However, the book actively denies Christ's original sense of sonship, thus obscuring a most vital truth regarding the personality of God.

Jesus gave a discourse to the Jews, recorded in John 5, where He fully explained to them His sonship.

Jesus knew that the Jews were determined to take his life, yet **in this discourse he fully explained to them his Sonship, the relation he bore to the Father** and his equality with him.³⁰⁹

In this discourse, Jesus spoke of the relationship He sustained with His Father and thus His equality with Him. They clearly understood that His sonship had to do with the original, "the very highest sense" ontological relationship He bore to His Father and not to a "new sense" covenantal sonship.

"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making himself equal with God." The whole nation called God their Father, and if Jesus had done this in the same sense in which they did, the Pharisees would not have been so enraged. But they accused Jesus of blasphemy, showing that they understood that **Christ claimed God as His Father in the very highest sense.**³¹⁰

Notwithstanding the Son of God was clothed with humanity [sonship in a new sense], yet Jehovah, with his own voice, assures him of his **sonship with the Eternal** [sonship to His Father in the original, very highest, ontological sense].³¹¹

Notice carefully the contrast in thought in the two appraisals below:

Ty Gibson: "He will be *called* the Son of God precisely because He was conceived in Mary's womb by a miracle, as was Isaac, **not**

309. Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 172.

310. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Mar. 5, 1901.

311. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 21, 1873. Parenthetical statements supplied by J. Witcombe.

because He always was the Son of God by nature before coming to our world.”

Ellen White: “Christ is declared in the Scriptures to be the Son of God. **From all eternity He has sustained this relation to Jehovah.**”

Christ has always been the Son of God by His very nature. From all eternity, He has sustained this relationship (that is, sonship) to Jehovah, His Father.

The teaching that Christ’s sonship was “not His innate, eternal identity” and that it had no ontological basis but only an incarnational or metaphorical basis *obscures* the fact that Christ was the only begotten Son of God *from eternity*. This obscuring of Christ’s sonship began in heaven. It lies at the very foundation of the rebellion that resulted in the great controversy between Christ and Satan, which began in heaven and is now being carried out here on earth, albeit from a slightly different angle. In heaven, the rebellious angels sought to obscure the fact of Christ’s sonship and of the exalted authority that this relationship to the Father would give to Him. On earth, erroneous teachings have been fostered that have taught men to believe that there is no true Son of God, that the divine being who assumed the role of sonship is not really the Son of God but is an ontologically unrelated, nearly identical being to the divine One who assumed the role of Father. Satan’s jealousy of Christ knows no bounds. He hates the Son of God so much that he is determined to *obscure* the knowledge of this close, intimate Father-Son relationship:

Angels were expelled from heaven because they would not work in harmony with God. They fell from their high estate because they wanted to be exalted. They had come to exalt themselves, and they forgot that their beauty of person and of character came from the Lord Jesus. **This fact the angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God**, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ. One angel

began the controversy and carried it on until there was rebellion in the heavenly courts among the angels.³¹²

It should be noted that the fallen angels could not be *obscuring* the idea of Christ's becoming the Son of God in a new sense when He would come to this earth if man should fall, for, at this point in time, the angels knew nothing of the hidden plan that God's Son would become surety for fallen humanity. Satan and his angels could only have been *obscuring* the fact that Christ was the only begotten Son of God in an ontological sense.

On the other side of the great controversy, the loyal angels and God Himself defended Christ's only begotten sonship.

Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile this mighty, rebellious angel to the will of his Creator.... **They clearly set forth that Jesus was the Son of God**, existing with him before the angels were created; and that he had ever stood at the right hand of God, and his mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned....³¹³

His beauty was so highly exalted that he thought he should be as God, and Christ must be second to him; but **the Lord informed Satan** this could not be possible. **Christ was His only begotten Son.**³¹⁴

It is the Father-Son relationship that gives significance to the word "gave" in John 3:16. One cannot *give* what one does not *possess*. God the Father, truly and literally—not metaphorically or symbolically—*possessed* a Son that He could *give* to save humanity.

And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: "**The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way**, before the works of old. I was set up from everlasting.... When He appointed the foundations of the earth, then was I with Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." [Proverbs 8:22, 23, 29, 30.]³¹⁵

312. Ellen G. White, Letter 42, 1910.

313. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 9, 1879.

314. Ellen G. White, Letter 157, 1910.

315. Ellen G. White, Letter 256, 1906.

Only a father can *possess* and therefore *give* a son. A son does not have the prerogative to *give* his father because a son does not have authority over his father. Isaac could not have *given* his father, Abraham. God the Father alone can *give* His Son. And He can *give* His Son precisely because He is the Father. This relationship established the prerogative for the Father, in great self-sacrificial love, to give His Son as a gift to save this fallen world.

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.... **God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God.** To Christ **has been given** an exalted position. He **has been made** equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son. Jesus said to the Jews: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.... The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.” John 5:17-20. **Here again is brought to view the personality of the Father and the Son**, showing the unity that exists between them.³¹⁶

The personality of the Father and His Son includes the fatherhood of God and the sonship of Christ. This original sense of sonship did not begin with His incarnation; otherwise, this personality of sonship would have been tied to His incarnation. But it wasn't.

O what a gift God has made to our world! The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. **God sent His own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, liable to physical infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are. **He was the Son of the living God. His personality did not begin with His incarnation in the flesh.**³¹⁷

Again, notice carefully the contrast in thought in the appraisals below:

Ty Gibson: “The incarnation was the act by which He became the Son of God.”

316. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 111, 1903.

317. Ellen G. White, Letter 77, 1894.

Ellen White: “His *personality* [Son of the living God] **did not begin with His incarnation** in the flesh.”

God, through His prophet, could not have said this plainer:

*Christ is declared in the Scriptures to be the Son of God. From all eternity He has sustained this relation to Jehovah.*³¹⁸

Who is this that was to come to our world and become incarnate? The only begotten Son of God.... “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old,” Christ says. “When he gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: Then was I by Him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” [Proverbs 8:22, 29, 30.]³¹⁹

Christ is the Son of God, and His angels do His bidding; for **He was even the Son of the Father** who so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son** to experience in our world all the inconveniences to be passed through in fulfilling His missions, in suffering with humanity.³²⁰

The teaching that denies actual sonship also denies the actual fatherhood of God. Doing so undermines an aspect of His great love for us, which He wants us to understand. God created family relationships here on this earth to give us and a watching universe an insight into the intimate relationship the Father has with His Son. Understanding this relationship helps all to see “how unutterable was the self-denial of the infinite God in giving His own Son to die to rescue man from utter ruin.” We see this illustrated in the story of Abraham and Isaac:

God would impress upon Abraham the gospel of salvation to man. In order to do this, and make the truth a reality to him as well as to test his faith, He required him to slay his darling Isaac. All the sorrow and agony that Abraham endured through that dark and fearful trial were for the purpose of deeply impressing

318. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 22, 1905.

319. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 37, 1898.

320. Ellen G. White, Letter 383, 1908.

upon his understanding the plan of redemption for fallen man. He was made to understand in his own experience **how unutterable was the self-denial of the infinite God in giving His own Son to die** to rescue man from utter ruin. To Abraham no mental torture could be equal to that which he endured in obeying the divine command to sacrifice his son.³²¹

O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that the infinite God would consent to the humiliation of **his own dear Son!**³²²

The sonship of Christ and the fatherhood of God is a most precious truth that is the very foundation of the Christian faith. John 3:16 loses meaning if we accept the role-playing, metaphorical, figurative views that are currently taught by some in our church. Jesus told Nicodemus: “For God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son....**”

It is taught by some in our church that Ellen White, early on in her prophetic ministry, expressed her understanding of the relationship between the Father and His Son in a manner that implied headship of the Father over His Son. Some believe that Ellen White held Semi-Arian views, similar to those held by her fellow pioneers, and expressed them in certain writings. For example, the following statements do not reflect our current egalitarian Trinitarian thought:

The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in the presence of all the angels **confer special honor upon his Son.** The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known **that it was ordained by himself that Christ, his Son, should be equal with himself;** so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was as his own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. **His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host.** Especially was his Son to work in union with himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His

321. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 369.

322. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Aug. 21, 1888.

Son would carry out his will and his purposes, **but would do nothing of himself alone**.... Satan and his sympathizers...could not...ascertain his purposes **in exalting his Son Jesus, and endowing him with such unlimited power and command**.³²³

The Son of God was **next in authority** to the great Lawgiver.³²⁴

To Christ **has been given** an exalted position. He **has been made** equal with the Father.³²⁵

It is true; those statements do not reflect egalitarian Trinitarian thought. But could it be that egalitarian Trinitarian thought is wrong? Are we willing to undermine the confidence of our church in the gift of prophecy by stating that some of her early writings do not teach the truth? Was she wrong, or are our modern-day scholars wrong?

To reject egalitarian Trinitarian views does not mean that one rejects the belief in the Heavenly Trio:

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.³²⁶

This statement above does not conflict with those earlier statements that imply that the Father is indeed the head of Christ, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians:

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

There is no evidence that Ellen White ever changed her published views on the Godhead or on any other doctrine. Nothing that she wrote regarding the Godhead ever had to be retracted. Her views from early on remained her views until her death (take

323. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 9, 1879.

324. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1872.

325. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 111, 1903.

326. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 615.

note of the dates of the statements used in this appendix). The growth in her understanding of God did not change her views from non-Trinitarian (that one God is one person—the Father) to Trinitarian (that one God is three Persons). Her early views were the same as her later views—non-Trinitarian. Ellen White never used the word Trinity for a reason. The word did not fit her theology.

We see in the following statement that Ellen White did not ever write an erroneous statement regarding biblical truth; therefore, nothing she ever wrote regarding the relationship between the Father and His Son was inaccurate.

I am now looking over my diaries and copies of letters written for several years back.... I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have things to revive past history, that they may see that there is one straight chain of truth, **without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.** This, I am instructed, is to be a living letter to all in regard to my faith.³²⁷

That which I have written is what the Lord has bidden me write. **I have not been instructed to change that which I have sent out.** I stand firm in the Adventist faith; for I have been warned in regard to the seducing sophistries that will seek for entrance among us as a people. The Scripture says, “Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” I present before our people the danger of being led astray as were the angels in the heavenly courts. **The straight line of truth presented to me when I was but a girl is just as clearly presented to me now.**³²⁸

Indeed, she wrote things later in life that she did not write earlier on, and the reason for that is that God needed to bring greater clarity because the erroneous views of certain church members required correction. Ellen White always believed, “In Christ is life,

327. Ellen G. White, Letter 329a, 1905.

328. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 26, 1905.

original, unborrowed, underived.”³²⁹ This description of the life He possessed is a description of divinity, which both the Father and the Son possess. As incredible as it may sound, all of Christ’s followers possess this divine life as a gift from God.

In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; **it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour.**³³⁰

This statement was not a seismic shift of belief, as many teach. Ellen White always believed and taught that the Son’s nature was identical to His Father’s. The Son was “the express image” of the Father’s person (Hebrews 1:3).

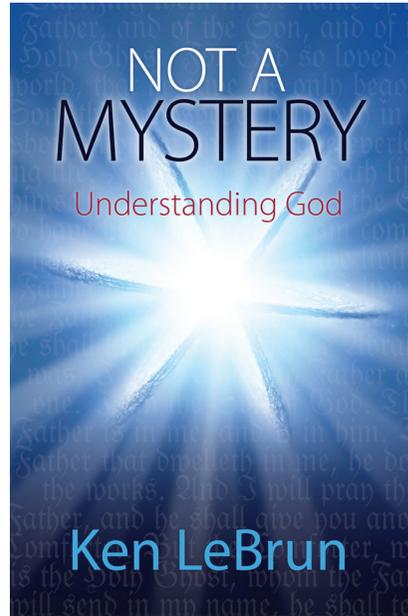
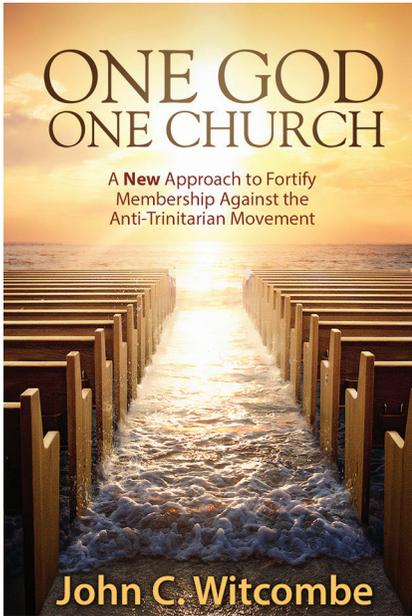
From my girlhood I have been given plain instruction that God is a person, and that Christ is “the express image of His person.” God always has been. **That which concerns us is not the how or the wherefore.**³³¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had an understanding of God, informed by the ministry of a living prophet of God, which is unique in Christianity. Our view of the Heavenly Trio is different from that of the Catholics or her Protestant daughters. We stand alone. Let us embrace the mysterious, incomprehensible truth of the *eternal* sonship of Christ.

329. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

330. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 13, 1912.

331. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 137, 1903.



Not A Mystery, a companion book to the one you are currently reading, was written by my friend, Pastor Ken LeBrun. You can read it online at ProphecyWaymarks.com.

These two books were written to proclaim this *one God* to Seventh-day Adventists. Ellen White said that this truth needs to be proclaimed throughout every church in our land.* But, before we can proclaim this truth to the churches of the land, we must first restore this pillar of truth in our own church. Therefore, we are making both of these books available for free distribution and would like to see them go to every church in our own denomination. If you would like to be one of these missionaries of the cross to proclaim that there is *one God* and one Mediator between God and man, who is Jesus Christ, the *Son of the Infinite God*, get in touch and let me know how many books you could distribute: pastorjcw@gmail.com

* "Let the missionaries of the cross proclaim that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, who is Jesus Christ the Son of the Infinite God. This needs to be proclaimed throughout every church in our land." (EGW 1888 Materials, p. 886)

“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.” Revelation 12:15

Will Your Anchor Hold?

“When the shaking comes, *by the introduction of false theories*, these surface readers, anchored nowhere, are like shifting sand.” *Last Day Events*, p. 177



John Witcombe, who is currently retired, served for more than thirty years as a pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.