

A Reply to Brother Eugene Prewitt: Part 1

Hello brothers and sisters in Jesus,

I have received a request from the brethren to respond to an article from brother Eugene Prewitt. That article is entitled “The Godhead for Seventh-day Adventists.” You can read it here.

<https://bibledoc.org/contra-men-and-movements/the-godhead-for-seventh-day-adventists/>

Now, as a disclaimer, brother Prewitt is what I would call a moderate trinitarian. He does not believe in making his view a testing matter so he and I could actually get along and work together on the points that we do hold in common. Yet, at the same time, I see some things in his article that I find to be misleading and it has confused some of the brethren so I have decided to reply.

I request that no one who reads these words take any of this as a personal attack against him (don't start calling him a Jesuit or any such nonsense). Our brother is a missionary, making greater personal sacrifice for the kingdom of God and Christ than most of us have. He also, unlike many of the trinitarian brethren, is somewhat tolerant of us and our views. Therefore, let us also be tolerant of him and his view, ever speaking the truth in love, as we are called to do under the unction of the Spirit of Jesus. Toward that end, I write.

I will quote from his article and issue a response underneath.

Prewitt: *“We need not agree on minor points if our major aim harmonizes well.”*

Reply: We humbly ask, is the landmark pillar of the personality of God and the personality of Christ in comparison the triune personalities of the trinity god (aka: the doctrine of the trinity) a minor point? While our brother might think so, the SDA church itself does not deem it so. The SDA church today presents the trinity doctrine as foundational, even as the 2nd Fundamental Belief. It is made a test of fellowship for acceptance within the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Prewitt: *This is why James White (a non-trinitarian) could work together so finely with William Miller (a trinitarian) before the Great Disappointment.*

Reply: James White took a reasonable stance. His quotes speak for themselves.

“The S. D. Adventists hold the divinity of Christ so nearly with the trinitarian, that we apprehend no trial here. And as the practical application of the subject of the Gifts of the Spirit to our people and to our work is better understood by our S. D. Baptist brethren, they manifest less concern for us on this account (J. White, Review and Herald, October 12, 1876)

“In the divine law, and in the gospel of the divine Son, are the tests of Christian character. And it is with an ill grace that those who have been splitting up into petty sects during the nineteenth century over forms of church government, matters of expediency, free and restricted salvation,

trinity and unity, whether we may sing any good hymn in church, or only the Psalms of David, and other matters which constitute no test of fitness for Heaven, now pounce upon us, and display any amount of religious horror, simply because we regard strict conformity to the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus the only true tests of Christian character. (J.White, RH Oct, 12, 1876)

Yet the SDA church today does not do the same. We are told, over and over again by leading brethren, that because we believe in the pre-incarnate Christ as a Son begotten by God we are denying Jesus' Divinity and making Him into a created being. By the testimony of today's Seventh-day Adventist leaders, James White himself would be excluded from being a member of the very church he helped found! Not to mention the whole host of original SDA pioneers who would also be excluded because the pioneer doctrine is called "false" and "pagan" by modern day SDA trinitarians.

"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.... Most specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the trinity." (Ministry Magazine, Oct. 1993 p10)

*"Only gradually did **this false doctrine** give way to the biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen White's writings in statements such as: "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived" (Review and Herald January 6th, 1994)*

*"By the end of the 19th century, Ellen White could not have been clearer when she distanced her description of Jesus **from any pagan ideas of derivation**: "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. 'He that hath the Son hath life.' 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life" (DA 530) (Adventist Record August 25, 2018)*

Prewitt: *Those who read broadly in their writings know that the pioneers of the Adventist message were not trying to convert the mainstream church members to a non-trinitarian position*

Reply: **This is a very debatable point. Historically, we know that entry into Seventh-day Adventism was entry into a non-trinitarian faith and that was the predominant teaching that the SDA people were exposed to.** In fact, the baptism into the faith was explained this way.

"1. We are baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Matt. 28:19. By this we express our belief in the existence of the one true God, the mediation of His Son, and the influence of the Holy Spirit" (Uriah Smith, 1858, The Bible Students Assistant, pages 21, 22)

Also, one of the primary teaching books in Adventism, "*The Biblical Institute*" (1878) taught a non-trinitarian doctrine. It was a record of a series of lectures by James White and Uriah Smith. Hence SDAs, like Prescott and Daniels, testified during the 1919 meetings that they were taught a non-trinitarian position as a part of the foundation of the faith. Also, earlier converts who came in, like S.B. Whitney, were taught the same. Dudley Canright even demonstrated how the SDA fundamentals (clearly non-trinitarian) were used as a test of fellowship in 1911. Please read my thesis "*The Unaccounted Factor: How Criticism Motivated The Adoption of Trinitarian*

Theology Within Seventh-day Adventism” for this data. While there were exceptions to the rule, it was normative for SDAs to teach non-trinitarianism to their converts back then. This is why false rumors spread abroad that SDAs denied the Divinity of Christ.

Yet even if we yield the point, and say that the SDA pioneers were not doing this, I think we all must still admit that they worked to keep the SDA church itself free from such errors. The periodicals speak quite loudly and clearly here.

They viewed the trinity doctrine as spiritualization and completely incompatible with the doctrine of the personality of God and the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. Numerous quotes indicate that this is so. I will only share a few:

“Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith concerning the sanctuary, or concerning the personality of God or of Christ, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor. {Ellen White 20LtMs, Ms 62, 1905, par. 14}

“A liar is one that presents false theories and doctrines. He who denies the personality of God and of His Son Jesus Christ is denying God and Christ. “If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” [Verse 24.] If you continue to believe and obey the truths you first embraced regarding the personality of the Father and the Son, you will be joined together with them in love. There will be seen that union for which Christ prayed just before His trial and crucifixion {Ellen White 21LtMs, Ms 23, 1906, par. 20}

*“The way spiritualizers have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural Trinitarian creed, viz., that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, though they have not one passage to support it, while we have plain scripture testimony in abundance that he is the Son of the eternal God.” (James White, *The Day Star*, January 24, 1846)*

*“The greatest fault we can find in the Reformation is, the Reformers stopped reforming. Had they gone on, and onward, till they had left the last vestige of Papacy behind, such as natural immortality, sprinkling, the trinity, and Sunday-keeping, the church would now be free from her unscriptural errors.” (James White, February 7, 1856, *Review & Herald*, vol. 7, no. 19, page 148, par. 26)*

*“The doctrine of the Trinity which was established in the church by the council of Nicea, A.D. 325. This doctrine destroys the personality of God, and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The infamous measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.” (J.N. Andrews, *Review and Herald*, Mar. 6, 1855)*

“But to hold the doctrine of the trinity is not so much an evidence of evil intention as of intoxication from that wine of which all the nations have drunk. The fact that this was one of the

leading doctrines, if not the very chief upon which the bishop of Rome was exalted 'to the popedom, does not say much in its favor. This should cause men to investigate it for themselves; as when the spirits of devils working miracles undertake the advocacy of the immortality of the soul. Had I never doubted it before, I would now probe it to the bottom, by that word which modern Spiritualism sets at nought. (R.F. Cottrell Review and Herald July, 6th, 1869)

"Last evening I spoke to a good audience in Bloomfield. My subject, by request, was the sonship of Christ in opposition to the trinity." (J. N. Loughborough, Review and Herald May 9, 1871, pg. 166)

Prewitt: *They did not write any books on the Godhead*

Reply: The pioneers focused on positive assertions of truth, in a holistic sense. As J.H. Waggoner explained:

"We have a right to be positive in our faith and our statements only when the words of Scripture are so direct as to bring the subject within the range of positive proof (J. H. Waggoner, "The Spirit of God" pg 8)

They saw this matter as a very simple thing and did not consider it worthwhile to spill much ink over it. R.F. Cottrell, who wrote two lengthy articles on the subject, gives us a good statement that may explain why no book was written:

"Men have gone to opposite extremes in the discussion of the doctrine of the trinity. Some have made Christ a mere man, commencing his existence at his birth in Bethlehem; others have not been satisfied with holding him to be what the Scriptures so clearly reveal him, the pre-existing Son of God, but have made him the "God and Father" of himself. I do not purpose to add much to the barrels of ink that have been wasted on both sides of this question. I would simply advise all that love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to believe all that the Bible says of him, and no more. Then you will have the truth, and not occupy either of these extremes (R.F. Cottrell, Review and Herald, July 6th, 1869)

Reply Continued: Now modern SDA leaders have now written several books on the trinity - *"Understanding the Trinity"* by Max Hatton, *"The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships"* by Whidden, Moon, and Reeve, *"Systematic Theology: God as Trinity"* by Norman Gulley; *"The Trinity: What Has God Revealed"* by Glyn Parfitt; *"The Heavenly Trio"* by Ty Gibson; *"Satan's War Against the Godhead"* by Steve Wohlberg; *"Exploring the Trinity"* by Doug Bachelor and the list could continue.

This, by itself, reveals a change in SDA focus. Whereas the SDA pioneers did not focus on this topic and many were tolerant of trinitarians, even though they themselves were certainly non-trinitarians, the SDA leadership today is the polar opposite. Modern day SDAs do focus very much on this topic, even claiming it is salvific. They are pro-trinitarians, some even adamantly so, and these do not tolerate non-trinitarians. In fact, they will work to get you fired you if you are a denominational employee who will not

affirm the wording of FB # 2. They will try to get you disfellowshipped if you are member who says otherwise. These are sad facts born out by the experience of thousands of SDAs now.

Prewitt: *The three books designed by Ellen White to warn (GC) and prepare (DA, STC) the world for Christ's coming can be read with pleasure and appreciation by trinitarians and many non-trinitarians alike. They just were not written to change the public's view regarding questions on the Godhead.*

Reply: **This claim is naive and it also might not be taking into account Mrs. White's unspoken strategy.**

“Our policy is, Do not make prominent the objectionable features of our faith, which strike most decidedly against the customs and practices of the people, until the Lord shall give the people a fair chance to know that we are believers in Christ, that we do believe in the divinity of Christ, and in His pre-existence {10LtMs, Lt 35, 1895, par. 4}

One of the most common customs and practices of the people is to believe in and worship the trinity god. Would it not make sense for Mrs. White to leave out any direct attacks against it and undermine it more subtly through her books designed to prepare the world for Jesus' return?

I would suggest to you that Mrs. White wrote in harmony with her own policy. **A careful reading of her books, particularly Great Controversy and Desire of Ages, reveal her writings working to change the public's view regarding questions on the Godhead. She clearly wrote to establish the landmark pillars of the personality of God the Father and the personality of Christ, His only begotten Son.** She revealed that the great controversy began with respect to the Sonship of Christ, His relation to the Father, and how that impacted God's law. She made it plain that Christ was different from an angelic son, like the rebellious cherub who, by law, could never be equal to God like Christ was.

If we read her writings we can see, quite clearly, that she presents God and His only begotten as Two separate and distinct Beings. This clearly undermines the doctrine of the trinity.

Let's look at the book Great Controversy:

“Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. “By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, ... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers” (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance {GC 493.1}

We can also see that she presents Christ as most honored of God, next to Him in power and glory, with Lucifer being next in line. This too undermines trinitarian doctrine.

“But there was one that chose to pervert this freedom. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven... {GC 493.3}

Again, she wrote of Christ having honor bestowed upon Him. This too undermines trinitarian dogma

“And coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield... {GC 494.1}

Yet again, she presents the Son of God Himself as pleading with Lucifer to follow the order that God Himself established. Once more this doesn't mesh with trinitarianism.

“The heavenly councils pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself. {GC 494.2}

Let's look now at the book Desire of Ages:

A careful reading of the quote below reveals what the issue of the great controversy was as it arose in heaven. Notice carefully that she draws the mind back to the first conflict and shows that Satan tried to now make it seem in reverse. The enemy suggested that Christ was merely an angel rather than the Son of God, a Divine Being. Notice again this infers that there is more than one Divine Being. So this is really a conflict about the Sonship of God and whether that made Him Divine or not.

“When Satan and the Son of God first met in conflict, Christ was the commander of the heavenly hosts; and Satan, the leader of revolt in heaven, was cast out. Now their condition is apparently reversed, and Satan makes the most of his supposed advantage. One of the most powerful of the angels, he says, has been banished from heaven. The appearance of Jesus indicates that He is that fallen angel, forsaken by God, and deserted by man. A divine being would be able to sustain his claim by working a miracle; “if Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” Such an act of creative power, urges the tempter, would be conclusive evidence of divinity. It would bring the controversy to an end {DA 119.2}

“Not without a struggle could Jesus listen in silence to the arch-deceiver. But the Son of God was not to prove His divinity to Satan, or to explain the reason of His humiliation. By conceding to the demands of the rebel, nothing for the good of man or the glory of God would be gained. Had Christ complied with the suggestion of the enemy, Satan would still have said, Show me a sign that I may believe you to be the Son of God. Evidence would have been worthless to break the power of rebellion in his heart.... {DA 119.3}

These books clearly teach a non-trinitarian view of God and His only begotten Son. It is no wonder that James White said this:

“We invite all to compare the testimonies of the Holy Spirit through Mrs. W., with the word of God. And in this we do not invite you to compare them with your creed. That is quite another thing. The trinitarian may compare them with his creed, and because they do not agree with it, condemn them. The observer of Sunday, or the man who holds eternal torment an important truth, and the minister that sprinkles infants, may each condemn the testimonies’ of Mrs. W. because they do not agree with their peculiar views. And a hundred more, each holding different views, may come to the same conclusion. But their genuineness can never be tested in this way (J. White, June 13th, 1871)

Again he wrote:

“This missionary seemed very liberal in his feelings toward all Christians. But after catechizing us [James and Ellen White were both present along with two other Adventists] upon the trinity and finding that we were not sound on the subject of his triune god, he became earnest in denouncing unitarianism, which takes from Christ his divinity, and leaves him but a man. Here, as far as our views were concerned, he was combating a man of straw. We do not deny the Divinity of Christ. We delight in giving full credit to all those strong expressions of Scripture which exalt the Son of God. We believe him to be the Divine person addressed by Jehovah in the words, “Let us make man.” He was with the Father before the world was... (James White, June 6, 1871, Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath, brackets added for clarity)

The fact that Ellen White doesn’t directly say that she believed in God the Father and His only begotten Son in a way that is contrary to the doctrine of the trinity, does not mean that she didn’t write to establish those landmark pillars in contradiction to the trinity doctrine.

The fact that trinitarians can read her writings with pleasure and appreciation is indicative of the fact that they are blind to these types of quotes. Many SDAs are blind to them too! I cannot tell you how many times I have brought up DA 119 and heard SDAs gasp in astonishment, explaining that they completely missed that part when reading. Quite frequently, they don’t even see it! So sister White was being wise as a serpent yet harmless as a dove. She had a policy of not putting objectionable features in the forefront when trying to reach the public but when the Spirit of God takes hold of the reader and their eyes are opened up, then they see the light of truth!

Prewitt: *I did say that none of the pioneers wrote a book on this topic. Well, J. H. Waggoner almost did. In 1877 he wrote a book titled “The Holy Spirit.” He was a non-trinitarian. And in this book was his perfect opportunity to express his core beliefs on this topic. Instead, he said that Adventists had never dared to even enter the discussion of whether the Spirit was a person*

Reply: This same J.H. Waggoner wrote another book called “The Atonement in the Light of Nature and Revelation.” You continued on to mention that. Now, in that book, he did take the opportunity to express his core non-trinitarian belief as it related to the topic. So doesn’t that undermine your whole argument here? The fact that Waggoner was ambiguous about the Spirit

as a personality does not mean that he was therefore shy to relate where he disagreed with the trinity. What it does mean is that he did not find that particular aspect, about the Spirit, to be pertinent. Yet when it came to the atonement he certainly did. We will quote him now. This section will be rather long.

“Doctrine of a Trinity Subversive of the Atonement

“It will no doubt appear to many to be irreverent to speak thus of the doctrine of a trinity. But we think they must view the subject in a different light if they will calmly and candidly examine the arguments which we shall present. We know that we write with the deepest feelings of reverence for the Scriptures, and with the highest regard for every Scripture doctrine and Scripture fact. But reverence for the Scriptures does not necessarily embrace reverence for men’s opinions of the Scriptures.

“It is not our purpose to present any argument on the doctrine of the trinity, further than it has a bearing on the subject under consideration, namely, on the Atonement. And we are willing, confidently willing to leave the decision of the question with all who will carefully read our remarks, with an effort to divest themselves of prejudice, if they unfortunately possess it. The inconsistencies of Trinitarians, which must be pointed out to free the Scripture doctrine of the Atonement from reproaches under which it has too long lain, are the necessary outgrowth of their system of theology. No matter how able are the writers to whom we shall refer, they could never free themselves from inconsistencies without correcting their theology. Many theologians really think that the Atonement, in respect to its dignity and efficacy, rests upon the doctrine of a trinity. But we fail to see any connection between the two. To the contrary, the advocates of that doctrine really fall into the difficulty which they seem anxious to avoid. Their difficulty consists in this: They take the denial of a trinity to be equivalent to a denial of the divinity of Christ. Were that the case, we should cling to the doctrine of a trinity as tenaciously as any can; but it is not the case. They who have read our remarks on the death of the Son of God know that we firmly believe in the divinity of Christ; but we cannot accept the idea of a trinity, as it is held by Trinitarians, without giving up our claim on the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption.

And here is shown how remarkably the widest extremes meet in theology. The highest Trinitarians and lowest Unitarians meet and are perfectly united on the death of Christ—the faith of both amounts to Socinianism. Unitarians believe that Christ was a prophet, an inspired teacher, but merely human; that his death was that of a human body only. Trinitarians hold that the term “Christ” comprehends two distinct and separate natures: one that was merely human; the other, the second person in the trinity, who dwelt in the flesh for a brief period, but could not possibly suffer, or die; that the Christ that died was only the human nature in which the divinity had dwelt. Both classes have a human offering, and nothing more. No matter how exalted the pre-existent Son was; no matter how glorious, how powerful, or even eternal; if the manhood only died, the sacrifice was only human. And so far as the vicarious death of Christ is concerned, this is Socinianism. Thus the remark is just, that the doctrine of a trinity degrades the Atonement, resting it solely on a human offering as a basis. A few quotations will show the correctness of this assertion. (J. H. Waggoner, 1884, *The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*, pages 164, 165)

Continuing on:

"We trust that we have shown to the full conviction of every one who "trembles at the word" of the Lord, that the Son of God, who was in the beginning, by whom the worlds were made, suffered death for us; the oft-repeated declarations of theological writers that a mere human body died are, by the Scriptures, proved untrue. These writers take the doctrine of a trinity for their basis, and assume that Christ is the second person in the trinity, and could not die. Again, they assume that death is not a cessation of life; and between the two unscriptural assumptions they involve themselves in numerous difficulties, and load the doctrine of the Atonement with unreasonable contradictions. We would not needlessly place ourselves in opposition to the religious feelings of any class, but in order to clear the doctrine of the Atonement from the consequences of these assumptions, we are compelled to notice some of the prominent arguments presented in favor of the doctrine of a trinity.

In the "Manual of Atonement," 1 John 5:20 is quoted as containing most conclusive evidence of a trinity and of the Supreme Deity of Christ. It is there claimed that he is called "the true God and eternal life." The whole verse reads thus: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." A person must be strongly wedded to a theory who can read this verse and not see the distinction therein contained between the true God and the Son of God. "We are in him that is true." How? "In his Son Jesus Christ." The distinction between Christ and the true God is most clearly shown by the Saviour's own words in John 17:3: "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

*Much stress is laid on Isa. 9:6, as proving a trinity, which we have before quoted, as referring to our High Priest who shed his blood for us. The advocates of that theory will say that it refers to a trinity because Christ is called the everlasting Father. But for this reason, with others, we affirm that it can have no reference to a trinity. Is Christ the Father in the trinity? If so, how is he the Son? or if he is both Father and Son, how can there be a trinity? for a trinity is three persons. To recognize a trinity, the distinction between the Father and Son must be preserved. Christ is called "the second person in the trinity;" but if this text proves a trinity, or refers to it at all, it proves that he is not the second, but the first. And if he is the first, who is the second? It is very plain that this text has no reference to such a doctrine. (J. H. Waggoner, 1884, *The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*, pages 167-169)*

Again:

"As before remarked, the great mistake of Trinitarians, in arguing this subject, is this: they make no distinction between a denial of a trinity and a denial of the divinity of Christ. They see only the two extremes, between which the truth lies; and take every expression referring to the pre-existence of Christ as evidence of a trinity. The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ and his divinity; but they are entirely silent in regard to a trinity. The declaration, that the divine Son of God could not die, is as far from the teachings of the Bible as darkness is from light. And we would ask the Trinitarian, to which of the two natures are we indebted for redemption? The answer must, of course, be, To that one which died or shed his blood for us; for "we have redemption through his blood." Then it is evident that if only the human nature died,

*our Redeemer is only human, and that the divine Son of God took no part in the work of redemption, for he could neither suffer nor die. Surely, we say right, that the doctrine of a trinity degrades the Atonement, by bringing the sacrifice, the blood of our purchase, down to the standard of Socinianism. (J. H. Waggoner, 1884, *The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*, page 173)*

Now, while we might disagree with Waggoner, we note that the Bible and the SOP are very clear that Christ died.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost (Luke 23:46)

When He closed His eyes in death upon the cross, the soul of Christ did not go at once to Heaven, as many believe, or how could His words be true— “I am not yet ascended to My Father”? The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with his body, and did not wing its way to Heaven, there to maintain a separate existence, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight. All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with His body in the sepulcher; and when He came forth it was as a whole being; He did not have to summon His spirit from Heaven. He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again. {3SP 203.2}

"By giving his life to save fallen men, Christ gives all heaven to those that believe on him. By dying in our behalf, he gave an equivalent for our debt. Thus he removed from God all charge of lessening the guilt of sin. By virtue of my oneness with the Father, he says, my suffering and death enable me to pay the penalty of sin. By my death a restraint is removed from his love. His grace can act with unbounded efficiency. {YI December 16, 1897, par. 7}

Thus the message that we have to tell the world is *not* that the Son of God did *not* die. No, God forbid! We must tell them that Christ “*was dead*” but now, behold, He is “*alive forevermore*.”

“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Rev 1:18)

Thus we can say to all men that God, in the person of His Son, died for you.

“O tell the erring, God loves you, God died for you” (Letter 50, 1893)

We must be careful not to place a limited view here, particularly out of reverence for an assumptive trinitarian dogma.

“The death of the divine Son justified the claims of the divine law. In order to more fully realize the value of redemption, it is necessary to understand what it cost. In consequence of limited views of the sufferings of the divine Son of God, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. { ST August 7, 1879, par. 2 }

Unfortunately, I have heard my SDA trinitarian brethren argue that Christ was actually still alive, consciously aware in spirit, during the time His body was dead. It is claimed that He was submissively waiting for the Father to raise Him even though He could have done so Himself at any time. This doctrine came from a personal friend of mine, Dr. Jack Blanco.

“Why did he remain in the tomb until Sunday morning? Well we may give numerous reasons, and there may be numerous reasons, but the fact is that He remained in the tomb submissively waiting until an angel came and rolled away the stone, even though He had power to do so. Paul reminds us that it was God who raised Christ from the dead. In other words, Christ submissively waited in the tomb until His Father called Him. Submissiveness in death. The kind of submissiveness - this kind of submissiveness, is more than human. It is divine.” (Jack Blanco, Trinity Symposium, Collegedale, Texas, 2006)

Dr. Blanco said pretty much the same thing at a 3ABN camp meeting 4 years later in 2010.

“What did the angel say? Son of God - your Father calls you. Oh! Even obedient in death - when He could have raised Himself. If that’s not obedience I don’t know what is. Stayed dead until the Father called.” (Jack Blanco, Sermon: ‘The Humble One’, 3ABN Fall Camp Meeting, 2010)

I believe these are errors in understanding, due to trinitarian presumptions. Erwin Gane reveals the premise behind the error:

“...Deity is immortal and therefore cannot die in any sense. It is impossible for an immortal being to give up life. Immortality is deathlessness...” (E. Gane “Ellen G. White on the Absolute Deity of Christ)

Do you see the problem? Deity “cannot die in any sense” according to the SDA trinitarian brethren. Yet we see otherwise don’t we? Christ actually made it possible for Himself to lose His own Divinity by becoming a human.

“Christ’s humanity could not be separated from His divinity.” {ST April 14, 1898, par. 6}

“The two expressions “human” and “divine” were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality. {ST May 10, 1899, par. 11}

Thus as Scripture says, He had to be saved from death.

Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; (Heb 5:7)

The Testimony of Jesus confirms that God had interest in the salvation of His only begotten Son.

“In his prayer the Saviour has revealed His desire that our conduct be such that the Father can have the same love for us, and the same interest in our salvation, that He had for His only begotten Son” {RH July 19, 1906, par. 10}

The point of what we are saying here is that by the incarnation Christ actually risked His own eternal existence, placing His Deity on a conditional basis. In this sense, He needed salvation from death just as we do.

*“Remember that Christ risked all; “tempted like as we are,” **He staked even His own eternal existence** upon the issue of the conflict {GCB December 1, 1895, par. 23}*

“Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour’s head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope.{1SM 256.1}

“Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His Deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty {ST May 10, 1899, par. 11}

These truths are often unseen or denied by our trinitarian brethren. They ignore the word “while” in the sentence above. Thus they present the incarnated Christ as totally incapable of dying. For example, Max Hatton, the SDA trinitarian author claims that if Christ sinned:

“It would have affected Him terribly if He had sinned. He would be shattered to a depth that we could never understand. God would be defeated, the human family would be forever lost, the residents of the other occupied planets would be in great distress and would probably lose a lot of confidence in God. It would have adversely affected Christ’s humanity somehow but his Deity would not be affected to the extent that He would be obliterated. He is Eternal, Omnipotent, and such-like and could never die.” (Max Hatton, “HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST FROM ANTI-TRINITARIANS)

Terry Hill, a prominent SDA non-trinitarian, wrote to various SDA trinitarian leaders asking them about this very matter. Here is how they replied:

“Thank you for collecting the Ellen White quotes in this area. I have examined each one of them and find that they do not state exactly what would have happened if Christ had sinned. There was a risk, that is clear, but just what that risk was is not clearly spelled out.” (Glyn Parfitt to Terry Hill, 8th October 2009)

“Thank you for reading the treatise on the Doctrine [sic] of God. God the son could have sinned but he would not have lost his existence. I do not know where you get the idea that sin would have brought the death of the eternal Son of God. God, because he is God cannot die. Humans can die. Sin in Christ would have determined death for all humans, and would have affected the life of the Son and the trinity in ways we cannot comprehend but will not have cause the death of the Son and change the Trinitarian structure of God’s Being.” (Fernando Canale, email to Terry Hill, 14th September 2007)

I can confirm that brother Canale still believes this. I wrote himself myself and he graciously responded. He gave his trinitarian interpretation of the Scripture and Egw quotes I shared with him. I will quote him and then issue a reply underneath:

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; (Heb 5:7).

FLC: Interpretation: save Christ from death on the cross for our sins (death of the divine human being that Christ became, not the death of his divine being)

Reply: Here we see how the assumed trinity doctrine is triumphing over the incarnation. The assumption is that since Christ is immutably God and therefore His life can never be lost. Thus the death of the divine human being was something of a farce because the divine Being did not and never can actually die.

“Remember that Christ risked all; "tempted like as we are," he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict.” (Ellen G. White, General Conference Bulletin 1st December 1895 ‘Seeking the Lost’)

FLC interpretation: When I received your message and read this passage I understood that stake his own eternal existence as involving necessarily his death or the cease of his divinity or eternal person. Yet, the statement does not say that. The statement only say that he risked (gambled) his own eternal existence. Which means that if he had sinned he would have been affected in himself eternally. His sufferings would continue forever because his life is eternal. We cannot deduce from this statement that his life would have ceased if he sinned.

Reply: Again the assumed trinity doctrine is triumphing over the incarnation. The idea that the words *“stake even His own eternal existence”* does not necessarily involve His death, the cessation of His Divinity or eternal Person, removes the plain meaning of language. I wrote brother Canale again but he never replied. Here is what I said:

“It is at this point that I would like to pause and challenge your reasoning. When I discuss the matter of the 2nd death with evangelicals I often find that they reinterpret words and phrases to turn it into eternal torment. This is usually because they are working with a foundational premise of an eternal soul. I think you have done a similar thing here. The word "existence" has basically become "well-being" in your interpretation above. [You are saying that] It isn't actually His existence that is being staked but the pleasantness and well-being of that existence. Basically it's a back door for a doctrine of eternal torment. Do you see what I am saying?

Let's get back to the original email reply:

“Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God. Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an

exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss.” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages. Page 131 ‘The Victory’)

FLC interpretation: Here the idea of “stake” is resumed as “risk” of eternal loss. Again, eternal loss does not necessarily imply the lost of life (death of Christ as divine eternal person). It could mean eternal separation from the Father and the Holy Spirit which will produce eternal suffering for Christ and also for the Father and Holy Spirit.

Reply: Here we see quite explicitly that the wages of sin for the incarnated Christ would not be death but rather eternal torment.

"Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour's head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope. {1SM 256.1}

FLC Interpretation: to be place under divine wrath and being without hope does not necessarily means ceasing to exist as a divine person

Reply: This interpretation appears to ignore the description of the Divine wrath. It is the same “as” what came upon Adam. We know that, apart from the immediate intervention of Christ, Adam would be eternally dead. He would have no existence. So what must the quote mean if it is this same wrath that Christ would have faced if He had sinned and that He “*would have been without hope.*” **Why interpret Christ, the last Adam, who “*staked His own eternal existence*” as not facing that same possibility? The only answer I can fathom is because of a trinitarian presupposition that says it is impossible. No amount of inspired words seems to be able to negate the assumptive view.**

"Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty (The Signs of the Times, May 10, 1899)

FLC interpretation: To lose his deity could mean to cease to exist in which case there would a contradiction with the first statement that says divinity cannot die applied to Christ. However it could mean the lost of the Divine POSITION he had before the incarnation and that the plan of Salvation was supposed to restore. I rather follow this last possible interpretation that to argue an inner contradiction in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Reply: Where brother Canale sees “*an inner contradiction*” I do not. There is really no great difficulty here. Let me give an illustration. Here are two premises.

A) Your car will always work

B) Your car cannot be lost while you make your payments

To interpret premise A as if it was non-conditional and say that you will always have a working car is faulty. It ignores the second premise that the retention of the car itself is conditional.

I believe what brother Canale has done, due to his trinitarian lens, is ignore the second premise of inspiration. Let's look at the two premises from the inspired pen.

A) "Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible. {19LtMs, Lt 280, 1904, par. 9}

B) "His Deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty. {ST May 10, 1899, par. 11}

So, again, to interpret premise A as if it was non-conditional and say that Jesus could not really die - as in cease to eternally exist - because it was impossible for Deity to do so is faulty reasoning. It ignores the second premise that, in His incarnated state, His retention of Deity itself was conditional.

Unfortunately, this type of thinking from brother Canale is also held by many others. One of my professors, who was taught by him, made the same argument to me.

"The danger in Jesus incarnation was that if he sinned, then divinity and the trinity would be eternally linked to Jesus' dead humanity. Jesus actually risked a fate worse than death, being eternally connected with sin. (Email from Douglas Jacobs to Jason Smith, Monday, January 26, 2015)

Another SDA minister, a very vocal pro-trinitarian advocate, made this claim to me on Facebook:

Richard Mendoza wrote: *That whether non of the members of the TRINITY "could loose their existence" is again speculative and has not been revealed in the Bible. . . Leave it there. . . EGW or no EGW. . . It's not Bible doctrine. . .*

Are you aware that BIBLE DOCTRINE is what the whole BIBLE teaches on a given subject. . . A faint illusion is not a doctrine. . . If it were a doctrine we would find it throughout the BIBLE.
[End Quote]

This claim, that "if it were a doctrine" it must be found "throughout the Bible" is false. It can just be there in one place and still be doctrine. The doctrine of the millennium is not found throughout the Bible but I am yet to hear anyone negate it because of that.

I believe that not only did the Son of God actually die but He actually would have stayed dead if He had sinned. His body would have decayed. In other words, He would have ceased to be if He had not remained loyal to God. The Son of God placed His entire Being, even the retention of His Divinity, into the Father's hands. Had He sinned in any particular then He would have never lived again. Yet He was sinless! Thus the Father awakened His

Son and Jesus came back to life by the power that was dormant within Himself. We must have a deeper conceptualization of the sufferings of the Son of God.

“As a member of the human family he was mortal, but as a God he was the fountain of life to the world. He could, in his divine person, ever have withstood the advances of death, and refused to come under its dominion; but he voluntarily laid down his life, that in so doing he might give life and bring immortality to light. He bore the sins of the world, and endured the penalty which rolled like a mountain upon his divine soul. He yielded up his life a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die. He died, not through being compelled to die, but by his own free will. This was humility. The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man. He brought into his human nature all the life-giving energies that human beings will need and must receive. {RH July 5, 1887, par. 5}

“The Saviour came into the world, outwardly the son of David, not manifesting the full significance of his character. His spirit was subject to that discipline and experience through which humanity must in some measure pass. His divinity was veiled beneath humanity. He hid within himself those all-powerful attributes which belonged to him as one equal with God. {SP 259.1}

“He was not only made flesh, but He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. His divine attributes were withheld from relieving His soul anguish or His bodily pains {11LtMs, Lt 106, 1896, par. 18}

“When Christ cried out, “My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken Me?” His divinity did not come to His aid to help Him see that His case was perfectly free. Not a ray of brightness illuminated that dying struggle. Not a pang of the death sentence was spared the Son of God. The word of the Lord was, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” [Ezekiel 18:4.] The sentence of death which God had pronounced against every transgressor of His law, must be executed against the Son of God. {14LtMS, Ms 205, 1899, par.7}

“The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Bright hope did not present to him his coming forth a conqueror. The sin of the world was felt to the utmost by the Son of God. The displeasure of the Father for sin, and the penalty, which is death, were all that he could realize through this amazing darkness. He was tempted to fear that sin was so offensive to the Father that he could never again be reconciled to his Son. Faith and hope trembled in the expiring agonies of Christ; for God had removed the assurance he had heretofore given his Son of his approbation and acceptance. Then the Saviour relied upon the evidences that had hitherto been given him that his Father accepted his labors and was pleased with his work. As he yields up his precious life, he has by faith alone to trust in Him whom it has ever been his joy to serve. Denied even bright hope and confidence in the triumph which will be his in the future, he still cries with a loud voice, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” [Luke 23:46.] He is acquainted with the character of his Father, with his justice his mercy, and his great love, and in submission he drops into his hands. Christ had wrapped his life in the life of God. He clung in faith to his Father, and this faith sustained him {14LtMs, Ms 205, 1899, par. 8}

The Scripture tells us no lie when it declares that God made the soul of Christ a sin offering and that Christ tasted death for every man.

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand (Isaiah 53:10)

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9)

Let’s get back to the subject matter at hand.

The doctrine of the trinity, which presents Jesus as alive, with a separate Divine consciousness, is false. He was not alive, as God, patiently waiting in submission for His resurrection. He was dead, unconscious, as a whole Being, and only His Father could awaken Him.

“He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house as a prisoner of divine justice, and he was responsible to the Judge of the universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, and his Father only could release him. {YI May 2, 1901, par. 8}

Prewitt: *A person then who read between the lines might have been able to conclude that Waggoner was less than persuaded by the Trinitarian creeds. But one would have been equally sure that the author was not writing the book to contradict them.*

Reply: The very fact that J.H. Waggoner refused to define the Spirit as a personality clearly indicates that he was opposed to establishing the doctrine of the trinity. Isn’t that a prerequisite for that doctrine? We do not have to be “*equally sure*” that he was not writing the book to contradict trinitarian creed. We can just be sure that he was not establishing this doctrine and we are quite sure of this.

Prewit: *In one other of Waggoner’s books did he address his concerns with the Trinity. And there he almost sounded like he would be a trinitarian if the word was only defined differently*

Reply: **Waggoner did make himself very clear as a rejector of the doctrine of the trinity in his book. We quoted him fairly extensively above. He saw the trinity as incompatible with the atonement. Yet, let’s deal with the implication here. What if someone re-defined the doctrine of the trinity and said it was 3 separate God Beings, like how many SDAs today do. Would Waggoner have accepted that definition? We actually know the answer. Again, let’s quote him:**

“THOSE who will have the patience to read the writers of the early centuries in their controversies over the doctrine of the Trinity, must agree in this, that very much which was then written on the subject was an interminable jargon, a bitter contention over words to no profit;

made up more largely of invectives and personal criminations than of argument; showing more zeal for party success than piety.

Bingham speaks of the vague views held by some in the following significant terms:— **“There were some very early that turned the doctrine of the Trinity into Tritheism, and, instead of three divine persons under the economy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, brought in three collateral, co-ordinate, and self-originated beings, making them three absolute and independent principles, without any relation of Father or Son, which is the most proper notion of three gods. And having made this change in the doctrine of the Trinity, they made another change answerable to it in the form of baptism.”**—Antiquities, book 11, chap. 3, § 4.

Who can distinguish between this form of expression and that put forth by the council of Constantinople in A. D. 381, wherein the true faith is declared to be that of “an untreated and consubstantial and co-eternal Trinity?” The truth is that we find the same idea which is here described by Bingham running through much of the orthodox literature of the second and third centuries. There is no proper “relation of Father and Son” to be found in the words of the council, above quoted. And we willingly leave it with the good judgment of every unprejudiced reader that three baptisms are more consistent with the idea of “three collateral, co-ordinate, and self-originated beings,” than with the idea of baptism into the names of the -Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in the likeness of the Saviour’s death and resurrection.

Bingham says this error in regard to a Trinity of three co-ordinate and self-originated and independent beings arose in the church very early; and so we find it in the earliest authors after the days of the apostles. He said that a change was made in the form of baptism corresponding to this form of belief; and so we find that three baptisms were announced by the same writers. Three baptisms are contrary to the express words of the Scripture and contrary to the Scripture ideas of baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ. We must determine, and that to a certainty, that three baptisms is that erroneous form which was made to correspond to the doctrine of three co-eternal beings, which did not regard the true relation of Father and Son, and which gave rise to a rejection of the baptism of the gospel, into the death of Christ.

Eld. Moore says:— “We have shown conclusively that Justin was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and by trine immersion, which traces trine immersion in an unbroken line to within thirty-three years of the close of the apostolic age.”

We quote this to show with what surpassing confidence he claims to have proved conclusively that of which he has not given one particle of evidence. And this seems to be characteristic of that class. The most absurd and improbable things are put forth with as much assurance as if they were demonstrated. Again he says:— “The origin of single immersion can be found among the innovations of the fourth century, while sprinkling and pouring, as well as infant baptism, can boast of no better birth.”

We say that single immersion has not been and cannot be traced to the innovations of the fourth century. It is according to the plain teachings of the New Testament; and the historian or tradition-monger who seeks to elevate another form to its place only proves that he does not follow the light of divine truth. And, if Eld. Moore means to say that sprinkling and pouring and

infant baptism are also among the innovations of the fourth century, then he states what every one knows to be untrue who does not take all his historical knowledge at secondhand. Or, if' he means to say that sprinkling and pouring and infant baptism, and, we may add, infant communion, have not as good historical evidence in their favor as trine immersion has, he then speaks against his own knowledge, or shows that his knowledge of history is very limited. Let this be specially noticed: While history is the chief dependence of trine immersion, it is not one whit more strongly fortified by history than are sprinkling, infant baptism, and infant communion. On this-point we are willing to rest the case on the evidence herein presented.

Chrystal, who is quoted so largely by the advocates of' trine immersion, advocates infant baptism as strongly as he does trine immersion. And he defends tradition, because by it he proves these dogmas. But it is a suspicious circumstance that he is silent in regard to infant communion, which, he must know, is as strongly entrenched in tradition, as are infant baptism and trine immersion. Infant baptism and infant communion are logically inseparable; they stand or fall together, so far as reason and traditional evidence are concerned. (J. H. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, January 27, 1881, pg. 40)

It is quite apparent that Waggoner would reject the 3 self-originated, independent God Beings version of the trinity too.

Prewitt wrote: *The Son and the Father do not have interchangeable positions in Scripture*

Reply: To this we most certainly agree. Unfortunately, this doctrine of interchangeable persons is commonly taught in today's Adventism. I have read it and heard it from the pulpit many times. The following document repudiates it:

<https://asitreads.com/2018-4-20-did-ellen-white-believe-and-teach-volunteerism/>

Prewitt wrote: *But on that last point Smith and Waggoner wrote too much. The blending of Christ's two natures, his taking humanity so that he could "taste death" for all of us, are mysteries that we cannot penetrate. How Jesus could really die as He was, is not for us to know.*

Reply: While there will always be things we do not know, we must make it abundantly clear that Jesus died and that He also faced the risk of eternal non-existence. These things have been explicitly revealed to us. Unfortunately, modern SDA trinitarian leaders claim that Jesus, because He is God, could never really die and thus they make His incarnation and risk into a farce. We dealt with that at length above.

Prewitt wrote: *And I, for the record, wish that our 28 fundamental beliefs were more ambiguous in regard to the Godhead.*

Reply: We do not wish for more ambiguity in regard to the Godhead but rather inspired precision. Let's use the express language of inspiration to express SDA doctrine. The problem with the current doctrine is not only that it is an assumption but it is also a wax nose doctrine that can be turned in a variety of different ways because of its ambiguity.

Many non-trinitarians, such as myself, are advocating for a return to the original 1872 statement with a minor addition. It would read like this

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, [the third person of the Godhead] Ps.139:7.*

II - *That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things... [End Quote]*

We would even be happy with a return to the pre-1980 position which reads like this although we would like to see the words “or Trinity” dropped off.

2. *“That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption (Matthew 28:19; Isaiah 44:6; 48:13; Matthew 12:32; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Revelation 1:8, 11).*

3. *That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature, He took upon Himself the nature of the human family,... [End Quote]*

The sad and utterly inane thing here is that we are frequently cast out of Adventism and held in ill repute for the mere fact that we do not affirm the identity of the one God as a unity of 3 persons. This is where Adventism is going too far. In your document you said, regarding the “point” about how “a merely human sacrifice would never atone for our sin,” that “Smith and Waggoner wrote too much” but do you not see that on the point of the identity of the one God, the current SDA church has gone too far? The current belief is an openly admitted assumption. As Richard Rice, the SDA theologian admits:

“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. (The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective by Richard Rice pg 89)

Now this is not a one off either. It is an openly admitted assumptive doctrine

“The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed.” (Handbook of SDA Theology, SDA Encyclopedia Vol 12, page 138)

“The New Testament does not have any explicit statement on the Trinity—apart from 1 John 5:7, which has been rejected as a medieval addition to the text—but the Trinitarian evidence is overwhelming. (Dennis Fortin <http://www.perspectivedigest.org/article/17/archives/15-4/god-the-trinity-and-adventism>)

“While no single Scripture formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact by Bible writers and mentioned several times. Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.”
(Adventist Review Vol. 158 No. 31, 1981, P. 4)

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

“No text of Scripture specifically states that God is three Persons; but theological reasoning on the basis of biblical principles leads to that conclusion (K. Donkor, BRI Release 9, "God in 3 Persons - In Theology, May 2015, pg 20)

"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**. (Dan Augsburg, “The ‘Eternal’ Three & ‘The LORD our God, the LORD is one!’ A Bible Study on the Eternal Godhead,” p. 22)

“Objection - Where in Scripture is the doctrine of the Trinity clearly taught?
Answer: **The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly required by Scripture but is nowhere fully explained therein**. The words of some theologians are helpful to the situation. (Max Hatton, Understanding the Trinity pg 128)

"Thus, we may affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, **even if it is a developed understanding based on text that do not state so explicitly**.(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)

Now let’s take a moment and compare that to what the Testimony of Jesus says:

“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... {BTS May 1, 1913 par.3}

“We are not to speculate regarding points upon which the Word of God is silent. All that is necessary for our salvation is given in the Word of God. Day by day we are to make the Bible the man of our counsel.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 8th August 1905, ‘Christ our only hope’)

“It is not His plan that His people shall present something which they have to suppose, which is not taught in the Word” {16LtMs, Ms 26, 1901, par.19}

“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” (8LtMs, Ms 39, 1893 par.3)

“The Bible teaching of God is the only teaching that it is safe for human beings to follow. We are to regulate our faith by a plain, “Thus saith the Lord.” The knowledge of Himself that God desires us to gain from His Word will, if brought into the daily life, make men and women strong to resist evil and fit them to represent Him {18LtMs, Ms 132, 1903, par. 36}

“Luther saw the danger of exalting human theories above the Word of God. He fearlessly attacked the speculative infidelity of the schoolmen, and opposed the philosophy and theology which had so long held a controlling influence upon the people. He denounced such studies as not only worthless but pernicious, and sought to turn the minds of his hearers from the sophistries of philosophers and theologians to the eternal truths set forth by prophets and apostles {GC88 126.1}

“We deplore the fact that men idolize their own opinions, that they are willing to be governed by their own preconceived ideas rather than by a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” It is the most difficult thing in the world to convince men who do not want to be convinced. {6LtMs, Lt 4, 1889, par. 86}

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

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

“But 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 yea 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.] {Ms149-1904.3}

“If your faith in the Word of God is strengthened; if you will fully accept the truths that have called us out of the world and made us a people denominated by the Lord as His peculiar treasure; if you will unite with your brethren in standing by the old landmarks, then there will be unity. But if you remain in unbelief, unsettled as to the true foundation of faith, there can be no hope of any more unity in the future than there has been in the past {19LtMs, Lt 23, 1904, par. 2}

The salient problem with what our SDA trinitarian brethren appear to be aiming for is that the SDA non-trinitarian brethren are being asked to be silent, to abandon the old landmark pillars regarding the personality of the Father and the Son, and to acquiesce to a doctrine that is an openly admitted assumption, which lacks a plain thus saith the Lord, and stands solely upon “*the voice of the majority*” by General Conference vote. We cannot do this in good conscience. Instead we are humbly asking for the matter to be revisited. We are asking the brethren to open up the floor for a new study to be had. Inspiration warns us:

"Many, very many matters have been taken up and carried by vote, that have involved far more than was anticipated and far more than those who voted would have been willing to assent to had they taken time to consider the question from all sides." (9T 278)

Is it possible that the SDA church voted a new fundamental belief about the trinity without considering the question properly from every angle? Consider the notes from the 1980 session:

“G.N. BANKS: Is our position as fundamentalist-believers that the Godhead is a unit of three equal members, pre-existent to all things, and that there was a period when there was no Sonship involved-just three members of the Godhead? Is that our position? Did the term Father come into play only in relationship to the Sonship experience as a result of sin and the need of the atonement?”

NEAL C. WILSON: Well, you are getting into an area that could lead us into certain Arian complications. And the word fundamentalist in itself is not a good description of Seventh-day Adventists today, because theologically it has implications that really do not harmonize with our position.

W. DUNCAN EVA: Mr. Chairman, we did not want to get into those areas that Elder Banks has talked about,... [Review and Herald April 24, 1980 pg 18]

Here we see that fear of Arianism caused the General Conference president to not answer the question. The Father/Son relationship was avoided. Those who know the history of how Adventism developed its current doctrine know that there was a purposeful censorship and repudiation of the original pioneer view regarding the begotten nature of Christ. Books were censored, lies were fabricated about the historical position, new interpretations of certain Egw quotes were promulgated, misleading compilations were made, and coercive tactics were used against SDA leaders who would not capitulate, like the men in the Columbian Union Conference. This has left the Adventist people in the dark about God and Christ. The landmark pillar, which was once a part of the SDA foundation of the faith, has been largely removed. Even brother Prewitt himself seems to be somewhat in the dark here.

Prewitt wrote: And if we agree that “in the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God” we probably should admit that we don’t know anything about something before that beginning. We don’t know if the Son was a Son at that point

Reply: We actually do know that He was the Son at that point. From the very beginning of time itself, the creation of the universe, He was God's Son. Inspiration tells us:

“Christ is declared in the Scriptures to be the Son of God. From all eternity He has sustained this relation to Jehovah. Before the foundations of the world were laid, He, the only begotten Son of God, pledged Himself to become the Redeemer of the human race should men sin
{20LtMs, Ms 22, 1905, par. 4}

Now let me move on to a different point. This is in regard to Uriah Smith and his promotion of his non-trinitarian views.

Prewitt wrote: *Did he have non-trinitarian views? Yes. Did he promote them in print? For someone who wrote weekly as an editor, he did so only very rarely*[\[iii\]](#)*. If you, friend, also have non-trinitarian views, I wish you would imitate the good pioneers on this point.*

Reply: Uriah Smith wrote to an audience of Seventh-day Adventist Christians. What was their view at this time? Well, let's read from the 1899 Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists:

“The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as we know, entire unanimity throughout the body. (A Revised Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught & Practiced by The Seventh-day Adventists)

Here we find a reason why Uriah Smith and the other luminaries did not preach and publish their non-trinitarian views within the Adventist periodicals every week. From their perspective there was “*entire unanimity throughout the body*” on this point. Yet they did advertise the fundamental beliefs and other non-trinitarian works in the back. And even when they wrote or preached to those without, they would typically address the matter with subtlety.

Now, to ask the children of the pioneers, the modern day SDA non-trinitarians, to not promote their views, when the SDA church itself is now casting us out because we do not adhere to fundamental belief # 2 is asking a bit too much.

We love the SDA church but we cannot stand by, in idle silence, when leaders like Angel Rodriguez reducing the Sonship of Christ to a metaphor

We cannot be mute when we see men like Ty Gibson saying Christ's Sonship is merely a prophetic term due to the covenant of salvation.

We cannot remain silent when certain of the leadership, men like Max Hatton, are presenting a triune god as a formless entity for the people to receive and worship.

We cannot turn a blind eye when men like Doug Batchelor claim that Proverbs 8 is not speaking about Christ and that to believe in a Son begotten of God is the same thing as a son created by Him. The SDA prophet clearly says otherwise.

Nor can we remain silent when the heresies of tritheism and volunteerism are confusing the people of God. There are men teaching that too, whom I could name.

Now I do *not* say these men are evil. I believe they are sincerely mistaken. And nor do I seek to cast them aside because of what I view as error. God forbid! These men have done much for the cause of present truth in many ways. Yet I truly believe they need to re-examine the issue of the Sonship of Christ.

And all of these aforementioned things are being taught, not by a plain thus saith the Lord but by tradition and human philosophy. Brother Prewitt, you ask too much on this point.

We love you for who you are, for your sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel, for your reasonable approach in many ways, yet what you ask here we must respectfully decline.

The demon of heresy is roaring and we must speak the truth against him. The ongoing apostasy within Adventism, which is increasing and waxing stronger, the turning away from the foundational principles of the denominated faith, must continually be opposed. We must call men back to the landmark pillar regarding the personality of God and the personality of Christ. We ask that you join us in this and cast your influence fully on the side of God, His only begotten Son, and His mysteriously-natured, omnipresent Spirit.

“The demon of heresy has mapped out the world and has resolved to possess it as his kingdom. Those who are in his army are numerous; they are disguised and are subtle and persevering. They resist every divine influence, and employ every instrumentality in order to compass the ruin of even one soul. They possess a zeal, tact, and ability that is marvelous, and press their way into every new opening where the standard of truth is uplifted. What will the laborers together with God do? Wherein lies their ability and efficiency? Those who are workers together with God will work in Christ’s lines. Imbued with the Spirit of Christ, they will rise to their true dignity and responsibility. {9LtMs, Lt 89, 1894, par. 15}

“One thing it is certain is soon to be realized,—the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominated faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith {SpTB07 57.1}

I will end this message with a selection of quotes from the pen of inspiration that I believe speak loud and clearly on this important subject.

When God would not concede to Satan’s claim to a place above His only begotten Son, Satan rebelled. There was war in heaven, and he was cast out. He pressed his claim to be placed above Christ, but the warfare resulted in his losing his position in the heavenly courts {25LtMs, Lt 132, 1910, par. 4}

“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. They were lifted up because of their beauty {25LtMs, Lt 42, 1910, par. 3}

As Jehovah, the supreme Ruler, God could not personally communicate with sinful men, but He so loved the world that He sent Jesus to our world as a revelation of Himself. "I and My Father are one," Christ declared. [John 10:30.] "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." [Matthew 11:27.] {18LtMs, Ms 124, 1903, par. 2}

"As Creator of all, God is governor over all, and He is bound to enforce His law throughout the universe. To require less from His creatures than obedience to His law would be to abandon them to ruin. To fail to punish transgression of His law would be to place the universe in confusion. The moral law is God's barrier between the human agent and sin. Thus infinite wisdom has placed before men the distinction between right and wrong, between sin and holiness. {ST June 5, 1901, par. 5}

"...The law of Jehovah, the foundation of his government in Heaven and upon earth, was as sacred as its divine Author; and for this reason the life of an angel could not be accepted of God as a sacrifice for its transgression. His law was of more importance in his sight than the holy angels around his throne. The Father could not change nor abolish one precept of His law to meet man in his fallen condition..." {ST January 30, 1879, par. 12}

"The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver. He knew that his life alone could be sufficient to ransom fallen man. He was of as much more value than man as his noble, spotless character, and exalted office as commander of all the heavenly host, were above the work of man. He was in the express image of his Father, not in features alone, but in perfection of character {2SP 9.1}

Christ volunteered to come to our world and give to men the true light. God gave His only begotten Son to the world to reveal the Father as supreme in heaven and in earth. Christ came in the form of humanity, to meet and overcome the enemy and his devices. {25LtMs, Lt 132, 1910, par. 6}

"It is our privilege to know God experimentally, and in true knowledge of God is life eternal. The only begotten Son of God was God's gift to the world, in whose character was revealed the character of him who gave the law to men and angels. He came to proclaim the fact, "The Lord our God is one Lord," and him only shalt thou serve. {RH March 9, 1897, par. 9}

"Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfilment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. {16LtMs, Ms 11, 1901, par. 4}

"Those to whom the Lord spoke anciently were in possession of the knowledge of the true God. Their message to the world was the existence of a personal God and the unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in carrying forward the great work of redemption in every soul that is emptied of self {20LtMs, Ms 78, 1905, par. 20}

“The Lord revealed Himself not only as the true and living God, but as our heavenly Father, when He sent His only begotten Son into the world to purchase our redemption. {BTS December 1, 1911, par. 6}

Our heavenly Father is the God of the universe, and Christ is the divine Son, the One equal with the Father {21LtMs, Ms 49, 1906, par. 26}

