

# THE TRINITY DEBATE

## Defending the Indefensible . . .

BRIAN S. NEUMANN

### INTRODUCTION:

It could be wondered, with a certain sense of legitimacy, what else can be said about the topic of the Godhead, or Trinity, as it is generally known in Christianity, that has not been said already. After all, since shortly after the apostolic era, in the first few centuries A.D., there was considerable debate over this doctrine. Men such as Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, Origen of Alexandria and his pupil, Gregory Thaumaturgus, who composed the first creed on the subject in his *Ekthesis tes pisteos*, had much to say about the nature of the Godhead. Since then, over the centuries that followed, many more educated scholars have added their voice to the debate. The present era is certainly no exception.

So, why should someone, like myself, with no official theological background, attempt to expound on such a controversial, land-mine issue, when he obviously does not have the academic equipment with which to pursue such a venture? Many of our leading Seventh-day Adventist scholars, past and present, have laid out the church's position from a historical, biblical and Spirit of Prophecy perspective – what need is there to flog a horse that has obviously been flogged to death by those far more qualified than I am? I have often asked myself this question since I know that there are those who would do greater justice to the task. Notwithstanding this though, I do feel that there are perhaps some valid reasons, some of them close to home, for why I felt compelled to pursue this venture. I have always believed that searching out truth is not simply the domain of credentialed theologians. Every one who studies religion – In the case of a Christian, the Word of God – Is a theologian by definition, albeit an un-credentialed one. There are many today who carry the credentials but are teaching everything else but the truth. It is the duty of every child of God to know what we believe so that we can give a reason for the hope that is within us. We need to study to show ourselves approved – these are both biblical injunctions.

One of the things that inspired me to write about this is because of my personal experience with it in relation to accusations that have been levelled against the SDA Church, because of its so-called Roman theology on the nature of the Godhead. I have, during my extensive seminar tours around the world, been exposed to the effects of this controversy and have seen the disastrous repercussions that it has had on people who have come to accept

the idea that this denomination is in error regarding its position on this doctrine. In some cases these people have been personal friends who at some or other time have held positions of trust in their respective congregations. Today, some of them do not even come to church any more and, in some cases, have asked for their names to be scratched from the denominations books because they have now come to realize that the Church they once viewed as God's remnant has, in fact, become a daughter of Babylon, a slave of the Catholic Church.

Another reason why I have decided to broach this subject is because of much of the material that I have read or been exposed to in some or other way that has attempted to deal with this topic – on both sides of the argument. In most cases, especially in defence of the SDA position on this doctrine, I have felt that the responses have not always been sufficient. Not because the arguments have not, generally, been solid (sometimes they are not), but because they have not answered every accusation / covered all the bases or closed all the loop-holes effectively – especially when countering the array of, so called, evidences presented from the words of our pioneers and the pen of Ellen White. Let me present, especially for those who are totally unfamiliar with the issue, a little helpful background.

The doctrine concerning the Godhead, commonly termed the doctrine of the Trinity (Lat. *trinitas* “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness”) is an essential doctrine of Christianity. In recent times, however, some SDA's have begun to question whether we are really teaching it correctly. In 1995, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, for example, a man by the name of Fred Allaback distributed a paper entitled *No New Leaders No New Gods* in which he claimed that ‘the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity until long after the death of Ellen G. White.’ ‘The Adventist Pioneers,’ he says, ‘believed that in the eons of eternity only one divine being existed. Then, this one divine being had a Son.’ Thus, Christ had a beginning. In regard to the Holy Spirit, Allaback believes that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and Christ not another divine being. The same view is held by other thought leaders such as Bill Stringfellow, Rachel Cory-Kuehl, and many more. All claiming that Jesus at one point in time did not exist and that the Holy Spirit is only a force. *Stringfellow* says, ‘Just think, there was a certain, specific day when God brought forth His Son . . . way, way back one beautiful, historic day. There was a time (even though it is impossible to think back that far into the past) when Christ did not exist.’ There are variations on the same theme, but the essential theology of this mind-set, is generally the same (See: *Gerhard Pfandl* article, ‘*THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE*,’ *Biblical Research Institute Silver Spring, MD June 1999*).

It certainly does appear, when reading their accounts of Adventist history, that from the earliest years of our church till at least the 1890's a whole stream of writers took an Arian or semi-Arian position on the Godhead. In other words, they would, if they were alive today, be opposed to the present teaching that the Adventist church holds on the Godhead. It would seem that the view of Christ presented in those years by Adventist authors was that there was a time when Christ did not exist, that His divinity is a sort of delegated, inherited

or bestowed divinity. It is said that the position of our pioneers, including Ellen White, in regard to the Holy Spirit, was that He was not the third member of the Godhead but the power or essence of God – a force rather than a person.

The question must be asked, is this indeed true? If it is not, do we have any way of proving, as categorically as possible, that it isn't? If you had asked me that question a little while ago, then I might have been a little hesitant to say that it can be proven. Indeed, the case presented by the Arians or Anti-Trinitarians, as they often themselves, seems to be a pretty solid case – this is, no doubt, why so many have been deceived by it. I am more than confident now, after spending much time researching this topic and looking at the arguments from both sides, that it is not only possible, but an absolute certainty, that the Arian theology can be exposed for what it really is – a deception of gross proportions. I will attempt to expose it as such in this document.

It might be helpful to bear in mind that fraudulent teaching is based on some basic, false premise, and, more often than not, contains elements of truth. The position taken by the 'anti-SDA Trinitarian / Arian' fraternity is no exception. Their case against the SDA Church is, to some degree, based on misinformation, or, at the very least, misunderstanding and particles of fact. Once the misinformation or misunderstanding is cleared up, then much of the foundation of their paradigm begins to crumble. Add to this expose, careful scrutiny of some of their prime defenses, using the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and a common sense, cause to effect evaluation of their theology – dissecting fact from fantasy – and you end up with a suitcase full of stale air.

Right now, I am almost tempted to go straight for the jugular and cut the 'beast' down at the source of life, but I will resist the lure, for a number of reasons. Firstly, I would like to present the 'Anti-SDA Trinity' case in as convincing and succinct, manner as possible – from their perspective, as they generally would defend it. I want the reader to understand how convincing their case appears to be, and, along with this, I would like to, at least for a while, give the opposition the benefit of the doubt. The second reason has nothing to do with the 'ASDAT' (Anti-SDA Trinity – I will abbreviate it as such). Rather, my reason has to do with the SDA defenses against the ASDAT that I so often have come across. Some of their arguments are also based on misunderstanding. And, possibly, because they keep missing the very basis of the ASDAT defense they are, inadvertently, feeding their case. The rationale for saying this will become clearer as I begin to unpack the proverbial suitcase later on in this document.

## PART 1

### PRESENTING THE 'ANTI-SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST TRINITY' (ASDAT) POSITION

When the SDA Church talks about a Godhead composed of a Trinity of beings, equal in authority of 'Godhood,' singular and separate – father, Son and Holy Spirit – as three distinct persons, then, they are declaring a heresy of pagan, Catholic proportions that, ultimately, undermine the very pillars of our faith. Since it is a fact that the SDA Church does, officially, teach this heresy today, it must be stated, with dire emphasis, that she has departed from the faith of her pioneers and the teachings of her prophet, Ellen G. White, all of whom continually held the Arian / non-Trinitarian view of the Godhead and most emphatically denounced the Catholic dogma of a triune Godhead of three distinct persons, equal in authority and eternal existence. It will be clearly shown from the history of the Christian church, our SDA denomination and the eternal Word of God, that a Trinitarian doctrine is the very root of false worship and is a fulfillment of the great omega of apostasies spoken of by God's faithful servant Ellen White. The implications of such an apostasy are indeed horrendous for a church that still claims to be the remnant body of Christ that holds the Bible as its standard of teaching. Let us examine the facts in clear systematic fashion, so as to plainly prove the error of this denominations present position.

#### THE TRINITY IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND ADVENTISM

Firstly, a dictionary definition of the Trinity concept will be of help:

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition:* Trinity: being three, group of three, union of **three persons in one Godhead . . .**

*Chambers 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary, 1936 printing:* Trinity: union of three in one Godhead, **persons of the Godhead . . .**

The definition clearly implies that there are three persons (plural) in one Godhead – suggesting total equality of status. If they are stated as the 'persons of the Godhead,' as they are, then this is an affirmation that they are, all three, God in the highest sense. It is vital to establish this fact as it is this foundational premise that lies at the very core of the Trinitarian error.

The origins of the Trinitarian doctrine go back to the post apostolic era, when dubious doctrines began infiltrating the Christian Church. In A.D. 180, Theophilus of Antioch spoke of the "the Trinity of God [the Father], His Word and His Wisdom," using the word 'trias' ("Ad. Autol.", II, 15). Afterwards it appears in its **Latin form** of *trinitas* in **Tertullian** ("De pud." c. xxi). In the next century [2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY] the word is in general use. It is found in many

passages of **Origen** ("In Ps. xvii", 15). The first creed in which it appears is that of Origen's pupil, Gregory Thaumaturgus. In his *Ekthesis tes pisteos* composed between 260 and 270, he writes:

There is therefore nothing created, nothing subject to another in the Trinity: nor is there anything that has been added as though it once had not existed, but had entered afterwards: therefore the Father has never been without the Son, nor the Son without the Spirit: and this same Trinity is immutable and unalterable forever (P. G., X, 986).

Clearly, by the time Thaumaturgus wrote his creed, the concept of a trinity, along the lines still held by the Catholic Church, had begun to take on specific form.

One of the first signs of warning, for SDA's, should be the fact that this doctrine was accepted by Constantine, who was a close friend of Origen – tutor of Thaumaturgus – and who was the man responsible for promoting the unity of pagan teaching with that of the Christian faith.

Meanwhile, in the fourth century A.D. in Alexandria, Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria was trying, as best he could, to revive what he saw as the biblical doctrine of the Godhead. His teaching eventually became known as the Arian doctrine – named after him. This doctrine, essentially, taught that Jesus Christ was not equal in authority with the Father and that he had not existed since eternity, though he was pre-existent before the creation of the world. It may be that those of us who today hold the anti-Trinitarian position may not agree with every aspect of Arius' position, but, the core of his notion is fundamentally the quintessence of what we hold as truth today. An important fact to consider is that Arianism was condemned at the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity which eventually became a backbone teaching of the Catholic faith. Listen to the words of God's faithful prophet as she describes the apostasy of the Christian Church during this era.

Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, "the mystery of iniquity" carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. . . . But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and ***in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions.*** The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the ***early part of the fourth century,*** caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. ***Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror.*** Her spirit controlled the church. Her

doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ.

This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of "the man of sin" foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. ***That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power, a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will. (The Great Controversy p. 49, 50)***

We would do well to notice that this was the exact period that the Trinity took its shape and was established by the council of Nicea in A.D. 325 (4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), the same time Ellen White says, 'paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror.'

J. N. Andrews, one of our early pioneers describes it as such:

'The doctrine of the Trinity which was established in the church by the council of Nice [Nicea], A.D. 325. This doctrine destroys the personality of God and His Son Jesus Christ.' 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, March 6, 1855)**

Another of our faithful pioneers (Loughborough) writes about the official introduction of the doctrine and the time it took to bring it to its present state. Notice that Loughborough recognizes it as a teaching of Persian (pagan) origin:

'This doctrine of the trinity was brought into the church about the same time as idol worship, and keeping the day of the sun, and is but Persian doctrine remodeled. It occupied about three hundred years from its introduction to bring the doctrine to what it is now. It was commenced about 325 A.D., and was not completed till 681. See Milman's Gibbons Rome, vol.iv, p. 422. It was adopted in Spain in 589, in England 596, in Africa in 534. – Gib. Vol. iv, p. 114, 345; Milner vol. I, p. 519.' **(J. N. Loughborough, Review & Herald, Nov 5, 1861)**

These evidences, in and of themselves, should be enough to cause any Bible-believing Seventh-day Adventist to summarily reject the teaching of a Trinity. But, to be sure, these evidences on their own will not be enough to clinch the case for most SDA's who have been indoctrinated, for generations now, with the Catholic philosophy of the Godhead. God's true church bases its doctrines on the Word of God, without exception – contrary to the practice of Rome, who relies on the opinions of man. The servant of the Lord declares:

The great error of the Romish Church is found in the fact that the Bible is interpreted in the light of the ***opinions of the "fathers."*** Their

opinions are regarded as infallible, and the dignitaries of the church assume that it is their prerogative to make others believe as they do, and to use force to compel the conscience. Those who do not agree with them are pronounced heretics. But ***the word of God is not thus to be interpreted.*** It is to stand on its ***own eternal merits, to be read as the word of God, to be obeyed as the voice of God,*** which declares His will to the people. The will and voice of finite man are not to be interpreted as the voice of God. (**Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 308**)

Ellen White said that *'The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed.'* (The Great Controversy, p. 598, 599) And, there is nowhere in the word of God that we find the word Trinity. Our pioneers believed this and our faith was built on a foundation of biblical truth and the revelation of the Spirit of God:

Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light, and ***studying the Word.*** . . . I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to the position we were to take regarding truth and duty.

A line of truth ***extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God,*** was plainly marked out before me, and I gave my brethren and sisters the instruction that the Lord had given me. . . . The leading points of our faith ***as we hold them today*** were firmly established. Point after point was clearly defined, and all ***the brethren came into harmony.***

The whole company of believers were united in the truth. There were those who came in with strange doctrines, but we were never afraid to meet them. Our experience was wonderfully established by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. . . .

It was some time after my second son was born [1849] that we were in great perplexity regarding certain points of doctrine. I was asking the Lord to unlock my mind, that I might understand His Word. Suddenly I seemed to be enshrouded in clear, beautiful light, and ***ever since, the Scriptures have been an open book to me.*** (Manuscript 135, Nov. 4, 1903, "Establishing the Foundation of Our Faith.")

The truths given us after the passing of the time in 1844 ***are just as certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us in answer to our urgent prayers.*** The visions that the Lord has given me are so remarkable that ***we know that what we have accepted is the truth.*** This was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. Light, precious light from God, established the main points of our faith as we hold them today. (**Letter 50, 1906, pp. 1, 2; To Elder W. W. Simpson, January 30, 1906; 1MR 53.2**)

These clear statements hardly need any comment. The doctrines of our faith were established shortly after the passing of the time of 1844. The brethren, our pioneers, understood them and taught them. They are, as Sister White puts it, *'certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us.'* Time after time our leading pioneers spoke out against the Catholic heresy of the Trinity. To them it was one of the most obnoxious philosophies imaginable. Take note of these words from a number of the brethren of that time:

**'Respecting the trinity, I concluded that it was impossible for me to believe that the *Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, was also the Almighty God,* the Father, one and the same being.'** (Joseph Bates, *Autobiography – Battle Creek, 1868, 205*)

**'It is not very consonant with common sense to talk of *three being one, and one being three. Or, as some express it, calling God the 'Triune God,' or 'the Three-one-God.'* If Father Son and Holy Ghost are each God, it would be three God's; for three times one is not one, but three. There is a sense in which they are one, but not one person, as claimed by Trinitarians.**

**' . . . Its *origin is pagan and fabulous. Instead of pointing us to Scripture for proof of the Trinity, we are pointed [by the Catholics] to the trident of the Persians,* with the assertion that by this they designed to teach the Trinity.'**(J. N. Loughborough, *Objections to the Trinity, Review, Nov 5, 1861*)

Yet, in spite of these clear statements regarding the Trinity, many will still adamantly say that the pioneers were wrong in their understanding of the Godhead and finally came to a correct position on this teaching with the passing of time. To add injury to insult, they claim that Ellen White was the one who was ultimately responsible for bringing the brethren to a clearer understanding of the Godhead. Can it really be said that the servant of the Lord, who had been faithfully leading the SDA Church away from Rome, would now lead them back to one of that institution's most pagan of doctrines concerning the very person of God and His Son Jesus Christ. Were not the truths concerning Christ and His work clearly laid out in those early days of the Advent movement? Again, I will let the servant of the Lord speak:

Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder {Hiram} Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure . . . Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to ***Christ, His mission, and His priesthood.*** A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to

others the instruction that the Lord had given me. (**Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 206, 207**)

Again, the faithful voice of God's messenger makes the issue plain. We *'understood the scriptures regarding Christ, His mission, and His priesthood.'* How can we accept that the present teaching of the Godhead was the revelation of 'progressive truth' – when the truth was already revealed, understood and taught by our founding brethren – the whole idea is positively repulsive. Ellen White would not have bought into such deception. Hear her words:

*'That which was truth in the beginning is truth now. Although new and important truths appropriate for succeeding generations have been opened to the understanding, the **present revealings do not contradict those of the past.** Every new truth understood only makes more significant the old.'* (**Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, March 2, 1886**)

***'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.'*** (**E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church Volume 6, p. 17. 1901**)

Please notice these further words by our pioneers concerning their position on the Godhead and the nature of the father, Son and Spirit:

*'The Father is the greatest in that he is first. The Son is next in authority because He has been given all things.'* (**J. S. White, Review & Herald, January 4, 1881**)

*'But you say, God is a spirit. (There is no doubt but [t]hat his spirit pervades all space, and every thing in it that has life.)'* (**J. Bates, The Opening Heavens, p. 18. 1846**)

*'Every member of the human family, except Adam, has had parents, and every one has had beginning of days; and indeed, with two exceptions, everyone has had end of life. Even the angels of God have all had beginning of days, so that they would be as much excluded by this language as the members of the human family. *And as to the Son of God, he would be excluded also, for he had God for his Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have beginning of days.'** (**J. N. Andrews, Review & Herald, September 7, 1869**)

‘Moreover, he [Christ] is the beginning of the creation of God. ... **The language does not necessarily imply that he was created**; for the words... may simply signify that the work of creation, strictly speaking, was begun by him. Without him was not anything made. Others, however, and more properly we think, take the word (for beginning in Greek) to mean the agent or efficient cause, ... understanding that Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things, *but that he himself came into existence in a different manner, as he is called the only begotten of the Father.*’ (J. N. Loughborough, Insert A-1, *Lest We Forget*, Volume 4, Number 2, Second Quarter, 1994)

‘**The Scriptures nowhere speak of Christ as a created being, but on the contrary plainly state that he was begotten of the Father .** (See remarks of Rev. 3:14, **where it is shown that Christ is not a created being.**) But while as the Son he does not possess a coeternity of past existence with the Father, *the beginning of his existence, as the begotten of the Father, antedates the entire work of creation, in relation to which he stands as joint creator with God.* John 1:3; Heb 1:2. Could not the Father ordain that to such a being worship should be rendered equally with himself, without its being idolatry on the part of the worshiper? He has raised him to positions which make it proper that he should be worshipped, *and has even commanded that worship should be rendered him, which would not have been necessary had he been equal with the Father in eternity of existence. Christ himself declares that 'as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.'* John 5:26. The Father has 'highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.' Phil. 2:9. And the Father himself says, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' Heb. 1:6. These testimonies show that Christ is now an object of worship equally with the Father; *but they do not prove that with him he holds an eternity of past existence .*’ (U. Smith, *Thoughts on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 430. 1882)

‘**God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be, - a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity, - appeared the Word.** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1. **This uncreated Word** was the Being, who, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. *His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in the mysterious expressions, “his [God’s] only begotten Son” (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14), and, “I proceeded forth and came from God.” John 8:42. Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared.* And then the Holy Spirit (by an infirmity of translation called “the Holy Ghost”), **the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the divine afflatus and medium of their power**, representative of them both (Ps. 139:7), was in existence also.’ (U. Smith, *Looking Unto Jesus*, p. 10. 1898)

Can Seventh-day Adventists, with clear conscience, teach that the Holy Spirit is actually a person and is not simply, as the word of God, the servant of the Lord and our pioneers put it, the '*Spirit of God.*' To suggest that simply because the Bible mentions the Father, Son and Holy Spirit separately (Matt 28:19; 2Cor 13:14 & other similar texts) implies equal status, makes no sense. This is hardly a foundation for a Trinitarian teaching on the Godhead. If I talk about the members of my family and mention them in the order of father, mother and son, does that mean I am assigning equal status to them? No, indeed not, generally you mention the members of your family in order of authority – father, mother and children. When I speak about my daughter's nose, am I assigning it as a separate entity to her face? Just because the Bible speaks of God and the Spirit in separate terms does not mean that the Spirit is not the Spirit OF God – HIS presence, HIS omnipresent essence. Right up until the 1930's certain of the leading brethren were well aware that the Holy Spirit was not a separate being as were the Father and Son. Consider these remarks by Ellen White's own son, Willie:

'The statements and the arguments of some of our ministers, in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit is an ***individual as are God the Father and Christ***, the eternal Son, have perplexed me, and sometimes they have made me sad.' (Letter, Willie C. White to H. W. Carr, April 30, 1935)

When Paul writes: 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all' (1Cor 12:4-6). We understand by this just what he means, namely, that THE SAME GOD is working in all – through HIS Spirit.

When Genesis 1:2 speaks about the 'Spirit of God' moving upon the face of the deep at creation, then we understand it as the Word reveals it – the Spirit OF God – not a separate 'God-entity' working as creator. The Bible does not teach that God created the world WITH another God, the Spirit. When Genesis 1:26 says, 'let US make man . . .,' it is not talking about the father speaking to another Spirit-God – a separate person. The text is referring to the Father communicating with His Son, Jesus Christ. Notice Ellen White's emphatic words on the partnership in creation:

'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."*** (Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1, 1870, p. 24, 25*)

'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.' (Ellen G. White, **Patriarchs and Prophets**, p. 34)

'The Father consulted **Jesus** in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth.' (Ellen G. White, **ST**, January 9, 1879 )

Two things become crystal clear when reading these statements and comparing them with the Bible. Firstly, it was Jesus and the Father who were the co-partners in creation, thus, when the Bible speaks about the Spirit it is clearly referring to the essence of Father, given to the Son – the power of God. Secondly, the work of creation is accomplished by a Father and a Son. This took place before Jesus came into this world as Mary's child, conceived by the Spirit of God. Clearly, the status of Son was assigned to Christ even before the creation of the world. The authority of the father is always superior to that of his son. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was begotten by the Father, the references to this, in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, are so clear that they have to be taken as they read.

**John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father,**) full of grace and truth.

**John 3:16** 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.

3:17 For God **sent not his Son** into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The Bible does not say that God begat a Son, only at the incarnation. The text says that He *gave His only begotten Son* (past tense), He gave the son which He already had – *He sent His Son*, the son was already a reality. Ellen White understood this when she wrote:

'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. . .' (**ST**, May 30, 1895 )

'In His incarnation He gained in **a new sense** the title of the Son of God . . . Thus He stood in our **world—the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.**' (**Selected Messages Book 1**, p. 226, 227 )

Ellen White's son, James Edison White wrote:

***'Christ is the only being begotten of the Father.'* (James Edison White, Past, Present and Future, p. 52. 1909)**

We can clearly and simply gather from these statements that Jesus was begotten, Born of the Father. He was the son of God before he came into this world but gained *'in a new sense,'* as Ellen White states, this title.

It must also be pointed out, based on the evidence of Ellen White's testimony, that Jesus was not created, as some Arians try to suggest (Uriah Smith and Loughborough made this quite clear in the statements presented earlier). Ellen White is quite emphatic on that point. She says he was *'not a son by creation as were the angels.'* Anti-Trinitarians do themselves no favour when they insist on trying to prove that Christ was a created being. There is no such evidence in the Bible, the pioneers, or the pen of inspiration. It is wiser to concentrate on the absolute and crystal clear statements than to support a case based on uninformed opinions and suppositions.

Surely, the infiltration of the Trinitarian dogma into the SDA Church is a fulfillment of the omega of apostasy, spoken of by Ellen White. Just after the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century God's people faced the alpha of deadly teachings – with Kellogg's theology, expounded in his book 'The Living Temple.' In that work Kellogg expounded theories about the nature of God that were in conflict with the position of the Church. Mixed into his pantheistic ideas were concepts of trinitarianism. Indeed, it would appear that pantheism is nothing less than the trinity doctrine dressed up in other garb. Consider these communications between A. G. Daniells (GC President at the time) and Willie White:

'He [Kellogg] then stated that his former views regarding the trinity had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement; but that in a short time he had come to believe in the trinity and could now see pretty clearly where the difficulty was, and believed that he could clear the matter up satisfactorily.

'He told me that he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and his view was that it was God the Holy Ghost, and not God the Father, that filled all space and every living thing. He said that if he had believed this before writing the book, he could have expressed his views without giving the wrong impression the book now gives.

'I placed before him the objections I found in the teaching, and tried to show him that the teaching was so utterly contrary to the gospel that I did not see how it could be revised by changing a few expressions . . . I could not see how it would be possible for him to flop over, and in the

course of a few days fix the books up so that it would be all right.’  
(**Letter: A. G. Daniells to W. C. White. Oct 29. 1903, p1.2.**)

Kellogg believed in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – terminology never used in the Scripture. Nowhere in the Bible does it ever refer to the Spirit as GOD THE SPIRIT. Neither does it refer to Christ in that sense. Ellen White, consistent with the Word of God, likewise refrains from describing the Son or Spirit in those terms. Ellen White called Kellogg’s teaching Pantheism. The GC President tried to place his objections before him, but Kellogg did not seem able to comprehend the error of his teaching. In that same month Ellen White wrote to the Physicians at St. Helena Sanitarium:

Your leader has been *moving the foundation timbers one by one*, and his reasoning would soon leave us with no certain foundation for our faith. He has not heeded the testimonies that God through His Spirit has given. The books of the Bible containing most important instruction are disregarded because *they say so much about a personal God*. He has not known whither his feet were tending. But in his recent writings, his tendencies toward *pantheism* have been revealed. (**SpTB07 39.2**)

Regarding Kellogg’s attempts at revising the Living Temple, Ellen White wrote:

It will be said that Living Temple has been revised. But the Lord has shown me that the writer has not changed, and that there can be no unity between him and the ministers of the gospel while he continues to cherish his present sentiments. I am bidden to lift my voice in warning to our people, saying, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. (**Ellen G. White, Selected Messages Book 1, p. 199 – written Aug 7, 1904**)

These remarks clearly mark the division between Kellogg’s pantheistic / Trinitarian philosophies and the position of Ellen White and the Faithful brethren. If it is true, as claimed by many, that Ellen White was responsible for guiding the brethren into accepting the Trinitarian doctrine, then why is this not reflected in her statements about the Alpha of apostasy. Indeed, it can safely be said that the adoption, by the SDA Church, of a Trinity is at the very heart of the present omega of apostasy taking place in our midst today – bearing the very characteristics of the alpha.

It is not as if our leading brethren at present do not recognize the discrepancy between the theology of our pioneers and what presently passes as gospel truth. They know full well that the founding brethren would be at odds, were they still alive, with many positions held by the Church today. These remarks by one of our leading historians (George R. Knight) should be testimony enough:

'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 would they not be able to agree with belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity.'  
(George R. Knight, *Ministry Magazine*, Oct 1993, p. 10)

But, it may be asked, what about the clear statements in the Bible that ascribe deity, equal with the Father, to Christ? What about the lucid statements by Ellen White that say that Christ is God and that speak of the Holy Spirit as a person of the Godhead? Yes, indeed, what about it? Our study would not be complete without discussing these debatable evidences.

For example, when Ellen White, in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 691, speaks about the Holy Spirit as the '*third person of the Godhead*,' she is not saying that the Spirit is a third person IN the Godhead. It is OF the Godhead in that it, as the essence / force of God, represents the Father and, second, the Son, but not IN the Godhead as a separate Divine being / person.

Ellen White speaks about the '*Three living persons in the heavenly Trio*.' (Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, pp. 62, 63. 1905; Ev 615.1). She also talks about the '*eternal heavenly dignitaries – God and Christ and the Holy Spirit*.' (Manuscript 145, 1901; Ev 616.4).

These statements in no way define the relationship that these three sustain to each other. It is true, there are three: a Father, a Son and a Spirit. But just because three are mentioned as being dignitaries or persons does not make a Trinity. There is one God, the Father, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit which they share (1Cor 8:6). It is their life, not another individual being. It is the life of the Father and Son which we have in us when the Spirit dwells within. Paul writes in Romans 8:9: '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.'

As previously stated, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit OF God and OF Christ. He can be called a person in the sense that He represents the persons of the Father and the Son. When we receive the Spirit, we receive the life / essence of Christ:

The impartation of the Spirit is ***the impartation of the life of Christ***. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life ***the Christ-life*** is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church. (***The Desire of Ages***, p. 805; ***ChS 254.4***)

It is always wise to compare one statement of Ellen White's with another so as to get the meaning she intended. Here, once again, when we look at the scriptures and carefully consider the statements by the Lord's prophet, we see

unity and truth. This same principle can be applied to Ellen White's remarks about the Holy Spirit being a person, or having a personality. These comments, too, always need to be seen in the context of Scripture and the other qualifying statements by Ellen White.

A common text quoted by those defending the SDA trinity and separate God-person of the Spirit is Acts 5:3, 4, 9. It reads as follows:

5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart *to lie to the Holy Ghost*, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land?

5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? *thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

5:9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together *to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband [are] at the door, and shall carry thee out.

The text is not saying that the Holy Ghost is God. When you lie to the Spirit you are, in effect, lying to the Father, God. The Holy Spirit is HIS Spirit. Verse 9 is the qualifying text. It says that they were tempting the '*Spirit of the Lord.*' 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, with reference to the Spirit: '*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty.*' Ellen White tells us what God is doing when He gives us the Spirit:

In giving us ***His Spirit***, God ***gives us Himself, making Himself a fountain of divine influences***, to give health and life to the world. (**Testimonies Volume 7, p. 273**)

There are other examples one can give but this is enough to resolve the matter. The Holy Spirit is not a person and is not God. It is the essence or power of God that flows from Him to His Son and to the World – Case dismissed.

When the Scripture speaks about Jesus as being God (John 1:1; Heb 1:8), what does it really mean? Is there a contradiction in the Word of God? In some places it says that God is ONE God (Gal 3:20; 1Cor 8:6). In another place it says that The Word, Jesus, is God (John 1:1), why? Surely, if there is one God that we must worship, and the ten commandments tell us that we must have no other God's before Him, then how can the Father and Son both be God and, if we include the Holy Spirit in the equation, how can Father, Son, and Spirit, all three, be God – ONE God. Three does not equal one and one does not equal three. Surely, we are not worshiping three God's. 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] **one** LORD.' (Deut 6:4). The statement of Scripture is emphatic and clear.

When John writes that the Word was there in the beginning, he is not referring to the beginning of the Father's existence, but the beginning of the Son's existence. Ever since He was born / created, He has been with the Father.

When Ellen White writes that *'there never was a time when he was not in close fellowship with the Father'* (Evangelism, p. 615), it needs to be understood in the same sense suggested above. Proverbs 8:22 says: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.' Ever since that event – when the Father POSSESSED Him – Christ has always been in close fellowship with the Father. It is just like saying that 'there never was a time when Gabriel was not in close fellowship with God.' We do not understand that to mean that Gabriel never had a beginning.

On the same page, in the book Evangelism and elsewhere, Ellen White states that Jesus is the *'pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.'* Does she mean that Jesus came into existence by himself, in eternity past. No! Ellen White is saying that he was the Son of God, before Bethlehem. The Father had Given Him Divine, eternal life – it was His by inheritance. Because of this, He was self-existent. He was pre-existent, because He had existed prior / pre the incarnation as the Son of God. You will remember that Ellen White stated that when he came as a babe in Bethlehem that he gained, *'in a new sense,'* the title, *'Son of God.'* She also stated in Desire of Ages, p. 51 that *'the dedication of the first-born had its origin in the earliest times. God had promised to give the First-born of heaven to save the sinner.'* Isn't that just so clear? Jesus was born in heaven – He was the First-born of heaven and the custom of dedication of the first-born had its origin in earliest times. Obviously these earliest times were before the time of the incarnation. Clearly, by the very context of the statement, its origins date back to the First-born of heaven, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Then there is the case of Hebrews 1:8, 9: '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. 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, [even] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Here the Father is designating the title of God to the Son. Yes, true, but in what sense? Is it in the sense that the Son is the Almighty God of eternity, or, is it in the sense that the Son has inherited Godhood from the Father who is still the supreme originator and ruler of the universe? The evidence within the text makes it clear. In verse 9 the Father refers to himself as being the God of the Son, who has anointed the Son above His 'fellows.' If Jesus is God, in this vicarious, designated sense, then the Father, who is all powerful in majesty and glory, is the GOD of the Son.

Surely we cannot accept a doctrine that is the very foundation of Romanism. The Catholic Church itself states that *'The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church.'* (**Handbook for Today's Catholic, p. 11**)

I could present the argument, used by many, with relation to the writings of Ellen White that have been changed, but I would actually be doing the Seventh-day Adventist, Anti-Trinitarian cause a disfavour by using this as evidence. The reason for this will be clear to any logical, rational human

being. Although some of Ellen Whites expressions have been changed or adjusted in later publications of her works, especially in some of the compilations and some of the modern works that have attempted to update and 'modernise' the English, it is not substantial enough to discredit the published works that still exist. It must be said, that most of the material under contention, with relation to the Godhead, is still available from the Ellen White Estate, and, if they cannot be trusted, can be compared with original copies of articles and books that are still available, either privately or in more official collections. In my own experience, I have been able to confirm the authenticity of statements that deal with the personality of the Holy Spirit and the divinity of Christ. To argue my case against the SDA Trinitarians from the perspective of, so called changed statements, would be making a mockery of the anti-Trinitarian cause. I refuse to build a good case out of straw-men and accusations that can easily be proven wrong. Rather, as has been shown in our study, the truth of the matter can be supported by clearly interpreting that which is genuinely the work of God's prophet. Having said this though, I can still present an example where publishers *have* taken liberty with a compilation. This example can be found in the book 'Evangelism' – a compilation that was not authorized by Ellen White.

On page 616 there is a subheading to an Ellen White statement which deals with the dignitaries of heaven – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Sub-heading, typed in bold, reads as such: '**The Eternal Dignitaries of the Trinity.**' Here is a prime example of audacious liberty that has been taken to make it appear that Ellen White concurred with a concept that she would never even have given the time of day. Nowhere in her writings did she ever use the word *Trinity* to describe the Godhead. The obvious reason is that she wanted to avoid any association with a concept that was clearly pagan and Catholic, a concept which she, as an anti-Trinitarian, never supported. This sub-heading is a dishonest reflection of Ellen White's position of the Godhead.

The above example I have given is, of course, found in the English edition. There are far more discrepancies in the works of Ellen White as they are found in translated publications, such as the German works. Time and time again, while reading official printings of Ellen White's writings in German, I have found them to completely slant her sayings so as to make it appear she said something she never said. At other times whole words or phrases have been left out so that one fails to grasp the original intent of the statement. A recent publication, dealing with Ellen White's comments on the Indiana Camp meeting debacle – where she spoke about the shouting, drums, dancing and noise that would come into our camp meetings before the close of probation – has been altered so as to destroy the force and clarity of the comment. The words, drums and dancing are not even present.

To be sure, liberties have been taken with some of Ellen White's works, but thankfully we still have enough original printings available to test and prove the newer publications. It is unnecessary and foolhardy to rely on rumours that claim her comments on Christ and the Holy Spirit have been changed in more recent publications. When people have come to me and said: 'Ellen White's writings have been changed.' I first ask them where they heard it. Well

invariably they say they have read it and seen the examples presented in some author's work. 'Well then,' I press the question: 'have you seen it, with your own eyes, do you know they have been changed?' Of course, the answer is, invariably: 'No.'

The best thing for us anti-Trinitarians to do would be to stick to the genuine evidences we have in the actual works of Ellen White. There is enough there to defend the case. *If we are right in taking an Arian position on the Godhead, and, if we have built on a solid premise, motivated by pure, holy and honest motives, then, the truth will triumph in the end.*

Has the SDA Church finally lost its status as the remnant church of God and now joined the ranks of the Roman institution and her other Babylonian sisters? Is it time to come out of her and step onto another platform that still remains faithful to the faith of our fathers? Well, I do hesitate to come out and categorically say that the SDA denomination has now become Babylon (I cannot read the mind of God and do not know when His patience has worn out and when He finally gives the decree of rejection), yet, when I see the compromises that have been made in accepting the doctrine of the Trinity and in many other areas of belief and practice, I cannot help but wonder. I do have my reservations, but I do tend to see the possibility that the church has spent the opportunity God has given and has thus relinquished its privileged status. So let me spend a little time discussing this issue.

In the Old Testament God made many wonderful promises to the nation of Israel, but why does it seem that many of these promises were not fulfilled? The answer is simple. God's promises are conditional. It would be insane to assume that just because God had told the nation of Israel that they were the chosen people and because the promises He made were of eternal consequence, that they could then go ahead, do as they pleased, and, without reprisal, remain forever the chosen ones and finally reap the eternal rewards promised by Him. It is just as non-sensical as the pseudo-Christian concept of 'once saved always saved.'

Ellen White does say that the SDA Church is God's end-time suppository of truth. She calls them the remnant, the apple of God's eye, the object of His supreme regard and, further, instructs that no one call her Babylon. But, God said many of these things about the Old Testament nation of Israel as well. We know though, that this nation is no more God's chosen nation. Why, because they did not stay faithful.

Can the SDA Church really assume that no matter what they do, no matter how many of their foundational doctrines they tamper with and adjust to please her critics and lose her cult status that she will still remain the remnant just because God has said so? Has God's standard changed? Is it possible to deny the very core of the Christian faith – a correct understanding of the person of God, His Son and His Holy Spirit – and still remain the end-time suppository of truth? What truth? Will we be able to show them how to worship this God when hundreds of our congregations are starting to look more like clubs, restaurants and social gatherings rather than a church? Will

we proclaim our faith in the Scriptures, yet teach that there is no real sanctuary in heaven? Can we declare our faith in the Spirit of Prophecy, but choose to reject or rationalize away nearly every clear statement that has been made about issues ranging from health reform, worship, to basic Christian principles and doctrines? Finally, will we teach the world about the God we serve when we do not even rightly know who He is, but have adopted the foundational teaching of the Whore that rides the beast? Who do we think we are fooling? In light of such massive compromises, can we escape fulfilling the omega of apostasy? Notice what Ellen white said in her statement about the characteristics of the omega:

The **enemy of souls** has sought to bring in the supposition that a great **reformation** was to take place among **Seventh-day Adventists**, and that this reformation would consist in **giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith**, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The **principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error.** A new organization would be established. **Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced.** The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. **The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it.** Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but **God being removed**, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. **Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure.**

Who has authority to begin such a movement? **We have our Bibles.** We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. **We have a truth that admits of no compromise.** Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth? **(Selected Messages Book 1, p. 205)**

Satan is behind the omega and his aim is to cause us to give up the pillars of faith that God has given us. The truths we once held dear will be said to be error. Books would be written – different from the old. The Sabbath and God would be lightly regarded. Could it be that changing our belief in the Godhead could lead us to regard God lightly and, in essence, remove Him from our religion and place our dependence on intellectual philosophy and human power? The statement ends by saying that the foundation of such a compromised church is built on sand and that the STRUCTURE will be swept away. This is the end result of taking God's promises for granted and for assuming that because you are esteemed and held in high regard and are the apple of God's eye that you will always stay that way no matter what you do. No! if your foundation is built on sand, the end will be eradication – you will be

swept away. For you to be swept away God would have had to annul your chosen nation' status. There is little doubt that the SDA Church has reached the point where she has fulfilled the characteristics of the omega. Has God annulled her chosen status as yet? I cannot read the mind of God and do not know His time-table. But, I must say, taking into account the nearness of the end and the signs that are unfolding everywhere around us that it is quite possible that this Church has joined the ranks of Babylon, never to return again. Once again, take account of this statement by George R. Knight (quoted earlier in this chapter):

**'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 would they not be able to agree with belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the *Trinity.*' (George R. Knight, *Ministry Magazine*, Oct 1993, p. 10)**

If our pioneers would not be able to join the SDA Church today because they would not be able to subscribe to our fundamental beliefs, then, as far as fulfilling the omega apostasy, and, a possible departure from chosen people status to ranks of Babylon is concerned, I rest my case.

***God's promises are conditional.* In order to make it possible for Him to bless us, we must do our part. (Sermons And Talks Vol, 2 p. 195; Lessons from the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, Manuscript 77, 1902)**

It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike ***conditional.*** [SEE JEREMIAH 18:7-10; JONAH 3:4-10. . . (Last Day Events, p. 38)

There are, of course, a number of other things that could come up for discussion in relation to the issue of the Godhead, but, the evidence presented here is sufficient to clearly support the position taken by our pioneers, Ellen White and those who still remain true to an anti-Trinitarian position on the Godhead. Perhaps it might be expedient to close the anti-Trinitarian case with two statements – one from Brother J. S. Washburn, a good friend of Ellen White, who was still fighting the cause into the 1930's and then a final quote from the prophet of the Lord herself. Following are portions of a letter written by brother Washburn. This letter was so appreciated by a conference president at the time that he distributed it to 32 of his ministers:

**'Satan has taken some heathen conception of a three-headed monstrosity, and with deliberate intention, to cast contempt upon divinity, has woven it into Romanism as our glorious God, an impossible, absurd invention. This monstrous doctrine, transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church is seeking to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel's Message . . .**

'The whole Trinity doctrine is utterly foreign to the Bible and the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Revelation gives not the slightest hint of it. This monstrous heathen conception finds no place in all the free universe of our blessed heavenly Father and His Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ . . . The Catholic heathen doctrine of the Sunday Sabbath is just as sacred as the Catholic pagan doctrine of the Trinity and no more so . . .

'Seventh-day Adventists claim to take the word of God as supreme authority and to have 'come out of Babylon,' to have renounced forever the vain traditions of Rome. If we should go back to the immortality of the soul, purgatory, eternal torment and the Sunday Sabbath, would that be anything less than apostasy? If however we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central root doctrine of Romanism, the Trinity . . . even though our words seem spiritual, is this anything else or anything less than apostasy, and the very Omega of apostasy? . . .

'However kindly or beautiful or apparently profound his sermons or articles may be, when a man has arrived at the place where he teaches the heathen Catholic doctrine of the Trinity . . . is he a true Seventh-day Adventist? Is he even a true preacher of the gospel? And when many regard him as a great teacher and accept his unscriptural theories, absolutely contrary to the Spirit of Prophecy, it is time that the watchmen should sound a note of warning.' **(Portions of a letter written by J. S. Washburn in 1939).**

'It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy.' **(Signs of the Times, Feb 19, 1894, par 4)**

Thus ends my defense of the ASDAT position. It does seem apparent that their case is a pretty solid one. But, regardless of how the strength of their case appears, on the surface, it is irreparably flawed and is constructed out of straw-men, hot air and a naïve ignorance of some very profound facts. In the next chapter we will examine their claims and will effectively take down the building blocks one by one till their case is, essentially, left incoherent and indefensible.

## **PART 2**

### **RESPONSE TO THE 'ANTI-SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST TRINITY' (ASDAT) POSITION**

My intention, in the preceding chapter, was not to present every argument that the ASDAT adherents have. There is actually no need to do this as their case is built on a few major presuppositions that, when proven wrong, essentially dissolve the whole case. I did, though, highlight many of their major strong-points and, in some cases, did them a favour by presenting their case in a more logical way and with a less fanatical flavour (I say this because, at times, some of their defences are based on unproven assumptions, often with a hint of paranoia). In other words, I have actually tried to reveal their case in a manner that may appeal to rational thinkers who may never have given their cause the light of day. That is not to say that everyone who gets taken in by their cause is, irrational, illogical and paranoid. I know how easy it is, from personal experience, to get caught up in something and then, once you are hooked, you somehow cannot see the ‘trees for the forest.’

I really did try to argue the ASDAT position as someone who is a genuine believer in their cause. I did not approach their position, tongue-in-cheek, but projected the cause boldly and empathetically. I intentionally did this because I can see how convincing the case actually appears to be. There were times, when reading their materials, that I began to feel convinced that they may be right. Some of the arguments are absolutely faultless – when seen through the spectacles of their foundational hypothesis. But, once the breeze begins blow through the gaps in their construction, the whole straw-man begins to tumble like a pack of cards. I will answer the ASDAT arguments in, generally, the same order as it was presented in the 1<sup>st</sup> section and will highlight a few extra issues that were not presented in their case.

A central problem that I see with the whole debate between those who hold the, so called, ‘official’ SDA position of the Godhead and those who are anti the SDA Trinitarian theology, is that none of these two groups seem to recognise some basic, essential facts that, if understood correctly and assimilated by open rational minds, would help clear the matter up and put the controversy to rest. Much of the ‘pain’ and ‘heartache’ in this debacle is simply as a result of misunderstanding the facts (unfortunately there are some of us who thrive on the controversial and the sensational – the facts do not matter, no matter how obvious – the important thing is that you still have an axe to grind). Having glimpsed things in this light, I will attempt to present my case in an unbiased evaluation of all the major issues involved.

I must say, with all due respect, I have detected, in some of the responses to the anti-Trinitarian case I have read, a desire to churn out the counter arguments, without considering some of the deeper motivations that might have given rise to this position within the SDA Church. Essentially, I am trying to say that a lot of the ‘factioning’ could have been avoided if some of our brethren – from way back till the present – had, for instance, been more circumspect in the terminology they had decided to use when expostulating our position on the Godhead. It would appear that some brethren just took it for granted that what we believe regarding the Godhead and what Catholics believe, is essentially the same thing. As a result, they saw no harm in adopting the Catholic label of ‘Trinity’ to describe what they, perhaps because of an inadequate understanding of the Roman heresy, believed was one and

the same thing. Perhaps, when they began using the term 'Trinity,' it might have been helpful to have clearly explained that by using the word we were not automatically accepting the Catholic definition of it. My justification for saying this will be highlighted in the discussion that follows.

## **THE RESPONSE:**

The ASDAT (Anti-Seventh-day Adventist Trinity) statements will be titled: **ASDAT** and my reaction will simply be headed: **RESPONSE**.

### **ASDAT:**

When the SDA Church talks about a Godhead composed of a Trinity of beings, equal in authority of 'Godhood,' singular and separate – father, Son and Holy Spirit – as three distinct persons, then, they are declaring a heresy of pagan, Catholic proportions that, ultimately, undermine the very pillars of our faith. Since it is a fact that the SDA Church does, officially, teach this heresy today, it must be stated, with dire emphasis, that she has departed from the faith of her pioneers and the teachings of her prophet, Ellen G. White, all of whom continually held the Arian view of the Godhead and most emphatically denounced the Catholic dogma of a triune Godhead of three distinct persons, equal in authority and eternal existence. It will be clearly shown from the history of the Christian church, our SDA denomination and the eternal Word of God, that a Trinitarian doctrine is the very root of false worship, and is a fulfillment of the great omega of apostasies spoken of by God's faithful servant Ellen White. The implications of such an apostasy are indeed horrendous for a church that still claims to be the remnant body of Christ that holds the Bible as its standard of teaching. Let us examine the facts in clear systematic fashion, so as to plainly prove the error of this denominations present position.

### **RESPONSE:**

I have to say that I entirely agree that we as SDA's have no business teaching the Catholic Trinity. I further agree that if we do hold to a Catholic understanding of the Godhead (as I have come to know it), then we *WILL* seriously undermine the pillars of our faith. Yes, indeed, the Catholic Trinitarian doctrine is at the root of her false worship and would be, if followed, an act of apostasy. Our pioneers and Ellen White knew what they were opposing when they castigated the Catholic Trinity. The question I have for the ASDAT is: 'Do *they* actually know what *they* are opposing?' I have a strong suspicion they do not. Although they may be right in stating their opposition to the SDA Church adopting a Catholic Trinity, they have, without realizing it, revealed one of the primary weaknesses in their whole case. In effect, much of the ASDAT case (and this is what so many seem to miss) is built on a totally false premise. This flawed supposition is that the SDA Church has, in fact, adopted the Catholic Trinity. If it can be proven that the Church is not teaching a Catholic Trinity, then, the whole ASDAT case becomes, as stated in the introduction of this document, a suitcase full of stale air –

nothing. The wind is taken out of their sails and one of their fundamental accusation lies lifeless and mute.

Another major flaw in the ASDAT position, as already alluded to, is revealed in the fact that they do not seem to know what the Catholic Trinity really is about – unlike our pioneers who knew precisely what it was that chagrined them about the Catholic Trinity. Unfortunately, as mentioned before, neither do many of our brethren who are defending the SDA Trinity have a handle on it either – one *could* say that the ASDAT and a large number of the SDA Trinity defenders have, at least, got something in common, albeit by default.

Much of the problem has to do with the usage and definition of the term Trinity – as prescribed by those either defending or rejecting its veracity. A simple dictionary definition of the term, although revealing its *basic* essence, is not enough to even nearly describe its components and establish if those who are talking about the Trinity in the SDA Church, those who formulated and properly understand the Catholic dogma and those who follow the ASDAT fraternity are, indeed, reading from the same page. Let us take a look at the dictionary definition as analyzed from the ASDAT perspective and then I will add my comments.

#### **ASDAT:**

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition:* Trinity: being three, group of three, union of **three persons in one Godhead . . .**

*Chambers 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary, 1936 printing:* Trinity: union of three in one Godhead, **persons of the Godhead . . .**

The definition clearly implies that there are three persons (plural) in one Godhead – suggesting total equality of status. If they are stated as the ‘persons of the Godhead,’ as they are, then this is an affirmation that they are, all three, God. It is vital to establish this fact as it is this foundational premise that lies at the very core of the Trinitarian error.

#### **RESPONSE:**

The dictionary definition, no doubt, finds its roots in concepts dating back to antiquity. Concepts that realized their fullness in the Catholic use of the word. But, knowing these facts is not enough to understand the meaning in all its fullness. To speak of a union of three persons in the Godhead (as the dictionary does), does not describe what the Catholics mean in their concept of unity of Father, Son and Spirit. Is it emblematic, is it literal in a genetic / biological sense of the word? This does make a whole lot of difference. The allegation against the SDA Church is that we are teaching the ‘Catholic Trinity.’ This is the concept that our pioneers so explicitly spoke out against. So, putting the dictionary definition aside, let us move on to the origins of the Trinity concept. I will utilize the brief account of this as given in the first chapter – it will serve the purpose adequately.

The origins of the Trinitarian doctrine go back to the post apostolic era, when dubious doctrines began infiltrating the Christian Church. In A.D. 180, Theophilus of Antioch spoke of the "the Trinity of God [the Father], His Word and His Wisdom," using the word 'trias' ("Ad. Autol.", II, 15). Afterwards it appears in its **Latin form** of *trinitas* in **Tertullian** ("De pud." c. xxi). In the next century [2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY] the word is in general use. It is found in many passages of **Origen** ("In Ps. xvii", 15). The first creed in which it appears is that of Origen's pupil, Gregory Thaumaturgus. In his *Ekthesis tes pisteos* composed between 260 and 270, he writes:

There is therefore nothing created, nothing subject to another in the Trinity: nor is there anything that has been added as though it once had not existed, but had entered afterwards: therefore the Father has never been without the Son, nor the Son without the Spirit: and this same Trinity is immutable and unalterable forever (P. G., X, 986).

Having read this then, a few things need to be noted. The concept of a 'threeness' in connection with the Godhead is not, strictly speaking, at point of origin, a Catholic concept. In A.D. 180, Theophilus of Antioch spoke of the 'the Trinity of God [the Father], His Word and His Wisdom,' using the word 'trias.' Whether he was totally correct in his theology is irrelevant to this aspect of our debate. The point made is that he was not a Catholic, and, interestingly enough, unlike men such as Origen and Thaumaturgus, authors of the Trinity model that was finally adopted by the counsel of Nicea in A.D. 325, did not study at the school in Alexandria.

The school in Antioch favoured an essentially exegetical approach to its interpretation of Scripture. This method prevents one from adding to the Word more than the scriptures actually reveal (this is the system that has consistently been used by Adventism). The school in Alexandria, on the other hand, preferred the allegorical approach when interpreting the Word of God. This method, for example, enabled the student to read into the scriptures, meanings that may never have been intended by the author. This does not automatically mean that every idea that ever came out of Alexandria was corrupted, but the chances of this were certainly greater, originating from an institution that deployed a faulty methodology of interpretation. The point that I am making is this. The idea of a 'threeness,' in connection with the Godhead, is not Catholic and did not even find its earliest roots in the school that finally spawned the origins of the distinctive Catholic Trinity. This is simply an incontrovertible fact. What is of interest though is the fact that Arius, who became known as the father of Arianism, was also from Alexandria. This by no means suggests that he had the same theology as Origen and others, but neither does it mean that his theology was correct. He denied that Jesus was of the same substance as the Father and reduced the son to the rank of a created being. Could it be that he took the allegorical approach to the scriptures in a direction that led him to these conclusions? Arius developed

his theory in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., quite a while after Theophilus of Antioch first used the term 'trias.'

The first thing, by way of summary, that needs to be made absolutely clear is this: The concept of a Godhead composed of three parts, is not, at its point of origin Catholic and did not even come from the same school that led to the final Catholic dogma. In spite of this fact, the most important question for us should be: 'what is it then that the Catholics believe and teach? It is hardly of value arguing about a term, such as Trinity, when the extrapolation of that term may vary significantly from one person to another. Coming to grips with this will help us to discover the essential truth about the whole matter.

#### OFFICIAL VATICAN WEBSITE:

*261 The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is **the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life**. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*262 The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, **in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God**.*

*263 The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (⇒ Jn 14:26) and by the Son "from the Father" (⇒ Jn 15:26), reveals that, with them, **the Spirit is one and the same God**. "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed).*

*264 "The Holy Spirit **proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son**" (St. Augustine, De Trin. 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095).*

*266 "Now this is the Catholic faith: **We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance**; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal" (Athanasian Creed: DS 75; ND 16).*

Reading this official statement from the Vatican website by no means gives us a clear idea of what, to our early Adventist pioneers, was so objectionable about the Catholic Trinity. For those who are fighting the ASDAT case though, it all seems clear as day. For them, this reading of the Catholic position, without looking beyond the superficial statements, would clearly say that they believe that God is made up of three absolutely equal yet separate persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – period. And this is, exactly what the ASDAT believe our pioneers revolted against and, thus, we should have a problem

with it too. But, in this supposition they are wrong. Before we look at the objections of the pioneers, let us take a closer look at some further Catholic views that give us a little more insight into what the official Vatican statements on the Trinity really are insinuating:

‘God the Father *eternally knows Himself*, and continues to know Himself, and thus *continues to bring forth the Son in a continual birth* . . .’ **(One God in Three Persons, My Catholic Faith: A Manual of Religion, Louis Laravoire Morrow, Bishop of Krishnager, p. 31)**

The Son proceeds from the Father by an act of the intellect and this is termed ‘eternal generation,’ by which we mean not only that there never was a time when the Father existed *without generating the Son*, but also that *the act of generation is a continuous act*. [the instruction in this Catholic manual also teaches that there could have been no separation between the Father and the Son while He was here on earth, since this would interrupt the process of regeneration. The son could not exist in such a case, nor the Father, since they are of one essence]. **(Alfred Mortimer, Catholic Faith and Practice – Catholic instruction manual for confirmation).**

‘The Son *proceeds from the Father*; the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.’ **(The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1914 Edition, art. “Holy Ghost.”).**

‘The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ. He is also the Spirit of the Father. Thus St. Augustine argues (in Joan, tr. Xcix, 6, 7 in P.L., XXXV, 188) . . . Just as there is only one Father, just as there is only one Son, so there is only one Spirit, who is, consequently, the Spirit of both’ . . . such is the explicit teaching of ecclesiastical tradition, which is concisely put by St. Augustine . . . This doctrine was put in the following words by the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons (Denziger, ‘Enchiridion,’ 1908, n. 460): ‘We confess that *the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles, but as from one principle, not by two spirations, but by one single spiration.*’ The teaching was again laid down by the council of Florence (ibid. n. 691).’ **(Ibid).**

‘Tertullian dwells at length on the Paraclete. The Holy Ghost, he says, *proceeds from the father through the Son*’ **(Ibid).**

“Expressions which contain the *statement that the Son was created* are found in Clement of *Alexandria* (Strom, Tatian, Tertullian, Origen . . .)’ **(The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1914 Edition, art. “The Blessed Trinity”).**

**NB:** These statements, from strictly Catholic sources, reveal some interesting insights that have a bearing on why our pioneers took the positions they did. They also raise a number of serious questions.

The Catholic position, when understood from these revelations, in a nutshell is: they seem to teach that the son has always existed with the Father, but they edify a literal birth process – a regenerating of the Son’s life – which is continuous. The Holy Spirit, though termed a person, is the essence of the Father which is, in turn, imparted to the Son. In other words, there is a bizarre, continuous genetic / biological amalgamation between the members of the Godhead, which does not make them separate beings in the typical sense of the term. The concept of three separate, individual persons in the Godhead does not exist in the Catholic doctrine. No wonder Ellen White made it clear that Christ’s life is ‘*original, unborrowed and undervived.*’ She wanted to make it clear that what we taught was in no way similar to the Catholic stance. Although some of the early ‘Church Fathers’ did speak about the Son being created, the Catholics do not say this explicitly. Rather, they teach a concept of ‘creation’ by continual birth, originating since eternity. This is NOT what SDA’s teach in their doctrine of the Godhead.

These were aspects of the Catholic Trinity that our pioneers detested. The irony of the whole matter is that aspects of this Catholic dogma are some of the very things that the ASDAT themselves are disseminating. Although they do not believe that the Son was there for eternity they do teach that He was generated, born, or created by the Father. They do, like the Catholics, teach that the Holy Spirit is the essence of God – not a person in the individual sense. They may counter what I am saying by pointing us to the fact that the Catholics use the word ‘person’ to describe the Spirit, which they don’t. But, does not Ellen White, who was, according to them, an ‘avowed anti-Trinitarian,’ also use the term person for the Holy Spirit? And, do the ASDAT not explain that away by saying that when she uses the term person for the Spirit that she is simply saying that in the sense that He represents the person of the Father and Son? Indeed, and this is exactly what the Catholics mean too. Again, I say, this is NOT what SDA’s teach in their doctrine of the Godhead. It will be seen that this was not what Ellen White taught either.

In light of the above, let us have a look at what our pioneers had to say. Now we will have a clearer understanding of what exactly they opposed in the Catholic Trinity.

‘Here we might mention the Trinity, which does away with the ***personality*** of God and His Son Jesus Christ.’ (James White, Review and Herald, Dec 11, 1855, p. 85)

‘The doctrine of the Trinity which was established in the church by the council of Nice [Nicea], A.D. 325. This doctrine ***destroys the personality of God and His Son Jesus Christ.***’ 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, March 6, 1855)

‘Respecting the trinity, I concluded that it was impossible for me to believe that the ***Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, was also***

***the Almighty God, the Father, one and the same being.*** (Joseph Bates, Autobiography – Battle Creek, 1868, 205)

‘It is not very consonant with common sense to talk of ***three being one, and one being three. Or, as some express it, calling God the ‘Triune God,’ or ‘the Three-one-God.’*** If Father Son and Holy Ghost are each God, it would be three God’s; for three times one is not one, but three. ***There is a sense in which they are one, but not one person, as claimed by Trinitarians.***

‘. . . Its ***origin is pagan and fabulous. Instead of pointing us to Scripture for proof of the Trinity, we are pointed [by the Catholics] to the trident of the Persians,*** with the assertion that by this they designed to teach the Trinity.’(J. N. Loughborough, ***Objections to the Trinity, Review, Nov 5, 1861***)

These statements by our pioneers take on a whole new significance in light of a deeper understanding of the Catholic Trinity, at least, as our pioneers understood it. First of all, James White and J. N. Andrews were, primarily, concerned about the fact that the *personality* of the Father and Son were destroyed by the doctrine of the Trinity. Why? Because the Catholics teach a continual birth of the Son and a disturbing ‘genetical’ status that exists between these two and the Spirit – this destroys their personalities if ever anything does.

Joseph Bates balked at the idea that the Father and Son were *one and the same being*. Why? Again, because of the Catholic teaching that the Father and Son are, in a mystically, physical way, connected in this continually, regurgitating, birth process and thus it is impossible for the Son to have life outside of the Father – His life being *derived* from the former. Notice, he is not lamenting that Jesus is God or suggesting that Jesus was created or born. He is lamenting the fact that Jesus could be ‘*GOD the FATHER, one and the same BEING.*’ This is his principal concern.

I am not suggesting that the pioneers would, at that point, have been in total agreement with the way our understanding of the Godhead has developed, but it is as clear as black on white, reflected in the above statements, that the essential problem they had with the Trinity was this physical / biological unity that destroyed the *personality / individuality* of the father and Son. This is something that the ASDAT adherents don’t even seem to notice.

Loughborough’s statement is a little more complex, but once again, we see that his central complaint was that *three persons cannot be one person*. Why? For the very same reasons expressed by James White, Joseph Bates and J. N. Andrews. He states, quite plainly, that ‘*there is a sense in which they are one, but not one PERSON.*’ Surely it does not take a degree in English grammar to figure out what he was saying. One can obtain a greater appreciation of what Loughborough was getting at when you consider his statement about the origins of the Catholic Trinity. He said that it ‘*pointed to the trident of the Persians.*’ Here the pagan connection is made with a

concept of deity that included three beings in the person of one being. A three-headed monstrosity, as it was termed by one of our pioneers – biologically / physically connected. Uriah Smith voiced the same concerns when he made this comment:

**‘The doctrine called the Trinity, claiming that *God is without form or parts*; that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the three are one person.’ (Uriah Smith, Review, July 10, 1856)**

This statement by R. F. Cottrell clearly indicates how he and other pioneers understood the primary objectionable trait of the Catholic Trinity:

‘He proceeded to affirm that "man is a triune being," consisting of body, soul and spirit. I never heard a Disciple confess faith in the doctrine of the trinity; but why not, *if man consists of three persons in one person?* especially, since man was made in the image of God? But the image he said, was a moral likeness. So man may be a triune being without proving that God is. But *does he mean that one man is three men?* I might say that a tree consists of body, bark and leaves, and no one perhaps would dispute it. But if I should affirm that each tree consists of three trees, the assertion would possibly be doubted by some. But if all admitted that one tree is three trees, I might then affirm that there were ninety trees in my orchard, when no one could count but thirty. I might then proceed and say, I have ninety trees in my orchard, and as each tree consists of three trees, I have two hundred and seventy. So if one man is three men, you may multiply him by three as often as you please.’ (R. F. Cottrell, Review & Herald, Nov. 19, 1857)

James White, Ellen White’s husband, would never have agreed with the idea that Christ was in any way inferior to the Father. He despised the doctrine of the Catholic Trinity, but he despised even more the concept of Unitarianism that makes Christ inferior to the Father:

**‘The inexplicable Trinity that makes the Godhead *three in one and one in three*, is bad enough; but that ultra Unitarianism that makes *Christ inferior to the Father is worse*.’ Did God say to an inferior, ‘Let us make man in our image?’ (James White, Review, Nov 29, 1877)**

No, He did not say that to an inferior. He said it to someone who was EXACTLY equal in status to himself. Yet, this is essentially what our modern day Anti-Trinitarians are saying. Of course, when they discover things like this they have to keep on tailoring their position so as not to contradict obvious evidence that does not support their theology. Either that or they need to deny that James White ever said a thing like that.

Whether the pioneers believed that the Son was begotten or created is, at this point of our investigation, irrelevant – we will still get to that issue. What is clear is that they did not believe that the members of the Godhead were one

person. Their objection was not to a two pronged trident Godhead, but to a three pronged one – Father, Son and Spirit. Remember, Loughborough agreed to the unity of the three, *in one sense*, but not that they were one person. I have to add, and will expand on this later, many of the pioneers did refer to the Holy Spirit as being the essence or power of God and not a person.

The bottom line is this:

1. The ASDAT accuse the SDA Church of teaching a Catholic Trinity. The truth is, the SDA Church does not teach such a thing, although some have used this term to describe what we believe.
2. The ASDAT say that our pioneers opposed the Catholic Trinity. They are right, but they, themselves, seem to have no idea what the root problem with the Catholic Trinity really is.
3. The ASDAT say that the Catholic Trinity concept is pagan and that we should have nothing to do with it. Yet, some of their own beliefs have uncanny semblance to positions held by the mother of all harlots – the Roman Catholic Church. When will they, the ASDAT, reject the teaching that Christ came out of the Father and that the Holy Spirit is the essence of the Father and the Son and not a person in the proper sense – all of these, even in the ASDAT degree, are Catholic concepts – come out of her my people, is our call to the ASDAT believers, before you receive of her plagues.

What is the greater error, to use a word, that according to dictionary definition, implies three individual persons, or to actually contain, in the elements of your doctrine, teachings that reflect a blasphemy of the eternal Godhead? To be sure, no matter what label you choose to describe God, if your definition of God is wrong, then your label means absolutely nothing. It is what you believe and teach that makes all the difference. This is why it is not enough to carry the name Seventh-day Adventist. Carrying the SDA tag does not define your true position if you do not hold to the beliefs that confirm the biblical standard. It is what you believe and what you practice that makes all the difference. The fact that the SDA Church, either officially, or unofficially, happens to use the term Trinity is no standard by which to judge what they actually believe or teach.

All the statements of Ellen White that say: *'in place of the requirements of God, she [the Catholic Church] substituted human theories and traditions . . . Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror . . . That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power, a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will.* (The Great Controversy p. 49, 50). All these statements that have been used to vilify SDA's and lay on them the guilt of following a Catholic dogma, all this means nothing, since we do not teach a Catholic Trinity. We may not be teaching what the ASDAT think we should, but a Catholic Trinity is certainly not what we espouse.

In 1936, B. G. Wilkinson (dean, administrator, evangelist and author, 1872 – 1968), was able to say that SDA's had not accepted the Catholic Trinity, even though there were some who had used the term 'Trinity' to describe the distinctions of the persons of the Godhead. These are his words:

'Replying to your letter of October 13 regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, I will say that *Seventh-day Adventists do not and never have accepted the dark, mysterious Catholic doctrine of the Trinity.*' (Letter, B. G. Wilkinson to Dr. D. S. Teters. Nov. 3, 1936)

Another major problem that I would like to highlight concerning the Catholic definition of the Trinity is the fact that they try to evaluate and explain as verity that which human beings could never have witnessed, or had knowledge of. For example, how do they know, that the Father gives continuous birth to the Son? How do they know that the Holy Spirit proceeds as the essence of God, as the first principle, to the Son? How do they know that there is this continual genetic blend between Father and Son when there is no biblical indication of this or any of the other afore mentioned suppositions? Yet, in spite of their extrapolation of the actual make up and origin of the Godhead they claim it to be a mystery. How much of a mystery remains when you have tried to explain the unity of Father, Son and Spirit within the context of our human paradigm? These are men who could not accept the simple words of Scripture that revealed only enough for us to know and accept by faith – why should God try to explain to sinful, fallen earth bound minds that which He knew they would never be able to grasp this side of eternity. Yet, they insisted on exercising their imaginations to grasp a concept that was beyond their ability to conceive. Our understanding of concepts such as birth, unity and eternity are severely limited by our three dimensional, earth bound model. We cannot perceive or even start to picture concepts such as the omnipresence of God, His omnipotence, eternity past and eternity future, yet we want to assign the existence of the Son, His physical make up and heavenly status according to our restricted knowledge. Because we cannot conceive of a reality where the Holy Spirit exists as a separate person, yet is united with the Father and Son and is still eternally omnipresent, we try to chain Him to the prison cell of our finite inventions and express His reality in terms of our own. Not only is this presumptuous, but it is arrogant, ignorant and fallacious in the extreme. '*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law*' (Deut 29:29). Perhaps it would be wise to follow the example of Christ Himself when getting into the subject of the mystery of the essence of God. Ellen White describes Christ's practice in relation to this topic:

In regard to entering into the subject of the divine mystery of the essence of God, *Christ ever maintained a wise reserve.* He did this that He might close the door where human conjectures should not be encouraged. *The most sacred, holy, and eternal mysteries which God has not revealed are but speculations when considered from a human standpoint, mere theories that confuse the mind . . . Many catch up ideas which are of no consequence and place them before the flock of*

*God as food, when they are only chaff which will never benefit or strengthen the flock of God, but will keep them in the lowlands, because they are feeding upon that which contains not the least virtue or nourishment. What is the chaff to the wheat (MS 45, 1900, 4BC 1157.5)*

Anti-Trinitarians have taken the words of Scripture that refer to Christ as the begotten or first of the creation of God and have used these expressions to define Christ in terms of human concepts of origin and position. They have taken texts that speak about the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and have restricted His existence and status in terms of finite definitions. Their attempts are no less contrived or foolhardy than their avowed opposition, the Catholics. Indeed, the similarities in certain of their inventions are not at all dissimilar.

GOD has used human words and concepts to reveal Himself to us, but has not used them so that WE can limit HIM to OUR three dimensional paradigm.

Of course, there are more questions that have to be cleared before this issue can be laid to rest. Some points that I will continue to argue may seem irrelevant in light of what I have already negated, but I will go ahead anyway since no loopholes should remain open.

**ASDAT:**

There is nowhere in the word of God that we find the word Trinity. Our pioneers believed this and our faith was built on a foundation of biblical truth and the revelation of the Spirit of God:

Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light, and **studying the Word**. . . . I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to the position we were to take regarding truth and duty.

A line of truth **extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God**, was plainly marked out before me, and I gave my brethren and sisters the instruction that the Lord had given me. . . . The leading points of our faith **as we hold them today** were firmly established. Point after point was clearly defined, and all **the brethren came into harmony**.

The whole company of believers were united in the truth. There were those who came in with strange doctrines, but we were never afraid to meet them. Our experience was wonderfully established by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. . . .

It was some time after my second son was born [1849] that we were in great perplexity regarding certain points of doctrine. I was asking the Lord to unlock my mind, that I might understand His Word. Suddenly I seemed to be enshrouded in clear, beautiful light, and **ever since, the**

**Scriptures have been an open book to me. (Manuscript 135, Nov. 4, 1903, "Establishing the Foundation of Our Faith.")**

The truths given us after the passing of the time in 1844 **are just as certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us in answer to our urgent prayers.** The visions that the Lord has given me are so remarkable that **we know that what we have accepted is the truth.** This was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. Light, precious light from God, established the main points of our faith as we hold them today. **(Letter 50, 1906, pp. 1, 2; To Elder W. W. Simpson, January 30, 1906; 1MR 53.2)**

These clear statements hardly need any comment. The doctrines of our faith were established shortly after the passing of the time of 1844. The brethren, our pioneers, understood them and taught them. They are, as Sister White puts it, *'certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us.'* Time after time our leading pioneers spoke out against the Catholic heresy of the Trinity. To them it was one of the most obnoxious philosophies imaginable.

#### **RESPONSE:**

To argue that because the Bible or Ellen White never used the term 'Trinity' suggests that the basic concept it encapsulates is heretical, makes no sense at all. There are a number of terms we use to describe biblical concepts, such as 'incarnation' for example, that are not used in the Bible. Yet, we do see that the theology described by that term is most definitely found there. Ellen White never used the term Trinity to describe the Godhead, but she did use the term, 'trio,' a word that is not found in the Bible either. Should we condemn her for using an English word that describes the concept of the *'three highest powers in heaven?'* (7ABC, p. 442) No, of course not, she simply chose a term in the English language that aptly expressed her theology of the Godhead.

The statements of Ellen White regarding the foundational points of the SDA faith are used as proof that the anti-Trinitarian position of our pioneers could not have changed since the main points of our faith, established after the passing of 1844, remained the same.

A considerable amount is assumed by the ASDAT adherents in using these statements to defend this position. It is assumed, first of all, that the essential pillars of our faith, established in those early years, included a full understanding of the role, function and status of the members of the Godhead – in particular, Christ. The following quote will be used by the ASDAT to prove this point:

Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder {Hiram} Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were

among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure . . . Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to ***Christ, His mission, and His priesthood***. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.(**Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 206, 207**)

It is a massive stretch of the imagination, and, an ignorant one at that, to connect these words of Ellen White to arriving at an understanding of the make-up and status of the persons of the Godhead. The aspects of '*Christ, His mission, and His priesthood*,' that the brethren came to comprehend had to do with coming to a deeper understanding of the 2300 day / year prophecy and the work of Christ in the most holy of the heavenly sanctuary that commenced at the closure of this time period.

Early Adventists were more concerned with the sanctuary, the Bible over traditions of men, the seventh-day Sabbath, the ten-commandments, the three angel's messages and the non-immortality of the soul. Although they expressed their dislike of the Catholic Trinity and espoused their concept of the Godhead, it was not the focus of what God was trying to reveal to them at this time.

Even though the early brethren did not have an absolute understanding of the Godhead, God did not feel that it was the most essential aspect of faith to bring to their notice in those early years. God had an order of priorities for introducing aspects of truth to His people. If He had revealed every aspect of His will for them at one time, the brethren would have been overwhelmed. In the early years God introduced the truth about the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, etc., then came the publishing work in the 1840's, church organization in the 1850's, health reform in the 1860's, and then righteousness by faith in the late 1880's.

Why did the Lord not introduce the righteousness by faith message directly after 1844? Surely, we all understand today that a comprehension of this issue lies at the very heart of the Christian experience. Why leave it till more than 40 years after the commencement of the movement? ASDAT brethren tell us that the truths of those early years are unchangeable (they quote Ellen White on this), but, which truths – the concept of salvation held by those early brethren? Their understanding of salvation was certainly not a landmark of our faith.

God allowed the brethren to live with a concept of salvation that was more attuned to works (a very Catholic notion I might add) for those early years. Then, in 1888, He brought to their attention the concept of righteousness by faith. Many of our pioneer brethren revolted against the idea, leading brethren, who had been with the cause since the earliest of times. Brethren such as Uriah Smith, who boldly condemned the Catholic Trinity, but yet did not have the truth on righteousness by faith, did not want to accept it and felt sure that

the brethren were departing from God's plan by accepting such a heretical concept.

If the ASDAT believe that the pioneers had *every aspect* of faith in line shortly after 1844, then they should be calling for us to go back to our original position on salvation. Oh, but that would bring us one step closer to the Catholic view of salvation – would it not. We certainly cannot have that. Ellen White clearly says that *'It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy.'* (Signs of the Times, Feb 19, 1894, par 4)

Well if the brethren had to make a painful transition to a correct understanding of salvation in the 1880's, then why shouldn't there have been a change in their understanding of the Godhead? What should have made this issue an exception? Indeed, there was a change that came in and Ellen White played a major role in that development, just as she had played a major role in the 1888 righteousness by faith revival.

God chose the 1890's as the time for highlighting this issue. Ellen White was in Australia, when W. W. Prescott visited her there. He had been inspired by the righteousness by faith message of 1888 and so developed an approach to evangelism that included these concepts and placed an emphasis on the character of God. He began to question the pioneer's understanding on the deity of Christ and the Godhead and A. G. Daniells supported his new direction. At the same time Ellen White was in the process of writing the Desire of Ages, in which she too expressed views on the pre-existence of Christ that the pioneers would have differed with.

M.L. Andreasen, who had become an Adventist four years earlier, later said that some of the leaders doubted that Ellen White had actually written *'original, unborrowed, underived'* in the Desire of Ages. In 1902 he took a special trip to California to investigate it for himself. After looking at these statements in Ellen White's own handwriting, he was convinced that she had indeed stated things as such. Of course, Ellen White was alive during this time when brethren were debating the apparent change in her description of the Godhead. Yet, Ellen White never wrote anything to negate the positions that she had taken in print. Of course, the ASDAT would rather write off Andreasen's commentary on this and will either deny that Ellen White said those things, or will attempt to twist and interpret her comments to suit their own special brand of Catholic theology.

Failing to succeed in these attempts, they will bring out statement after statement by the pioneers to prove that Christ was begotten and did not exist from all eternity. To continually use the writings of our pioneers to prove the infallibility of their own position shows great blindness. The pioneers were not infallible in their teachings – especially when it came to issues that were beyond the full understanding of man. Many of the pioneers preached messages and published books and articles that contained immense truth, yet, it is clear from the simple historical record, that Ellen White did not agree with every position they took. A case-in-point would be the fact that she did not endorse every idea presented by Uriah Smith in the book 'Daniel and the

Revelation.’ Another case-in-point would be the righteousness by faith message of Jones and Waggoner. Although she supported them in the strongest of terms, she also stated that she did not agree with every detail of their position. Quite a number of these men that presented undeniable truths, went on to say things that went against the scriptures and that which God had revealed to Ellen White, clearly indicating that the things they taught should not, in all cases, be considered faultless and thus permanent, unchangeable SDA truth. Even their words need to be tested against the highest authority, the Bible and need to be subjected to the clear testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy. It is true that Ellen White encourages us to study the words of the pioneers so that we can know what it cost to come to the foundational truths which we have today, but this is by no means an unconditional endorsement of every word or thought that proceeded from their mouths or pens. If this was the case, then, her own testimony of not agreeing with all they had to say would reveal the contradictory nature of her own words and practice.

In the next segment I will print the statements of Ellen White that warn God’s people not to change the landmarks of our faith. Next, I will present some of the statements by our pioneers concerning the nature of the Godhead. Finally, I will then present a clear statement by Ellen White on what she understood as being the ‘landmarks of our faith’ and the warning she gives regarding those who accuse the brethren of changing these landmarks. The reason why I feel it is necessary to do this is because the ASDAT use as one of their prime arguments against the SDA Church the accusation that our present teaching on the Godhead has been a rejection of the landmarks of the faith. Thus, by doing this, the SDA Church has gone against Ellen White’s instruction that we should look to the pioneers and what they believed when establishing these landmarks – one of the landmarks, according to their evidence, being the Godhead. It will be shown, quite conclusively, that, once again, their whole case is built on a completely false premise and only serves to erect a straw-man that will totter and fall when the wind of truth blows its way.

*‘The leading points of our faith as we hold them **today** were **firmly established**. Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony. The whole company of believers were united in the truth. There were those who came in with strange doctrines, but we were never afraid to meet them. Our experience was wonderfully established by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.’ (E. G. White, **Manuscript Releases Volume 3**, p. 413. 1903)*

*‘As a people we are to stand firm on the platform of eternal truth that has withstood test and trial. We are to hold to the sure pillars of our faith. **The principles of truth that God has revealed to us are our only true foundation. They have made us what we are. The lapse of time had not lessened their value.**’-- Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, p. 51. (1904.) (E. G. White, **Counsels to Writers and Editors**, p. 52)*

***‘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.’ (E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* Volume 6, p. 17. 1901)***

The above quotes and those that follow were taken from one of the ASDAT’s own articles defending their position (*The Living Voice of the Lord’s Witnesses, Restitution Ministries, Australia, [www.acts321.org](http://www.acts321.org)*). Following are some statements by our pioneers concerning the Godhead:

***‘The Father is the greatest in that he is first. The Son is next in authority because He has been given all things .’ (J. S. White, *Review & Herald*, January 4, 1881)***

***‘But you say, God is a spirit. (There is no doubt but [t]hat his spirit pervades all space, and every thing in it that has life.)’ (J. Bates, *The Opening Heavens*, p. 18. 1846)***

***‘Every member of the human family, except Adam, has had parents, and every one has had beginning of days; and indeed, with two exceptions, everyone has had end of life. Even the angels of God have all had beginning of days, so that they would be as much excluded by this language as the members of the human family. And as to the Son of God, he would be excluded also, for he had God for his Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have beginning of day s. ‘ (J. N. Andrews, *Review & Herald*, September 7, 1869)***

***‘Moreover, he [Christ] is the beginning of the creation of God. ... **The language does not necessarily imply that he was created;** for the words... may simply signify that the work of creation, strictly speaking, was begun by him. Without him was not anything made. Others, however, and more properly we think, take the word (for beginning in Greek) to mean the agent or efficient cause, ... understanding that Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things, *but that he himself came into existence in a different manner, as he is called the only begotten of the Father.*’ (J. N. Loughborough, Insert A-1, *Lest We Forget*, Volume 4, Number 2, Second Quarter, 1994)***

***‘The Scriptures nowhere speak of Christ as a created being, but on the contrary plainly state that he was begotten of the Father . (See remarks of Rev. 3:14, **where it is shown that Christ is not a created being.**) But while as the Son he does not possess a coeternity of past existence with the Father, *the beginning of his existence, as the begotten of the Father, antedates the entire work of creation, in relation to which he stands as joint creator with God .* John 1:3; Heb 1:2. Could not the Father***

ordain that to such a being worship should be rendered equally with himself, without its being idolatry on the part of the worshiper? He has raised him to positions which make it proper that he should be worshipped, *and has even commanded that worship should be rendered him, which would not have been necessary had he been equal with the Father in eternity of existence. Christ himself declares that 'as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.'* John 5:26. The Father has 'highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.' Phil. 2:9. And the Father himself says, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' Heb. 1:6. These testimonies show that Christ is now an object of worship equally with the Father; *but they do not prove that with him he holds an eternity of past existence .'* (U. Smith, *Thoughts on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 430. 1882)

***'God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be, - a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity, - appeared the Word.*** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. ***This uncreated Word*** was the Being, who, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. *His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in the mysterious expressions, "his [God's] only begotten Son"* (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), and, "I proceeded forth and came from God." John 8:42. *Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared.* And then the Holy Spirit (by an infirmity of translation called "the Holy Ghost"), ***the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the divine afflatus and medium of their power***, representative of them both (Ps. 139:7), was in existence also.' (U. Smith, *Looking Unto Jesus*, p. 10. 1898)

The question that needs to be asked is this: *are these views of the SDA pioneers reflections of the Adventist landmarks, or are they reflections of their own understanding and not what the Lord confirmed as final truth to His chosen servant, Ellen White?* What were the landmarks established after the passing of 1844? The best possible way to establish this is to let Ellen White herself enlighten us. Notice, in this following statement, the warning that accompanies her comments:

'The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes ***the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven***, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] ***the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."*** One of the landmarks under this message was ***the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The non-immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to***

**mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.**

'Now at the present time God designs a new and fresh impetus shall be given to His work. Satan sees this, and he is determined it shall be hindered. *He knows that if he can deceive the people who claim to believe present truth, [and make them believe that] the work the Lord designs to do for His people is a removing of the old landmarks, something which they should, with most determined zeal, resist, then he exults over the deception he has led them to believe . . . That which is food to the churches is regarded as dangerous, and should not be given them. And this slight difference of ideas is allowed to unsettle the faith, to cause apostasy, to break up unity, to sow discord, all because they do not know what they are striving about themselves.'*

**Manuscript 13, 1889. {CW 31.1}**

It would do well for the ASDAT brethren to consider that Ellen White, herself, did not see the doctrine of the Godhead as being one of the landmarks of our faith, thus, it is clearly seen that the whole accusation about departing from the landmarks is completely false. In fact, it would appear that the tables are turned. When considering the warnings Ellen White presented in this statement it would seem that the ASDAT themselves might be doing the work of the Devil in accusing people of departing from the landmarks of our faith by teaching the, so called, Catholic Trinity. Indeed, they shift the focus for this hour of earth's history to an issue that should not be the primary point of debate – that which Ellen White describes as a 'mystery' – instead of focusing on that which truly are landmarks of our faith such as: the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, the first and second and third angel's messages, the ten commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, the light of the Sabbath and the non-immortality of the wicked – the very landmarks Ellen White defined herself. She said that she could '*call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks.*'

Obviously the ASDAT can call to mind more than what the prophet of God herself could recall. Surely, once again, we reveal a gaping chasm in the ASDAT undertaking.

#### **ASDAT:**

Can Seventh-day Adventists, with clear conscience, teach that the Holy Spirit is actually a person and is not simply, as the word of God and the servant of the Lord puts it, the '*Spirit of God.*' To suggest that simply because the Bible mentions the Father, Son and Holy Spirit separately (Matt 28:19; 2Cor 13:14 & other similar texts) implies equal status, makes no sense. This is hardly a foundation for a Trinitarian teaching on the Godhead. If I talk about the members of my family and mention them in the order of father, mother and son, does that mean I am assigning equal status to them? No, indeed not, generally you mention the members of your family in order of authority – father, mother and children. When I speak about my daughter's nose, am I assigning it as a separate entity to her face? Just because the Bible speaks of God and the Spirit in separate terms does not mean that the Spirit is not the Spirit OF God – HIS presence, HIS omnipresent essence. Right up until the 1930's certain of the leading brethren were well aware that the Holy Spirit was not a separate being as were the Father and Son. Consider these remarks by Ellen White's own son, Willie:

'The statements and the arguments of some of our ministers, in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit is an ***individual as are God the Father and Christ***, the eternal Son, have perplexed me, and sometimes they have made me sad.' (Letter, Willie C. White to H. W. Carr, April 30, 1935)

#### **RESPONSE:**

In these attempts to explain the position and role of the Holy Spirit the ASDAT have resorted to using an earth-bound paradigm. This is exactly what I was referring to in the previous section of my response. How can one compare the mystery of the Godhead to the status of a human family or the relationship of some one's nose to their face. Perhaps, without realizing it, the usage of this quote by Willie White, does not do the ASDAT any favours. Willie White was not at odds with the concept of the Holy Spirit as a person. He was at odds with those who were trying to define the person of the Spirit in the *same* sense that they were defining the person of the Father and Son. He understood that which all thinking Bible students know and that is that the Holy Spirit is not an '*individual AS are God the Father and Christ.*' He is an individual in a different sense, in a sense which is far too mysterious and heavenly for our earth-bound imaginations to conceive. This is why Ellen White warned the brethren about trying to define too specifically the nature and personality of the Holy Spirit:

***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 mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.*** (Acts of the Apostles, p. 52)

The nature of the Holy Spirit is ***a mystery not clearly revealed, and you will never be able to explain it to others because the Lord has not revealed it to you.*** You may gather together scriptures and put your construction upon them, but the application is not correct. The expositions by which you sustain your position are not sound. You may lead some to accept your explanations, but you do them no good, nor are they, through accepting your views, enabled to do others good . . . ***It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is*** . . . There are many mysteries which I do not seek to understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of these points, silence is golden . . . you are not the only one who seems to be moved with ambition in this direction. It would not be right or prudent to send you out as a worker to promulgate your peculiar ideas and thus cause division; we have plenty of this now . . . Now, my brother, ***it is truth that we want and must have, but do not introduce error as new truth.*** (Letter 7, 1891. Ellen G. White Estate Washington, D. C. December 6, 1984 Entire Letter; 14MR 180.4)

Either the ASDAT take the prophet of the Lord seriously on this question or they do not. If they do not, then they will be rejecting the clear words of the one they so readily quote. What has God revealed regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit? We have only that which has been revealed in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. To be dogmatic about your position on the nature of the Holy Spirit is to wallow in the quagmire of infidel ignorance.

**ASDAT:**

When Paul writes: 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all' (1Cor 12:4-6). We understand by this just what he means, namely, that THE SAME GOD is working in all – through HIS Spirit.

**RESPONSE:**

This text is not an attempt by Paul to highlight the doctrine of the Godhead. He is merely trying to show us that the presence of God – His authority – is present in the gifts and work that we do through His power. The fact that the designation, 'God,' is only used here once is not proof that the Lord and the Holy Spirit, do not share the attributes of supreme Godhead.

In Matthew 28:19, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are mentioned without attaching the title God to the Father. Does it make the Father any less God, simply because the exalted designation is absent? Does it make the Son or Spirit of lesser significance because the Father is mentioned first? Or, is it mentioned in that way, not for us to establish the heavenly 'pecking-order,' but rather, for us to appreciate more fully the role that each of the members of the Godhead are filling. In this way the concept of the Godhead, God's plan of salvation and active role in the lives of mankind are brought to a level that can be grasped by finite minds.

**ASDAT:**

When Genesis 1:2 speaks about the 'Spirit of God' moving upon the face of the deep at creation, then we understand it as the Word reveals it – the Spirit OF God – not a separate 'God-entity' working as creator. The Bible does not teach that God created the world WITH another God, the Spirit. When Genesis 1:26 says, 'let US make man . . .,' it is not talking about the father speaking to another Spirit-God – a separate person. The text is referring to the Father communicating with His Son, Jesus Christ. Notice Ellen White's emphatic words on the partnership in creation:

'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." (Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1, 1870, p. 24, 25)**

‘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.’ (Ellen G. White, **Patriarchs and Prophets**, p. 34)

‘The Father consulted **Jesus** in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth.’ (Ellen G. White, **ST**, **January 9, 1879** )

It becomes crystal clear when reading these statements and comparing them with the Bible, that it was Jesus and the Father who were the co-partners in creation, thus, when the Bible speaks about the Spirit it is clearly referring to the essence of Father, given to the Son – the power of God.

#### **RESPONSE:**

When Ellen White writes that the Father consulted Jesus in regard to carrying out the act of creation, is she insinuating the absence of the Holy Spirit, or is she highlighting another far more intricate and personal fact regarding the creation of man? Three key words must be kept in mind when reading these quotes by Ellen White: *beings*, *image* and *man*.

God said ‘*let us make man in our image.*’ (Gen 1:26). In this case he *would* be talking to the Son specifically. Man was made in the image of the Father and Son – ‘Let us make man in our image.’ We know that man was created by the hand of God out of the dust of the earth. In this act, the Father and Son are personally and intimately involved. So when God says, ‘let us . . .,’ He is referring to a specific task that He and the Son would perform. The end result of this task would be ‘beings’ made in their image, not in the image of the Spirit, since the Spirit has a completely different kind of substance and person which is a mystery to us all. Further more, the Bible says that it was by the Son that all things were created, suggesting a role of creator that the Son filled within the offices of the members of the Godhead. Thus, they, Father and Son were partners in this act. Why this should negate the status of the Spirit is beyond any rational mind.

Without bringing the attributes of the Godhead down to a human level, let me use an example to make the point. In a business concern you might have three managers. One may be the ‘product manager,’ the other the ‘distribution manager’ and the third the ‘personnel manager.’ In a specific situation where the management of incoming goods needs to be taken care of, the distribution and product managers will, in view of their assigned office, consult and work

together on that job. Does this make the personnel manager any less of a manager? No, of course not – this aspect of managerial work was not one of his designated tasks. He is no less integral to the work of the business than the other two managers.

The Holy Spirit plays a very specific and important role in the plan of salvation. He is doing a work that He has been designated to do. Very often he is mentioned in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy without the name of the Father or Son being spoken of at all. The reason for this is simply because it is His role in that specific task that is being highlighted at that point.

When Ellen White, for example, says that the Holy Spirit is ‘the personal presence of Christ in the soul’ (Review and Herald, Nov 29, 1892), or when she refers to the Holy Spirit as ‘His [Christ’s] Spirit’ (Review and Herald, May 19, 1904), she is not relegating the Spirit to the position of persona-non-grata. Rather, she is highlighting one of the functions of the Holy Spirit – to impart life (Christ’s life) to us. The fact that the Spirit fulfills this task does not mean that He is not a person in His own right. We, as humans, cannot begin to comprehend the spiritual dimension. To try to deny the personality and status of the Holy Spirit – based on our lack of spiritual vision – is like refusing admit that a tree is made up of separate atoms, just because we cannot see the atoms for the wood.

The Spirit is the representative of the Father and the Son. It is their Spirit, in that the Holy Spirit is as much a member of the Godhead as they are. He may not be, in substance, as they are, but this fact does not detract from His individual membership or status.

If the director of a company sends his secretary to represent HIM at a business meeting, the secretary becomes the ‘director’s representative.’ Because the secretary is the representative of the director, means that he comes with the authority of the director, yet, still keeps his title and function of secretary – he is still an individual and has not become a non-specific apparition of the director’s person. So, when God says that ‘*I will pour out My Spirit*’ (Acts 2:17), He is not speaking of it in the possessive sense, but in the sense that what the Spirit will impart, when He comes, will be His character and power – because this is the designated role that the Spirit fills.

When Jesus talks about Him and the Father as ‘one’ (John 17:11), and, that when you have seen Him, you have ‘seen the Father’ (John 14:9), does he mean that they are blended together (as suggested by the Catholics) and are not separate persons, that He is, perhaps, just the visible apparition of the Father? No, He bears the authority of the Father and is, in character and purpose, so identical to the Father, that, when you see Him, see His works and understand His mission, then you might as well have seen the Father in action too.

This, by no means, concludes the case on the Holy Spirit, as there are other arguments from the Bible and the writings of Ellen White that the ASDAT use in defending or arguing their case. Some of these arguments are as follows.

**ASDAT:**

But, it may be asked, what about the clear statements in the Bible that ascribe deity, equal with the Father, to Christ? What about the lucid statements by Ellen White that say that Christ is God and that speak of the Holy Spirit as a person of the Godhead? Yes, indeed, what about it? Our study would not be complete without discussing these debatable evidences.

For example, when Ellen White, in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 691, speaks about the Holy Spirit as the '*third person of the Godhead*,' she is not saying that the Spirit is a third person IN the Godhead. It is OF the Godhead in that it, as the essence / force of God, represents the Father and, second, the Son, but not IN the Godhead as a separate Divine being / person.

Ellen White speaks about the '*Three living persons in the heavenly Trio*.' (Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, pp. 62, 63. 1905; Ev 615.1). She also talks about the '*eternal heavenly dignitaries – God and Christ and the Holy Spirit*.' (Manuscript 145, 1901; Ev 616.4).

These statements in no way define the relationship that these three sustain to each other. It is true, there are three: a Father, a Son and a Spirit. But just because three are mentioned as being dignitaries or persons does not make a Trinity. There is one God, the Father, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit which they share (1Cor 8:6). It is their life, not another individual being. It is the life of the Father and Son which we have in us when the Spirit dwells within. Paul writes in Romans 8:9: '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.'

**RESPONSE:**

To come to these kinds of conclusions in the face of such clear unambiguous statements by Ellen White is a flagrantly contemptuous treatment of the prophet's inspired words.

When Ellen White uses the phrase: '*third person of the Godhead*,' how can you misinterpret such a clear remark and place it in some sort of figurative context. Firstly, the word, third, clearly suggests that there must be three, meaning, there must be two others besides the third. Why use the term third at all, when you do not mean three, but something else. The whole idea makes no sense at all. Then, to combine the word, person, to this expression makes it a definite prescriptive phrase. The word, 'person,' according to dictionary definition, means *individual, self, personality or being*. Ellen White is making a clear statement about the *status* of the Holy Spirit and this ASDAT argument wants to make it null and void and explain it in terms of allegory. Not only is this non-sensical, but it is a downright pathetic attempt at defending the indefensible. What is more, she defines, exactly, what He is a member of: 'the Godhead.' A statement that clear can only be misunderstood by a grammatical ignoramus. To argue the point based on the fact that she

used the term OF and not IN is exegetical nonsense as, in the very next comment, she uses the term IN and not OF to designate the position of all three.

When Ellen White talks about the '*Three living persons in the heavenly trio,*' you are faced with a phrase that is just as prescriptive as the one dealt with before. In fact, this statement by Ellen White is even more definitive than the first. She refers to the members of the Godhead as *living persons*. If a person is an individual and if that person is alive, then what more do you want? Add to these clear designations the word, 'trio,' and you have an unambiguous statement of qualification – period.

The other phrase that is highlighted, where Ellen White refers to the '*eternal heavenly dignitaries – God and Christ and the Holy Spirit,*' is, once again, an open and shut case. Not only does she mention them separately, confirming that she does see them as three distinct persons, but she ascribes the term 'eternal' to all three. They are ETERNAL HEAVENLY DIGNITARIES. To weave this phrase into something vague and formless is to make of non-effect something that was obviously meant as a specific declaration of fact.

#### **ASDAT:**

As previously stated, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit OF God and OF Christ. He can be called a person in the sense that He represents the persons of the Father and the Son. When we receive the Spirit, we receive the life / essence of Christ:

The impartation of the Spirit is ***the impartation of the life of Christ***. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life ***the Christ-life*** is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church. (**The Desire of Ages, p. 805; ChS 254.4**)

It is always wise to compare one statement of Ellen White's with another so as to get the meaning she intended. Here, once again, when we look at the scriptures and carefully consider the statements by the Lord's prophet, we see unity and truth. This same principle can be applied to Ellen White's remarks about the Holy Spirit being a person, or having a personality. These comments, too, always need to be seen in the context of Scripture and the other qualifying statements by Ellen White.

#### **RESPONSE:**

Of course, it is well stated that we need to refer to the other statements of Ellen White and the scriptures that deal with related topics. But, when doing this, some, even when faced with the clearest most obvious qualifying remarks, do not see in the clear light of day. The above argument is a prime example of just such an omission.

The position that is being taken here – similar to one we have already dealt with – is lacking in some essential insight. Of course we are imbued with the life (spiritual life / attributes) of Christ when we give our lives to Him – it is the designated task of the Holy Spirit to impart this to us. He is the one who represents Christ. It is His job to give us the life OF Christ. If someone refers to my wife as, ‘the wife of Brian,’ does that imply that my wife is a non-entity? If the wife of Brian has been asked to pass on a gift to one of his friends, does it mean that she must be a physical part of him to be able to carry out such a task? These are simply expressions, manners of speech that are not meant to be a definitive expression of the Holy Spirit’s physical make-up or designated status. View this statement in light of the clear, definitive, unambiguous comments we analyzed in the previous section and then all is in harmony. It would seem that the ASDAT would rather analyze the clear statements in light of the more ambiguous ones, which of course, as stated earlier, makes no sense and is self-defeating.

#### **ASDAT:**

A common text quoted by those defending the SDA Trinity and separate God-person of the Spirit is Acts 5:3, 4, 9. It Reads as follows:

5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart *to lie to the Holy Ghost*, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land?

5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? *thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

5:9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together *to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband [are] at the door, and shall carry thee out.

The text is not saying that the Holy Ghost is God. When you lie to the Spirit you are, in effect, lying to the Father, God. The Holy Spirit is HIS Spirit. Verse 9 is the qualifying text. It says that they were tempting the ‘*Spirit of the Lord.*’ 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, with reference to the Spirit: ‘*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty.*’ Ellen White tells us what God is doing when He gives us the Spirit:

In giving us ***His Spirit***, God ***gives us Himself, making Himself a fountain of divine influences***, to give health and life to the world. (**Testimonies Volume 7, p. 273**)

There are other examples one can give but this is enough to resolve the matter. The Holy Spirit is not a person and is not God. It is the essence or power of God that flows from Him to His Son and to the World – Case dismissed.

## RESPONSE:

The problem with this argument is based on exactly the same logic as the previous arguments. The ASDAT can never understand these texts in another light until they abandon their habit of interpreting the clear sayings in light of the vague or non-specific (those which are not intended to communicate a doctrine on the members of the Godhead), and until they come to see the true status and person of the Spirit. The above texts, when seen in the light of clear statements can, indeed, be understood to say that when you lie to the Holy Spirit you are lying to God, for, in His person, He carries the status of the Godhead. The way in which you interpret this text has nothing to do with what the text is actually revealing regarding the person of the Spirit, but everything to do with the presupposition you've already established before you read it. Clearly, this makes the point that this text is not a definitive teaching on the person of the Spirit and thus needs to be interpreted in light of the more palpable evidences.

When Ellen White says (as in the above statement) that God gives of Himself when He gives the Spirit, then it will make perfect sense when seen in light of a definitive statement on the person of the Spirit. Such as:

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. **(Special Testimonies, Series A, No. 10, p. 37. 1897; Ev 617.2. Emphasis supplied)**

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ's name. He *personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality*. **(20MR 324.2 Taken from Ms 93, 1893. Emphasis supplied)**

The essential problem is that ASDAT have fallen into that age-old trap of using the inspired words to prove their own theory. Perhaps this warning by Ellen White, to one of the brethren in her day, might be applicable in this case:

*My brother, you have been deceived yourself, and have deceived others. You have not searched the Scriptures in the right way. You must search them to learn the mind of God, not to prove your theory. You read the Word of God in the light of your own views. You build up a false structure, and then barricade it with texts which you claim prove it to be true; but you pass over those passages which prove it to be untrue. You say, "The Bible is my foundation of faith." But is it? I answer, The Bible does not sustain you position. Again you say, "Show me by the Bible that I am wrong, and I will give up my views." But how can you be convinced by the Bible as long as you wrest and misapply its utterances? By so doing you cut off the only source by which God might reach and convict you . . . You have also taken from their connection portions of the testimonies which the Lord has given for the benefit of His people, and have misapplied them to the support of your erroneous theories--borrowing or stealing the light of Heaven to teach that which the testimonies have no harmony with, and have ever*

*condemned.* Thus you place both scripture and testimony in the framework of error. *All who are in error do as you have done. . . .* You do not have real faith in the testimonies. If you did, you would have received those which pointed out your delusion. *You have been drinking at polluted streams. . . .* **(Selected Messages Vol. 2 p. 82, 83. Emphasis supplied)**

The danger with trying to gather all the quotes in the Bible or Ellen White to prove certain aspects of status within the Godhead is that the intention of the author, in making these statements, was, in the first place, never meant to confer the order of status within the Godhead. If one wants to find out about the specific authority of the Father, Son or Spirit, then it is better to go to the clear expressions of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that are obviously dealing with those things on a primary, theologically centered level. An impasse arises for the ASDAT because they have already made up their mind, based on their faulty presupposition, and now, when they are confronted with the clear, unambiguous comments in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy about the status and nature of the members of the Godhead, they have to resort to twisting and extrapolating those plain remarks to fit what they have already concluded is verity – one does not construct facts on pre-ordained conclusions, you reserve your conclusions till you have established the *unambiguous* facts. Not even the Popes need to resort to this kind of ‘hermeneutical contortionism’ and subterfuge. They simply claim that they are above the Bible and freely interpret truth in the way they see fit.

The important thing to bear in mind – which the ASDAT refuse to do – is to avoid any dogmatism or controversy over the personality of God. To speculate on these things, over and above that which has been revealed is to tread on forbidden territory:

‘Our ministers must be very careful not to enter into controversy in regard to the personality of God. ***This is a subject that they are not to touch.*** It is a *mystery*, and the enemy will surely lead astray those who enter into it. We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world. God is a person and Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as “the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.

‘I was forbidden to talk with Dr. Kellogg on this subject, because ***it is not a subject to be talked about.*** And I was instructed that certain sentiments in Living Temple were the Alpha of a long list of deceptive theories.’ **(Ellen G. White, Sermons and Talks Volume 1, 343)**

The part of this statement that says: ‘*God is a person and Christ is a person,*’ is often used by the ASDAT progenitors as a prime exhibit in their case against the SDA Trinity. If only they would quote the whole statement, then it

will reveal to them and others, the act of disobedience *they* are participating in when they insist on meddling in a subject that they are forbidden to touch.

Ellen and William White's reticence in trying to enter into controversy on the mysteries of the Holy Spirit's personality (which are 'too deep for human understanding') are reflected in these comments by her son in response to a letter written to him, requesting that he explain his mother's position concerning the persona of the Spirit:

'In your letter you request me to tell you what I understand to be my mother's position in reference to the personality of the Holy Spirit. This I cannot do because I never clearly understood her teachings on the matter. There always was in my mind some perplexity regarding the meaning of her utterances which to my superficial manner of thinking seemed to be somewhat confusing. I have often regretted that I did not possess that keenness of mind that could solve this and similar perplexities, and then remembering what Sister White wrote in 'Acts of the Apostles,' pages 51 and 52, '*regarding such mysteries which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden,*' I have thought best to refrain from discussion and have endeavoured to direct my mind to matters easy to be understood.' (**Letter, W. C. White to H. W. Carr, April 30, 1935**)

The ASDAT, when faced with the verses in the Bible that speak about 'the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,' say that the Bible is not trying to signify a separate person status to the Holy Spirit or signify His position by mentioning Him together with the Father and Son or by using the term, 'and,' when introducing Him. Yet, when they try to argue the status of Christ, to show that He is a distinct person from the Father and to prove His status as 'Son,' they use this argument presented by one of our pioneers R. F. Cottrell:

'And when Jesus says, 'I *and* my Father are one,' I believe it; and when he says, 'My Father is greater than I,' I believe that too; it is the word of the Son of God, and besides this it is perfectly reasonable and seemingly self-evident.

If I be asked how I believe the Father *and* Son are one, I reply, They are one in a sense not contrary to sense. *If the and in the sentence means anything, the Father and the Son are two beings.* They are one in the same sense in which Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one. He asked his Father that his disciples might be one. His language is, that they may be one, "even as we are one.' (**R. F. Cottrell, *Review & Herald*, June 1, 1869**)

If they are willing to use these words of Christ and Cottrell to define the Son's position and His specific person from that of the Father, then why not apply that exact same principle to the scriptures that speak of 'Father, Son AND Holy Spirit.' To my understanding, this is practicing a double standard – applying a principle of interpretation in one case but rejecting it in another situation when it does not agree with their theology.

All the above revelations from the scriptures and the writings of Ellen White should be enough to convince us of the status and person of the Holy Spirit. Yet, I can offer more lucid remarks from the pen of inspiration that will contribute to establishing these facts beyond the realms of question. Consider, for example, these words by Ellen White with regards to the act of baptism:

When we have accepted Christ, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit have pledged ourselves to serve God, the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit--the three dignitaries and powers of heaven--pledge themselves that every facility shall be given to us if we carry out our baptismal vows to "come out from among them, and be . . . separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing." When we are true to our vows, He says, "I will receive you" (**MS 85, 1901; 6BC 1075.8**)

How can Ellen White refer to a non-specific entity as one of the three 'dignitaries' of heaven? To be a dignitary – one of a certain number, in this case three – you have to be an individual. If only the Father and Son are dignitaries, and, the Spirit is just the essence of the two, then surely it would be pointless to speak of Him as one of three. This helps to highlight Matthew 28 verse 19 that commissioned the disciples to baptize in the name of, 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost.' Taking into account the words of Ellen White, we can now say, quite emphatically, that the SDA understanding of Matthew, making the Father, Son and Spirit three separate, coequal, eternal beings, is quite correct indeed. But, this further evidence from the pen of inspiration helps to reinforce the position even more:

You are born unto God, and you stand under the sanction and the power of the three holiest beings in heaven, who are able to keep you from falling . . . When I feel oppressed, and hardly know how to relate myself toward the work that God has given me to do, I just call upon the three great Worthies, and say; You know I cannot do this work in my own strength. (**7 Manuscript Release 267.2**)

How on earth can these statements be understood in the light of the ASDAT position? In this case, the Holy Spirit is stated as being one of the three holiest 'beings' of heaven (naturally, a 'being' of a different substance to Father and Son, but never-the-less a being), one of the 'three great Worthies.' Note the term, 'worthies,' is written with a capital 'W,' signifying supreme status. In light of all the evidences presented, to hold to the idea that the Holy Spirit is not an individual in His own right is, quite frankly, wanton blindness. An attempt at turning these comments into something figurative or emblematic would be just as ridiculous.

Another self defeating attempt at defending the ASDAT position is the often self contradictory arguments about apparent errors in certain translations of the Bible that specifically mention the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, individually,

in the same passage. Matthew 28:19 and 1John 5:7 are two prime examples. It is stated that only in the great commission of Matthew 28 is it said that the disciples should baptize in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After this mention, we find the disciples always baptizing in the name of Christ. The argument is that Matthew 28:19, with its mention of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not to be found in the most 'trustworthy' original manuscripts and thus we should treat this text as an error of translation, used to promote the Trinitarian theology. What amazes me is the selectivity of the ASDAT defenders – keeping what suits them and rejecting what does not. In trying to defend this case though, they shoot themselves in the foot. Ellen White is one of the major authorities they use to defend their case, yet, in the position they take on Matthew 28:19, they would have to accuse Ellen White of making a serious mistake in her acceptance of the wrong version of this verse. Ellen White clearly accepts this version of the baptism commission as the right one, as the following evidences clearly indicate:

There are *three living persons of the heavenly trio* [GODHEAD]; 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.-- **Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, pp. 62, 63. (1905) {Ev 615.1}**

They [the disciples] were to baptize in the name of the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.* (**Acts of the Apostels, p. 28**)

The prejudice of the Jews was aroused because the disciples of Jesus did not use the exact words of John in the rite of baptism. John baptized unto repentance, but the disciples of Jesus, on profession of the faith, *baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* **2SP 136.3**

They were to teach the observance of all things whatsoever Jesus had commanded them, and were to baptize in the name of the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* **3SP 238.2**

If Ellen White was wrong in accepting this text as the correct statement on the baptismal authorities, then how do we know that she is not wrong in a whole lot of other instances as well? We would have to do what the ASDAT do and simply select the quotes that agree with our chosen position. Of course we would dissect the Bible in the same way – delete the verses that do not agree with us and choose only the ancient manuscripts that present what we believe.

If I was an ASDAT subscriber, I would also have a major problem with 1John 5:7. This verse so clearly states: *'For there are three that bear record in*

*heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.'* Here we have a concept that quite clearly fits the SDA theology of a Trinity. This statement is so definitive that you are left with only one alternative as an anti-Trinitarian – 'delete the text, claim it is translated from faulty manuscripts,' the same as you do with Matthew 28:19. 'It cannot be true, even if it is in the Bible, because we all know that God is ONE and there are NOT three persons in that ONE Godhead.'

The Greek (trēis, tria, triōn) used in the original manuscript (if you accept this manuscript of course), suggests a 'primary (plural) number, 'three.' This obviously suggests that the author, John, saw the Father, Son (Word) and Holy Ghost as three distinct persons, yet one. Ellen White saw it this way, as we have already begun to see and will continue to see in this study. If it was good enough for John and good enough for Sister White (both non-Roman Catholic) then, surely, it should be good enough for us as well.

I would like to deviate for a moment and touch on just one interesting point about the sayings of our pioneers and Ellen White's relation to it. In the Ellen White quotes above, you might have noticed that she uses the term 'Holy Ghost' to refer to the Holy Spirit. Some of our pioneers would have had a major problem with this as they understood that the original Greek did not use the term 'Ghost,' but 'Spirit.' Here are samples of such remarks from the pen of Uriah Smith:

*And then the Holy Spirit (by an infirmity of translation called "the Holy Ghost"), the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the divine afflatus and medium of their power, representative of them both (Ps. 139:7), was in existence also. (U. Smith, **Looking Unto Jesus**, p. 10. 1898)*

*The terms "Holy Ghost", are a harsh and repulsive translation. It should be "Holy Spirit" (hagion pneuma) in every instance. This Spirit is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit being the same whether it is spoken of as pertaining to God or Christ. (U. Smith, **Review & Herald**, October 28, 1890)*

As a result of this understanding Uriah Smith consistently referred to the Holy 'Spirit' and not Ghost. Yet, Ellen White had no problem with using the term Ghost. What I am trying to point out is that simply because some pioneers saw things in a certain light did not automatically mean that Ellen White held the same position, their concepts on the Godhead are just one case in point. It is interesting that this segment from Uriah Smith is taken from commentary he was making on the nature of the Godhead.

One of the most objectionable, demeaning, condescending and arrogant teachings of the ASDAT is the position they take on the origins and status of Christ. I have already touched on this issue, but I need to present a more substantial argument that will highlight and expose some of the specific positions taken in the ASDAT attack.

### **ASDAT:**

The work of creation is accomplished by a Father and a Son. This took place before Jesus came into this world as Mary's child, conceived by the Spirit of God. Clearly, the status of Son was assigned to Christ even before the creation of the world. The authority of the father is always superior to that of his son. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was begotten by the Father, the references to this, in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, are so clear that they have to be taken as they read.

**John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of ***the only begotten of the Father,***) full of grace and truth.

**John 3:16 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.

**3:17** For God ***sent not his Son*** into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

**3:18** He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The Bible does not say that God begat a Son, only at the incarnation. The text says that He *gave His only begotten Son* (past tense), He gave the son which He already had – *He sent His Son*, the son was already a reality. Ellen White understood this when she wrote:

'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. . . ' (ST, May 30, 1895 )

'In His incarnation He gained in ***a new sense*** the title of the Son of God . . . Thus He stood in our ***world—the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.***' (Selected Messages Book 1, p. 226, 227 )

Ellen White's son, James Edison White wrote:

***'Christ is the only being begotten of the Father.'*** (James Edison White, Past, Present and Future, p. 52. 1909)

We can clearly and simply gather from these statements that Jesus was begotten, Born of the Father. He was the son of God before he came into this world but gained '*in a new sense,*' as Ellen White states, this title.

It must also be pointed out, based on the evidence of Ellen White's testimony, that Jesus was not created, as some Arians try to suggest (Uriah Smith and Loughborough made this quite clear in the statements presented earlier). Ellen White is quite emphatic on that point. She says he was *'not a son by creation as were the angels.'* Anti-Trinitarians do themselves no favour when they insist on trying to prove that Christ was a created being. There is no such evidence in the Bible, the pioneers, or the pen of inspiration. It is wiser to concentrate on the absolute and crystal clear statements than to support a case based on uninformed opinions and suppositions.

When the Scripture speaks about Jesus as being God (John 1:1; Heb 1:8), what does it really mean? Is there a contradiction in the Word of God? In some places it says that God is ONE God (Gal 3:20; 1Cor 8:6). In another place it says that The Word, Jesus, is God (John 1:1), why? Surely, if there is one God that we must worship, and the ten commandments tell us that we must have no other God's before Him, then how can the Father and Son both be God, in the supreme sense, and, if we include the Holy Spirit in the equation, how can Father, Son, and Spirit, all three, be God – ONE God. Three does not equal one and one does not equal three. Surely, we are not worshiping three God's. 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] **one** LORD.' (Deut 6:4). The statement of Scripture is emphatic and clear.

When John writes that the Word was there in the beginning, he is not referring to the beginning of the Father's existence, but the beginning of the Son's existence. Ever since He was born / created, He has been with the Father.

When Ellen White writes that *'there never was a time when he was not in close fellowship with the Father'* (Evangelism, p. 615), it needs to be understood in the same sense suggested above. Proverbs 8:22 says: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.' Ever since that event – when the Father POSSESSED Him – Christ has always been in close fellowship with the Father. It is just like saying that 'there never was a time when Gabriel was not in close fellowship with God.' We do not understand that to mean that Gabriel never had a beginning.

On the same page, in the book Evangelism and elsewhere, Ellen White states that Jesus is the *'pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.'* Does she mean that Jesus came into existence by himself, in eternity past. No! Ellen White is saying that he was the Son of God, before Bethlehem. The Father had Given Him Divine, eternal life – it was His by inheritance. Because of this, He was self-existent. He was pre-existent, because He had existed prior / pre the incarnation as the Son of God. You will remember that Ellen White stated that when he came as a babe in Bethlehem that he gained, *'in a new sense,'* the title, 'Son of God.' She also stated in Desire of Ages, p. 51 that *'the dedication of the first-born had its origin in the earliest times. God had promised to give the First-born of heaven to save the sinner.'* Isn't that just so clear? Jesus was born in heaven – He was the First-born of heaven and the custom of dedication of the first-born had its origin in earliest times. Obviously these earliest times were before the time of the incarnation. Clearly, by the very

context of the statement, its origins date back to the First-born of heaven, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Then there is the case of Hebrews 1:8, 9: '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. 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, [even] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Here the Father is designating the title of God to the Son. Yes, true, but in what sense? Is it in the sense that the Son is the Almighty God of eternity, or, is it in the sense that the Son has inherited Godhood from the Father who is still the supreme originator and ruler of the universe? The evidence within the text makes it clear. In verse 9 the Father refers to himself as being the God of the Son, who has anointed the Son above His 'fellows.' If Jesus is God, in this vicarious, designated sense, then the Father, who is all powerful in majesty and glory, is the GOD of the Son.

Surely we cannot accept a doctrine that is the very foundation of Romanism. The Catholic Church itself states that '*The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church.*' (**Handbook for Today's Catholic, p. 11**)

#### **RESPONSE:**

Let me briefly respond to the last quote from the Catholic handbook:

We do not accept a doctrine that is the very foundation of the Catholic Faith. This has already been proved in my earlier responses. Yes, it may be the central doctrine of the Catholic faith, but we do not teach it, the accusation is null and void.

The above arguments by the ASDAT center on terminology such as begotten, born or created. Before I question the logic of this, let me briefly refer to the text used by the ASDAT to *support* these apparent references to the origins of Christ. The text is found in Proverbs 8:22, which states: 'The Lord possessed me [Christ] in the beginning of His way, before His works of Old.' The argument says that 'ever since THAT event (signifying a point in time), Christ has always been in close fellowship with the Father. They use this text to lend clarity to John 1:1 which speaks of Christ / the Word being there in the beginning.

The logic of this argument is actually self-defeating. Proverbs says that the Lord possessed me in the beginning of 'HIS' way. Sure, one could extract the word, 'possessed,' and say that this means that Christ was possessed at a *point in time*. But when you consider that the text speaks of the beginning of HIS (the Father's) way, then you have to assume that the Father had a beginning too – which we know He did not. It is obvious that the words 'beginning' or 'possessed' are not meant to suggest a specific point in time, but, rather, describe the eternal relationship between the Father and Son in the language and concepts of earthly realities that cannot conceive the notion of existence in eternity past. If we refuse to see it in this way then we will have

to accept, due to the very evidence of the text itself, that the Father had a 'beginning of His way.' Thus, too, when Ellen White says: 'he who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning . . .' (MH 422), it needs to be understood in the same sense. She is not either trying to assign a starting point to the life of Christ, whether through literal birth or creation (concepts that will be discussed shortly), she is merely using this biblical terminology to express a continual relationship for which there is no possible human computation available. This is why, in other places, she (and the Bible) speaks of the 'eternal' existence of Jesus, making it clear that the term 'beginning' should not be seen as an actual point in the past, but rather as a means of expressing 'un-datable' time – for both Father and Son, as the term 'beginning' is also used with reference to the Father's 'way.'

From verse 23 down to verse 30, where expressions such as, 'I was brought forth' and 'I was brought up with Him,' are used, we have to apply the same understanding, otherwise we still end up with 'inscrutables.' For example: When it is says, 'I was brought up WITH him [the Father],' it suggests that the Father and Jesus were brought up together. It does not say that He was brought up *by* Him but 'with' Him. If Christ was set up 'from everlasting,' as the text says, then it means that the whole issue of origin must be understood in terms of the word 'everlasting.' This word means what it says. It is a word that describes an incomputable (past, present and future) time-frame. These are the words Ellen White uses when talking about this very portion of Scripture:

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 . . . (Prov. 8:22-27). **(Selected Messages Book 1, p. 247)**

Thus, when the expressions, 'brought up,' 'possessed' and 'beginning' are used it needs to be understood in a non-literal sense. The expressions, in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, that refer to the eternal character of Christ's existence are usually presented in clear unambiguous, categorical terms (stating concepts of origin as fact), whereas, the kind of terminology dealt with above are often couched in figurative / allegorical terms – expressing eternal, infinite concepts in the language of finite acuity. Ellen White, in her comment on John 1:1, states quite emphatically:

The world was made by him, 'and without him was not anything made that was made.' And without him was not anything made that was made.' If Christ made all things, he existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and *in the highest sense.* He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. **(The Review and Herald, April 5, 1906. p. 8.)**

The difference between this way of understanding these expressions and the explanation of the ASDAT is that *the ASDAT interpret the eternity statements in light of the ones that use the word beginning or born, etc., taking them as literal expressions*, whereas the explanation of beginning, born and created, etc., which I have suggested, are *understood in the light of the evidences that speak of Christ in distinctively stated, eternal terms*.

Another point is that the ASDAT fraternity, themselves, cannot agree on whether Christ was actually born or created. Those who hold to the idea that He was created use Revelation 3:14 as one of their proof texts. Those who believe that He was begotten of the Father, feel that to speak of Christ as being created conflicts with so much that is related to the plan of Salvation and contradicts the clear statement by Ellen White that says He was 'not a son by creation, as were the angels.'

Either way, whether one believes that Christ was born or created in eternity past, makes no sense, since the statements in the Bible or Ellen White are not assigning a starting point to Christ's existence. If people begin to speculate on the origins of Christ they run the risk of bringing a mystery of heavenly dimensions down to the level of human pro-creativity, or at least very close to that. Whether Christ was born of the Father or created of the Father, still boils down to the same thing – He is then, essentially, a creation of the Father, because all the attributes of life were received from the author of all life, the original, eternally, self-existent, underived (all attributes Ellen White assigns to Jesus) source of life, the Father, God.

If this is true, then Christ should not have been the one who came to this world as a man and died for our sins, but the Father should have been the one instead – the one who gives life, the prime source of all life (the creator), should take the responsibility of atonement. After all, He was then the one who created, by His Son (this would be in a vicarious sense), beings that had the possibility, through freedom of choice, to commit sin. Of course this whole idea is ridiculous because Christ IS God and He IS the Creator of all. Take note of these interesting comments by Ellen White:

**God might write the messages of truth upon the firmament of the heavens as easily as he placed the stars in their position. . . . **(Signs of the Times, January 8, 1880 par. 5)****

Here Ellen White clearly connects supreme deity with the creation of the stars. Who is this GOD that she is referring to who has this incredible power to write truth upon the firmament of heaven that He created? It is the same One that she writes about in the following statement – the One from whom she would rather receive knowledge than from infidels:

**I am willing to be taught by Him who *created the heavens and the earth, who made the lofty trees, the spears of grass, and every shrub. I am willing to be taught of Him that set the stars in their order in the***

heavens, and appointed the sun and the moon to do their work. I can drink at that fountain. I do not need to go to infidel authors, but to God. I want to know God and the power of His grace. I will make no boast of knowledge. Those who know not God, even while they look upon His works, say there is no God. The fool hath said that in his heart. Shall we go to such men for knowledge, from whom Christ is hidden, when the very things they ought to know, they do not know? God help us that while we shall have to communicate more or less with those who have no knowledge of the truth, we may be so grounded and rooted in the truth, that nothing can move us. We are to bear rich clusters every day. Why? Because we are converted every day. **(9MR 70.2)**

Are the ASDAT not just as blind and infidel in the position they take on the origin and status of Christ that it can, indeed, be said that He is hidden from them. Shall we go to the ASDAT for knowledge about the Godhead, about the creator and ruler of this universe when they do not even know who He is? I should think not. Let Ellen White confirm for us whom she understood as being the creator:

When we look on the sun and the stars, the trees and the beautiful flowers, we should remember that Christ made them all. And He made the Sabbath to help us keep in mind His love and power. **(SJ 67.3)**

When Ellen White, or the Bible for that matter, speaks about Jesus as being 'begotten,' it is with the view of Christ's role in the plan of redemption in mind. This role the Father and Son understood from the very beginning, from the eons of eternity past. Because of their foreknowledge of every detail of that which lay ahead in the future, in particular as it concerned this world and fallen man, they designated to themselves the roles of Father and Son, for the benefit of the whole universe and those that they knew they would one day have to save.

'In His incarnation,' says Ellen White, Christ gained 'in a new sense the title of Son of God' (Selected messages 1, p. 226, 227). The ASDAT argument is that 'He was the Son of God by birth, and now he became the Son of man, also by birth – thus obtaining, in a new sense, the title Son of God.'

In the Old Testament Jesus is designated the title 'Lamb of God.' Just because he was designated a typological title that describes a role he would one day fulfill in an antitypical sense, does not mean that at some previous point in time Jesus had died and would now, in a new sense be able to receive the title 'Lamb of God' by dying again. He has always been the Son of God and the Lamb of God because these were the pre-ordained roles he was to fill in the bigger picture of redemption. When Ellen White speaks about the pre-ordained role of Christ, she speaks of it in eternal terms, thus indicating a distinct connection between the role that Christ would fill and the title that is associated with that role:

Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, "Lo, I come." "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God." Heb. 10:5-7. *In these words is announced the fulfillment of the purpose that had been hidden from eternal ages. Christ was about to visit our world, and to become incarnate.* **(Desire Of Ages, p. 23)**

Only now, in the eyes of the watching universe, once Christ had fulfilled the task of these assigned roles, had that which was once only understood in types, shadows, roles and promises, come to actual completion. What father, Son and Spirit had always known would be, what they had planned for in all their work connected to the plan of salvation, in the various phases of their existence, had now become established. That which was once a picture painted on the canvass of types and figures, now unfolded and would continue to unfold, on the moving celluloid screen of a work of art in its various phases of achievement. As a result of His completed mission, as Son and Lamb of God (His birth, life and death), Jesus was crowned as King of the Universe. Now another phase of the roles designated Him would come into effect. He would take on the responsibility of mediator and judge, those very functions that had also been ascribed to Him of old – the characters that had been played out year after year in the work of earthly priests, in types and shadows, representing that which was yet to come. These pre-ordained, typified works now came to maturity and Christ could now, not only as Saviour, but also as Conqueror and King, reveal to the universe, to a fuller extent, another facet of His person and purpose and enter into the next chapter of the eternal pre-ordained plan of the covenant of mercy. It is in this light, of the everlasting, eternal plan, that Ellen White understands the mission of Christ:

The salvation of the human race *has ever been the object of the councils of heaven*. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has *existed from all eternity*, and is called the everlasting covenant. *So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity.* **(Signs of the Times, June 12, 1901)**

This confusion between the roles of the Son and Spirit and their origin and status within the Godhead reminds me of the problem that so many Christians have with accepting that Christ is also Michael, the Archangel. They find it impossible, in spite of the evidences in the Scripture (applying the principle of 'here a little and there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept'), to see that Michael is also our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The ASDAT, likewise, cannot see past the roles Jesus fills and terminology such as 'born,' or 'begotten,' and thus fail to prescribe Him His proper origin and status within the Godhead. They exhibit this same shortcoming (as shown prior to this) when it comes to the Holy Spirit.

As I have stated in the earlier part of this chapter, there is a danger of trying to say more about the Godhead than is actually revealed in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Although I have presented views or alternatives in my reply to the ASDAT, I do not want to, although I do believe that the broad picture is true to our SDA theology, be dogmatic over the finer details – no one can nor, indeed, has a right to be. After all, we have not seen and we have not heard. I have by no means reached the end of my reply to the ASDAT. There remains an integral part of this exposé that still needs to be taken care of. The next phase is to present clear biblical supports to my response, combined with more clear unequivocal statements from the pen of Ellen White. In this way we will be able to complete, in as convincing a manner as possible, an annulment of a cause which is, in effect, already legless, paralyzed and bedridden.

## **INSPIRED, VITAL EVIDENCES**

In this section I will highlight some of the ASDAT arguments already presented and will then present the evidences that clearly place their case beyond salvageable standing. Those which will now be presented are inspired evidences that can have no counter response – unless one wants to defy the boundaries of logic and truth.

There are titles given to Christ, in the Old and New Testaments, which clearly imply His origin and status. I will present the terms and texts and will then add my comments:

**GOD** (ěĹôhĭym – el-o-heem): the supreme GOD, mighty . . .

**LORD** (Yehôvâh – yeh-ho-vaw): the self-Existant or eternal (the Jewish national name of God) . . .

**I AM** (GREEK: egō eimi – THAT I AM: ho ōn; HEBREW: ‘ani hu’): JEHOVAH

*EXODUS 3:14* And God [ěĹôhĭym – the supreme GOD] said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

*EXODUS 20:2* I [am] the LORD [Yehôvâh – the self-existant or eternal One] thy God [ěĹôhĭym – the supreme GOD], which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.  
*20:3* Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

These texts are prime exhibits in vindicating the status and origins of Christ. When the Israelites worshiped their God, they were worshipping the ֵלֹהִים, Yehôvâh, the great I AM. The one that spoke to Moses from the burning bush is the same one that declares in the Ten Commandments that there should be no other God's before Him. The ASDAT adherents believe that God the Father is the supreme God and that when we include in our worship Father, Son and Spirit – as God, applying equal status, we break the commandment of God because we are worshipping three Gods and not one. This is a serious accusation, but is it true? The answer to that question will become clear when we reveal who 'the God' was that appeared in the burning bush and who gave the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. We read Jesus statement about His authority in the following text:

*JOHN 8:58* Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.

It goes without saying and requires no exegetical acrobatics, to understand that Jesus was declaring that *He* was I AM. The one who was in the burning bush, the one who gave the commandments at mount Sinai, thus, the Yehôvâh – the self-existent or eternal One, the ֵלֹהִים – the supreme GOD that the Hebrew nation worshipped. In simple, straight forward English language, supported by the very words of Christ, it becomes an irrefutable reality that Jesus is God. Indeed, if we are breaking the commandment that says: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,' then we are, in effect, blaspheming Jesus, for He was the one who spoke those words. Added to this, we have the testimony of Ellen White that says:

With solemn dignity *Jesus* answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM."

Silence fell upon the vast assembly. *The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin. (Desire of Ages, p. 469)*

Jehovah is the name given to Christ. (The Signs of the Times, May 3, 1899, p. 2.)

Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the source and sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship." (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 305.)

The evidence in this regard is absolutely conclusive. Jesus, along with the Father, IS GOD in the HIGHEST sense of the word. To try to argue this away

is simply an exhibition of willful deception. Ellen White puts it just as categorically when she says:

Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. **(Selected Messages Vol. 1, p. 247)**

#### **CHRIST AND THE 4<sup>TH</sup> COMMANDMENT:**

"Wherefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." These words are full of instruction and comfort. Because the Sabbath was made for man, it is the Lord's day. It belongs to Christ. For "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1:3. Since He made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier. It declares that He who created all things in heaven and in earth, and by whom all things hold together, is the head of the church, and that by His power we are reconciled to God. For, speaking of Israel, He said, "I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them,"--make them holy. Ezek. 20:12. Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ's power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God. **(Desire of Ages, p. 288)**

God gave his law, and in the fourth precept of the decalogue is his Sabbath. **(Review and Herald, July 15, 1890)**

Christ himself gave the law from Mount Sinai, and he has not lessened a jot or tittle of its claims. He has given his own life to atone for man's transgression of the law, and to enable him to obey its precepts. **(Signs of the Times, October 10, 1892)**

The evidences in these statements also make it clear that Jesus is God, He gave the Law at Mount Sinai, is the great I AM, is the self-existent, eternal one, in whom is life unborrowed and underived (all evidences from the Bible and Ellen White). These are not ambiguous statements from the Word or from the pen of inspiration. They are clear categorical expressions that delineate the status of Christ. It is in light of such clear declaration that we should interpret the other comments from the Word and Spirit of Prophecy that can be understood in a dualistic manner. Compare the above revelations with these further unequivocal comments by Ellen White:

To save the transgressor of God's law, **Christ, the one equal with the Father**, came to live heaven before men, that they might learn to know what it is to have heaven in the heart. He illustrated what man must be to be worthy of the precious boon of the life that measures with the life of God. (RH, November 17, 1891)

**Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.... In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages.** He assures us that *there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.* He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him. (Signs of the Times, Aug. 29, 1900. Ev 615)

Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection, and the life." **In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.** "He that hath the Son hath life." The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life. (The Desire of Ages, p. 530, 1898)

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, **existed from eternity, a distinct person**, yet one with the Father. [THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE REVIEW AND HERALD, APRIL 5, 1906.]

The order of *Melchisedec*, gives us another clue as to the timeless derivation of Christ. By taking evidences from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, regarding this personality, it can be established that the origins of Jesus are as eternal as eternity itself. Melchisedec, king of Salem and priest of God, appears in Genesis chapter 14 for the first time when Abraham pays him a tithe from the spoils of war. Although this king / priest is only mentioned here, as the one who receives Abraham's tithe, we do know enough, from the scriptures and the writings of Ellen White to have no doubt who he represents and who the ultimate, antitypical priest of the order of Melchisedec is.

Ellen White tells us that this king / priest, of Genesis 14, lived 20 miles from Hebron: *'here had been the home of Melchisedec,'* the place that David chose to build the Jewish capital (Signs of the Times, June 22, 1888). She also tells us that he was a *'holy man'* (Review and Herald, May 16, 1882). The conclusion, based on these statements, is that Melchisedec, of Abraham's day, was a real person who lived on earth. Says Ellen White: *'at one time Melchisedek represented the Lord Jesus Christ in person, to reveal the truth of heaven, and perpetuate the law of God'* (Letter 190, 1905). She states that, *'It was Christ that spoke through Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchisedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world'* (Review and Herald, Feb. 18, 1890).

All the high priests of the earthly sanctuary were priests after the order of Melchisedec. Christ would, once He had completed His mission to this world and ascended to heaven, become the eternal, ultimate, antitypical priest of the order of Melchisedec. This is how Ellen White states it:

'The high priest, clad in his consecrated and expensive robes, with the breastplate upon his breast, the light playing upon the precious stones inlaid in the breastplate, presented a most imposing appearance, and struck the conscientious, true-hearted people with reverence and awe. The high priest was designed in an especial manner to represent Christ, who was to become a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. This order of priesthood was not to pass to another, or be superseded by another.' (Pamphlet, **1Redemption or the First Advent of Christ With His Life and Ministry**, p. 13.1, 1877. Read also, 'The Great Controversy,' Chapter 1, **The First Advent of Christ**)

Thus, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey amidst the rejoicing of the people, the disciples could describe Him, to those who enquired, in the way expressed by Ellen White below:

They inquire who and what is the cause of all this tumultuous rejoicing. As they, with much authority, repeat their question,--Who is this? the disciples, filled with a spirit of inspiration, are heard above all the noise of the crowd, *repeating in eloquent strains the prophecies which answered this question.* Adam will tell you, It is the seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head. Ask Abraham, he will tell you, ***It is Melchisedek, King of Salem, King of Peace.*** Jacob will tell you, He is Shiloh of the tribe of Judah. Isaiah will tell you, Immanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Jeremiah will tell you, The Branch of David, the Lord, our righteousness. Daniel will tell you, He is the Messiah. Hosea will tell you, He is the Lord God of Hosts, the Lord is his memorial. John the Baptist will tell you, He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The great Jehovah [a title also assigned to Christ] has proclaimed from his throne, This is my beloved Son. We, his disciples, declare, This is Jesus, the Messiah, the Prince of Life, the Redeemer of the world. And even the Prince of the powers of darkness acknowledges him, saying, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." (**Spirit of Prophecy Vol 2, p. 395**)

Of course, it is beyond dispute that Melchisedec is, in the ultimate sense, Jesus Christ. Paul knew this and spoke about Jesus, the ultimate priest of this order, in the following manner:

**HEBREWS 7:1** For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation *King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;*

7:3 *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*

It does not take much to figure out that Paul is not talking about the Melchisedec of Genesis 14. Ellen White plainly states that he was a man and lived near the area of Hebron, once named Salem. He is certainly not talking about the generations of earthly priests that represented Christ in type – they all had mothers and fathers. No angel could fill this role, they were all created. It was not God the Father, as He is not the one designated the role of High Priest. There is only one High Priest that could abide continually and that could fulfil the timeless criteria Paul lays out in his statement – that High Priest is Jesus Christ – who is, ‘*without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life,*’ and who is, right now and for eternity, ‘*a priest continually.*’

These descriptions are not speaking of Christ in His incarnated form. In this sense, he had a beginning, as a babe in Bethlehem. This is a description of the divine nature of Christ that existed eternally, during His life on earth and while He lay in the tomb awaiting resurrection. ‘*He who had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again," came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Humanity died: divinity did not die. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death*’ (The Faith I live By, p. 51, 1SM, p. 301). Thus, it can be concluded, from a heavenly, eternal perspective, Christ had no beginning and was not born or created in any sense. The whole concept of ‘SON’ must, as pointed out so many times before, be seen in the context of the plan of salvation. Any other explanation leaves one with a host of contradictions that cannot be solved in light of all the clear, unambiguous statements of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Another interesting text about the Saviour is to be found in this prophetic statement by Isaiah:

*ISAIAH 9:6* 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.

**GOD** – êl (ale): strength, mighty, Almighty

**EVERLASTING** – ‘ad (ad): eternity, everlasting, evermore

**FATHER** – âb (aub): literal or figurative – chief, principle

Simply put, Jesus is here called God (almighty), his origins are designated to eternal dimensions and inclusive in the use of the word ‘Father,’ is the notion

of chief or principle, designating His status. The word chief means, 'ruler' or 'head' – the one in control, the one in command or the one who rules. The term *principle* not only has the connotation of head or ruler attached to it but it also finds its roots in the concepts of 'law,' 'decree' and 'standard.' This clearly indicates origins and position of unconditional levels. There is no skirting around this as these designations in Isaiah are categorical and clear and are intended to leave the reader in no doubt as to the status of the one that is being written about – this can be seen as a clear doctrinal evaluation of the person of Christ.

I include this following text, found in the book of Hebrews, to emphasize the point already so concisely made. The statements by the Father concerning the status of Christ, found in these texts, are so categorical that, once again, they need to be taken as prime guides for establishing a theological framework for understanding the position and rank of Christ.

*HEBREWS* 1:8 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.

1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, [even] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

These texts, although they speak of the Father conferring such status on the Son, are not an indication that the Son is in any way inferior to the Father. The terms for God and Lord, used in this passage, are used interchangeably for both Father and Son.

It should never be inferred that when Christ spoke about depending on the Father, that he was designating His heavenly status. These comments should always be seen in light of His earthly mission. Christ Himself chose, when he came to this world, to subordinate Himself to the Father – this was part and parcel of the pre-ordained, eternal plan. The texts in Scripture that refer to the Son saying that He could of himself do nothing were not insinuations that His powers or abilities, even in the perpetual heavenly context, were actually the Father's. This is simply Christ saying that *He chose, in the form of man*, to rely totally on the Father.

A text that aptly illustrates Christ's God-hood and personal choice in taking on a subservient role to the Father while on earth is found in *Philippians 2:5-7*:

*PHILIPPIANS* 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

2:6 Who, being in the form of God, ***thought it not robbery to be equal with God:***

2:7 But ***made himself of no reputation***, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

The incarnation of Christ and His mission on earth should never be used as a means to infer conditions upon His eternal status. This act of God was an incredible act of condescension. The whole plan of salvation is an act of love and kindness that the Godhead chose to carry out for mankind – eternal in its origins and planning – reflected in the very designations of roles and titles adopted by the heavenly dignitaries. What a shame, what a travesty, an act of pitiful human arrogance and ignorance, to use this plan, conceived for their salvation and eternal well being, as a means to demean and categorise the mystery and greatness of the eternal powers of heaven. It would be well for us to bear in mind the mystery of Christ's incarnation and not to speculate beyond what God has emphatically revealed:

In contemplating the incarnation of Christ in humanity, we stand baffled before an **unfathomable mystery**, that the **human mind cannot comprehend**. The more we reflect upon it, the more amazing does it appear. How wide is the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem's manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? And yet the Creator of worlds, **He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily**, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory, and yet wearing the garb of humanity! (ST July 30, 1896). (5BC 1130.5)

To suggest that Christ is anything other than God, in the fullest sense (regarding His origins and status), is not only blasphemy, it is not only un-Adventist, but it is, at its very core, un-Christian and, indeed, anti-Christ. Certain elements of such a false position are pagan and Catholic in nature. To deny the true status and Divinity of Christ is to deny the very central pillar upon which true Christianity is built, upon which the plan of salvation is built – it is pagan in the most definite sense of the word. As *Ellen White* so pointedly states:

No outward shrines may be visible, there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practicing idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. **Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** (Testimonies Vol. 5. p. 173)

Those who in any way lessen, even in the smallest degree, the status and eternal origins of Christ, exhibit the same spirit that spurred Lucifer to reject Jesus as his superior, simply because he could not and chose not to understand how one that appeared to be so much like himself, as the archangel Michael, the one who took on a special role, coming down, as it were, to the level of the angels, could actually be God, in the same sense and with the same authority as God the Father. In effect, Lucifer saw Christ more

as one like himself, not as one that shared the divine authority and glory of supreme deity. Ellen White writes (because of this wanton misconception of Lucifer's) that the Father gathered the angels together so that it could be made clear to them exactly what the authority of Christ entailed (Patriarchs and prophets, p. 36). At the time of his rebellion in heaven Satan '*declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's command alone will he obey*' (Ellen White, 3SG, 38).

It may not be that we are aspiring to be as God and that we are trying to cause a conscious rebellion against Christ, as Lucifer did, but when we lessen His authority and claim that the Father alone is the supreme GOD we worship, then we are, in effect, manifesting the same logic and spirit that motivated Lucifer to make Christ less than what He really was. This type of definition of the status of Christ will not lead us closer to heaven or closer to Jesus, but will, as in the case of Lucifer, lead us further from Christ and straight to eternal damnation.

Following are some other pertinent texts that help us to better understand the status of Jesus Christ. I will intersperse some of them with comments, but many of them speak quite adequately for themselves and need no extra explanation.

*JOHN 20:28* When Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas declares: '*My Lord My God!*'

*COLOSSIANS 2:9* For in him dwelleth *all the fullness of the Godhead* bodily.

*TITUS 2:13* Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of *the great God* and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

### **JESUS FORGIVES SINS:**

*LUKE 5:20* And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? ***Who can forgive sins, but God (Thëös – the Supreme Divinity)*** alone?

Several New Testament references to Jesus as 'Lord' are quotations of Old Testament texts employing one of the Hebrew names for God (e.g., Acts 2:20, 21 & Romans 10:13 – cf. Joel 2:31, 32; 1 Peter 3:15 – cf. Isaiah 8:13). These references make it clear that the Apostles, intentionally, meant to make it clear to those whom they were addressing, that Jesus is LORD in the highest sense.

The word 'Kurios' is used interchangeably in the New Testament to designate both God the Father (e.g., Matt 1:20; 9:38; 11:25; Acts 17:24; Rev. 4:11) and Jesus Christ (e.g., Luke 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 10:36; 1 Cor 2:8; Phil. 2:11; James 2:1; Rev 19:16). Indeed, in some texts, there is ambiguity as to whether the Father or Son is meant (e.g., Acts 1:24; 2:47; 8:39; 9:31; 11:21; 13:10-12; 16:14; 20:19; 21:14; cf. 18:26; Rom. 14:11). For the Jews particularly, the term *Kurios* suggested that Christ was equal with the Father.

## TEXTS THAT CLEARLY SUGGEST THE CONCEPT OF PLURALITY IN THE GODHEAD

*GENESIS 3:22* And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of **us**, to know good and evil . . .

This text is especially significant in that it negates a specific argument often given by the ASDAT. It is said that when the word US is used, God is not talking to equal members of the Godhead, but could just as easily be speaking to other dignitaries of heaven. Of course this is a weak argument and the ASDAT thought leaders are generally aware of this. The prime reason that immediately reveals this fallacy, is that the ones that God is speaking to also have the knowledge of good and evil – this the angels do not have, as created man did not have till the fall. Of course God also, when speaking of the creation of man, says, 'let US make man in OUR image' (Genesis 1:26). There is no doubt that he was speaking to equals – at the very least the Son – as man was not made in the image of angels or other created beings, but in the image of God. The most important point that is made with these texts is that the Godhead does consist of a plurality of beings. The following texts need to be seen in the same light.

*GENESIS 11:7* [The Lord's response to the goings on at the building of the tower of Babel] Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

*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.

## THE CONCEPT OF UNION BETWEEN A PLURALITY OF ENTITIES

In *Genesis 2:24*, God said that man and woman were to 'become one ('echad) flesh.

The word '**echad**' suggests a unity of distinct parts. Moses could have used the word **yachid** (only one, unique), but the Holy Spirit chose not to lead him to use this word but a word that the HOLY SPIRIT knew accurately described the Godhead. The same Hebrew word is used in *Deuteronomy 6:4*: 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one ('echad).'

In the book of John Christ speaks about 'oneness' between Him and the Father that clearly suggests a unity in the sense of Godhood as well. Notice that the reaction of the Jews clearly indicates that they saw it as such.

*JOHN 10:30* I and [my] Father are one.

10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

10:33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

The Jews knew what they were talking about. They were right that for someone to claim to be God was blasphemy – of the highest order. Of course, what they did not realize was that they were talking to God veiled in human flesh.

*JOHN 14:9* 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?

*JOHN 17:21* 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.

These texts clearly reveal a unity and status of elevated proportions. They do not teach a unity of bizarre biological / genetical blending, as the Catholics do. If this was the case it would fly in the face of other more definitive scriptures and the emphatic voice of the Spirit of Prophecy. The unity and oneness spoken of here is in the sense of purpose and unity of spirit. This is clearly explained by the fact that Christ speaks of a desire for that same kind of unity to exist between Him and His people. Quite obviously, this is a unity of spiritual and not one of physical blending.

Again I emphasise, it may be hard for us to understand the mystery of the Godhead, how Father, Son and Spirit are still, all three, God. We are not asked to understand the finer details, but to accept the simple fact that we are worshipping God without breaking the commandments when we believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being, in their different functions, God.

## **THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD**

This is an issue which I have dealt with earlier on, but I would like to present it here with a further insight into the meaning one finds in the original Greek.

*REVELATION 3:14* And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God . . .

A correct understanding of the Greek, in context with what the rest of Scripture has to say about the Son, brings us to a correct understanding of this text.

**BEGINNING** – **GREEK: Arche** – can be understood as Beginning, point of origin, first cause, or ruler.

In other words, word **Arche** can mean that He was created or, it *can* mean that He, himself, is the one who is the Creator – the one who is the source of God’s creation – the first or primary cause. In fact, it has to be seen in this sense, as any other interpretation would fly in the face of overwhelming evidence.

### **THE FIRST BORN OF EVERY CREATURE**

This is another issue that I have touched on, but some further clarification and insight will be of help.

**COLOSSIANS 1:14** In whom we have redemption through his blood, [even] the forgiveness of sins:

1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

This is not a text that proves that Christ was born – thus did not exist from the beginning with the Father. Rather, this text speaks of Christ’s exalted position. The expression, ‘Firstborn,’ ‘prototokos,’ in the Greek, is a title not a definition of His origins or biological status. For example, *David* (a type of Christ), was called by God, ‘*My firstborn,*’ (Psalms 89:27), although, biologically speaking, he was the youngest of the house of Jesse. Another significant point with relation to the above text from Colossians is the fact that verse 17 clearly states that Christ existed before all things. See how verse 16 emphasises His creatorship of ALL things. As Ellen White so aptly puts it, ‘*if Christ made all things, He existed before all things*’ (*The Review and Herald, April 5, 1906. p. 8.*)

I highlight once again, this type of methodology of interpretation is probably one of the major flaws in the ASDAT methodology. They so often confuse the work and various titles of Christ with His nature (as they do with the rest of the Godhead). As a result they have to construct a plethora of ‘Straw-men’ to prop up their case.

What follows next are some significant statements made by Sister White concerning the Holy Spirit and the 'heavenly trio.' I have used some of them earlier in this document, but I will reprint them here again so that they appear with all the other statements dealing with the same issues.

## ELLEN WHITE COMMENTS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who *is as much a person as God is a person*, is walking through these grounds. **Manuscript 66, 1899. (From a talk to the students at the Avondale School.) {Ev 616.5}**

The *Holy Spirit is a person*, for He beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. When this witness is borne, it carries with it its own evidence. At such times we believe and are sure that we are the children of God. . . . **Ms 20, 1906. {Ev 616.6}**

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." **Manuscript 20, 1906. {Ev 617.1}**

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*. **Special Testimonies, Series A, No. 10, p. 37. (1897) {Ev 617.2}**

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ's name. He personifies Christ, *yet is a distinct personality*. **20MR 324.2 Taken from Ms 93, 1893.**

## THE HEAVENLY TRIO

There are *three living persons of the heavenly trio* [GODHEAD]; 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.-- **Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, pp. 62, 63. (1905) {Ev 615.1}**

The *eternal heavenly dignitaries--God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit--*arming them [the disciples] with more than mortal energy, . . . would advance with them to the work and convince the world of sin.-- **Manuscript 145, 1901. {Ev 616.4}**

We are to co-operate with the three highest powers in heaven, --the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,--and these powers will work through us, making us workers together with God.-- **Ibid., p. 617.**  
**{7ABC 442.5}**

## **RESULTS OF REJECTING THE DEITY OF CHRIST:**

“If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ 1 Corinthians 2:14. None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption.”—***The Great Controversy.*, p. 524.**

I would love to put the case to rest, but there are still a few final concerns that I need to deal with before this can finally be done. These come in the form of extremely provocative accusations, namely, that the Church's position on the Godhead is the fulfillment of the omega apostasy, and, as a result she has joined the ranks of Babylon. I also want to deal with the accusation that Ellen White's writings have been changed and a few less outstanding, but nevertheless pertinent issues. I would like to commence by refreshing your memory with the ASDAT's concept of the omega apostasy.

### **ASDAT:**

Surely, the infiltration of the Trinitarian dogma into the SDA Church is a fulfillment of the omega of apostasy, spoken of by Ellen White. Just after the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century God's people faced the Alpha of deadly teachings – with Kellogg's theology, expounded in his book ‘The Living Temple.’ In that work Kellogg explicated theories about the nature of God that were in conflict with the position of the Church. Mixed into his pantheistic ideas were concepts of trinitarianism. Indeed, it would appear that pantheism is nothing less than the trinity doctrine dressed up in other garb. Consider these communications between A. G. Daniells (GC President at the time) and Willie White:

‘He [Kellogg] then stated that his former views regarding the trinity had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement; but that in a short time he had come to believe in the trinity and could now see pretty clearly where the difficulty was, and believed that he could clear the matter up satisfactorily.

‘He told me that he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and his view was that it was God the Holy Ghost, and not God the Father, that filled all space and every living thing. He said that if he had believed this before writing the book, he could have

expressed his views without giving the wrong impression the book now gives.

'I placed before him the objections I found in the teaching, and tried to show him that the teaching was so utterly contrary to the gospel that I did not see how it could be revised by changing a few expressions . . . I could not see how it would be possible for him to flop over, and in the course of a few days fix the books up so that it would be all right.'  
**(Letter: A. G. Daniells to W. C. White. Oct 29. 1903, p1.2.)**

Kellogg believed in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – terminology never used in the Scripture. Nowhere in the Bible does it ever refer to the Spirit as GOD THE SPIRIT. Neither does it refer to Christ in that sense. Ellen White, consistent with the Word of God, likewise refrains from describing the Son or Spirit in those terms. Ellen White called Kellogg's teaching Pantheism. The GC President tried to place his objections before him, but Kellogg did not seem able to comprehend the error of his teaching. In that same month Ellen White wrote to the Physicians at St. Helena Sanitarium:

Your leader has been *moving the foundation timbers one by one*, and his reasoning would soon leave us with no certain foundation for our faith. He has not heeded the testimonies that God through His Spirit has given. The books of the Bible containing most important instruction are disregarded because *they say so much about a personal God*. He has not known whither his feet were tending. But in his recent writings, his tendencies toward *pantheism* have been revealed. **(SpTB07 39.2)**

#### **RESPONSE:**

The evidence and argument presented above is a prime example of building a straw-man to bolster your case. It may seem to make sense to the reader that is not fully aware of the issues involved in the alpha and the omega apostasy and who is not in touch with what Kellogg's pantheism was all about. It is obvious though, from a reading of Daniell's letter and Ellen White's correspondence on this issue that they were not at all focusing on a Catholic Trinitarian heresy but the heresy of pantheism – which is not the Catholic Trinity. Kellogg's reason for mentioning his belief in the Trinity was not done to indicate the basis for his pantheistic philosophy, rather, it was to emphasise that he had come to another conclusion regarding the One he viewed to be the essence that was in all things – namely the Holy Spirit. He well knew the Adventist position on the Catholic Trinity. If he was trying to show Daniell's that he had come to a compromise and was now in the process of adjusting his philosophy he would hardly have been stupid enough to think that he would allay the brethren's fears by stating his belief in a Catholic Trinity. He used the term Trinity in the same way that many SDA people use it today, to describe their belief in the existence of three coeternal, individual persons of the Godhead.

When Daniell's responds by placing before Kellogg the objections he had to his teaching, it was not to counter his concept of three, individual divine beings, but rather to tell him that he would never be able to adjust his pantheistic writings in time by just changing a few expressions. The issue was pantheism, not trinitarianism – there is a difference.

If the Catholic Trinity actually lay at the foundation of Kellogg's philosophy then it is extremely odd that in all the communication Ellen White penned she never once makes reference to the Trinity or to Catholicism as lying at the heart of it all. The quote used above is a prime example. Ellen White says: *'He has not known whither his feet were tending. But in his recent writings, his tendencies toward **pantheism** have been revealed.'* Notice, she does not say his tendencies towards trinitarianism have been revealed, but his tendencies towards *'pantheism.'* To be sure, Ellen White continually warned our people about narrowing the gap between ourselves and Rome and would've been the first to point out a Catholic heresy if it were to be taught by Kellogg or any one of our leaders at that time. Simply put, Ellen White would never have missed the association of Kellogg's pantheism with Roman Catholic trinitarianism, and, thus, if this were a major core of his teaching and would position us to be led back to Rome, would've sent a clear warning in this regard. But, not even once does she make this connection.

The ASDAT make a huge noise about the fact that Kellogg was teaching the Catholic Trinity, but it is obvious to anyone that has even a superficial knowledge of the alpha crisis, that Kellogg was promoting the idea of God being present *IN* all things – obviously, according to his original hypothesis, it was the Father. There was no mention of a Catholic Trinitarian idea concerning the origins of Christ and His relationship to the Father and the person and being of the Holy Spirit – in fact, the Holy Spirit, in Kellogg's original position, was not the pervasive essence in all nature, but the Father. When he considered an adjustment, the core idea was simply to swap the roles of the person of the Godhead that he now perceived to be the pervasive essence. This still did not convince Daniell's or Ellen White as it still remained pantheism – whether Kellogg meant the Father or the Holy Spirit. Indeed, even in the case of the Holy Spirit filling the role Kellogg describes in his pantheistic teaching, it would be detracting from the person and individuality of the Spirit's role within the Godhead. Daniel's use of the term Trinity (as previously pointed out) was purely to make it clear that he saw three persons in the Godhead and had come to the conclusion that it was the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, which pervaded all things. It was in this sense that God was, physically and biologically, *IN* all things – whether Father or Spirit – that Kellogg was at fault and had proceeded into the realms of pantheistic doctrine.

Another interesting straw man is the reference to the fact that the Bible and Ellen White never used the terms, 'God the Son' and 'God the Holy Spirit.' This is like saying that because my wife does not refer to me as 'the father, Brian,' I cannot thus be the father of my children. Does it make any difference

whether she refers to me in this way or whether she says: 'Brian is the father of our children?' It makes no difference at all. Either I am a father or I am not.

Ellen White states, emphatically, that, 'Jesus IS God in the highest sense of the word.' In the book of Hebrews the Father calls the Son, 'God.' This we have already established with a number of evidences from both these sources. Ellen White refers to the Holy Spirit as the 'third person of the Godhead,' etc. Let us please operate and present our arguments as thinking, intelligent human beings. If Jesus is God, then, it would follow that he is 'God, the Son.' To be called God, but yet you are not allowed to directly attach the term God to your title, reveals less common sense than one would expect from a five year old. To be God, but you are not allowed to be called God would be as stupid as my children saying that because they call me by my first name (Brian), I cannot be their father.

To bolster the misinterpretation of Daniell's communication, the ASDAT link to it a string of Ellen White quotes that in no way use terminology such as Catholic or Trinity to expose Kellogg's error. Following, is another of her quotes used by the ASDAT for this purpose:

**ASDAT:**

Regarding Kellogg's attempts at revising the Living Temple, Ellen White wrote:

It will be said that Living Temple has been revised. But the Lord has shown me that the writer has not changed, and that there can be no unity between him and the ministers of the gospel while he continues to cherish his present sentiments. I am bidden to lift my voice in warning to our people, saying, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. (**Ellen G. White, Selected Messages Book 1, p. 199 – written Aug 7, 1904**)

These remarks clearly mark the division between Kellogg's pantheistic / Trinitarian philosophies and the position of Ellen White and the Faithful brethren. If it is true, as claimed by many, that Ellen White was responsible for guiding the brethren into accepting the Trinitarian doctrine, then why is this not reflected in her statements about the alpha of apostasy. Indeed, it can safely be said that the adoption, by the SDA Church, of a Trinity is at the very heart of the present omega of apostasy taking place in our midst today – bearing the very characteristics of the alpha.

It is not as if our leading brethren at present do not recognize the discrepancy between the theology of our pioneers and what presently passes as gospel truth. They know full well that the founding brethren would be at odds, were they still alive, with many positions held by the Church today. These remarks by one of our leading historians (George R. Knight) should be testimony enough:

‘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 would they not be able to agree with belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity.’  
(George R. Knight, Ministry Magazine, Oct 1993, p. 10)

### **RESPONSE:**

First, let me respond to the usage of Ellen White’s statement above. Again, we see no mention of the Catholic Trinity – there is simply a reference to the fact that the writer of *The Living Temple* (Kellogg) has not changed and a warning to the people to not be deceived. Deceived by what, the Catholic Trinity? Why, I ask again, was it never mentioned in all her communication concerning the dangers of the great alpha of apostasy? Why, when our pioneer brethren and Ellen White herself, so vehemently opposed it, did she not bring it clearly to the attention of the brethren that they were narrowing the gap between themselves and Rome by accepting Kellogg’s theology? The answer is simple: because the issue was not the Catholic Trinity, but pantheism, period.

It is unfortunate that George R. Knight states that ‘most’ of our pioneers would not be able to join the SDA Church today because of our fundamental beliefs. It would’ve been wise for him to have pointed out at what point in their experience they would have found themselves in opposition to what we believe today – especially with relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, in the early days, some of our brethren would not have accepted the 1888 message of righteousness by faith. But, in time, many of them, including Uriah Smith, who was opposed to it at first, accepted it. There were brethren in those early days that held Arian beliefs regarding the Godhead, but, in the process of time came to accept the light the Lord gave on this issue. Would Ellen White, one of our most significant founding members, have been able to accept what we teach regarding the Godhead today? If not, then it would seem ironical that we use so many of her statements to clarify our position on this doctrine. The answer is plainly and simply, Ellen White, an Adventist pioneer, would have been able to accept belief number 2 that deals with our doctrine on the Trinity, in spite of the fact that the brethren choose to caption it as ‘Trinity.’ If she would not be able to accept it, then we had better stop using her statements on this belief as a means of giving added insight into the Godhead. If we are teaching the truth, then those early pioneers who advanced in the truth as it was revealed, would be able to say yes to our fundamental beliefs today – at the very least they would be able to accept those teachings that they had accepted as present truth during the first fifty years or more of our existence.

Thus, the question, that needs to be asked, is this: is our present teaching on the Godhead a fulfillment of the omega apostasy? Was the idea that the church would teach the Catholic Trinity stated by Ellen White as being one of the characteristics of the omega? A simple reading of Ellen White’s comments on the omega will reveal this not to be the case. Following is one of the prime descriptions that Ellen White gives of the omega:

The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would *consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith*, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The *principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error.* A new organization would be established. *Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it.* Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but *God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power*, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure. **(Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 204)**

If I was looking for a reason to fit the Catholic Trinity into the above description then, I could, if I built a straw-man first, do just that. But, when one is aware of the facts and takes a slightly closer look at what Ellen White is actually saying, it becomes clear that such an attempt would simply be a case of barking up the wrong tree.

The first thing that makes null and void the argument that the church is fulfilling the omega by teaching the Catholic Trinity, is the simple fact, as proven earlier, that she is not. Her teaching on the Godhead is not the Catholic Trinity. Surely, to fulfill this criteria of the omega, we would have to actually be instructing this Catholic heresy. Secondly, the characteristics of the alpha, repeated in the omega, in so far as a Catholic Trinity is concerned, is a non-existent entity, simply because the Catholic Trinity was not the issue in the alpha and is not, unless more is given on this, the issue in the omega either.

Certainly, the omega has to do with rejecting truths, publishing books of a new order and accepting a system of intellectual Philosophy, but is this inclusive of the Catholic Trinity? If we were teaching this, then perhaps, yes. Might we still apostatize to the point of doing this? Only God knows the answer to that question. But, one thing is absolutely sure, when reading the description given by Ellen White, the overriding issue in the omega is the fact that man relies on his own strength and not God's strength. By doing this he lightly regards (in rationalizing away the requirements of God and following man-made standards and values) the Sabbath and the God who created it. Ellen White does not say that the church is lightly regarding God because she has adopted a Catholic Trinity. If a Catholic Trinity was ever to be taught, then

yes, we could include that in the description, but if and till such a time arrives, it would be a fabricated, fallacious accusation to make.

### **ASDAT:**

I could present the argument, used by many, with relation to the writings of Ellen White that have been changed, but I would actually be doing the Seventh-day Adventist, Anti-Trinitarian cause a disfavor by using this as evidence. The reason for this will be clear to any logical, rational human being. Although some of Ellen Whites expressions have been changed or adjusted in later publications of her works, especially in some of the compilations and some of the modern works that have attempted to update and 'modernise' the English, it is not substantial enough to discredit the published works that still exist. It must be said, that most of the material under contention, with relation to the Godhead, is still available from the Ellen White Estate, and, if they cannot be trusted, can be compared with original copies of articles and books that are still available, either privately or in more official collections. In my own experience, I have been able to confirm the authenticity of statements that deal with the personality of the Holy Spirit and the divinity of Christ. To argue my case against the SDA Trinitarians from the perspective of, so called changed statements, would be making a mockery of the anti-Trinitarian cause. I refuse to build a good case out of straw-men and accusations that can easily be proven wrong. Rather, as has been shown in our study, the truth of the matter can be supported by clearly interpreting that which is genuinely the work of God's prophet. Having said this though, I can still present an example where publishers *have* taken liberty with a compilation. This example can be found in the book 'Evangelism' – a compilation that was not authorized by Ellen White.

On page 616 there is a subheading to an Ellen White statement which deals with the dignitaries of heaven – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Sub-heading, typed in bold, reads as such: '**The Eternal Dignitaries of the Trinity.**' Here is a prime example of audacious liberty that has been taken to make it appear that Ellen White concurred with a concept that she would never even have given the time of day. Nowhere in her writings did she ever use the word *Trinity* to describe the Godhead. The obvious reason is that she wanted to avoid any association with a concept that was clearly pagan and Catholic, a concept which she, as an anti-Trinitarian, never supported. This sub-heading is a dishonest reflection of Ellen White's position of the Godhead.

The above example I have given is, of course, found in the English edition. There are far more discrepancies in the works of Ellen White as they are found in translated publications, such as the German works. Time and time again, while reading official printings of Ellen White's writings in German, I have found them to completely slant her sayings so as to make it appear she said something she never said. At other times whole words or phrases have been left out so that one fails to grasp the original intent of the statement. A recent publication, dealing with Ellen White's comments on the Indiana Camp meeting debacle – where she spoke about the shouting, drums, dancing and noise that would come into our camp meetings before the close of probation –

has been altered so as to destroy the force and clarity of the comment. The words, drums and dancing are not even present.

To be sure, liberties have been taken with some of Ellen White's works, but thankfully we still have enough original printings available to test and prove the newer publications. It is unnecessary and foolhardy to rely on rumours that claim her comments on Christ and the Holy Spirit have been changed in more recent publications. When people have come to me and said: 'Ellen White's writings have been changed.' I first ask them where they heard it. Well invariably they say they have read it and seen the examples presented in some author's work. 'Well then,' I press the question: 'have you seen it, with your own eyes, do you know they have been changed?' Of course, the answer is, invariably: 'No.'

The best thing for us Anti-Trinitarians to do would be to stick to the genuine evidences we have in the actual works of Ellen White. There is enough there to defend the case. *If we are right in taking an Arian position on the Godhead, and, if we have built on a solid premise, motivated by pure, holy and honest motives, then, the truth will triumph in the end.*

#### **RESPONSE:**

This is probably the most sensible ASDAT argument I will have to respond to in this document. In fact, as I was in the process of putting this ASDAT argument to paper, I decided to do them a favour by presenting the accusation that Ellen Whites writings have been changed, in the most sensible light possible. This is, most definitely, doing them a service, because when presented in the way they usually make this accusation, we find one of the most ridiculous, paranoid and unprovable opinions they could possibly hope to present.

Not much of a comment is required of me to the above section, except to say, that although I agree with the basic statement, I might not have worded it as drastically or in such an accusatory manner (in certain instances) if I was to discuss the issue outside of the ASDAT argument that I presented above.

The final accusation I would like to turn our attention to is the accusation that the church has become Babylon. This accusation is closely connected to the omega and the whole Trinity issue so references to these aspects will again occur in what follows. Again, I will present the ASDAT position and then I will formulate my response.

#### **ASDAT:**

Has the SDA Church finally lost its status as the remnant church of God and now joined the ranks of the Roman institution and her other Babylonian sisters? Is it time to come out of her and step onto another platform that still remains faithful to the faith of our fathers? Well, I do hesitate to come out and categorically say that the SDA denomination has now become Babylon (I cannot read the mind of God and do not know when His patience has worn

out and when He finally gives the decree of rejection), yet, when I see the compromises that have been made in accepting the doctrine of the Trinity and in many other areas of belief and practice, I cannot help but wonder. I do have my reservations, but I do tend to see the possibility that the church has spent the opportunity God has given and has thus relinquished its privileged status. So let me spend a little time discussing this issue.

In the Old Testament God made many wonderful promises to the nation of Israel, but why does it seem that many of these promises were not fulfilled? The answer is simple. God's promises are conditional. It would be insane to assume that just because God had told the nation of Israel that they were the chosen people and because the promises He made were of eternal consequence, that they could then go ahead, do as they pleased, and, without reprisal, remain forever the chosen ones and finally reap the eternal rewards promised by Him. It is just as non-sensical as the pseudo-Christian concept of 'once saved always saved.'

Ellen White does say that the SDA Church is God's end-time suppository of truth. She calls them the remnant, the apple of God's eye, the object of His supreme regard and, further, instructs that no one call her Babylon. But, God said many of these things about the Old Testament nation of Israel as well. We know though, that this nation is no more God's chosen nation. Why, because they did not stay faithful.

Can the SDA Church really assume that no matter what they do, no matter how many of their foundational doctrines they tamper with and adjust to please her critics and lose her cult status that she will still remain the remnant just because God has said so? Has God's standard changed? Is it possible to deny the very core of the Christian faith – a correct understanding of the person of God, His Son and His Holy Spirit – and still remain the end-time suppository of truth? What truth? Will we be able to show them how to worship this God when hundreds of our congregations are starting to look more like clubs, restaurants and social gatherings rather than a church? Will we proclaim our faith in the Scriptures, yet teach that there is no real sanctuary in heaven? Can we declare our faith in the Spirit of Prophecy, but choose to reject or rationalize away nearly every clear statement that has been made about issues ranging from health reform, worship, to basic Christian principles and doctrines? Finally, will we teach the world about the God we serve when we do not even rightly know who He is, but have adopted the foundational teaching of the Whore that rides the beast? Who do we think we are fooling? In light of such massive compromises, can we escape fulfilling the omega of apostasy?

Satan is behind the omega and his aim is to cause us to give up the pillars of faith that God has given us. The truths we once held dear will be said to be error. Books would be written – different from the old. The Sabbath and God would be lightly regarded. Could it be that changing our belief in the Godhead could lead us to regard God lightly and, in essence, remove Him from our religion and place our dependence on intellectual philosophy and human power? The statement ends by saying that the foundation of such a

compromised church is built on sand and that the STRUCTURE will be swept away. This is the end result of taking God's promises for granted and for assuming that because you are esteemed and held in high regard and are the apple of God's eye that you will always stay that way no matter what you do. No! if your foundation is built on sand, the end will be eradication – you will be swept away. For you to be swept away God would have had to annul your 'chosen nation' status. There is little doubt that the SDA Church has reached the point where she has fulfilled the characteristics of the omega. Has God annulled her chosen status as yet? I cannot read the mind of God and do not know His time-table. But, I must say, taking into account the nearness of the end and the signs that are unfolding everywhere around us that it is quite possible that this Church has joined the ranks of Babylon, never to return again.

***God's promises are conditional.*** In order to make it possible for Him to bless us, we must do our part. **(Sermons And Talks Vol, 2 p. 195; Lessons from the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, Manuscript 77, 1902)**

It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike ***conditional.*** [SEE JEREMIAH 18:7-10; JONAH 3:4-10]. . . **(Last Day Events, p. 38)**

There are, of course, a number of other things that could come up for discussion in relation to the issue of the Godhead, but, the evidence presented here is sufficient to clearly support the position taken by our pioneers, Ellen White and those who still remain true to an anti-Trinitarian position on the Godhead. Perhaps it might be expedient to close the anti-Trinitarian case with two statements – one from Brother J. S. Washburn, a good friend of Ellen White, who was still fighting the cause into the 1930's and then a final quote from the prophet of the Lord herself. Following are portions of a letter written by brother Washburn. This letter was so appreciated by a conference president at the time that he distributed it to 32 of his ministers:

'Satan has taken some heathen conception of a three-headed monstrosity, and with deliberate intention, to cast contempt upon divinity, has woven it into Romanism as our glorious God, an impossible, absurd invention. This monstrous doctrine, transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church is seeking to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel's Message . . .

'The whole Trinity doctrine is utterly foreign to the Bible and the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Revelation gives not the slightest hint of it. This monstrous heathen conception finds no place in all the free universe of our blessed heavenly Father and His Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ . . . The Catholic heathen doctrine of the Sunday Sabbath is just as sacred as the Catholic pagan doctrine of the Trinity and no more so . . .

‘Seventh-day Adventists claim to take the word of God as supreme authority and to have ‘come out of Babylon,’ to have renounced forever the vain traditions of Rome. If we should go back to the immortality of the soul, purgatory, eternal torment and the Sunday Sabbath, would that be anything less than apostasy? If however we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central root doctrine of Romanism, the Trinity . . . even though our words seem spiritual, is this anything else or anything less than apostasy, and the very Omega of apostasy? . . .

‘However kindly or beautiful or apparently profound his sermons or articles may be, when a man has arrived at the place where he teaches the heathen Catholic doctrine of the Trinity . . . is he a true Seventh-day Adventist? Is he even a true preacher of the gospel? And when many regard him as a great teacher and accept his unscriptural theories, absolutely contrary to the Spirit of Prophecy, it is time that the watchmen should sound a note of warning.’ **(Portions of a letter written by J. S. Washburn in 1939).**

‘It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy.’ **(Signs of the Times, Feb 19, 1894, par 4)**

#### **RESPONSE:**

What can one say when there are elements of truth and relevancy mixed with total error and uncontextualised argumentation? Again, I presented this ASDAT argument by trying to make it sound vaguely intelligent, but even so, it has one major flaw – besides all the others – that makes it hardly worth giving the time of day. I say this in light of the fact that most of these people, in spite of my attempts at trying to make them sound reasonable, are of the opinion that the SDA Church has become Babylon (established fact) and there is no other way of looking at it. In this position they have shown ignorance and great presumption.

Even if the church should at some time apostatize to the point of ceasing to be God’s chosen nation, which human factor can know that it has reached the point where God has pronounced such a decree – unless this is revealed by divine inspiration. Of course, I simply say this to point out the presumption of the ASDAT, or anyone else that has designated this status to the SDA Church. No one can, as stated in the ASDAT argument, read the mind of God and know when His patience has finally run out to the point of making such a decision. I will show, from the evidence which I will present, that the label of Babylon should never be applied to the SDA Church. Before I do this though, let me discuss the issue of the ‘conditional’ nature of God’s promises – particularly in the experience of the Jewish nation and the SDA Church.

It is quite true that God’s promises are conditional. The promises to Israel, God’s chosen nation, were indeed so. Yet, in spite of the fact that their chosen nation status was conditional, no one could have known when they had out

lived the condition, unless God revealed it to them. This has to be the case, as no human being can be the one to decide when God's time table had run out. We know when the chosen nation status of Israel ran out because we find it in the Word of God. Daniel 9 lays it out in clear terms. You see, knowing the conditions is one thing, but knowing the time of God's decision is quite another. The Bible does not reveal a time when the remnant status of the SDA Church will run out, neither does the Spirit of Prophecy. These are simply irrefutable facts. Those who today are calling the SDA Church Babylon have simply made up their own minds, based on their own time-table and criteria that the chances for the SDA Church have run out. To suggest that the SDA Church has become Babylon, is just as presumptuous and self-righteous as some one saying they know when another person has passed the point of God's mercy and has reached the end of their individual probation. Not only is this presumptuous and self-righteous, it borders on the kind of blasphemy practiced by the Roman Church, where pope's put themselves in the position of God. If it is not in the power of man to forgive sins, then how can it be in the power of man to decide when an individual or an institution has passed the door of their probation – the whole idea is, to say the least, quite sickening.

These considerations, in and of themselves, should be enough to put the case to rest, but, I do think that it would be wise to deal a little more specifically with the further issues raised in the above ASDAT section.

While there is no doubt that there will be those in responsible positions within the structure of the SDA Church that will fulfill the characteristics of the omega (unless Ellen White was deluded on this point), the church will not at any time become Babylon. It is true that in our present day we see many elements of the omega in our midst – some of these issues have been pointed out in the ASDAT statement above, but the church of God, made up of His faithful people, will not fall. They will remain faithful to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its calling and, when the storm and tempest comes, then, the sinners (regardless of whether they are lay people or leaders in the highest degree) in Zion will be sifted out – because their foundation is built on sand.

Ellen White states that it will be the Seventh-day Adventist Church that will be singled out at the end of time as the body that stands against the decisions of the rest of the religious, political world. If she is right in this, and of course she is, then how could that be possible if the church has become Babylon long before the fact?

The Ellen White statements quoted in the ASDAT statement above (regarding conditionality) do not apply to the body of Christ as a whole. She never intended them to be a specific reference to the chosen nation status of the SDA Church. This body, made up of the faithful, whether or not they still have their earthly institutions and physical churches at the very end, will go through as the church triumphant. The question for you and I is, whether we will be a part of those faithful or not, or would we have chosen, like many of the ASDAT believers, to leave (sift ourselves out) the body of Christ, to join the ranks of mystery Babylon.

The quote by J. S. Washburn, is another example, among so many already noted, of using some one's remarks to prop up another ASDAT straw-man. Washburn's remarks are relevant and will remain relevant in any situation where people accept Rome's Trinitarian doctrine or any one of her other non-biblical teachings. In this case though, in light of all that has been revealed in this document, it is irrelevant.

The Church is not Babylon, but, it might be well for the ASDAT to consider that they have become an accuser of the brethren, have built their foundation (ministry of false teaching) on sand. When the storm and tempest come their structure will have long ago been swept away, for many of them are already in Babylon and out the church, by their own choice, and will thus have to accept the consequences for their actions. May God help the individuals caught up in this kind of ministry to come to their senses, and, once again, join the body of Christ, to remain faithful while others fall out and are swept away by every wind of doctrine that will lure them out of the fold, into eternal darkness. In closing I would like present these statements by Ellen White concerning accusations that the church is Babylon.

Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people, who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus. . . My brother, if you are teaching that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Babylon, you are wrong.--**TM 50, 58, 59 (1893). {LDE 43.3}**

The Lord has not given you a message to call the Seventh-day Adventists Babylon, and to call the people of God to come out of her. All the reasons you may present cannot have weight with me on this subject, because the Lord has given me decided light that is opposed to such a message.

. . . this matter has been brought before my mind in other cases where individuals have claimed to have messages for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of a similar character, and the word has been given me, "Believe them not." "I have not sent them, and yet they ran." **{2SM 63.3}**

One, Garmire, [SEE CH. 9.] advocated and published a message in regard to the loud cry of the third angel; he accused the church in a similar manner to what you are now doing. He said the leaders in the church would all fall through self-exaltation, and another class of humble men would come to the front, who would do wonderful things. This man had daughters who claimed to have visions. **{2SM 64.3}**

. . . He claimed to believe the testimonies. He claimed them to be true, and used them in the same manner you have used them to give force

and appearance of truth to his claims. I told them this message was not of God; but it was deceiving the unwary. He would not be convinced . . . If ever a man that I looked upon was inspired, this man certainly was; but I told him plainly his inspiration was of Satan, not of God. His message bore not the divine credentials. **{2SM 65.2}**

God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, a church on the earth, whom He has made the depositaries of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world. He would reprove and correct them. The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out of His mouth unless they repent. The message to pronounce the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Babylon, and call the people of God out of her, does not come from any heavenly messenger, or any human agent inspired by the Spirit of God. **{2SM 66.2}**

There is in some of the members of the church, pride, self-sufficiency, stubborn unbelief, and a refusing to yield their ideas, although evidence may be piled upon evidence which makes the message to the Laodicean church applicable. But that will not blot out the church that it will not exist. Let both tares and wheat grow together until the harvest. Then it is the angels that do the work of separation. **{2SM 69.1}**

I warn the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be careful how you receive every new notion and those who claim to have great light. The character of their work seems to be to accuse and to tear down.

My brother, I would say to you, Be careful. Go not one step farther in the path you have entered upon. Walk in the light "while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you" (John 12:35). **{2SM 69.3}**

My brother, you have been deceived yourself, and have deceived others. You have not searched the Scriptures in the right way. You must search them to learn the mind of God, not to prove your theory. You read the Word of God in the light of your own views. You build up a false structure, and then barricade it with texts which you claim prove it to be true; but you pass over those passages which prove it to be untrue. You say, "The Bible is my foundation of faith." But is it? I answer, The Bible does not sustain you position. Again you say, "Show me by the Bible that I am wrong, and I will give up my views." But how can you be convinced by the Bible as long as you wrest and misapply its utterances? By so doing you cut off the only source by which God might reach and convict you . . . You have also taken from their connection portions of the testimonies which the Lord has given for the benefit of His people, and have misapplied them to the support of your

erroneous theories--borrowing or stealing the light of Heaven to teach that which the testimonies have no harmony with, and have ever condemned. Thus you place both scripture and testimony in the framework of error. All who are in error do as you have done. . . . You do not have real faith in the testimonies. If you did, you would have received those which pointed out your delusion. You have been drinking at polluted streams. . . . **{2SM 83.1}**

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. . . . 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.--**TM 45, 49 (1893). {LDE 52.2}**

The Church Triumphant [IN 1893 IN MEETING THE CHARGE THAT THE CHURCH HAD BECOME BABYLON, ELLEN G. WHITE WROTE: "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."--**TESTIMONIES TO MINISTERS, P. 49.**