Chapter 18 - **Come, Let Us Reason Together**

(Note: The following has been excerpted and adapted with permission from an unpublished manuscript

by Jean Handwerk.)

 A literal understanding of God’s Word, when we “take it as it reads, except when symbolic language is used” (GC 598), is consistent and conclusive. The Spirit of prophecy complements biblical truths, and never contradicts them. And it is *because* God’s Word is consistent and conclusive that the Trinity doctrine is revealed to be a doctrine that *competes against God’s Word.*

**The Burden of Proof**

You may have heard or read Trinitarian speakers and writers explain their understandings of the Trinity view, but what they don’t explain is what is wrong with the literal understanding of the Bible. That explanation is needed, because without it, what justification is there for our denomination’s doctrinal switch from our pioneers’ literal understanding to the new metaphorical interpretation? In other words, why has our Seventh-day Adventist Church officially adopted a doctrine radically different from what our pioneers believed, when no error has been pointed out in what the pioneers believed? Did truth suddenly become error? You know better. Simply put, the *burden of proof* regarding the need to change from the literal interpretation to a metaphorical interpretation of the Bible lies squarely in the lap of advocates of the Trinity doctrine, but that burden has not been borne. Trinity proponents do not attempt to prove God’s literally-understood Word wrong because they are unable to do so. Therefore, what they present as the Trinity doctrine is simply their alternate interpretation of God’s Word—their replacement of God’s literal, biblical truth about Himself and His Son and Spirit with their own view. As different as the two views are, they both cannot be correct, hence my statement that the Trinity doctrine competes against the literal understanding of the Bible. It is a most serious matter, because in doing so, it competes against God Himself, the author of His Word.

**Confusion in the Camp**

 In his book *The Trinity: What God Has Revealed,* author Glyn Parfitt, himself a Trinitarian, admits on page 19 that “the word ‘Trinity’ means different things to different people and there are some statements made by Trinitarians with which I could not agree.” Although in his book Parfitt does not explain much of how he understands the Trinity, it’s obvious that what he believes about the Trinity is opposed in some way(s) to what it means to others, and vice versa. So whose interpretation is correct? (A review of Parfitt’s book can be found at http://[www.scribd.com/document/14140730/Review-of-The-Trinity-What-Has-God-Revealed-by-Glyn-Parfitt](http://www.scribd.com/document/14140730/Review-of-The-Trinity-What-Has-God-Revealed-by-Glyn-Parfitt).)

 The more important question is this: Is the Bible so indefinite, so vague, that a clear doctrine cannot be defined and commonly held? The pioneers did not find the Bible so confusing; they enjoyed near-unanimity on doctrines.

 When fundamental beliefs 2 through 5 are discussed in detail, some self-described Trinitarians will say about one point or another, “I don’t believe that.” They have their own unique Trinitarian understandings that usually accept the surface theory of three coeternal gods while rejecting consequent related teachings not mentioned in the published *Fundamental Beliefs.* Especially is that so when the details about metaphorical role-playing are brought up (no true Father or Son), or when it is asked how the atonement so crucial to our salvation could be achieved by someone just acting a part in the great controversy, or when it’s pointed out that we now have three sovereign Gods of the universe, not just one “great Source of all,” one “ancient of days.” Thus, the theory does appear to some Trinitarians to be speculative biblical reinterpretation, at least in part. They sense it and back away from it—but not entirely, for they cannot bring themselves to believe our church has voted error into our beliefs. No Adventist wants to believe that, but when reality stares us in the face, we would be wise to adjust our thinking. Moreover, each weakness in the theory calls forth more speculative explanations, such as the unsubstantiated claim that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable. This weakness is not found in the literal biblical narrative of a divine Father and His only begotten Son sacrificing themselves for the sake of a helpless, hopeless race.

 In his book, Parfitt doesn’t suggest a resolution to the underlying problem of confusion in Trinitarian ranks. If a doctrine is true, it will be supported so clearly by Scripture that there will not be a multitude of versions. There will be “one body, and one Spirit, … one Lord, *one faith*, one baptism, *one God* and Father of all….” (Eph 4:4-6) That was the united belief of our pioneers as the Lord led them in the restoration of biblical truths that had long been hidden from view. But since Kellogg’s apostasy, our denomination has been struggling with division in our ranks on this issue. Kellogg’s corrupt teachings have surprisingly taken root in our church. This book is a labor of love, an earnest attempt to provide enough sound reasoning and supportive statements from the Bible and Spirit of prophecy to end the division and unite us once more on the fundamental principles held by our pioneers. In the preamble of their published *Fundamental Principles*, it wasstated that the pioneers had “great unanimity” in their beliefs—something that escapes our people at the moment, but which is not impossible for humble hearts to achieve, if we surrender preconceived ideas and desire truth at all costs.

**Religious Liberty in the Church**

 Despite the crisis of credibility within Trinitarianism due to the multitude of versions propounded, there is an increasing call from within the Seventh-day Adventist church that those members who honestly can find no biblical or Spirit of prophecy support for the Trinity doctrine adopted by the church in 1980 must either conform their beliefs to the church or else leave it voluntarily, or be removed from membership. In support of that call, Ellen White’s counsel is cited from a letter to Brother A:

 “…But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered. Your error was in persistently maintaining your private judgment of your duty against the voice of the highest authority the Lord has upon the earth….”

 However, the doctrinal position taken by non-trinitarians today is the same as that of the apostles as recorded in Scripture—unless their words have a meaning not obvious in a literal reading and in common understanding of word meanings. Thus while it is true that the General Conference in world session is the “highest authority” of our denomination, for which we have great respect, we dare not assume our human organization is infallible in its doctrinal decisions. There is other counsel from Ellen White that fits the present situation better than the quotation above. She wrote of the stand taken by the German princes at the Diet at Spires. The emperor’s decree restricted religious liberty by prohibiting the dissemination of the reformed doctrines. The Reformers were ordered not to share the light from the Scriptures that God had revealed amid the papal oppression of the 1260 years. If they would remain silent, there would be superficial peace.

 What was their decision? “‘Let us reject this decree. In matters of conscience the majority has no power.’ (Merle d’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation,* bk. 13, ch. 5)

 Mrs. White wrote explicitly in reference to the princes’ spiritual discernment: “This principle we in our day are firmly to maintain. The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God’s witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive this word as *supreme authority….”* (AA 68) So while the church is the “highest authority that God has on earth,” His Word is the “supreme authority.”

Ellen White’s writing continues: “We are to recognize human government [including human church governance] as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God’s word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is not to be set aside for a ‘Thus saith the church’ or a ‘Thus saith the state.’ The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.” (AA 68-69)

 The truths advocated today by those holding non-trinitarian understandings of God’s Word are not new; they are the same truths taught by the writers of Scripture. The book *The Great Controversy* includes this next principle, penned by Martin Luther: “But it is contrary to the will of God, that man should be subject to man in that which pertains to eternal life. Subjection in spirituals is a real worship, and should be rendered only to the Creator.” (GC88 167)

 Under inspiration, Ellen White included in her book Luther’s words as he finished his defense before the Diet at Worms: “If, then, I am not convinced by proof from Holy Scripture or by cogent reasons; if I am not satisfied by the very texts that I have cited; and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God’s word, I neither can nor will retract anything, for it cannot be right for a Christian to speak against his conscience.” (ST August 30, 1883)

 Again, the burden of proof regarding the alleged “error” of taking the Bible as it reads lies squarely in the lap of those who would substitute another interpretation of God’s Word. Until that burden is borne and the flaws of a literal biblical reading are demonstrated for all to see, how can there be moral integrity or moral authority in the eyes of God attached to the call that non-trinitarians conform to the creed of the church or leave it?

**The Weight of Evidence**

 Even when a Trinitarian speaker or writer presents what appears to be solid biblical reasoning in support of the doctrine, that reasoning, to be trusted and believed, must be consistent with all other evidence on the same topic. Mrs. White commended William Miller’s *Rules of Interpretation;* his fourth rule reads thus: “To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error.” So far in this book, you have seen many explicit statements from the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy that directly contradict the teachings of the Trinity doctrine, and there are far more than what are included in this book. What about them? Unless those contrary passages are dealt with openly by Trinitarian speakers or writers, they have not done due diligence, nor have they been transparent before the church body in the formulation of the doctrines they advocate. “Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight.” (MB 68) In other words, unless biblical and Spirit of prophecy passages opposing Trinitarian teachings are openly considered and shown to be erroneous, they will not have done honest research. They will have neglected to justify their own study results, and therefore the conclusions they will have reached cannot be trusted. Consequently, there will be no resolution of the doctrinal division in our midst; they themselves will have prevented it.

 Given the wealth of evidence in the literal reading of God’s Word and in the writings of Ellen White in support of the apostolic/pioneer understanding, when compared to the relatively few verses or passages that can possibly be interpreted to support the Trinity doctrine, one can hardly ignore the *sheer weight of evidence* in favor of God being the Father, Jesus Christ being His true Son, and the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of God and of Christ.

**Based on the Bible?**

 The lack of consensus within the Trinitarian camp becomes obvious when some Trinitarian writers or speakers think to prove the doctrine true from the Bible. And yet, as you read earlier in this book, even the theologians at Seventh-day Adventism’s Biblical Research Institute admit that there is no explicit Bible evidence for the Trinity doctrine, and they are not alone in that admission. So… can the doctrine be proved from the Scriptures or not? History has already given us the answer.

 Briefly, the development of the doctrine most notably began at Niceae in the fourth century, in the contention between Arius and Athanasius. This proves that the apostles, in their writings, had not defined the Trinity doctrine, so it had to be “developed” by man in a series of church councils at a time when the apostatizing church had already undertaken its adoption of pagan customs, rituals, and teachings. We would be naive to assume that those church councils were immune to more error. Ellen White wrote this brief history of that time: “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. Thespirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. 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.” (GC 49)

 “Human theories and traditions.” Pagan “doctrines, ceremonies and superstitions”—all incorporated into the faith and worship … of whom? “*Professed* followers of God.” Not true worshippers, of whom God has preserved a remnant in every age. Shall Seventh-day Adventists adopt the “human theories and traditions” and the pagan “doctrines” that the corrupted church incorporated in those early centuries after Christ? A church controlled by the spirit of paganism? Reread the last three sentences above, if you doubt this depiction. As J. N. Andrews said of such proceedings, “The doctrine of the Trinity which was established in the church by the council of Nice, a. d. 325. This doctrine destroys the personality of God, and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The *infamous measures by which it was forced upon the church*, which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history, might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.” (J. N. Andrews, *The Three Angels of Revelation 14:6-12* [1855], 54)

 Can there possibly be a correct or “biblical” view of a doctrine that has its origin in such dubious circumstances centuries after the biblical canon closed? Is it really possible to “Christianize” a pagan doctrine, as the apostate church claims she has done with pagan statues, prayer beads, incense and candles, processions, priestly class, sunrise services, repetitive prayers, etc.? Shall we now unite with the apostate church in accepting the pagan tradition of a triune god?

**Jesus’ Sonship Still Rejected**

 “‘I know you,’ Christ declared to the Pharisees, ‘that ye have not the love of God in you.’ He spoke to them thus plainly because they could not discern His divinity under the veil of humanity. He was God in human flesh, and He could not but work the works of God. Unbelief, prejudice, and jealousy beat about Him, and if His humanity had not been united with divinity, He would have failed and become discouraged. At times His divinity flashed through humanity, and *He stood forth as the Son of God,* His veil of flesh too transparent to hide His majesty. But the men who claimed to be the expositors of the prophecies refused to believe that He was the Christ. Satan had control of their minds, and they utterly refused to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth.” (RH March 26, 1901)

 According to Scripture and the Spirit of prophecy, they refused to acknowledge Him as the Son of God. How else could He “work the works of God”? How could they deny the divinity that sometimes flashed through His veil of humanity? Even when He openly admitted being so in response to Caiaphas’ demand, His admission was rejected as rank blasphemy worthy of death. So, too, in the present age, Jesus’ Sonship, which is the true reason He is divine, is rejected still—most astoundingly, by a people who once held a true understanding of His Sonship. In Adventism’s *28 Fundamental Beliefs,* Jesus’ divinity is exalted, but because it is now claimed He cannot be both divine and true Son, His Sonship is denied—despite the plain history revealed in Holy Writ. The Spirit of prophecy quotation above continues with these words of warning, given in divine mercy:

 “Since Christ was treated thus, can we be surprised when those to whom He has given His message are rejected and scorned by men whose resistance of light is even less excusable than was the resistance of the Jews?” (Ibid.)

**A Foundation Built on Sand**

 Tritheistic Trinitarianism, such as is found in Seventh-day Adventism today, finds a foothold only when at least two assumptions are blindly accepted as fact. The first assumption is that Jesus gave up His omnipresence forever when He incarnated. Where is *any* inspired evidence for that claim? We have every right to demand proof—even an obligation to demand it—and a responsibility to object to the promotion of such a limitation of Jesus’ divinity without explicit inspired support for all to see for themselves. There is no place for speculation in this matter. In fact, the claim that He forfeited forever His omnipresence denies the explicit words of Jesus Himself in John 14 and elsewhere in both Scripture and the Spirit of prophecy, as can be read earlier in this book. Yet the assumption serves the Trinity doctrine well, in that, due to Jesus’ alleged forfeiture of omnipresence, He can’t come back to believers on earth in spiritual presence, so He needs another God called “God the Holy Spirit” to represent Him to us. And thus the pagan theory of a triune God is rationalized in Seventh-day Adventism and other Christian denominations.

 The second blind bassumption is that Jesus can’t be both God and begotten Son. In other words, it is claimed that divinity can’t have a beginning, so thus true Sonship is impossible. This claim also has no support whatsoever; it has man’s finite reasoning alone as its basis. Man would set limitations on what an omnipotent God can do and has done. Why do we quibble at the inspired record of God bringing forth a Son of His own substance, with His same divine attributes (Pr 8:24, 25; John 3:16; ST Nov. 27, 1893)—a Son to whom the Scripture record says He gave life? (John 5:26) But again, the presumption serves to support the Trinitarian theory of three independently self-existent, coeternal gods. It does so by acknowledging Jesus’ divinity but denying His true Sonship.

 Since Jesus spoke often of His Father, clearly implying His own divine Sonship, and since the gospels tell of God the Father speaking from heaven, identifying Jesus as His Son, there had to be a way to explain these Scriptures to make them fit the Trinity teaching opposing Jesus’ literal Sonship. Thus the second assumption requires an alternate reading of God’s sacred Word. No longer can the Bible be trusted to mean what it literally says about the Father and the Son. Now, according to man’s opinion, the inspired historical record of the great controversy must be interpreted metaphorically when it speaks of Them. We say to God, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,” but have the hubris to add, “but only if that light is filtered through our new hermeneutic.” The creature sets his wisdom above his Creator’s wisdom.

 It is not overstatement to call those two assumptions lies, because that is what all speculative claims, taught as if they were truths, really are. They have no “it is written” to sustain them, but they are repeated, nonetheless, as if they were true, and thus they are deceitful. Promoting assumptions as truth is essentially breaking God’s ninth commandment, which is not to bear false witness. The word “lie” communicates the seriousness of the false teachings about our sovereign Creator God, and the eternal consequences devolving upon those who teach or believe the lies without having investigated for themselves the reasons for their faith. God’s Word gives ample evidence contrary to those lies, as you have read in this book, so we are without excuse before Him. Our sublime and holy God is truly debased and dishonored by these teachings. He is despised in the persons of those who believe Him to be the biblical “one God the Father,” the “only true God.” As they are despised, He is despised. Meanwhile, Satan exults that his scheme is so successful—that his counterfeit god has been so readily accepted. In large part, he has succeeded, despite Ellen White’s specific warnings about his “shutting Jesus from our view as the Comforter” (RH Aug. 26, 1890), and in “obscuring the fact” that “Christ was the only begotten Son of God” (TDG 128). Shall we remain ignorant of his devices? Shall we not raise the alarm? And shall we not humble ourselves before our God, confess our inexcusable unbelief, and seek His pardon and His salvation?

**Another Way of Looking at It**

A former Trinitarian told me she was taught that just as Jesus was the Son of God, under the authority of God and yet a separate person, so, too, was the Spirit of God under the authority of God, but also a separate person. Both were “of God,” and as the Son was a separate individual, so was the Spirit. Simple and straightforward.

 She was also taught that just as she was the daughter of her parents, a separate individual but under their authority, who would go when she was sent, so, too, did the Son of the Father go when He was sent, and in like manner, so does the Spirit go where Jesus sends it. Therefore, it makes sense to conclude that the Spirit is a separate person from Jesus, just like Jesus is a separate person from the Father. Again, pretty straightforward and sensible.

 Though I don’t agree with that thinking, I recognize it as logical, so far as it goes. She told me she learned this simple reasoning as a young girl, and it was impossible for her to think in any other way as she grew older. Nothing else made sense to her. When she read something about Father and/or Son in the Bible, her brain would subconsciously reinterpret the passage to fit the metaphorical interpretation she had been taught, and verses that wouldn’t fit her preconceptions, she simply passed over as too deep for her ability to comprehend. Overall, to her it was obvious that there were three separate divine beings.

 Things came to a head for her when her husband—also a Trinitarian—started telling her what he was learning about the Holy Spirit. Whenever he used that term, she would automatically think “third god,” but what he was showing her about that third god from the Bible or Spirit of prophecy wasn’t making sense—wasn’t fitting her understanding of that god. She said they were talking the same language and using the same words “Spirit of God” or “Holy Spirit,” but what he was reading to her was too confusing. It was as if her husband was talking gibberish, even though he was reading from the Bible and seemed to be talking normally to her. She became very upset because they couldn’t seem to communicate any more. She wondered how she and her husband could read the same Bible and think it said different things to each of them.

 This Trinitarian woman needed something *other than* the Bible to resolve her confusion. She felt the Bible had become a source of division between her husband and herself, since they couldn’t agree on what it said and she couldn’t even understand it any more. Fortunately, someone had earlier given the couple a link to Terry Hill’s book *A Study of the Godhead as it pertains to Seventh-day Adventism* (<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/godhead/aghd1.pdf>)*.* That online (downloadable) book is what she turned to, to study for herself about what her husband was trying to tell her. It was clear he wasn’t thinking about the Godhead as they both used to think of it.

As she read the Bible passages and statements from Ellen White’s published writings included in that book, she saw that a person becomes a new creature when he accepts the Lord as Savior, but he is still the same person. One can have a renewed mind, and be the same person, yet that person will have changed.

 Then she read God’s Word, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor 2:11) Finally this once-obscure verse made sense to her. She realized what she had not been able to realize before: God’s Spirit is still Himself! God was teaching her that just as the spirit of man is in man, so the Spirit of God, in the implied parallel, is in Him. The spirit is *not* a separate entity, but the personality, the mind, the character of the one whose it is—the non-physical aspect of the individual. The Spirit of God and the spirit of man both know things, as the verse states; both can be grieved or troubled—but that doesn’t automatically mean they are separate beings. Ellen White wrote, “I am deeply grieved in my heart….” She described the grief as being in her heart, but we know her whole personality felt that grief, because her mind perceived whatever had happened in such a way as to distress her.

 The final breakthrough for this former Trinitarian was learning that Christ had *not* forfeited His omnipresence when He incarnated. That thinking was again man’s limited understanding, but not the testimony of Scripture. Furthermore, that Christ could be in us—just as the Bible literally said—meant to her that the Bible could be believed just as it read. It didn’t need to be subconsciously reinterpreted as she read. She understood those sacred pages in a new light, and was set on fire by the love and wisdom of God revealed therein. She understood her husband’s excitement and desire to share with her what he had been learning.

 Finally, these words of Ellen White made sense to this former Trinitarian. “In giving us His Spirit, God gives us Himself” (7T 273) meant exactly that. God gives us Himself! What greater gift can there be? Why do we not earnestly plead for His Spirit, knowing that we will receive into our hearts (minds) our wonderful God!

 Ellen White wrote, “…It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men…. It is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit….

 “Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it? The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children….” (AA 50)

 Once this former Trinitarian was in danger, because she would have prayed to Satan’s counterfeit god to send his spirit, and she would have received an imposter spirit. Now she prays to the living God the Father for His Spirit, and she knows she receives Him, in His omnipresence! Along with His dear Son! That is the message of God’s Word that has been clarified in this book. Imagine the joy that can be yours when you learn where Christ, in His omnipresence, chooses to go. He truly chooses to come to dwell in us, in closest fellowship: “Christ in you, our hope of glory.” Amazing condescension, motivated by purest love! It is the message of righteousness by faith! And as she revealed these truths to others who had been taught man’s theories, who in their turn saw the truth in all its beauty, she understood how it could be that “the light and love and power of an indwelling Christ shone out through them [apostles], so that men, beholding, marveled.” (AA 65) She read the words of the apostles in a new light, and was transformed.

 This dear woman realized that though what she initially had been taught was certainly logical, it was not based on God’s Word. It was man’s explanation about something he hadn’t fully understood. It was man’s best attempt to make sense of a doctrine straight from the mind of the adversary, which became clear to her as she learned of the satanic inspiration for Kellogg’s alpha of deadly heresies and the resultant omega. She comprehended as never before that God’s truth is found in a literal understanding of His Word, unless symbolic language is used—just as His Holy Spirit through Ellen White has assured us.

**The Spirit of Prophecy**

 As one considers the teachings in the Trinity doctrine compared to those in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, it becomes obvious that to accept the four fundamental beliefsdealing with the Trinity (#2-5), one has to reject #18, which deals with the authenticity of the gift of the Spirit of prophecy in Ellen White. Jesus gave gifts to His church after He ascended, among which was the gift of that Spirit. So long as His church exists, the promise of the gift remains. It is a legitimate and trustworthy divine source that gives salvational understanding. But often today, when a person insists, “The Bible and the Bible only,” what is really meant is, “No Ellen White,” because her writings cut across the carnal heart. Yet if she was a true prophet of God, which, I believe there is irrefutable evidence that she was, then why are her written words not regarded as from God every bit as much as Isaiah’s or Daniel’s written words? Are there degrees of the prophetic gift? Do we not enter dangerous ground when we hold our opinions or interpretations higher than the inspired statements from her pen that you’ve read throughout this book? I say that because as late as 1904, Mrs. White wrote of her full support of the biblical understandings established in the years between 1844-1846. She said God Himself revealed those “principles of truth” to the pioneers:

 “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.” (SpTB2 51 [1904])

 Two years later, in 1906, she again affirmed under inspiration that truth doesn’t change:

 “I do not wish to ignore or drop one link in the chain of evidence that was formed as, after the passing of the time in 1844, little companies of seekers after truth met together to study the Bible and to ask God for light and guidance.... The truth, point by point, was fastened in our minds so firmly that we could not doubt.... The evidence given in our early experience has the same force that it had then. The truth is the same as it ever has been, and not a pin or a pillar can be moved from the structure of truth. That which was sought for out of the Word in 1844, 1845, and 1846 remains the truth today in every particular.” (Ltr 38, 1906)

 Unless we are willing to call her a false prophet, her words soundly challenge the validity of the Trinity doctrine. Acceptance of it involves a rejection of the counsel given her by the Holy Spirit. Do we dare set our opinions above the wisdom of God’s Spirit?

**Did Ellen White Become Trinitarian?**

 For some Trinitarian writers or speakers, the only plausible reason they can come up with for the doctrinal paradigm shift is their claim that Ellen White became a Trinitarian. They correctly reason that most SDAs would not forsake the pioneers’ literal understanding of God’s Word unless they were convinced Mrs. White was inspired by the Holy Spirit to do so. But the claim that she endorsed the Trinity doctrine is easily shown to be false by the two quotations above, which were written several years *after* she supposedly had become Trinitarian—and there are more. Please watch the video *Ellen G. White and the Trinity* by Imad Awde (<https://youtu.be/rfOBg39tv2M>) and you will see for yourself.

 Further, though it is claimed that a statement in *Desire of Ages,* published in 1898, revealed her theological transition, the honest scholar will admit that other statements in that very same book, as well as statements made in her writings for years after 1898, plainly evidence that Mrs. White never embraced Trinitarianism of any ilk—not three gods making up one god, nor one god with three different manifestations, nor any other variation. She believed just as the apostle Paul did: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (1 Cor 8:6) Not only that, but as late as 1911, her published inspired counsel was still to “take the Bible as it reads.”

 “*The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible* have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: “Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God.” Mark 12:24. *The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning,* unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” John 7:17. *If men would but take the Bible as it reads,* if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.” (GC [1911 ed.] 598)

**Making Non-Entities of God and Christ**

 When she wrote of “learned men” teaching “mystical” or “spiritual” meanings not obvious in the Bible language, and of “false teachers” misleading and confusing minds, she may have had Kellogg and his followers in mind, but the problems didn’t stop with Kellogg’s death. It is applicable even today, because not everyone heeded Mrs. White’s counsel against Kellogg’s teachings. In fact, some leading men accepted and themselves promoted the teachings Kellogg developed under satanic influence. Ellen White’s charge that the mystical alpha made “non-entities of God and of Christ” is true of the “mystical” or “spiritualized” trinitarian three-in-one God that also makes non-entities of God and Christ. Is that not the case in the trinitarian claim that the biblical God the Father and His only begotten Son are but temporary roles played in the great controversy, and that in supposed reality, they are but two of three unnamed, interchangeable, coequal Gods making up a three-in-one God? Where is any of that mentioned in God’s sacred Word? Does it not make a “non-entity” of Christ to claim that He is not a true Son of God, but a metaphorical one only? And what about the Trinitarian claim that Paul’s declaration of faith “to us there is but one God, the Father” is not really true, because allegedly, there are three sovereign gods, just as are named in our *Fundamental Beliefs*? Does that not shamefully diminish our sovereign, holy “ancient of days” and His Christ and their agonizing self-sacrifice for us?What about the Trinitarian restriction of Jesus in the totally unsupported claim that Jesus can’t be both God and Son—in spite of the explicit witness of Scripture that He is both? How can we be “made in the image of God” if God is a “unity” of three Persons? How can we be sons and daughters of God if there is no true heavenly Father? Does the death of a metaphor satisfy the demands of a literal law? These legitimate challenges to the Trinity doctrine are non-issues when the Word of God is “taken as it reads.”

**“One Substance,” “One Life” and the Atonement**

“Though sin had produced a gulf between man and his God, a divine benevolence provided a plan to bridge that gulf. And what material did He use? A part of Himself.” (OHC 12) That “part of” God that He used to reconnect heaven and earth is identified in this statement: “…It seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, ‘I and My Father are One.’ The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were *of one substance, possessing the same attributes*.” (ST Nov. 27, 1893) In the universe, only the begotten Son of God can make that claim; created sons of God cannot. Christ alone was “set up” and “brought forth” *by* the Father *from* the Father Himself. (Prov 8:23-24) Only a Son with God the Father’s own substance and nature has the right to consider Himself equal with God. Jesus Christ is “truly God in infinity but not in personality.” (UL 367)

 Their substance and attributes are not the only “oneness” Father and Son share. “Christ declares, ‘I live by the Father,’ *my life and his being one*.” (HM June 1, 1897) “He [Christ] declared he had no existence separate from the Father.” (RH Jan. 7, 1890) “Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom and of joy.” (SC 9) It is the Father “of whom are all things.” (1 Cor 8:6) These statements inform us that Jesus and the Father share one life—the Father’s life—for there is but “one Way, one Truth, and *one Life.*” (2MR 124) Father and Son are “two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character.” (YI Dec. 16, 1897)

 Amazingly, we may receive that same “one life”—the Father’s life. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11) “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” (John 5:26) “All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: *through the beloved Son, the Father’s life* *flows out to all*….” (DA 21) Therefore, “he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:12) How may we have the Son? By faith. By believing in Christ. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” We know that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” (2 Cor 5:19) So, too, we may have the Spirit of God and of Christ within us. “…Bible sanctification. This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.” (GC 469)

 That Christ is self-existent, we cannot deny, for then we would deny His divinity/deity/Godhood. But He is not *independently* self-existent; the eternal life that He has is the Father’s eternal life, for there is only “one life.” Therefore, we cannot deny His divine Sonship any more than we can deny His divinity! Why would we, when the Spirit of prophecy tells us that even before open rebellion arose in heaven, the angels knew Jesus to be the Son of God, and that the Father declared Him so in their presence? *“*To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of [Lucifer]…. The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son…. Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will. The Son of God had wrought the Father’s will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due…. The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ….” (PP 36)

 If we believe Christ is an *independently self-existent* God, having His own substance and His own life in Himself, and not receiving substance or life from His Father, then there would be *two* divine lives! If that is so, then all the related quotations and verses under this subheading are lies, and Ellen White is a false prophet! And if we believe the Holy Spirit is a third *independently self-existent* God, each one having His own substance and divine life, each with no relationship with the other two, then there are *three* divine lives in our universe! This is undeniable tritheism: three gods, three beings having their own “original, unborrowed, underived” lives! Questions are inevitable. Which one of those three is “the great Source of all”? (DA 21) Which is the biblical “ancient of days”? And there’s even more confusion, for even Trinitarians admit there is no credible, logical, or biblical way to justify the assertion that those three gods are only one god.

 The truth exposes error further: If Christ does not share the Father’s life and substance, then how could He, as an independently self-existent God, die on the Cross? How does independently self-existent divine eternal life die? It can’t! And even if He had somehow died by losing His life, then since He had been the source of His own life, where would the life come from by which He would be resurrected? The dead cannot resurrect themselves. Yet if His restored life came from a different god, then Christ would no longer be self-existent.

 The only way the Trinity doctrine can explain how “Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8) is to have Jesus’ humanity die. But that brings up two insurmountable doctrinal problems. First, humanity alone could not atone for God’s broken law; not even an angel’s life could. Thus in the Trinity teaching, we would not have atonement for our sins. And the doctrine’s fatal flaw can’t be sidestepped by claiming “It’s a mystery.” Not when the non-trinitarian understanding is so clear.

 Secondly, we know the merging of the divine and human in Christ was “never to be broken.” (DA 25) “Christ’s humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling Holy Spirit.” (DA 123) “In Christ were united the divine and the human—the Creator and the creature. The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, meet in Jesus—the Son of God, and the Son of man.” (Ms 141, 1901) “Christ’s humanity could not be separated from His divinity.” (ST April 14, 1898) That is good news for us, for “it is in this union that we find the hope of our fallen race.” (ST July 30, 1896) But it is bad news for the veracity of the Trinity doctrine.

 And as a result of all this, we have been brought to the point in the history of our denomination where no Adventist can believe all of our published fundamental beliefs. You have seen for yourself the disconnect between the writings of Ellen White and the teachings of the Trinity. That disconnect means either Ellen White is a false prophet, or the Trinity doctrine is a false doctrine. Either fundamental belief #18 about the gift of prophecy given to Mrs. White is not true, or else fundamental beliefs #2 through #5 about three independently-existent, coeternal gods being a “unity” of one god are not true. To accept belief #18 is to reject beliefs #2-5, and to accept #2-5 is to reject #18. There is no third option, and very Adventist must choose—even if it’s done by letting others make the choice for him or her.Each one of us is unavoidably out of compliance with the church’s official positions, whether we are aware of it or not. Ignorance does not excuse us from this doctrinal dilemma any more than indolence does, for we have the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy by which to test every doctrine.

**Christ “Gave Up His Life”**

 So how *did* the divine-human Christ die on the cross? The truth is so glorious! Divine life—the one life of the Father—makes Christ self-existent, or else He could not be divine. No beings possess this divine life yet except the Father and His begotten Son. It is fully Christ’s life, yet we know that it is the Father’s life in Him that has made Him self-existent. Scripture says that the Father’s life—a life without beginning or end—was given to Christ by the Father, and it can be given to us. We read above that the Father’s eternal life flows through Him to us! “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life.” (John 10:27-28) But in the greatest, most heart-melting act of eternity, Christ on Calvary surrendered His life back to God. Amazing grace! Unsurpassed love! The cross “is the great center of attraction; for on it *Christ gave up His life* for the human race.” (6BC 1113) “All who gain the precious boon of immortality will follow the example of Christ, who went about doing good, who cheerfully *gave up his life* to ransom those ready to perish.” (YI Oct. 25, 1900) “Our precious Saviour considered them [every soul] of such value that He did not withhold Himself, but *gave up His life* in order that they might have a provision, a trial, a time when they should consider the things of eternal interest.” (1SAT 61) “If we gain the eternal reward, we must follow the example of Christ, our Pattern, who did good and only good with the Lord’s entrusted talents. He cheerfully *gave up His life* to ransom a wicked, apostate race.” (UL 234)

 Right before the divine-human Christ died, He said, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” (Luke 23:46) *“*Commend” in that verse, according to *Strong’s* #3908 in the context of Christ’s imminent loss of life, means “*to deposit as a trust, or for protection; to commit the keeping of*” (from *Accordance*, Bible software for Mac computers). He surrendered His life into His Father’s keeping, to be kept in trust and returned to Him when the Father so willed, and then He died. That understanding is consistent with the statements from the Spirit of prophecy above, but there’s more evidence.

 Jesus said in John 10:18, concerning His life, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again….” The noun “power” is *Strong’s* #1849; the short definition is “power, authority, weight.” The HELPS Word-study gives us this added understanding: “…authority, conferred power, delegated empowerment.…” ([biblehub.com/greek/1849.htm](http://biblehub.com/greek/1849.htm)) That Jesus’ power or authority was conferred or delegated is an important point; it can prevent the misconception that Jesus had “life in Himself” when He was dead, giving Him inherent power to raise Himself three days later. That makes no sense, because if He had life in Himself, He wasn’t really dead—which is a denial of Scripture! The fact is, Jesus said plainly in John 10:18 that He would “lay down” His life. He wouldn’t retain it; He would “commend” or “deposit” it into the Father’s hands.

 “I have power to take it again.” The verb “take” (*Strong’s* #2983) can mean to acquire for oneself (as in “take the lead”) or receive for oneself (as in “accept the offered gift”). Letting the context guide us, the most sensible and likely meaning from *Strong’s* referring to the dead Christ “taking” his life again is “to accept,” “obtain,” “receive.” He could not restore life to Himself; He was truly dead. That is the clear testimony of Scripture: “Christ died for us.” Christ’s “taking it again” means life was returned to Him by the One who gave it in the first place—the same One to whom Christ gave it right before His death. Christ received it again because, as the only Son of God that had been begotten, He had been given power to do so.

 The surrender of His divine life to His Father was a supreme act of love, visibly acknowledged by the Father for all to see, though most did not yet understand. Ellen White wrote, “Suddenly the gloom lifted from the cross, and in clear, trumpet-like tones that seemed to resound throughout creation, Jesus cried, ‘It is finished.’ ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.’ A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast, and died.” (DA 756) By His own choice, Christ *gave up His life* for us. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” (John 10:17-18)

 Scripture tells us the Father raised the Son to life again. The Father is “him [he] that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” (Rom 4:24) “He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house as a prisoner of divine justice. He was responsible to the Judge of the universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, and His Father only could release Him.” (5BC 1114) “…Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead….” (Acts 4:10) To be raised from the dead means to be given life again. The Father gave His Son the Father’s own life a second time. “Christ was invested [by the Father] with the right to give immortality. The life which He had laid down in humanity, He again took up and gave to humanity.“ (YI Aug, 4, 1898) The eternal life that He was given by the Father (John 5:26), He “laid down.” The life the Father gave back to Him, Jesus “again took up.”

**Surrendering Our Own Lives**

 For the sake of others, that others might come to know Christ, we are called upon to surrender our lives to God—not in the same sense as the divine Son of God could do and did do, for our lives are yet temporal, but nonetheless, to fully surrender: “But to him who has entirely surrendered his life to God, the assurance is given that the Holy Spirit will be his helper.” (RH June 16, 1896) “If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision.” (GW 263) We are to die to self. “The greatest work that can be done in our world is to glorify God by living the character of Christ. *God will make perfect only those who will die to self*. Those who are willing to do this can say, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’” (Ms 16, 1900; 6BC 1109)

 If we choose to die to sin and self, we will be given the Holy Spirit: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom 8:11) “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” (Rom 8:10) “The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul.” (TMK 57) “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 6:11) “Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.” (Rom 6:13) What kind of life are we given when we die to self and sin? “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

 I am compelled by this love to say, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Make it wholly thine.”