

Adventist Review Perpetuates the Omega

by Lynnford Beachy

The cover story of the April 22, 1999 issue of the *Adventist Review* carries the title, "Heresy or Hopeful Sign? Early Adventists' struggle with the truth about the Trinity." This article was written by Jerry Moon, associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. As the title indicates, this article was designed to explain why early Seventh-day Adventists did not believe in the Trinity. Beginning about the time the church hierarchy had conferences with leading evangelicals in the mid fifties, the leadership for several years attempted to cover up the fact that the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers did not believe in the Trinity. Now, with the growing realization of this fact, the Seventh-day Adventist leadership struggles to explain this alarming fact to the laity.

The title of this article indicates the Adventist leadership's dilemma: whether to call the teachings of early Seventh-day Adventists *heresy*, or to look at those teachings as a hopeful sign of what was to come. To call the early Seventh-day Adventist teachings *heresy* would be to admit that the current teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination cannot be traced back to the movement God raised up in the early 1800s. This is something many are unwilling to do, hence they look for some explanation to make it appear as though the current teachings of the denomination are simply a progression of truth. We would like to take time now to examine this recent article and see if the thoughts contained therein can be substantiated from Scripture. We are not examining this study as a personal vendetta against Jerry Moon. We are only interested in evaluating the *issues* presented. All emphasis in this article is supplied except where noted in Jerry Moon's article.

The *Review* stated, "The story of how the church came to doctrinal agreement on the Trinity affords insights into several aspects of how Adventists discovered truth and preserved church unity amid a diversity of viewpoints." (*Adventist Review*, April 22, 1999, p. 9. Hereafter referred to as *AR*.) By this statement he is implying that the early Adventists were not in doctrinal agreement concerning the Trinity; however this is not the case. The early Adventists were in doctrinal agreement concerning the Trinity for over fifty years. They unanimously rejected that doctrine.

Ellen White wrote, "*The leading points of our faith as we hold them today [1903] 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.—MS 135, 1903.*" (*The Early Years*, p. 145)

Is the S. D. A. Church in Doctrinal Agreement Today?

The *Review* stated that the Seventh-day Adventist church of today has come "to doctrinal agreement on the Trinity." While this may be true among the theologians of the church, it is not true among the laity who constitute the vast majority of the church. In the March, 1999 issue of the S. D. A. *Collegiate Quarterly*, Mornie Sinclair Knight reveals that this certainly is not the case. Mornie wrote, "Recently, I was having a biblical discussion with a group of Adventist and non-Adventist friends, during which the following question was raised. It caused me to reflect. 'What do Adventists believe about the Trinity?' Immediately, a Sunday worshiper said the word *Trinity* cannot be found in the Bible. All the Adventists conceded. One answered that there is one God, one being with three personalities, meaning that God the Father has a kind of split personality.

"Another Adventist answered that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all equal in power and in thought. A third Adventist said that when we get to heaven we will see God the Father and Jesus Christ, but the Holy Spirit will not be in evidence because there would no longer be a need

for Him. A fourth said that all three Gods exist, but God the Father is most powerful, Jesus less powerful, and the Holy Spirit the least powerful. Finally, a fifth Adventist said that the Father is God, but Jesus Christ was not God.

"Understandably, my non-Adventist friends were confused. *'How could five people from the same church have such different opinions about God?'* they asked. A Jewish friend remarked, 'That means every time Adventists pray, some are praying to one God and some are praying to many Gods.' *'Your church sounds like confusion,'* a Muslim interjected.

"This incident troubled me for the entire week. I had always believed in the Trinity as stated in *The Twenty-Seven Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, so it never occurred to me that some Adventists believed otherwise.

"The following Sabbath, I went to church and asked various people their belief about the Trinity. Amazingly, I received radically different opinions. It seems clear that we do not know what we believe." (*S. D. A. Collegiate Quarterly*, March 26, 1999, p. 113)

I can personally verify this fact. I also have asked some Adventists what they believe about the Trinity and have received many different answers. It is obvious that the general laity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not in doctrinal agreement, but rather confusion regarding the Trinity. This is to be expected when the theologians declare the very idea of the Trinity to be a mystery.

The *Review* continues, "The pioneers weren't endowed scholars with unlimited time for study, but people with families to raise and bills to pay. Consequently, the process of reaching doctrinal consensus was a slow and lengthy one." (*AR*, p. 9) Here it is stated that the pioneers did not have time to study the Bible because they were too busy raising their families. Anyone who has read their writings would not be fooled by this statement. These pioneers studied the Scriptures many times late into the night, or even all night long.

Ellen White wrote, "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. I met with them, and *we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word.*" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 206)

These early Adventists studied the Scriptures more diligently and for longer hours than many ministers today. They did not occupy themselves studying scientific philosophies and psychology as is taught in seminaries today. They were earnest Bible students who were well acquainted with the Scriptures. J. N. Andrews "enjoyed 'severe study' much more than physical activity; in later years he could read the Bible in seven languages and claimed the ability to reproduce the New Testament from memory." (*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, p. 43) How many ministers today can make such a claim? These early pioneers were dedicated Bible students and strongly non-Trinitarian in their beliefs.

J. N. Andrews wrote, "The doctrine of the Trinity... 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." (*Review & Herald*, March 6, 1855)

Ellen White's husband, James White, wrote, "As fundamental errors, we might class with this counterfeit sabbath other errors which Protestants have brought away from the Catholic church, such as sprinkling for baptism, the trinity, the consciousness of the dead and eternal life in misery." (*Review & Herald*, September 12, 1854)

This, and other such statements from Brother White are significant because of the testimony of Willie White at the 1913 General Conference session when he noted that his father and mother were in

doctrinal agreement. (See 1913 *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, p. 233.)

The Process of Doctrinal Development

The *Review* continues, "In view of this lengthy process of doctrinal development in which lay-people as well as ministers took an active part, it is not so surprising that some teachings assumed by most Christians were rather late in receiving attention from this small but rapidly growing Christian denomination.

"The Adventist understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity came about through a long process of scrutiny, initial rejection, and eventual acceptance. The early Adventists had no question about the biblical testimony regarding the eternity of God the Father, the deity of Jesus Christ 'as Creator, Redeemer, and Mediator,' and the 'importance of the Holy Spirit.' However, they weren't initially convinced that Christ had existed from eternity or that the Holy Spirit was a personal being, so they rejected the concept of 'Trinity.' " (*AR*, p. 9)

Here it is implied that the doctrine of the Trinity was "rather late in receiving attention" from the early Adventists. This, however is not the case. Adventists examined and rejected the doctrine of the Trinity very early in their existence. Many of the leading men in the Millerite movement were non-Trinitarian prior to 1844. (For example, Joseph Bates, James White, Hiram Edson, Joshua Himes, etc.) The *Review* stated that the early Adventists "weren't initially convinced" of the Trinitarian concepts. The use of the word "initially" implies that they rejected the Trinitarian teaching at first but later accepted it. This is far from the truth. The early Adventists rejected the Trinity from the first to the last; they never accepted this doctrine.

In fact, after the death of Ellen White when LeRoy Froom was promoting Trinitarian ideas, he was confronted with opposition from the older men. LeRoy Froom wrote, "May I state that my book, *The Coming of the Comforter*, was the result of a series of studies that I gave in 1927-28 to ministerial institutes throughout North America. You cannot imagine how I was pummeled by some of the old timers because I pressed on the personality of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead. Some men denied that—still deny it. But the book has come to be generally accepted as standard." (Letter by LeRoy Froom to Dr. Otto H. Christenson, October 27, 1960)

Ellen White's Viewpoint

The *Review* continues, "The Adventist pioneers who questioned the doctrine of the Trinity included the most influential writers among them, with one major exception—Ellen White. Whatever may have been Ellen White's original beliefs, she never expressed anti-Trinitarian views in her writings." (*AR*, p. 10) Is this statement accurate? Not according to "orthodox" churches of today.

Referring to the time of the S. D. A. evangelical conference of 1955- 1956, Walter Martin said, "*At that time Adventism was considered like Jehovah's Witnesses, like Mormonism, like most of the major cultic structures of the day. ... When I first met with L. E. Froom, he took me to task for about fifteen minutes on how I could ever possibly think that Adventism was a cult. Adventism rings as true as steel. I said, 'do you think Arius was a Christian?' And he was an excellent church historian and he said, 'of course he wasn't a Christian, he denied the deity of Jesus Christ.' I said, so did Ellen White. Dr. Froom said, 'What!' I said yes and then I produced the quotations, and I opened up a suitcase and produced at least twelve feet of Adventist publications stacked up and marked for Dr. Froom's perusal, and for the perusal of the committee to check the sources in there. And they found everything I said was there was there. And they were in mortal shock I might add, to think that it was as pervasive as it was.... That's why you were classified with the Jehovah's witnesses early on, because of the Arian emphasis in Adventism. And because of the fact that you affirmed Michael the Archangel to be Christ."* (Transcript from a taped conference at Loma Linda, January 1989)

As Walter Martin affirmed, Ellen White made many statements that are clearly non-Trinitarian. Notice these pointed examples.

"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. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.' John 1:1, 2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the *only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God*. 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9:6. His 'goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' Micah 5:2. And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: 'The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting.... When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.' Proverbs 8:22-30." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34; See also pp. 35, 36.)

" 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,'—not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (*Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895)

"Before his fall, *Satan was highly exalted. His position was next to that of Christ*, and he was radiant with holiness. But he swerved from his allegiance to the blessed and only Potentate, and lost his high position." (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 9, 1899)

All these statements are clearly non-Trinitarian, and this is but a small sample of the many non-Trinitarian statements made by Ellen White that Martin may have referred to.

Misconceptions?

The *Review* continues, "Among the reasons given by the early Adventists for rejecting the Trinity was the misconception that the Trinity made the Father and the Son identical. Joseph Bates wrote regarding his conversion in 1827, '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.' D. W. Hull, J. N. Loughborough, S. B. Whitney, and D. M. Canright shared this view." (*AR*, p. 10) The early Adventists did not have misconceptions regarding the teachings of the Trinity. They knew well the teachings of that doctrine.

There are two basic teachings regarding the Trinity which have been accepted as orthodox in the sphere of Christianity. Both of these teachings claim that there is "One God in three persons." One version of the Trinity states that there is one God who manifests himself in three personalities, but is only one being. Catholic writer, St. Austin wrote, "The Son is one Person, and the Father is another; they do not, however, constitute two Beings, but the Father is the same Being that the Son is, that is, the only true God." (*Tract 36, in Joann*, as quoted in *Matthew Henry's Commentary* on John 8:18)

This concept of the Trinity is held by many Christians in many denominations. As we have seen from the *Collegiate Quarterly*, even within Adventism, some hold to this view. The Adventist pioneers wrote at times against this particular concept of the Trinity. (For example, Joseph Bates in his preceding quotation. See also, *What Did the Pioneers Believe?* available in printed form from the publishers of this article or on our web site.)

The other basic teaching regarding the Trinity states that there are three separate beings, each of them God, all of whom together make up only one God. This concept is the predominate view held by most Christians today. This is the concept the *Review* claims to be "biblical." The Adventist pioneers wrote against this concept of the Trinity as well, as we will see in a moment.

The *Review* stated that D. M. Canright had the supposed misconception that the Trinity taught the Father and the Son were the same person. Yet Canright wrote, "'God is a spirit.' (John 4:24) Now if the Holy Ghost is a distinct person from the Father, here are two spirits. *That the pre-existent Word, the*

Son, is another person, our opponents contend; and that he has a spirit they will not deny." (*Signs of the Times*, Vol. 4, No. 28) Canright obviously understood that the Trinitarian concept taught three distinct persons.

Notice that the *Review* included J. N. Loughborough among those who had the supposed misconception that the Trinity doctrine taught that the Trinity was made up of only one being. Yet in the very next paragraph the *Review* quoted Loughborough as having a different "misconception."

The *Review* stated, "Another objection to the Trinity was the misconception that it teaches the existence of three Gods. 'If Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are each God, it would be three Gods,' wrote Loughborough in 1861." (*AR*, p. 10) Here Loughborough was writing against the version of the Trinity that teaches that there are three beings, each God, yet supposedly making up only one God. Loughborough's statement was simply a logical deduction Trinitarians must make if they maintain that there are three separate beings, all of which are God. No matter how much one attempts to explain it, one plus one plus one does not equal one!

Human Sacrifice?

The *Review* continues, "A third view was that belief in the Trinity would diminish the value of the atonement. Since the 'everlasting, self-existent God' cannot die, then if Christ had self-existence, He couldn't have died on Calvary, they reasoned. If only His humanity died, then His sacrifice was only a human one, inadequate for redemption. (See sidebar 'What Happened to Christ's Deity When He Died?')" (*AR*, p. 10) I found it interesting that the *Review* did not claim that this objection was based upon a misconception of what the Trinity teaches. They must admit this is a conclusion that must be made if one holds to the idea of the Trinity. We are referred to the sidebar, which verifies this fact.

The sidebar in the *Review* stated, "One of the early Adventist arguments against the Trinity doctrine was that if Christ had been eternally preexistent with the Father, He would have been immortal and thus could not have died on Calvary's cross. In order to protect the reality of His death on the cross, the pioneers felt they had to deny that Christ had preexistent divine immortality. Ellen White plainly rejected this reasoning, explaining that when Jesus died on the cross, 'Deity did not die. Humanity died' (manuscript 131, 1897). Again she wrote, 'Humanity died; divinity did not die' (*Youth's Instructor*, August 4, 1898; both quotations are in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1113). In explaining that only Christ's humanity died, she in no way minimized the divine component of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary." (*AR*, p. 13)

The two statements mentioned above are two of the few instances where it seems as if Ellen White might be saying that a divine half of Christ remained alive while a human half died. The first statement cannot be found in any of the published writings of Ellen White except for *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. The second statement comes from the *Youth's Instructor*, August 4, 1898. Let us look at the context of this statement and compare it with some other statements she made to see what she meant here.

Ellen White wrote concerning Christ, " 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' 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. He declares that he has life in himself to quicken whom he will.

"All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are recipients of the life of the Son of God. However able and talented, however large their capacities, they are replenished with life from the source of all life. He is the spring, the fountain, of life. *Only he who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light* and life, could say, 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.' " (*The Youth's Instructor*, August 4, 1898)

Notice Ellen White's statement here. She said, "Only he who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light..." This is a direct reference to a passage of Scripture found in 1 Timothy. It says, "Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who

only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." (1 Timothy 6:15, 16) Verse 16 cannot be speaking of Christ, for many men have seen Him, but it is speaking of the Father alone, whom no man hath seen at any time. (See John 1:18.) Yet, how could it be that Ellen White was referring to the Father as the one who said, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again?" Christ said, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." (John 12:49) And again, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 14:10)

How do we then relate to Ellen White's statement: "In his divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death." Let us look at a few other statements she made concerning this subject.

The Divinity of Christ

"At the time when he was most needed, Jesus, the Son of God, the world's Redeemer, *laid aside his divinity*, and came to earth in the garb of humanity." (*Signs of the Times*, March 18, 1897)

"The salvation of souls was the great object for which Christ sacrificed his royal robe and kingly crown, the glory of heaven, and the homage of angels, and *laying aside his divinity, came to earth* to labor and suffer with humanity upon him." (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 21, 1907)

Ellen White plainly stated that Christ laid aside His divinity when He came to earth, so what could she mean when she refers to His divinity while He was on earth? Please notice the following statement.

"Jesus Christ 'counted it not a thing to be grasped to be equal with God.' Because divinity alone could be efficacious in the restoration of man from the poisonous bruise of the serpent, *God himself, in his only begotten Son, assumed human nature*, and in the weakness of human nature sustained the character of God, vindicated his holy law in every particular, and accepted the sentence of wrath and death for the sons of men." (*The Youth's Instructor*, February 11, 1897)

Ellen White stated that the Father Himself "in His only begotten Son, assumed human nature." She evidently was not indicating that the Father actually became a man, for she often wrote of Christ as a separate being who became a man. She did, however, teach that the Father dwelt in His Son, by His Spirit, while Christ was on earth. This agrees with the Scripture that says, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19) So the divinity that Christ had while He was on this earth was the divinity of His Father dwelling in Him. So when Ellen White wrote, "Humanity died: divinity did not die," she was referring to the divinity of the Father that was dwelling in Christ. Certainly that did not die, nor could it have died.

Of Christ's complete death Ellen White wrote, "Jesus said to Mary, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.' When He closed His eyes in death upon the cross, the soul of Christ did not go at once to heaven, as many believe, or how could His words be true—'I am not yet ascended to my Father'? *The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with His body, and did not wing its way to heaven, there to maintain a separate existence*, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight. *All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with His body in the sepulcher*; and when He came forth it was as a whole being; He did not have to summon His spirit from heaven." (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, pp. 1150, 1151)

Ellen White did not teach that any part of Christ remained alive while his body was dead. She taught the complete death of Christ. Referring to Christ, she wrote, "He humbled himself, and took mortality upon him. As a member of the human family, *he was mortal*." (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 4, 1900)

Much is said about the fact that Ellen White stated that humanity and divinity were blended in Christ. This is true, yet she also wrote the following: "Divinity and humanity are blended in him who has the spirit of Christ." (*The Youth's Instructor*, June 30, 1892 - See also *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 24.)

"The life of Christ has shown what humanity can do by being partaker of the divine nature. All that Christ received from God we too may have." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 149) "In His humanity *He was a partaker of the divine nature....* He became the Son of God in a new sense." (*Signs of the Times*, August 2, 1905, also found in *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 226) While Christ was on earth He was a partaker of the divine nature of His Father. While He was on this earth He was divine, not because of the powers he had for they had been laid aside, but because He was the Son of the Most High God.

"*He was able to resist the temptations of Satan through his dependence upon the divine power of his heavenly Father, as he was subject to his will, and obedient to all his commands.*" (*The Youth's Instructor*, August 23, 1894) "*The entire dependence of the Son on the Father, was shown in the words 'The Son can do nothing of himself.'*" (*The Upward Look*, p. 341)

It is plain that Christ depended upon His Father, yet some say that Christ raised himself from the dead. If this is true, then he could not possibly have been dead to begin with, and His words could not be true when He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." (John 5:30) If Christ could do nothing of Himself, He surely could not have raised Himself from the dead. The Scriptures declare, no less than thirty times, that the Father raised His Son from the dead.

It is definitely true that the pioneers objected to the teaching that Christ did not die completely. J. H. Waggoner wrote, "The declaration, that the divine Son of God could not die, is as far from the teachings of the Bible as darkness is from light." (*Review & Herald*, November 10, 1863)

When Jesus revealed to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and die, Peter rebuked Him saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." (Matthew 16:22) After quoting this text Ellen White wrote, "Satan suggested to his [Peter's] mind that if Jesus was the Son of God he could not die." (*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 232)

Did the Pioneers Eventually Accept the Trinity?

Continuing with the *Review* article: "Most of these [Adventist pioneer] objections to the Trinity are based on either misunderstandings of the Trinity doctrine, extreme distortions of it, or speculative extrabiblical additions to it. None of them is a valid objection to the true biblical view of one God in three persons. Yet all the objections were based on biblical texts.... As long as they appealed to Scripture itself rather than to a creed as their rule of doctrine, they were bound to discover the truth sooner or later." (*AR*, pp. 10, 11) The *Review* article is saying that the Adventist pioneers really didn't know what the Trinity doctrine was all about so they objected to theories that were not really part of the Trinity doctrine, and therefore, as they eventually became more familiar with the teaching, they accepted this doctrine.

This is very far from the truth. In fact, many of the early Adventists came from other denominations, most of which were strongly Trinitarian, yet when they became Adventists they discarded their unbiblical beliefs, including the Trinity. J. H. Waggoner, the father of E. J. Waggoner, was a prominent worker in the Baptist church [a Trinitarian denomination], however, after he became a Seventh-day Adventist, he was a very strong writer against the Trinity doctrine. (See *Miracles in my Life*, by J. N. Loughborough, p. 34.)

Did *Desire of Ages* Change the Pioneer Teachings?

The *Review* continues, "The watershed for the Adventist understanding of the Trinity came in 1898. In that year Ellen White published her monumental *Desire of Ages*, in which she differed sharply with most of the pioneers regarding the preexistence of Christ.... '*In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived*' (p. 530, italics supplied)" (*AR*, p. 11) Many believe that by this statement Ellen White was meaning that Christ did not receive life from His Father in any way, however, the Scripture states, "For as the Father hath life in himself; *so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*" (John 5:26) These words are very plain. Christ said that His Father gave Him life. So what did Ellen White mean when she made this statement?

You will find it interesting to note the context of this statement as it is found in its original source. She wrote, " 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men' (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. 'I lay it down of myself' (John 10: 18), He said. *In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ.* He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent' (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world." (*Signs of the Times*, April 8, 1897, also found in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 296, 297.) Ellen White stated that we can possess "life, original, unborrowed, underived." Yet nobody would claim that mankind was not given life by God.

The *Review* continues, "On pages 669-671 [of *The Desire of Ages*], Ellen White repeatedly uses the first-person pronoun 'He' in referring to the Holy Spirit, climaxing with the impressive statement, 'The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.... Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the *Third Person of the Godhead*, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power' (p. 671; italics supplied)." (*AR*, p. 11) The fact that Ellen White referred to the Holy Spirit as "He" in this case does not imply that she was referring to the Holy Spirit as a third separate being. Many times she referred to the Holy Spirit using the word "it." For example, in the same book she wrote, "The Holy Spirit puts forth *its* highest energies to work in heart and mind." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827) It may do well for us to examine this statement in its context.

"In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. *The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father* for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. *Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome* all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671)

Ellen White refers to the Holy Spirit as a gift that Christ had solicited from His Father. She goes on to say that "Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power." So what did she mean when she wrote, "the Third Person of the Godhead?" It is interesting to note that the term "Third Person" was not capitalized in the original 1898 copies of *The Desire of Ages*. Neither was "Third Person" capitalized when this quotation was printed in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* on May 19, 1904, and again on November 19, 1908.

It may do well to examine what Willie White, Ellen White's son, understood about the term "third person." On January 24, 1935 H. W. Carr wrote a letter to Willie White, in which he stated:

"It is urged by some of our leaders now that The Holy Spirit is a third person of the same nature of the Father and Son, a member of the heavenly trio, cooperative in creation and personally active with the Father and Son. For many years I have used these statements of Sr. White [statements previously quoted in his letter] in combating false teachings relative to defining the Holy Spirit." (Letter by H. W. Carr to Willie White, January 24, 1935)

Willie White responded to this letter on April 30, 1935 in the following manner:

"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....

"The statements and the arguments of some of our ministers in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit was an individual as are God the Father and Christ, the eternal Son, have perplexed me and sometimes they have made me sad. One popular teacher said 'We may regard Him, (the Holy Spirit) as the fellow who is down here running things.'

"My perplexities were lessened a little when I learned from the dictionary that one of the meanings of personality, was Characteristics. It is stated in such a way that I concluded that there might be personality without bodily form which is possessed by the Father and the Son.

"There are many Scriptures which speak of the Father and the Son and the absence of Scripture making similar reference to the united work of the Father and the Holy Spirit or of Christ and the Holy Spirit, *has led me to believe that the spirit without individuality was the representative of the Father and the Son throughout the universe, and it was through the Holy Spirit that they dwell in our hearts and make us one with the Father and with the Son...."* (Letter by Willie White, April 30, 1935)

Ellen White's own son claimed he did not understand her statements to be teaching that the Holy Spirit was a distinct individual as are the Father and His Son.

In 1895 Ellen White penned the following: **"Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth.** *The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof.* He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent....—Manuscript 5a, 1895." (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, pp. 23, 24) This statement was used in *the Desire of Ages* with modifications to read:

"The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. **Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth.**" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669)

Notice carefully the differences between the former and latter quotations. The sentences were reversed making it appear as if Ellen White were saying the Holy Spirit was a separate individual. As we look at the original statement we can see clearly that Ellen White was stating that "the Holy Spirit is Himself [Christ] divested of the personality of humanity." And again she said He would send "His Holy Spirit." There is one major problem with the quotation after the sentences have been reversed. If we are supposed to believe that the Holy Spirit is a separate being other than the Father and His Son, it makes no sense to say that the Holy Spirit was "divested of the personality of humanity." According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* the word "divested" means, "to strip, to dispossess, to free of; to rid." If the Holy Spirit is a third being it is certain that he never was a human, and therefore it would be impossible for him to strip, or rid himself of humanity.

The question naturally arises, "How could someone have altered this paragraph to make it appear as if Sister White was teaching the Trinity doctrine?"

The Preparation of
The Desire of Ages

Marian Davis worked for Sister White as a copyist for twenty-five years. Ellen White put a lot of confidence in Marian Davis to do her work faithfully. She was a very hard worker, and labored many

times late into the night. She was Ellen White's most trusted and capable copyist. Ellen White had this to say about her work:

"She [Marian Davis] is my book-maker. ... She does her work in this way. She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. *She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.*" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5 p. 185)

She also wrote, "I have done scarcely anything on the life of Christ, and have been obliged to often bring Marian to my help, irrespective of the work on the life of Christ which she has to do under great difficulties, *gathering from all my writings a little here and a little there, to arrange as best she can.*—Letter 55, 1894, p. 6." (*Manuscript Release No. 728: How the Desire of Ages was Written*, p. 28)

"*I feel very thankful for the help of Sister Marian Davis in getting out my books. She gathers materials from my diaries, from my letters, and from the articles published in the papers. I greatly prize her faithful service. She has been with me for twenty-five years, and has constantly been gaining increasing ability for the work of classifying and grouping my writings.*—Letter 9, 1903." (*Ibid.*, p. 44)

It is certain that Marian Davis did not write any of Ellen White's books, but she did have a great deal to do with the way they were laid out. Did Ellen White personally approve of every change that Marian made in the structure of the books?

In a personal letter, Ellen White wrote, "*Marian will go to him [Willie White] for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself.... I have had a talk with her and told her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie.... Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business.*—Letter 64a, 1889, p. 1." (*Ibid.*, p. 22) In the book, *The Desire of Ages*, certain aspects of how the text was to be arranged was left entirely up to Marian Davis to decide.

"As the work [*The Desire of Ages*] was thought to be nearing completion in 1896, Marian, working on the three general introductory chapters, 'God With Us,' 'The Chosen People,' and 'The Fullness of the Time,' *sought the counsel of Herbert Lacey of the Avondale school on the arrangement of paragraphs.* He was a rather youthful graduate of the classical course offered at Battle Creek College. He made some helpful suggestions in the matter of the sequence of the thoughts presented, which, when it became known, gave birth in later years, when he was known as a seasoned college Bible teacher, to rumors that Lacey had a prominent role in authoring the book. In both oral and written statements he flatly denied such a role (DF 508, H. C. Lacey to S. Kaplan, July 24, 1936)." (*The Australian Years 1891-1900*, p. 385)

In preparing the final portions of *The Desire of Ages* Marian consulted with H. Camden Lacey for advice regarding the arrangement of paragraphs. This caused some to believe that Lacey "had a prominent role in authoring the book." It was in this year also that W. W. Prescott proofread the book in its final stages. In June of 1896, after counsel with Lacey and Prescott, Marian "had precious matter to insert" into the book.

Ellen White wrote, "In the afternoon Brother and Sister Prescott came. We had a good visit with Sister Prescott. *Brother Prescott was with Marian in the interest of the book 'Life of Christ.'* [*The Desire of Ages*] *He is reading it, for it is the last reading before publication.*—MS 62, 1896. (*Ibid.*, p. 387)

Arthur White notes: "So Ellen White and her staff thought; but it did not work out that way. Three or four months later there was more material to be added. Wrote Ellen White on June 1, 1896: 'In the last discourses reported, *Marian has had precious matter to insert*, and this has necessitated her obtaining a new set of copies with the addition.'" (*Ibid.*, p. 388)

The Counsel of
Lacey and Prescott

In a letter written by H. Camden Lacey to LeRoy Froom he speaks specifically about this time period. LeRoy Froom had written a letter to Lacey asking him about the events in Australia. He wrote, "Dear Brother Lacey:... Elder D. E. Robinson of the White Estate, is under the impression, I believe from something told him by you, that over at Cooranbong around 1898 or 1899 you were giving a series of studies on the Trinity and were challenged by some of the brethren. I think Marian Davis was present at that time,..." (Letter written by LeRoy Froom to Herbert Camden Lacey on August 8, 1945)

Lacey replied, "Dear Brother Froom:... Well, that was not quite the angle in which I was involved in the studies conducted at Cooranbong way back in 1896. At that time, Professor Prescott was tremendously interested in presenting Christ as the great 'I AM' of Exodus 3:14, which of course was Christ the Second Person of the Godhead, with the statement of Jesus in John 8:58, which we all agreed to; but then linked it up also with other 'I ams' in that Gospel—7 of them, such as 'I am the Bread of Life' 'I am the Light of the World' 'I am the Door of the Sheep' etc. all very rich in their spiritual teaching—but which those latter cases is merely the copula in the Greek, as well as in the English. But he insisted on his interpretation. *Sr. Marian Davis seemed to fall for it, and lo and behold, when the 'Desire of Ages' came out, there appeared that identical teaching on pages 24 and 25, which, I think, can be looked for in vain in any of Sr. White's published works prior to that time!*

"In this connection, of course you know that *Sr. Marian Davis was entrusted with the preparation of 'Desire of Ages'* and that she gathered her material from every available source—from Sr. White's books already in print, from unpublished manuscripts, from private letters, stenographical reports of her talks, etc.—but perhaps you may not know that she (Sr. Davis) was greatly worried about finding material suitable for the first chapter. She appealed to me personally many times as she was arranging that chapter (and other chapters too for that matter) and I did what I could to help her; and I have good reason to believe that she also appealed to Professor Prescott frequently for similar aid, and got it too in far richer and more abundant measure than I could render....

"Professor Prescott's interest in the 'Eternity of the Son,' and the great 'I AMS' coupled with the constant help he gave Sr. Davis in her preparation of the 'Desire of Ages,' may serve to explain the inclusions of the above-named teachings in that wonderful book....

"I have always known that Elder *Uriah Smith was an Arian in belief*, ('Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation' reveal that!) and that *our people undoubtedly generally followed that view*. But we, as a family, had been brought up in the Church of England, and were naturally, may I say, Trinitarians. We just believed it, subconsciously, and I do not remember our ever discussing the question with the brethren who brought us into the Truth, Elder M. C. Israel, and young brother W. L. H. Baker. One thing I do recall is my mother's remarking on the strange language used by our ministers in speaking of the Holy Ghost as 'it' and 'its' as though they thought of the Holy Spirit as an influence, instead of as a Person. That seemed very strange to her, and in a measure to me also (I was about 17 then).

"Now this bring[s] me to the second point in my letter; The angle in which I was involved in that convention at Cooranbong was not the Eternity of the Son, but the Personality of the Holy Ghost.

"Perhaps a few words of historic background may be helpful here:

"As I already stated, I was really a Trinitarian at heart. And I went through Healdsburg College, and Battle Creek College, with a dim sort of a feeling that there was something wrong about our teaching on the Ministry and Personality of the Holy Ghost. (Of course, that term was never used, except in reading from the Bible,—it was always 'Holy Spirit' and referred to as 'it.')

And then *in the Testimonies I noticed that, practically everywhere, the same language was used,—'Holy Spirit' 'it' 'its' etc., as though the 'Spirit of God' were an influence, instead of a Person, the Third Person of the Godhead....*

"On the voyage back to Australia during September 1895, I made that theme, the Personality and Work of the Holy Ghost, a special subject of Bible Study. And I became convinced for myself! So when I was asked to conduct a series of Bible Studies at the 9:00 o'clock hour in a convention in Cooranbong

in 1896, I presented that theme very much to the interest (I well remember!) of Sr. Marian Davis, who took copious notes, and also to that of Elder A. G. Daniells, who was frequently present and expressed conservative appreciation.

"When the 'Desire of Ages' came out in 1898, Brother Daniells himself called my attention to the expression found on page 671, where the Spirit is spoken of as 'the third person of the Godhead' (I had not at that time seen a printed copy) and made some kindly comments....

"In this same connection I was interested to note the language used in the article 'The Holy Spirit in our Schools' found in 8T. 61, 62, and bearing [the] date 'May 10, 1896' Cooranbong N. S. W., where every time the Holy Spirit is referred to, the pronouns 'He,' 'Him,' 'His' are employed. And He is called a 'heavenly messenger' 'The heavenly guest' repeatedly, and apparently 'the great Teacher Himself.' " (Letter by Herbert Camden Lacey to LeRoy Froom on August 30, 1945)

It is apparent that W. W. Prescott and Camden Lacey had some influence upon Marian Davis while she was preparing *The Desire of Ages*. Both of these men were Trinitarians at this time, and it is obvious that the counsel Marian Davis received from them was pro-Trinitarian. Up to this time Marian Davis was very careful to present the Testimonies as they had been given by the Lord. Yet here it seems that she was influenced by Lacey and Prescott to make minor changes so that it appeared as if Ellen White was teaching the Trinitarian doctrine.

The Pioneer Reaction to *The Desire of Ages*

The *Review* writer states: "The result of these and similar statements [in *The Desire of Ages*] was a division of opinion among the ministers and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some, such as General Conference president A. G. Daniells, *Review and Herald* editor William Prescott, and Andreasen, accepted these statements as inspired doctrinal correction for the church....

"Ellen White's testimony, by calling attention to scriptures whose significance had been overlooked, created a paradigm shift that couldn't be reversed. As Adventists, like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, returned to the Scriptures to see 'whether those things were so,' they came to a growing consensus that the basic concept of the Trinity was a biblical truth to be accepted and embraced. The change didn't occur overnight, but no new anti-Trinitarian publications came from denominational presses after 1898. Some reprints of older books and articles still contained such views, but these were eventually discontinued or edited to reflect the new understanding." (*AR*, p. 11)

The statements referred to in this article did not call attention to "scriptures whose significance had been overlooked." The pioneers were well acquainted with the arguments from scripture both for and against the Trinity doctrine. From the evidence of Scripture they concluded that the Trinity doctrine was a false theory invented by Satan himself. Of the three men mentioned as accepting these statements as "doctrinal correction for the church," one, W. W. Prescott, was already teaching Trinitarian views at least two years prior (1896), and another, A. G. Daniells, had "expressed conservative appreciation" for the Trinitarian view in 1896. The other, M. L. Andreasen searched for the statement "life original, unborrowed, and underived" in Ellen White's manuscripts, seemingly without checking for context, and rested the matter there.

There is no record of other pioneers coming to the conclusion "that the basic concept of the Trinity was biblical truth" as a result of the publication of *The Desire of Ages*. In fact, twenty-one years later, at the 1919 Bible Conference, the church was not united on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The 1919 Bible Conference

In the summer of 1919, "the church called its leading ministers and college teachers together for a Bible conference, to be followed by a Bible and History Teachers Council." (*Adventism in America*, edited by Gary Land, p. 160; see also *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, pp. 395, 396) Anyone who has

read the minutes of the 1919 Bible conference must conclude that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination had not become Trinitarian as yet.

During the 1919 Bible Conference there were lively discussions between prominent church leaders who felt that some were trying to bring the false doctrine of the Trinity into the Adventist Church. A. G. Daniells had to cool the discussions down by emphatically asserting that: "We are not going to take a vote on Trinitarianism or Arianism, but we can think." This fact disproves the false notion that Ellen White (through *The Desire of Ages*), corrected the prevailing non-Trinitarian position of the Adventist pioneers.

Anyone who candidly reads the discussions on the Trinity during the 1919 Bible Conference clearly recognizes that, over twenty years after *The Desire of Ages* was published, the church was not unified on the Trinity doctrine.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, which Ellen White attended to the end of her life, was non-Trinitarian in their beliefs. Often Ellen White was sent to correct those who held erroneous views. If the early Adventists were wrong, certainly God would have instructed Ellen White to correct these views. She wrote, "*Many errors arose, and though I was then little more than a child, I was sent by the Lord from place to place to rebuke those who were holding these false doctrines. There were those who were in danger of going into fanaticism, and I was bidden in the name of the Lord to give them a warning from heaven.*" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 5, 1905)

Ellen White was a bold messenger for the truth. No matter the rank or position, if one was holding false views she would not refrain from letting them know. Yet never once did she breathe a word of correction to any of the pioneers for their widely known beliefs concerning God. Her own husband was among the leading writers against the Trinitarian doctrine, yet she never corrected him. In fact, when a man began to teach that the Holy Spirit was a third separate being other than the Father and Son, Ellen White wrote a letter of correction to him, pleading with him to come into harmony with the rest of the brethren on this issue.

The Chapman Letter

On June 11, 1891 Ellen White wrote a letter to Brother Chapman. She wrote, "I have received yours dated June 3. In this letter you speak in these words: 'Elder Robinson does not wish me to leave, but urges that I enter the canvassing field until such time as the conference can afford to employ me in some other capacity, but states positively that I cannot be sent out to present the truth to others until some points held by me are changed or modified in order that the views regarded by us as a people should be properly set forth. He quotes as a sample, *My idea in reference to the Holy Ghost's not being the Spirit of God, which is Christ, but the angel Gabriel*, and my belief that the 144,000 will be Jews who will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah....'"

Ellen White wrote Brother Chapman a long letter in which she counseled, "I hope that you will seek to be in harmony with the body.... You need to come into harmony with your brethren.... Letter 7, 1891" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, pp. 175-180)

Brother Chapman's views were inconsistent with the rest of the church so Ellen White counseled him to come into harmony with his brethren regarding his teaching on the Holy Spirit. Certainly Ellen White was aware of the church's teaching on the Holy Spirit at that time.

If Ellen White intended to change the church's teaching on the Trinity by the publishing of the book *The Desire of Ages*, it was entirely inconsistent with her character. Whenever someone began to teach false doctrines it was Ellen White's custom to immediately deal with them plainly on the issue, not by silently publishing a book contrary to those views, but by meeting the teachings head on with a letter or by personal testimony.

1898 and Beyond

The *Review* article of April 22, 1999 stated, "No new anti-Trinitarian publications came from denominational presses after 1898." Let us see if this is fact or fiction. If Ellen White intended to make the Adventist church Trinitarian by publishing her book *The Desire of Ages* in 1898, surely she would not have made any non-Trinitarian statements after that date. Yet we read the following in a book that was published to meet a crisis: the pantheistic teachings contained in the book *The Living Temple* by J. H. Kellogg.

Ellen White wrote, "God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. *To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father.* All the counsels of God are opened to His Son." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 268, March 1904) This is clearly a non-Trinitarian statement coming from the pen of Ellen White after 1898.

Again, she wrote, "He who denies the personality of *God and of his Son Jesus Christ, is denying God and Christ.* 'If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.' If you continue to believe and obey the truths you first embraced regarding *the personality of the Father and the Son*, you will be joined together with him in love. There will be seen that union for which Christ prayed just before his trial and crucifixion." (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 8, 1906)

She also wrote, "*God's Spirit and life are in His Word.*—Letter 132, 1900." (*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 38, 39) And again, "At what infinite cost to the Father and to the Son was the merciful, wondrous provision made for our redemption!" (*The Signs of the Times*, August 12, 1908) Ellen White certainly made non-Trinitarian statements after 1898. She was not alone in this either.

Stephen N. Haskell was one of the pioneers who strongly supported Sister White. In 1905 he published these thoughts, clearly non-Trinitarian:

"*Back in the ages, which finite mind cannot fathom, the Father and Son were alone in the universe. Christ was the first begotten of the Father, and to Him Jehovah made known the divine plan of Creation.* The plan of the creation of worlds was unfolded, together with the order of beings which should people them. Angels, as representatives of one order, would be ministers of the God of the universe. The creation of our own little world, was included in the deep-laid plans. The fall of Lucifer was foreseen; likewise the possibility of the introduction of sin, which would mar the perfection of the divine handiwork. It was then, in those early councils, that Christ's heart of love was touched; and the only begotten Son pledged His life to redeem man, should he yield and fall. Father and Son, surrounded by impenetrable glory, clasped hands. *It was in appreciation of this offer, that upon Christ was bestowed creative power, and the everlasting covenant was made; and henceforth Father and Son, with one mind, worked together to complete the work of creation.* Sacrifice of self for the good of others was the foundation of it all." (*The Story of the Seer of Patmos*, pp. 93, 94)

In 1911, M. C. Wilcox, editor of *The Signs of the Times*, published the following statement:

"Question 187: What is the difference between the Holy Spirit and the ministering spirits (angels), or are they the same?"

"Answer: The Holy Spirit is the mighty energy of the Godhead, the life and power of God flowing out from Him to all parts of the universe, and thus making a living connection between His throne and all creation. As is expressed by another: 'The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ.' It thus makes Christ everywhere present. To use a crude illustration, just as a telephone carries the voice of a man, and so makes that voice present miles away, so the Holy Spirit carries with it all the potency of Christ in making Him everywhere present with all His power, and revealing Him to those in harmony with His law. Thus the Spirit is personified in Christ and God, but never revealed as a separate person. Never are we told to pray to the Spirit; but to God for the Spirit. Never do we find in the Scriptures prayers to the Spirit, but for the Spirit." (*Questions and Answers Gathered from the Question Corner Department of the Signs of the Times*, pp. 181, 182)

Wilcox quoted Ellen White from her book *The Desire of Ages*. This quotation from Ellen White cannot be found in any publication prior to 1898. It is evident that this non-Trinitarian answer was written and printed after 1898. So the statement, "no new anti-Trinitarian publications came from denominational presses after 1898," is obviously not true.

Ellen White and the Godhead

Referring to Ellen White, the *Review* stated, "She never wrote an article directly confronting wrong views about the Godhead." This is not a true statement either. When the false views about God were being presented by J. H. Kellogg she wrote, "I am instructed to speak plainly. 'Meet it,' is the word spoken to me. 'Meet it firmly, and without delay.' ...In the book *Living Temple* there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given." (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 200) Ellen White did "meet it," through many letters and publications.

On October 29, 1903 A. G. Daniells wrote to Willie White the following letter:

"He [J. H. 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 *within a short time he had come to believe in the trinity* and could now see pretty clearly where all 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." (Letter by A. G. Daniells to W. C. White on October 29, 1903)

Shortly after Kellogg wrote the book *Living Temple*, which contained pantheistic views about God, he accepted the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet Ellen White did not cease from her call to "meet it." She continued to write against his teachings concerning "the personality of God and where His presence is." (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 200)

"In the night season I was in a large meeting. Dr. Kellogg was speaking, and he was filled with enthusiasm regarding his subject.... One by my side told me that the evil angels had taken captive the mind of the speaker.—Manuscript 64, 1904, pp. 1, 2." (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 375)

The *Review* continues, "If every time someone studied the Bible and came to an incomplete understanding of truth Ellen White had corrected it, soon Adventists would have done nothing except sit and wait for her to write." The pioneers had obviously studied the Bible on the issue of the Trinity quite thoroughly. If the theory is correct that Ellen White changed the denominational teaching regarding the Trinity by publishing the book *The Desire of Ages*, it would be evident that this change did not come about due to diligent study of the Bible.

The Trinity and the Character of God

Jerry Moon, in attempting to explain why the Adventists took so long to become Trinitarians stated: "The pioneers in the 1840s and 1850s were approaching the Bible from the standpoint of other extremely important doctrines, such as the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries, which have everything to do with the character of God. In the divine purpose for this movement, the understanding of the character of God was a higher priority than the understanding of His nature." He wrote as if the issue of the Trinitarian versus the non-Trinitarian view has nothing to do with the character of God. This is far from the truth, as was realized by the pioneers.

One objection the Adventist pioneers had to the Trinity doctrine was that it reduced the plan of redemption to an act or a play; making God the Father giving up nothing more than a friend, and even worse, a friend who could not die under any circumstance. The Bible view, which the pioneers

maintained, reveals that God the Father gave up that which was most dear to Him, His only begotten Son. Not a son who could not die under any circumstance, but His own Son who would take upon Himself mortality and the risk of sinning which would mean eternal death.

Ellen White wrote, "Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, *at the risk of failure and eternal loss*."

"The human family had been overpowered by the deceptions of the enemy; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and it was the enemy's hope that Christ also would be a victim to his seductive wiles; but at every point he met the tempter and put him to flight. Christ was the conqueror over the powers of darkness. *We do not comprehend the infinite condescension of Christ in consenting to war with the enemy, or the infinite risk he ventured in engaging in the great controversy in our behalf.*" (*The Signs of the Times*, April 25, 1892)

God and His Son both took an infinite risk by Christ coming to this earth. The more we realize the great sacrifice that God made by sending His Son into this world, the more we will appreciate and understand His love for us. If the Bible had said, "God so loved the world that He gave a cow," we would realize that God loves us somewhat, but not much, if all He was willing to give up was a cow. If the verse had said, "God so loved the world that He gave an angel," we still would have a limited understanding of God's love. Thank the Lord for the truth that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Our perception of God's love depends upon the value of the gift He gave up.

The Trinity doctrine teaches that Jesus Christ is not actually the Son of God, but that he merely assumed the role of Son for the purpose of the plan of salvation. In 1996 Gordon Jenson, then president of Spicer Memorial College in Pune, India wrote, "In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit,... By accepting the roles that the plan entailed, the divine Beings lost none of the powers of Deity.... The divine Beings entered into the roles they had agreed upon before the foundations of the world were laid." (The Week of Prayer issue of the *Adventist Review*, October 31, 1996)

Moreover the doctrine teaches that Christ could not have died, so there was no real risk involved on the part of the Father or His Son. In this way the Trinity doctrine severely distorts the sacrifice that God made on our behalf. It severely distorts God's character of love.

Ellen White wrote, "The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416)

Our understanding of God definitely affects our understanding of His character. This was not a subject that was bypassed by the early pioneers; they devoted much study to the subject.

The *Review* continues, "With the new perspective provided by *The Desire of Ages*, Adventists went back to their Bibles and discovered a whole range of information about the Godhead that they had not noticed before. They became convinced that indeed, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were *three* divine persons." As one examines the writings of the early pioneers it becomes very clear that they had not overlooked certain passages of Scripture regarding the Godhead. In fact they were very familiar with the arguments put forth by Trinitarians and had an answer for them from the Scriptures.

A Progression or Recession?

The *Review* continues, "Leaders from the second generation of the pioneers and many others after 1898 accepted the doctrine of the Trinity as a further unfolding of the biblical truths that the first pioneers had accepted." The *Review* attempts here to link the Trinitarian teaching of the Adventist

church of today with the teachings of the early Adventists on the subject of the Godhead, yet that cannot be done, for new truth never does away with the old. Ellen White wrote, "In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are essential; *new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it.* It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new." (*The Signs of the Times*, June 20, 1902)

The Trinitarian doctrine is not an unfolding of the non-Trinitarian. It is not a progression of truth based upon old truth. The Trinitarian doctrine did not come into the *world* as a result of diligent Bible study, but as a result of men in apostasy who, at about the same time, brought in the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness. (See the study entitled *The Formulation of the Trinity Doctrine* available from the publishers of this article.) In like manner, the entrance of the Trinitarian doctrine into the Adventist church did not come about as a result of diligent Bible study, but as the result of men in leadership positions, who had already rejected the "Righteousness by Faith" message and were primed to accept the Omega of deadly heresy as prophesied by Ellen White.

William Johnsson, editor of the *Review*, wrote, "Some Adventists today think that our beliefs have remained unchanged over the years, or they seek to turn back the clock to some point when we had everything just right. But all attempts to recover such 'historic Adventism' fail in view of the facts of our heritage.

"Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of 'present truth.' Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Many of the pioneers, including James White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and J. H. Waggoner, held to an Arian or semi-Arian view—that is, the Son at some point in time before the Creation of our world was generated by the Father.... the Trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists. Even today a few do not subscribe to it." (*Adventist Review*, January 6, 1994, p. 10)

George Knight, Andrews University seminary professor, wrote, "Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs.

"More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity...." (*Ministry Magazine*, October, 1993, p. 10)

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination of today cannot trace its Trinitarian teachings back to the movement God raised up in the 1800s. The weight of evidence is clear that Ellen White was not Trinitarian and did not desire to silently move the church to a different position.

The position of the early Adventists could hardly be called a "hopeful sign" towards Trinitarianism. If the doctrine of the Trinity is orthodox, then the pioneers were in "heresy." However if the pioneers had the truth, as Ellen White over and over proclaimed, then the church of today can not claim to be a successor to the pioneers but is rather an offshoot of the movement that God raised up? Truly something to ponder.