

The Arian or Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen G. White Answer

by Erwin Roy Gane

The doctrine of Trinity has been a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist church since 1931. In the earliest years, however, most early church leaders were anti-trinitarian. What caused the change? Erwin Gane examines the various beliefs of prominent leaders in the early years as shown in their writings. He also documents the differences between their thought and that of Ellen White and shows how she led the church, through a gradual process that avoided direct confrontation, to the fully Trinitarian position which is held today.

Erwin R. Gane, M.Div., M. Th., is well known to the members of the SDA church, since his last 9 years of service before retirement were at the General Conference as editor of the Adult Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly. Previous to this he taught religion classes at Avondale College in Australia, Union College, and Pacific Union Colleges in America. He has also pastored churches in Australia and the USA. He and his wife are now retired in Angwin, California.

This previously unpublished Masters Thesis by Erwin Roy Gane, written June 1963 for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, is reproduced here by permission of the author.

PREFACE

This research examines the literature of Seventh-day Adventists to discover the prevalence of Arian or anti-Trinitarian views and the Ellen G. White answer to these views.

Since the Yearbooks published from 1931 to 1962 indicate official acceptance of Trinitarianism, special attention was given to the earlier history of the Denomination to determine whether this was from the beginning the accepted understanding of the Deity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. [The Problem and Definitions of Terms Used](#)
- II. [The Belief of the Earliest Pioneers of the Adventist Church](#)
- III. [Early Militant Anti-Trinitarians](#)
- IV. [Uriah Smith an Influential Arian](#)
- V. [Smith Supported By His Contemporaries](#)
- VI. [Canright an Anti-Trinitarian Apologist](#)
- VII. [From Canright to Waggoner](#)
- VIII. [From Morse to E. J. Waggoner](#)
- IX. [From 1890 To 1898](#)
- X. [A Change After 1898](#)
- XI. [Washburn Attempts to Revive Old Position](#)
- XII. [A Questionable Conclusion](#)
- XIII. [Ellen White a Trinitarian Monotheist](#)
- XIV. [Ellen G. White on the Absolute Deity of Christ](#)
- XV. [Ellen G. White on the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit](#)
- XVI. [Summary](#)
[Bibliography](#)

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

From time to time individual Seventh-day Adventists arise who adhere to an anti-Trinitarian mode of belief. They often quote the founding fathers of the Church as having been in agreement with their position. They regard the official Trinitarianism of modern Adventism as a reversion to paganism, or at best, as Satan's counterfeit conception of God, characteristic of Papal dogma.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to examine the literature of Seventh-day Adventists, especially that published between 1844 and 1900, with a view to discovering the extent to which Arian or anti-Trinitarian views have been held by writers and members of this church; (2) to gain evidence making possible an explanation of adherence by the Church to whatever conception of the Deity was found to have been predominant; (3) to present the Ellen G. White answer to each of the major positions held by Seventh-day Adventist anti-Trinitarians.

Importance of the Study. It is important for Seventh-day Adventists to be informed as to the doctrinal history of their own Church. It should be possible for Adventists to be able, in respect to any doctrinal position, to say whether their present belief is that to which the Church has always subscribed, or whether Adventist thought on the subject has progressed beyond certain imperfect and undeveloped concepts. To be able to demonstrate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has always adhered to certain fundamental beliefs is to provide historical verification that, from its inception, it has fulfilled a distinctive spiritual role. But to claim that a certain doctrine held today has always been accepted by the Church, when in fact it has not, is at best careless, and at worst dishonest. It is, therefore, important that the history of Adventist thought on the nature of God be impartially investigated.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Adventist. Throughout this thesis when reference is made to the Adventist Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as distinct from other Adventist groups, is intended.

Arian. The term Arian for the purpose of this thesis has reference to the belief that Christ was brought into existence by the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is not a person but a influence. Therefore, an Arian as defined here is distinct from the liberal, humanistic Arians who represent Christ as a mere man.

Anti-Trinitarian. The term anti-Trinitarian is used throughout to refer both to the Arian and to other variants from the Trinitarian position.

Monarchianism. The term Monarchianism as used in this thesis has reference to Modalistic Monarchianism, a teaching propagated by the Sabellians in the third century AD. They maintained that in the Godhead the only differentiation was a succession of modes or manifestations. The one God revealed Himself as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They refused to distinguish between these three as distinct personalities. To them, Christ and the Holy Spirit were other manifestations of the Father. They held that the doctrine of the Trinity postulated the existence of three Gods.

Spirit of Prophecy. The term Spirit of Prophecy is used as a reference to the writings of Ellen G. White. Although Seventh-day Adventists understand this term to have a broader application to all divinely inspired prophecy, yet they consistently use it in a restricted sense to apply to the prophetic gift as manifested in the life and work of Ellen G. White.

Socinianism. The doctrine which makes of Christ a mere man. He is thought to have been created by God wholly perfect, and endowed with special authority and a faithful revelation of God's will. In the United States in the nineteenth century Socinianism was one branch of Unitarianism.

Unitarianism. The Christian thought and religious observance which rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and emphasizes the unipersonality of God. The Unitarian movement in America in the first half of the nineteenth century was predominantly Arian. Most American Unitarians at this stage held that Christ is inferior to the Father, yet more than a mere man, having been created before the beginning of the world.

III. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE PAPER

The procedure followed in presenting the evidence discovered has included an examination of all that a particular Seventh-day Adventist writer presented on the subject, dealing with his utterances in their chronological order. The writers have been examined, for the most part, in the order in which they first expressed themselves on the subject. Thus Uriah Smith is dealt with before J.N. Loughborough because he first wrote on the subject in 1859. Loughborough's first utterance was in 1861. All the evidence in regard to Uriah Smith's view is presented in one section, even though this involves reference to later periods of the Church's history. This arrangement makes it possible for an over-all view of the position of each writer. In each case the writer's complete view of the Deity, including the discussion of the Holy Spirit and of Christ,

is examined. The views of Ellen G. White are presented in the final three chapters of the thesis.

Throughout this thesis italics in quotations are those of the author being quoted.

CHAPTER II

THE BELIEF OF THE EARLIEST PIONEERS OF THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

Although he was not a seventh-day Sabbath observer, William Miller is regarded as the spiritual father of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventists are proud to identify themselves with a religious pioneer who manifested such remarkable insight as an exponent of prophecy, and who labored so tirelessly to warn the careless multitudes of the soon coming of Jesus. The burden of Miller's message was the Second Advent of Christ. The doctrine of the nature of God was not, with him, a subject of immediate and paramount importance.

MILLER A TRINITARIAN

In spite of the strength of the Unitarian and Socinian movements in America in the first half of the nineteenth century, Miller, who was regarded as distinctly unorthodox in other respects, abided by the orthodox Trinitarian position. Some years after the infant Seventh-day Adventist movement had gained a firm hold on life, James White produced a work entitled, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller*. White quotes Miller's statement of faith written at Low Hampton, September 5, 1822:

"I hereby acknowledge that I have long believed it my duty... to leave, for the inspection of my brethren, friends and children, a brief statement of my faith (and which ought to be my practice); and I pray God to forgive me where I go astray. I made it a subject of prayer and meditation, and therefore, leave the following as my faith,—reserving the privilege of correction. (Signed) Wm. Miller

"Article Two.

"I believe in one living and true God, and that there are three persons in the Godhead—as there is in man, the body, soul, and spirit. And if any one will tell me how these exist, I will tell him how the three persons of the Triune God are connected."¹

Here then is an unequivocal declaration of Miller's acceptance of the broad outline of Trinitarianism, with a frank admission of the mysterious nature of the union between the three persons on the Godhead. In the absence of evidence that he later exercised his "privilege of correction" by an expression of anti-Trinitarian views, we are justified in assuming that this was Miller's belief to the day of his death.

HIMES AND THE CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

One of Miller's ardent supporters in preaching the imminent return of the Lord was Joshua V. Himes, a well-known minister of the denomination known as the "Christian Connection."² In

1835, Rev, T. Newton Brown published his *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, which included an article on the "Christian Connection" written by Himes.³ The beginning of the Christian Connection is dated about 1800. No individual is recognized as the leader or founder of the sect. The members had come from a number of the more conservative religious denominations such as the Calvinistic Baptists, the Free-will and Six-principle Baptists, the Methodists and Presbyterians. Coming as they did from such a diversity of backgrounds, the members retained their variant opinions on doctrinal matters. Himes points out that the early distinguishing characteristic of the group was "universal toleration." In regard to their attitude to the doctrine of the Trinity, Himes wrote, "At first, they were generally Trinitarian; subsequently they have, almost unanimously, rejected the Trinitarian doctrine as unscriptural."⁴ Then he proceeds to itemize the doctrines which are generally accepted by this sect:

That there is one living and true God, the Father almighty, who is unoriginated, independent, and eternal, the Creator and Supporter of all worlds; and that this God is one spiritual intelligence, one infinite mind, ever the same, never varying.... That Christ is the Son of God, the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world...⁵

The statement clearly states that the Father alone is "unoriginated, independent and eternal." Christ was then originated, dependent and brought into existence by the Father. This statement is of course quite consistent with Himes' remark that the Christian Connection "have, almost unanimously, rejected the Trinitarian doctrine as unscriptural."⁶

It will become evident as this discussion progresses that where such views of Christ were prevalent, the Holy Spirit was generally divested of personality and separate existence as a member of the Deity, being regarded as a mere influence emanating from the Father and from Christ. This was the view held by the Christian Connection as enunciated by Himes. Among those beliefs which they generally accepted as Scriptural doctrines was the view "that the Holy Spirit is the power and energy of God, that holy influence of God by whose agency, in the use of means, the wicked are regenerated...."⁷ It is very significant that Himes, one of the spiritual fathers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, should hold these doctrines. It is of further significance that others of the pioneers of this Church had been members of the Christian Connection, prior to accepting the tenets of Seventh-day Adventism.⁸

BATES' VIEW OF THE GODHEAD

Joseph Bates is justly revered by Seventh-day Adventists for his faithful part in the successful launching of the movement. In 1868 the Publishing Association of the Church issued *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates*.⁹ Bates tells of his early struggles and labours. He mentions a revival of religion in the Christian Church at Fairhaven in 1827.¹⁰ Bates, at this time, was seriously considering uniting with some Christian group or another, and he was influenced by this revival. Since before their marriage his wife had been a member of the Christian Church. Bates had attended the meetings of this organization with his wife when he was at home and had become somewhat acquainted with their views. "They took the Scriptures for their only rule of faith and practice, renouncing all creeds."¹¹ Bates' parents were well established members of the Congregational Church and ardently hoped that he and his wife would also join them. But there

were certain doctrinal matters which prevented this. Bates wrote, "But they embraced some points in their faith which I could not understand. I will name only two: their mode of baptism, and doctrine of the trinity."¹²

His father tried unsuccessfully to convince Joseph Bates that in these matters of doctrine the Congregational Church was correct. In regard to the subject of the Trinity, Bates wrote in 1868:

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. I said to my father, "If you can convince me that we are one in this sense, that you are my father, and I your son, and also that I am my father, and you my son, then I can believe in the trinity."... In a few days I was immersed and joined the Christian Church.¹³

The Christian Church referred to the Christian Connection which, as has been seen, rejected the Trinitarian position. Later Bates became an active worker in this organization, and still later one of the founding fathers of the Sabbatarian Adventist movement.¹⁴

Joseph Bates' objection to the doctrine of the Trinity evidenced an attitude which was to be reiterated forcefully by later militant Seventh-day Adventist anti-Trinitarians. Bates rejected Trinitarianism because it involves the complete identification of Father and Son. Of course, Trinitarianism does no such thing. William Miller asserted his belief in "one living and true God," composed of "three persons." He understood the "Triune God" to contain "three persons."¹⁵ This is the true Trinitarian understanding of the doctrine, and since Miller wrote in 1822, and Bates objected to Trinitarianism, on the grounds presented, in 1827, it is a justifiable assumption that the conception which Trinitarians have today of the relations between members of the Deity, was the conception current when Bates wrote. Undoubtedly there were in vogue in the nineteenth century, as there are today, extreme forms of Trinitarianism, against which the early Adventists seriously reacted. Evidence for this will be presented as we proceed. But this is not an adequate explanation of the extreme anti-Trinitarianism of the early Adventists. Bates assumes that, pushed to its logical conclusion, Trinitarianism becomes Monarchianism, in which the Father is the Son and vice-versa. Then he objects to this on the ground that one person cannot possibly be another. But he is not objecting to Trinitarianism, as he imagined. He is objecting to his interpretation of what Trinitarians teach. He is objecting to Monarchianism.

Bates wrote his autobiography in 1868. There is no indication in his narration of the events of his past life that his view had changed in the interval since 1827. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that, after becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, Bates retained his anti-Trinitarian belief.

JAMES WHITE AN ENIGMA

Prior to becoming an Adventist, James White was an ordained minister of the Christian Connection.¹⁶ He wrote his "Life Incidents" in 1868 for the *Review and Herald*.¹⁷ He says, "At the age of fifteen I was baptized and united with the Christian Church."¹⁸ Later he was ordained and carried on revival work for this organization. In 1842 he heard William Miller preach and became an enthusiastic adherent of the Second Advent faith.¹⁹

Since White came out of the Christian Connection, one would expect to discover that he was, at least early in his career, opposed to Trinitarianism. But the evidence is not readily forthcoming, and what is available is inconclusive. It is true that James White was editor of the *Signs of the Times* in 1879. On May 22 of that year there appeared an article strongly opposing Trinitarianism written by A. J. Dennis.²⁰ It would be easy to conclude that White concurred with the position taken in the article, since he was editor and there is no indication that he, as editor, might have held another view. But James White was a Christian gentleman, and possibly he published a view with which he could not agree simply as a gesture of Christian courtesy. He did not agree with certain workers on some other issues, but remained silent, even when their views were published, simply for the sake of avoiding a serious doctrinal cleavage.

On the other hand, there are certain indications which point in the direction of the view that James White was not a Trinitarian. In 1877 he wrote a tract entitled *Christ in the Old Testament* in which the following statement appears:

The work of emancipating, instructing and leading the Hebrews was given to the One who is called an angel. Ex. 13:21; 14:19, 24; 23:20-23; 32:34; Num. 20:16; Isa. 63:9. And this angel Paul calls "that spiritual Rock that followed them," and he affirms, "That Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. 10:4.

The eternal Father is never called an angel in the Scriptures, while what angels have done is frequently ascribed to the Lord, as they are his messengers and agents to accomplish his work.²¹

We have here a suggested distinction between "the eternal Father" and Christ. Christ is called an angel in Scripture, the Father is not. Christ is referred to as "the Lord" to distinguish Him from "the eternal Father." It would be possible to read between the lines and assume that James white did not regard Christ, the Lord, as eternal in the same sense as the Father; that, in fact, Christ was to some extent inferior in rank to the Father, because he is called an angel and the Father is not. But, in the absence of corroborating evidence, this would not be a fair conclusion.

There is in the James White Memorial Library at Andrews University a thesis which states that A. T. Robinson declared in an interview that James White was not a Trinitarian.²² Robinson had been acquainted with the Whites. This type of evidence based on the testimony of an old man is hardly to be regarded as entirely satisfactory. But it is nonetheless an additional finger pointing in the same direction as other fragmentary pieces of evidence. At all events, White did not allow his view, whatever it was, to come to the fore, at a time when a major Trinitarian controversy might have split the infant Adventist Church.

ENDNOTES

¹James White, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875), p. 59.

²Joshua V. Himes, "Christian Connection," *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. T. Newton Brown (Boston: Shattuck & Co., 1835), 362.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 362, 363.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 363

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), p. 47.

⁹Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 205

¹⁴L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), IV, 954.

¹⁵James White, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875), p. 59.

¹⁶James White, "Life Incidents," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, XXXI (February 18, 1868), 147. (Hereafter referred to as *Review and Herald*).

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁸*Ibid.* The Christian Church referred to is generally understood to have been the Christian Connection. See L.E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), IV 1057.

¹⁹James White, "Life Incidents," *Review and Herald*, XXXI (February 18, 1868), 147.

²⁰A. J. Dennis, "One God," *The Signs of the Times*, V (May 22, 1879), 162.

²¹James White, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Oakland, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1877), p. 11.

²²C. M. Taylor, "The Personality of the Holy Spirit," (unpublished Master's dissertation, James White Memorial Library, Andrews University, 1953), pp. 7, 8.

CHAPTER III

EARLY MILITANT ANTI-TRINITARIANS

STEPHENSON STRONGLY ARIAN

Writing in the *Review and Herald* in 1854, J. M. Stephenson exposed himself as a militant Arian. In an article entitled "the atonement" Stephenson forcefully presented his anti-Trinitarian arguments:

The idea of the Father and Son supposes priority of the existence of the one, and the subsequent existence of the other. To say that the Son is as old as the Father, is a palpable contradiction of terms. It is a natural impossibility for the Father to be as young as the Son, or the Son to be as old as the Father.¹

He proceeded to point out that the terms "Father" and "Son" would not have been used by the Bible writers if they had wished "to convey the idea of the co-etaneous existence, and eternity of the Father and Son...."² Stephenson quoted a Trinitarian named Fuller who agreed that the Father must have existed prior to the Son. The Son is the "first born" said Stephenson, in the sense that He had an origin at a point prior to all other forms of life. Christ was begotten. Therefore "he must have had a beginning." God, he wrote, is the "only supreme ruler." It would be impossible to have two Supreme Rulers at the same time. Only the Father is "supremely, or absolutely, good."³ Only the Father is, in the absolute sense, immortal. Only the Father is self-existent. The Son is therefore dependent on the Father for the Father gave "the Son to have life in himself."⁴

Stephenson went so far as to declare that Christ was a created being:

Col. 1:15. "the first born of every creature." Creature signifies creation; hence to be the first born of every creature, (creation) he must be a create being; and as such, his life and immortality must depend upon the Father's will just as much as angels, or redeemed man....⁵

FRISBIE IDENTIFIES THE SUNDAY God

Writing in March of the same year [1854], J. B. Frisbie identifies the "Sabbath God" and the "Sunday God."⁶ The Sabbath God is a Spirit, but also a personal Being possessing body and parts. The Sunday God is identified by reference to a Catholic Catechism and a Methodist work. The Catholic work, as quoted by Frisbie, maintains

that God has no body. There is but one God, but comprising three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is said not to be tri-theism.

The Methodist work quoted by Frisbie also states that the one true God does not have body or parts. God is one, but in the unity which is God there are said to be three persons each of the same substance, each possessing the same power and eternity of existence.

Frisbie's prime purpose in this article is evidently to present God as a personal being possessing bodily parts. But in opposing Trinitarian views, which deny that God possesses parts, in this sense, he also opposes the Trinitarian position in toto, concluding this section of his article by saying, "these ideas well accord with those heathen philosophers."⁷

HULL OPPOSES NICENE CREED

Writing in 1859, D. W. Hull presented in the *Review and Herald* a series of two articles discussing the "bible doctrine of divinity." He sees the Trinitarian position as subversive of the doctrine of the atonement.⁸ It is clear that he is, to some extent, reacting to certain extreme Trinitarian positions, but in the process he attempts to shatter the whole structure of that doctrine. Hull writes:

The doctrine which we propose to examine, was established by the Council of Nice [sic], A.D. 325, and ever since that period, persons not believing this particular tenet, have been denounced by popes and priests, as dangerous heretics. It was for disbelief in this doctrine, that the Arians were anathematized in A.D. 513.

As we can trace this doctrine not farther back than the origin of the "man of sin" and as we find this dogma at that time established rather by force, than otherwise, we claim the right to investigate the matter, and ascertain the bearing of Scripture on this subject.⁹

Hull is at pains to point out that "we" believe in the divinity of Christ but adds that "we don't believe, as the m. e. church discipline teaches, that Christ is the very and eternal God; at the same time, very man; that the human part was the Son, and the divine part was the Father."¹⁰

He then proceeds to repudiate what he calls "The orthodox view of God" that he is "without body, parts, passions, centre, circumference, or locality." It is not difficult to understand his opposition to this extreme view. He adds, "it certainly appears that such a God as this, must be entirely devoid of an existence."¹¹

Hull then begins to investigate all the important passages claimed by Trinitarians in support of their view. In answer to the Trinitarians' use of Isaiah 9:6 he declares that Christ is here called mighty, but not almighty. The word he believes is used "in a limited sense." Christ is the everlasting Father only in the sense that He is to live everlastingly, certainly not in the Trinitarian sense.

Hull emphasizes the argument which Joseph Bates used in 1827. If the divine part of Jesus was the Father, if it was the Father who was manifested in the flesh, then God and Christ are one person. Consistently throughout the article, Hull confuses the correct Trinitarian position with Monarchianism. He argues that Trinitarians say there is one God and that Christ is God in the same sense as the Father. Therefore Christ is the Father. They are one and the same person. But he sees this to be logically impossible and Scripturally unsound. Father and Son are one just as are a man and his wife. They are united in interest and purpose. Christ, he says, is not the only and eternal God. He is not as great as the Father, nor did He pretend to be so. His power was delegated. The objection is illustrated as follows:

What would the reader think of a man who moved from the State of Ohio to Iowa with his family and after enjoying their company for a season talk of going back to Ohio where he could see his family? If you cannot allow inconsistencies I men, how can you accuse the Saviour of leaving the world to go to the Father, and at the same time assert that the Saviour was Jehovah himself?¹²

Hull gives further reasons for rejecting what he calls the Trinitarian position. If Father and Son are one person then the world was three days without a God, for the Bible says that He was "put to death in the flesh." Christ cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Trinitarians say that the Godhead had left him. Then Christ must have been alive after the Godhead had departed from Him, and the sacrifice was only a human sacrifice.¹³ But how could a human sacrifice atone for our sins? Thus he objects to the view that Christ's soul did not die. It was necessary for every part of Christ to die that human sin might be adequately atoned for. He quotes 2 Peter 3:18 and adds, "There is no chance of escape here. Christ's soul and every part that dwelt in his flesh was put to death and buried in sheol, or hades."¹⁴ The Trinitarian teaching that Christ's body descended to the grave but his soul or divinity, or whatever it might be termed, ascended to paradise, is rejected as unscriptural and destructive of the possibility of the atonement.

The three salient reasons which Hull gives for rejecting Trinitarianism are that the doctrine teaches that God lacks bodily parts and emotions, that it identifies Father and Son as one and the same person, and that, because it teaches that the divine in Christ did not die, it renders the sacrifice a human sacrifice, and therefore, an inadequate atonement for the sins of man. It is quite evident that to some extent Hull was

opposing an extreme form of Trinitarianism, but this is not a sufficient explanation of his anti-Trinitarianism. He relegates the decisions of Nicea to the category of false doctrine. But he misinterprets the position of the Nicene fathers. They were at pains to avoid the accusation of Monarchianism. Hull accuses them of teaching this. Like Joseph Bates, on this particular point, he is opposing not the Trinitarian view itself but his own misconception of what that view is.

ENDNOTES

1J. M. Stephenson, "The Atonement," *Review and Herald*, VI (November 14, 1854), 128.

2*Ibid.*

3*Ibid.*, p. 131.

4*Ibid.*

5*Ibid.*, p. 133.

6J. B. Frisbie, "The Seventh day-Sabbath [*sic*] Not Abolished," *Review and Herald*, V (March 7, 1854), 50.

7*Ibid.*

8D. W. Hull, "Bible Doctrine of Divinity," *Review and Herald* (November 10, 1859), 93.

9*Ibid.*

10*Ibid.*

11*Ibid.*

12*Ibid.*, 194

13D. W. Hull, "Bible Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ," *Review and Herald*, XIV (November 17, 1859), 201.

14*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

URIAH SMITH AN INFLUENTIAL ARIAN

Perhaps the most influential of the early Seventh-day Adventist Arians was Uriah Smith. For forty-seven years, Smith was editor of *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*. During this time he often allowed his views to appear in print, sometimes in the form of articles written by other people, sometimes in the form of articles and statements in books written by himself. It is the intention of the present writer, first Smith's understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit, and second, his position as to the Deity and pre-existence of Christ.

SMITH'S VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As early as 1859, Uriah Smith stressed the importance of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Church:

This Spirit is the life-principle of the church of God; and the degree in which that Spirit is possessed by the church marks the exact ratio of her acceptance with him, and the strength of that life which she lives "by faith of the Son of God."¹

Smith recognizes the Spirit as the source of spiritual power and the surety of the presence of God in the church, and he recoils in horror from the suggestion that there is no Holy Spirit:

Reader, can you conceive of a more dark and chilly theory, and one better calculated to lie like an iceberg on the heart of the church than the view which some hold, that there is no Holy Spirit? Be it our lot ever to be free from this unhallowed sentiment, and those who hold it.²

In the light of these statements it is well to be guarded in our interpretation of Smith's later denials of the personality of the Holy Spirit. He in no way detracts from the importance of the Spirit of God as the source of light and power. He would join Trinitarian in praying earnestly for this gift and he would emphasize the indispensable nature of the Spirit's work in human redemption. But any attempt to invest the Holy Spirit with personality, Smith met with reasoned opposition.

Later in the century there appeared a regular column in the *Review and Herald* headed "in the question chair." Here the questions of correspondents were answered, and here Smith occasionally found a convenient place to express his views. In 1890 in answer to the question "is the Holy Spirit a person?" Smith wrote:

But respecting this Spirit, the Bible uses expressions which cannot be harmonized with the idea that it is a person like the Father and the Son. Rather it is shown to be a divine influence from them both, the medium which represents their presence and by which they have knowledge and power through all the universe, when not personally present.³

Smith recognizes that in chapters 14 to 16 the Spirit is personified as the comforter. He quotes the use in these chapters of the personal and relative pronouns "he," "him" and "whom" in reference to the Holy Spirit. But these instances he would regard simply as figures of speech, for in most cases in Scripture "it" is spoke of in ways which would deny that it is a person, like the Father and the Son. "for instance," he writes, "it is often said to be 'poured out' and 'shed abroad.' but we never read about God or Christ being poured out or shed abroad."⁴

When the Holy Spirit has appeared, Uriah Smith points out, it has been in varying shapes and forms. Once it appeared as a dove, once in the form of "cloven tongues as of fire."⁵ Elsewhere we read of "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."⁶ These descriptions would not, in his opinion, be used if the Holy Spirit were to be understood as a person.

In March of the following year, 1891, Uriah Smith said in a sermon reported in the *General Conference Bulletin*:

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God; it is also the Spirit of Christ. It is that divine, mysterious emanation through which they carry forward their great and infinite work.⁷

He acknowledges that it is the "eternal spirit," it is omniscient and omnipresent, it is the Spirit that had a hand in creation, it can be grieved and quenched. But it is not a person, It is an influence. It is a "mysterious emanation."⁸

The reason for the personification of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is given by Smith in an answer to a question in a later issue of the *Review and Herald*:

2 John 16:13 describes the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is so connected with Father and the Son that it is itself personified and spoken of as doing what the Father and the Son do through it.⁹

In reading the *Review and Herald*s of the 1890s, one gains the decided impression that this subject was, to some extent, exercising that minds of the laity at this time. In September 1892 a questioner again raised the issue, and Uriah Smith answered. The question is significant as an illustration of the type of reasoning which evidently was exercising the minds of some Adventists at this time:

If God is a spirit (John 4:24) and at the same time a person (Dan. 7:9), would not the same reasoning prove the Holy Spirit a person, as referred to in John 14:26?

Ans.—No; for God is elsewhere described and represented as a person; but the Holy Spirit is not. The fact that the Holy Spirit is personified in John 14, and thus spoken of as acting in a personal and individual manner, does not prove it to be a person, any more than the fact that love is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13 as performing certain acts and exercising certain emotions, proves that charity, or love, is a person.¹⁰

Again in October 1896, a questioner probed into the mysterious nature of the Spirit of God. The question was, "do the scriptures warrant the praise or worship of the Holy Spirit? if not does not the last line of the doxology contain an unscriptural sentiment?"¹¹ Smith answered the first question in the negative. Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to worship the Holy Spirit, as we are commanded to worship Christ. In answer to the second question, he reasons that if in the baptismal formula the name of the Holy Spirit is to be used along with that of the Father and the Son, "Why could it not properly stand as a part of the same trinity in the hymn of praise, 'Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost'?"¹²

Uriah Smith's argument here and his use of the word "trinity" may suggest to some that perhaps his view of the nature of the Holy Spirit and of the relations between the members of the Deity have undergone a change in the direction of Trinitarianism, since last he expressed himself on the subject. As will be seen, this is not so. Through these years, his work *Daniel and the Revelation*, containing his Arian views, was being printed and circulated. In 1898, his book *Looking Unto Jesus* appeared with its strongly Arian description of Christ. The very next year after Smith's use of the word "trinity" in a *Review and Herald* article, he published, in answer to a questioner, his opinion that "there are various expressions concerning the Holy Spirit which would indicate that it could not be properly considered as a person such as its being 'shed abroad' in the heart, and 'poured out upon all flesh.'"¹³

It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Uriah Smith consistently held that the Holy Spirit is an influence, not a person nor a member of the Deity in a Trinitarian sense. No evidence has been discovered that he held any other belief on the subject, or that he changed his position prior to his death in 1903.

SMITH'S VIEW OF CHRIST

Uriah Smith's stand on the subject of the relation between Christ and the Father has been more widely publicized because of its inclusion in his volumes *Daniel and the Revelation*, and *Looking Unto Jesus*. The first issue of his commentary on Revelation

came off the press in 1865 under the title, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the book of Revelation*. Speaking of Christ in his comment on Revelation 3:14-22, Smith wrote:

Moreover he is "the beginning of the creation of God." Not the beginner, but the beginning, of the creation, the first created being, dating his existence far back before any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. On this expression Barnes makes the following significant admission: "if it *were* demonstrated from other sources that Christ was, in fact, a created being, and the first that God had made, it cannot be denied that this language would appropriately *express* that fact."¹⁴

In the 1882 edition of *Thoughts on the book of Daniel and the Revelation*, this statement was modified so as to exclude the suggestion that Christ was created in the ordinary sense of the term.¹⁵ The 1899 edition of the same work altered the statement again so that it now indicated it to be the opinion of the author that Christ was no created in the ordinary sense, but that there was a time when He did not exist:

Others, however, and more properly we think, take the word to mean "agent" or "efficient cause," which is one of the definitions of the word, understanding that Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things, but that he himself came into existence in a different manner, as he is called "the only begotten" of the Father. It would seem utterly inappropriate to apply this expression to any being created in the ordinary sense of the term.¹⁶

The 1907 edition of the work contained the comment in this identical form. The Southern Publishing Association produced "a new edition, revised and annotated" in 1941. For decades the Seventh-day Adventist Church had been Trinitarian in belief as will be seen later in the discussion. As would be expected, this comment on Revelation 3:14-22 was revised so as to relegate to the category of error any idea of Christ having been created. But surprisingly the statement still reads so as clearly to imply "that the Son came into existence." The passage reads as follows:

Moreover, he is "the beginning of the creation of God." Some attempt by this language to uphold the error that Christ was a created being, dating his existence anterior to that of any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God....Others, however, and more properly we think, take the word to mean "agent" or "efficient cause," which is one of the definitions if the word, understanding that Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things, but that the Son came into existence in a different manner, as he is called "the only begotten" of the Father. It would seem utterly inappropriate to apply this expression to any created being in the ordinary dense of the term.¹⁷

The phrase, "and more properly we think," clearly indicates that in the opinion of the author the view that follows, containing the statement "that the Son came into existence," is the correct one. Why the editors should have strengthened the opposition, contained in the statement, to the position that Christ was created, and yet have failed to delete the teaching that there was a time when He did not exist, is beyond the knowledge of the present writer. It is certainly difficult to understand in view of the official Trinitarian declarations of the Church at the time for years before this.¹⁸ It was not until the 1944 revision that the Arian view was finally excluded from this work. The statement now reads:

Others, however, and more properly we think, take the word, arche, to mean the "agent" or "efficient cause," which is one of the definitions of the word, understanding that Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things.¹⁹

Daniel and the Revelation in the older editions contained other utterances which were clearly anti-Trinitarian in intent. For instance, the 1882 edition contains a comment on Revelation 1:4 which denies eternity of existence to Christ. The phrase, "from him which is and which was, and which is to come," is said to be an "expression which signifies complete eternity, past and future, and can be applicable to God the Father only."²⁰ Smith points out that this language is never applied to Christ. On the use of the term "alpha and omega" in Revelation 1:11 he excludes any application of the phrase to Christ by quoting textual evidence for the omission of the words.²¹ Of course, Revelation 22:13 provides an undeniable application of this phrase to Christ, because of verse 16, but Smith explained the usage as follows:

Christ here applies to himself the appellation of Alpha and Omega. As applied to him, the expression must be taken in a more limited sense than when applied to the Father as in chap. 1:8. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of the great plan of salvation.²²

In 1898, the same year that Ellen G. White's book *The Desire of Ages* was published, the Review and Herald Publishing company produced Uriah Smith's work, *Looking Unto Jesus*. It is significant that the leading Denominational publishing house should produce in the same year two works, one so markedly anti-Arian and the other so distinctly Arian. Smith renewed and further explained his Arian teaching in this new work. He wrote:

God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be,--a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity,--appeared the Word... This uncreated Word was the Being, who, in the fullness of time was made flesh, and dwelt among us. His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. . . . Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation,

known only to Omniscience, and possibly only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared.²³

Obviously, Smith's 1865 teaching, that Christ was a created being, was a passing phase. Here again we see that although he recognizes a remote time at which Christ came into being, yet the process by which this took place is regarded as distinct from creation. After having been brought into existence, the Son was given equality with the Father. So Uriah Smith understands Paul's utterance as recorded in Philippians 2:6. He regards Deity as having in some mysterious way evolved. "with the Son," he writes, "the evolution of deity, as deity, ceased."²⁴

Uriah Smith in his book *Looking Unto Jesus* declared himself as adhering to the position that every part of Christ died on Calvary. In this he was in complete agreement with D. W. Hull. He believed that when Christ left heaven He left His immortality behind also. When He died it was "as a whole, as a divine being, as the Son of God." If this had not been so then the Saviour would have been merely a human one, and the sacrifice merely a human sacrifice, "but the prophet says that 'his soul' was made 'an offering for sin.' isa. 53:10."²⁵

Uriah Smith's position on the nature of God is, therefore, clearly Arian. The Holy Spirit is a mere influence. The Son was brought into existence by the Father, and although elevated to a position of equality with the Father, His authority is, at best, a delegated authority. The suggestion that the divine part of Christ did not die on Calvary he rejected as destructive of the possibility of the atonement.

ENDNOTES

¹Uriah Smith, "The Spirit of God," *Review and Herald*, XIII (February 17, 1859); 100.

²*Ibid.*

³Uriah Smith, "In the Question Chair," *Review and Herald*, LXVII (October 28, 1890), 664.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Acts 2:3,4.

⁶Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6.

⁷Uriah Smith, "The Spirit of Prophecy and Our Relation To It," *The General Conference Bulletin*, IV (March 18, 1891), 146.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Uriah Smith, "In the Question Chair," *Review and Herald*, LXVIII (November 10, 1891), 697.

¹⁰Uriah Smith, *ibid.*, LXIX (September 6, 1892), 568.

¹¹Uriah Smith, *ibid.*, LXXIII (October 27, 1896), 685.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, LXXIV (March 23, 1897), 188.

¹⁴Uriah Smith, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1865), p. 59.

¹⁵Uriah Smith, *Thoughts on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882), p.487.

¹⁶Ibid., 1899, p. 371.

¹⁷Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1941), p. 400.

¹⁸"Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1931), p.377.

¹⁹Uriah Smith, *op. cit.*, (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944), p. 391.

²⁰Uriah Smith, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882), p. 430.

²¹Ibid., p. 431.

²²Ibid., p. 817.

²³Uriah Smith, *Looking Unto Jesus*, (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1898), p. 10.

²⁴Ibid., p. 13.

²⁵Ibid., p. 23.

CHAPTER V

SMITH SUPPORTED BY HIS CONTEMPORARIES

LOUGHBOROUGH OPPOSES "PAGAN" TRINITARIANISM

James White was editor of the *Review and Herald* in 1861. In November of that year, he published J. N. Loughborough's answer to the question, "what serious objection is there to the doctrine of the trinity?" Loughborough replied:

There are many objections which we might urge, but on account of our limited space we shall reduce them to the following: 1. It is contrary to common sense. 2. It is contrary to Scripture. 3. It's origin is Pagan and fabulous.¹

In enlarging on the first point, Loughborough objected to the idea that three are one, and one, three. He opposes the use of the terms "the Triune God," and "the three-in-one God."² "if Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are each God, it would be three Gods." Under the second point he urges that in Scripture Father and Son are spoken of as two distinct persons. As indicated by John chapter 17, the oneness between them is the same as that between Christian believers. To believe the doctrine of the Trinity, to Loughborough, would involve acceptance of the idea that "God sent himself onto the world, died to reconcile the world to himself, raised himself from the dead, ascended to himself in heaven...."³ Here again we are confronted with anti-Trinitarianism based on opposition to what Trinitarians did not teach, that the Father was the Son and vice versa.

That Loughborough was opposing Trinitarianism, not merely as it appeared in his day, but in its earliest manifestation in the Christian Church, is evidenced by his amplification of his third point. The doctrine of the Trinity came into the church, so he argues, about the same time as image worship and Sunday observance. It is simply a renovation of the pagan Persian religion. It was introduced into the Christian Church about 325 A. D. and was an established doctrine by 681 A. D. Spain adopted it in 589, Africa in 534 and England in 596.⁴

J. N. Loughborough also declared himself on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Writing in 1898 he described the Spirit of God as "God's representative—the power by which he works, the agency by which all things are upheld."⁵ He says that the Spirit of God is recognized in the Bible as the Lord's presence. The Spirit of God, as spoken of in respect to creation, he describes as, "the creative energy of God." Throughout this 1898 article, Loughborough emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is God's power. He expresses no conception of the Spirit as a personality, and consistently uses the pronoun "it" in reference to the Third Person of the Godhead.

GOODRICH ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

E. Goodrich, writing for the Review in 1862 expressed his horror at the sentiment that there is no Spirit.⁶ He sees not much of worth left in Bible religion when it is divested of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He describes the Spirit as "the living and acting agent" by which God's work for man is accomplished."⁷ There is no indication as to whether Goodrich regarded this "agent" as a personally and a member of the Deity, or simply as an influence. This much is certain: that an anti-Trinitarian possessing the convictions of Uriah Smith, could heartily subscribe to what Goodrich wrote, as indicated by Smith's own discussion of the importance of the Holy Spirit in 1859.⁸

WHITNEY PRESENTS "BOTH SIDES"

S. B. Whitney became a Seventh-day Adventist some short time before 1862. His change of faith was seriously regretted by the Congregational Church at Malone, and two representatives of that congregation, A. Parmalee and J. B. Henck wrote to him with the intention of winning him back to his old faith.

The *Review and Herald* published the letter to Whitney and his reply. The relevant sections for the purpose of this discussion, are quoted here. Parmalee and Henck wrote:

A few words now in regard to the doctrine which you have recently embraced as substitutes for those you once adopted, but have now put away.

1. The doctrine of the Trinity you set aside as not a scripture doctrine. Our creed on this subject is, that there are three persons in *one God*, not three persons in one person, and that Christians are required to baptize in the name of these three, as constituting the only true God revealed on the scriptures. The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of *faith*, not of comprehension, nor could we solve the mysteries of this infinite, wonderful Being, if he were presented to us as existing in one person only.⁹

The writers proceed to depreciate Whitney's conduct in "launching out" as had the Unitarians and Socinians in an effort to gain knowledge beyond what is revealed in Scripture.

In his reply, S. B. Whitney fails to answer the Congregational creed that, "there are three persons in one God."¹⁰ Evidently Parmalee and Henck quoted this in their letter in answer to a previous accusation that their teaching involved the notion of "three persons in one person."¹¹ They are certainly objecting to this latter conception.

Whitney ignores the issues involved on this point and proceeds to prove that God has a form:

In Ex. xxxiii, 21-23, we read that God told Moses that he would cover him with his hand while he passed by, but that he should see his back parts. Will the Dr. charge God with deception or admit that he has a form? Will he receive Christ's testimony when he speaks of his Father's "shape"? Luke v, 37. Will he admit that Christ went to heaven bodily? Acts i, 9.¹²

There can be no doubt that Whitney was opposing the conception that God lacks bodily parts and form. The point is not even referred to in the Congregational letter. The Trinitarian position of three persons in one God is in no way answered in Whitney's reply. It appears reasonable to conclude:

1. that new converts to the Adventist Church at this stage were introduced to anti-Trinitarianism. At least this was so in Whitney's case. This was certainly the impression received by the Congregationalists of Malone; and no effort was made in Whitney's reply or elsewhere on the *Review and Herald* to correct this impression. On the contrary, the reply contained renewed opposition to the Trinitarian position. Of course, it is dangerous to generalize on this point. There may have been many converts who retained their Trinitarianism, but the present writer has not been able to discover evidence for this.

2. S. B. Whitney's reply evidences the reaction to certain extreme statements in the Trinitarian creed, which we have noticed in other early Seventh-day Adventist writers, but,

3. There can be no doubt that the Trinitarians at this time did not teach, as certain Seventh-day Adventist writers interpreted them as teaching, that Christ and God are one person. The Congregational creed, as referred to by Parmalee and Henck, clearly stated that "there are three persons in *one God*, not three persons in one person."¹³

ENDNOTES

¹J. N. Loughborough, "Questions for Bro. Loughborough," *Review and Herald*, XVIII (November 5, 1861), 184.

²*Ibid.*

³J. N. Loughborough, "Questions for Bro. Loughborough," *Review and Herald*, XVIII (November 5, 1861), 184.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵J. N. Loughborough, "The Spirit of God, " *Review and Herald*, LXXV (September 20, 1898), 600.

⁶E. Goodrich, "No Spirit," *Review and Herald*, XIX (January 28, 1862), 68.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*cf. ante.*, p. 18.

⁹S. B. Whitney, "Both Sides," *Review and Herald*, XIX (March 4, 1862), 109.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, 110.

¹³*Ibid.*, 109.

CHAPTER VI

CANRIGHT AN ANTI-TRINITARIAN APOLOGIST

Writing for the *Review and Herald* in the period from 1867 to 1878, D. M. Canright confined himself, for the most part, to a very verbal and somewhat polemic reiteration of what his Seventh-day Adventist predecessors had written.

CANRIGHT'S 1867 ARTICLE

In 1867 he produced an article entitled, "Jesus Christ the Son of God." He wrote:

Christ came into existence first of all things... My grounds for this proposition are John i:1,2; Col. i, 17; Prov. viii, 22, 30. "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." Here, the existence of the Word, or Christ, is placed as far back as language can place it, even in the beginning with the great God.¹

Canright understood that Christ was begotten, not created in the same sense as angels and men. We are commanded to worship the Son, and no created being is ever worthy of worship. The Son is not to be regarded as great as the Father for first all things are subdued under the Son and then the Son becomes subject to the Father. Here Canright quotes John 14:28 and 1 Cor. 15:28. Therefore, he concludes, "The Son is subordinate to the Father."² Christ cannot be described, as the Father can, as the "very and eternal God." As did his predecessors, Canright assumes that Trinitarians teach that the Father and the Son are one person, and then proceeds to demonstrate the incorrectness of this position. When Christ died, every part of him died otherwise the sacrifice was only a human one.

CANRIGHT'S 1878 ARTICLES

In 1878, Canright produced a series of four articles headed "the personality of God," greatly amplifying his views and providing strong opposition to the Trinitarian position. He wrote, "Jesus says that his father is the only true God. but trinitarians contradict this by saying that the Son and the Holy Ghost are just as much the true God as the Father is."³ Canright opposed the creedal conception of God as "without body, part, or passion." "I do not believe," he said, "that any person, whatever his creed may be, ever prays to God without conceiving of him as having a body, form, and shape, and being located upon a throne in heaven."⁴ He provides considerable Scriptural quotation as evidence for his belief. He denies the usual distinction between matter and spirit, and regards God as possessing form and parts, even though He is a

Spirit.⁵ "It is our opinion," he writes, "founded both in revelation and science, that celestial beings are as material as men, only that they are more highly organized, more refined,—matter on a higher plane."⁶

In the same year, 1878, *The Signs of the Times* published an article by Canright entitled "the Holy Spirit not a person, but an influence proceeding from God." He begins:

All trinitarian creeds make the Holy Ghost a person, equal in substance, power, eternity, and glory with the Father and Son. Thus they claim three persons in the trinity, each one equal with both others. If this is so, then the Holy Spirit is just as truly an individual intelligent person as is the Father or the Son. But this we cannot believe. The Holy Spirit is not a person. In all our prayers we naturally conceive of God as a person, and of the Son as a person, but whoever conceived of the Holy Ghost as being a person, standing there beside the Father and equal with Him?⁷

On the contrary Canright takes the decided stand that the Holy Spirit is "a divine influence proceeding from the Father and also from the Son, as their power, energy, etc."⁸ The Spirit is personified in the Bible only because it is the Spirit of a person. In a similar way is man's spirit personified.

ENDNOTES

1. ¹D. M. Canright, "Jesus Christ the Son of God," *Review and Herald*, III (June 18, 1867),

²*Ibid.*

73. ³D. M. Canright, "The Personality of God," *Review and Herald*, III (August 29, 1878),

⁴*Ibid.*, Sept. 5, 1878, 81.

⁵*Ibid.*, Sept. 19, 1878, 97.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷D. M. Canright, "The Holy Spirit not a Person, but an Influence Proceeding from God," *The Signs of the Times*, IV (July 25, 1878), 218.

⁸*Ibid.*

CHAPTER VII

FROM CANRIGHT TO WAGGONER

DENNIS ACCEPTS "ONE GOD"

It was during James White's term as editor of *The Signs of the Times* that A. J. Dennis in 1879 published his article entitled "one god." He wrote:

What a contradiction of terms is found in the language of a trinitarian creed: "In unity of this Godhead are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." There are many things that are mysterious written in the word of God, but we may safely presume the Lord never calls upon us to believe impossibilities. But creeds often do.¹

Dennis regarded belief in two self-existent beings each equal in power, as postulating the existence of two Gods. But, he says, the Bible teaches the existence of only one. He saw no difficulty in ascribing eternity to both Father and Son if "eternity" refers to "duration without end." In this sense Enoch and Elijah and all the redeemed saints have eternity of existence.²

HOPKINS ABETS ANTI-TRINITARIANISM

J. M. Hopkins writing for the *Review and Herald* in 1883 attached great importance to the work of the Holy Spirit, but proceeded to define its existence in the following term, "it is that almighty, holy influence operating in the universe of god, by means of which worlds have been formed, physical laws established and maintained;..."³

God, he believed, has communicated to his people by means of the Spirit, the saints are to be raised by the same power, and the living changed into an incorruptible form ready for translation, by the same Spirit. But the Spirit remains an "influence" as different from a person, an equal member in the Godhead.

SWIFT AND TENNY IN DOUBT

Two men wrote for the *Review and Herald* In 1883, leaving the question as to the nature of the Holy Spirit an open one. Neither was prepared to dogmatize and both placed emphasis on the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit. Swift wrote, "Just what the spirit is, is a mooted question among theologians, and we may not hope to give it a positive answer, but we may learn something of its nature, and the part it acts

in human salvation."⁴ He proceeds to speak of the work of the Spirit and consistently uses the personal pronoun "he" in reference to the Spirit. There is no real indication in the article as to whether Swift believed the Holy Spirit an influence or a person, but the tenor of the article is certainly in the direction of the latter conception.

G. C. Tenny in his article entitled "The Comforter," asserts that whatever the existence of the Holy Spirit is material or immaterial, whether it is "a personal being, or a representative influence, it exists, clothed with an all-seeing and omnipresent nature, and claims our most sacred respect."⁵ Here again the writer leaves the question open as to the personality of the Holy Spirit. Later in the century, in 1896, Tenny wrote an answer to a question sent in by a correspondent. The question was as follows:

Please explain 1 John 5:8. (1) Is the word "spirit" synonymous with the Holy Ghost of verse 7? (2) What is the Holy Ghost? How do we receive it, through God, or through angels? (3) Is the Comforter of John 16:7,8 the Holy Ghost? If so, how can it be alluded to as "him" and "he"?—C.W.W.⁶

Tenny disposed of the first question by saying that the last part of verse 7 and the first part of verse 8 is an interpolation which ought not to be in the Scriptures. He adds:

It is not in the Revised Version, and it is well understood by Biblical scholars that these words were inserted by some one who desired to render more prominent an erroneous idea of the dogma of the Trinity.⁷

Of course modern scholarship would not disagree with Tenny's rejection of the 1 John 5:7 and 8 interpolation. But it is clear from his statement that he is not Trinitarian. The idea, which the passage would prove, were it genuine, is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. This idea Tenny regards as "erroneous."

In spite of this, Tenny does not rule out the possibility that the Holy Spirit is a person. In answer to the second question he wrote, "we cannot tell. we cannot describe the Holy Spirit." He regards the Scriptural evidence of such a nature that he is "led to believe he is something more than an emanation from the mind of god." Tenny continues:

He is included in the apostolic benedictions, and is spoken of by our Lord as acting in an independent and personal capacity as teacher, guide, and comforter. He is an object of veneration, and is a heavenly intelligence, everywhere present, and always present. But as limited beings, we cannot understand the problems which the contemplation of the Deity presents to our minds.⁸

Here we are confronted with a writer who obviously has not accepted the doctrine of the Trinity, but whose doubts in regard to the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit seem to be gradually resolving in the direction of the Trinitarian belief. He is not yet thoroughly sure, but is at least prepared to concede that "He," the Spirit of God, "is something more than an emanation from the mind of God."

J. H. WAGGONER HOLDS TRINITY CONCEPT "DEGRADES" ATONEMENT

The Pacific Press published J. H. Waggoner's book, *The Atonement*, in 1884. As has been shown Waggoner was by no means the first Seventh-day Adventist writer who regarded the Trinitarian view of Christ as subversive of the atonement, but his work underlined and for a time perpetuated this position. He wrote, "surely, we say right, that the doctrine of a trinity degrades the atonement, by bringing this sacrifice, the blood of our purchase, down to the standard of socinianism."⁹

The point which Waggoner emphasizes so often is that in Christ there were not two distinct natures during the incarnation, one, the human, which died, and the other, the Divine which, when the human died, ascended again to the Father. This view would render the sacrifice a human one, and therefore an inadequate one for human redemption.

Waggoner regards it as impossible for the self-existent God to die. He says, "here is a plain declaration that 'the ever-living, self-existent god' died for sinners, which we *cannot* believe...."¹⁰ The Father was the self-existent God, Christ was not. Therefore, Christ could die for sinners. Both His human and divine attributes died on the Cross. This position led Waggoner to conclude that Christ was subordinate possessing a derived existence. Christ was pre-existent but not self-existent and therefore God in a subordinate sense. Waggoner wrote:

The first of the above quotations say the Word *was* God, and also the Word *was with* God. Now it needs no proof—indeed it is self-evident that the Word *as* God, was not *the God* whom he was *with*. And as there is but "one God," the term must be used in reference to the Word in a subordinate sense, which is explained by Paul's calling the same pre-existent person the Son of God.¹¹

It was this pre-existent, subordinate Son of God who died on Calvary and provided the possibility of atonement. It is clear, therefore, that Waggoner's repudiation of Trinitarianism was in view of its apparent contradiction of his understanding of the atonement.

ENDNOTES

¹A. J. Dennis, "One God," *The Signs of the Times*, V (May 22, 1879), 162.

²*Ibid.*

³J. M. Hopkins, "Grieve Not The Spirit," *Review and Herald*, LX (July 3, 1883), 417.

⁴J. E. Swift, "Our Companion," *Review and Herald*, LX (July 3, 1883), 421.

⁵G. C. Tenny, "The Comforter," *Review and Herald*, LX (October 30, 1883), 673.

⁶G. C. Tenny, "To Correspondents," *Review and Herald*, LXXIII (June 9, 1896), 362.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement* (Oakland, Cal.: Pacific Press, 1884), p. 174.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.176.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 153.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM MORSE TO E. J. WAGGONER

MORSE SUBORDINATED CHRIST TO THE FATHER

BOLLMAN SEES SPIRIT AS "POWER" OF GOD

Writing for the *Signs of the Times* in November 1889. C.P. Bollman declared that the Spirit of God "is essentially divine."³ But he does not go so far as to portray the Holy Spirit as a distinct personality and member of the Deity. This Spirit is the "power" of God by which the Son created all things. The Spirit is "an essential part of God, and therefore, necessarily divine," but "it" remains to Bollman an impersonal power.⁴

THE 1889 YEARBOOK

The 1889 Yearbook was the first to include a definition of the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. The statement of their understanding of God is interesting in that it is such that both Trinitarians and anti-Trinitarians could subscribe to it without violating their respective convictions. The declaration reads:

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

II. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom he created all things, and by whom they do consist; . . .⁵

The identical statement appeared in the Yearbook of 1905. The Trinitarian of course could agree with the entire passage. He would interpret it his way, including Christ and the Holy Spirit in the term "one God" in item I. But so could the anti-Trinitarian agree with it. He would interpret the passage to mean that only the Father is eternal. He would be, to the Arian, the "one God" referred to in item I. There is no indication in this declaration that the Arian views of the "Smiths, Canrights and Waggoners" in the Adventist Church had been superseded by Trinitarianism.

E. J. WAGGONER AGREES WITH HIS BRETHREN

Back in 1890, before he left the Adventist Church E. J. Waggoner expressed himself on the subject of the pre-existence of Christ in a manner consistent with what we have discovered to be the traditional explanation given by Seventh-day Adventist writers up to this time. In his work *Christ and His Righteousness* he wrote, "We know that Christ 'proceeded forth and came from God' (John 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man."⁶

To E. J. Waggoner, at least at this stage of his career, Christ had a beginning. There was a time when He had not existed. His life was derived from that of the Father. This view was in no way regarded by Waggoner as a contradiction of his remark a little farther on in the same work to the effect that Christ is God by inheritance possessing the attributes of Deity.⁷ Nor would it necessarily be ruled out by what Waggoner wrote in 1900 that, "'Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,' are associated on equal terms. 'I and my Father are one.' John 10:30. They both sit upon one throne. Heb. 1:3; 8:1; rev. 3:21."⁸ Even Uriah Smith, for all his Arian pronouncements, conceived of Christ as "the Associate Majesty of Heaven equal with the Father, and sharing equally in the glory;..."⁹ This equality was conferred upon Him, hence He is not God in the same sense as the Father. Waggoner's remark in 1900 that both Father and Son "sit upon one throne" is, however, a departure from the position of G. W. Morse that the Father, as Supreme Ruler, has His throne in heaven while the Son has His on this earth.

After leaving the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and shortly before his death, E. J. Waggoner wrote out his *Confession of Faith*. In it we read this declaration:

From the simple truth that Christ is "the image of the invisible God,"—the shining forth of His glory, the manifestation of His unchangeable character,—Himself the same yesterday, and all the yesterdays, and today, and forever, we must believe and know that from the days of eternity of old until now, Christ has exercised the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and king.¹⁰

Had Waggoner altered his former stand so that now he conceived of Christ as a Being without beginning? Had he now accepted the Trinitarian doctrine of the eternal pre-existence of Christ? Taking the statement in isolation from his former utterances one would probably conclude that. The phrase, "from the days of eternity of old until now," strongly suggests this. But Waggoner had written in 1850 that Christ came into existence "so far back in the ages of eternity ..."¹¹ The "days of eternity" of the 1916 declaration might well have reference to the infinite period which, in Waggoner's earlier work, was said to have elapsed since Christ "came forth from God."

ENDNOTES

¹G. W. Morse, "How Many Eternal Thrones," *Review and Herald* LXIII (October 12, 1886), 634.

²G. W. Morse, "The Great God," *Review and Herald*, LXIII (May 11, 1886), 299.

³C. P. Bollman, "The Spirit of God," *The Signs of the Times*, XV (November 4, 1889), 663.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵"Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1889), p. 147.

⁶E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Oakland, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1890), p. 9, cf. 19, 21, 22.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸E. J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings* (Oakland, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1900), p. 13.

⁹Uriah Smith, *Looking Unto Jesus* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1889), p. 11.

¹⁰E. J. Waggoner, *Confession of Faith* ([n.p.], 1916), p. 8.

¹¹cf. *ante*, p. 42.

CHAPTER IX

FROM 1890 TO 1898

BORDEAU REGRETS DIVERSITY OF OPINION

There can be no doubt but that in 1890 there was no unity of understanding in regard to the nature of God, in Adventist circles. D. T. Bordeaux wrote in November of that year:

Although we claim to be believers in, and worshippers of, only one God, I have thought that there are as many gods among us as there are conceptions of the Deity. And how many there are of these, and how limited are most of them! Rather, how limited are *all of them!* We do not half study the character of God the Father and of God the Son, and the result is that we make Christ such beings as ourselves.¹

Unfortunately for our purpose Bordeaux does not elaborate on the nature of the prevailing conceptions of the Deity. Whether he is referring to an Arian versus Trinitarian disagreement among believers is difficult to say. The evidence he presents is valuable in so far as it indicates that the church was by no means united in its concept of God, and the remark would seem to suggest that the vocal, influential anti-Trinitarian writers were not, at this time, representing the views of the Church as a whole.

WILLIAMSON HOLDS HOLY SPIRIT AN INFLUENCE

Almost a year after Bordeaux's remark, T. R. Williamson wrote for the *Review and Herald* reiterating the old argument that the Holy Spirit was not a person, but an influence. He cannot see that the Bible references to the Holy Spirit intend to us "to conclude that a person is meant, or that any other idea is intended by these terms, than that of an influence."² No one, proceeds Williamson, is ever baptized with or filled with a person. But they are baptized with and filled with the Spirit. The personification of the Holy Spirit in Scripture he considers to be simply a figure of speech.

Williamson repudiated the Trinitarian belief that the Holy Spirit is God. He wrote:

It was said by the Lord Jesus, "I and my Father are one." If there are three persons in the Godhead, why did he not include all three in one? Why did he only say, "I and my Father are one," if the Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead, one with the Father and Son? Why this ignoring of the third person of the Trinity?³

He concludes by repeating that the Holy Spirit "is simply an influence from God." It is a manifestation of the power of God which pervades the universe as air pervades the earth.⁴

PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHES SPEAR ARTICLE

The publication in 1892, by the Pacific Press, of a Trinitarian article, written by a non-Adventist writer, would seem to indicate a growing acceptance of this doctrine in the Adventist Church. The article entitled, "The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity" was written by Samuel T. Spear and published in 1889 in the *New York Independent*.⁵ The Pacific Press reprinted it in 1892 as No. 90 of the Bible Student's Library.

The Spear article clearly defines the Trinitarian position as teaching the unity of the Godhead consisting of three persons:

This doctrine, as held and stated by those who adopt it, is not a system of tri-theism, or the doctrine of three Gods, but it is the doctrine of one God subsisting and acting in three persons, with the qualification that the term "person", though perhaps the best that can be used, is not, when used in this relation, to be understood in any sense that would make it inconsistent with the unity of the Godhead, and hence not to be understood in the ordinary sense when applied to man.⁶

The article thus effectively answered those Seventh-day Adventists who had confused Trinitarianism with Monarchianism, and those who had confused it with tri-theism. But there is much in the article that would be quite unobjectionable to Adventist anti-Trinitarians. The Son is spoken of as "in some respect distinct from and subordinate to God the Father."⁷ And this subordination is not said to be simply in regard to his human nature. Spear wrote, "the subordination extends to his divine as well as his human nature."⁸

God acted through Christ in the work of creation. Christ was the subordinate agent. Christ was "sent" into the world and delivered "up for us all." Therefore the Father possessed "some kind of primacy."⁹ Spear quotes 1 Cor. 15:28 as proving that after Christ's reinstatement in heaven he is subordinate to the Father, and that not in His human nature merely, but in His higher divine nature.¹⁰ This was certainly a palatable form of Trinitarianism for Adventists who had in the past, and who during and after this time, opposed the doctrine.

Spear does not go so far as to say that the subordination of the Son to the Father involved the propagation of the Son by the Father back in the eternal ages. There is no

suggestion that there was a time when the Son did not exist. In reference to this theory he writes:

The theory of the *eternal generation* of the Son by the Father, with the cognate theory of the *eternal generation* of the Holy Ghost from the Father, or from the Father and the Son, while difficult even to apprehend, and while at best but a mystical speculation, is an effort to be wise, not only above what is written, but also beyond the possibilities of human knowledge.¹¹

It is difficult to resolve the contradiction in Spear's judgment that the Son "is truly divine and truly God in the most absolute sense," with his opinion that in His divine nature Christ is subordinate to the Father. He regards the Arian, who views Christ as more than human but less than divine as in error, because of his failure to recognize the absolute divinity of Christ. But Spear himself recognizing, as he asserts, the absolute divinity of Christ, yet proceeds to fall into the Arian dilemma of regarding His divinity as subordinate to that of the Father. Here we have absolute divinity inferior to absolute divinity, which, in the final analysis, is perilously close to the Arian conception of the anti-Trinitarian writers of the Adventist Church.

JONES APPROACHES TRINITARIANISM

A. T. Jones recognized the Holy Spirit as the presence of Christ. His sermon "the third angel's message" was published in the *General Conference Bulletin* in 1895. Jones spoke of the Holy Ghost as "the real presence of christ" to the believer.¹² And he adds, "can he bring christ to us without bringing the mind of christ to us?—assuredly not."¹³ The remark is not conclusive evidence that Jones accepted the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, but it seems to indicate that possibly this was so.

A series of editorial articles appeared in the *Review and Herald* in 1900 under the title, "The Faith of Jesus." Uriah Smith and A. T. Jones were co-editors at this time. The serial article is not signed, but the language and style of writing appear to be that of A. T. Jones. The writer sets forth Christ's likeness to God as taught in the first chapter of Hebrews and His likeness to man as indicated by the second chapter. Just as Christ is like the Father "in very nature," of the same substance and form of the Father, so, says Jones, he bears in his human nature a complete likeness to fallen humanity.¹⁴ Of course this question of the human nature of Christ was of special concern to Jones as revealed by his emphasis on the subject in his book, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*.¹⁵ This serial *Review and Herald* article contains the identical emphasis, and thus provides us with an additional clue to its authorship.

The important relevant point in this series is that "Jesus and God are 'of one'—of one flesh, of *one nature*, of *one substance* ..." ¹⁶ This was a major departure from the militant opposition to such views by earlier writers.

M. C. WILCOX AND THE "divine unity"

M. C. Wilcox explained the Scriptural passages that refer to the Holy Spirit as a person, in the light that "It" is the personal representative of both the Father and the Son. ¹⁷ Writing for the *Signs of the Times* in 1898, he failed to credit personality and Deity to the Spirit in the Trinitarian sense. The Holy Spirit "comes to the believer as a person, the person of Christ Jesus...." ¹⁸

Wilcox wrote an article in 1898 entitled "The Divine Unity." The unity is not presented as the unity of three divine persons, but that of "one God, the Father." ¹⁹ Christ is depicted as "under God, our Creator and Redeemer." ²⁰ Once again the reader of the Denominational literature is confused by the subordination of the Son to the Father.

ENDNOTES

¹D. T. Bordeau, "We May Partake of the Fullness of the Father and the Son," *Review and Herald*, LXVII (November 18, 1890), 707.

²T. R. Williamson, "The Holy Spirit—Is It a Person?" *Review and Herald*, LXVIII (October 13, 1891), 627.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Samuel T. Spear, "The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity," *The Bible Students' Library*, No. 90, (March, 1892), 3-14. (Reprint from *New York Independent*, November 14, 1889).

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 11,12.

¹²A. T. Jones, "Holy Spirit the Presence of Christ," *The General Conference Bulletin*, I (February 25, 1895), 329.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴A. T. Jones (ed.), "The Faith of Jesus," *Review and Herald*, LXXVII (December 18, 1900), 808.

¹⁵A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1905), p. 129.

¹⁶A. T. Jones (ed.), "The Faith of Jesus," *Review and Herald*, LXXVII (December 25, 1900), 824.

¹⁷M. C. Wilcox, "The Spirit—Impersonal and Personal," *The Signs of the Times*, XXIV (August 18, 1898), 518.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹M. C. Wilcox, "The Divine Unity," *The Signs of the Times*, XXIV (December 22, 1898), 816.

²⁰*Ibid.*

CHAPTER X

A CHANGE AFTER 1898

It was after 1898 that the Adventist Church began publishing Trinitarian sentiments with increasing frequency. Ellen G. White's book, *The Desire of Ages* appeared in this year with its unequivocal definition of Christ's place as equal in power and authority with the Father, and of the Holy Spirit as "the third person of the godhead."¹ The markedly Arian or anti-Trinitarian conceptions which continued to be published in Adventist literature after this point, appeared only in those works written at an earlier date, or in 1898 before *Desire of Ages* had made its impact. It is true that certain members of the Church at various times since then have adhered to and circulated Arian views, but for the most part these have not been published by the Denomination.

KING'S MESSENGER ARTICLES

In 1898 and 1900 the *Review and Herald* printed three articles from "The King's Messenger," all of which were clearly Trinitarian in teaching. The first appeared in 1898 and was entitled, "The God-man."² It said, "the God-man is Immanuel, God with us,—God with us in the person and presence of the Holy Ghost." Here the Holy Spirit is a divine person. The second article, appearing in January 1900, deprecated the fact that Christians worship the Father and the Son, but "will not give the place of power and authority to their representative, the blessed Holy Ghost."³ The pronoun "he" is used throughout in reference to the Holy Spirit.

The third article, appearing in April 1900 is even more convincing as evidence of the changed tenor of thinking among Seventh-day Adventists. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as "one with and sent by the Father and the son."⁴ He possesses personality for, "he would make us know his personality, but ever in living connection with Christ."⁵ And finally the reader is admonished, "Let him make you know, beloved, how surprisingly beautiful are the blended personalities of our triune God, manifested by the personal presence of the Holy Ghost."⁶ Then after so many years of opposition to the doctrine, the Church now possesses a "triune God," while the Holy Spirit is accepted as a Person and a member of the Deity.

J. Edson White wrote of Christ in 1898 as, "standing equal with the Father in the realm of Heaven, and in all the created universe."⁷ R. A. Underwood in the same year indicated that his view of the Holy Spirit had changed. He wrote, "It seems strange to me now, that I ever believed that the Holy Spirit was only an influence, in view of the work He does."⁸

He continues by explaining Satan's design of destroying faith in the personality of the Godhead,— "the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost..."⁹ S. N. Haskell, in 1900, spoke of Christ as "the Son of God, equal with the Father."¹⁰ In 1903 Haskell stressed that God and Christ possess distinct personality and form.¹¹ J. M. Cole in 1929 wrote, "Our Lord Jesus Christ is to His people an Eternal Father, because He is eternally the same, 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.'"¹²

ROBINSON LEAVES A DOUBT

A. T. Robinson writing for the *Review and Herald* in 1929, leaves a doubt in the reader's mind as to his true position. He states, "there is 'one God' to whom the sinner must be reconciled, or else go down to eternal death. there is 'one mediator,' through whom alone such reconciliation can be effected."¹³ His article is headed "One God and One Mediator," and, whether intentionally or not, he gives the impression that the one God is the Father only. He is to become the Supreme Ruler of the universe. "When the Plan of Salvation is completed, there will be a reunion of the 'whole family in Heaven and earth,' over whom one Supreme Father will precede."¹⁴ As proof he quotes 1 Cor. 15:28. The reader cannot do otherwise than receive the impression that in the mind of the writer there lingers the doctrine of the subordination of the Son to the Father.

F. M. WILCOX A TRINITARIAN

F. M. Wilcox in 1931 left no doubt as to his meaning when he wrote, "on the contrary, the bible represents Christ as very God, as deity itself; he partook of the very nature and essence of the eternal Father."¹⁵ Wilcox then proceeded to define the current position of the Church on the subject:

We recognize the divine Trinity,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,—each possessing a distinct and separate personality, but one in nature and in purpose, so welded together in this infinite union that the apostle James speaks of them as "one God." James 2:19.¹⁶

Wilcox quotes the 1931 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* in support of his statement. This was the first year in which a Trinitarian formula of belief was inserted into the *Yearbook*. It read as follows:

2. That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy

Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matt. 28:19

3. That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father.¹⁷

This is the official belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The 1962 *Yearbook* repeats this statement of faith in substantially the form in which it first appeared in 1931.¹⁸

ENDNOTES

¹E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 671.

²The King's Messenger, "The God-man," *Review and Herald*, LXXV (September 20, 1898), 598.

³The King's Messenger, "The Third Person," *Review and Herald*, LXXVII (January 16, 1900), 35.

⁴The King's Messenger, "Blended Personalities," *Review and Herald*, LXXVII (April 3, 1900), 210.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷J. E. White, *The Coming King* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1898), p. 15.

⁸R. A. Underwood, "The Holy Spirit a Person," *Review and Herald*, LXXV (May 17, 1898), 310.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰S. N. Haskell, "Christ in Holy Flesh, Or a Holy Christ in Sinful Flesh," *Review and Herald*, LXXVII (October 2, 1900), 634.

¹¹S. N. Haskell, "The Personality of God," *Review and Herald*, LXXX (October 8, 1903), 9.

¹²J. M. Cole, "The Everlasting Father," *Review and Herald*, CVI (January 31, 1929), 19.

¹³A. T. Robinson, "One God and One Mediator," *Review and Herald*, CVI (October 31, 1929), 6.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵F. M. Wilcox, "Christ Is Very God," *Review and Herald*, CVIII (October 29, 1931), 3.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷"Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1931), p. 377.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 1962, p. 5.

CHAPTER XI

WASHBURN ATTEMPTS TO REVIVE OLD POSITION

On October 14, 1939, W. W. Prescott preached a sermon in the Takoma Park Church on the subject, "The Coming One." He took the position that Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New Testament. He urged that the three persons of the Godhead cannot be regarded as separate personalities in the same sense as human beings, because there is a mysterious union between them which is dissoluble.¹

OPPOSES PRESCOTT SERMON

J. S. Washburn took exception to the Prescott sermon, and produced twenty typed pages in answer to the Trinitarian position. The first section consists of a polemical attempt to refute Trinitarianism, particularly as represented by Prescott's sermon, and the second section comprises a personal attack on Prescott. Washburn exposes himself throughout as a testy supporter of a dying cause. He describes the doctrine of the Trinity as "a cruel heathen monstrosity removing Jesus from the true position of Divine Saviour and Mediator."² Trinitarianism is of pagan origin and it is characteristic of Roman theology. In fact it is "Satan's crowning masterpiece of apostate counterfeit Christianity."³

HIS VIEW OF CHRIST

Washburn's depiction of Christ was identical to that of the older Adventist writers. Christ was brought into being, begotten of the Father. The Father is Jehovah and the Son Adoni.⁴ He accuses Prescott of teaching that the Father and the Son are one person. His illustrations of the absurdity of that view are practically identical to those used by the early Adventist writers. The unity between the Father and Christ Washburn sees as entirely analogous to that between Christ and His disciples. If Prescott is correct then, says Washburn, the Father was born of the Virgin, and He hung on the cross and died. Obviously the basis of his anxiety is the old problem of J. H. Waggoner and others that the divine in Christ died, but he says the Trinitarian teaching renders this impossible. Then the sacrifice was not an adequate atonement.⁵

HE CONTRADICTS HIMSELF

Washburn attempts to explain the Ellen G. White statement, "Deity did not sink and die, that would have been impossible."⁶ He quotes Job 34:12, 14, 15 and Ps. 36:9 as evidence that when a man dies God simply takes back the life He has previously given. Just so:

When Christ was begotten of the Father, He received the life of God, His Father. When Jesus died on the cross, he said, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," (or life), and the life of God was given back to the Father, and for a time, three days and nights, that life was with the Father from whence it had come. In the resurrection that life of God is restored to the one who died. Ps. 104:30. But between his death on Friday afternoon, till Sunday morning, the Son of God was dead.⁷

Thus Washburn reduces the life of Christ, the pre-existent, divine Christ, to the level of human existence, derived from the Father in the same sense, re-called at death and re-bestowed in the resurrection, in the same sense. Then Washburn proceeds to quote a Spirit of Prophecy statement which contradicts the argument he has just presented. The statement he quotes is as follows:

When he closed his eyes in death upon the cross, the soul of Jesus did not go at once to Heaven.... All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with his body in the sepulchre. And when he came forth it was as a whole being. He did not have to summon his spirit from heaven.⁸

Washburn confidently affirmed, "This squarely contradicts the teaching of Elder Prescott."⁹ But what he had overlooked was that it squarely contradicted J. S. Washburn. He had just announced that "the life of God was given back to the Father..." But the Ellen G. White statement, which he quoted as supporting evidence, has the life of Jesus remaining in the sepulchre.

The remainder of Washburn's attack on Trinitarianism in general, and Prescott's sermon in particular, consists of a piling up of reasons as to why the Godhead could not be one person. As were the early Adventist Arians, Washburn is opposing Monarchianism. Thus he exposes his misunderstanding of what Trinitarians teach. He concludes, "The whole Trinity doctrine is utterly foreign to all the Bible and the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Revelation gives *not* the slightest hint of it."¹⁰

So dies the fading splendour of Seventh-day Adventist anti-Trinitarianism!

ENDNOTES

¹J. S. Washburn, "The Trinity." (Paper filed in Office of the Dean, Andrews University, Theological Seminary. [n.p., n.d.]), p. 2. (Mimeographed)

²*Ibid.*, p. 1.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p.2.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶Ellen G. White, Letter 280, 1904, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol, V (1956), 1113.

⁷Washburn, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁸Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. III (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1878), pp. 203, 204.

⁹Washburn, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 8.

CHAPTER XII

A QUESTIONABLE CONCLUSION

Some short time ago, certain updated, unsigned, mimeographed documents were circulated by the Seventh-day Adventist leadership in answer to some of the positions taken by M. L. Andreasen. Document I entitled, "Uriah Smith's Restricted View of the Atonement," states, "both Smith and Waggoner were in the minority group of Arians, or anti-Trinitarians, as regards the Godhead, following the crisis of 1844."¹ Document II, entitled, "J. H. Waggoner's Position on the Atonement" states:

However, it is essential to note, first, that our founding fathers came out of diversified denominational backgrounds. Many were Trinitarians, while a few came from the "Christian Connection," which was militantly Arian, or anti-Trinitarian. But some of these few rose to positions of prominence among us. Smith and Waggoner both held Arian views. Both were writers and editors, and interwove Arian views into their writings.²

In the light of the evidence presented in this paper, it might justifiably be asked, where is the proof that in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventists "many were Trinitarians," or that the anti-Trinitarians were a minority? Almost every utterance on the subject published in Adventist literature prior to 1898 was Arian or anti-Trinitarian. The Spear article was a notable exception, but it was a reprint of an article written by a non-Adventist writer, and it contained the doctrine of the subordination of the Son to the Father, which was quite acceptable to the Adventist anti-Trinitarian, but quite unacceptable to the later believer who concurred with the 1931 statement of belief.

As has been shown, there was prior to 1898 considerable diversity of belief on the subject of the nature of God. Bordeau in 1890 regretted this. But the present writer has been unable to discover any evidence that "many were Trinitarians" before 1898, nor has there been found any Trinitarian declaration written, prior to that date, by an Adventist writer, other than Ellen G. White.

The statement quoted from the document, "J. H. Waggoner's position on the atonement," strongly suggests that it was the few who came from the "Christian Connection," and who rose to "prominence among us," who are regarded as responsible for the dissemination of Arian, or anti-Trinitarian views among Adventists,³ Smith and Waggoner are then cited as holding Arian views. But no evidence is given that these men came from the "Christian Connection," as the statement would suggest. As has been shown, James White and Joseph Bates came

from this organization, but it is not known who else. And is it to be believed that all the Adventist writers examined in this thesis, who presented Arian opinions, came from the Christian Connection? Of course that was not so. The truth is as stated by the document quoted above, that "our founding fathers came out of diversified denominational backgrounds."⁴ This fact, and the fact that so many were Arians, is sufficient to prove that the origin of a few from the "Christian Connection" is not adequate explanation of the anti-Trinitarianism consistently appearing in Adventist literature.

Of course the writers and editors of any church organization will be a minority group. So they were in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But this minority group happened to present, almost without exception, anti-Trinitarian statements in articles and books. This certainly does not look like evidence that "many were Trinitarians." If Trinitarians were so numerous it is strange indeed that some of them did not put their views in writing. Some would perhaps blame Uriah Smith for preventing this. Then why did not Trinitarian articles appear in the years when James White was editor of the *Review and Herald*? And what evidence is there that Uriah Smith exercised such an over-riding influence that for decades he succeeded in excluding from publication, in any form, the Trinitarian beliefs of the majority of Adventists?

ENDNOTES

¹"Uriah Smith's Restricted View Of The Atonement" (Paper supplied by L. E. Froom, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, [n.p., n.d.]), p.1. (Mimeographed).

²"J. H. Waggoner's Position On The Atonement" (Paper supplied by L. E. Froom, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, [n.p., n.d.]), p.1. (Mimeographed).

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

CHAPTER XIII

ELLEN G. WHITE A TRINITARIAN MONOTHEIST

The final chapters of this thesis are devoted to a relatively brief discussion of the position of Ellen G. White in regard to the nature of God. The present writer has found no evidence that Ellen G. White ever wrote or declared herself orally in favor of the Arian position. On the contrary all the evidence which will be presented here is of a distinctly Trinitarian nature. As will become apparent, by far the greatest number of the E. G. White statements on the subject were made in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of this century. It has been demonstrated that there was an evolution of thought among Adventists generally on the nature of God. This took the form of gradual repudiation of Arianism and acceptance of Trinitarianism. But Ellen G. White's writings do not reveal this type of thought evolution. The profound statements of her later period do not contradict anything she wrote in the earlier period. Instead they reveal a growing awareness of the deeper mysteries of the Godhead.

Certain of Ellen G. White's statement, which clearly contradicted the positions of her Adventist contemporaries, were written prior to 1898. Evidently the significance of these statements was not immediately appreciated, as is evidenced by the continued presentation of contrary views in denominational periodicals and books. Ellen G. White's statements on the nature of God became more abundant, more insistent and increasingly unequivocal as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

It is the purpose of the present writer to present in this and the following two chapters Ellen G. White's views on the nature of the Godhead; the nature of Christ on relation to the Father before, during, and after the incarnation; and the nature of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GODHEAD

Some of Ellen G. White's strongest warnings were given in regard to the danger of presumptuously attempting to fathom the mysteries of the Deity. She wrote:

Publish the truth, do not publish error. Do not try to explain in regard to the personality of God. You cannot give any further explanation than the Bible has given. Human theories regarding Him are good for nothing. Do not soil your minds by studying misleading theories of the enemy.¹

On the other hand, she indicated that there are certain truths on the nature of God revealed in the Bible which are available to those who prayerfully seek to understand them:

The revelation of Himself that God has given in His Word is for our study. This we may seek to understand. But beyond this we are not to penetrate. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out on conjectures regarding the nature of God, but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. None are to indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion.²

It must, therefore, be in a spirit of humble caution that we attempt to present a little of what has been revealed on this mysterious subject.

ONE GOD

Ellen G. White was manifestly a monotheist. There is no suggestion anywhere in her writings that there are three Gods. The complete oneness between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are emphasized in many statements. This unity is likened to that between Christ and his disciples, and John chapter 17 is quoted as evidence of the validity of the analogy.³ But the analogy is a partial and imperfect one. The disciples were not divine; Christ was. The relationship between them and Christ is therefore only in certain respects similar to that between the Father and the Son. If the relationship between Christ and His disciples were in all respects similar to that between the Father and the Son there would be no mystery involved in Christ's relationship to the Father. But here is something which is said to be "infinitely mysterious:"⁴

There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was One with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light unapproachable and incomprehensible.⁵

Thus the oneness between the Father and the Son is declared to be a mysterious union not yet explained to mortals. The relationship between Christ and the Father presents no real problems to the tritheist. To him there are three Gods who are united in purpose and identical in character and attributes, but nonetheless just as distinct as was Christ from His disciples. What is there infinitely mysterious about this? Here is just another of man's attempts to apprehend the "light unapproachable and incomprehensible." It is not difficult to understand why the Adventist Arians repudiated this position. But the answer to it, as will be demonstrated, is not to be

found in the subordination of the Son to the Father or the conception of a time when the Father alone existed.

Ellen G. White speaks of the Father and the Son as being of "one substance."⁶

With what firmness and power he uttered these words. The Jews has never before heard such words from human lips, and a converting influence attended them; for 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. The Jews understood his meaning, there was no reason why they should misunderstand, and they took up stones to stone him.⁷

The tritheist, who limits the oneness between Christ and the Father to that between Christ and His disciples, is now obliged to explain in what sense it might be true that Christ and His disciples are "of one substance, possessing the same attributes."⁸ Is there any evidence in the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White to suggest that the believer is in possession now, or will be at some time in the future, of the "substance" of God? The present writer has discovered none.

On the other hand the Adventist Arian is faced with the difficulty that the supreme God includes Christ. The statement says that the Jews understood His meaning. And they understood Him on other occasions when He claimed complete union with the Father. For instance Jesus claimed to be the "I am."

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

Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity."⁹

Then Christ as the "I am" was the "self-existent One." But is not the Father the self-existent One? Of course. Then is not the Arian right in responding that such a doctrine postulates the existence of two Gods?¹⁰ Ellen G. White answers this question by stating quite unequivocally that the "I AM" is One. Commenting on Ezekiel 1:4, 26; 10:8 she says:

Heavenly beings, sustained and guided by the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, were impelling the wheels; above them, upon the sapphire throne was the Eternal One; and round about the throne a rainbow, the emblem of divine mercy.

The history which the great I AM has marked out in His word, uniting link after link in the prophetic chain, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tells us where we are to-day in the procession of the ages, and what may be expected in time to come.¹¹

The theme of the whole passage is divine intervention and control in the affairs of men. The "Eternal One" is clearly the "I AM." But because of Christ's claim the I AM includes both Christ and the Father. The One Upon the throne is the One God. Ezekiel and Ellen White were monotheists. But here is one God including both Christ and the Father. Here is a mysterious oneness which cannot be explained in Arian or tritheistic terms.

The God who revealed Himself to Moses was the "Eternal One." This One was "the Deity."

To the transgressor it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; but Moses stood alone in the presence of the Eternal One, and He was not afraid; for his soul was in harmony with the will of his Maker. . . .

The Deity proclaimed Himself, "the Lord, the Lord god, merciful and gracious..."¹²

Elsewhere it is clearly stated that Christ was with the Father at Sinai:

When they came to Sinai, He took occasion to refresh their minds in regard to His requirements. Christ and the Father, standing side by side upon the mount, with solemn majesty proclaimed the Ten Commandments....¹³

Therefore the "Eternal One" who revealed Himself at Sinai included both the Father and Christ. Moses communed with one God, the Deity. Both Christ and the Father are included in that term "the Eternal One:"

It was Christ who had spoken to Israel through Moses. If they had listened to the divine voice that spoke through their great leader, they would have recognized it in the teachings of Christ. Had they believed Moses, they would have believed Him of whom Moses wrote.

Jesus knew that the priests and rabbis were determined to take his life; yet He clearly explained to them His unity with the Father, and His relation to the world.¹⁴

The Jews would have understood something of the unity between Christ and the Father if they had understood that it was Christ who spoke to Israel at Sinai.

As quoted above, Ellen G. White emphasized that "the Deity proclaimed Himself" to Moses.¹⁵ Of course the Deity is the Godhead, and Mrs. White explained elsewhere what she understood by the Godhead.

The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and is invisible to mortal sight.

The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be "the express image of His Person." "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is shown the personality of the Father.

The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to Heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are three, living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these three powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of Heaven in their effort to love the new life in Christ.¹⁶

It might be asked of the Arian how Christ could be inferior to the Father and yet be "all the fullness of the Godhead manifested." Clearly, in this passage, the Holy Spirit is God, for the Godhead consists of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This passage also provides a dilemma for the Adventist tritheist for if the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are each "the fullness of the godhead," then they are in some mysterious sense in one another. There is a union here that is beyond human comprehension and that transcends all man-made analogies, a union which renders it perfectly accurate to say that our God is one God.

The God of creation is one God according to Ellen G. White. "nature testifies that one infinite in power, great in goodness, mercy and love, created the earth, and filled it with life and gladness."¹⁷ There are many Scriptural passages and many statements in the writings of Ellen G. White that render it abundantly apparent that the Creator includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Ellen White wrote, "all things were created by the Son of God."¹⁸ Further she stated:

"When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." John 16:13. Only by the aid of that Spirit who in the beginning "was brooding upon the face of the waters;" of that Word by whom "all things were made;" of that "true light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," can the testimony of science be rightly interpreted.¹⁹

Here the Holy Spirit promised by Christ is identified with the Spirit of Genesis 1:3. Christ and the Holy Spirit are therefore included with the Father in the "one infinite in power" who "created the earth."

The Jehovah of the Old Testament is one God according to Ellen G. White. "Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated one, Himself the source and sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship."²⁰ Elsewhere she wrote, "Jehovah is the name given to Christ. 'behold, God is my salvation,' writes the prophet isaiah; 'I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. . . .'"²¹ Therefore, Jehovah, the one God of the Old Testament, included Christ.

The mysterious union between the Father and the Son is such that Ellen G. White referred to Jesus as our Father in a manner reminiscent of the words of Isaiah 9:6. "However much a shepherd may love his sheep, he loves his sons and daughters more. Jesus is not only our shepherd; he is our 'everlasting Father.' John 10:14, 15 r.v."²²

The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing evidence is that Ellen G. White was a decided monotheist. God is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

THREE DISTINCT PERSONALITIES IN THE DEITY

Ellen G. White taught the unity of the Deity but she wrote many statements indicating that God consists of three distinct personalities. As indicated above, to her God comprised Father, Son and Holy Spirit who were each "the fullness of the Godhead."²³ The union between them is such that it is true to say that our God is one God. But this does not destroy the distinct personalities of the members of the Deity.

As we consider the question in the light of Ellen G. White's statements on the unity of the Deity it appears that the term "personality" must be given a special connotation when it is used in reference to a member of the Godhead. There is no mysterious union between human personalities so that it could be said that any three are also one. From the point of view of human terminology one is one, three are three, and three can logically never be one. But in regard to the Deity three personalities comprise one God. Then evidently the distinction between human personalities is by no means analogous to that between the personalities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; otherwise the three would comprise three Gods, not one.

Just as the complete unity of the Godhead is a mystery so is the distinction between the personalities comprising it. To rush in where angels veil their faces and with a dogmatic gesture declare that the existence of three equal, distinct personalities in the Deity postulates the existence of three Gods is to give the word "personality" its purely human connotation. But God is infinitely superior to things human. In

reference to Him the word must be given a new connotation. What that should be is not revealed. Ellen G. White's use of it in the passages to be quoted here is perfectly understandable since she was obliged to use what language was available to her in explaining the mysteries of the nature of God.

There follows a brief series of quotations which emphasize that God is a personal Being and that the numbers of the Godhead are distinct personalities:

The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science represent, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a Spirit; yet He is a personal Being; for so He has revealed Himself.²⁴

Christ is one with the Father, but Christ and God are two distinct personages.²⁵

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father.²⁶

There is a personal God the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son.²⁷

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.²⁸

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one.²⁹

Care must be taken in interpreting this last passage and in interpreting John chapter 17 on which it is based. In the light of the evidence of the preceding section we are bound to conclude that there are similarities in the relationship between Christ and the Father and in that between Christ and His disciples. But there are also vast differences. The unfallen angels were entirely united to the Father and the Son, but they were not divine, nor were they able to enter into all the secrets of their Ruler.

Even the angels were not permitted to share the counsels between the Father and the Son when the plan of salvation was laid. Those human beings who seek to intrude into the secrets of the Most High show their ignorance of spiritual and eternal things.³⁰

If the distinction between Christ and His disciples and the union between them were entirely analogous to the distinction and union between Christ and the Father then there would be no such divine secrets kept from the human believer. Partaking of the divine nature by human beings would then be elevation to the level of the Deity. It was Satan's effort to achieve this that precipitated the Great Controversy, and he

continues to perpetuate his own demonic covetousness by degrading man's conception of Christ in relation to the Father and elevating man's conception of himself in relation to Christ.

More will be said concerning the Holy Spirit in the final chapter where Ellen G. White's overall teaching on the subject will be presented, but suffice it to say here that she conceived of the Holy Spirit as a person. "The Holy Spirit is a person, for He beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God."³¹

The evidence of this chapter may be summarized by saying that Ellen G. White was clearly a monotheist who understood the one God as comprising three distinct personalities. But the student of the Deity is bound to admit that both the oneness of God and the distinction of the personalities are mysteries which human terminology cannot define.

ENDNOTES

¹E. G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), pp.93, 94. Citing Letter 179, 1904.

²E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), p. 429.

³*Ibid.*, p. 421.

⁴E. G. White, "The Word Made Flesh," *Review and Herald*, LXXXIII (April 5, 1906), 8. Cited by Francis D. Nichol (ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956) V, 1126. (Hereafter referred to as 5 BC).

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶E. G. White, "The True Sheep Respond to the Voice of the Shepherd," *The Signs of the Times*, XX (November 27, 1893), 54.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), pp. 469, 470.

¹⁰J. N. Loughborough, "Questions for Bro. Loughborough." *Review and Herald*, XVIII (November 5, 1861), 184.

11E. G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), p.178.

12E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), p. 329.

13E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 616. Citing E. G. White, *Historical Sketches*, p. 231. (1866).

14E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 213.

15E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), p. 329.

16E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), pp. 614, 615. Citing E. G. White, *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7, pp.62, 63. (1905).

17E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. VIII (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904), p. 256.

18E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 281.

19E. G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), p. 134.

20E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), p. 305.

21E. G. White, "The Word Made Flesh," *The Signs of the Times*, XXV (May 3, 1899), 2.

22E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 483.

23Cf. *Ante*, p. 73.

24E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), p. 413. In this as in certain other statements Ellen G. White was obviously attempting to answer the pantheistic notions which J. H. Kellogg had attempted to introduce into the Church. This was a more serious threat to the Denomination than was Arianism because of the militant disposition of the man who was propagating it. Undoubtedly Ellen G. White's overall teaching on the nature of God was intended to answer what she recognized as prevailing misconceptions on the subject, including both Arianism and pantheism. See A. W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962), III, 140, 141.

25E. G. White, "The Work in Washington," *Review and Herald*, LXXXII (June 1, 1905), 13. Cited by 5 BC, 1148.

26E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 247. Citing *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906.

27E. G. White, "The Revelation of God," *Review and Herald*, LXXV (November 8, 1898), 709.

28E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), p. 421.

29*Ibid.*

30E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. VIII (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904), p. 279.

31E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 616.
Citing *Manuscript* 20, 1906.

CHAPTER XIV

ELLEN G. WHITE ON THE ABSOLUTE DEITY OF CHRIST

In this chapter the purpose of the writer is to trace in brief outline the teachings of Ellen G. White on the pre-existence and Deity of Christ. The two fundamental questions to be answered are, (1) did Ellen G. White support the view of the Adventist Arians that there was a time when Christ did not exist and, (2) did she concur with their teaching that Christ as God, was, and is, subordinate to the Father?

THE ETERNAL PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

Ellen G. White stated categorically many times that there never was a time when Christ did not exist. He was not brought into existence by the Father either by a process of creation or of eternal generation. He has always been with the Father. He did not have a beginning. The following are just a few of the many quotations that could be cited as proof that this was her view:

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.¹

He is the eternal self-existent Son.²

But while God's Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding His pre-existence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father.³

Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when he was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.⁴

Christ shows then that, although they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation. The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures.⁵

From eternity Christ has been man's Redeemer.⁶

The Adventist Arians had seen the Trinitarian position as destructive of the truth of the atonement, but in 1898 Ellen G. White demonstrated that their own view produced that unfortunate result. She wrote:

In consenting to become man, Christ manifested a humility that is the marvel of the heavenly intelligences. The act of consenting to be a man would be no humiliation were it not for the fact of Christ's exalted pre-existence.⁷

Thus it was "Christ's exalted pre-existence" that rendered the incarnation a humiliation and qualified Christ to atone for human sin. Beings whose existence was purely derived could never have paid the price of human redemption.

CHRIST EQUAL WITH THE FATHER BEFORE THE INCARNATION

There are many statements in the writings of Ellen G. White which effectively contradict any suggestion that prior to the incarnation Christ was in any sense subordinate to the Father. Repeatedly she stressed that Christ was equal with the Father in power, position and authority, that in fact He was God in the highest sense:

Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore....⁸

Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged Sovereign of heaven, one in power and authority with the Father.⁹

To save the transgressor of God's law, Christ, the one equal with the Father, came to live heaven before men, that they might learn to know what it is to have heaven in the heart.¹⁰

The only way in which the fallen race could be restored was through the gift of his Son, equal with himself, possessing the attributes of God. Though so highly exalted, Christ consented to assume human nature, that he might work in behalf of man, and reconcile to God his disloyal subjects.¹¹

Some have regarded this equality with the Father as having been conferred upon Christ. His is said to be a delegated authority, hence He is not the supreme God in the same sense as is the Father. This, of course, could not be true since "Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense."¹² But those who have propagated this view find what appears to be support for it in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 1:

The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that He might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon His Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of Holy Angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself, that Christ His Son should be equal with Himself, so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of His Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the

Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was the Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth. His Son would carry out His will and His purposes, but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him.¹³

There followed considerable altercation between the angels supporting Lucifer and those supporting Christ. The loyal angels sought to convince the disloyal of the justice of God:

They clearly set forth that Jesus was the Son of God, existing with him before the angels were created; and that he had ever stood at the right hand of God and his mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned....¹⁴

There are two interpretations to this whole passage. One is that of the Arians who would contend that the Father had conferred supreme power and authority equal to His own upon Christ. The other is that the passage refers to an announcement to the angels of a situation that had existed from the ages of eternity. According to this latter interpretation Christ had always been in the position of complete equality with the Father as the supreme Sovereign of heaven, but because of the defection of Lucifer and because of his subtle insinuations a special reiteration of Christ's exalted position was necessary. The very fact that the loyal angels urged the unchanged status of Christ as an argument for accepting the Father's announcement proves that the announcement was not the inauguration of something new, but a definition and declaration of the position which Christ had always sustained.

That this is the only tenable interpretation of the passage is effectively demonstrated by reference to a parallel passage in *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute ruler had been appointed them, and to his authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts.

There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation, and his claims to equality with Christ, had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning.¹⁵

This passage is in complete agreement with the former one. *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 1, was published in 1870 and *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1890, but the view of the question as presented in both is identical. The proclamation by the Father of the position of the Son was a necessary restatement of a situation that had never been otherwise. If Ellen G. White had intended to convey that Christ was elevated by the Father to His position of equality she would have been contradicting her other utterances to the effect that "Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. he was God from all eternity, God over all blessed forevermore...."¹⁶

CHRIST EQUAL WITH THE FATHER DURING THE INCARNATION

There is no intimation in the writings of Ellen G. White that when He took on human nature, Christ ceased to be God equal with the Father. On the contrary she abundantly testifies to Christ's complete equality with the Father at every stage of His earthly existence. As a babe in the manger He was still the mighty God:

How wide is the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem's manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory and yet wearing the garb of humanity! Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one.¹⁷

As a child Christ was still the mighty God equal with the Father:

What opposites meet and are revealed in the person of Christ! The mighty God, yet a helpless child! The Creator of all the world, yet, in a world of His creating, often hungry and weary, and without a place to lay His head! The Son of man, yet infinitely higher than the angels! Equal with the Father, yet His divinity clothed with humanity. . . .¹⁸

To the Jews Christ "announced himself to be the self-existent one."¹⁹ He "claimed equal rights with God in doing a work equally sacred, and of the same character with that which engaged the Father in Heaven."²⁰ Christ claimed equality with the Father and the prerogatives of Deity in the highest sense.²¹ The mysterious unity that existed between Christ and the Father prior to the incarnation was retained during the Saviour's life on earth. God was still one God: "From all eternity Christ was united with the Father, and when he took upon himself human nature, he was still one with God. He is the link that unites God with humanity."²² Christ gave up heaven for the period of His earthly ministry, He veiled His glory in humanity, He chose not to use

certain aspects of His divine power and knowledge, but He was still the supreme Sovereign of the universe:

But although Christ's divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. The human did not take the place of the divine, nor the divine the human. This is the mystery of godliness. The two expressions "human" and "divine" were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality. Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty. Surrounded with sorrow, suffering, and moral pollution, despised and rejected by the people to whom had been entrusted the oracles of heaven Jesus could yet speak of Himself as the Son of man in heaven.²³

What a subject for thought, for deep, earnest contemplation! So infinitely great that He was the Majesty of heaven, and yet He stooped so low, without losing one atom of His dignity and glory!²⁴

DID CHRIST USE HIS OWN DIVINE POWER DURING THE INCARNATION?

Ellen G. White lays it down as an unvarying rule that Christ never performed miracles on His own behalf. His divine power was not employed to alleviate His own suffering, to supply His own needs or to overcome temptation. In these respects Christ remained as a man entirely dependent upon His Father. Speaking of the temptation in the wilderness Ellen G. White wrote, "Neither here nor at any subsequent time in his earthly life did he work a miracle in his own behalf."²⁵ In reference to His overcoming temptation she wrote, "he overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power."²⁶

The question arises as to whether Christ used His own divine power in working miracles for others. Was this miracle working power His own or was it given Him by the Father as it was later conferred upon the Apostles? Ellen G. White wrote:

The world's Redeemer was equal with God. His authority was as the authority of God. He declared that he had no existence separate from the Father. The authority by which he spoke, and wrought miracles, was expressly his own, yet he assures us that he and the Father are one.²⁷

On the other hand the following apparently contradictory statement appears in *The Desire of Ages*:

In all that He did, Christ was co-operating with His Father. Ever He had been careful to make it evident that He did not work independently; it was by faith and prayer that He wrought His miracles.²⁸

This latter statement appears in the chapter , "Lazarus, Come Forth." This chapter presents the raising of Lazarus as the most convincing evidence of Christ's divinity. Throughout the chapter the impression is given that the power of Christ manifested in this remarkable way was not in any sense derived, but His own inherent power as God, the Life-giver. Mary and Martha were not alone in their time of trial when Lazarus was sick unto death. "Christ beheld the whole scene, and after the death of Lazarus the bereaved sisters were upheld by his grace."²⁹ The author proceeds:

Had He restored him from illness to health, the miracle that is the most positive evidence of His divine character would not have been performed.

Had Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. Death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus in the presence of the Life-giver. Therefore Christ remained away.³⁰

This miracle was to be the greatest evidence to the skeptical contemporary Jew of the Deity of Christ:

This crowning miracle, the raising of Lazarus, was to set the seal of God on His work and on His claim to divinity.³¹

This miracle which Christ was about to perform, in raising Lazarus from the dead, would represent the resurrection of all the righteous dead, By His word and His works He declared Himself the Author of the resurrection.³²

But how could all this be true unless the power Christ displayed in raising Lazarus were His own power as God, equal with the Father? How do we reconcile the statement that it was by faith and prayer that Christ performed His miracles with the apparently contradictory one that "The authority by which He spoke, and wrought miracles, was expressly His own"?³³

The Desire of Ages provides us with other evidence of Christ's use of His own underived, divine, miracle working power. For instance, the chapter "Thou Canst Make Me Clean" deals with Christ's forgiving and healing the paralytic who was let down through the roof of the house. Ellen G. White speaks of the Saviour's previous work for this man:

The Saviour looked upon the mournful countenance, and saw the pleading eyes fixed upon Him. He understood the case; He had drawn to Himself that perplexed and doubting spirit. While the paralytic was yet at home, the Saviour had brought conviction to his conscience. When he repented of his sins, and believed in the power of Jesus to make him whole, the life-giving mercies of the Saviour had first blessed

his longing heart. Jesus had watched the first glimmer of faith grow into a belief that He was the sinner's only helper, and had seen it grow stronger with every effort to come into His presence.

Now in words that fell like music on the sufferer's ear, the Saviour said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."³⁴

The power manifested here was not such that any man is able to derive from God. Under no circumstances can mere man forgive sins. The Saviour used His healing power on this occasion as evidence of His power to forgive sins. Prior to this he had exercised His divine power to bring conviction to the heart of this soul. Here we have Christ using His power as the Deity for a lost and physically ill individual. The healing power that Christ displayed was the identical power that He used in the original creation of man:

It required nothing less than creative power to restore health to that decaying body. The same voice that spoke life to man created from the dust of the earth had spoken life to the decaying paralytic.³⁵

On the other hand *The Desire of Ages* contains indications that some of Christ's miracles were performed by faith in and dependence upon His Father rather than by the exercise of His own authority as Deity. For instance when He stilled the storm on Galilee He is said not to have done so by exercise of His own power:

When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the "master of earth and sea and sky" that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down and He says, "I can of mine own self do nothing." John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.³⁶

In one instance we have Christ using His underived, creative power to heal a dying paralytic. In another instance the power of the Father, available to Christ because of His faith, was the source of the miracle. Whatever conclusion is drawn must take two factors into account. First, all Christ's miracles were performed by "faith and prayer." The statement in *The Desire of Ages* declaring this is a general one.³⁷ It comes within a chapter which narrates the raising of Lazarus, a miracle which above all others was evidence of Christ's power as Deity. Then even this miracle was in some sense performed by "faith and prayer." Second, some of Christ's miracles resulted from the exercise of His own power as God. Others resulted from the exercise of the Father's power in response to Christ's faith.

The present writer concludes that Christ's use of His divine was always within the context of faith in the Father. In some instances the power He used was His own, but He had accepted the limitations of man and thus imposed upon Himself limitations in regard to the direction of its use. As man He was a dependent human being. On occasions He exercised His own creative power, that which was His as God, which was "unborrowed and underived," and which in the beginning He had used in the creation of the world. The direction as to the use of this power came from the Father because Christ had accepted the limitations of humanity. Perhaps the fact that the stilling of the sea was the Father's act in response to Christ's faith, rather than an instance of exercise of Christ's own authority as Deity, is to be explained by the fact that the miracle was to some extent for His own benefit and, as previously pointed out, never did He perform a miracle for His own benefit.

At all events the evidence is overwhelmingly opposed to the view of the Adventist Arian that the divine in Christ during the incarnation was an inferior divinity entirely subordinate to that of the Father.

WHAT HAPPENED TO CHRIST'S DEITY WHEN HE DIED?

This question was a crucial one for the Adventist Arian. He rejected Trinitarianism because it taught that the divine in Christ did not die, but that it ascended to the Father when the human Christ expired on the Cross. The Arian saw this as an inadequate human sacrifice. He believed the Deity did die. This was possible because the divine in Christ was an inferior delegated divinity. It would have been impossible, so the Arian declared, for the supreme Father to have died in this way.

Ellen G. White emphasized on a number of occasions that the Deity did not die:

Humanity died; divinity did not die.³⁸

The Deity did not sink under the agonizing torture of Calvary, yet it is nonetheless true that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."³⁹

When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible.⁴⁰

Deity did not die. Humanity died, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, "I am the resurrection, and the life."⁴¹

It is true that there are certain statements in the writings of Ellen G. White which may appear to teach otherwise. For instance, "nature sympathized with the suffering of its

author. the heaving earth, the rent rocks, proclaimed that it was the Son of God who died."⁴² Some would interpret this to mean that the divine in Christ died. Since it was the Deity who was the Author of nature, it was the Deity who was suffering and dying. The following page of the same work refers to the "sacrifice which was made by the Majesty of Heaven in dying in man's stead."⁴³ Earlier in the same work Ellen G. White wrote, "the divine Son of God was fainting, dying."⁴⁴

One suggested reconciliation of the apparent contradiction between these two sets of passages would be that Christ did not die in the normal sense of the term. His life was not taken from Him, for He possessed a divine self. He gave up His life voluntarily.⁴⁵ Therefore He was really and absolutely dead in His human and divine natures, but the act of giving up His own life is to be regarded as something distinct from death. Therefore, some would suggest, it is still true to say that the Deity did not die."

The present writer objects to this position on the grounds that the Deity is immortal and therefore cannot die in any sense. It is impossible for an immortal being to give up life. Immortality is deathlessness. To argue that the Deity did not die, but was in fact dead, is to involve oneself in unnecessary manipulation of language. If as Ellen G. White says, it was impossible for Deity to die then undoubtedly she meant just that.

Christ during the incarnation was a God-man. He is referred to many times in the writings of Ellen G. White as the divine Son of God, and as the Majesty of Heaven. These terms are used to refer to the God-man. The human element of Christ's nature was not divine and had never existed in heaven. But since Christ was God in human flesh, terms which technically refer only to His divine nature are used to refer to the total Being including His human nature. "Majesty of Heaven" technically refers to the divine, but Ellen G. White uses it to refer to the totality of His existence including the human. It would not therefore be incorrect for Ellen G. White to use the terms "divine Son of God" and "majesty of heaven" in the untechnical sense when speaking of the death of Christ. The very name "Christ," when used to refer to His earthly existence, involves both the human and the divine. She speaks of Christ being hungry, thirsty and weary.⁴⁶ In these instances obviously the emphasis is on the human aspect of his nature, the term "Christ" being used in the sense of the total Being. Just so, when she speaks of the death of the "majesty of heaven" it would appear she is using the term in an untechnical, accommodated sense. Since elsewhere she categorically denies the possibility of the Deity dying it seems reasonable to conclude that when she speaks of the death of the "divine Son of God" she is using the general term which, in this particular context, has special reference to the death of the human in Christ.

Ellen G. White explains at least in part what happened to the Deity element of Christ's nature when He died on Calvary:

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.⁴⁷

The precise condition of the Deity aspect of Christ's nature during the brief period of His incarnation in the tomb is undoubtedly one of the deepest mysteries of the Gospel. The Arians were right in denying that the divine Christ ascended to heaven when the human expired on the Cross, but they were wrong, according to Ellen G. White, in postulating the death of Deity.

As further evidence, the circumstances of the resurrection may be cited. Ellen G. White speaks of Christ as a prisoner in the tomb. Only the Father could release Him:

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.⁴⁸

It was the angel who called Christ in the name of the Father to rise from the tomb.⁴⁹ It was the "spirit which raised Jesus from the dead."⁵⁰ But nonetheless Jesus came forth "to Life that was in Himself:"

When the voice of the angel was heard saying, "Thy Father calls Thee," He who had said, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again," "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up," came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Deity did not die. Humanity died, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life." In His divinity Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.⁵¹

The passage clearly implies that Christ's coming forth "to life that was in himself" was in view of the fact that "Deity did not die."

How then is answered the objection of the Adventist Arian that the sacrifice was a purely human one and therefore no atonement for human sin? Any answer can only be tentative and partial for here we are delving into the deep mysteries of the atonement. Ellen G. White wrote of the intense suffering of Christ in view of the separation from His Father, resulting from human sin being laid upon Him. Twice

before Calvary He almost died as a result of the imputation of human guilt and the consequent separation from His Father. These two occasions were in the wilderness of temptation and in Gethsemane.⁵² Finally this separation broke the heart of the Son of God:

The sins of the world were upon him, also the sense of his Father's wrath as he suffers the penalty of the law transgressed. It was these that crushed his divine soul. It was the hiding of his Father's Face—a sense that his own dear Father had forsaken him—which brought despair.⁵³

The separation of Christ from the Father involved the separation of absolute God from absolute God. It involved the temporary severing of the mysterious unity that is God. Of the Gethsemane experience Ellen G. White wrote, "as Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness."⁵⁴ Finally the severing of this divine unity broke the heart of the Son of God:

But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. . . .

It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.⁵⁵

The severing of the mysterious divine relationship between Father and the Son involved suffering far greater than death, suffering which all heaven knows to have been an abundant provision for the guilt of a lost race.⁵⁶ What mere man has the temerity to demand the death of the immortal Deity to the infinite price paid for human redemption?

CHRIST EQUAL WITH THE FATHER AFTER THE INCARNATION

The writings of Ellen G. White contain no suggestion that since the incarnation Christ has been delegated a subordinate position in the courts of heaven. There is no intimation that as God He resigned forever any of the prerogatives of God when He died for the sins of man. On the contrary, in unmistakable language it is stated that Christ was restored to His former position in heaven. Referring to Christ's prayer recorded in John 17:1-5 Ellen G. White wrote:

He is praying to His Father in regard to a glory possessed in His oneness with God. His prayer is that of a mediator; the favor He entreats is the manifestation of that

divine glory which was possessed by Him when He was one with God. Let the veil be removed, He says, and let My glory shine forth—the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.⁵⁷

This prayer for the complete restoration of His former status in heaven was answered:

Thus the prayer of Christ was answered. He was glorified with the glory which He had with His Father before the world was. . . .

No words can describe the scene which took place as the Son of God was publicly reinstated in the place of honor and glory which He voluntarily left when He became a man.

And today Christ, glorified, and yet our brother, is our Advocate in the courts of heaven.⁵⁸

There are repeated declarations in the writings of Ellen G. White to the effect that Christ's position today is one of complete equality with the Father and of supreme authority in heaven and earth. As previously intimated Christ's oneness with the Father was broken up because of sin, but this oneness was entirely restored. Today Christ stands in precisely the same relationship to the Father as He did before the incarnation:

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.⁵⁹

According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers, as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.⁶⁰

Ellen G. White effectively answered Uriah Smith's contention that Christ is the Alpha and Omega only in a subordinate sense. She wrote, "Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the revelation of the new."⁶¹ In commenting on Revelation 1:18-20 Ellen G. White stated:

These are wonderfully solemn and significant statements. It was the Source of all mercy and pardon, peace and grace, the self-existent, eternal, unchangeable One, who visited His exiled servant on the isle that is called Patmos.⁶²

Of course these verses in Revelation have obvious reference to Christ. He then is the "self-existent, eternal, unchangeable one." That being so, a change in His status as God is manifestly an impossibility.

CHRIST EQUAL WITH THE FATHER AFTER THE END

Some of the Adventist Arians used 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 as evidence that at the end Christ assumes a subordinate position to the Father. Unfortunately Ellen G. White makes no comment on the central problem of the passage, but nowhere does she give any hint that a change in the status of the Son will be effected at the end of time. On the other hand, she does say much about the exalted position Christ will occupy at the conclusion of the millennium:

In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven takes place the final coronation of the Son of God. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of Kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government, and executes upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people.⁶³

There can be no reasonable doubt that the King of Kings who at the conclusion of the Millennium is invested with supreme majesty and power before the assembled hosts of the saved and the unsaved is Jesus Christ the Son of God:

As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. . . . They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, "Marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints." (Rev 15:3) and falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of Life.⁶⁴

The hour has come when Christ occupies His rightful position and is glorified above principalities and powers and every name that is named.⁶⁵

Nowhere in the writings of Ellen G. White is there any suggestion that Christ adopts a position subordinate to the Father at any time subsequent to His coronation.⁶⁶

ENDNOTES

¹E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 296. Citing *The Signs of the Times*, April 8, 1897.

2E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 615.
Citing *Manuscript* 101, 1897.

3E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 247. Citing *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906.

4E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 615. Citing *The Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900.

5*Ibid.*, p. 616. Citing *The Signs of the Times*, May 3, 1899.

6E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. IX (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909), p, 220.

7E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 243. Citing *The Youth's Instructor*, October 13, 1898.

8E. G. White, "The Word Made Flesh," *Review and Herald*, LXXXIII (April 5, 1906), 8. Cited by 5 BC, 1126.

9E. G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1888), p. 495.

10E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), p. 179. Citing *Review and Herald*, November 17, 1891.

11E. G. White, "Imperative Necessity of Searching for Truth," *Review and Herald*, LXIX (November 8, 1892), 690.

12E. G. White, "The Word Made Flesh," *Review and Herald*, LXXXIII (April 5, 1906), 8. Cited by 5 BC, 1126.

13E. G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. I (Battle Creek, Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870) pp. 17, 18.

14*Ibid.*, p. 18.

15E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), pp. 37, 38.

16E. G. White, "The Word Made Flesh," *Review and Herald*, LXXXIII (April 5, 1906), 8. Cited by 5 BC, 1126.

17E. G. White, "Child Life of Jesus," *The Signs of the Times*, (July 30, 1896), 5.

18E. G. White, "God Manifest in the Flesh," *The Signs of the Times* (April 26, 1905), 8.

19E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Publishing Association, 1898), p. 469.

20*Ibid.*, pp. 207, 208.

21*Ibid.*

22E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 228. Citing *The Signs of the Times*, August 2, 1905.

23E. G. White, "Christ Glorified," *The Signs of the Times*, XXV May 10, 1899), 2. Cited by 5 BC, 1129.

24E. G. White, "Tempted In All Points Like As We Are," *The Signs of the Times*, XXIV (June 9, 1898), 2.

25E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 119.

26E. G. White, "After the Crucifixion," *The Youth's Instructor*, XLIX (April 25, 1901), 130.

27E. G. White, "Christ Revealed the Father," *Review and Herald*, LXVII (January 7, 1890), 1.

28E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 536.

29*Ibid.*, p. 528.

30*Ibid.*

31*Ibid.*, p. 529.

32*Ibid.*, p. 530.

33E. G. White, "Christ Revealed the Father," *Review and Herald*, LXVII (January 7, 1890), 1.

34E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 268.

35*Ibid.*, pp. 269, 270.

36*Ibid.*, p. 336.

37*Ibid.*, p. 536.

38E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 301. Citing *The Youth's Instructor*, August 4, 1898.

39E. G. White, *Manuscript* 140, 1903. Cited by 5 BC, 1129.

40E. G. White, *Letter* 280, 1904. Cited by 5 BC, 1113.

41E. G. White, *Manuscript* 131, 1897. Cited by 5 BC, 1113.

42E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. II (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1869), p. 211.

43*Ibid.*, p. 212.

44*Ibid.*, p. 206.

45E. G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 484.

46*Ibid.*, p. 118.

47E. G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. III (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1878) pp. 203, 204.

48E. G. White, *Manuscript* 94, 1897. Cited by 5 BC, 1114.

49E. G. White, *Manuscript* 115, 1897. Cited by 5 BC, 1110.

50E. G. White, "Beware of Imitations," *The Youth's Instructor*, XLIII (February 7, 1895), 44.

51E. G. White, *Manuscript* 131, 1897. Cited by 5 BC, 1113.

52E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Publishing Association, 1898), pp. 131, 693.

53E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. II (Mountain View Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1869), p. 214.

54White, *op. cit.*, p. 686.

55*Ibid.*, p. 753.

56Revelation 5:11, 12.

57E. G. White, "Christ Glorified," *The Signs of the Times*, XXV (May 10, 1899), 2. Cited by 5 BC, 1146.

58*Ibid.*

59E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. VIII (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904), pp. 268, 269.

60E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 38.

61E. G. White, *Manuscript 33*, 1897. Cited by 5 BC, 1092.

62E. G. White, *Manuscript 81*, 1900. Cited by 5 BC, 955.

63E. G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* Vol. IV (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1884), p. 480.

64*Ibid.*, p. 484.

65*Ibid.*, p. 486.

66As a suggested interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:28 the present writer would offer the following. The text cannot refer to the subordination of the human in Christ to the Father. According to 1 Corinthians 15:24 the change that takes place comes at "the end." The human in Christ is subordinate now just as it has always been since the birth of the Saviour. This change does not occur at the "end" or "when all things shall be subdued unto Him." Since the Son is co-equal with the Father, "in the Father," and the "express image of the Father," He is included in "God" who is "all in all." God cannot be subject to God. Therefore Christ cannot be subject to the Father, in the ordinary sense. The Son becomes "subject unto Him" in the sense that the Son ceases to carry out a distinct mediatorial work for man, and all that He bought back by the vicarious sacrifice is now entirely subordinate to God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The distinctive work of the Son ceases and God becomes "all in all." The Son is no longer a separate functionary within the Deity and the plan of redemption is acknowledged to have been the achievement of a unified God.

CHAPTER XV

ELLEN G. WHITE ON THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ellen G. White repeatedly affirms that the Holy Spirit is a Person:

The Holy Spirit is a person, for He beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. . . .

The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.¹

The Holy Spirit is presented in the writings of Ellen G. White as God, not an inferior emanation from the Deity, but in every sense God, as are Christ and the Father:

The prince of the power of evil can only be held in check by the tower of God in the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.²

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.³

The Holy Spirit is not spoken of as a subordinate representative, a tool used by the Father and the Son. As is Christ so is the Holy Spirit the "fullness of the Godhead:"

The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are three living persons in the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and those powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their effort to live the new life of Christ.⁴

The contention of the Adventist Arian to the effect that the Holy Spirit is a mere influence, not a Person and certainly not a member of the Deity, is therefore soundly contradicted in the writings of Ellen G. White.

ENDNOTES

¹E. G. White, Evangelism (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), pp. 616, 617. Citing Manuscript 20, 1906.

²ibid., p. 617. Citing Special Testimonies, Series A, No. 10, p. 37. (1897)

³E. G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 671.

⁴White, op. cit., pp. 614 615. Citing Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, pp. 62, 63. (1905).

CHAPTER XVI

SUMMARY

The evidence as presented here indicates that prior to 1898 the prevailing opinion in the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the nature of God was anti-Trinitarian. It has been shown that a whole series of writers took this position. Those early Adventist writers who expressed themselves on the subject agreed on certain fundamental issues. Christ was consistently regarded as subordinate to the Father and the Holy Spirit as a mere influence.

Although all the Adventist Arians aimed at discounting Trinitarianism, the arguments they emphasized in opposition to it varied somewhat. Certain writers, such as Bates, Hull, Loughborough, Whitney, and Canright identified Trinitarianism with Monarchianism. As they saw it, if Christ were absolute Deity then He was the Father. Since they repudiated this position, they repudiated Trinitarianism. On the other hand some writers saw Trinitarianism as postulating the existence of three Gods. Loughborough and Dennis so viewed it. Thus, the Arians opposed both extremes, Monarchianism and Tritheism. Trinitarianism, they thought, might be identified with one of these extremes, but it certainly is not the truth. To them, Arianism provided a satisfactory mediating position. There is only one supreme God, and that is the Father. There was a time when Christ did not exist, and the Holy Spirit is not a person.

Some writers particularly opposed Trinitarianism because it apparently depreciated the efficacy of the atonement. Hull, Smith, Canright and J. H. Waggoner were in this category. If Christ were absolute God in the same sense as the Father, then His divine nature could not die. Under these circumstances, the sacrifice would have been a human one. Such they regarded as an inadequate atonement for the sins of man.

Some opposed the extreme creedal positions which divested God of bodily parts and form. Hull, Whitney and Canright were particularly articulate on this point. On the other hand, it is clear that the opposition by early Adventist writers to Trinitarianism was not simply a reaction to extreme forms of the doctrine. Both Hull and Loughborough opposed the decisions of Nicaea, and Whitney in becoming a Seventh-day Adventist had evidently repudiated the creedal teaching of the Congregational Church that there are three persons in one God.

Attempts have been made to demonstrate that the Arians among Seventh-day Adventists were a small but influential minority. As indicated, Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner are sometimes blamed for the existence of anti-Trinitarianism in the Adventist Church. The evidence suggests otherwise. Four Seventh-day Adventist

writers declared themselves Arians before publication of Uriah Smith's *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation* in 1865. Stephenson wrote in 1854, Hull in 1859, Loughborough in 1861, and Whitney in 1862. Although Joseph Bates did not write his autobiography until 1868, in it he clearly demonstrates that he had been an Arian since 1827. The views of such a prominent pioneer were undoubtedly influential. Even Smith's extreme statement in 1865 to the effect that Christ was a created being finds its antecedent in a similar statement by Stephenson in 1854. By the same token the views expressed by J. H. Waggoner in 1884 were by no means original with himself. His anti-Trinitarianism and his limited view of the atonement were shared by a considerable stream of writers who preceded him.

The Whitney article proves that in 1862 it was not unusual for a new convert to be inducted into the Arian belief. Evidently by 1890, when Bourdeau deprecated the prevailing diversity of opinion on the subject, the situation had changed in that other views were being seriously considered. The reprinting of the Spear article would indicate that they were. But these other views were not expressed by Adventist writers, with the exception of Ellen G. White, until 1898 and following. Jones' statement on the Holy Spirit back in 1895 was at best only an approximation to the Trinitarian view.

Why was Arianism the prevailing doctrine up to 1898? As has been demonstrated, some of the pioneers were influenced by the Christian Connection which was opposed to Trinitarianism. To what precise extent the religious background of these few influenced the positions of later writers would be difficult to determine. The Adventists, coming as they did from diversified denominational backgrounds, rejected many of the major beliefs of their former communions. It would appear that Trinitarianism became associated in their thinking with other theological views they thought unscriptural and pagan. Sunday observance was introduced by the papacy, but so was Trinitarianism. Were not the decisions of Nicea and Chalcedon largely the result of papal influence? And was not papal dogma leavened by pagan error? Then whatever the Bible teaches it could not possibly teach pagan-papal Trinitarianism. So reasoned the pioneers of the Adventist Church.

It appears that what the Bible does actually teach on this subject was not seriously considered in the early years of Seventh-day Adventism. Immediately after the disappointment of 1844 the founding fathers of the Church were occupied with what was termed "present truth." Of course the primary emphasis was on the second coming of Christ. Since a correct understanding of the cleansing of the sanctuary explained the mistake of 1844, the emphasis on the Scriptural teaching of the sanctuary service became a vital issue. The Bible was studied with new zest and as new beliefs developed Ellen G. White confirmed them. But the subject of the nature of God did not come to the fore. This fact is underlined by the relatively few articles

on the subject in the *Review and Herald* in the second half of the nineteenth century, by comparison with the huge volume of material published on the distinctive Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. Whenever an Adventist writer declared himself on the nature of God the declaration was anti-Trinitarian. This indicates a prevailing conception, but it does not prove that this view was the fixed and uniform belief of the Church. Seventh-day Adventists have no creed. This is why the prevailing belief on the doctrine of God could change.

It would appear that the early Seventh-day Adventist writers were to some extent influenced by the nineteenth century Arminian, Unitarian and Socinian reaction to the Calvinistic theology of certain leading Protestant denominations. Trinitarianism was a tenet of Calvinism. Had not Calvin burned Servetus for his anti-Trinitarian declarations? Therefore the Arminian, Unitarian and Socinian reaction to predestinarianism, and other aspects of Calvinism, became associated with anti-Trinitarianism. It would have been unusual if the early Adventists had not been influenced to some extent by this movement. They rejected predestinarianism and many of them came out of well established Calvinistic communions.

What changed the prevailing Seventh-day Adventist view from Arianism to Trinitarianism? The evidence would indicate that it was the publication of the Trinitarian declarations of Ellen G. White in the last decades of the nineteenth century that initiated the change. It would appear that she wrote little before the early 1890s which could have led to serious questioning of the prevailing Arian view. Most of her statements which appeared before 1890 could have been interpreted to agree with the Arian doctrine. But from the early 1890s on, Ellen G. White produced increasingly unequivocal Trinitarian statements. She did not contradict any position she had formerly taken. She exalted as the eternally pre-existent, self-existent Son, who at every stage of His existence was absolutely equal with the Father. The Holy Spirit she depicted as a Person in as real a sense as Christ and the Father are Persons. She speaks of him as the third Person of the Godhead. The whole tenor of her teaching on the nature of God is one of exaltation of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Why were Ellen G. White's statements on the subject so relatively late in appearing? Had they appeared in the early phase of denominational history they might well have been the subject of considerable division. The Church needed to be firmly established before such difficult and controversial matters could be introduced. When Ellen G. White wrote on the nature of God it was her intent not only to answer Arianism but also to answer the pantheistic conceptions which were being propagated by J. H. Kellogg. But this pantheistic threat did not seriously arise until late in the nineteenth century. It was a more serious danger to the stability of the developing movement than Arianism. The Arians were not so militant, they were loyal to the denomination

and, as subsequent events proved, many of them were quite open to conviction on the subject.

No doubt the enlarging missions program of the Church late in the nineteenth century emphasized the need of careful statement of faith. If an attempt to correct Arianism were unwise in the earliest period, it would have been even more unwise to wait until this doctrine was held by thousands of Seventh-day Adventists the world around.

Finally, it must be borne in mind that the Adventist Arians never repudiated the divinity of Christ as Creator, Redeemer and Mediator, nor did they underestimate the importance of the Holy Spirit in the Church. In fairness to the Arian pioneers of Adventism it must be said that they were great men of God and honest seekers for truth. No doubt this is one reason the Arian doctrine was held for so long. There was a loyal repetition of the views of certain founding fathers. Washburn's article gives this impression. It is characteristic of religious movements, of which Seventh-day Adventism is an example, that because of the spiritual calibre of the pioneers, the views of these men are cherished. This is a source of strength and unity, but it can become a source of weakness when the Church refuses to advance with increasing light. Truth is not static, but dynamic, as the history of Seventh-day Adventism amply testifies.