

Spirit and Truth

Bible studies dedicated to helping the Bible student to know and worship God as He requires His followers to know and worship Him.

The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. John 4:23,24

Appendix C

**SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
POSITION re the GODHEAD**

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, TRINITARIAN OR NOT ?

The history of the doctrinal position of the Seventh-day Adventists Church in respect to the Trinity reads like the people of God of Old Testament times. There was a time of faithful compliance with the word of God, a church beautiful in the eyes of their Creator. As the years passed and acceptance by the world became the primary concern they were ensnared by the net of ecumenism. It will be noted that initially the denomination was non-Trinitarian in their belief, only later to cast this off for the more unifying doctrine of the Trinity.

Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs. More specifically most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity. *{MINISTRY October 1993, p.10, George Knight}*

In 1931 the first official statement of beliefs appeared. Prepared by a committee of four at the request of the General Conference Committee, it appeared in the SDA Yearbook of 1931, then in the first official Church Manual in 1932. While the intent may have been largely "descriptive" in the same sense as the 1872 statement, the 1931 statement did not include any qualifying preamble that would remind the church of its descriptive status. The earlier statement said "Adventists had no article of faith, creed or discipline aside from the Bible" The 1931 statement said that "Holy Scriptures ... are the only unerring rule of faith and practice." Nothing is said about a creed.

The appearance of the statement in the Church Manual, however, especially in light of the 1946 "safeguard" about changing the manual, gave the statement significant standing in Adventism, even if the church did not intend to consider it to be a formal creed.

In addition to the missing preamble, the 1931 statement differs most dramatically from the 1872 statement in that it is fully Trinitarian.

{Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries, p.46. (Authorised by the North American Division Officers and Union Presidents of the SDA Church)}

...The 1872 statement of beliefs was nonbinding and a proposed church manual was rejected in 1883.

The fact that the first statement of belief (albeit unofficial) was non-Trinitarian is remarkable. {Ibid. p.45}

Recorded on page 437 of the book "Issues:" the following is an excerpt from the 1872 statement of beliefs relevant to the nature of the Godhead. You may note that these statements do not provide an understanding of the Holy Spirit, other than as a representative of God (the Father). Did the Church overlook the Holy Spirit? No. They understand and believe the Spirit to be that of the Father.

Statement 1

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. Psalm 139:7.

Statement 2

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things and by whom all things consist;...

A further quote from the 1872 statement of beliefs concerning the relevancy of the Holy Scriptures is taken from paragraph 3, and is as follows:

Statement 3

That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of His will for man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

By this statement, the church is seen to recognise the authority and infallibility of the Word of God. However, the following statements, taken from the SDA journal, the Advent Review, is a sad denial of that previously stated position.

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, **it is assumed as a fact** by Bible writers... only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity. (emphasis supplied). {Advent Review Vol.158, No.31, p.4. 1980}

Some will tend to resist this doctrine (the Trinity) because it is not found expressly stated in the Scriptures. {*Advent Review Aug. 20, 1993, p.8*}

Even the scholarly writers for the authoritative organ of the SDA church concede that the doctrine of the Trinity is not stated in the word of God. Rather, it is assumed to be true. There is no other doctrine of the SDA church that is believed, or accepted without one single passage of Scripture to support it!

The current statement of beliefs is given in the book, "Seventh-day Adventists Believe," distributed in 1988 and covers the 27 fundamental beliefs of the denomination.

Chapters 2–5 give an explicit account of the denomination's present view of the Godhead, the Father, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. It is unequivocally Trinitarian.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has definitely changed its former position in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. It has stated that its pioneers would not be able to join the denomination of today if they had to subscribe to its fundamental beliefs (*Ministry Oct. 1993, p.10*). The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were devoutly non-Trinitarian.

By changing her stand on this doctrine, is the SDA church conceding that she began on a platform of error? If this is the case, then how can we be sure the church has it right now? And what else is wrong with their theology? The SDA church claims that *all human wisdom must be subject to the authority of Scripture* (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe, p.13*). Does this mean we shall see forthcoming, from this people that have had great light, a complete and exhaustive Bible (KJV) based discourse correcting the foundation error and proving the Trinity??!!..... It will never happen. Else it would have been done by now and closed all controversy.

In every attempt to prove the Trinity a Biblically based doctrine, the key texts, that would demolish the Trinity building blocks, are never used. E.G.White is frequently quoted, using references that are not conclusive and leaving out passages that clearly deny the Trinity (see appendices A and B for some of these quotes). It should be noted that E.G.White, so often quoted, states that unless we are well grounded, having our Bible view of a subject clear, we are not to quote her at all (5MR. p.140; see appendix B p.2, 3). This would indicate that Sister White only approves of her writings being used adjacent to Scripture. That is, when she may clearly be seen to be in harmony with and supported by the Bible and not as an argument to offset the clear teachings of the word of God..

Ellen White is accepted as the prophet to the SDA church. Even her writings are referred to as the Spirit of Prophecy and Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 are quoted in recognition of this as God's gift to the church.

There is ample biographical and autobiographical evidence that E.G.White and her pioneer contemporaries were non-Trinitarian (see Further Reading list at the end of this book). The church acknowledges this by recognising their own statement of beliefs, of 1872, to be non-Trinitarian. They also confirm that many of the pioneers of the SDA church, from that era, would not be able to join the church today because of their non-Trinitarian belief.

Notwithstanding the church's acknowledgement of the non-Trinitarian position of the pioneers, there is an ardent push to make Ellen White, their prophet, a Trinitarian, as one of themselves. If Sister White was a Trinitarian while surrounded by non-Trinitarians, and she was the prophet to deliver the truth to the infant church, why is there not one word in all of her testimonies to the church and to individuals that they were wrong in their adherence to a non-Trinitarian Godhead? It is because she, along with her contemporaries, did not believe the Trinity! If such pointed statements did exist, we may be sure they would be proclaimed from the roof tops. She would not have withheld reproof; look at her attitude toward her commission to reprove as God directed...

Leave me with God and let Him teach me. I will take the words from the Lord and speak them to the people. I do not expect that all will accept the reproof and reform their lives, but I must discharge my duty all the same. I will walk in humility before God, doing my work for time and for eternity....

With a sorrow burdened heart, I have performed my unpleasant duty to my dearest friends, **not daring to please myself by withholding reproof, even from my husband; and I shall not be less faithful in warning others, weather they will hear or forbear....** The life and character of different persons are clearly presented before my mind. I see their errors and dangers and feel compelled to speak of what is thus brought before me. I dare not resist the Spirit of God.
{5T.p20}

There is no record of Ellen White correcting her own husband over the following statements.

1RH. 244, C1 James White

Jesus is equal with the Father in creation and He received all things from the Father. **The Father is greater than the Son in that He was first.**

RH September 12, 1854 James White

As fundamental errors, we might class with this counterfeit sabbath (Sunday) other errors which protestants have brought away from the Catholic Church, such as, sprinkling for baptism, **the Trinity**, the consciousness of the dead and eternal life in misery. The mass who have held these fundamental errors have doubtless done it ignorantly; **can it be supposed that the church of Christ (SDA) will carry along with her these errors** till the judgement scenes burst upon the world.
(parenthesis supplied)

All the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church came from a thorough study of the Bible. That which could not be understood from the Bible was made plain when the Spirit of God revealed the truth to Ellen White. She would then deliver God's message to the Adventist pioneers who were halted in their Bible study. When the foundation of truth for the Seventh-day Adventist church was laid, Mrs. White would not remain silent in the face of any attempts to undermine those pillars of faith so graciously given by God. If the non-Trinitarian doctrine of the early Adventist church was not Biblically sound, God would have shown her and she would have said so in unmistakable language, not by innuendo, or with statements that could be read either way.

In the early days of the message, when our numbers were few, we studied diligently to understand the meaning of many scriptures. At times it seemed as if no explanation could be given. My mind seemed to be locked to an understanding of the Word; but when our brethren who had assembled for study, came to a point where they could go no farther, and had recourse to earnest prayer, the Spirit of God would rest upon me, and I would be taken off in vision, and be instructed in regard to the relation of scripture to scripture. These experiences were repeated over and over and over again. Thus many truths of the third angel's message were established, point by point. Think you that my faith in this message will ever waver? Think you that I can remain silent, when I see an effort being made to sweep away the foundation pillars of our faith? I am as thoroughly established in these truths as it is possible for a person to be. I can never forget the experience I have passed through. God has confirmed my belief by many evidences of his power. {RH. June 14, 1906 par.18}

The various denominations from which the SDA pioneers emerged were structured on many centuries of tradition with doctrines that were not grounded on Biblical fact (e.g. Trinity, state of the dead and Sunday sacredness). It seems incomprehensible that, when Yahweh was setting up a "called-out church" to worship Him according to truth, He would not have made His own identity His first point of clarification. Were those first fifty years of the denomination based on any error?....

Series B.7 p.58 (1906)

The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1844, after the passing of the time. The languishing souls are to be confirmed and quickened according to His word. And many of the ministers of the gospel and the Lord's physicians will have their languishing souls quickened according to the word. Not a word is changed or denied. That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth. Pillars of truth were revealed, and we accepted the foundation principles that have made us what we are --- Seventh-day Adventists, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus.

No. The first fifty years were not based on error, but on truth. However Mrs. White would foresee a serious falling away from the established truths that made the church the people that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. So how are we to interpret the claim of

the church that the pioneers were wrong on the point of the Godhead and the church has now grown into an enlightened truth?

Series B.2, p.54, 55 (1904)

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

Series B. 7, p.57. (1906)

One thing it is certain is soon to be realized,--the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominated faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith. Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience until the present time.

These three poignant statements from the prophet of the SDA church state that the doctrines established by 1844 and proved correct in the ensuing 50 years are the very foundation of the church. They are not to be discarded, though they would be, and in doing so the denomination will be changed. It will not be the same SDA church of 1844.

It is heart breaking to see God's beautiful SDA church denying her fundamental doctrine of one God, the Father, and one Lord, His Son, in favour of the ecumenical and traditional view of three Gods. Two of them *pretending* to be related and the three of them going under the title

of one God. The SDA church has chosen to be like the nations around her (Eze.16:1-34; 20:32).

The following quote shows how a philosophical concept may be held to the exclusion of the truth. To the God of heaven, such intellectual arrogance is regarded as idolatry.

No outward shrines may be visible, there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practising idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. **Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal. Are we worshipping the true God as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place?** God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshipping the true God. {5T 173}

Letter to Bro. Chapman, 11 June 1891

Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit.

I have received yours (letter) dated June 3. In this letter you speak in these words: "Elder Robinson does not wish me to leave, but urges that I enter the canvassing field until such time as the conference can afford to employ me in some other capacity, but states positively that I cannot be sent out to present the truth to others until some points held by me are changed or modified in order that the views regarded by us as a people should be properly set forth. He quotes as a sample, 'My idea in reference to the Holy Ghost's not being the Spirit of God, which is Christ, but the angel Gabriel, and my belief that the 144,000 will be Jews who will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. On all fundamental points I am in perfect harmony with our people; but when I try to show what seems to me to be new light on the truth, those in authority, none of whom have seemingly ever made a personal investigation of the matter, refuse to look into the Bible, but brand me as a fellow with queer ideas of the Bible.' " {14MR 175.1}

Your ideas of the two subjects you mention (Holy Spirit Gabriel and 144,000 Jews) do not harmonize with the light which God has given me. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not clearly revealed, and you will never be able to

explain it to others because the Lord has not revealed it to you. You may gather together scriptures and put your construction upon them, but the application is not correct. The expositions by which you sustain your position are not sound. You may lead some to accept your explanations, but you do them no good, nor are they, through accepting your views, enabled to do others good. {14MR 179.1}

It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in My name." "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" [John 14:16, 17]. **This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter....** {14MR.179.2}

There are many mysteries which I do not seek to understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of these points, silence is golden. {14MR 179.3}

I hope that you will seek to be in harmony with the body. I have been shown that you would not exert a saving influence in teaching the truth, because your mind is restless, and unless you drank deeper of the Fountain of life, you would make the mistake that many others have made, of thinking that you have new light, when it is only a new phase of error. {14MR 180.1}

You need to come into harmony with your brethren....{14MR. 180.2}

The above quote from 14MR., is part of a letter written to Brother Chapman by Ellen White, from Petoskey, Michigan, June 11, 1891. It is listed in the White Estate as manuscript 1107. Some of the above wording may also be found in Acts Of The Apostles pp.51,52.

We may note from this passage that Sister White states -- *we cannot define the Holy Spirit because such knowledge is too high for us and it has not been revealed.* However, she then proceeds to give the definition that has been revealed and that is within the limits of our comprehension. She says -- *The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Spirit of truth which the Father will send in His name.* She then qualifies that statement by saying that, *this refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter.* We may ask, is the Spirit of Christ a third

member of the Godhead, or Jesus in a Spirit form? If we insist that it is a third Being in the Godhead, we may be stepping into the prohibited area of speculation she has just denounced?

We may also notice that Sis. White does not correct Bro. Chapman when he stated the accepted understanding of the Holy Ghost to be the *Spirit of God, which is Christ*, a concept with which he differed. Her later recommendation to him was that he should *come into harmony with the body* (church brethren). And what doctrine did the brethren hold? They held the same view as Ellen White in respect to fundamental doctrines of the SDA church. In particular, they believed the Holy Spirit to be the Spirit of Christ, not a third person.

The Keeping Of My Soul

Put not your trust in princes (religious leaders), nor in the son of man in whom there is no help. Psalm 146:3, compare Isa. 3:12.

With the many warnings against false teachers, why are the people so ready to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy? There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour's teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible?

How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God's word that they are light-bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world, leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible, and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister; and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to

the unbelief, the pride and prejudice, of another.
{ 4 SOP. p.415 }

Further Reading:***The Living Voice***

Published by: Restitution Ministries

Direct quotes from early Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers clearly presenting their view of the identity of God and the error of the Trinity. (comprehensive)

The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity

By Lynnford Beachy, of Smyrna Gospel Ministries

A detailed study on the concept of the Trinity, its origin and how it came to be accepted in Christendom as part of worship of the God of heaven.

The Trinity Confusion

Compiled by Margaretha Teirney, of Remnant Messages

A detailed study on pagan multiple deities, their triune gods and the development of the Trinity as (wrongly) applied to the Creator God.

And His Teaching.

By Margaretha Teirney, of Remnant Messages

Background of the Trinity in Catholicism and the beliefs of the pioneers of the SDA church on the Trinity

Except As We Forget.

By Margaretha Teirney, of Remnant Messages

How the Trinity came to be established into the SDA church

Build on the Solid Rock

By Bob and Peggy Boyd

From Restitution Ministries

A broad coverage of the subject of the Godhead. The one God (not three in one) teaching of the Bible accepted by the SDA church, then later rejected as error.

God's Mystery Finally Understood.

By Joe Harricharan, of Sanctify Them With Thy Truth Ministry.

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Each of the following publications were authored by E.G. White

PP	-	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>
DA	-	<i>Desire of Ages</i>
3SP	-	<i>Spirit of Prophecy Vol.3</i>
ISM	-	<i>Selected Messages Vol.1</i>
Ev.	-	<i>Evangelism</i>
EW	-	<i>Early Writings</i>
5T	-	<i>Testimonies To The Church Vol.5</i>
4SOP	-	<i>Spirit of Prophecy Vol.4</i>
CM	-	<i>Colporteur Ministry</i>
7MR	-	<i>Manuscript Releases, Vol.7 (embracing manuscript number - xxx)</i>
Ms	-	<i>Manuscript, with number</i>
YI	-	<i>Youth's Instructor with specified date of issue</i>
RH	-	<i>Review and Herald with specified date of issue</i>
5RH	-	<i>Review and Herald Publications, Book 5</i>
7ABC	-	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol.7A</i>

In the open pages of God's holy word, light from Heaven has been shed upon the world. But it should be remembered that the greater the light bestowed, the greater the darkness of those who pervert or reject it.

Spirit of Prophecy vol.4. p.388



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