

The Development of Trinity Theology within the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Part 3

The Son of God - A brief study through the spirit of prophecy

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We noted in Part 2 of this series that regarding the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the current theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that all three are only role-playing (acting out) their various parts. According to official SDA documentation therefore, these terminologies are not to be taken literally. They are said to be only metaphors.

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The Scriptures a Safeguard

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

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The Son of God - A brief study through the spirit of prophecy

A reminder of current SDA Godhead theology

It is taught today, by the SDA Church, that Christ, in His pre-existence, was not begotten of God therefore He is not really God's Son. It is said that He is only role-playing (acting out) the part of a son. This is the same as the Father and the Holy Spirit who are also said to be role-playing (acting out) their parts.

It is explained that in the ages of eternity past, three (unnamed) divine beings decided that in order to redeem mankind from sin, they would take on these different roles. This is why the terminologies Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are said to be only metaphors. This is what is taught today, through our various denominational publications, also in our churches, schools and colleges etc, by the ministry and the teachers of the SDA Church. Here now are some of the statements that have been made, in our denominational publications, explaining this role-playing idea. We noted these in detail in part 2 of this study.

“It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, **They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan.**” (Frank Holbrook, *These Times*, June 1st 1981, ‘What is the Trinity’)

This role-playing idea was also promoted through an avenue in which it would receive the greatest exposure. This was in a week of prayer reading in 1996.

“A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. **In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation.** All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven. As sin progressively developed in heaven and later, on earth, so the plan to deal with it was progressively revealed—the **divine Beings entered into the roles they had agreed upon before the foundations of the world were laid** (see 1 Peter 1:20).” (Gordon Jenson, *Adventist Review*, October 31, 1996, *Week of Prayer readings*, ‘Jesus the Heavenly Intercessor’)

In 2008, this same role-playing belief was also taught in our Sabbath School quarterly

“But imagine a situation in which the Being we have come to know as God the Father came to die for us, and the One we have come to know as Jesus stayed back in heaven (we are speaking in human terms to make a point). **Nothing would have changed, except that we would have been calling Each by the name we now use for the Other.** That is what equality in the Deity means.” (Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Quarterly, page 19, Thursday April 10th 2008, ‘The Mystery of His Deity’)

In the book *The Trinity*, which was published in 2002 to explain the official position we have taken concerning the trinity doctrine, Woodrow Whidden made these comments

“While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, **do we really want to take such expressions in a totally literal way? Or would it be more appropriate to interpret them in a more metaphorical way that draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood?**” (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, ‘Biblical objections to the trinity’ page 94, 2002)

“Is it not quite apparent that the problem texts become problems only when one assumes an exclusively literalistic interpretation of such expressions as “Father,” “Son,” “Firstborn,” “Only Begotten,” “Begotten,” and so forth? Does not such literalism go against the mainly figurative or metaphorical meaning that the Bible writers use when referring to the persons of the Godhead? (*Ibid*, page 106)

“While the three divine persons are one, They have taken different roles or positions in the Godhead’s work of creation, redemption, and the loving administration of the universe. The Father has assumed overall leadership, the Son has subordinated Himself to the leadership of the Father, and the Spirit is voluntarily subordinate to both the Father and the Son.” (*Ibid*, page 243, ‘Why the Trinity is important – part 1’)

This is saying that the terminologies mentioned here (Father, Son, begotten etc) should not be taken literally but metaphorically.

In the 2001 SDA publication *Understanding the Trinity*, a book written by Max Hatton (a retired minister living in Australia) that is said to explain the current theology held by the SDA Church, we find the following;

“Because the Bible requires us to believe that God is a Trinity we can accept that, for the purposes of the plan of redemption, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit decided in the Councils of the Godhead, to accept various positions in conducting the plan. The Father accepted what we might call the position of ‘Managing Architect’. Jesus accepted the position of ‘Mediator Redeemer’ and the Holy Spirit accepted the position of ‘Comforter Sanctifier” (*Max Hatton, Understanding the Trinity, pages 76-77, 2001*)

“Jesus was not begotten, neither was he created. Many who say Jesus was a literal Son of God make claims for one or more of these ways He is said to have come into being. If people want to follow this line of literalness they should explain how it is possible to be absolutely literal when there was no mother. The terms Father and Son, when related to Jesus, can hardly be literal really.” (*Ibid*, page 97)

“Jesus became the Son of God at His human birth...” (*Ibid*, page 34)

In the *Handbook of SDA Theology*, which is said to explain all the official beliefs of SDA’s, it says the following about the belief that Christ is begotten of God

“The preeminence of God the Father over God the Son suggested by the analogy to the human father-son relationship seems to be sustained by some passages that appear to teach that the Son is generated by the Father, and that the Son is subordinated to the Father. ... The generation of the Son from the Father cannot be analogically deduced from the process of human generation. Such a deduction would produce a speculative theory without any ground in revelation. ... There is, therefore, no ground within the biblical understanding of the Godhead for the idea of a generation of the Son from the Father” (*Fernando Canale, Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, page 125, ‘The doctrine of God’*)

In the publication *Adventist World*, Angel Rodriguez, who in 2011 retired from the position of Director of the SDA Biblical Research Institute, explained what the Bible means by the terminology “the Son of God”

“The metaphor of sonship means that although Christ and the Father have the same nature, they are different persons, implying a plurality of persons within the Godhead. *Third*, the relationship between parents and children is unique. Their union is practically indissoluble. The metaphor is therefore a good symbol for the deep unity that exists within the members of the Godhead (John 17:5)...There is no biblical support for the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. The Son came from God but was not generated by Him. *Fifth*, the father-son image cannot be literally applied to the divine Father-Son relationship within the Godhead. The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father ...The term “Son” is used metaphorically when applied to the Godhead.” (Angel Rodriquez, *Adventist World*, November 2015, ‘A Question of Sonship’)

In the *Ministry* magazine of June 1982 (which was two years after the trinity doctrine was first voted into our fundamental beliefs) we find this statement

“The Father, Son relationship in the New Testament, must always be understood in the light of the event of Bethlehem. The only child born into this world with a divine rather than a human father is Jesus. The title ‘son’ refers to His entry into time and does not deny at all His eternal origins. There are references in the Old Testament to ‘Sonship’ but these are always in anticipation of the incarnation” (J. R. Hoffman, *Ministry*, June 1982, page 24, ‘Is Jesus Jehovah God?’)

So as we can see, the current official theology of the SDA church is that (a) Christ is not begotten of God therefore He is not truly the divine Son of God, and (b) before the entrance of sin, three unnamed divine persons chose to role-play the parts of a Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus it is concluded that the terminologies of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are only metaphors. Some maintain that Christ is called a Son because of the events of Bethlehem (the virgin birth). A more detailed analysis can be seen on pages 171-188 of part 2 at the following link

[The development of SDA trinity theology - part 2](#)

We shall now take a look at what has been revealed, through the spirit of prophecy, about the divine Son of God. We can then compare this with what is being taught today by the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The beginning of the Sonship controversy

It is a generally accepted fact that sin, before it existed here on earth, existed in Heaven. The Bible tells us that it came in through the rebellion of Lucifer. He was then the highest of the angels. So what was involved in the original controversy – and what was it that led Lucifer to rebel against God?

“Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer, that glorious angel, got up a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth.” (Ellen G. White, *Sermon, Berkeley California, August 21st 1910*)

“This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ. One angel began the controversy and carried it on until there was rebellion in the heavenly courts among the angels.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 42, 1910, to D. A. Parsons, April 29th 1910*)

“They [the unfallen angels] 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; and that he had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 9th January 1879, ‘The fall of Satan’)

The initial controversy involved a dispute over whether or not Christ really is “the only begotten Son of God”. The fallen angels were endeavouring to obscure this “fact” (that He really is the only begotten of God), whilst the unfallen angels were doing exactly the opposite. So what had led to this dispute?

“**When God would not concede to Satan’s claim to a place above His only begotten Son, Satan rebelled**. There was war in heaven, and he was cast out. He pressed his claim to be placed above Christ, but the warfare resulted in his losing his position in the heavenly courts.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 132 1910, to H. W. Cottrell, December 1st 1910*)

“When God would not concede to Satan’s claim regarding the place that he should occupy in heaven, Satan rebelled. There was war in heaven, and he was cast out. **He pressed his claim to be equal with Christ**, but the warfare resulted in his losing his position in the heavenly courts.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 12 1911, to H. W. Cottrell, March 3rd 1911*)

“**I assure [you] that it will be one of our perplexities to distinguish the genuine from the spurious**. Deception steals in unawares, just as it stole into the heavenly courts. Satan sought to undermine the confidence of the angels in God’s government. **He desired the place occupied by Christ, having it in his mind, if he gained this position, to make an effort to take the place of God**. Adroitly he presented his suggestions to the angels, and many of them received these suggestions. He left his insinuations in their minds to develop.” (Ellen G. White, *Ms 37 1903, typed May 1st 1903, Directions for Work*)

“Satan, who was once a beautiful angel in the heavenly courts, became a fallen angel because he did not want to occupy a secondary place, but to be next to God. **He would have the Lord Jesus become second to him, for his own glory was very precious in his own sight. He was jealous of Christ, the Saviour.**” (Ellen G. White, *Ms74 1910, March 20th 1910, 'Talk/Remarks at Oakland, California'*)

Lucifer wanted to be equal with Christ. He also longed to be placed above Christ. This was self-aggrandizement. The Bible tells us that Lucifer was lifted up because of his own beauty (Isaiah 14:12-14). This was the original sin. We are also given this insight

“Christ is the express image of His Father’s person, and the angels could see in the Son a perfect representation of God. **Lucifer coveted the honor and glory given to Christ**. He became so self-exalted that he supposed that he could do anything he desired to do because of his high position as covering cherub, **and he tried to obtain for himself the position given to Christ**.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 55 103, to John Harvey Kellogg, April 15th 1903*)

“The beams of glory enshrouding the eternal God, once rested constantly upon him [Lucifer]. But, not content with his position, tho honored above the heavenly host, **he began to covet the glory with which the Father had invested the Son**. Lucifer desired to be first in heaven.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 10th 1903)

Here it is revealed that Christ had been “invested” with the glory He possessed, also that He had been “given” His position. Lucifer became jealous of these things. Instead of being content with the glory and beauty that God had given to him, he aspired to the glory and position that God had given to Christ. His desires though could not be fulfilled. He was only a created being. Christ was begotten of God. So what could God do in order to make clear the truth about His Son?

“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 should be equal with himself; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was as his own presence. His word 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 he to work in union with himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon it.” (*Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 page 17 1870*)

It is evident that the Father has the supreme authority – also that He had “invested” His Son with authority. God also made clear to the heavenly host that He had “ordained” that His Son “should be equal with Himself”.

In further explanation of this dispute, Ellen White wrote in the opening chapter of *Patriarchs and Prophets*

“The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” John 1:1, 2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 35, ‘Why was sin permitted’*)

Notice it says that “the Word” (Christ), is “the only begotten of God”. This means that no other person in the universe is begotten of God. This would be the reason why Ellen White maintained that the Son of God was the “only being” that could enter into the counsels and purposes of God. These two realisations automatically exclude the Holy Spirit from (a) having been begotten of God, and (b) as having the status of a divine “being”. Notice too that the words, “the only begotten of God”, refer to an action. It is not just a description of Christ.

In a letter addressed to her two sons Willie and Edson White, Ellen White said that her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, along with *The Great Controversy*, had been written especially for newcomers to the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This, she explained, was so that these newcomers may be “established in the truth”, also be kept from going down “strange paths” (*Letter 229 1903*). Three years later in another letter she appealed

“Please read the first chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and see if the precious truths contained in this book are not given by the Lord to protect His people from deceptions that are urged upon them just now.

I tell you in the name of the Lord God of Israel, that Satan is presenting his sophistries to ministers and medical workers; and if our people listen to these sophistries, they will become impregnated with the same false idea of popular religion that will cause them to develop into gods, and there will be no place in their lives for God or for Christ." (Ellen G. White, Letter 212 1906 to A. J. Read, July 2nd 1906)

Here it is said that if we are to avoid being deceived by Satan, we need to believe what God has revealed in the opening chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. We shall therefore see what else Ellen White has written in its opening chapter (*Why Sin was Permitted*)

After saying that Lucifer had coveted the homage due alone to the Creator, Ellen White again explained of this fallen angel

"And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone." (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, op. cit)

Again we see it said that God had "invested" His Son with the glory He possesses. On the next page we find further explanation of God dealing with this dispute.

"The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings." (*Ibid*, page 36)

This is where we need to remember something very important. This is that when Christ was begotten of God, none of the angels existed. This is because God created all things, including the angels, *through* Christ (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:1-2, Colossians 1:16-17). This means that none of the angels had beheld the begetting of the Son, which, ultimately means, they had to take God's word for it that this did happen. To put it another way, the inhabitants of heaven had to accept by faith that Christ was begotten of God. None of them could actually prove it because when Christ was begotten, they did not exist. We are in the same position today. We are to take God's word for it (that Christ truly is the only begotten Son of God). Ellen White continued

"Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will." (*Ibid* page 36)

God "declared" to the heavenly host that Christ was "the Only Begotten of God". Remember: God's intent of calling this vast assembly was to set forth "the true position of His Son". It was also to "show the relation" that His Son "sustained to all created beings". On this very important point therefore, God could not afford to have any misunderstandings. After all, this is what the dispute was all about. Was Christ really the Son of God or not?

In keeping with His character, God was compelled to make clear that Christ was begotten of Himself, also that His Son was not, as were the angels, a created being. This is why Lucifer could not attain to Christ's position. He was a created being. Christ was begotten of God. There is a world of difference between these two origins of existence.

In this same chapter we also find this statement

“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. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions.” (*Ibid* page 38)

Again the “true position of the Son of God” is emphasised. We are also told that up to the time of this assembly, there had been “no change” in Christ’s position or authority. This means that since the time that Christ had been begotten, His position was exactly the same as it always had been. Even before the angels were created, Christ’s Sonship with God had been His “true position”.

It is also very important to bear in mind (as we have already seen above) that this assembling of the host of Heaven was prior to the creation of our world. As Ellen White again pointed out

“The Son of God had wrought the Father’s will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. **Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants.**” (*Ibid*, page 36)

When the inhabitants of Heaven were told that that Christ was begotten of God, they could not have related this in any way to the virgin birth at Bethlehem, neither could they have related it to the resurrection of Christ. After all, what did they know about the events that would transpire after God had created our planet? At that time, God had not even created our world – and none of these heavenly beings, including Lucifer, were allowed into the counsels when the Father and the Son had discussed it.

The angels therefore would not have known anything about Adam and Eve, or their fall into sin, or their need of a saviour, or that Christ would become flesh and die for the sins of the human race. They were completely ignorant (oblivious) of all these things. Only God and Christ knew of these future events. There is no way therefore that when God said to the heavenly host that Christ was begotten, that they could have related this to Christ’s voluntary descent into human nature. They could only have been thinking that He had been begotten of God prior to any of them being created. This is what the dispute was all about. It was this “fact” (see page 4) that the fallen angels were attempting to obscure – that Christ was the only begotten of God – begotten before anything was created.

Five times, in John’s writings, Christ is referred to as begotten (John 1:14, 1:18, 3:16, 3:17 and 1 John 4:9). Some maintain that this is only alluding to Christ’s birth at Bethlehem but this cannot be so. This is because John wrote his gospel in order to show that Christ is the Son of God (John 20:31) – and nowhere does he even mention the events of Bethlehem (the virgin birth etc). Each of the signs he gives, as he progresses through his gospel, is a sign of Christ’s divinity. Read through his gospel and you will see what I mean. He even begins his gospel to show Christ is divine.

“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. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not John 1:1-5

Ellen White wrote of these words

“How precious are these words! By them some have been led to believe in Christ as the Son of God. ... The writer of these words plainly shows that Jesus Christ is one with the Father. Christ is called the Word. He is the first-begotten of the Father.” (Ellen G. White, Ms 111 1903, 'October 22nd 1903, That they may be one; As we are one')

So as we can see, when the Bible, also the spirit of prophecy, refers to Christ as the only begotten of God, it can only mean begotten prior to anything being created. This is how the heavenly host would have understood what was meant when God told them that Christ was the only begotten of Himself. We also read in *The Great Controversy*

“Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator’s will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 493, ‘The Origin of Evil’)

This was in the 1911 edition of *The Great Controversy*. Ellen White was repeating what she had written 21 years earlier in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890). This edition of the *Great Controversy* was published 13 years after the publication of *The Desire of Ages* (1898). She was still saying then, in 1911, that Christ, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God.

Another interesting insight is where Ellen White explained

“The angels were marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head. Satan, ambitious to exalt himself, and unwilling to submit to the authority of Jesus, was insinuating against the government of God. Some of the angels sympathized with Satan in his rebellion, and others strongly contended for the honor and wisdom of God in giving authority to His Son. There was contention among the angels. Satan and his sympathizers were striving to reform the government of God. They wished to look into His unsearchable wisdom, and ascertain His purpose in exalting Jesus and endowing Him with such unlimited power and command.” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 145, ‘The Fall of Satan’)

“While some of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion, others reasoned with him to dissuade him from his purposes, contending for the honor and wisdom of God in giving authority to his Son. Satan urged, for what reason was Christ endowed with unlimited power and such high command above himself! He stood up proudly, and urged that he should be equal with God. He makes his boasts to his sympathizers that he will not submit to the authority of Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume 3, page 36, ‘The Temptation and Fall’, 1864)

Again we see it said that Christ was “given” authority, and “endowed with unlimited power”. This was his inheritance as the only begotten of God (Hebrews 1:4-6).

We can now see what Ellen White meant when she made the following two statements

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

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, **gave his only begotten Son**, tore from his bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 9th July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People'*)

Concerning the origins of the controversy between Christ and Satan, much more could be added from the spirit of prophecy, but it would only be repeating what has been said above. We shall now turn our thoughts to the incarnation.

The incarnation of the divine Son of God

It was the divine Son of God who voluntarily became a baby in Bethlehem

"When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission by assuming the likeness of a man **when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God.**" (*Ellen G. White, letter, to J. H. Kellogg, Letter No. K-303, August 29th 1903*)

"O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, **that the infinite God would consent to the humiliation of his own dear Son!**" (*Ellen G. White, Christian education, page 107 'The book of books', 1893*)

"O what a gift God has made to our world! The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. **God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, liable to physical infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are. He was the Son of the living God.** His personality did not begin with His incarnation in the flesh." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 77 1894, to Bro Scazighini, August 3rd 1894*)

"Said the angel, "Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, **whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them.**" (*Early Writings, page 127, 'God's Gift to Man'*)

"**The Father did not yield up his dearly beloved Son without a struggle**, whether to let guilty man perish or to give his Son to die for the lost race." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30th January 1879, 'The Great Controversy: The plan of salvation'*)

"In giving His Son, God gave Himself that man might have another trial. If God could have changed this law to meet man in his fallen condition, would He not have done this, **and retained His only begotten Son in heaven?—He certainly would.**" (*Ellen G. White, Bible Echo, February 8th 1897, 'The Law and the Gospel'*)

"Every specification of the Old Testament prophesied was fulfilled in the New Testament. **There could be no uncertainty in regard to Christ being the Son of God.**" (*Ellen G. White, Experiences in Australia, page 341*)

“Who was this? The Majesty of heaven. **The Son of the Infinite God condescended to take humanity upon Himself**, that He might give a perfect pattern of humanity for infancy, childhood, and youth.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 47 1893, to W. W. Prescott, October 25th 1893*)

“**How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem’s manger is still the divine Son of God?** Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that he who made the worlds, for our sakes became a helpless babe.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor, 21st November 1895, ‘Child life of Jesus No. 1’*)

“In His incarnation **He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God**. Said the angel to Mary, “The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” While the Son of a human being, **He became the Son of God in a new sense.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times August 2nd 1905, ‘Christ our only hope’*)

“The dedication of the first-born had its origin in the earliest times. **God had promised to give the First-born of heaven to save the sinner**. This gift was to be acknowledged in every household by the consecration of the first-born son. He was to be devoted to the priesthood, as a representative of Christ among men.” (Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages, page 51, ‘The Dedication’*)

“**It is true that God gave his only begotten Son to die for us**, to suffer the penalty of the [broken] law of God. ...For our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might be made rich. **The Father sent His Son here**, and right here on this little atom of a world were enacted the grandest scenes that were ever known to humanity.” (Ellen G. White, *Sermon, Minneapolis, October 13th 1888, ‘Tell of God’s love and power’, Ms 7 1888*)

“Satan is determined that men shall not see the love of God, **which led him to give his only begotten Son to save the lost race; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.**” (Ellen White, *Review and Herald, 20th March 1894, ‘Christ the center of the message’*)

“The contemplation of the love of God, **manifested in the gift of his Son for the salvation of fallen men, will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else will.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, January 7th 1890, ‘Christ revealed the Father’*)

“Jesus unfolded before this noble Pharisee [Nicodemus] the whole plan of salvation, and his mission to the world. In none of his subsequent discourses did the Saviour explain so thoroughly, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the human heart, if it would inherit the kingdom of Heaven. **He traced man’s salvation directly to the love of the Father, which led him to give his Son unto death that man might be saved.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times, 15th November 1883, ‘The all-important lesson’*)

“God has given to the world and to angels the evidence of the changeless character of His love. **He would part with His only begotten Son, sent Him into our world**, clothed in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin and to die upon Calvary’s cross to make it manifest to men that there is provision in the counsels of heaven for those who believe in Christ to keep the commandments of God.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 11a 1894, to Captain Christiansen, January 2nd 1894*)

During the incarnation, Satan continued his attack against Christ's divine Sonship (Matthew 4:1-7, Luke 4:3-9)

"Satan flattered himself that he could lead Christ to doubt the words spoken from Heaven at his baptism. **And if he could tempt him to question his sonship**, and doubt the truth of the word spoken by his Father, he would gain a great victory." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 4th 1874, 'The Temptation of Christ')

"Satan had been defeated in the first temptation. He next took Christ to the pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem, **and asked him to prove his sonship to God by throwing himself down from the dizzy height.**" (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, December 21st 1899, 'Tempted in all points like as we are')

Did Satan know in Heaven that Christ really was the Son of God?

"The statement is made that the devil believed and trembled. **He believed that Christ was the Son of God while he was in heaven**; and when upon this earth he was in conflict with Him here on the field of battle, he believed on Christ; but could this save him? No, because he did not weave Christ into his life and character." (Ellen G. White, *Ms5 1886, Sermon, June 19th 1886, Orebro, Sweden, 'Striving to enter in'*)

These attacks on Christ's divine Sonship did not only come directly from Satan. He employed men to carry out his work. Referring to the ongoing disputations that Christ had with the Jews over His Sonship to God, Ellen White wrote

"Jesus knew that the Jews were determined to take his life, yet in this discourse **he fully explained to them his Sonship, the relation he bore to the Father and his equality with him.** This left them without an excuse for their blind opposition and insane rage against the Saviour." (Ellen White, *Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 2, page 172*)

This "equality" could only have been in Christ's pre-existence. As Ellen White explained

"Jesus claimed equal rights with God in doing a work equally sacred, and of the same character with that which engaged the Father in heaven. But the Pharisees were still more incensed. He had not only broken the law, according to their understanding, **but in calling God "His own Father" had declared Himself equal with God.** John 5:18, R. V.

The whole nation of the Jews called God their Father, therefore they would not have been so enraged if Christ had represented Himself as standing in the same relation to God. **But they accused Him of blasphemy, showing that they understood Him as making this claim in the highest sense.**" (Ellen White, *'The Desire of Ages' page 207*)

We know from Scripture that because Christ claimed to be the Son of God, the Jews regarded this as blasphemy. This is why they said that He deserved to die. They maintained that by making this claim, Jesus was making Himself equal with God (Matthew 26:63-65, Mark 14:60-65, Luke 22:70-71, John 5:18, 8:56-59, 10:30-33, 10:36 and 19:7).

"Jesus repelled the charge of blasphemy. My authority, He said, for doing the work of which you accuse Me, **is that I am the Son of God, one with Him in nature**, in will, and in purpose." (*Ibid, page 208*)

“Again the priests and rabbis cried out against Jesus as a blasphemer. His claim to be one with God had before stirred them to take His life, and a few months later they plainly declared, “For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.” John 10:33. Because He was, and avowed Himself to be, the Son of God, they were bent on destroying Him.” (*Ibid*, page 470, ‘*The Light of Life*’)

“Not long before this, Christ’s enemies had accused Him of blasphemy, and had taken up stones to cast at Him because He claimed to be the Son of God. They accused Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan. But here Christ claims God as His Father, and with perfect confidence declares that He is the Son of God.” (*Ibid*, page 535, *Lazarus, Come forth*)

“So perverted had the priesthood become that when Christ declared himself the Son of God, Caiaphas, in pretended horror, rent his robe, and accused the Holy One of Israel of blasphemy.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, June 12th 1900*)

“For a moment the divinity of Christ flashed through his guise of humanity; and the high priest quailed before the penetrating eyes of the Saviour. That look seemed to read his hidden thoughts, and burn into his heart; and never in after-life did he forget that searching glance of the persecuted Son of God. This voluntary confession of Jesus, claiming his Sonship with God, was made in the most public manner, and under the most solemn oath” (*Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 3, page 120, ‘In the Judgement Hall*’)

So we can see that the whole controversy is over the Sonship of Christ. Again, much more could be quoted saying the same thing, but the above will suffice.

Other Sonship statements worthy of note

Concerning the divine Sonship of Christ, there are many more statements from the spirit of prophecy that are worthy of our attention but space allows only for a small number.

“Who is Christ?—He is the only begotten Son of the living God. He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought,—as a thought made audible. Christ is the word of God. Christ said to Philip, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” His words were the echo of God’s words. Christ was the likeness of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person.” (*Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor, 28th June 1894, ‘Grow in Grace*’)

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.” (*Ellen G. White, Ms 116, December 19th 1905, ‘An Entire Consecration*’)

“All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all.” (*Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, page 21, ‘God with us*’)

“God has sent His Son to communicate His own life to humanity. Christ declares, ‘I live by the Father,’ My life and His being one. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (*Ellen G. White, Lake Union Herald, December 2nd 1908, ‘Extracts from unpublished Testimonies*’)

“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; He also is become my salvation." (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 3rd May 1899, 'The Word made flesh')

“Here Christ shows them that, altho 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.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 3rd May 1899, 'The Word made flesh')

“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.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, January 7th 1890, 'Christ revealed the Father')

“In the person of his only begotten Son, the God of heaven has condescended to stoop to our human nature.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 17th March 1904)

“There is a personal God, the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son.” (Ellen White, MS 86 1898, July 3rd 1898, 'Notes of the week of prayer, No. 5)

“God’s love for the world was not manifest because He sent His Son, but because He loved the world He sent His Son into the world that divinity clothed with humanity might touch humanity, while divinity lay hold of infinity. Though sin had produced a gulf between man and his God, divine benevolence provided a plan to bridge that gulf. And what material did He use? A part of Himself. The brightness of the Father’s glory came to a world all seared and marred with the curse, and in His own divine character, in His own divine body, bridged the gulf and opened a channel of communication between God and man.” (Ellen G. White, letter 38a 1890, to J. S. Washburn, September 18th 1890)

“It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man’s Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face.” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 366 'The law and the covenants')

“Our workers should use the greatest wisdom so that nothing shall be said to provoke the armies of Satan, and to stir up his united confederacy of evil. Christ did not dare to bring a railing accusation against the prince of evil, and is it proper that we should bring such accusation as will set in operation the agencies of evil, the confederacies of men that are leagued with evil spirits? Christ was the only begotten Son of the infinite God, he was the Commander in the heavenly courts, yet he refrained from bringing accusation against Satan.” (Ellen White, *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers*, No. 3 1895, page 55)

Closing thoughts and conclusions

Even the casual reader can easily see that there is a world of difference between what has been revealed through the spirit of prophecy, and what our denomination is teaching today

(that Christ is only role-playing/acting out the part of a Son). In keeping with Scripture, Ellen White is absolutely clear that Christ really is the only begotten of God therefore He really is the only begotten Son of God. Nowhere in her writings does she even suggest that Christ is only role-playing the part of a Son. She says He was begotten of God before anything was created.

This leaves us with a decision to make. Do we believe what the SDA Church is teaching today (the metaphorical role-playing idea), or do we take our stand with the spirit of prophecy? Certainly we cannot do both.

Our salvation depends upon who and what we believe. We need therefore to consider our decision very carefully. Our choice could quite possibly determine our ultimate destiny.