

Three choices (an email to a friend)

By Terry Hill

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“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 powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 63, Some Out and Be Separate’, 1905*)

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Section One

Introduction

Hi Julie

Re your recent email, also in answer to your question, I have set out my comments below. I have tried to keep them as brief as possible but unless a certain amount of explanation is included, which admittedly does make this reply very lengthy. I cannot see how it would be worthwhile. Please accept my apologies for not getting back to you sooner. It has been a very busy time.

Please feel free to pass this on to anyone you believe may be interested. All that I ask is that you send it on with its text complete and unchanged.

I would gladly welcome any reply. It is interesting to see how other Christians, particularly Seventh-day Adventists, regard this same issue. I know we all have our personal views on this topic; also that in our church today this subject is something of a really 'hot potato'.

I will take these things in the order you have them in your email, i.e., (1) the trinity, (2) the Godhead, (3) the Holy Spirit: an impersonal force. I have also included each definition as you have it in your email. I have sent it in PDF format. I hope that this is Ok with you.

This was not originally intended to be a Bible study but it has grown somewhat. In support of my beliefs I have included a reasonable number of Scriptural references.

As will be noted, particularly by Seventh-day Adventists, I have not included any quotations from the pen of Ellen White. This has been done for a specific reason. This reason is that Ellen White said herself that all of our professed beliefs should be able to be supported by Scripture alone. In other words, it should not be necessary regarding any of the doctrines that we hold that we should have necessity to quote Ellen White. If Scripture alone cannot support any of our beliefs, then we should not hold them. It is more than likely that some will criticise me for producing such a document without quoting her but I have done so out of all good conscience. Having said this, I do believe that a comprehensive study of her writings would produce the same conclusions as in this document.

I have also regarded this as an opportunity to share my faith. I hope that others will do the same.

As you will see from my comments, I do not accept that any of the three views presented are totally correct. I believe that in one way or another, they each 'fall

short' of correctly expressing what the Scriptures say concerning the three personalities of the Godhead. Some will obviously disagree with my conclusions – hopefully in the right spirit.

Section two: Trinity (definition as in your email)

Definition: One God with three personalities, all of one substance, continually manifested.

The Father knows Himself: Jesus continually begotten.

The Father & the Son know each Other: The Holy Spirit continually proceeding. 325AD–Council of Nicaea–Trinity Established. Paganism + Christianity = Papacy. Sunday worship devoted to Trinity. Churches that hold to Trinity: (I have deleted these named denominations!)

My comments:

When used in theological discussions, the word 'trinity' is usually intended to convey the idea that God is 'one unit', meaning a three-in-one entity (a tri-unity of divine personalities). What is normally meant is that the three personalities, namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are all of one indivisible substance (as in the above trinity definition). Whilst it is easily understandable as to why so many Christians come to this conclusion, it must also be said that this three-in-one concept goes beyond what God has revealed in the Scriptures. In other words, the trinity doctrine, as expressed above, is not explicitly stated in the Bible. This is the crux of the problem.

It must be said that the only way that God is depicted within the Scriptures is as a singular personal being. The same can be said of the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is somewhat different. We shall come back to this thought later.

Perhaps it would be helpful here to understand some of the history of the trinity doctrine. Background is always very important. It enriches a study.

The trinity in history

The word 'trinity' (Latin. trinitas), is generally believed to have been introduced into Christian Godhead theology by a North African church father named Tertullian (c AD160-220). He coined it to help express what he believed was the relationship between God the Father, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. His particular understanding of it was different from what was to later become the 'official (orthodox) teaching' of the trinity as held today by many denominations although obviously there are similarities.

The word 'trinity' (or its equivalent) cannot be found in Scripture. This is not a problem in itself because we use many non-biblical words and phrases to describe various biblical teachings. The 'investigative judgement' and 'the

millennium', are very good examples. The real problem is that the three-in-one concept of God cannot be found in the Scriptures. In other words, there is no text of Scripture or one passage of texts that expresses the idea that God's being (existence) is three-in-one as purported in the trinity doctrine. This means that it is only conjecture, a man-made teaching, formulated to define the very thing that God has chosen to be silent upon, meaning how He exists.

The above trinity doctrine (formula) is a 4th century innovation. Generally speaking, the Christian church maintains that its formulation was the work that God had left the church to do. Needless to say, this is the admittance that this teaching is not explicitly expressed in the Scriptures.

Interesting to note is that in the 4th century when this teaching was first officially introduced into Christianity, the majority of Christians opposed it, also since then, 'much blood' has been shed over it. The trinity has always been a matter of ongoing debate and controversy. It can easily be said to be the most debated teaching in Christianity.

It was the 4th century Roman Emperor Theodosius I (the Great), a passionate upholder of the creed of Nicaea that decreed the trinity doctrine to be an official teaching of Christianity.

The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) where this creed was founded was the first ecumenical church council ever held. This came about because of a controversy concerning Christ. It was here that a creed was signed, albeit unwillingly by some, saying that the Son was consubstantial (of one indivisible substance) with the Father. There was no theology in the creed concerning the Holy Spirit. It only said "And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit". Later at the second ecumenical council at Constantinople (AD 381), the Holy Spirit was included in this consubstantiality with the Father and the Son. This was now the trinity doctrine.

Theodosius decreed the trinity faith a test of orthodoxy. In spite of this, a vast number of Christians opposed it but those who did so were very harshly penalized for their faith. Edward Gibbon in his 'Decline and fall of the Roman Empire' says that over a period of 15 years, Theodosius made a total of 15 severe edicts against those he termed 'heretics' and those who opposed the trinity teaching. Theodosius made this trinity Christian faith the state religion of Rome.

The outcome was that non-trinitarian bishops and priests were not allowed in the pulpit. Many were exiled because of their non-conformity. It appears that it was hoped that this expulsion would encourage the laity to accept, or to at least profess, what had become the 'one true faith' of 'imperial Christianity'. This was a psychological persuasion – meaning, punish the leaders and the followers will surrender. Any homes/buildings that were found to hold meetings contrary to this so-called 'orthodoxy' were confiscated and handed over to the authorities. Those who rejected this teaching were also very heavily fined. The dissenters were also

prohibited from holding well paid/influential jobs/positions in society etc. It was like a civil exile. Non-trinitarians were not welcome in the churches (nothing really changes does it).

With the passing of time, Christians who refused to espouse this official 'trinity faith' were constantly persecuted by the church (often state backed because the church itself had no power to inflict this punishment). Non-conformists often paid the penalty with their lives. Whilst this type of methodical persecution is said to have begun with Theodosius, it must be said, as far as I can gather from the records of history, that he did not personally cause blood to be shed over this or any other religious opinion. The latter type of persecution came through others.

The trinity creed

For those who are interested, here is the Creed of Nicaea (AD 325) as upheld by Theodosius before it was changed to include the Holy Spirit as consubstantial with the Father and the Son.

"We believe in one God the Father, all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those in earth; for us humans and for our salvation he came down and became incarnate, became human, suffered and rose up on the third day, went up into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit."

An integral part of apostate Christianity

It was because of this initial act of Theodosius that the trinity doctrine (creed) became an integral part of the evolving faith of apostate Christianity. Today it is still the central belief of the Papacy, the latter of which, as Seventh-day Adventists teach (at least some do), was the end result of this apostasy and the beginning of God's true people being 'driven underground' for their faith (Revelation 12:6, 12:14 etc).

Seventh-day Adventists today should study the acts of Theodosius in relation to the taking away of the daily in Daniel chapter 8. It is very significant. This is when the church joined hands with the state to create a religio-political power (see Daniel 8:11-12). As was said above, Theodosius made this trinity faith the state religion of Rome. Paganism was taken out of the way and substituted with 'paganised Christianity' (or 'Christianity paganised'). This was antichrist but it was prophesied that it should come (see Daniel 7:7-9, 7:23-25, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10).

Many of today's Protestant churches hold to either the same or a very similar trinity teaching as the Papacy. Most believe it to be the test of orthodoxy. It even seems that presently in 2008, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has adopted

this very same attitude. They regard those who do not accept the trinity doctrine, at least their version of it, as being 'heretical'. The strange thing is that during the time of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915), the predominant faith of Seventh-day Adventists was non-trinitarian. In other words, during this time period, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was strictly a non-trinitarian denomination. This is only the same as saying (at least according to our present day denominational attitude) that all through the time period of Ellen White's ministry we were a heretical denomination. This belief is really very strange because as our denominational history attests, Ellen White upheld the beliefs of the pioneers, especially their beliefs concerning God and Christ.

This leaves a very big 'question mark' over the allegations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today that our pioneers were wrong in their teachings concerning the personalities of the Godhead. For those looking for the truth, this realisation should at least merit an investigation into our history.

Not essential to salvation

In itself, the trinity doctrine (whatever version) has its basis in speculation, meaning it is totally dependant upon that which is not revealed in Scripture. Remove this speculation and there is no trinity doctrine. Even so (and this really is very unfortunate) many Christians regard this teaching as a crucial doctrine (a test of orthodoxy) but this is purely traditional and not Scriptural.

A belief in the trinity teaching is certainly not essential to salvation. In other words, there is no need to believe it to be saved.

The trinity teaching is only a man made doctrine based on speculative reasoning. The majority of theologians, at least those worthy of their salt, will admit that it is not explicitly expressed in Scripture. At the very best they will say that it is only an implied doctrine. Obviously, the non-trinitarians will understand why the trinitarians draw this conclusion but they will still disagree with them. They will say instead that any speculative theories concerning God and His existence should not be entertained. They will usually maintain that we are only to study what God has revealed without adding to it (Deuteronomy 29:29, 1 Timothy 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:15-16, 2 Timothy 4:1-4).

Certainly the trinity doctrine itself should not be regarded as a test of whether a person is a Christian or not. Important to remember is that Jesus Himself said that "life eternal" is that we might know Him (Jesus) and the only true God that had sent Him (John 17:3). This was reiterated by John when he said that to have Christ (to have salvation) is to know both the Father and the Son (2 John 1:9). Neither Jesus, John nor any other of the Bible writers says that to be saved we need to know and confess how God has His existence. Certainly also no one mentions knowing the Holy Spirit, not even Jesus. We shall come back to this point later. A belief in the trinity doctrine therefore is not essential to salvation although some churches may require a confession of it as necessary for church membership. This is not something that is Scriptural, neither is a confession of

this teaching obligatory to a person regarding themselves being a son or daughter of God. We have the authority of the Scriptures for that belief.

Many different understandings

One of the most unfortunate aspects concerning the trinity doctrine is that many Christians appear to have their own understanding of it. In other words, 'the trinity' is not just 'one thing' to everybody. If it were, then it would not be such a problem.

Strange to relate (again this is only because of tradition), it seems that as long as a person uses the word 'trinity' to describe God's being, regardless of what they mean by this terminology, that person will usually be accepted as orthodox. This really is very strange, especially as we are talking here in terms of the most important teaching of the Scriptures (what is believed about God). For obvious reasons, this multitude of different understandings makes the word 'trinity' itself an ineffective and unproductive word, except of course for the confusion it creates.

If you are unsure of what I mean, look at it this way.

If someone asks you if you believe in the trinity, how would you know what you were being asked? The honest answer is that you would not know. This is because there are so many different views of 'the trinity' that you could not be sure which one was held by the person who is asking you the question. So until you understand what the questioner means by 'the trinity', which could be absolutely anything, you cannot answer either 'yes' or 'no'. So if you wish to answer the question intelligently, the very first thing you must do is to ask your questioner for their particular understanding of this teaching. This may give him or her who is asking you the question cause to ponder but at least you will know what it is that you are being asked. This may also bring about the realisation that it is very easy to use the word 'trinity' but something else to explain what is meant by it.

It would be just the same as if someone asked you if you believed in 'the millennium' (another non-Scriptural word used to describe a Bible teaching). Unless it was explained to you what was meant by this terminology you would never know what it was that you were being asked. It obviously could mean any one of a number of different teachings – all coming under the heading of 'the millennium'.

In reality there is nothing to gain or prove in using the word 'trinity'. It causes more confusion than anything else. If it only meant 'one thing' then this would be different but it doesn't. Today it had so many different meanings that in itself it has become impotent.

Early Christianity

Early Christians did not profess what we know today as the trinity doctrine. They believed that the Father was the source of all things and the Son the divine mediatory through whom all things came into being (John 1:1-3, Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:15-16, Hebrews 1:1-2 Revelation 1:1 etc). They believed also that Christ was God manifest in the flesh (John 1:1, 1:14, Philippians 2:5-6, Colossians 2:9, 1 Timothy 3:16 etc).

It appears that initially, early Christians did not have any hard and fast belief about the Holy Spirit being a personality; particularly at first they did not regard Him as a personal individual being like God and Christ are personal individual beings. The latter can be said especially with respect to God's people in what we now refer to as 'Old Testament times'.

In keeping with the Scriptures, early Christians always spoke of God and Christ as two separate personalities meaning two separate and distinct beings. They also believed that the Son was sourced (begotten) of the Father but not that He was created. Christ to them was the Wisdom of God brought forth and made manifest (Proverbs 8:22-31, 1 Corinthians 2:7). John described Him as 'the logos' – the expression of [God's] thought - [God's] reason - [God's] thought made audible - the Word [of God] (John 1:1, Revelation 19:13).

This bringing forth was something that was later termed 'a generation', albeit it was said to be a process known only to God. This belief was that sometime in eternity, by a means not revealed in the Scriptures, this wisdom proceeded forth from the source of all life meaning from the Father (Proverbs 8:24-25, John 8:42). This they regarded as a begetting **of** God not a creating **by** Him. This is why they described the Father as the unbegotten and the Son as the begotten (not created). This is also why they believed that the Son was God essentially. To early Christians, the Son of God was God Himself begotten, meaning that to mortal man, the person of the invisible God was shown (Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17, Hebrews 1:3, 1:8, etc). In brief the Son was said to be the (inner) person of the Father shown (see John 14:8-9, Hebrews 1:3).

Using early Christian terminology, the Son was believed to be God from God, true God from true God. To put this in another way, early Christians believed that everything that God was - so was the Son (see John 1:1, John 1:18, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 2:9 Philippians 2:5-6 etc 1 John 5:20). At the very beginning of his gospel, John made a decided effort to distinguish between the Father and the Son (John 1:1). He referred to the Father as 'the God' (John 1:1b) and the Word as 'God' (John 1:1c). He phrased it this way to identify the Father in contrast to the Word yet made it very clear that the Word was God and not some lesser deity. Unquestionably this was John's original intent. It is also reasonable to believe that he wrote his gospel to refute the many false teachings that were then, in the latter part of the 1st century, being voiced regarding Christ.

Remember here that within the Scriptures, the word 'God' is only ever used with reference to a singular being not a 'collection' of divine beings. It was also said that the only difference between these two divine personalities was that the Son was the begotten of the unbegotten Father. This was the faith of early Christianity. With the addition of its non-Scriptural speculations, this was also the faith that eventually developed into the trinity doctrine. The latter was in the 4th century when the apostasy within Christianity was 'snowballing'. The trinity doctrine was an integral part of this apostasy. History attests to this much.

A true Son

Early Christians believed that Jesus really was the pre-existent Son of God. They believed that He was begotten (sourced) of the Father. This faith is attested to by the testimony of Jesus Himself (John 3:16, John 9:35-38, John 10:36, John 11:4 etc). It is also the testimony of God the Father (Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, 2 Peter 1:17-18). It is also testified to by those that knew Jesus in His pre-existence (Mark 5:7, Luke 4:41 etc). Note that the unclean spirit of Gadara called Jesus "the Son of the most high God". These professions were obviously not denoting a metaphorical (figurative) Sonship but one that is literal and very real.

What is meant by this is that Jesus not only regarded Himself as the Son of God in the very highest sense of its meaning but also declared Himself as such to His listeners. This is why the Jews said that He was making Himself equal to God, even making Himself to be God (John 5:18, John 10:33). This is also why it was said that Jesus was being blasphemous and was worthy of death (Matthew 27:43, Luke 22:66-71, John 19:5-7). Obviously none of His accusers regarded His Sonship claims as metaphorical (figurative). They believed that He was saying that He was literally God's Son else they would not have made such accusations. Common sense and reason tells us this much.

Jesus said that His Church would be built on the confession of Him being the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-20, see also John 6:68-69). The Scriptures also say that those who deny the Father and the Son are anti-Christ (1 John 2:22). John wrote His gospel to show that Jesus really is the Son of God (John 20:31).

This faith that Jesus was God's 'one and only (solitary) beloved Son' was obviously based on what Jesus said of Himself (John 3:16-18), also of the testimony of inspiration (John 1:14-18, Hebrews 1:4-6, 1 John 4:9, 1 John 5:20, 2 John 1:3). Jesus said that He was God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). He therefore is the unique one, the one and only beloved Son of God. This is His personal testimony. To believe that Jesus really is God's Son, how much more evidence do we need?

There is nothing in the Scriptures to suggest that Jesus or anyone else was referring to this Sonship as only being from the incarnation. Those who do so

must provide the Scriptural evidence for such reasoning (as of yet I have never found any). If they fail to do this it will be a case of poor scholarship.

This idea that Jesus is only a son because of the incarnation could even be interpreted as teaching a form of adoptionism. Jesus spoke of Himself in terms of being a son prior to His coming to earth (in His pre-existence). He was therefore God's Son prior to the incarnation and not because of it (John 3:16, John 8:38-42, Luke 2:48-49, Luke 10:21-22, 1 John 4:14). His was a literal Sonship. This is why the devil came to Him and tried to make Him doubt the personal testimony of His own Father (Matthew 3:17, 4:3, 4:6 etc).

The original (orthodox) trinity doctrine

The original (orthodox) trinity doctrine was the end result of the two councils of Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381). The next century at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) when the two natures of the incarnate Christ were being debated, the conclusions of Nicaea and Constantinople were confirmed.

Put very simply, this orthodox trinity teaching says that the Father is unbegotten; the Son is ***everlastingly*** begotten (not created) whilst the Holy Spirit proceeds. All three personalities are said to belong to the ***one indivisible substance*** of God (the one being of God).

Trinity essentialness therefore is both the threeness and the indivisible oneness (trinity - tri-unity – three in unity). If either of these two essentials is missing there is no trinity doctrine. In other words, without the three personalities there is no 'tri' and without the indivisible oneness there is no 'inity' (unity). Whatever the version of the trinity, these are the two essentials (God a trinity or tri-unity).

The orthodox trinity doctrine does not say that each of the three personalities is one third of the substance (like the three sections of a pie chart) but that each is, or has His subsistence in, the whole of it.

Note above that I have underscored 'everlastingly' and 'one indivisible substance'. These are the two concepts of the orthodox trinity teaching that are not found in Scripture. These therefore are the speculations of the trinity doctrine. This is what makes it a speculative and non-essential doctrine. Nowhere in the Scriptures is given a metaphysical explanation of God, neither does it say that the Son, as a separate personality from God the Father, is co-eternal with the Father. At the very best it can only be said that the existence of the Son before the incarnation is not measured by figures, or to put it another way again, the extent of His divine life, as a separate personality from the Father (meaning as a Son), is beyond human computation (Micah 5:2, Proverbs 8:22-25). This is why this 'period of existence' should not be attempted to be defined. It is beyond human reasoning – certainly something not revealed by God.

The begotten concept regarding Christ was the reinforcing of Him being both truly the Son of God and truly God. This acquiring of a Son (Proverbs 8:22) was

not the creating of another god but was the very same God begotten (John 1:1, John 1:18, Hebrews 1:3, 1:8). Many Seventh-day Adventists seem to be confused over this difference. They regard the 'begetting' of the Son as something like a creating when it is not.

It is very unfortunate that many Seventh-day Adventists, particularly those in responsible positions who profess to be trinitarians, appear to be ignorant of this fact. They seem to think that those who say that the Son is begotten of the Father are saying that He is some sort of derived or semi-god etc (a lesser god than God Himself). Many also say that to depict Christ as begotten is to say that He is not fully divine. This reasoning is based solely on ignorance of what the majority of the orthodox trinitarians, also many of the non-trinitarians, mean by the term begotten. It is also ignorant of how early Christians regarded Christ.

This brings us to a very important point.

As noted above, the trinity doctrine is not stated in Scripture. This means that if we are to use the 'Bible only' to explain the deity of Christ then it must be couched in terms that are non-trinitarian. This is not realised by many Christians. This is also in contrast to what is maintained by trinitarians. They will usually say that the only way to correctly express the deity of Christ is as it is expressed in the trinity doctrine but this cannot be true. This is because it is only the same as saying that the Bible is inadequate to correctly express the deity of Christ (because the trinity concept is not found in it). The reality is, because the Bible is silent regarding God being a trinity, the 'Bible only' way to define the deity of Christ is in terms that are non-trinitarian. Any other way is non-Scriptural.

The problem

Regarding this 'trinity issue', it appears that many do not see the reality of 'the problem'. By this I mean that they fail to see that 'the problem' is how the Son, albeit He is revealed to be the express image of God's person (Hebrews 1:3), can be the one and the same God as the Father yet a separate personality from Him (Genesis 1:1, 1:26-27, Psalm 45:6-7 [Hebrews 1:8], Isaiah 43:10-13, 44:8, 45:5, 46:9, John 1:1, 10:38, 14:11, 17:21, 1 John 5:20). In addition they fail to see that the Holy Spirit is also the one and the same God (John 14:18, 14:23).

Some views expressed by Seventh-day Adventists describe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as though they are three gods (no relationship between them). These Seventh-day Adventists seem to have 'lost the plot'. More than anything else, their beliefs tend to border on tritheism (three gods); either that or they do not believe the Holy Spirit to be a personality, so they depict God and His Son as two gods.

If a formula (like the trinity doctrine) is to be contrived to explain how God exists (which is not very advisable because the Bible offers no explanation) then all three personalities must be said in some way or another to be the one and the same God. He cannot be part God (part divine) neither can He be another god

(or a lesser god). Christians do not profess to have a multiplicity of gods. The Son is either fully God or He is not God at all (1 John 5:20).

The procession of the Holy Spirit

It was the belief of the procession of the Holy Spirit that partially contributed to the great schism between the Western (Latin) and Eastern (Greek) churches (usually said to have happened in the 11th century) although it must be said that along with a number of other disagreements, this appears to have been for many years an ongoing difference. The west (Roman Catholicism) believes that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son (the filioque clause) whilst the east (the Orthodox Church) believes that He proceeds from the Father alone (see the Creed of Nicaea above), sometimes said to be through the Son. Some have seen this dispute as a 'storm in a teacup' but today this difference still exists. It also still separates.

This 'Holy Spirit dispute' is not the only difference between the churches of the east and the west. The east does not regard the Pope as authoritative. This is especially so with regards to the establishing of doctrine. The eastern churches accept the tradition of the early church councils. This is why they do not accept the filioque clause (and [from] the Son). It was not in the original creeds.

There are other differences in beliefs between the western and eastern churches but this 'Holy Spirit' difference is one area as far as the Godhead is concerned.

This leads us quite nicely into the second of the three choices that you sent in your email.

Section Three

THE GODHEAD (as in your email)

Definition: The Father Eternal. The Son Eternal. The Holy Spirit Eternal. Three distinct eternal Beings. The Son and Holy Spirit voluntarily chose submissive roles.

Life—original, unborrowed, underived.

Oneness, a unity of love, a harmony of thought, purpose, and character. Those who believe in the Godhead: (I have deleted these named denominations!)

My comments:

As it stands, this above Godhead summary is nothing short of tritheism (three gods). This is because there is nothing relational here regarding the three personalities. In other words, there is nothing in this statement to either make or

explain how the three are the one and the same God. On this basis alone, this statement must not be accepted as Scriptural. In fact I would say that as it stands, it is nothing less than polytheism, which in turn is nothing less than paganism.

According to Scripture, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the one and the same God (see above) but never are they depicted as a composite entity as in the trinity doctrine although it must be reiterated that the Scriptures do not depict a plurality of gods. This is why the trinity doctrine was first formulated. Its supposed intent was to define and defend this 'one God' mystery against all other heretical teachings, at least those that were considered heretical according to trinitarian reasoning. The only problem was, as we have noted above, to accomplish this end its formulators went beyond that which is revealed in the Scriptures, meaning that they attempted to explain what God has not revealed. Since that time, this doctrine has been the cause of many disputes, also the loss of life to many sincere and faithful Christians

Very important to note is that the two words 'Godhead' and 'trinity' are not synonymous. This is why the oft used phrase 'Godhead or trinity' should never be given expression. This is because its usage makes it look as though the two terminologies are synonymous when in reality they are not. This phrase therefore ('Godhead or trinity') can only serve to add to the confusion that in abundance already exists today within Seventh-day Adventism. Some Seventh-day Adventists appear to use it without caution.

As has been said previously, the word 'trinity' means to convey the concept of three-in-one (a tri-unity) whilst the Greek words translated 'Godhead' (KJV) do not even imply such a concept.

In the KJV, the word 'Godhead' appears just three times and is a rendering of the old fashioned English word 'Godhood'. It is found in Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9. It conveys each time the idea of divinity.

In Acts 17:29, the word 'Godhead' is translated from the Greek word 'theios'. This is an adjective that according to Strong's means 'Godlike' (the divine or divine-like) and is exactly the same word that is twice translated 'divinity' in 2 Peter 1:3-4.

In Romans 1:20 the word 'theiotes' (feminine noun) is used and means either 'divinity' or 'divine nature' (the quality of divinity). In Colossians 2:9 it is 'theotes' meaning 'the state of being God' (being divine). All of these words are from the root 'theos' and they all project the idea of divinity or deity. Note very importantly that in Colossians 2:9 it says that all the 'fullness of the Godhead' dwelt in Christ, not that Christ dwelt in the Godhead. The man Jesus Christ was not the God Almighty although indwelt in Him was divinity corporeal (bodily - in reality).

Now it can be seen why the phrase 'Godhead or trinity' should never be expressed. It is leading people to believe that these two words (trinity and Godhead) are synonymous when they are not even similar.

Submissive roles of those of the Godhead

In the above Godhead statement, it says the Son and Holy Spirit ***chose*** submissive roles (supposedly to accomplish the plan of redemption). This really is paganism (three gods). It is like saying that all three personalities are exactly the same and that to accomplish the redemption of mankind they chose to role-play (pretend) the parts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No evidence will be found for this in either the Scriptures or in the writings of Ellen White.

This role playing idea is totally unacceptable. It must never be entertained. It is no more than human (in fact pagan) fable. There is nothing in the Scriptures or in the writings of Ellen White to suggest that the Son is not literally a son. As has been said above, the fact that He is the Son of God shows that He is truly God. He is different from the Father inasmuch as He is begotten (the one and only Son) of the Father. This is why He is God essentially. He is God Himself in the person of His own Son (John 14:9).

The Son therefore, being of God, has no existence separate from the Father. This is why in this sense alone He is submissive (if you wish to call it that) to the Father. This is a natural aspect of His very being but it is not a qualitative difference. Apart from His 'begottenness', the Son of God is equal to God the Father in every respect. Do not confuse His natural submissiveness as a Son with His submissiveness to His human nature for the sake of redeeming mankind from sin. These are two entirely different submissions although both are the hallmark of His humility of character. This is why, if we have Christ within, we also will reflect that very same humility (see Philippians 2:1-8).

The 'life' of Christ

In the above Godhead statement there are the words "original, unborrowed, underived". Although it does not specifically say so, I assume that these are with reference to Ellen White statement often quoted from 'The Desire of Ages' (page 530) that "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived".

To any first year Bible student, this statement is a reasonably obvious conclusion. Certainly it is not earth shattering news to the Christian neither was it earth shattering news to Seventh-day Adventists when Ellen White first penned these words in 1897 although some today erringly attempt to make it appear that it was such. A quick glance at the history of Seventh-day Adventism reveals this much. What I mean is that whilst Ellen White was alive, 'The Desire of Ages' brought about no theological change within Seventh-day Adventism. This is regardless of claims to the contrary. History attests to this fact.

The Son of God is God; therefore the life that is in Him is the life of the Father. In other words, the life of the Father and the life of the Son is the same divine life (John 5:26). It must therefore follow that the life that is in Christ is life original, unborrowed, underived. What else could it be? It is the life of God. This is the very same life that is found in all who accept Christ as their Saviour. It cannot be earned. It is given as a free gift. Christ received from God all things but He only took to give. This is the law of the universe. The Father's divine life flows out to everyone through the Son (John 14:20, John 15:4).

Oneness

Whilst within the Scriptures there is no metaphysical description of God (this is why the trinity doctrine is a speculative doctrine), it is only reasonable to believe that prior to the foundation of this world, there was a oneness between God and Christ that is more than likely, even if it was revealed to us, far beyond the scope of human comprehension. Although not revealed in Scripture, this must have been something more than just “a unity of love, a harmony of thought, purpose, and character” as said in the above Godhead statement.

It is this undisclosed oneness (how God exists) that is obviously attempted to be delineated by reason of the trinity doctrine. The problem is that it is not revealed in Scripture therefore we should never attempt to speculate concerning it. This is where the trinity doctrine is in error. It attempts to explain what God has chosen not to reveal. It must be said that whilst it can be easily understood just why this was attempted, it should never have been done, not even now. God has kept this a secret therefore silence is golden.

Section four

HOLY SPIRIT: AN IMPERSONAL FORCE (as in your email)

Definition: The Father: Eternal, The Son: Begotten way back in eternity. (Originated from the Father.) The Holy Spirit: an impersonal force, power, or influence. (Originated from the Father and Son.)

Basically, the same a variation of the Trinity doctrine, except the Holy Spirit is a force, not a person. Churches that hold to Anti-Holy Spirit View: (I have deleted these named denominations!)

My comments:

Concerning this statement, the first thing to be noted is that whilst it is decidedly non-trinitarian, it does not reflect the views of many Seventh-day Adventist non-trinitarians. The other thing to note is that it bears no resemblance to the trinity doctrine. Whoever said that it was a “variation of the Trinity doctrine” was ‘a million miles away’ with that conclusion.

The question of the Holy Spirit is rather a complex issue; certainly it is more multifaceted than the one concerning the Father and the Son.

First it must be said that the nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery known only to divinity, yet He must be a personality. This is because amongst other things that He does, one of His most important functions is to witness to our spirits that we are the sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:16). This is very important to realise. He cannot therefore, as is stated in the above Godhead statement, be just an “impersonal force, power, or influence”.

Upon reading what the Scriptures say regarding the Holy Spirit, it also becomes very clear (even quite obvious) that He is not an individual personal being like we regard God and Christ as individual personal beings. His nature can only be described as a mystery. This is a mystery that God has chosen not to reveal therefore it is wise not to speculate.

I reason this way (that the Holy Spirit is not exactly a person like God and Christ are individual personages) for a number of reasons. Allow me to explain.

One reason is that in the Scriptures, the Father and the Son are sometimes depicted as sitting upon a throne (Psalm 47:8, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 3:21, 12:5 etc) but the Holy Spirit is never seen as doing such. Why not, if He is a person like God and Christ?

It must also be said that in the Scriptures, neither God nor Christ are ever seen expressing love for the Holy Spirit although they are seen expressing their love for each other (John 10:17, John 14:31, John 15:9-10). Neither is it shown where the Holy Spirit expresses love for the Father and the Son. Why not, if He is a person like God and Christ?

Another point to note is that Scriptures never say that the Holy Spirit loves fallen humanity although the Bible does tell us that both the Father and the Son love us (John 3:16, 14:21, 15:9, Romans 5:7-8, Romans 8:39, 1 John 3:1 etc). Never either are we told to love the Holy Spirit but we are called to love the Father and the Son (Deuteronomy 6:5, Joshua 23:11, Matthew 22:37, John 14:21, 14:23). If the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Christ are persons, why are we not urged to love Him and why does it not say that He loves us? Is there a reason for this?

In providing salvation for mankind, we read in the Scriptures of the sacrifice made by the Father and Son (John 3:16, Ephesians 5:2, Hebrews 10:12, 1 John 3:16, 1 John 4:9-10) but never is the Holy Spirit depicted as making a sacrifice. Why not, if He is a person like God and Christ?

Never are we told to pray **to** the Holy Spirit but we are told to pray **for** His reception. Never did Jesus direct His prayers to the Holy Spirit or talk to Him.

Neither are we told to speak or pray to the Holy Spirit. Why not, if He is a person like God and Christ?

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will not speak of Himself but of what He hears (John 16:13). So why, if He is a person like God and Christ, does He not speak of Himself? After all, God and Christ speak of themselves.

The Holy Spirit dwells within everyone who accepts Christ as Saviour (Romans 8:9, Ezekiel 36:24-27) but He does not dwell within the unconverted (Proverbs 15:29) This means that He is within countless hundreds of thousands of people at the same time, millions even. Is this acting as a person like God and Christ are persons?

Jesus breathed out the Holy Spirit upon His disciples (John 20:22). Does a person (a personal being like God and Christ) get breathed out? His nature therefore must be a divine mystery.

Certainly the apostle Paul never depicted the Holy Spirit as a personal being like God and Christ. Read the introduction to all of his letters. In every single one he says "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (or similar wording depending on the translation being used). Never does he include the Holy Spirit in this greeting. We must ask then, if the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Christ, why does Paul not include Him? (see Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3-4, 2 Corinthians 1:2-3, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2-3, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4 and Philemon 1:3)

There are also other places in Paul's writings where he refers to the Father and the Son together but not the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 11:30-31, Ephesians 6:23, Colossians 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 etc). Is this significant?

James, Peter and Jude do the same as Paul (James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1-3, 2 Peter 1:1-2, Jude 1:1). Why did they not include the Holy Spirit in their greetings?

John the gospel writer also said that as Christians, our fellowship is with the Father and the Son but does not include the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:3, 2 John 1:3 and 2 John 1:9). He also said that those who deny the Father and the Son are anti-Christ (1 John 2:22). If the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Christ, then why did John not include Him in this same condemnation? In other words, is it not anti-Christ to deny that the Holy Spirit is a personage like God and His Son? Obviously not according to John although Jesus did say that blasphemy (evil speaking etc) against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable (Matthew 12:31).

As was said above, Jesus said that life eternal is that we may know Him (Jesus) and the only true God that had sent Him (John 17:3, see also 2 John 1:9). Jesus does not mention knowing the Holy Spirit. Why not, if He is a person like God and Himself (see also Colossians 2:1-3)?

All of the above are very important realisations. Put them all together and collectively they overwhelmingly suggest that not only is the nature of the Holy Spirit a mystery but also that He is not an individual person like we consider God and Christ to be individual persons. As far as His divine nature is concerned, this is where we should let it remain – a mystery.

Who or what did Jesus say is the Holy Spirit?

When John 14 is read, particularly verses 14-23, it is reasonably obvious that the Holy Spirit is both God and Christ omnipresent when the latter two are both bodily (physically) in Heaven. This may be something of a mystery but this is what Jesus has told us.

Allow me to explain what I mean. John records Jesus as saying (John 14:18)

"I will not leave you comfortless: **I will** come to you."

Jesus said that with the coming of the comforter, that He Himself (Jesus) would come and not someone else. This is not Jesus coming in the physical sense as it will be at the Second Coming but by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit therefore is Christ Himself omnipresent, unrestricted by His humanity. As Jesus said "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there **am I** in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Obviously He is not with us today in His bodily presence but by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit therefore is the presence of Christ. This is why Paul said that he had Christ living within him (Galatians 2:20, Galatians 4:6 and Colossians 1:27). To have the Holy Spirit within is the same as saying having Christ within.

Jesus also said

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will** come unto him, and **make our abode with him**. John 14:23

Jesus is saying here that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the indwelling of both the Father and the Son therefore in some way not revealed in the Scriptures, they must 'share' the same divine Spirit (see Romans 8:9). This 'sharing', like His nature, is something of a mystery that God has kept to Himself (chosen not to reveal). It is best therefore not to speculate.

Although in His own right a personality, thus making three living personalities of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is both God the Father and Christ omnipresent whilst the latter two are bodily absent (still resident in Heaven). This is obviously why Jesus said that life eternal was to know both Him and His Father (John 17:3) yet did not mention the Holy Spirit. Notice that Paul said that because of Christ, both Jew and Gentile have access (admission) to the Father through the one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). To have the Holy Spirit is to have the Father and the

Son. This is why we can say that there is a trio of personalities of the Godhead yet not say that they are a trinity.

As the Psalmist said, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalms 139:7). This is Hebrew parallelism. Where God's Spirit is, there also is His presence.

This I believe is where there is a very serious problem with Seventh-day Adventist theology. They regard the Holy Spirit as a person like God the Father and Christ (a separate person from them and like them), thus because Jesus still retains His humanity, they have great difficulty in explaining how He (Jesus) can be omnipresent (see John 14:18, Matthew 18:20 etc). If the Holy Spirit is considered a person like God and Christ, it also makes it difficult for those who believe it to explain how the Father is omnipresent.

In other words, according to current Seventh-day Adventist theology, the presence of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit Himself present (another person like the Father and the Son) therefore He is not the Father and the Son present. The Holy Spirit therefore is simply the representative of the other two without being the actual presence of the Father and the Son. This is obviously in direct contradiction to what Jesus said (see above). Rather than anything else, this current theology of Seventh-day Adventism tends to border on tritheism (a belief in three gods).

In 'old time' (non-trinitarian) Seventh-day Adventist theology, the Holy Spirit was possessed by Father and the Son therefore when He (the Holy Spirit) was present it was the same as saying that the Father and the Son were present although not in bodily form. This is not now taught in current Seventh-day Adventist theology. This is one of the major differences between the 'new' and 'old' theologies of Seventh-day Adventism. One is trinitarian whilst the other is decidedly non-trinitarian although the latter can be said to speak of a trio of personalities. This is a far cry from the trinity doctrine although there are similarities.

The human spirit

This understanding of who and what is God's Spirit is very similar to an understanding of the human spirit.

Our spirit is who and what we are. It is that part of us preserved by God when we die (Ecclesiastes 12:7, Acts 7:59-60, 1 Corinthians 5:5). It must follow therefore that in the resurrection, this same spirit will be placed within a new body that God is pleased to give us. On that day it will not be that God will create a new person that looks like me, talks like me and thinks like me but will actually be the 'real me' (my spirit or my character) in a new physical body. The 'real me' will then function again as a person. This is what happens when the human spirit is restored to a dead body (Luke 8:54-56). The human spirit therefore cannot be just the 'spark of life' (divine energy or life principle) as stated in the book

'Seventh-day Adventists believe' (pages 81-83), neither can it be symbolic of the 'life force' of both man and animals as expressed in the official 'Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology' (page 213) .

The Bible tells us that the spirit (character) of man goes upward whilst the spirit (character) of the beast goes downward (Ecclesiastes 3:21). This is probably an allusion to the spirit (character) of man being preserved at death whilst the spirit of the beast is not preserved.

The Scriptures tell us that God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) witnesses to our spirits (the human spirit) that we are His children (Romans 8:16). Just as the Holy Spirit is not just a power or impersonal force, so too man's spirit is not just a power or impersonal force. We cannot say that the Holy Spirit is a person and that He witness to our spirits which is just our life force. That does not make sense. It would also be inconsistent exegesis. Why should we say that God's Spirit is a person whilst the human spirit is not a person but a power?

It is only the spirit who really 'knows' the individual (see 1 Corinthians 2:11). It must also be said that our spirits are not another person separate from who we are but who we are (see Psalms 31:5 – note the parallelism of "spirit" and "me"). This is the same with the Spirit of God. The Spirit is who God the Father is and who His Son is. This is why the Holy Spirit is both God the Father and Christ omnipresent although not physically present. When Christ breathed upon the disciples the Holy Spirit (the Holy Ghost) He was giving of Himself (John 14:17, 20:22).

Important to note is that unlike God's spirit, the human spirit cannot function without (or outside of) a physical body. This is why at death (James 2:26), the spirit of a person becomes non-functional (inanimate or dormant). This is also the reason why dead people do not know anything; neither is it possible for them to have anything more to do with what happens either here on earth or in Heaven (Ecclesiastes 9:4-10, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, Psalm 146:4, Isaiah 38:18 etc). In brief, dead people are sleeping (unconscious), totally unaware of what is happening around them (John 11:11-14). This means that they are unable to communicate with God, man or each other. This is how it was with Jesus when He was in the tomb. He knew nothing from the time He died at Calvary until His Father raised Him to life again through the operation of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 1:1, Romans 6:4, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 4:14, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 2:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Everything that consisted of the life of Jesus remained in the tomb until His resurrection. He then came out of the grave as a whole being.

The human spirit cannot function outside (other than) of a bodily presence. The Holy Spirit is different. The Holy Spirit belongs to God. It is the Spirit of the Father. This is why it is called holy. This serves to differentiate it from any other spirit. God's Spirit can function independently of God's physical being. This is

how both the Father and Christ are omnipresent. This is how we have a trio of personalities of the Godhead.

Jesus did say that when as Christians we are brought to witness for our faith, it will not be us that is speaking but the Spirit of the Father that speaks in us (Matthew 10:20), again showing us that the Holy Spirit belongs to the Father. Notice too that the Father gives the Holy Spirit to those whom He chooses (Luke 11:13). This shows us that God uses His Spirit as it pleases Him.

Overall conclusion

It only reasonable to conclude that whatever the word 'trinity' is conceived to mean, not only is it an ineffectual word but also one that is very confusing. This is because it does not really explain anything. In fact its usage only invites both controversy and confusion. This is why it should never be used.

This is probably why Ellen White never used it. It may have even been (and this is more than likely) that God told her that she must never use it. For whatever reason, in all of the 71 years of her ministry as God's messenger to the remnant, never once did she speak or pen this word. If she did, there is no record of it. This must be regarded as 'supernatural'. Most Christian writers use it in one way or another.

It must also be said that Ellen White never spoke of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as in any 'standard' trinity doctrine. Her writings testify to that much although some pro-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists try to convince people differently.

In itself, this realisation regarding the non-use of the word trinity begs a question.

This is that if the inspired writers of the Bible never described the three personalities of the Godhead as a trinity (meaning that the three-in-one concept cannot be found in Scripture), and if Ellen White, also inspired of God never used the word trinity (1600 years after the doctrine was first formulated), also if this same lady never spoke of God as professed in the trinity doctrine, then why should Seventh-day Adventists today feel compelled to make any such a confession?

Why also should they feel compelled to use the word 'trinity'? Would not this compulsion be inspired by a similar spirit that actuated Theodosius when he said that non-trinitarians were not welcome in the churches? What kind of people says these things anyway? Surely not those indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit)?

Early Seventh-day Adventists

As a matter of interest here, seeing that curiosity may have been aroused, I thought I would add a little about early Seventh-day Adventism. I hope you do

not mind. I realise it makes this reply to your question that much lengthier but I think it also 'rounds it out' a bit as well.

During the time period of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915), the Seventh-day Adventist Church was strictly a non-trinitarian denomination. As did the early Christians, they believed that the Son is begotten of God (a true Son) and therefore God essentially. Whilst the Holy Spirit was eventually believed to be a personality (this came to be believed through the spirit of prophecy), never was this divine personality regarded as a person like God and Christ are persons (personages), at least not whilst Ellen White was alive.

To put this in another way, whilst not always regarded by our pioneers as a personality, the Holy Spirit was believed to be the presence of the Father and the Son whilst the latter two were bodily (physically) in Heaven. This is as we have seen above was said by Jesus. The problem was, at least the way that our pioneers viewed it, the Bible often depicts the Holy Spirit as not being like a person, or at least how we normally conceive a person to be (also as we have noted above). This is why for a long period of time they did not regard Him as being such.

Our pioneers took the straightforward view that the Holy Spirit was either a person or He was not a person, meaning that they could not see any 'in between' reasoning. This is quite understandable. It was not until Ellen White said that He was a personality, also that His nature was a mystery known only to God, that they began to think differently.

When Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit was a divine personality, Seventh-day Adventists did not change their theology. They still continued to regard the Holy Spirit as both God and Christ omnipresent. Certainly they did not become trinitarians because of this revelation. History attests that during the time of Ellen White's ministry, Seventh-day Adventists still did not regard the Holy Spirit to be a person in exactly the same sense as they considered God and Christ to be persons. This means that when Ellen White died they were still a predominantly non-trinitarian denomination, at least in the normal sense of its meaning.

A change in beliefs

After Ellen White died (1915), moves were made to change the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. This was in spite of early 1900's appeals and warnings from her not to do so.

During the early 1900's, Ellen White warned of a growing apostasy within Seventh-day Adventism. She even said that many would leave the faith (not the church) and be deceived by what she termed "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils". She warned also that Satan would suggest that a reformation was needed to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists but she maintained that what our church had been teaching for the previous 50 years was the truth that God

had given to us. The denominational faith during these 50 years was non-trinitarian.

After she died, the changes made to our beliefs mainly concerned changing the belief regarding Christ from begotten to unbegotten, also changing the belief concerning the Holy Spirit to make Him appear to be a person exactly like God and Christ. This eventually led to the acceptance of a 'full blown' trinity doctrine although not exactly the same as orthodoxy.

Whilst this current version of the trinity now held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church has the same 'trinity essentials' as orthodoxy, meaning the threeness and the indivisible oneness (see above), it does at times seem to border on tritheism. Like orthodoxy also it is built upon sheer speculation (that which God has not revealed).

The official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today says that during the time of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915), our pioneers were teaching error, especially error concerning Christ. This is what Seventh-day Adventists today are being asked to believe. This is also why today we have a trinity debate within our denomination. The non-trinitarians are saying that concerning the three personalities of the Godhead, our pioneers had it correct. This is not simply because they were our pioneers but because their teachings are believed to be correct according to both Scripture and that which God has revealed through Ellen White. The pro-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists obviously disagree with these conclusions. This is why they say that the trinity doctrine was brought into our beliefs. It was, according to them, to correct the errors of our pioneers, hence today's trinity debate.

This changeover to trinitarianism took decades to complete. The trinity doctrine itself cannot be said to become established within Seventh-day Adventism until well into the 1950's. This was over 35 years after Ellen White had died. Even then this trinity theology was still in its formative stages, meaning it was still evolving. It was not until 1980 at the General Conference session at Dallas that the trinity doctrine was first voted in as an official teaching of Seventh-day Adventism. This was 136 years after our beginnings (1844) as God's remnant people.

There are those who attempt to say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was only non-trinitarian because a few of our pioneers came out of non-trinitarian denominations. This though is faulty reasoning. It does not account for the entire church being non-trinitarian for something like 100 years.

All the time of Ellen White's ministry, which was from 1844-1915, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a non-trinitarian denomination. During this time she had something like 2000 visions from God but never did she tell the pioneers that they were wrong in their non-trinitarianism. It cannot be said therefore that it was just because a few of our early pioneers were non-trinitarians that the entire

church was non-trinitarian. God had 70 years to correct this faith through Ellen White (if it had been in error) but He never did so. It is therefore unreasonable to say that just because of a few early pioneers, it was non-trinitarian for 100 years.

We must also remember that no one forced people to become Seventh-day Adventists. Those who joined the church did so knowing that they were joining a non-trinitarian denomination. We can say therefore that when Ellen White died in 1915, the 135,000 membership were voluntary non-trinitarians. We can see again therefore that it would be nonsensical to say that our entire church was non-trinitarian just because a few of our pioneers came out of non-trinitarian denominations. In coming to a consensus of faith, our early pioneers did so by collective Bible study, prayer and revelation from God through the spirit of prophecy. They were non-trinitarian by personal choice.

Implications

If it was not for the implications of the trinity doctrine, it may have been said that this teaching was just a harmless piece of conjecture (speculation), assuming of course that no one would be felt compelled to believe it. As it is though, it is far from harmless.

The introduction of the trinity doctrine into the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, particularly those beliefs concerning Christ, made a very serious impact on certain aspects of the gospel once held by them.

The trinity doctrine impacts the atonement. This really is very serious. This is because according to trinitarian theology, only human nature died at Calvary and not the personage of the divine Son of God. This means that all that trinitarians have for atonement is a human sacrifice and not one that is divine. Quite recently, one Seventh-day Adventist minister tried to convince me (in attempting to justify his support of the trinity doctrine and his reasoning that the divine Son of God did not die at Calvary) that all that humanity needed for atonement was a human sacrifice. This is something that I refuse to accept. I hope too that most Seventh-day Adventists will refuse to accept it.

The trinity doctrine also affects what really happened at the incarnation.

Orthodox trinitarians believe that the Son always has His existence in the one substance of God therefore He did not actually leave the courts of Heaven, neither did He exile Himself from His Father and become a separate person from God. This is because, so say the trinitarians, none of the divine beings can undergo change. According to orthodox trinitarian theology, Christ is part of the triune structure of God, therefore not only never does He leave the side of His Father but also that He is immutable (not subject to change).

The Scriptures testify that by becoming human, the divine Son of God undertook all the liabilities of humanity (Hebrews 2:17-18, Hebrews 4:14-17). This must mean that in coming to earth he took the risk of failure and eternal loss. In other

words, Christ could have sinned and He must have put at stake His own existence. The orthodox trinity doctrine prohibits this reasoning. This is why this teaching denigrates the gospel. It reduces the reality of it into a well scripted sequence of events in which the end result regarding Christ was predetermined and unchangeable.

In redeeming mankind from sin, according to orthodox trinity theology, no risk was taken by the Father and the Son. As far as I can tell, current Adventist theology appears to be a somewhat modified version of this conclusion although there does seem to be divergent views. This is inasmuch as this theology appears to say that Christ could have sinned but this would not have endangered His existence. Whichever version of the trinity is espoused, the latter conclusion is inevitable. This is because, according to the trinitarians, the trinity structure of God cannot undergo change therefore no change, however small, can come to the Father, Son or Holy Spirit.

Many non-trinitarians believe that the entirety of this trinity reasoning strikes at the very heart of the true gospel. This is because they believe that without the belief that the divine Son of God really died at Calvary and without the belief of the risk of the possible failure of the Son, the extent of God's love is not fully revealed. In other words, it is only when it is realised that it was possible for Christ to have forfeited His divine attributes, also that He would have lost His eternal existence if He had sinned, that we can really see how much God loves us.

It is an awesome thought but nevertheless true that if Christ had sinned, even though He may have gone to the cross and died, the stone would never have been rolled away from His tomb.

My apologies that my reply was a bit lengthy but I hope it helps to answer your question. If you have any questions or thoughts regarding what I have written, please do not hesitate to email me. I am only too glad to be able to share my thoughts with you. That goes also for all those who may read it.