

January – February – March 2017 – Part 1

*Comments on the Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide*

*The Holy Spirit
and Spirituality*

The Holy Spirit and Worship

An introduction

“. . . and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:7). Worship is at the heart of Adventism and of the three angels’ messages. Worship goes to the very heart of one’s religion, to what that religion is, and to what it is supposed to do for the worshipper. Before we can have true worship, we must know the one we worship. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well:

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:22–24)

Perhaps you have also read:

No outward shrines may be visible, there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practicing idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. *Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false God as were the servants of Baal.* (Ellen. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 174, 175; all emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted)

The adult Sabbath School lessons (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guides*) that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be studying the first quarter of 2017 is on the Holy Spirit and spirituality. It has been almost eleven years since the church has had the Holy Spirit as a topic in its lessons. These new lessons begin with confusion and end with confusion. We will be exploring the specifics later in this booklet, but first we should look at some basic issues concerning the biblical topic of worship, as it involves or does not involve the Holy Spirit.

The acceptance of the trinitarian doctrine and what it teaches concerning the personhood and divinity of the Holy Spirit is considered vital by evangelical Christians. As one Adventist theologian wrote:

Anyone who knows God the Father and God the Son, but has not attained to the belief in the Spirit as a Person and as God, is not a

Christian any more than are those who do not believe in the deity of the Son. (Arnold Wallenkampf, *New by the Spirit*, p. 10)

One cannot understand worship without knowing who is worthy of worship. If the Holy Spirit is as divine as the Father and Son are divine, then mankind must worship the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit, however, is not a separate divine person, apart from the Father, then to worship such a concept, according to the testimony of Jesus, would be idolatry.

In reality, there are no false deities, such as Baal or Molech. These pagan deities only existed in the minds of the people, inspired by Satan. Isaiah noted:

Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. (Isaiah 37:18, 19)

Sadly, the worship of such false concepts leads to the worship of Satan, and he is the one that Ellen White saw in vision who received worship and was prayed to by the careless company that did not rise up with Jesus when he went into the most holy place.

I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming chariot go into the holy of holies within the veil, and sit down. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the most of those who were bowed down arose with Him. I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness. Those who arose when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on Him as He left the throne and led them out a little way.

Then He raised His right arm, and we heard His lovely voice saying, "Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself." Then a cloudy chariot, with wheels like flaming fire, surrounded by angels, came to where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne to the holiest, where the Father sat. There I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father.

On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, "My Father, give us Thy Spirit." Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.

I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. *I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, "Father, give us Thy Spirit."* Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children. (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56)

Does Satan have a spirit? According to the Bible and to the Spirit of Prophecy, he does. For example:

And as he [Jesus] was yet a coming, the *devil* threw him [a man's son] down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the *unclean spirit*, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. (Luke 9:42)

Throughout His life on earth He [Jesus] had walked in the light of God's presence. When in conflict with men who were inspired by the very *spirit of Satan*, He could say, "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." John 8:29. (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 685)

Concerning the Holy Flesh movement, Ellen White wrote:

Men and women, supposed to be guided by the Holy Spirit, held meetings in a state of nudity. They talked about holy flesh. They said they were beyond the power of temptation, and they sang, and shouted, and made all manner of noisy demonstrations. These men and women were not bad, but they were deceived and deluded. . . .

Satan was molding the work, and sensuality was the result. The cause of God was dishonored. Truth, sacred truth, was leveled in the dust by human agencies. . . .

I bore my testimony, declaring that these fanatical movements, this din and noise, were inspired by the spirit of Satan, who was working miracles to deceive if possible the very elect. (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 108, 109; 1900)

In these statements we read that the devil, or Satan, has a spirit, but we would not think that there are two Satans or that there is a separate Satan that is the spirit of the main or the original Satan. We understand this to mean the influence or working of Satan among the people. Having a spirit is not evidence of being another different distinct being!

Only deity is worthy of worship, and worship is the central theme of the book of Revelation. The Bible clearly teaches the worship of the Father

and the worship of his Son, Jesus Christ (see Revelation 5), but nowhere in Inspiration is man directly or indirectly commanded to worship the Holy Spirit or to pray to the Holy Spirit!

Worship is a life and death issue. For man to worship “the only true God,” (John 17:3), he must come out of Babylon, for she “is fallen” (Revelation 14:8). Babylon’s way of thinking, and all the doctrines and lifestyles that go with it, are denounced by God in the strongest terms, and the follower of Christ is commanded to come out of her. God says this is urgent: “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). If we fail to heed the call of Christ, we shall be lost eternally.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the central pillar of Babylon. Notice this claim:

The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church. (*Handbook for Today’s Catholic*, p. 11)

Revelation 17:5 calls papal Rome:

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The Advent Movement was raised up, in part, to bring about a reformation in worship. The Advent Movement was to reject the false abominations of worship that the Catholic Church bequeathed to Protestants. Elder James White wrote:

The greatest fault we can find in the Reformation is, the Reformers stopped reforming. Had they gone on, and onward, till they had left the last vestige of Papacy behind, such as natural immortality, sprinkling, the trinity, and Sunday-keeping, the church would now be free from her unscriptural errors. (*The Review & Herald*, February 7, 1856)

God raised up a people who were to be free from the pagan-papal errors mentioned by Elder White. Sadly, today finds a situation of apostasy (a falling away) from that truth which God gave to his people.

Overview

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as taught in Trinitarianism, was not held by the patriarchs and prophets, and it was unknown to the apostles and early Christians. This doctrine is, in fact, the establishing doctrine of the papacy! A. T. Jones, in his voluminous book *The Two Republics*, entitles the chapter on the acceptance of the Trinity, “Establishment of the Catholic Faith.” (See pages 329–354.) The main framework of the trinitarian

doctrine was laid in the Council of Nicæa in AD 325. This Catholic council, presided over by the sun-worshipping Constantine, declared God and Christ to be coequal and coeternal; however, this council did not deal with the subject of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic understanding of the Holy Spirit was formulated at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. This Council elevated the Holy Spirit to personhood, coequal and coeternal, with God and Christ.

The early Adventist pioneers' understanding of the biblical term, "Holy Spirit of God," was that of God's life or inner nature. Furthermore, they understood the Holy Spirit to be a *person*, when referred to in the context of the *divine nature, personality, or presence* of God the Father and/or his Son — but never as a separate divine being, i.e., God the Holy Spirit.

Adventist pioneers, such as James White, Joseph Bates, and J. N. Andrews, saw that when God gives us his Spirit, he is not giving us someone other than himself, but he is giving us of his very self.

Biblical framework

The meaning of *Spirit* — The word *spirit* appears to many as a rather vague term. The problem is compounded by the translators of the King James Version using *ghost* ninety-eight times for the same word translated *spirit*. In the Old Testament the word *spirit* almost always comes from the Hebrew word *ruwach*. *Ruwach* is defined in *Strong's Dictionary* as "wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figuratively, life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension, a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (including its expression and functions)." In addition to *spirit*, other translations of *ruwach* are air, anger, blast, breath, cool, courage, mind, quarter, side, tempest, wind, and whirlwind. Gesenius devotes nearly a page and a half of his lexicon to defining *ruwach* and giving the various nuances. (See *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, pp. 760, 761.)

The majority of cases involving *ruwach* relate it to breath or life. A word closely related to *ruwach*, which is translated *breath*, is *neshamah*. *Neshamah* is used in Genesis 2:7, where we read: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (*neshamah*) of life; and man became a living soul." *Neshamah* is also translated *spirit* twice (Job 26:4; Proverbs 20:27) and *souls* once (Isaiah 57:16). *Neshamah* is used interchangeably with *ruwach*. Notice the parallelism:

By the blast (*neshamah*) of God they perish, and by the breath (*ruwach*) of his nostrils are they consumed. (Job 4:9)

All the while my breath (*neshamah*) is in me, and the spirit (*ruwach*) of God is in my nostrils. (Job 27:3)

The Spirit (*ruwach*) of God hath made me, and the breath (*neshamah*) of the Almighty hath given me life. (Job 33:4)

Other parallel usages show these terms, *ruwach* and *neshamah*, to be synonymous: the breath (*neshamah*) of life, Genesis 2:7; the breath (*ruwach*) of life, Genesis 6:17. These verses show *spirit* to be living, active, and full of life.

Spirit and mind — The Greek word usually translated *spirit* is *pneuma*. It is defined in Strong's as: "a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit." This is very similar in concept to the Hebrew *ruwach*.

Both *ruwach* and *pneuma* carry the concept of mind or intellect. Isaiah 40:13 states:

Who hath directed the Spirit (*ruwach*) of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

The Septuagint (LXX) reads:

Who has known the mind [Greek: *nous*] of the Lord? and who has been his counselor, to instruct him?

Here the translators of the LXX have used *nous* or mind in the place of *ruwach*.

Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13 from the LXX in Romans 11:34:

For who hath known the mind (*nous*) of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? (See also 1 Corinthians 2:16.)

Here we see that both the translators of the LXX and Paul, under inspiration, understood the concept of spirit and mind to be closely related.

However, spirit goes much further than just the concept of mind. It is the very essence of being or the inner person. Suppose a person has become paralyzed and is lying in a bed unable to move or even speak, yet his mind and thoughts are clear. Is his paralyzed body the real essence of his person? Of course not. It is his mind which makes up his character and personality!

Twice Luke records that Jesus "waxed strong in spirit" (Luke 1:80; 2:40). This is not speaking of a physical process but rather of a development of that aspect of a person that cannot be explained in physical terms. To illustrate this further, notice these words Paul wrote to the believers:

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. (Colossians 2:5)

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. (1 Corinthians 5:3)

We do not think that Paul was with these brethren physically, nor do we believe that there was some non-bodily form of Paul floating around in Colosse or in Corinth, but rather his teachings, words, and influence were among those churches.

Words / spirit — One of the ways we receive God’s Spirit is by the word of God. Words express the concepts of the mind and are explained by Jesus to be spirit.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

This truth is taught by parallelism in Proverbs 1:23:

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will *pour out my spirit* unto you, I will *make known my words* unto you.

The parallel is between *spirit* and *words*. The pouring out of God’s spirit is equivalent to making his words known. Also in Ezekiel, we read:

And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will *speak unto thee*. And *the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me*, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.” (Ezekiel 2:1, 2)

Here *God’s words* and *his Spirit entering* are synonymous with one another.

The pouring out of God’s Spirit is often referred to as rain. Deuteronomy 32:2 states:

My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.

God’s doctrine (*words*) comes as the rain (*spirit*). When God pours out his Spirit, he often uses words and concepts. This is why Ellen White describes the latter rain as “greater light” in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* on page 507 because his words bring enlightenment.

Man made in the image of God — Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) “not only in character, but in form and feature” (*The*

Great Controversy p. 645). Both Daniel and Ezekiel testify that God has a physical form akin to man:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. ... I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. (Daniel 7:9, 13)

And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. (Ezekiel 1:26)

So, while we read that God has a physical form, there is another aspect to God. Jesus said, “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). God’s Spirit is his inner being, mind, thoughts, words, and personality that is not restricted to physical form. If God is a two-dimensional being, bodily form and spirit, then man, who is made in his image, is a two-dimensional being, as well. This is not to be confused with the concept of the immortal, undying soul. Upon death, man’s spirit (breath) returns to God and is never consciously separate from his physical form. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul compares the divine spirit with the human spirit:

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:10–16)

In other words, man’s spirit is to man, as God’s Spirit is to God. When I say, “My spirit is grieved,” you would not think for a moment that I am speaking of someone other than myself. My spirit is my mind, character, and personality. It is the element that is really me. You can cut my hand

away, and I am still me. Cut my arms off, and I am still me. You can cut my legs off and I am no less a person, even though I have less of a body.

God is omnipresent by his Spirit. Even though God has a bodily presence, it is by his Spirit that he can be omnipresent. David wrote:

Whither shall I go from thy *spirit*? or whither shall I flee from thy *presence*? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. (Psalm 139:7, 8)

We see Hebrew parallelism in verse 7, with the words “spirit” and “presence” used interchangeably. The Spirit of God is not an extra God, but the essence of his inner person. It is the aspect of God that is not physical.

The term *God the Holy Spirit* is nowhere to be found in inspiration.¹ Neither the Bible nor Sister White ever used that term. It is a man-made term to promote the idea of a third being that is coequal and coeternal with God and Christ.

While the Bible does not speak of God the Holy Spirit, it does speak of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. (1 Samuel 11:6)

The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. (Job 33:4)

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (1 Peter 1:11)

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him

1. In *The Review and Herald* of August 17, 1897, we find the following statement: “To those who truly love God the Holy Spirit will reveal truths that have faded from the mind, and will also reveal truths that are entirely new.” There is clearly a missing comma after the word, “God” for the sentence does not make sense otherwise.

that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8:9–11)

These usages are in the possessive form with the last reference (Romans 8:9) using “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ” interchangeably. God and his Son share the same Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). Jesus said that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him because he had been anointed to preach the gospel. Jesus was “set up [anointed] from everlasting” (Proverbs 8:23). The very term *Christ* means *the anointed one*. God anointed Christ with his Spirit. This is why we are told in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” The mind, or spirit, that was in Christ was the mind/spirit of the Father. In fact, Paul states that “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Comments and thoughts on the Holy Spirit in relationship to the Sabbath School lessons

As noted earlier, these lessons begin with confusion and end with confusion. In the introduction, we are told:

The Holy Spirit, God Himself, knows God as no person can; thus He reveals God to us in a trustworthy and reliable manner. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (AASBSG)*, January–March 2017, p. 3)

Who is the God referred to in the above quotation? The first use of *God* seems to be referring to the Holy Spirit. The second one appears to be God the Father, or it may be talking about the supposed three persons of the Trinity, as also the third *God* could be doing. It is impossible to know!

Please do not forget the fact that the orthodox, or classical, trinitarian doctrine states that God is one being in three persons, not three different beings. We will expand on this in the comments on Lesson 4.

Lesson 1 — The Spirit and the word

In many places the *AASBSG* speaks truth, and we are thankful for this. These truths, however, are written within the framework of a false theology and can be understood differently by different readers, depending upon the mindset of the reader. For example, the quarterly says that “. . . the Holy Spirit was operational not only in the distant past but also in the origin of the Bible” (p. 6). We can all agree with this statement, but, depending upon the way we view things, different conclusions can be drawn.

Let us not forget this counsel in *Prophets and Kings*, as we read and study the works of men:

The enemy of mankind knew that truth unmixed with error is a power mighty to save; but that when used to exalt self and to further the projects of men, it becomes a power for evil. (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 505)

Even truth, mishandled and used for the projects of men (even theological projects) can become a power for evil!

Sunday and Monday: These sections of Lesson 1 note that the Holy Spirit works through revelation and through inspiration. This is surely true, and none should stumble over this.

Of interest, the Greek word for *revelation* is ἀποκάλυψις (*apokalupsis*), from which we get our word *apocalypse*. The Greek word for *inspiration* is θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*), and it means *God-breathed*.

Tuesday: We are glad to see that, concerning the inspiration of the Bible, the author of the *AASBSG* takes a positive stand for “a six-day creation, a worldwide flood, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the literal Second Coming” (p. 9).

This section, however, does present confusion concerning the person of God. In the first paragraph, we read:

God hates false witness (*Exod. 20:16*) and cannot lie (*Heb. 6:18*). He is called a God of truth (*Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16*). In a similar manner, the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (*John 14:17*). (*Ibid.*)

Again, remember the Trinity is taught by Adventists to be one God in three persons, not three different beings or three different Gods. The phrase, “in a similar manner” indicates two different gods—the God of truth and the Spirit of truth. In other words, “He” who is the “God of truth” is someone different than the “Holy Spirit” who is “the Spirit of truth.”

Wednesday: This section is on the Holy Spirit as a teacher. In this mostly very good section, the scourge of Calvinism is dropped casually into the lesson. In the first paragraph we read:

Human beings are darkened in their understanding of truth; they are by nature, alienated from God (*Eph. 4:18*). (p. 10)

Ephesians 4:18 does not teach this. The context for this verse is about the Gentiles. The verse reads:

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. (Ephesians 4:18)

This text says nothing about being alienated from God due to the nature of the person. The Bible says that it is sin that alienates us from God. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

The Spirit of Prophecy states:

But sin alienated him [mankind] from his Maker. (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 467)

In the apostasy, man alienated himself from God. (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 230)²

Thursday: This lesson offers some commendable thoughts about the Holy Spirit never being given to take the place of the Bible, etc.

The Bible is our only spiritual safeguard. It alone is a reliable norm for all matters of faith and practice.

We can't judge hearts or motives. We can, though, judge theology, and the only standard we have to judge it with is the Word of God. (p. 11)

We certainly say *Amen* to this and only wish the lesson's author and editors had relied upon this more in the quarterly, especially in Lesson 4.

Lesson 2 — The Holy Spirit: Working Behind the Scenes

This lesson begins by stating that “the Holy Spirit does not receive the same prominent attention in Scripture as do the Father and the Son” (p. 14). The theme of the introduction seems to be that the humility of the Holy Spirit keeps him from being in the front of the scenes of work. The introduction reminds of a book I read promoting tritheism. In dealing with the subject of the “counsel of peace” (Zechariah 6:13), where the prophet Zechariah clearly says it was between the two of them and then comparing this with Ellen White's statement that Christ was “the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34), the author of the book on tritheism stated that the Holy Spirit could have entered into the counsel of peace but did not because he was so humble! May God have mercy upon any who use such logic. To deny the plain words of Zechariah and of the Spirit of Prophecy and, by implication, to state that the Father and/or the Son do not have such humility is terrible and even blasphemous.

2. There is a lone original statement in *Steps to Christ* that says, “By nature we are alienated from God” (p. 43), but this statement is qualified by saying that this condition results from being “‘dead in trespasses and sins.’”

Sunday: This lesson's comments begin by stating: "By comparing the Holy Spirit's actions to that of the wind, Jesus describes the Spirit's elusiveness" (p. 15). It is not the elusiveness of the Spirit that is spoken of by Jesus but rather the work of the Spirit that appears to be elusive. The author seems to later note this on Friday's part of the lesson.

Monday: This part of the lesson deals with the Holy Spirit and creation. Genesis 1:2 certainly teaches that the Spirit of God was at creation. However, again while we all can agree upon this fact, it may be very differently understood, depending upon the person's theological mindset. The lesson states:

The Hebrew word for "moving over," or "hovering" (*merahepeth*) over, the surface of the earth that is used in Genesis 1:2 is the same word that is used in Deuteronomy 32:11, where God is compared to an eagle hovering over its nest of young. The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in the creation of life on this earth and takes care of the newly created living beings as an eagle would do for its young. (p. 16)

While this concept is not theologically new,³ there is no direct link between Deuteronomy 32:11 and Genesis 1:2, especially concerning God's care for mankind, which is great. But the quarterly goes even further into boisterous theological waters, when it states:

Psalm 104:30 suggests that the Creation act was possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit and He played an active part during this process. (p. 16)

The problem with this is that Psalm 104:30 is not dealing with the original creation but rather with the resurrection. Verse 29 makes this clear.

Tuesday: This part of the lesson deals with the Spirit guiding in the building of the sanctuary.

Wednesday: This part of the lesson speaks of the Holy Spirit glorifying Christ. The opening paragraph in this section states:

With the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is intensified, and He gives His gifts to all believers. (p. 18)

The *He* in the above sentence has as its antecedent the Holy Spirit, and while 1 Corinthians 12:11 states that the Spirit gives various gifts, we also know that, according to Ephesians 4:8, it is Christ who gives gifts unto the believers, one of which is the Holy Spirit.

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit the disciples were to receive a marvelous power. (White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 821)

3. See *Ministry* magazine, August 2013 (Luiz Gustavo S. Assis)

Furthermore, in Luke 11:13, Jesus says:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Thursday: This part of the lesson is one of the most disturbing of the lesson. It makes reference to Luke 1:34, 35, stating that “the Holy Spirit effected the incarnation of Jesus” (p. 19). The text states:

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and 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. (Luke 1:34, 35)

Though not noted in the King James Version, the word “thing” is a supplied word, with the adjective “holy” in the neuter gender. The same adjective “holy” is used in the beginning of the verse with the word “Ghost” (*pneuma*–spirit). Therefore, the missing word to be modified in the second usage could be *spirit* instead of “thing.” The verse would then carry the following meaning: The Spirit of the Father would overshadow Mary and the Holy Spirit that would be born would be called the Son of God. This understanding parallels a statement from Sister White:

Think of Christ’s humiliation. He took upon himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. He took our sorrows, bearing our grief and shame. He endured all the temptations wherewith man is beset. He united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. He united himself with the temple. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” because by so doing he could associate with the sinful, sorrowing sons and daughters of Adam. (Ellen White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, December 20, 1900)

A parallel scripture for Luke 1:35 is found in Matthew’s record. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:18). Joseph was then told, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (v. 20). Adventist pioneers were quick to realize that if the Holy Spirit were coequal and coeternal, a person in all the same respects that God and Christ are, then Jesus would not be the Son of God, as the Scriptures clearly state, but rather the Son of the Holy Spirit!

Lesson 3 — The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

We fully agreed with Thursday’s part of Lesson 1 of the quarterly, “The Bible is our only spiritual safeguard,” yet, as we begin Lesson 3, we see words describing the revelation of the Holy Spirit as *subtle, inferred, and indirect* instead of a plain “thus saith the Lord.”

Sunday: In this part of the lesson the first sentence says, “The Bible does not present a systematic description of the divinity of the Holy Spirit” (p. 23).

The key text for the day is Acts 5:1–4. By comparing these texts, the lesson states that “God and the Holy Spirit [are] on the same level [divinity]” (*Ibid.*). This is correct of itself, but again, we need to understand what Peter understood by this. Peter did not have the idea that the Holy Spirit was a separate being from the Father, but rather was the spirit of the Father.

Interestingly this part of the lesson teaches that the reason judgment came upon Ananias and Sapphira was because there was a need to keep the unity in the church:

To lie with regard to the sharing was to deny the unity of the community and to belie the Spirit that undergirded that unity and made it possible.

. . . God used drastic consequences to make sure that the new church would work in unison and truthfulness with one another and be willing to be led by His Spirit. (*Ibid.*)

If the issue were one of unity, that concept slipped by Ellen White in her book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, for there she speaks about the sins of covetousness and selfishness that had to be exposed:

This liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit. The converts to the gospel were “of one heart and of one soul.” One common interest controlled them—the success of the mission entrusted to them; and covetousness had no place in their lives. (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 71, 72)

Monday: This section of Lesson 3 deals with divine attributes of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, as the Bible teaches, then we should be able to see the divine attributes of God in his Spirit.

This section contains a statement that should be highlighted. About two-thirds of the way down on page 24, it says, “Only God is eternal (*1 Tim. 6:16*). If the Spirit is called eternal, then He must be God.” Do you understand this logic? Do you realize the reference does not say this? The quarterly uses the term *eternal* in the place of *immortal*. First Timothy 6:14–16 states:

That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

The context is difficult to miss. Jesus Christ is going to reveal the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” This is speaking of the Father, and he is said be the only one with an absolute immortality. Even humanity will one day have immortality but that does not make them eternal, nor make them God. We have to be careful, beloved, when we read and to not be misled by even well-meaning people.

Tuesday: This section of Lesson 3 is entitled “Biblical Hints.” How appropriate! This part of the lesson presents parallels from Scripture which speak of God and of his Spirit interchangeably. Looking at parallels is a good idea, so let us explore that concept a little more.

The apostle Peter states that “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Here Peter states that the prophets were moved by the “Holy Ghost.” However, in his first epistle he states: “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:9–11). Here Peter states that the prophets were moved by “the Spirit of Christ.” Thus Peter, under inspiration, equates the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ to be one.

The book of Daniel records the words of Gabriel, when he said to Daniel: “But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael [Christ] your prince” (Daniel 10:21). This channel of inspiration complements that expressed in Revelation 1:1: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.” The line of communication originates with the Father who gives it to his Son. Christ gives the message to his angel, who then delivers it to the prophet.

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 present seven messages, each one addressed to a church. Each message begins with an introduction by Christ, using terminology connected with himself in the first chapter that reveals he is the one giving the message. For example, the first message, to the church at Ephesus is addressed as coming from the one who “holdeth the seven stars in his right hand” (Revelation 2:1). In Revelation 1:16, Jesus is described as having the seven stars in his right hand. This is the pattern in each of the seven messages. The speaker is introduced in a way which leaves no doubt that it is Jesus Christ speaking, yet every single message ends with the admonition: “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22).

Jeremiah 31:31–34 records the new covenant experience and states that it is “the LORD” who is speaking yet in the New Testament, it is attributed to the “Holy Spirit.”

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:15–17)

Isaiah says he heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:9, 10). In Acts 28:26, 27, Paul quotes these verses, and then in the preceding verse (25) he clearly attributes this to be the work of the Holy Ghost.

Paul, writing to the Romans, declares that the Spirit makes intercession for the saints. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26, 27). The same apostle declares in Hebrews that it is Jesus who “ever liveth to make intercession for” us (Hebrews 7:25). Also, Paul, writing to Timothy, stated clearly, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Ellen White wrote, “No middle-man comes between the sinner and Christ” (*The Signs of the Times*, June 28, 1899).

Wednesday: This part of the lesson is on the work of the Holy Spirit and begins the use of an expression that will be used more than once to

describe the Holy Spirit. That word is *Being* (page 26). It is used in Lesson 4, at least on pages 30, 32, and 33. But now we have a problem. According to the orthodox, or classical, trinitarian teaching, the Holy Spirit and the Father and Son are NOT three distinct separate *beings*, but rather three *persons*!

The Adventist pioneers declared with “great unanimity” that God and Christ were personal beings but never described the Holy Spirit as a personal being, separate and apart from the Father or Son. Ellen White held this same position and never rebuked her husband, Elder Bates, Elder Waggoner, or others, for teaching such. There are statements that have been published in which Ellen White appears to teach differently. We will look at some of these statements later. In fact, the denomination used Ellen White, especially statements from the book, *The Desire of Ages*, as its license to make sweeping changes in its theology. However, all such changes must be carefully measured with the following statement of Ellen White, written on her 78th birthday:

Nothing is so precious to me as to know that Christ is my Saviour. I appreciate the truth, *every jot of it, just as it has been given to me by the Holy Spirit for the last fifty years*. I desire everyone to know that *I stand on the same platform of truth that we have maintained for more than half a century*. (Ms 142, 1905, pp. 1, 2; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 44)

In 1905 Ellen White declared that to at least around 1855 there was a platform of truth that she and the brethren (“we”) had maintained. A major shift on the teaching of God would invalidate such a statement and make Ellen White to be a liar.

Shortly after the death of Ellen White, there was a movement led by a new generation, including LeRoy Froom and others, to introduce a more evangelical understanding of God into the church. While called *the Trinity* in the statement of fundamental beliefs, it was interpreted by most of the brethren as tritheism. Tritheism teaches that God is three coeternal *beings*, each a distinct *person*.

The orthodox trinitarian doctrine defines God as one being in a unity of three coeternal persons. The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity does not teach multiple beings. To Trinitarians, God is of one numerical substance, yet in three persons, or, as described by theologians, hypostasis. The three persons are referred to as “three individual centers of intelligence and action” (*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p. 150). Tritheism declares that God is not numerically one, but the oneness of God is in the purposes, character and nature of God. Sometimes this is called trinitarianism by those who do not understand the orthodox Trinity, but

to knowledgeable Trinitarians, this is considered an anathema, a type of polytheism. While tritheism was not part of the 1931 statement of fundamental beliefs, it was the model that most laymen and many ministers believed and taught for many years in Adventism. It is still the understanding of God that many in the church believe today. This model is very popular among most independent ministries.

When we are speaking of the numerical individual(s) in the Godhead, the word *being* is used. Trinitarians seek to make a distinction between *persons* and *beings*. They believe in one being and three persons, while Tritheists believe in three beings in three persons.

The General Conference has signaled an official shift in clear favor of the orthodox trinitarian doctrine in the release of the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, also known as Volume 12 of the *Commentary Reference Series*. This volume was mandated by the 1988 General Conference Annual Council and conceived shortly after the 1980 Dallas General Conference session. Its preparation was entrusted to the Biblical Research Institute of the church. It is as official as such a book can be. On page 121, God is referred to as “one divine reality and not to a plurality of divine beings.” On page 122, God is again referred to as a “divine Being” singular, with a “plurality of persons.” On page 150 we read: “In the being of God is an essential coprimordiality [existing from the beginning] of three coequal, coeternal, nonoriginated persons.” Also on page 150 we read this warning against Trithesim:

The danger of Tritheism ... becomes real when the oneness of God is reduced to a mere unity conceived in analogy to a human society or a fellowship of action. Beyond such a unity of action, however, it is necessary to envision God as the one single reality which, in the very acts by which He reveals Himself directly in history, transcends the limits of our human reason.

Unmistakably, the theologians and leaders of the denomination, especially those at Andrews University, are on the path of orthodox trinitarianism, even if the quarterly team is not.

Wednesday: This part of Lesson 3 deals with the Spirit of truth. John 4:24 is referenced on this page, and it should be noted that a literal translation of the first part of this text says “God is Spirit.” Not just a spirit but spirit.

Thursday: This part of the lesson is entitled, “Why Does It Matter?” (p. 35). We fully agree with the lesson producers that it matters greatly what we understand about the Holy Spirit. For if he is a different divine being, then he should be prayed to and worshipped. But if the Holy Spirit is not a different being but is rather the Spirit of God and the Spirit of

the Son, like the pioneers believed, we must not worship or pray to the Holy Spirit. We may ask God for the Holy Spirit, but it would be a form of idolatry to pray to the Holy Spirit as someone other than God or Christ.

Lesson 4 — The Personality of the Holy Spirit

The purpose of this lesson is to clarify the personality of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit is not simply a force or influence. While the Holy Spirit brings power and influences us, we certainly agree that it is not proper to try to limit the Holy Spirit to an influence or power.

Sunday: This portion of the lesson introduces the Greek word *parakletos*, which is translated in John as *comforter*, but this same word is used in 1 John 2:1, where we read:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate (*parakletos*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Here Jesus is referred to by the same term that is used to speak about the Holy Spirit. While the lesson quoted from important parts of John's gospel, it failed to quote John 14:16. Jesus said that if we loved him we would keep his commandments (John 14:15), and then he stated:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* (John 14:16–18)

Some people have been confused about what Jesus meant in John 14:16. The lesson gives a quick, surface view to the word *another* in verse 16. But let us consider it a little further. To express the thought of Christ, John uses the Greek word *allos*. *Allos* means another of the same kind, as opposed to *heteros*, which means another of a different kind. Notice the usages as given in the examples:

And the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee [Saul], and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another (*allos*) man. (1 Samuel 10:6, LXX)

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another (*heteros*) gospel: Which is not another; (*allos*) but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6, 7)

When Jesus said that he would send “another (*allos*) Comforter,” he was saying that the comfort that the disciples were to receive was to be of

the same nature as the comfort that he had given them. Receiving “another Comforter” did not imply receiving a different Comforter. In John 14:16, Jesus refers to himself as the Comforter in the third person. This is not unique. He also does this in the following verses:

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:13–17)

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

Notice these important points made by Ellen White:

As by faith we look to Jesus, our faith pierces the shadow, and we adore God for His wondrous love in giving us Jesus the Comforter. (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 124)

The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669)

To be divested is to be stripped of. One can only divested of what one once had. No Trinitarian would admit that the Holy Spirit ever had humanity to be stripped or divested of. This can only refer to Christ, as her parallel statement clearly portrays that “he would represent himself.”

Jesus stated that he would send the “Spirit of truth” that the world neither received nor knew. Of Jesus it is written, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). This Comforter was already dwelling with them, and Jesus clearly stated, “I will come to you.” The question that must be settled is, did Christ mean that he himself would come or that he would send an associate? The word “Comforter” is from the Greek *parakletos*, which means an *intercessor* or *one called beside*. *Parakletos* is also found in 1 John 2:1: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate (*parakletos*)

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” John says that our advocate or comforter is Jesus.

Tuesday: This part of Lesson 4 is vital for us to get right. Though not dwelling upon it, this portion speaks of the nature of the Holy Spirit. Now, what about the nature of the Holy Spirit? Have we not read:

The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden. (Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 52)

Beloved, the nature of my *own spirit is a mystery*. If I cannot understand it, how can I understand the nature of God’s Spirit?

Let us consider in context what Ellen White said about the nature of the Holy Spirit being a mystery and about silence being golden. Writing to a Brother Chapman, she began:

I have received yours dated June 3. In this letter you speak in these words: “Elder Robinson does not wish me to leave, but urges that I enter the canvassing field until such time as the conference can afford to employ me in some other capacity, but states positively that I cannot be sent out to present the truth to others until some points held by me are changed or modified in order that the views regarded by us as a people should be properly set forth. He quotes as a sample, ‘My idea in reference to the Holy Ghost’s not being the Spirit of God, which is Christ, but the angel Gabriel, and my belief that the 144,000 will be Jews who will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 175)

Notice what he was teaching about the Holy Spirit and how he contrasted this to what the brethren were teaching! Ellen White went on to write:

Your ideas of the two subjects you mention do not harmonize with the light which God has given me. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not clearly revealed, and you will never be able to explain it to others because the Lord has not revealed it to you. . . .

There are many mysteries which I do not seek to understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of these points, silence is golden. (p. 179)

I hope that you will seek to be in harmony with the body. . . .

You need to come into harmony with your brethren. . . .

It is your duty to come as near to the people as you can . . . (p. 180)

Friday: In this part it is noted that in Matthew 28:19 Jesus instructed his disciples to baptize in the “ ‘name,’ *singular*, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (p. 36). This text is typically understood to mean that when an apostle or minister baptizes someone, he is supposed to baptize them using the formula: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. But what is the record of the apostles who directly heard Jesus? Acts 2:38 records the first time this command was carried out. Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Peter instructed these people to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ rather than in the names of three separate persons. In Acts 10:48, Peter “commanded [Cornelius and his brethren] to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” From these verses it is plain that Peter did not understand Christ to have commanded him to baptize into a Trinity.

Peter must have understood the command of Jesus differently than most Trinitarians understand it today. As we continue in the book of Acts, we find that Peter was not alone in his understanding of this command. When Peter and John came to Samaria, they found a group of people who had been “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16).

Let us also consider Paul, who claimed he received the gospel directly from Jesus Christ. When he visited Ephesus and met some brethren who had only been baptized with John’s baptism, he instructed them about Christ, and the Bible says “when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”(Acts 19:5).

There is no record in the Bible of anyone baptizing in three separate names of three individual persons. There are a few possibilities that could explain why the disciples always baptized in the name of Jesus:

- 1) The disciples may have been in direct rebellion against Jesus.
- 2) They may have misunderstood what he said.
- 3) Matthew 28:19 may be a gloss. Perhaps Jesus never gave this command.
- 4) The disciples understood the command of Jesus differently than most Trinitarians understand it today.

I do not believe that we can accept any of the first three possibilities, but the fourth statement offers a reasonable solution. Jesus was not trying to teach us that God is a Trinity, or he would have been contradicting other statements he had made and many statements made by other biblical writers. Matthew 28:19 says nothing about God being three persons. However,

Ephesians 4:6 says that there is “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

The Bible uses the phrase “God the Father” thirteen times, but it never says “God the Son” or “God the Holy Spirit.” To literally baptize someone in the name of a person, we must know the person’s name. Yahweh (Jehovah or other similar spellings) is the personal name of the Father. Jesus (Yahshua or other similar spellings) is the personal name of the Son, but the Scripture nowhere gives a name for the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not even hint that such a name exists, so we can see that Jesus was not giving a specific formula of words for the preacher to recite at a baptism. We know this, first of all, because all the recorded examples of people baptizing after this command was given show that it was done in the name of Jesus and, secondly, because it would not be possible to literally baptize in the proper name of the Holy Spirit because the Bible makes no mention of such a name.

The word *name* in the Bible often refers to a person’s character. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel because his character had changed. The word *name* in Matthew 28:19 has reference to the character, rather than to the proper names, of individuals. Once we realize that Christ was commissioning his disciples to baptize into the character of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, it is easier for us to understand his words. This command is closely connected with the command to teach. Christ wants his disciples to understand the truth about God, his Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three of these are vital in a Christian’s life. The Father loves us so much that he gave his Son to die for our sins, and he gives his Spirit to guide us in our lives. If a person lacks the knowledge and experience of any of these aspects, his relationship with God will suffer. This is why Christ specifically mentioned all three.

From this we can see that Matthew 28:19 certainly does not prove a Trinity nor does it prove that the Holy Spirit is a separate being apart from the Father and his Son. If we are to find proof for these doctrines in the Bible, we must look somewhere else.

Supplement on statements by Ellen G. White

The following Spirit of Prophecy statements, some used in the quarterly and some not, are given with comments to help explain seemingly trinitarian statements from Ellen White. However, careful examination of these statements shows that they fail to provide the evidence necessary. Space does not allow an examination of every statement that could be called into question, but the following is representative of some of the main statements.

“The Heavenly Trio”

One of the most quoted statements of Ellen White on the Holy Spirit concerns what is called the heavenly trio. This statement was published twice in Ellen White’s lifetime and reads:

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. (*Evangelism*, p. 615; 1946; originally published in *Special Testimonies, Series B*, no. 7, pp. 62, 63; 1905)

The background to this statement is of vital importance. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, director of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, had adopted a system of theology and philosophy called pantheism, a teaching that God is in all things. These ideas were published in 1903 by Kellogg in a book entitled *The Living Temple*. As we shall see, Kellogg drifted toward pantheistic ideas because he accepted the doctrine of the Trinity. Carefully notice the following statements, which are taken from the same testimony from which the famous “heavenly trio” statement is taken:

I have not been able to sleep during the past night. Letters have come to me with statements made by men who claimed to have asked Dr. Kellogg if he believes the Testimonies that Sister White bears. He declares that he does, but he does not. (Ellen White, *Special Testimonies, Series B*, no. 7, p. 60)

Kellogg claimed to believe the testimonies and that they expressed what he was now teaching about the Holy Spirit. Writing to former General Conference President, G. I. Butler, he noted:

The ideas I hold in reference to the presence of God everywhere and in everything, as a manifest agency in all the workings of Nature, I did not [sic] originate. (Letter of J. H. Kellogg to G. I. Butler, December 30, 1903)

Earlier that year, writing to W. W. Prescott, Kellogg quoted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 161; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, page 205; *Special Testimonies on Education*, page 33; and *Christian Temperance*, pages 52, 161 to sustain the point that his writings merely reflected the work of Sister White. Although he claimed to believe the testimonies and even used them to prove his points, Ellen White boldly declared that Dr. Kellogg did not believe them. Going back to the original testimony in Series B, Number 7:

I am so sorry that sensible men do not discern the trail of the serpent. I call it thus; for thus the Lord pronounces it. Wherein are those who are designated as departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, departing from the faith which they have held sacred for the past fifty years? I leave that for the ones to answer who sustain those who develop such acuteness in their plans for spoiling and hindering the work of God. (Ellen White, *Special Testimonies*, Series B, no. 7, p. 61)

Here she says that some of the brethren were “departing from the faith which they have [had] held sacred for the past fifty years.” In 1872, the first published statement of fundamental principles was issued. It clearly reflected the beliefs of those first fifty years of the Advent Movement. This statement declared, in part:

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

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, ...

Adventist Trinitarians who know our history acknowledge that there has been a paradigm shift in the church’s theology about the Godhead—a great change from the prior fifty years. The book *Issues*, authorized by the North American Division officers and union presidents, called this statement of fundamental principles “distinctly non-Trinitarian” (p. 39).

But in the very testimony in question, Ellen White says that Kellogg’s teachings were a departing of the faith, not a work of progress. She declared that such would spoil and hinder the work of God! She also noted:

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye already have hold fast till I come... (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, no. 7, p. 61)

Interestingly, Ellen White mentioned Thyatira. This church has been historically associated with Catholicism, whose doctrine of the Trinity is its central pillar of support. It was to this church, which rejected the Sonship of Jesus, that our Lord addressed himself as “the Son of God” (Revelation 2:18). Notice the following statements that help broaden the picture:

The Father is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight. The Son is all the fulness of the Godhead manifested.

The Word of God declares Him to be “the express image of His person.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Here is shown the personality of the Father. The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. (*Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63)

Now carefully read the following part of the testimony as it was edited by Ellen White in her own handwritten manuscript that has been widely distributed and publicized by the White Estate.

There are [the living three personalities] 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... (*Ibid.*, p. 63)

A study of Sister White’s writings reveals that she did not use the terms “being” and “personalities” interchangeably, as some do today. She stated that Christ was “the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34) This denotes only two “beings.” If the Holy Spirit was a “being” in the same sense as Christ, then why was the Holy Spirit not able to enter into all the “counsels and purposes of God”?

She went on to write in the Testimony of 1905:

When the truth in its simplicity is lived in every place, then God will work through His angels as He worked on the day of Pentecost, and hearts will be changed so decidedly that there will be a manifestation of the influence of genuine truth, as is represented in the descent of the Holy Spirit. (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, no. 7, p. 64)

Two key points of this testimony are: 1) Kellogg had lost faith in the testimonies, and 2) a contrast is made between his spiritualistic beliefs and the truth about God. Kellogg claimed to believe the testimonies, and he even used them to try to prove that Ellen White was teaching the Holy Spirit was a third being, separate and apart from the Father and Son.

However, she did not accept this new teaching and warned the people against accepting this so-called *new light*. She urged the church to stay with the truth they had been teaching for at least the last fifty years. That truth was simply that the Father is God and Jesus is his Son and the Spirit is the Spirit of God. Ellen White wrote that in his new theology, Kellogg was departing from the faith and accepting doctrines of devils.

This testimony describes the personality of God, his literal relationship with his Son, Jesus Christ, and also that the Comforter is said to be, in fact, “the Spirit.” Then she said that God’s working through his angels on the day of Pentecost . . . is represented in the descent of the Holy Spirit.” Notice this statement:

All the human capabilities are to be henceforth consecrated powers to do service for God in representing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost upon whom they depend. All heaven is represented by these three in covenant relation with the new life. (Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 389; dated 1904)

On October 28, 1903, Dr. Kellogg wrote to G. I. Butler, stating:

As far as I can fathom, the difficulty which is found in The Living Temple, the whole thing may be simmered down to this question: Is the Holy Ghost a person? You say No. I had supposed the Bible said this for the reason that the personal pronoun “he” is used in speaking of the Holy Ghost. Sister White uses the pronoun “he” and has said in so many words that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Godhead. How the Holy Ghost can be the third person and not be a person at all is difficult for me to see.

The next day, October 29, 1903, the then current General Conference president, A. G. Daniells, wrote the following in a letter to Willie White, concerning the pantheistic theories of Kellogg:

He [Dr. Kellogg] then stated that his former views regarding the Trinity had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement; but that within a short time he had come to believe in the Trinity, and could now see pretty clearly where all the difficulty was, and believed that he could clear the matter up satisfactorily. He told me that he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and his view was that it was God the Holy Ghost, and not God the Father, that filled all space, and every living thing. He said that if he had believed this before writing the book, he could have expressed his views without giving the wrong impression the book now gives.

Earlier in the letter, Daniells had noted, concerning Kellogg:

He said that some days before coming to the council, he had been thinking the matter over, and began to see that he had made a slight mistake in expressing his views. . . . He felt sure that he believed just what the Testimonies teach, and what Dr. Waggoner and Elder Jones have taught for years; but he had come to believe that none of them had expressed the matter in correct form. (*Ibid.*)

Kellogg had, in his mind, taught what Ellen White, Jones, and Waggoner had taught, but that he had expressed his views poorly. A. G. Daniels wrote to Kellogg, “Now you can readily see that all this can not be corrected by simply a change of terms” (Letter of A. G. Daniels, to J. H. Kellogg, October 28, 1903). Furthermore, Daniels noted to Willie White that before his mother, Ellen White, had come out against the book, Kellogg had given “fair warning that this battle would be fought out to the bitter end, and that the old traditional theories would be rolled under” (Letter of A. G. Daniels to Willie White, October 29, 1903). During the outset of the controversy, Kellogg acknowledged that he had a new model of thought that went beyond just the expression of his words. Daniels was not deceived by Kellogg’s attempt to change the manner of expressing his thoughts. He wrote: “I felt fully satisfied that he had not changed his views in any essential particular” (*Ibid.*).

What a lesson for us! Theories concerning the Godhead, as well as other truths, are sometimes presented to the people as living water, but these theories are from “seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.” Many times it is introduced as new light, but when resistance comes, the voices proclaim it is the old truth, even truth that Ellen White, Jones and Waggoner presented, just put in new settings. We must each be Bereans (Acts 17:11) and study for ourselves the word of truth.

The personality of the Holy Spirit

The next two statements deal with the personhood of the Holy Spirit. The first of these statements was published in *Evangelism*:

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds.—Manuscript 66, 1899. (From a talk to the students at the Avondale school; Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 616)

As noted in the reference in *Evangelism*, this is from a talk given at Avondale school on April 15, 1899. This talk was never published during Ellen White’s lifetime. Part of it was first released in 1946, with the publication of *Evangelism*. Another part was published in 1990 in *Manuscript Releases*, volume 7, page 299, and then in 1994 more of it was released in *Sermons and Talks*, volume 2, pages 136–139. The complete sentence states:

We have been brought together as a school, and we need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds, unseen by human eyes, that the Lord God is our Keeper and Helper. He hears every word we utter and knows every thought of the mind. (Ellen White, *Ms66-1899.11*)

Ellen White was making it clear that she was not advocating that the Holy Spirit was merely some impersonal force, but the person of “the Lord God” who was constantly with them, watching and listening to everything that happen. If she was trying to teach the Trinity, she failed, for the school did not adopt the trinitarian doctrine, and the great “weight of evidence” from her writings is clearly on the non-trinitarian side of the issue.

Another controversial statement is found in *Evangelism*, page 617:

The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

The key to understanding this statement is found in Sister White’s quotation of 1 Corinthians 2:11. As we saw earlier in this booklet, this text, in essence, says that only man knows his spirit and only God knows his Spirit. In other words, man is to man’s spirit as God is to God’s Spirit. Nobody who properly understands the spirit of man would say that his spirit is a separate part or entity apart from him.

“Three highest powers in heaven”

We are to co-operate with the three highest powers in heaven,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—and these powers will work through us, making us workers together with God. (Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 617)

This statement, like the “heavenly trio” statement, is taken from page 51 of *Special Testimonies*, Series B, no. 7. All the background is the same. She is writing concerning the Kellogg crisis and is encouraging her readers to remain faithful to the truths that had been held for fifty years. In connection with this statement of Ellen White, it is highly interesting to note a statement that Uriah Smith made, fourteen years earlier, at the 1891 General Conference session. After sharing several Bible verses about the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, he noted:

You will notice in these few verses the apostle brings to view the three great agencies which are concerned in this work: God, the Father; Christ, his Son; and the Holy Spirit. (Uriah Smith, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 14, 1891, volume 4, p. 147)

This statement is remarkable because Elder Smith explains that the Adventist pioneers understood the use of the term “three great agencies” in a

way that is in harmony with the teaching that the Holy Spirit is not a third, separate being, but rather is the Spirit of the Father and his Son.

“Third Person of the Godhead”

Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the third person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. (White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671; 1898 edition)

The phrase “third person of the Godhead” was published seven times while Ellen White was alive. (*The Review & Herald*, May 19, 1904; November 19, 1908; *The Signs of the Times*, December 1, 1898; *The Watchman*, November 28, 1905; *Special Testimonies*, series A, no. 10, pages 25, 37; and *The Desire of Ages*, 1898 edition) Each time the term “third person” was published, the lower case was used. Standard rules for capitalizing the titles of the Deity have not changed since Ellen White’s death; however, this term has been republished nine times since her death using the upper case, including a change in *The Desire of Ages*.

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