

## **A STUDY ON THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DOCTRINE OF TRINITY** **How to answer antitrinitarians**

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**April 2020**

Among the pioneers of our church were some who held Arian or semi-Arian views. Some members of our church today believe that we must agree on every point of doctrine with what our pioneers believed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. They conclude that the doctrine of the Trinity held by our Church today has departed from the pillars of our faith. But there is no statement in the Spirit of Prophecy that supports including Arian or Semi-Arian concepts among the pillars and foundations of the SDA faith regarding the Deity.

It is true that E. G. White urged the church to preserve the books of our pioneers, and to keep the milestones that were prayerfully studied and adopted at the beginning of our denomination. But these statements were given due to Dr. Kellog's problems with pantheism, or Ballenger's rejection of the real existence of the heavenly sanctuary (Arthur White, *Ellen G. White. The Early Elmshaven Years (1900-1905)*, 405-413). She also appealed to the testimonies of our pioneers when John Bell tried to introduce another theory about the three angelic messages of Rev 14 (Arthur White, *Ellen G. White. The Australian Years (1891-1900)*, 272ss). But she never held that the beliefs of our pioneers were accurate on every point.

### **“Advancing truth” and “increasing light”**

Some pioneers may have had their own personal ideas about various topics at different times, but which did not constitute the official church position regarding those particular beliefs. E. G. White herself did not start out with total understanding, but God revealed truth to her over the course of seven decades until her death in 1915. For instance, she rejected the light which came through Joseph Bates regarding the true day of rest until she received a vision of the sanctuary and saw a special light shining on the fourth commandment. This is why she affirmed that the truth is an advancing truth, and conceded that on some points our pioneers may have been wrong about things that God had not revealed to them. Neither E. G. White nor our pioneers pretended to have a monopoly on truth, or a knowledge of the whole truth. Such a prideful attitude did not characterize our pioneers, including E. G. White, who warned against it.

“Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who, we have reason to believe, desire to know what is truth as much as we do... If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it; for it is foolish to become set in our ideas, and think that no one should interfere with our opinions. Let everything be brought to the Bible; for it is the only rule of faith and doctrine” (*BEcho*, October 15, 1892).

“We need our eyes anointed that we may see the light of truth. We must not think, ‘Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge.’ The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light... We must have living faith in our hearts, and reach out for larger knowledge and more advanced light” (*RH* 03-25-90, 4). The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light” (*CW* 33). “God will

not bless men in indolence, nor in zealous, stubborn opposition to the light he gives to his people” (RH, 02-25-90, 2).

### **The SDA belief of the Deity over time**

The World Council of 1930 published twenty two points under the title, “Statements on Fundamental Beliefs.” which was published in the *Yearbook* the next year, and successively until 1980, as in the *Manual of the Church* from 1932 until 1980, when the 27 fundamental doctrines were published in the Session of Dallas. They accepted the Trinity.

George Knight wrote in recent times that if our pioneers were resurrected today, they would not choose to be baptized as SDA’s because of their Arian beliefs. I think that if they were shown all that had come to light regarding the Godhead since their death, including the later testimonies of the Spirit of Prophecy, they would joyfully accept that greater light and be baptized with the understanding we have today. In fact, anyone can be baptized in our church today by agreeing to the fundamental beliefs published in the *Year Book* of our church in 1889, 1905, 1907 and 1914, regarding the Deity. In 1913, Francis M. Wilcox wrote the following statement in the *Review and Herald*, in a paper entitled “The Message for Today” (Oct 9, 1913, 21):

“For the benefits of those who may desire to know more particularly the cardinal features of the faith held by this denomination, we shall state that *Seventh-day Adventists believe, in the divine Trinity*. This Trinity consists of the eternal Father, a personal, spiritual being, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite in power, wisdom, and love; of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal Father, through whom all things were created, and through whom the salvation of the redeemed host will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the one regenerating agency in the work of redemption.” [Ellen G. White was still alive].

This begs a question. Is there something that has changed in our fundamental beliefs published formerly? The most we can say is that some points are added, built upon what was formerly believed. On the other hand, the language is equivalent to the language employed by E. G. White in her later writings. Is the word Trinity incompatible with the statements of the Spirit of Prophecy about the Father as the first person of the Deity, the Son as the second, and the Holy Spirit as the third person? No. It is true that the word Trinity appeared later in Christianity. The same could be said about other words like Incarnation, which refers to the fact that Jesus became human when he was born of the Holy Spirit. By the word Trinity we believe that there are three equal persons in substance and attributes, though distinct as persons and performing different functions.

There is also an increase of knowledge in relation to our understanding of the “continuous” in Dan 8, discussion of which was suspended in the days of our pioneers, but which today stands out clearly and is generally accepted by our church as a reference to Christ’s “continuous” intercessory ministry in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The same could be said of the king of the north and the king of the south who would contend at the time of the end, according to the prophecy of Dan 11:40-45. While towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century this topic had confronted James White and Uriah Smith, today there is general consensus on its meaning. The king of the north is Babylon, a symbol of Rome in the book of Revelation; and the king of the south is Egypt, a symbol of atheistic and secular governments that appeared in the time of the end with the French Revolution [see the Sabbath School Quarterly on Daniel in 2020. There is progress and growth in our church, and we are pleased for that. Our church is not a dead church, but advances under the direction of God, as was anticipated by the Spirit of Prophecy.

## Development on the Trinity in E. G. White writings

Although there is no statement of E. G. White denying the Trinity that needs to be set aside, it is clear from reading her statements that her concept of deity grew over the years. While some of her statements are ambiguous in the early years, in later years they are more accurate and defined. On other subjects she changed over time, as God revealed to her the truth. To the example of the true day of rest aforementioned, we might add the specific time to keep the Sabbath. The biblical light on the beginning of Saturday at sunset came through a study undertaken by John Andrews in 1855. She did not accept that conclusion until she received a vision later that year confirming the study by Andrews.

Until 1863, E. G. White and our pioneers ate sea oysters, pork and all kinds of meat. Thanks to the visions she received later, and the study of the Bible, when the church was organized these customs were eliminated.

Our pioneers' reaction to the Trinitarian creed of their day, more specifically the Methodist creed, had to do with the denial that God had a body. The Episcopal Methodist creed stated that there is only one living God without body or parts. According to this view, Christ is the only and everlasting God and, in turn, He became man; the human part is the Son, and the divine part is the Father. In consequence, according to this view, God is always without a body, parts, persons, center, circumference, or locality." In other words, the creeds of many churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century affirmed that God is immaterial, without body, parts or passions (M.E. Cornell, *Review & Herald*, abril 7, 1863). In addition, many Christian churches believed also at that time, that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three in one, that together formed one God without body or parts.

This is the reason our pioneers strongly rejected this spiritualizing concept of God according to the following texts of the Bible: Exod 24:9-11; 33:20-23; John 1:18; Heb 1:1-3. This also explains why in one of her first visions E. G. White asked Jesus if the Father had a form like him and the answer was yes. Jesus replied: "I am the express image of the person of My Father" (*EW* 77, see Heb 1:1-3).

In 1858 E. G. White connected the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son in the scriptural account of Jesus' baptism (*Spiritual Gifts*, v. I, 28). In 1869, the pioneers declared that Christ was equal to God (2 *T* 200). This led James White to reflect more on the Trinity while still not accepting it. He acknowledged in 1877, in an article in the *Review* (Nov 29, 1877), that "Christ is equal to God" but he specified that the concept of an inexplicable Trinity that makes "three in one" is really bad, but he also recognized that ultra-Unitarianism "that makes Christ inferior to the Father is worse."

In 1872, E. G. White contrasted Christ with angels, saying that "Christ was not created" (*RH*, Dec 17, 1872), which also led Uriah Smith to change his belief that Christ was the first created being. In 1878 E. G. White affirmed that Christ is the "Eternal Son" (*RH* Aug 8, 1878). She emphasized in 1887 and again in 1898 and 1905 that "for all eternity, Christ was united with the Father" (*RH*, July 5, 1877; *DA* (1898), 19; *ST*, Ag 2, 1905).

In 1888 the Spirit of Prophecy affirmed that the full Deity of Christ is necessary to have a broader concept of justification by faith. She wrote: "If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the divinity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them... None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption" (*GC* [1888] 524).

Some antitrinitarian believers have argued that if the Son is eternal, it is because he came from the Father's bosom until He came out from the Father, having a beginning. But, how did God presumably beget the Son before His incarnation? Was the Son reproduced like an ameba? They don't answer that question. In addition, they misinterpret John 1:18, where bosom has to do with the closest or intimate environment of God, like in the parable where Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22-23). See (*RH*, July 9, 1895).

On the other hand, also in 1888, E. G. White stated that Christ, “the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, and in purpose—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God” (*GC* [1888] 493; *PP* [1890] 34). He was “one in power and authority with the Father” (*GC* [1888] 495), notwithstanding different in person. This she affirmed in 1906: “Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right... He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent” (*RH*, April 5; 1906; *FLB* 46), but different in person.

Some antitrinitarians highlight the fact that in the statements of 1888 and 1890 the Spirit of Prophecy doesn't mention the Holy Spirit. But that light came later. In 1897 we were told that the Holy Spirit is “the third person of the Godhead” (*Special Testimonies*, Series A, N. 10, 37). Again, some had tried to explain this by saying that this is a reference to Jesus without the body. But, as we will see later, Jesus was not two persons, one with the body which is in heaven, and another without the body whom He sent to the earth. Jesus is the second person of the Godhead, and the Holy Spirit the third. The Son is not the second and the third at the same time.

The book *The Desire of Ages* was published in 1898. There E. G. White wrote that “in Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. ‘He that hath the Son hath life.’ 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life” (*DA* 530). Our detractors explain this with the declaration of Christ, who said that the Father determined that He should have life in Himself. But this statement was given within the framework of his incarnation, as we will see in more detail afterwards, when the Son stripped Himself of certain attributes in order to be like us (Philip 2:5ss), without dispossessing Himself of His inherent faculty of having life in Himself from all eternity. They also argue that this original non-derived life was that of the Father who was in the Son. But as we will see later in more detail, there E. G. White is talking about the very life of Christ as something that He possessed by nature, without derivation of any other life.

She said again in the *Desire of Ages*, that the Holy Spirit is “the Third Person of the Godhead” (*DA* 671). In 1901 and again in 1905, she emphasized that there are three “eternal heavenly dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit” “There are three living persons of the heavenly trio..., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” “In mind, in purpose, in character, they are one, but not in person” (*Ms* 145, 1901; *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7 (1905), 51, 62-63; *The Ministry of Healing* (1905), 422; quoted in *Evangelism* 614-617. See Whidden-Moon-Reeve, *The Trinity* (RHPA, 2002).

In 1900 we were told that “Christ is equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man's freedom. He is the eternal self-existing Son, on whom no yoke had come; and when God asked, ‘Whom shall I send?’ He could reply, ‘Here am I; send Me.’ He could pledge Himself to become man's surety; for He could say that which the highest angel could not say—I have power over My own life, ‘power to lay it down, and ... power to take it again’” (*Youth Instructor*, June 21, 1900).

Our antitrinitarian adversaries insist that the first visions of E. G. White, where she portrayed the Father and the Son united to solve the problem of sin and the fall of Adam, not only neglect the Holy Ghost, but also declare that Lucifer followed the Son in authority. But in 1901 she received more light, and wrote: “the Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave Themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption. In order fully to carry out this plan, it was decided that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, should give Himself an offering for sin...” (*Counsels of Health* 222).

Some had deduced that the Father conferred authority to the Son after the conflict of Lucifer, to leave the door open to believe that He had not possessed this authority previously. But already in 1890 E. G. White stated that “there had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and

misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning” (*PP* 38, 1890). Even before, in 1870, she affirmed that the loyal angels told Lucifer “that Christ was the Son of God, existing with Him before the angels were created; and that He had ever stood at the right hand of God, and His mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned” (*Spirit of Prophecy*, 19; *The Truth about Angels*, 35).

In 1906 the Spirit of Prophecy also affirmed that “the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right. This was no robbery of God.” He had “divine, original glory” (*RH*, April 5, 1906, 11). “Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.... In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God” (*ST*, Ag 29, 1900; *The Truth about Angels*, 23-24). And while our contenders want to argue that before being begotten in a remote time in eternity, the Son did not exist separate from the Father, they have to ignore the first statement of the paragraph that speaks of an endless pre-existence, of an eternity backward without computation.

### **The word Trinity**

Should we be upset by the term Trinity, when we use it to describe a foundation of our faith confirmed by the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? It does not imply that we have adopted some ill-advised Catholic attempts to use that term for faulty biblical doctrine. The fact that some apply wrong concepts to the term Trinity, does not mean that we can’t use the term at all. In that case the Israelites would never have been able to use the term *’el*, “god,” nor *’elohim*, “gods” with a singular context in reference to God, because the Canaanites used that term to go far astray, just as many today misunderstand the term “God.”

Do you find the word “millennium” in the Bible? The book of Revelation projects a thousand years of peace, but does not employ the word “millennium.” Is it wrong to use that word because it doesn’t appear in the Bible? Why? This term helps us to refer more easily to what the Bible teaches about this promise of God. The same can be said of the word “incarnation.” Where is it in the Bible? Nowhere. But when we use it—and E. G. White also uses it—it is in reference to the great historical reality that God became flesh (John 1:14). And the fact that this term also has pagan connotations in Hinduism and other Eastern religions, in addition to many who practice the rites of the New Age, doesn’t prevent us from employing this term within the biblical scope.

In addition to the term Trinity, some have employed the term Triune, which introduces some confusion because it tries to numerically define three by one, and one by three. This has provoked strong reactions throughout history among many non-Christian people who rejected the Trinity. Still, some play with the numbers and point out that  $1 \times 1 \times 1$  is equal to 1. But we don’t need to play with numbers, we need to deal with the divinely revealed reality.

Dr. Aecio Cairus shared an analysis with me of the value of the term Trinity from a linguistic perspective that I will relate here. Aecio tells us that God’s uniqueness is absolute, while His “plurality” is relative. It is always possible to say with finality that “God is one”. But it is not accurate to say “God is three” without providing further explanation. In other words, in a certain respect (the Divine Persons) it is AS IF God were three, but it is not really three in another perspective. This is precisely what the term “trinity” expresses.

Trinity is to the number three as unity is to the number one. Both terms define the quality of the respective number. But if we pay attention, we will realize that “unity” is always applied to subjects that are actually plural. It makes no sense to speak of the “unity” of only one man. But if we speak of the “unity” of the church or of the nation, it makes sense. What we want to say is that the members or the citizens or the components of the unity are or must be, in a certain way, AS IF they were one, though they are really many. Even if we are called to have unity in a group, we will always want our own

toothbrush.

In other words, “unity” is not “one.” The unity is relative and its subject is plural. In the same way, and vice versa, the word “Trinity” is applied to a unique subject, who is God. His Trinity consists of the fact that they are in some way three, but they continue being one. Once we understand this, we realize that it is not necessary to say “Triune.” The term Trinity implies that we are speaking of a singular subject.

### **The trinitarian formulation of baptism**

Some Adventists touched by an antitrinitarian fervor have been saying that the trinitarian formulation was introduced by Eusebius in the fourth century, at the Council of Nicaea. They don’t realize that this formulation where Jesus mentioned the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, was already known toward the end of the first century by Polycarp (70-155/160), Ignatius of Antioch (between 35-107), Justin Martyr (between 100-165), Irenaeus (115-190), Theophilus of Antioch (second half of the second Century), Tertullian of Carthage (160-215), all of them before the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century.

We also see some of our divisive friends quoting Bible and E. G. White statements that speak of two divine people, the Father and the Son, emphasizing that these statements do not mention the Holy Ghost. They have also found E. G. White quotations that mentioned Lucifer as next in importance to the Son of God in heaven, and that his place was occupied by Gabriel. Lucifer, in their view, and then Gabriel, would have occupied the third place after Christ (although E. G. White never used the term “third” to refer to Lucifer or Gabriel). In those statements, nothing is said about the Holy Ghost as being the third person in heaven. Let us answer this unfounded criticism by simply saying that, as already seen, she received more light on this point later. On the other hand, a quality of the Holy Spirit is that of not being seen, but felt, lived, experienced (John 3:8).

“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead” (DA 671).

Some have played with the terms “personalities” as not referring to a person. But in the statement quoted above, the Holy Spirit is pointed out as being “the Third Person.” So, when E. G. White wrote “personalities” in other instances, she was thinking in terms of “persons.”

“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” (*Special Testimonies*, Serie B, N. 7, pgs. 62-63, 1905).

The manuscript of E. G. White in the former statement has a correction where she struck out the “s” and wrote above “alities,” that is, “the living three personalities of the heavenly trio.” Therefore, some have been discrediting the book *Evangelism* because they believe that “persons” and “personalities” are not the same. Those who published the book *Evangelism*, according to some, would have changed what she wrote. But other statements she wrote show us that she understood personalities and persons as equivalent. In addition to the several other instances where the Spirit of Prophecy mentions the Holy Spirit as being a “person,” I searched the CD of E. G. White writings, and found the following statements where she uses the term personalities, which obviously are a clear reference to different persons.

“I read the first chapter of Hebrews as the basis of my discourse. This chapter clearly indicates

the individual personalities of the Father and the Son” (*RH*, 1 de Agosto, 1907 Notes of Travel - N. 2 Mrs. E. G. White Loma Linda, Cal. Sabbath Sermon). “In this Scripture [John 1:1-4,14-16; 3:34-36], God and Christ are spoken of as two distinct personalities, each acting in their own individuality” (*MR*760 18).

Dr. Aecio Cairus wrote to me in a pastoral cyber network that “‘person’ in ordinary language is a human being in its broadest sense (‘there were four persons in the car’), and when we talk about persons regarding God many think of a human being or his divine prototype. But when the language of ‘person’ was adopted to speak of God, “person” was a term that designated the participants in a dialogue, whatever their nature, form or condition. The term refers to what the Bible tells us about the Father’s dialogue with the Son and the Spirit, how they communicate between each other and glorify one another. In other words, ‘person’ when applied to God means Someone and not merely ‘something.’ The fact that some reject ‘person’ but admit ‘personality’ means that what they are rejecting is not what Christianity teaches. It is a simple semantic problem.”

Other antitrinitarians have tried to explain away the fact that the Spirit of Prophecy refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Third *Person* of the Godhead” (not “personality”), saying it means that that Third Person is the very Spirit of Christ now disincarnated whom He sent to the earth after His ascension to heaven. But Jesus is one person, not two. When the Son of God became flesh, He combined His divinity with His humanity. That does not mean that His divinity was one person, and His humanity was another person. That indissoluble union continued through the crucifixion and ascension and will last for all eternity. “He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken” (*SC* 14). Briefly, we cannot call the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to the earth, “the Third Person” of Christ, while the incarnated Son in heaven is the Second Person of Christ; one dwelling on earth, and the other in heaven.

### **The Trinity in the New Testament**

Our antitrinitarian friends like to challenge us to locate texts in the Bible that speak of the Trinity. Dr. Aecio Cairus shared with us a number of these texts that are scattered throughout the New Testament. With his authorization, we will include that list here.

Aecio points out that antitrinitarians try to discount the triple baptismal invocation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in Matt 28:18. They refer to a non-existent original Hebrew version of Matthew and appeal to medieval Jewish versions of that gospel. But they waste their time, because even if we put discount Matt 28, we will never be able to erase the audible and/or visible presence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit from the baptism of Jesus, recognized in all four Gospels. Jesus is the pattern for His followers, and His baptism is the starting point for what follows.

Aecio continues saying that the NT is full of passages where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned together. I would like to list the ones I know (there may be others):

John 14:16: Jesus promises to ask the Father to send another Comforter to occupy His place.

John 16:13-15: The twelve will receive additional information from the Spirit, which will reveal it from the Father and the Son.

John 20:21-22: Sending the twelve as the Father sent Jesus, with the power of the Spirit.

Heb 10:38: God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit

Rom 15:16: The duty of the minister of Christ is to preach the gospel of God to present believers as an offering sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Rom 15:30: Request in the name of Jesus and for the love of the Spirit to join Paul in praying to God.

1 Cor 12:4-6: Unity in the diversity of gifts of the same Spirit, ministries of the same Lord, and works of the same God.

2 Cor 1:21, 22: God is the one who fortifies us in Christ and seals us with His Spirit in our hearts.

2 Cor 13:13: Invocation on believers of the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Spirit.

Eph 2:18: We have access through Christ to the Father, through the same Spirit.

2 Thess 2:13: The believers are loved by the Lord, chosen by God and sanctified by the Spirit.

Heb 9:14: The blood of Christ, a sacrifice offered by the Holy Spirit to God, will cleanse us.

1 Pe 1:2: Chosen by the Father's prescience in the sanctification of the Spirit to be sprayed by the blood of Christ.

1 John 4:2: God's work through the Spirit is present when we recognize that Christ came in the flesh.

Jud 20-21: Let us pray in the Holy Spirit, to stay within God's love and to wait in the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Aecio concludes that we have in this list of 16 passages, 2 Gospels (Matthew and John), 5 epistles of Paul, and 3 universal epistles. All sections of the NT are represented. The order of mention of the three Persons is indistinct, emphasizing their essential equality.

Since the whole New Testament follows this triune scheme of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and since the Father and the Son are truly God and are also different persons, how could the third member of this repeated NT trio be merely Something and not Someone different, as are the first two members? Of course, "different" does not remove all three of them from being perfectly united in thought, word and action.

Let us rephrase this idea. "Now, dear brethren, I would like to bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the mighty powerful arm of God." This is a little incongruous, isn't it? An invocation of two that are each one of them Someone different and the third item that is just Something, an aspect or attribute of the first two. But if we see the Spirit as the glory or power of God alone, then that is the same thing that 2 Cor 13:13 is doing. It would be totally incongruous.

Let us look at the problem of blasphemy against the Son, which can be forgiven, and against the Holy Spirit, which has no forgiveness in this world or in the world to come (Matt 12:30-32). Instead of discussing what blasphemy is (which is well known), we have to emphasize here WHO is offended. If Christ and the Spirit are the same—as some antitrinitarians affirm—how is it possible to blaspheme against Christ without blaspheming against the Holy Spirit? But the text shows a clear difference in the severity of the two blasphemies.

It is true that in a certain sense the Spirit is Christ himself, because it comes from Him and expresses His presence among us. The Father is also in the Son: he who has seen Christ has seen the Father (John 14:9). But that does not mean that the Son is the Father and nothing else, because the Father sent his Son into the world: He did not send Himself. Similarly, the Spirit is not simply Christ Himself, because Christ prays to the Father to send the Spirit to take His place. [Thank you once again, Aecio].

### **Significant quotes about the Holy Ghost**

Some antitrinitarians scrutinize the following statement of E. G. White: "the Holy Spirit is Himself [Christ] divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof" (14 *MR* 23, 1895). They infer from this statement that Christ and the Holy Spirit are the same. But this is not what the Spirit of Prophecy intends to say. Let us allow E. G. White interpret herself.

“The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ’s name. *He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality*” (MR 20, 324 – Ms 93, 1893). “The divine Son of God, the personification of the only true God” (RH January 30, 1900; 3 SM 416).

If the Father and the Son are two different personalities (persons), then the Holy Spirit and Christ are also two different personalities (persons), according to what we have already seen. Such is also the case when E. G. White speaks of the three powers and/or agencies that are in heaven, in reference to the three persons of the Deity. The Son also personifies the Father, and notwithstanding He is a different personality.

“Our sanctification is the work of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. It is the fulfilment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand *with Him, with His Son, and with His Spirit* in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then co-operate with *the three great powers of heaven* who are working in your behalf ... This is the pledge of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*; made to you if you will keep your baptismal vow, and touch not the unclean thing ... Those who unite with *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, who show by their lives that they are no longer following the course they followed before they united with *these divine instrumentalities*, will receive wisdom from above ... Christians must feel their need of a power which comes only from the *heavenly agencies* that have pledged themselves to work in man’s behalf. After we have formed a union with *the great threefold power*, we shall regard our duty toward the members of God’s family with a sacred awe” (ST 19 Junio 1901).

“The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave Themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption” (*Counsels of Health* 222).

With the crisis of Kellog's pantheism as the background, E. G. White wrote this:

“It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is ... (14 MR 179). “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” (AA 52 [1911]).

But even if we cannot define just what the Holy Spirit is, His divine nature, how He is interrelated to the other two persons of the Godhead:

“We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a *person* as God is a *person*, is walking through these grounds, that the Lord God is our keeper, and helper” (Ms 66, 1899, 4). “*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” (FLB 52).

Against the figures of nature used by Kellog and those who followed him to project his pantheistic approach, Ellen White wrote:

“God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made ... The Father cannot be described by the things of earth. *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’ [Heb 1:3] ... *The Comforter* that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, *is the Spirit in all the fulness of the Godhead,* making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are *three living persons of the heavenly trio;* in the name of these *three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and *these powers* will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ (*Special Testimonies B 07, 62-63, 1905*).

This last statement, now presented in a broader context, can help us to see that although the Bible uses human language and earthly illustrations, we cannot rigidly bind God, or circumscribe Him, to such illustrations and words. In John 3:12 Jesus said to Nicodemus, after illustrating the work of the Holy Ghost in the wind: “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?”

We constantly read in the pages of our antitrinitarian interlocutors, quotes that they gather from E. G. White where she presents the Holy Spirit as being the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God, and that Christ Himself is omnipresent through His Spirit. But, should the fact that the three persons of the Godhead belong to each other like a couple in a marriage (Gen 2:22), mean that the Spirit is not a different person? In the case of the Trinity, there is through the Holy Ghost an interconnection of the three persons of the Deity, and of the Deity with all creation, which is impossible to calibrate or measure with our finite minds, or to represent with earthly things. In this respect, the illustration of marriage falls short, because in the Holy Spirit are the Father and the Son, regardless of whether the Father and the Son remain bodily in heaven, while the Spirit descends to earth. However, the man is not in the woman when they are physically in different places.

Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy refer to the Holy Ghost by a personal pronoun, “He,” not “it.” In John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26 and 16:7, the pronoun employed by biblical writers to refer to the Holy Ghost is masculine, not neutral. E. G. White refers to the Holy Spirit in the book *DA*, more than 60 times by the male pronoun (“He,” “Him”), not by the neutral pronoun (“it”). And of the 126 times in which she refers in her other writings to the Holy Ghost she never uses the neutral pronoun.

### **1 Cor 2:11 – John 4:24 – 2 Cor 3:17**

In order to deny that the Spirit is a different person from the Father and the Son, our confused friends introduce a statement of E. G. White who, in turn, quotes a passage of the Apostle Paul. And they do not grasp that, again, the illustration falls short of the intimate relationship between the three persons of the Deity.

“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’” (1 Cor 2:11) (*Ms 20, 1906*).

Just as marriage can help us understand how the three persons of the Godhead are one (Gen 2:24), but cannot encompass the whole dimension of that divine unity; so too the illustration of our human spirit (who is not a person different from us because we are a psychophysical unity), illustrates how the Holy Spirit knows the depths of God, but without pretending to encompass or limit or equalize the entire dimension of the Spirit of God in its connection with the Father and the Son. Let’s put it in another way.

It was argued that, by the fact that the spirit of man is the one who knows what is within him, and that spirit is not a person different from that of man, then the Spirit of God should not be a person either. But as already seen, E. G. White says that the Holy Spirit has a personality, He is a person, and let us know it when He affirms to us within us that we are children of God.

I believe that the examples we have already given should prevent us from exaggerating the illustrations that the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy give about the interconnection between the three persons of the Deity. The illustration of the spirit of a man who knows what is within him has no other purpose than to emphasize the divine nature of the Holy Ghost who knows the depths of God, so that He can reveal that knowledge to those who, like His Spirit, have spiritual faculties, they “are spiritual” (1 Cor 2:11,15-16).

But, can one say of the spirit of man that “he will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears” of man within him, as it is in the case of the Spirit of God? (John 16:13). Of course not! My spirit does not hear within me what I say, because my spirit is myself. But the Holy Spirit hears what the other members of the Godhead say! Before a world that the disciples were to face with all sorts of “false Christs” and “false apostles,” who would speak under the influence of “deceiving spirits,” as were the pagan deities of the ancient world, it was to be important to highlight the fact that the Comforter or Spirit of Truth would not contradict the Son or the Father. There is a mutual or rather triple dependency between the three persons of the Trinity. But we cannot say the same of the spirit of man, because the spirit of man and man are the same person. In contrast, the Spirit of God and God the Father and/or Son are different persons.

“God is spirit” (John 4:24). What does that mean? Only that the divine nature is spiritual, which allows God to relate intimately with all the creatures He created in His image, with a spiritual nature, because we are also “spiritual” (1 Cor 2:15). And this doesn’t mean that we don’t have a material body. “The Lord is the Spirit,” “the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:17), are equivalent expressions which mean the same thing. Through the Holy Spirit, the Son is “in the Father,” and “the Father is in the Son, so that Jesus could say, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

“I and the Father are one,” said Jesus (John 10:30; 14:9-11). But the Apostle Paul spoke in 1 Cor 15:40 that there are “heavenly bodies,” and as we have already seen, both the Father and the Son have a body or, rather, they are bodies, in the same way that to have a spirit means to be a spirit. If the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, they are also both in the Holy Spirit, for He personifies them as Christ to the Father, without being the same person.

“In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 2:9). But He (His human body) will remain in heaven until he returns “a second time” (Heb 9:28). And this fact doesn’t hinder the Lord to be spiritually with us “all the days until” His final glorious bodily return (Matt 28:20; Acts 1:11; Filip 3:21). If, in the case of Christ, we could not distinguish between Him and the Spirit, how is it that He will come a second time? Is He not permanently here till the end? He is here because, as the Spirit of Prophecy explains it, the Holy Spirit personifies Him. But as a person, the Son is in the heavenly sanctuary. The same can be said of the Father, who is with the Son in the temple of heaven, in the sight of the angels of God, until He finishes the work of intercession for man.

The redeemed will “see His face,” that of the Father, once they have been sealed forever (Rev 22:4). But let us know for certain that we will never see the person of the Spirit bodily, and not because He does not exist as a person, but because that is His characteristic. He is everywhere in the universe, because He is the Holy Spirit.

“The greatness of God is to us incomprehensible. ‘The Lord’s throne is in heaven’ (Psalm 11:4); yet by His Spirit He is everywhere present. He has an intimate knowledge of, and a personal interest in, all the works of His hand” (*Ed* 133, 1903). “By His Spirit He is everywhere present” (*MH* 417). “By the Spirit the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with you” (*The*

*Bible Echo*, Jan 15, 1893; cf. John 14:23).

## The eternity of the Son

As already mentioned, some antitrinitarians play with the word “begotten” to say that unlike us, Christ was not created. In their view, the Son would have been born sometime in eternity. But “begotten” doesn’t necessarily mean a denial of a former existence. “Son” as well as “firstborn” are often employed in the Bible as titles which imply a nomination for a position which represents God, without implying that the persons so designed did not exist before (Ps 2:7; Heb 5:5). Therefore the connection of “begotten” with “being born,” applied to the Son of God before His incarnation, lack foundation.

To the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who believe that the Son is an inferior god, we say that neither before nor after was there another god than God Himself. “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me” (Isa 43:10). But some antitrinitarians infer that the Son received or inherited the divine nature of the Father which is eternal, though presuming that there was a time when the Son didn’t exist separate from the Father. No testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy confirms this view. On the contrary, there are several statements of the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible that deny it. Isa 43:10 states that no God would be formed after Him either. Unless we admit the coeternity of the Father and the Son, and the fact that they comprise only one Deity, Isa 43:10 denies any other later formation.

We are formed (*’asah*) in our mother’s womb (Ps 139:14-15). But God says that no one would be formed or modeled like God before or after Him. The same is expressed in other passages of Isaiah where the Eternal says, “I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God” (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12),

Who said this? “The Eternal (Yahweh).” What is the passage talking about? It deals with the eternity of God, the great I AM of the Bible, an eternal present. Could this be said of the Son (let us take it as a title), if He were not coeternal as His Father? The Jews took stones to kill Him for blasphemy when Jesus applied that title to Himself. He was not saying “before Abraham was, I WAS or I existed.” That could have been said of someone who is not eternal but simply existed before someone else. He told them that “before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58-59; cf. Exod 3:14). And when John beheld his glorified High Priest, he heard Him saying: “I am the First and the Last” (Rev 1:17; 2:8), “I am the Alpha and the Omega ... who is and was and is to come—the Almighty” (Rev 1:8; 22:12-13).

Prov 8:25 declares of the wisdom that personifies the Son: “I have been established from everlasting (*’olam*), from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.” In biblical terms, this “beginning” is a reference to the eternity expressed at the beginning of the sentence, and which applies to God and Christ in the rest of the Bible. “In the beginning, God ...” (Gen 1:1). As we will see in more detail afterwards, “begotten” refers to a title, in the case of “wisdom” at the time when it was revealed, without denying that it existed before that appointment or revelation.

We find this again in Micah 5:2, where the prophet states that the future Messiah who would be Lord or ruler in Israel would be born, yes, in Bethlehem, but whose origin would come rather from the very eternity (*’olam*). The expression, “from the days of eternity,” (contrary to what some antitrinitarians want to affirm), is a reference to God’s very eternity. It does not say from a day in eternity, but from those days backward in eternity that cannot be counted. As Psalm 90:2 also puts it: “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting (*me’olam*), to everlasting (*ad’olam*), you are God.” Here the psalmist speaks of an eternity that goes backwards and forwards.

Micah 5:2 also employs the term *qedem*, usually translated as “beginning.” “ancient times,” “of old,” as in Hab 1:12, in reference to the Eternal, which modern versions often correctly render as “eternity.” “Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One.” As Micah 5:2 says that “His goings forth are from the beginning,” the prophet specifies that this beginning or origin has to do with God’s eternity.

The revelation of God, His manifestation, His wisdom, has been given since immemorial times, from eternity, since God began the creation of the universe.

That is why E. G. White refers to God with expressions such as “Eternal Father” and “Eternal Son,” because as persons, they have neither origin nor end. “Eternal Son” does not mean that the Son is eternal because his Father is eternal, but because like His Father, His origin is not counted in numbers.

“Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.... In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God” (*ST* Aug 29, 1900; *The Truth about Angels*, 23-24). “Here [John 8:58] Christ shows them that, although they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation. The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures” (*ST* May 3, 1899). “The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity” (*The Upward Look*, 367; *Ms* 116, Dec 19, 1905).

The latter statement was expressed when the effect of Kellog's pantheism had not yet been completely eradicated, and adds, “but not in personality,” in reference to the revelation that Jesus gave of Himself when He became flesh as a divine-human person, to forge the righteousness that will allow us to walk on earth as He did.

### **The conflict between the two natures of Christ**

A curious proposition advanced by antitrinitarians has to do with the two natures of Christ, divine and human. In this proposition Christ would be human, and the Holy Spirit divine. According to this view, the divine nature would have been confined to the human body of Christ (“clothed in humanity” and thus limited in space) while he was on earth. But after ascending to heaven He could send His disincarnated divine nature to the earth, where it could then be everywhere.

But Christ does not live with two separate natures, bodily and spiritual. Because in that case, He wouldn't have had to go to heaven to be everywhere here on earth. He could be everywhere already when He was on earth. And while it is true that on earth, in adopting our humanity, He was constrained to bear the two natures (divine and human), it doesn't mean that His body is now in heaven, and His spirit here on earth. The Holy Spirit belongs to Him, yes, as the Son belongs to the Holy Spirit and the Father, because they form a Deity. And the Spirit also represents Christ and personifies Jesus on earth, as well as the Father (John 14:23), but without implying that they are the same person.

It is not our purpose to introduce a discussion on the human and divine nature of Christ. We need only to emphasize the fact that God gave us His Son to become flesh for all eternity (John 3:16). Actually, the Father didn't *lend* us His Son, but He *gave* Him to our human species. For this reason, after His ascension to heaven with His humanity, the Son did not separate His human body from his divinity, sending His divine spirit without the body that would supposedly have remained in heaven. Is the Lord only a body in heaven for supposedly sending His spirit to the earth? As already seen, the Holy Spirit that the Father sends in the name of Jesus personifies Him but without making the Son two persons, that is, the second and the third persons of the Godhead.

“Christ had not exchanged His divinity for humanity; but He had clothed His divinity in humanity...” (*RH*, October 29, 1895). “This was not done by going out of Himself to another, but by taking humanity into Himself” (*RH*, April 5, 1906).

“In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His

only-begotten Son.’ John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.’

“God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’ who shares the throne of the universe. It is the ‘Son of man’ whose name shall be called, ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love” (DA 25).

### **“In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived” (DA 530)**

It was toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when E. G. White wrote in her book *Desire of Ages* her commentary on the statement of Jesus, “I am the resurrection and the life”: “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.” But some antitrinitarians reason that the unborrowed and underived life was that of the Father that Jesus received. They resort to John 5:26 where Jesus says: “as the Father has life in Himself, so also He gave to the Son to have life in Himself.”

Our answer is simple. This is clearly a reference to the incarnation of Christ, to probe the concept that in adopting the human nature to give His life for sinners (Mar 10:45), the Father had determined that He would not lose the faculty of having life in Himself, that is, that He would not stop being God in the human flesh. As a matter of fact, Jesus also said in John 10:17-18: “I lay down My life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down and power to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Now, the Greek word *labein* may mean “to take it” or “to receive it.” No version translates Mark 8:14 “to receive bread,” but “to take bread.” However, our confused antitrinitarian believers prefer to interpret John 10:18 as “to receive,” in reference to a gift of life given to the Son by the Father. But that translation forces the context. It makes no sense to say that Jesus has power to lay down His life to receive it again. The action of receiving depends on the one who wants to give it. Here in this text, the one who has power to lay down His life is the one who has also power to take it. As a matter of fact, E. G. White understood this statement of Jesus as having power to take His life again. “They had heard Him declare that He had power to lay down His life and to take it again” (DA 777).

Once again, the Son received this commandment from the Father in the context of His incarnation. As the Spirit of Prophecy explains it, the Son did not cease to be God to become a man. He is Emanuel, “God with us.” His divinity and humanity were combined to be both the Son of God and the Son of Man, one divine/human person. But by assuming our humanity, the Son would not resort to His divinity for His own benefit. Otherwise He could not be our Savior. He was to be in all things like us, though “sinless” (Heb 2:14,17; 4:15).

Some of our non-conventional antitrinitarian believers also affirm that we, created beings, also receive that original underived life that the Son possesses. Notwithstanding, the Spirit of Prophecy makes a clear difference between Christ and us. While in Christ, that original underived life is inherent to Himself (which means that He didn’t derive it from the Father), in our case that eternal life is imparted to us by grace.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.’ It is not physical life that is here specified,

but eternal life, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual received. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again ... But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. 'I lay it down of myself,' He said ... This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent'" (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world (*ST* Feb 13; 1912; *SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, 1130).

"In Jesus is our life derived. In Him is life, that is original, unborrowed, underived life. In us there is a streamlet from the fountain of life. In Him is the fountain of life. Our life is something that we receive, something that the Giver takes back again to Himself. If our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall, when Christ shall appear, also appear with Him in glory. And while in this world we will give to God, in sanctified service, all the capabilities He has given us" (*Letter* 309, 1905).

### **John 5:26; 10:17-18**

How do we understand in this context the statement of John 5:26? Does the Son have life in Himself because the Father gave it to Him, according to the interpretation of some of our antitrinitarian friends? No! The Father gave the Son the power to have life in Himself when He assumed our human nature. This is seen in the quotations of E. White that we had already studied. It means that the Son would not cease to be God when He would assume our human condition. In our human nature, the Father determined that His Son would not lose the power of having life in Himself. This fact stands out most strongly in John 10:17-18, when Jesus says that the Son has power to lay down His life, and to take it again. If the Son had not been willing to give His life in sacrifice for sin, neither men nor the devil Himself could have taken it away.

How did Jesus die, and at the same time retain the power to take back the life that He had relinquished? Because His human nature died, not His divine nature. It was the divine nature of Christ that lifted up the human nature after dying at the cross.

"Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person—the man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible. Christ, the sinless One, will save every son and daughter of Adam who accepts the salvation proffered them, consenting to become the children of God. The Saviour has purchased the fallen race with His own blood" (*LHU* 76; 5 *BC* 1113). See Acts 2:24.

When Jesus' humanity died, His divine nature didn't allow His human body to see corruption (Acts 2:31).

"The Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself. Now was proved the truth of His words, 'I lay down My life, that I might take it again ... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' John 10:17, 18; 2:19. Over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, Christ had proclaimed in triumph, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' These words could be spoken only by the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest

animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death” (DA 785).

“To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity. ‘I am come,’ He said, ‘that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly’” (DA 786-7).

How can the Lord lay down His life and take it again? Some have tried to explain it by saying that divinity remained dormant in the dead human body of Christ. But we don’t know that, as we will never be able to know how divinity joined to a young, helpless child who was born in Bethlehem. Perhaps the secret rests in the divine spiritual nature that interconnects the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and what we cannot completely understand because we are not God, nor has the Godhead revealed it to us (see Luke 1:35; Rom 8:11; Heb 13:20).

“How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem’s manger is still the divine Son of God? Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that He who made the worlds became, for our sakes, a helpless babe. Though higher than any of the angels, though as great as the Father on the throne of heaven, He became one with us. In Him God and humanity became one, and it is in this fact that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in Him the brightness of divine glory, the express image of God the Father” (*The Youth’s Instructor*, Nov 21, 1895; 3 SM 127-128 [1895]).

### **“I was given birth” (wisdom) and “Firstborn”**

Perhaps the most persuasive text to support the antitrinitarian argument is that of Prov 8:22ff, where Solomon personifies “wisdom,” and declares that it was born before the creation of the world and of heaven, so that God possessed it from the beginning. If we add to this the statement of the apostle Paul in Col 1:15, “the firstborn of all creation,” and Rev 3:10, “the beginning of God’s creation,” the picture seems complete for many to plainly deny the Trinity. Some antitrinitarians however do not say like other Arians that God created the Son, but that the Son was begotten, he was born, before the universe was created.

We need not discuss in detail here the meaning of the term “firstborn.” It is employed in the Bible several times without a literal meaning, but as a reference to a right that can be obtained even without being physically firstborn. For example, Jacob received the right of the first born in relation to the inheritance, even though he had not been born first. David was not born first either, but God chose him as a firstborn to occupy preeminence in the midst of his people (Ps 89:20-27). In this sense, the Israel of God of the Old Testament and the Israel of God of the New Testament are included in the category of “first born,” also with the sense of receiving the inheritance of those who really have the right of birth through Christ Jesus, who has preeminence over all the brethren (Exod 4:22; Heb 12:23; Rom 8:29; Col 1:18; Rev 1:5, etc).

Some antitrinitarians think that Christ became the firstborn before His incarnation. But the most that can be inferred from the Bible is that the Father determined in His Trinitarian counsel that His Son be the principal over all His creation. This is the meaning Paul gives Jesus when he adds, “so that in everything He might have the supremacy” (Col 1:18). This supremacy He possess not only by creation (vv. 16-17), but also by redemption. Rev 3:10 refers to Him not as the first being that was created, but as the one who began the creation (Heb 1:2).

Among the rabbis it was normal to refer to God as the firstborn of the divine creation, as witnessed in later Jewish literature (Strack & Billerbeck III 626, 6 *TDNT* 878, n. 44). This is significant because it shows us how the term “firstborn” was understood in Paul’s day. In addition, Paul employs the same term, “firstborn of creation” to refer to Christ, which is an indisputable proof of His identification with God, of his Deity and eternal pre-existence. The term “firstborn” thus applies to God in His character as “First and Last” which as we have already seen is a reference to His eternal character, without giving that expression a literal meaning.

### ***Monogenes* (John 3:16)**

There has been discussion about whether *monogenes* means “only-begotten” or “unique in its genre.” In Heb 11:17 it is indisputably referred to as “unique in his genre,” because Abraham had more than one son. So in John 3:16, the most direct meaning of *monogenes* would refer to a “unique son,” not in the sense of being begotten, but in nature. Again, the passage refers to the incarnation of the Son of God, and even if some want to give the term the meaning of “only-begotten,” and project it back to eternity past, the fact is the same. As we will see below, God referred to David as being begotten when he was anointed as king. The same can be said of Jesus after being resurrected. He was begotten on that day as God’s Son without implying that He had not existed formerly.

But what about the personification of wisdom that was born before the creation of the universe, according to Prov 8:24-25, and that those who take an antitrinitarian stance in our church correctly apply to Christ?

### **The personification of “wisdom”**

First, let us say that it was common for ancient peoples to personify good and evil. Thus, the Canaanites personified death in the god *Mot*, where death and the god of death were often identified. We can see this when Solomon speaks of love as being as strong or even stronger than death. This can be interpreted as being not only stronger than death, but even stronger than *Mot*, the god of death (Song of Solomon 8:6), like the one who oversaw the empire of death in the New Testament (Heb 2:14). On the other hand, the Son of God personifies divine love (see 1 John 4:8), to such an extent that He destroys not only death, but also its author. Likewise the Canaanites personified “plague” or sickness, and “contagion,” from which only God could deliver them (Ps 91:6).

Solomon also personified “wisdom,” as John later did the *logos*, “the Word.” But we must be careful not to go too far in that personification of “wisdom” or “word.” For example, are we going to infer that every word is literally Christ, or was every wise expression born prior to the creation of the universe? Could you deduce that before the Wise Son was supposedly begotten, God had no brain? Because the text says that the Eternal possessed wisdom “from the beginning.”

There is much to say regarding the description of Prov 8:22ff about wisdom. For the sake of brevity, let us list just a few things.

1. Lucifer’s personification in the description of the king of Babylon (“Prince of this world” in John 12:31; 14:30), cannot be applied literally in every point to Lucifer, for the text continues to describe his prototype, the literal king of Babylon (Isa 14).
2. Nor can God’s personification on the throne of David be literally applied in every point to God, for often the kings who sat on the throne of David misrepresented the figure chosen by God to reveal Himself to His people and to the world (1 Chr 29:23; see Ps 82).

3. The word “beget” applies not necessarily to someone who was conceived, but to someone who is appointed to office. Thus, in Ps 2, David is begotten as a son of God (v. 7) when he was anointed by God (v. 4) to represent Him before His people as king. In this typological projection, the Psalm applies to Jesus when He was crowned king-priest according to the order of Melchizedek, after ascending to heaven (Heb 5). In this context, God would have determined in His eternal councils that the second person of the Deity personified the divine wisdom as Creator.

4. The word “beginning,” as already seen, is linked to the word “eternity” (Prov 8:22-23). In this context, it should be noted that the Bible does not speak of God as a timeless being, because it makes no sense to refer to God without reference to His existence. The full dimension of that “principle” has not yet been revealed to us, and we do not know whether it ever will be. “In the beginning God...” (Gen 1:1).

God is “eternal,” but we cannot measure His eternity, because unlike God who doesn’t have an origin, we do, and we can’t imagine something that’s out of what we know. At this point our logic comes to an end, because we have no other point of reference. The Bible reveals God as being *Omnitemporal* rather than *timelessness*. God encompasses the totality of time, if that can really be spoken of since there is neither beginning nor end. “From eternity to eternity, thou art God” (Ps 90:2).

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last” (Rev 3:11), again, in reference to the eternity of the Deity expressed in our limited terms.

5. The title “Everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6). It doesn’t say “Father, Eternal,” because it is a single composed word that is a proper name, *abiyad*, without gender or number or state, which implies eternal fatherhood. And just as it was determined that the Son should die “from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), so it was also determined in the divine immemorial councils that the second person of the Deity should be revealed as the Eternal Son, or eternally begotten, or rather, eternally appointed to be the first, to have preeminence over everything by both creation and redemption. In this context, the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the covenant of God to save the world through the Son is an “eternal covenant” (Heb 13:20), and in addition, the Spirit of Prophecy refers to Jesus as “the eternal Son of God.”

“While God’s Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding His pre-existence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God” (*RH*, April 5, 1906; *Ev* 615).

The terms “father” and “son” apply to persons, often in a figurative way, to denote relationship, feature or traits, characteristics, nature. Thence the other terms as “sons of thunder,” “son of consolation,” etc. The characteristic of Eternal Father and Eternal Son can be applied to Christ as well, because He is God from eternity, without beginning or end as His Father, and the Creator of the universe (Heb 1:2).

Let us expand some additional concepts. The personification or demonization of “plague” and even “death” as gods-demons by the Canaanites, had nothing to do with the true God of Israel. Pandemics and death cannot praise Him (Isa 38:18). On the other hand, the personification of “wisdom” could not honor a demon-god, the devil himself to put it plainly. And the fact that the verse of Solomon says that the Eternal possessed the wisdom, and that it was begotten, speaks of two persons like in other passages of David and in the vision of Zechariah. “The Eternal told to my Lord” (Ps 110:1), “The Eternal said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebukes thee...’” (Zech 3:2).

Reference to the “wisdom” that is born (personifies, names, establishes) may include more than the Eternal Son being first in importance because He is the divinely appointed agent of creation (Col 1:16; Heb 1:2) and therefore has preeminence among the children who were created in the image of God. It may also refer to the divine determination to reveal that wisdom to the world in the incarnation and atoning death of His Son to save this creation and safeguard the rest of the universe (Col 1:20). This “wisdom,” Paul will say, was to remain hidden from ancient times until it was revealed with the appearance of sin (Eph 3:9-11). This wisdom is introduced as having been begotten before the creation of the world and the universe, which helps us to understand the reason why the apostles also referred to the death of Christ as having been fulfilled in God’s designs before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4-5; Rev 13:8; 17:8). So too will E. G. White declare that “from everlasting He [Christ] was the mediator of the covenant” (*RH* April 5, 1906; Heb 13:20).

So, where is the text that says that there was once a time in eternity when the second person of the Deity had not existed as a person separated from the Father? Nowhere. On the contrary, as we have already seen, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy abound in references to the Eternity not only of the Father, but also of the Son, as two distinct persons.

### **Differences in the same terminology when applied to Christ**

Now, our antitrinitarian friends gather many quotes from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy containing terms that can refer to the Son or also to us, who are “sons to adoption,” as Paul will say in Rom 8. But they do not seem to realize that while God gave us the Son as a model, there is always a very big difference between Him and us. He is our elder brother, yes, but beware, let us not make Him too equal to us, because while He came in the likeness of flesh of sin and was tempted in everything like us, He was without sin. He taught us to pray to God by saying, ‘Our Father in heaven’ (Matt 6:9), because I need to remember that God is not only mine, but also the God of the brother or neighbor with whom I may have problems. However, Jesus Himself never prayed “our Father,” but “my Father.” In John 20:17 He made a clear difference when He said: “I am ascending to my Father and your Father” (John 20:17). His identity with the Father was unique.

Jesus came to share His divine power with us so that we may also participate “in the divine nature” which worked in Him to overcome sin, so that we too may overcome, even with our propensity to evil, “the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 2:4). And though the Spirit was given to Christ without limit because His mission on earth required it (John 3:34; Col 1:19), and though the Father does not arbitrarily restrict His Spirit to those who are adopted as children through His Son, (for He wants to share with us “all His fullness”), only in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Deity bodily (Col 2.9).

We become God’s ‘children’ when we receive the capacity to think and make decisions under the influence of the Holy Ghost, who begets a new life in us and makes us children of God (John 3). But Jesus was called “Son of God” because He was begotten by the Holy Spirit in our human flesh (Luke 1:35), without human intervention. We are also called children of God by baptism (John 3:5), but no dove descends upon any of us with the voice of God saying, “This is my Beloved Son...” (Matt 3:17). Jesus was called “Son of God with power,” when God raised Him from the dead (Rom 1:4). Thus we too will be called “children of God, being children of the Resurrection” (Luke 20:36).

We could continue comparing and making differences between Jesus and us. But these examples are enough to require us to be cautious so as not to use the similarities in figures, terms, and deeds in a manner that blurs the Divinity and Eternity of the Son of God.

### **The incarnation of the Word**

Our antitrinitarian friends believe that the *Logos*, that is, the *Word*, like the *Wisdom*, come from God

the Father, and for that reason only the Son would be eternal. Some go so far as to translate John 1:1 as “God was the Word,” while all other modern versions translate “the Word was God,” and as such was also understood by the Spirit of Prophecy. But this doesn’t change anything. God was in the Word, and the Word was consequently God. In the same chapter we are told that “the Word became flesh” (v. 14). This is the same as to say that God was incarnated in humanity in the person of His Son, in such a way that He should be called Emanuel, “God with us.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that the Word in John 1 is a reference to an inferior god, like some Arians believed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. They also highlight the fact that God called other men “gods” or “sons of God” in ancient times (John 10:34; Ps 82:6; Exod 4:15-16,22-23; 7:1; 21:6: *’elohim*: judges, etc.). But we have already considered some differences between Jesus as Son of God, and we as sons of God “to adoption” (Rom 8). Let us deal now with some additional differences.

“The Logos (Word) of God came [*egéneto*] (John 10:35) to kings (1 Sam 10:6,10), prophets (2 Sam 7:4-5 [LXX: *egéneto*]; 1 Kgs 13:20 [*egéneto*]; 16:1 [LXX: *egéneto*]; 17:2,8 [LXX: *egéneto*]; 18:1 [LXX: *egéneto*], etc.), and prophet priests (Eze 1:3 [LXX: *egéneto logos*]; also in 6:1; 7:1; 11:14, etc), The people were to hear their messages as coming from God, as if God was speaking through them, because God promised to be in the mouth of His messengers (Exod 4:12,15-16). “as though God were pleading through us” (2 Cor 5:20). But the Word didn’t come to Jesus. He “was the Word” (John 1:1), because even if He interacted with His Father and the Holy Spirit in a triple dependency, He was the very Word incarnated. Those who follow Him must remain in His Word (John 5:24; 8:31).

We were created in the image of God, according to His likeness (Gen 1:26-27). But Jesus was “the express image” of God (Heb 1:3; see Col 1:15). He is, as E. G. White well captured it, the “Eternal Son” of the “Eternal Father,” one with God but a different person bound in character and purposes from all eternity.

### **Antitrinitarian theological damage**

Some might ask, what exactly is the problem in believing in a Deity of one or two persons, rather than three persons? But, in order to please antitrinitarians, should we require baptismal candidates to be baptized in the name of their choice? Should we shorten the Trinitarian formula found in Matt 28 to satisfy the most hypersensitive antitrinitarians?

1) First of all, we must say that *error* will always bring its negative aftermath no matter how easy or difficult it may be for some to see it or anticipate it. The truth that God has entrusted to us regarding the Trinity is integrated into a chain of truths where no links can be set aside without harmful consequences (to paraphrase the Spirit of Prophecy). That truth is “compact,” and any attempt to break the continuity of this doctrine will cause damage that will sooner or later come to light even if in the most unexpected way.

2) The refusal of some to use the Trinitarian formula when performing baptisms is an open assault on the mission of the church. Since that formula was given by the Lord and confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy, its rejection also affects the biblical doctrine of the gifts that God put in His church. This cannot be circumvented by choosing unilateral statements of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. We have to accept all the inspired counsel of God.

3) According to the book of Acts, did the apostles baptize only in the name of Jesus? I’m not so sure they did. The apostles emphasized the name of Jesus in baptism because He was the only member of the Godhead that was questioned in their day. Present truth for them was to raise “Jesus Christ, and Him

crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). The gospel was, above all, the gospel of Christ. And this doesn’t mean that the apostles had eliminated the Trinitarian formula of Matt 28, because it was a command of the Lord.

The people in the first century had no problem in accepting God as Father. But the Son was a human being, and the story of Jesus had to be told to them. Acts 19:1-6 records the case of certain disciples who had been baptized by John the Baptist. The apostles explained to them that the Messiah announced by John had already come. After this, they were baptized in the name of Jesus, who they now came to know.

Indeed, it was not a question of saying that they should be baptized in the name of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and E. G. White. Nor was it right to baptize in the name of angel Gabriel. It had to be one just like the Father and the Holy Spirit. The point under discussion was the person of Christ whom the Holy Spirit had come to confirm as being the Promised Messiah, someone who was on the same level as the Deity. Therefore baptism in the name of the Son involved the other two persons of the Godhead (John 10:30; 14:9,23,26, etc). But the baptism proposed by some today in the name of Jesus only, or only in the name of the Father, excluding “the third person of the Deity,” implies a rejection of one or two persons of the Deity. And this is a denial of a biblical truth, a rejection of the Trinity doctrine.

4) Any attempt to reduce the eternal attribute of the Son of God as equal with the Father, whether openly or covertly, lowers the character of God, the doctrine of atonement, the truth about justification by faith, the heavenly priesthood of Christ, and in essence, the whole compact system of faith that God bequeathed to us.

*a) If the Son is not equal to God, we could not see the righteousness of God in the vicarious death of Christ (Rom 3:21-26).* In the case that Jesus would have been literally “born” of God before His incarnation, as proposed now by some antitrinitarians, or even created as Arians understood it in the second century, the atonement of a literal begotten or created son would reveal the injustice of the Father, not His righteousness.

Let us state it plainly. From a criminal point of view, the death of a righteous for an unrighteous is unacceptable. Regardless of the good will of an innocent person to give his life for a guilty person, this exchange could not be accepted by a righteous judge without being blamed for allowing such an unrighteous sacrifice. In the case of God as the Judge of the universe, (if it was necessary that someone pay for the fault of others), many could ask why in that case the Father would not come to suffer Himself? For this reason, the Son had to be God at the same level of the Father, otherwise we could see in the cross only the righteousness of the son, not the righteousness of the Father who allowed such a crime to be perpetrated against His innocent son. Might the creatures of the universe rightfully question the love of the Father, fearing that He could even make other creatures likewise pay for the faults of others?

The plan of God for the redemption of humanity must bring security and everlasting peace to all the universe (Col 1:20), so that no doubt remains of His love and righteousness for all eternity. For this reason, the Son had to be God at the same level as the Father. The decision of the Son to give His life for a lost world could be acceptable only on an equal level with God. Again, the decision of offering the life of the Son in sacrifice for sin, determined in the Trinitarian councils, was to be an act in which the whole universe could see “the righteousness of God” (John 3:21ff), not simply the righteousness of the Son or of any other created being who would agree to die for the sinners. In the cross of Christ the whole universe should see the unrighteousness of sin, and the righteousness of God for adopting Himself, in the second person of the Godhead, the human nature to die for the sinners (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Unless God Himself came to pay for our human offenses, God could be blamed for allowing the sacrifice of an innocent created being to save criminal people. It is different if we see in the voluntary sacrifice of the Son, the commitment of the Father and the Holy Spirit, the involvement of the three persons of the Deity.

“The throne of God must not bear one stain of crime, one taint of sin. In the councils of heaven, before the world was created, the Father and the Son covenanted together that if man proved disloyal to God, Christ, *one with the Father*, would take the place of the transgressor, and suffer the penalty of justice that must fall upon him” (6 *SDABC* 1070).

b) *No person created or born or derived from the Father could atone for sin.* For this reason God could not accept Abraham’s sacrifice of his son Isaac (Gen 22). Nor could any innocent human being that God made of mud, not even a pure angel could offer his life for the lost race, for in that case we would have seen the righteousness of a man or of an angel, not the righteousness of God.

“The power of an angel could not make an atonement for our sins. The angelic nature united to the human could not be as costly, as elevated, as the law of God. It was the Son of God alone who could present an acceptable sacrifice. God himself became man, and bore all the wrath that sin had provoked. This problem, How could God be just and yet the justifier of sinners? baffled all finite intelligence. *A divine person alone could mediate between God and man*” (*YI* 08-31-87, 8).

“No man of earth or angel of heaven could have paid the penalty for sin. Jesus was the only one who could save rebellious man. In Him divinity and humanity were combined, and this was what gave efficiency to the offering on Calvary’s cross” (1 *SM* 322).

“Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God” (*ST* 12-30-89, 4)

“The fallen race could be restored only through the merit of Him who was equal with God” (*The Messenger* 04-26-93, 05). “It was the Saviour’s full and free acceptance of the penalty that made His sacrifice wholly acceptable in every point” (*ST* 08-22-00, 8).

“The angels prostrated themselves at the feet of their Commander and offered to become a sacrifice for man. But an angel’s life could not pay the debt; only He who created man had power to redeem him” (*PP* 64).

“What must sin be, if no finite being could make atonement? What must its curse be if Deity alone could exhaust it? The cross of Christ testifies to every man that the penalty of sin is death (*Letter* 23, 1873, in *OHC* 44).

And what the Apostle Paul tells us in Philip 2:6-11 happened two thousand years ago.

c) *God’s great plan for man’s redemption is affected.*

“If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them. [1 Cor 2:15 quoted]. None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man’s redemption” (*GC* 524; already in the *GC1888*).

This is as true in reference to the Deity of the Son before those who openly reject it, as it is to those who claim that he is a “god” in some inferior way. It is precisely in theological circles that many reject the doctrine of the vicarious atonement as an horrendous and aberrant act, as if to satisfy the Father, His Son had to die in a bloody way. This was a pagan view, but unacceptable to human reason, unless we first comprehend and accept the divine nature of Jesus.

Let us agree that what happened on the cross was something embarrassing and outrageous. But thanks be to God because it took place! For on the cross, we see God Himself taking our place, and the only thing we can do is to marvel at such a great love! We can see there the revelation of the immeasurable

divine wisdom which remained hidden from immemorial times. And we also understand the righteousness of God in giving sin its deserved payment.

The doctrine of Christ's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary would also be damaged if the Son is seen as being literally begotten or born at some point in eternity, because His blood that He offers in the sinner's behalf in the temple above, would not reflect honor on the Father who would be seen as having unjustly delivered His Son for us. Such a transaction would be considered an unfair act if the Son had not been God in every sense of the Word. Only someone who was equal to God and equal to man could mediate between both, and understand both sides of the contest. And that intercession of the Son before the Father in the heavenly sanctuary would have no relevance unless the Holy Ghost mediated to bring communion with the creatures who cry out to God for deliverance and forgiveness of sins (see Rev 6:9-10). [For more details see A. R. Treiyer, *The Glorious Fulfillments of the Sanctuary*, lesson 1].

### **Final appeal**

Let me appeal to all those who are confused on these wonderful issues, to follow the light that God has given to our people, God's last remnant to warn the world of the heavenly judgment that has already begun (Rev 14:7). I would also beseech my discomfited fellow believers to lay down your pride, for your own sake and for the sake of others. Don't allow the devil to grow the rebellious seed within you that he has placed in all human hearts. Accept all the testimony of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Don't be tied to isolated passages without taking into account all the divine testimony that is clear enough, even though revealed through "earthen vessels."

Our security is to march together as a people. We were warned not to follow a different course than the *General Conference Congress* adopts through its representatives around the world. In the decisions made by our church, although weak and imperfect for being composed of human beings, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are to be taken into account. Do not be so quick to assume that those who have studied the subject of the Trinity before you have not weighed extensively both sources of authority that come from God and which, in themselves, constitute the same source, the divine revelation given through His servants the prophets.

Among the many examples found of rebellious people in the history of our church, let me mention the case of McCullagh, who was an evangelist among us yet rejected the Spirit of Prophecy. He attacked E. G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church on several points, including the atonement and the sanctuary, diet, etc. Two years later he requested to return to the ministry and confessed that he had harbored a contentious attitude during that time. He was afraid that E. G. White could not forgive him for offending her so much. But she said that she was willing to forgive him, though he had to take an attitude of rebuilding what he had torn down, confessing his fault in public. He did so, but about five years later, he left the ministry and the church, unleashing his own feelings of bitterness that he had held before.

E. G. White warned us of him and others like him: "I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable... Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe" (Arthur White, *Ellen G. White. The Australian Years* (1891-1900), chap 23, 286. See *SDABC*, 1114, on Num 16:1-50).

Dear fellow believers: Do not allow others to steal your affection for our people and the truth we profess. They may come to you with subtleties that lead to nothing good, for they bring confusion to incautious people, and incite you to rise up proudly against your brothers and sisters who the Lord has called to proclaim the truth that He has revealed for this solemn time in which we live.