

Brother Vance Farrell:

I want to write this letter to thank you for the tracts that you have sent to me. In each one I find the strongest evidence in support of the subject being considered. Of special interest to me were the tracts entitled "In Christ We Conquer". The truth on the subject of the nature of Christ in the incarnation has been little spoken of since I have been a member of the church ("1955").

In 1976 I received a copy of "Documents From The Palmdale Conference on Righteousness by Faith". As I read this book I began to see that the nature of Christ in the incarnation was being presented in a different way than I had been taught at first. I was reading quotations from sources that I couldn't begin to double check. I found that I could obtain these reference books from Leaves of Autumn Books in Arizona and began to purchase as many as I could afford. As I studied I began to see that many of the views of the pioneers had been altered. Today we are seeing the results of this altering. In the attempt to find favor with the Evangelical Churches and to make our doctrines more appealing to them, we have woven a web of error about ourselves that we can hardly free ourselves of.

In 1896 Ellen White wrote: "If those who claimed to have a living experience in the things of God had done their appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would have been warned ere this (1896), and the Lord Jesus would have come in power and great glory." (R & H, Oct. 6, 1896) If the Lord could have come before 1896 then it stands to reason that the faith and/or doctrine that they believed was the truth. In 1888 God had given to the church a "most precious message". TM pg. 91, 92. "It is the third angels message" (IBID) "This message was to bring to the world the uplifted Savior." (IBID)

Knowing all of this, it would appear, that what I need to do is to go back and find out what the pioneers of our church believed and bring myself up to the time of the message of Jones and Waggoner, and then take that final step up onto the platform of righteousness by faith and hold on 'til Jesus comes. This I determined to do. In 1872 the first comprehensive "Declaration" of Seventh-Day Adventists "Fundamental Principles" ever attempted was in form of a 14-page leaflet titled "Fundamental Principles of Seventh Day Adventists." It was number five of the "Words of Truth Series" published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association. I managed to obtain a copy of this leaflet and began my study. About the same time, I got a copy of a study that an Ohio Conference pastor had made, on the changes made in the Fundamental Beliefs over the years. One of the most significant changes that I noticed was in the changes made with regard to our understanding of the nature of God.

I wondered why they would need to be changed? How many more changes will need to be made before we have them "right"? Or, were they "right" to begin with?

"When the time passed in 1844, there were none who believed the truth as we now hold it. All believed the prophecies that brought us to that time. Then began a greater searching of the Bible than had ever been, probably, at any time since the days of the apostles. They went over and over the old arguments concerning the prophecies that pointed to 1844, and after most thorough examination they could see no other conclusion than that the prophetic periods terminated at that time. As they studied, they began to see one link of truth after another; and as these truths unfolded to the pioneers,--I have reference to such men as Elders James White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and J. H. Waggoner,--They did not dare present that truth to the people until they had made it a special subject of prayer and the spirit of prophecy had set its seal to it." (Haskell, R & H, Oct. 27, 1904)

"That was the way the Foundation was laid, step by step, until they found they had a system of truth, and understood the third angels message as it has been brought to us. At the present time there is but little realizing sense of this, and, in fact, it seems to me that we have been drifting away from the old landmarks, and are in such a condition that when the test comes, as it surely will, many will be shaken out." (IBID)

At this point I was absolutely certain that I could trust the views of the men mentioned and began to search. I obtained a copy of the book "The Atonement" 1872 edition by J. H. Waggoner. Two chapters were of especial interest to me. Chapter III "Death of Christ Vicarious The Son of God Died" -- and Chapter IV "Coctrine of the Trinity Subversive of the Atonement". I am enclosing with this letter Xerox copies of these two chapters for you to read. I found these words of James White in the Day Star articles interesting also: "The way spiritualizers this way have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural trinitarian creed, viz, that Jesus Christ is eternal God, though they have not one passage to support it, while we have plain scripture testimony in abundance that He is the Son of the eternal God." (The Day Star, Jan. 24, 1846)

Being of Methodist background and believing in the Trinity as I did, these were serious charges and I had to know the truth. Could the doctrine of the trinity be subjected to the test "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."? Isaiah 8:20.

THE LAW

Exodus 20:2,3 I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

I ask myself, "If the trinity is true then why doesn't it say 'We are the Lords your Gods, Thou shalt not have any other gods before us?'"

THE TESTIMONY

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear O Israel: "the Lord our God is one Lord."

I ask myself, "why doesn't it say 'the Lords our Gods are three Lords?'"

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord: that is my name and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

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

1 Coriinthians 8:4,5,6 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by Him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge.

Ephesians 4:6 One God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

I must concede that to support the doctrine of the trinity I find myself out of harmony with these texts. I must therefore agree with James White, Uriah Smith, J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, Haskell and many other pioneers in their doctrine of one God.

One question still bothered me. In John chapter 1 verse 1, it says "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the Word was God." If there is only one true God then how is Jesus God also? Is there two Gods co-equal? How can this be in harmony with the texts already mentioned? In the book "Story of Redemption" by Ellen White I began to find my answer. "The great creator assembled the heavenly host, that He might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon His Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them.

The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host." (S R pg. 13) These same words are found in Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 1 pg 17. Would this agree with what the Bible teaches? I continued to search.

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.

Acts 2:33 Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, etc.

Acts 5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand, etc. . .

John 14:28 (last part) "for my Father is greater than I"

John 13:16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

John 10:29 My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, etc.

1 Corinthians 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him (Christ) then shall the son be subject unto him (The Father) that put all things under him (Christ) that God (The Father) may be all in all.

I was beginning to form a picture in my mind such as Ellen White had described and had obviously seen in vision. The Heavenly Father has a throne in Heaven that He sits on. Christ, the Son sits on the throne with the Father. The Father exalts the Son to be equal with himself. The Son receives the authority to command angels and to receive their adoration. Lucifer is jealous of the Son and murmurs against the Father exalting the Son and begins to question the Father's justice. As I continued to study the relationship between the Father and the Son, many other interesting truths were added to the picture.

"For unto which of the angels said He at any time, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee'? And again, 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?'" Hebrews 1:1-5

"God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son." V 8, pg. 269

"Our great Exemplar was exalted to be equal with God. He was high commander in heaven. All the Holy angels delighted to bow before Him. And again, when He bringeth in the First Begotten into the world, He saith, 'and let all the angels of God worship Him.'" Vol. 2, pg 426

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one gave his only begotten Son, tore from his bosom, Him who was made in the express image of his person, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (R & H, July 9, 1895)

"God Himself has established the order of heaven, etc. . . .

"The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence he might set forth the true position of his Son, and show the relation he sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the Eternal, self existant one encircled both," etc. . . . "Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ the only begotten of God, could fully enter into his purposes, and to him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of his will. The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of Heaven; and to him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due." PP, pg 36.

"The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in his work of beneficence. He had an associate -- a co-worker who could appreciate his purposes, and could share his joy in giving happiness to created beings. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." John 1:1, 2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father -- one in nature, in character, in purpose, the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2. And the Son of God declares concerning himself "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, etc. . . . when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him as one brought up with him and I was daily his delight rejoicing always before him. PP, pg 34.

There we have it, the story of the relationship of the Father and the Son as far back as scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy can take us. Christ, the Son of God, torn from His bosom, long before creation began, growing up with the Father, working the Father's will in the creation of all things. Exalted as equal with the Father having been given all things including life. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John 5:26. "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived" DA, pg 530. Finally, appointed by the Father to the office of Mediator. Signs of the Times, April 26, 1899.

The Holy Spirit has been set forth as the "Third Person of the Godhead" and so we must also test this assertion to "The Law and to the Testimony." In my search for evidence to this assertion, I found myself unable to find supporting texts. I purchased a Strong's concordance in the hope that I could find the necessary texts. To my dismay I was unable to find a single text. I did learn some things though. Third Person is nowhere in the Scriptures to be found. Godhead is found in three texts; Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20, and Colossians 2:9. In each text the word Godhead refers to the Heavenly Father only. I then looked for references to the words Holy Spirit, Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, etc. I found over two hundred texts to these references. The interesting things about this was that the Hebrew and Greek words from which Spirit is translated did not convey the idea of a person. NEH-PHESH = breath or principle of life. N'DEEVAH = soul in one text Job 30:15. N'SHAMAH = soul in one text, Isaiah 57:16. PSUCHE = soul, life, mind, or heart, usually means breath. RUAHH means breath or spirit of life. PHANTASMA means ghost. PNEUMA means breath or principle of life.

As examples of how these are used, I cite Genesis 1:2 "Spirit of God" and Psalms 33:6 says, "breath of his mouth." John 3:5-8 compares the Spirit with the wind. John 20:21, 22 Jesus breaths on the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost." In 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18, says, "the Lord is that Spirit," and "by the Lord, the Spirit." I then turned to the testimony of Ellen White. I read everything that I could find on the subject and came away somewhat confused because I found statements that seemed to conflict with each other and so I determined to accept those statements that agree with the Bible and to leave the conflicting statements to be answered as I continue to study.

One thing has been impressed upon my mind as I have studied. Since the death of the pioneers of the church, an effort to call in question their faith has been made. They were called Arians and their books have been taken off the shelves and out of print. For instance you can't buy "The Atonement" by J. H. Waggoner, you can't buy "Bible Readings For the Home Circle" (the one the pioneers wrote), you can't buy "Daniel and Revelation" by Uriah Smith (as he wrote it). Why? Is it because these books as they came from the pens of our pioneer authors are an embarrassment to those who have chosen to bring in doctrines contrary to them? The Bible says: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah 58:12. ". . . That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. God has certainly blessed the work of Leaves of Autumn in bringing back to print many of the books written by our early pioneers.

James White and Uriah Smith held a Biblical Institute at Oakland, California in April 1-17, 1877. A synopsis of the lectures was printed. On page 184 we find these words:

"2. In what way is God everywhere present?

ANSWER: By his representative, his Holy Spirit.
Psalms 139:7

3. What is the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER: Any attempt to answer this question is venturing upon holy ground. It is something which is common to the Father and the Son: the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. It is something to which the expressions, "poured out" "shed abroad" "descended", etc. are applied. It was breathed by Christ upon his disciples. John 20:22. It was an agent in the creation of the world. Genesis 1:2. But it would be useless to try to enumerate all the methods and varieties of its manifestations. In a word it may, perhaps, best be described as a mysterious influence emanating from the Father and the Son, their representative and the medium of their power."

Mattie Hamilton Welsh, in her book, published after her husband's death in 1905, (George S. Welsh) on page 221 says:

"10. What is the fruit of the Spirit?

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Galatians 5:22,23."

"Receive ye the Holy Spirit." The imparting of the Holy Spirit by the breath of Christ is proof that the Spirit is not a corporeal person as many people are wont to assert. The following expression in "The Desire of Ages," page 805, is to the point: "The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The imparting of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ."

In 1872, J. H. Waggoner writes in his book "The Atonement" Chapter IV, "The Trinity Is Subversive of the Atonement." All of these statements were made in the full light of day and published openly and circulated widely. I have never read anything from the pen of Ellen White in criticism of any of these statements or ideas. Yet when J. H. Kellogg began to proclaim his ideas that were finally printed in the book "Living Temple", Ellen White strongly criticized him. You can read all about that in "Battle Creek Letters". The same with A. F. Ballanger. The same with Canright. The same with

those who were preaching in the "Holy Flesh movement." If those who denied the Trinity were wrong, why didn't Ellen White warn them about it, as well? Considering all the evidence from the Scriptures as well as all the evidence from the Spirit of Prophecy, I must conclude, that she was in harmony with their views.

Brother George Vandeman presents a study on the 1260 days prophecy of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 representing the Church as a train entering a tunnel. He asks the question, "When the train comes out of the tunnel at the other side of the mountain, will it be the same? Obviously the answer is yes. In thinking about this, I wondered, if the Seventh Day Adventist Church is the one that came out of the tunnel at the end of the 1260 years of Papal supremacy (1798), and the pioneers of our church were not trinitarians, what were the believers like that went into the tunnel?"

In Daniel 7 we see the description of the horn power that subdues three of the other 10 horns. Verse 24. He speaks great words against the most high and should wear out the saints of the Most High and think to change times and laws. Verse 25. Seventh Day Adventists believe that this describes the Papacy. Since there was a controversy between the horns, what was the controversy? In studying church history, I find the main point of controversy was the nature of God.

At first the controversy centered on the preexistent nature of Christ. "Whether the Son of God, therefore, is of the same substance or only of like substance, with the Father, was the question in dispute." The Two Republics by A. T. Jones 1891 edition, page 334.

"The same question which had been so long discussed as to the nature of Christ, was up now in regard to the nature of the Holy Spirit. Now the question was whether the Holy Spirit is "Homousian" with the Father and the Son. The Macedonians held that it is not. The council decided that it is." (IBID, pg. 395).

As the controversy continued, the Catholic church added error to error. At first it was one God in three persons, next the immaculate conception and the exaltation of Mary and so on. While the Arians held to the idea of One God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ.

As I studied this question I read a book "Arius the Libyan" by Nathan Kuhn, which shed much light on the nature of the controversy and participants. A stigma of error was cast upon Arius and his followers. All of the views of Arius that he had written were destroyed. The only story of Arius that one could read was one concocted by his enemies. In Foxe's "Book of Martyrs", some of these stories are related. The lines were drawn and the controversy continued.

So when the Bishop of Rome was given the rule of the kingdom it is interesting that the three kingdoms which were conquered by the armies of Belisarius were the three Arian kingdoms.

Such was the position of affairs when, in 533, Justinian entered upon his Vandal and Gothic wars. Wishing to secure the influence of the pope and the Catholic party, he issued that memorable decree which was to constitute the pope the head of all the churches and from the carrying out of which in 538, the period of papal supremacy, is to be dated. And whoever will read the history of the African campaign, 533-4 and the Italian campaign 534-8, will notice that the Catholics everywhere hailed as deliverers the army of Belisarius, the general of Justinian.

The testimony of D'Aubigne (Reformation Book 1, Chapter 1) also throws light upon the undercurrents which gave shape to outward movements in these eventful times. He says: Princes whom these stormy times often shook upon their thrones, offered their protection if Rome would in its turn support them. They conceded to her the spiritual authority, provided she would make a return in secular power. They were lavish of the souls of men in the hope that she would aid them against their enemies. The power of the hierarchy, which was ascending, and the imperial power, which was declining, leaned thus one upon the other and by this alliance accelerated their twofold destiny. Rome could not lose by it. An edict of Theodosius II and of Valentinian III proclaimed the Bishop of Rome "rector of the whole church". Justinian published a similar decree.

"But no decree of this nature could be carried into effect until the Arian Horns, which stood in its way, were plucked up. The Vandals fell before the victorious arms of Belisarius in 534; and the Goths, retiring, left him in undisputed possession of Rome in 538." Gibbons Rome, chapter 41, quoted in Daniel and Revelation, U. Smith, 1882 edition, pages 174-175.

Did the Arians disappear, that is, just go away? No. "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent." Revelation 12:14.

"Suffice it to say that here we are again carried back to the time when Satan became fully aware that he had utterly failed in all his attempts against the Lord of Glory in his earthly mission; and seeing this he turned with tenfold fury, as already noticed, upon the church which Christ established. Then we have again brought to view the church in her wilderness state, a time, times and a half, 1260 years, verse 6, the flood of persecution which the devil cast out after the church through the medium of the papacy, etc. . . ." IBID, page 674.

Those who continued to oppose the papacy, continued, in small companies, to practice their faith in its simplicity as it had once been delivered to the saints. They were a constant irritation to the papacy and were the brunt of persecution through the 1260 year period. At the end of this time, God called out a pure church, gain to stand for the truth during the time of the investigative judgement, that is, after October 22, 1844. What kind of doctrines did this church espouse? The fundamental beliefs of Seventh Day Adventists of 1872 is their statement and their understanding of these beliefs, they are articulated in the writings of their chief proponents, give us insight. We would expect, then, that just as those who were given by God a wilderness hide-a-way did not hold to the doctrine of the trinity, that those who appeared after that hiding time should likewise deny that doctrine. And so it was.

Just as in former times when those who opposed God's true followers cast aspersions on them (they were calling them Heretics and accusing them saying that they didn't believe in the Holy Spirit and that they were teaching that Christ was a created being) so now do men make similar accusations against those who hold to the same beliefs.

"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." (R & H, December 3, 1908) Are we to believe that the pioneers of our church, being Arians, were idolaters, believing in a false concept of God? I don't think so. But if they didn't have a false concept of God, then where does that leave those who have a trinitarian view now?

"We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teachings in our past history." LS, page 194.

"Satan has laid his plans to undermine our faith in the history of the cause and work of God. Satan is working with men in prominent positions to sweep away the foundations of our faith. Shall we allow this to be done brethren?" (R & H, November 19, 1903)

"The warning has come. Nothing is to be allowed to come in that will disturb the foundation of the faith upon which we have been building ever since the message came in 1842, 1843, and 1844." (R & H, April 14, 1903)

"The old truths given us at the beginning are to be heralded far and near. The lapse of time has not lessened their value. It is the constant effort of the enemy to remove these truths from their setting, and to put in their place spurious theories." (R & H, August 20, 1903)

We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for the truth, who laid the foundation of our work. Not long ago I took up a copy of the Bible Echo. As I looked it through, I saw an article by Elder Haskell and one by Elder Corliss. As I laid the paper down, I said: 'These articles must be reproduced. There is truth and power in them.' Men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Let the truths that are the foundation of our faith be kept before the people. Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established (1842-1869). The enemy will bring in false theories such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary." (R & H, May 25, 1905)

The light that the pioneers of our church had, has not gone out. The problem is that we have not recognized the light or have deliberately chosen darkness. The discoveries that I have made with regard to this subject, I have thus far shared with a few close friends of mine. I have no burden to force my views on anyone but only to share them with those who are seeking for truth. Some of these friends of mine have studied the subject also and with the same conclusions. Their study has broadened my knowledge and my study has broadened theirs and we will continue to do as we have done. This essay is by no means comprehensive, as there is much more that could be written here. It is my hope that the reader will only use this as a spring board to study the subject himself. Acceptance or rejection will not affect our relationship at all because I realize that we all do not see in the same line. If plain scriptural evidence can be brought forward to discredit anything that I have written, I would greatly appreciate knowing of it.

Anxiously awaiting the return of
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
I remain:

R. K. Sutton