

Interview with Devin the Non-Trinitarian

3/2/2019

So Devin, I read your non-trinitarian confession letter, and I must say I am in shock...

Me too...still. But I am also happy and excited to finally see the truth on this most profoundly important subject. I am truly grateful for this.

Well, if you will forgive me saying so, I am not. In fact, I feel a heavy sense of grief about your “conversion”!

Most understandable. That is the way I felt for my wife’s non-trinitarian friends back when they “refused the light” I was offering back in 2015.

Anyway...I thought I would take the challenge you gave in your letter and begin by “thoroughly questioning you,” as you said to do. I don’t know just how thorough I will be, but I do have some weighty questions.

I really appreciate your concern and care. Fire when ready.

Ok, so what happened? How...why...did a switch flip in your mind? You touched on this in your letter, but I think there is much more to the story.

Yes, there is more. Practically speaking, two things provided context for the change. The first: I was scheduled to preach my first sermon at the main SDA church in Iceland on Feb 9, and the Lord indicated that I was to preach on the topic of the Two Witnesses (of Rev 11:3). The second: For seemingly unrelated reasons, I was to give a Bible-study to a group on the topic of the Second Fundamental Belief of SDA Adventism Friday evening before preaching the sermon.

As you can imagine, I put a lot of study into these topics in the preceding weeks. It was in this study that my mind began to open to some things that it had previously been closed to.

As I studied to present the Trinity from Scripture, I was struck by how sparse the direct support for it was in the Bible, considering how important such a topic must be (the personality of God is one of the pillars of Seventh-day Adventist faith, see {MR760 9.5}). The Bible never actually states that there are three members of the Godhead who *are* One. Nowhere does it state that there is one God who manifests as or is composed of three individual Members. 1 Jn 5:7 comes the closest by saying the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost “agree” in one, but then this phrase is of very doubtful canonicity as even the SDA Bible commentary has noted. The Trinity must be inferred by those reading Biblical listings of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (there are only five such lists in the Bible, all in the NT) and other indefinite inspired indications. To “prove” the Trinity beliefs of SDAs I at least needed texts proving that the Holy Spirit was a distinct Being and a member of the Godhead in His own right, like the Father and Jesus. I could only find a handful of verses I thought were hinting at this. *Strange*, I thought, *God generally provides emphasis and clarity of a truth by repeating it in Scripture to the degree that specific truth is important.* The topic of the distinct personality of a Member of the Godhead seemed pretty important to me, so I was disturbed to see how the Bible rarely, if ever, makes the Holy Spirit’s individuality explicit.

But I collected the verses Trinitarians usually collect and felt satisfied as usual. Then I felt impressed that in order to effectively counter error, I needed to review what serious SDA non-trinitarians were really saying.

I fired up YouTube and, having heard that Nader Mansour was a thought-leader in the SDA non-trinitarian movement, I plugged in his name and began watching one of the first videos that popped up in the results. Now mind you that I began watching this video merely to review the poor logic, faulty reasoning, shortsighted perspectives, and information gaps promulgated by non-trinitarians. The sermon I watched was entitled “Proving the Trinity”¹ and its purpose was to explain the Bible texts Trinitarians commonly use to try to prove their doctrine.

This video was a major eye-opener for me. I did not get from the sermon what I expected. By the time I was finished watching, I was deeply impressed that Mansour’s reasoning appeared Biblical and sound – much more so than mine was on the topic. I didn’t really know what to make of it at the time. All I could think was, *Devin, what if you are wrong? But this can’t be...*

I went forth to my Friday night Bible study to present what I had planned despite feeling strangely conflicted. The next morning, I gave my talk on the topic of the Two Witnesses. The sermon was built on the premise that the Bible, outside of the book of Revelation, interprets the two witnesses to be the minimal basis for truth-establishment. There are many manifestations of the two-witnesses principle: Old and New Testaments, two tables of stone for the Commandments, even male and female and a two-part “whole duty of man” along with many others. Before preaching, I had given some thought to what the deepest manifestation of the two-witnesses principle might be. I had planned to say the *deepest* manifestation is 1) God and 2) His created kingdom. But on Sabbath morning, I felt a strong impression not to say this...that it was not true. I spent the rest of the day wondering why I had only been able to say that 1) God and 2) His created kingdom is a *deep* manifestation.

What could be a deeper example of two witnesses? The answer was obvious, but I did not believe it: A Godhead manifested by two divine Beings and Their spirit, not three divine Beings. Questions began to seriously haunt my mind: Why are “two or three” enough to establish God’s Word (2 Cor 13:1)? Why not three *at minimum* based on the Three Members of the Godhead? These questions proved the epicenter of the turning point for me. They pressed me to consider seriously for the first time the possibility that non-trinitarians may be right after all. I began to read.

Astrid linked me to a rather lengthy PDF Mansour had produced entitled “Putting the Pieces Together”.² As I finished reading it early the following week, I thought, *this document has explained the major Spirit of Prophecy quote objections...to my satisfaction!* Then were truly thrown open the floodgates of personal bias which had held back what I now see to be an overwhelming reservoir of evidence supporting the non-trinitarian perspective. I began to truly consider God differently for myself! And I can tell you even my initial views of the Father and Son and their spirit were to me beautiful, Biblical and even self-evident...more so than the tritheistic views of God I had always suffered from before.

Why do you say you “suffered from” tritheistic views before? What exactly was your view of the Godhead or Trinity before, and what have you seen to be problematic with that view (aside from how you see it as Biblically unsupportable)?

Lack of Biblical supportability is the BIG problem with any erroneous view! But beyond that, my belief in the Trinity ended up confusing my understanding of many inspired texts both in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. It made for lots of apparent contradictions. And it cast a very dark shadow over my understanding of each

¹ <https://youtu.be/Jtq0Pa7XfK4>

² http://old.revelation1412.org/files/1413/4269/9545/Putting_the_Pieces_Together.pdf

Person of the Godhead. The Trinity gave me a twisted picture of God, His Son, and their holy spirit. Could an error be more serious?

Here is what I previously believed about the Godhead...pretty much just what the SDA Fundamental Beliefs 2-5 say. I believed that there were three *individual* Members of a Godhead or Trinity, a divine Triumvirate of co-equal, co-eternal Beings who were each fully God independently yet were connected in unity (one God in this sense) by incredibly deep relationships. I believed that these relationships were comparable to family relationships but deeper and that the Members of the Godhead depended on each other as human family members do. I believed that these Beings were complete Peers in the fullest sense and that each were without beginning and without end. I believed that they shared the same divine Nature and were wholly bound to operate according to this Nature (i.e. God cannot lie, God cannot die, God cannot be tempted, etc.). I believed it was appropriate to refer to any of the three divine Beings as God and to refer to the overall divine Team as God.

I want to first make it clear that I do not now see every aspect of this perspective on God to be false. But overall, this perspective led to some frightfully twisted conclusions/confusions. Both to myself and to others I have recently come to admit this.

The first that comes to mind is the confusion I had regarding God the Holy Spirit. I could see in Scripture two obvious points regarding the Spirit: 1) He is so submissive to the other divine Beings as to be constantly at their whim and disposal, seeming to have no will, thought, action, or even name (like Jehovah, Michael, or Jesus) of his own, and 2) He is ever the One actually accomplishing or at least facilitating the achievements which the Father and Son take credit for. All my life these points have seemed more than strange, and until this month, only two possible explanations ever came to mind...

Explanation 1: The Holy Spirit is what It seems to be, the unnamed Slave of the Godhead doing most of God's work but receiving little to none of the honor and worship. The Spirit is a Cinderella of sorts and the Father and Son are like Its two oppressive Stepsisters.

Surely you will agree that this explanation for why the Bible presents the Holy Spirit as it does *is completely repugnant*. Surely you see why I eventually felt pressed to look for a better understanding. And eventually I found it:

Explanation 2: Before God created anything, all three Gods of the Godhead were in the form which the Holy Spirit maintains to this day. All three were *bodiless Spirits* (Jn 4:24?). When God created spacetime in "the beginning," Jehovah and Michael condescended to inhabit physical forms in time and space and thus left behind the almighty powers of their previous existence. The Holy Spirit did not condescend in this way. He remained behind so that the Godhead overall would remain Almighty. The Spirit is the one doing everything for God now because *He still can* do almighty things. And this explains why He appears as nothing compared to the other Gods of the Triumvirate. Consider the principle Jesus expressed in Mark 10:43-44: "whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."

Until this month I have been mostly satisfied by this explanation. Even though it relied rather heavily on speculations, it was the best explanation I had for the Holy Spirit's situation in the Godhead. It seemed to account for all the inspired data, and most importantly, it steered my thinking clear of Explanation 1. Yet I now see a glaring problem with Explanation 2 – it glorifies the Holy Spirit above Father and Son! It makes the Holy Spirit out to be the only Member with Almighty power presently – the "Chiefest", to use Christ's word – while also showing the Holy Spirit to be the *most* condescending God, the humblest, the ultimate "Minister", the

“Servant of All”. This is highly problematic as Ellen White tells us, “The Father and the Son alone are to be exalted” {YI, July 7, 1898 par. 2} and “Jesus, the served of all, came to be the servant of all” {CCh 301.2}.

Another confusion I sustained under the Trinity doctrine pertained to who Jesus Christ really was and whether the Son of God really died for me. I noticed that God the Son could not be tempted (Jas 1:13). Also, God the Son was “the life” (Jn 14:6) – the immortal life which cannot have an end. Thus, I could not truly believe that Jesus Christ was *in actuality* God the Son. Jesus was tempted in all points like us (Heb 4:15), and Scripture is clear that Jesus died. But Ellen White wrote, “Humanity died: divinity did not die” {5BC 1113.6}. Such statements confirmed my view of God the Son existing *always and forever untouchable and unaffected* in some alternate divine reality. The view of a Trinity mystically enthroned outside their play-reality (which created beings know as reality) explained the strangeness of “Jesus” raising Jesus from the dead (Jn 2:19, 21; 5:21; 10:17-18; 11:25). Jesus Christ may have been a perfect man whom God the Son fully identified Himself with (“I am always the living Son-God, but I identify as Jesus the human”?!), but it could not be the case that the divine Son was tempted, that the divine Son died. If God the Son died, how did He raise Jesus from the dead?

Furthermore, I did not believe that God “the Son” was really the Son of God. I did not believe the “Father” really had a “Son”. All the Father-Son language used to describe these two Being’s relationship throughout the Bible had to be an analogy, a figurative representation (though Scripture never indicates that it is) because the co-eternal “Son” never actually came out from the eternal “Father”. I could only think these two Gods were just acting like Father and Son for their play-reality with us. And I could not for the life of me understand why. Why would the Word not simply present Their relationship as it really is – a penultimate Peers friendship – or at least explain why They use the Father-Son representation so consistently? I could not fully accept the explanation that it was to reveal the love of God. If that were the reason for “Father” and “Son”, why did the Word not include some familial terminology to present the relationship between the “Father” and the Holy Spirit or between the “Son” and the Holy Spirit? If God is love, why do you never see any love between the “Father” and the Holy Spirit or between the “Son” and the Holy Spirit in Scripture? Why does it seem the “Father” and “Son” are best friends and much more to each other but leave the Holy Spirit out in the cold and use It like a nameless Slave? I could not leave such questions to fester in my mind, so I speculated a role for the Holy Spirit, and although I did not usually tell anyone about this or even reveal it by my choice of pronouns, I personally considered the Holy Spirit to be a *female* Goddess – the “Wife” of the “Father” and the “Mother” of the “Son”. (If this sounds weird, consider that it is less weird than the other option – that Jesus had *two* “Fathers” according to Lk 1:35 and Jn 16:28.)

And as for what I thought about the Father...to be honest, not much. Jesus said His Father “is greater than I” (Jn 14:28) and went so far as to call Him “the only true God” (Jn 17:3). Paul wrote, “One God and Father of all, who is above all...” (Eph 4:6). But I really didn’t find myself much impressed. None of this made sense! He was an *equal* Member of the Trinity, wasn’t He? Wasn’t “God the eternal Son,” as SDA Fundamental Belief 4 calls Him, *co-equal* with the Father? I could see no explanation for why we should see the Father as the highest God in the Trinity. Isn’t the Son’s name Jehovah just as the Father’s name is Jehovah (Isa 44:6)? Didn’t Jesus say “I AM” (Exo 3:14; Mk 14:62)? According to the SDA Fundamental Belief pertaining to the Father, “The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also those of the Father.” Why does the Bible consistently indicate a *divine pecking order* with the Father on top? I could see no positive reason or explanation for this. To be completely honest, it seemed that not only was the Father no different in nature than His associates in the divine Triumvirate but also that He had never done anything to distinguish Himself above the other Members of the Trinity *while they actually had*. So you can imagine how I had rather distant feelings for God the Father. He must be truly distant from me if even my prayers could not reach Him except by the mediation of two

Intercessors – first the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26) then Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5)! But I really did *try* to view Him and worship Him as the Bible said He was – both God in the Highest and my loving heavenly Father. Though this made no sense and thus did not feel true to me, I hoped all the belief of it I could muster would be enough all the same.

I am telling you...I really *suffered* from tritheistic views of the Godhead. I was so confused! For significant reasons I felt the closest to and had the highest respect for the Holy Spirit, who I considered must effectively be the most powerful and most humble God (or Spirit-Goddess). I considered Jesus Christ to be the human being God the Son fully identified Himself as, a man completely filled with the Holy Spirit (and His divine nature). But I did not believe God the Son really condescended to Earth, was actually tempted or ever truly died. He remained enthroned, as always, in that mystic, alien reality only the Trinity inhabits. And my confusion snuffed out almost every warm thought or emotion I ever sought to think or feel about the Most High! I could see He was top of the divine pecking order and was the most inaccessible to us, yet no positive reason for this could I find, and as for God so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son, I could not really believe this on two accounts: 1) Jehovah did not really have a “begotten Son,” He had a co-equal, co-eternal Peer, and 2) God the Son never really came to the earth, experienced and overcame temptation, and died for humanity!

Devin, I don't know what to say... I can only think this is blasphemy!

That's the way I now see it too! Fundamental Beliefs numbers 2-5 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church drive the honest seeker of truth to blasphemous, even pagan conclusions.

That's not what I meant. Oh, Devin... At least I now see why you retracted all your previous writings.

I don't think my previous writings were *solid* error. In fact, I still think they were the byproduct of God giving me advanced light. But I am now certain they also contained arguments and interpretations based on speculations, faulty assumptions, and pure error. No question about it! And I would never offer someone a drink I knew had even a little deadly poison in it.

Well, now that you discussed at length the numerous troubling results of SDA trinitarianism, please explain in comparative detail why you think SDA non-trinitarianism is better.

Ok, but know that I won't take the time here to present everything...not by a long shot! And I surly don't know everything about this anyway! I am a newbie here. But already I have seen more than enough to be sure I can throw that monstrous construct of the “SDA” Trinity belief in the rubbish bin of Babylonian errors where it belongs.

I would summarize my newfound non-trinitarian faith as follows: The Almighty God, Jehovah, is the only Father of Michael, now known by the name Jesus Christ. *Michael* means “who is *like* God” (consider this a description, not a question). He is a Being begotten (Ps 2:7), a Being who *came out* from His Father (Jn 16:27; 17:8) – from His Father's very “substance” {7ABC 437.3} – and thus *inherited* (Heb 1:4) the full divinity of the “only true God” (Jn 17:3), His *actual* Father. The begetting of the Son of God took place three times in history: 1) before Creation at a most ancient point in time called “the beginning of his [Jehovah's] way” (Prov 8:22), 2) when the power of the Highest overshadowed Mary (Lk 1:35), and 3) when the Son of God was raised from death (Psa 2:7 and Acts 13:33). The Father and the Son ALONE *are* “all the fullness of the Godhead” {BTS, March 1, 1906 par. 1-2}. They are the only Beings who rule in the Universe of Their creation {GC 493.1} – the same Universe we call Reality, in which They are personally and wholly invested. Their spirit is the divine mind (Isa 40:13, 1 Cor 2:16), the eternal life-force (Rom 8:2, 10; Eph 1:19-20; 1Pet 3:18), the mighty power (Eph 1:19-20; 1Pet 3:18), the glory (1Pet 3:18;

Rom 6:4) and much more OF both God and His Son. Their "one spirit" (Eph 4:4), like ours, is *NOT* an individual Being with whom any may be in relationship. To relate with Their spirit is nothing more than to relate with God and/or His Son.

This faith is far more supportable throughout Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy than I have indicated by the references above. I inserted key references just so you can begin to see why I see this is truly based in Scripture.

For now, instead attempting an exhaustive study of non-trinitarianism, I will just give a sampling of inspired quotes I now find to be satisfactorily explained *only* by this non-trinitarian perspective.

The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. **He had an ["an" = one, not two] associate—a ["a" = one] 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 ["only being" = one]** that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God [thus, the Holy Spirit is *not* a Being "that can 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. . . . 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." Proverbs 8:22-30. {PP 34.1}

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

The Son is all the fulness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be "the express image of His person." "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is shown the personality of the Father.

The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fulness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. {SpTB07 62.3 - 63.3}

This quote says only the Father and Son = "all the fulness of the Godhead" AND the "another Comforter" of Jn 14:16 = the Spirit in the Father and in the Son.

There is no comforter like Christ [so the Holy Spirit is *not* a Comforter *like* Christ], so tender and so true. **He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. His Spirit speaks to the heart.** Circumstances may separate us from our friends; the broad, restless ocean may roll between us and them. Though their sincere friendship may still exist, they may be unable to demonstrate it. . . . **But no circumstances, no distance, can separate us from the ["the" = one] heavenly Comforter.** Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always there, one given in Christ's place, to act in His stead. He is always at our right hand, to speak soothing, gentle words; to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. **The influence of the Holy Spirit**

is the life of Christ in the soul. This Spirit works in and through every one who receives Christ. Those who know the indwelling of this Spirit reveal its fruit--love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. {AG 195.4}

Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, who was to take his place. **This Comforter is the Holy Spirit,--the soul of his life,** the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. **With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin.** {RH, May 19, 1904 par. 1}

"They have ONE God and ONE Saviour; and ONE Spirit--**the Spirit of Christ**--is to bring unity into their ranks. {9T 189.3}

Why the special inserted explanation of the "ONE Spirit"? Note that this statement was published very late in Ellen White's ministry – 1909.

1Co 8:4-6 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.**

By "one God" a singularity, not a plural unity, is meant for God the Father is here placed in contrast to a plurality of "gods". But why? Why not two Gods, or three Gods? Also, what about the Holy Spirit?

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

What about the Holy Spirit?

1Jn 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly **our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ**

Why is the Holy Spirit left out?

1Ti 2:5 For *there is* one God, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**

What about the Holy Spirit, our Mediator according to Rom 8:26?

2Co 3:17 Now **the Lord is that Spirit:** and where the Spirit of the Lord *is,* there *is*

liberty.

This verse clearly indicating that the Lord = "that Spirit" = "the Spirit of the Lord."

Joh 17:8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that **I came out from thee** [the Son of God begotten], and they have believed that **thou didst send me** [the pre-begotten Son of God sent for humanity].

Pro 8:22-24 **The LORD possessed** [same Hebrew word translated "gotten" in Gen 4:1...read this verse!] **me** [Christ] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. **I was set up**...from the beginning... When *there were* no depths, **I was brought forth**...

1Jn 4:9-10 **In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through him. **Herein is love**, not that we loved God, but that **he loved us, and sent his Son** *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

If Jesus was not God's only begotten Son before the incarnation, then the potency of the point here being made about God's love for us is completely neutralized. Think about it.

I really can't see how I never saw this before...

The Father is the only true God. It finally makes sense. The Son of God is fully divine only by birth, by inheritance. He is not another God. He is not Jehovah's Peer. And the Holy Spirit is not an individual Being other than the Father and Son. My questions about the Spirit's comparative nothingness in the Godhead finally have a good answer. I no longer need believe It to be a Spirit-Goddess effectively more powerful and humble than the Father and the Son!

The Holy Spirit is *IN* all the divinity the Father and Son share. And if the Son originally obtained this divinity when first begotten, there is no reason to think He could not clothe it in humanity and finally surrender it up with the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my [holy] spirit" (Lk 23:46). **"The divine Son of God left the throne of heaven and gave His life for us**, and for our sakes became poor. He clothed His divinity with humanity." {Ctr 65.6} Really, he did! I finally believe it! My salvation was actually purchased with the *infinite* price of God's only begotten Son!

Devin, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that read this interview, were both almost, and altogether such as I am. (like in Acts 26:28-29)

But the inspired writings contain many "objection quotes," as I think you called them. Are you saying there are satisfactory explanations to *all* the objections inspiration raises? How could most of the SDA church be in error on such an important point as you allege? I can hardly believe that to be possible!

Ok, so these are THE two big questions when it comes to this topic, right? First, what about the objections? Second, how could the SDA church be so deeply and significantly in error? If it weren't for these two questions, wouldn't we all be non-trinitarian?

I will address these separately and only in a cursory way. I am not the expert here, and the main thing I want to do is point you in a good direction and leave you to pray and study for the answers yourself. What I have recently discovered is that there are thorough resources providing sound answers to both these questions.

Like I said in my confession letter, the YouTube sermon "Proving the Trinity" and the document "Putting the Pieces Together" by Mansour really opened my eyes to the satisfactory neutralizations of Bible- and White-based objections. From what I saw, many objections can *easily* be laid to rest with a little thoughtful comparison of inspired text with inspired text.

But there were two types of objection-statements I thought were not so easy to explain. I want to focus on those with you. I think when people feel they need some hooks to hang their doubt-hats on, here they find the most study ones...

1. "name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost"; "The three powers of the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"; "serve God, the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit--the three dignitaries and powers of heaven"; "the three persons--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"; "There are three living persons of the heavenly trio"; "Christ gave His representative, the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit"; "I just call upon the three great Worthies".
2. "I [the Son of God] was set up from everlasting"; "Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father."

As for the first difficult objection-statement category, what ended up leaving me scratching my head the longest here was how the Godhead could be composed of "three persons" yet only two Beings. (Recall that "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.") I could understand that inspiration's listings of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit along with phrases like "heavenly trio" really say nothing about the individual nature of Each nor of the relation Each sustains to the Others. I could understand that "three powers" do not necessarily equal "three individual Beings." *But I struggled to see how it could be that "three living persons" is not a reference to the Trinity.*

Yet I realized that, logically speaking, there were only three possibilities: 1) Ellen White truly contradicted herself, 2) Ellen White was non-trinitarian early in her ministry but in time changed her position on the topic of God, 3) Ellen White was not at all referring to the Triune Godhead SDA's now generally believe in when she wrote "three persons," "three living persons," "the third person," "the three great Worthies," etc. And since options 1 and 2 are really the same and clearly make Ellen White out to be a false prophet at least for an extended period of her ministry, I had to go with option 3). When I looked up the possible meanings of "person" in Webster's 1828 Dictionary, I discovered even more reason to accept option 3.

For time's sake I'm not going to get into much detail here except to say that serious non-trinitarians have no trouble seeing God as a Trio. Trinitarians see God as either 1 and 3. Non-trinitarians see God as 1, 2, and 3. There is one true God – the Father, Jehovah. In the ancient past, He begat a Son, divine *by* His divinity, who inherited

His name and nature. Thus, for long ages, there have existed two Beings who are Each the fulness of the Godhead. Their spirit is not just the personal presence of the Father, nor just the personal presence of the Son for They share one spirit. Therefore, Their spirit is a third person of the Godhead in the sense that it is the unity of the Father and Son's being, yet not an individual Being in its own right. The Holy Spirit *is* the Father *and is* the Son. (You need to look up meaning 6 under "Person" in the 1828 Dictionary to see why we I may rightly call the Holy Spirit a person of the Godhead.)

As for the second objection-statement category, I have always considered this to be one of the very strongest foundations upon which to build arguments against non-trinitarianism. Yet a week ago, I believe the Lord completed a process of revealing to me its true weakness as such.

IF it may be shown conclusively from the inspired writings that the Son of God existed throughout all eternity past, then the non-trinitarian perspective is fundamentally invalidated. And this seems to be exactly what Ellen White implied when she wrote,

From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. They were two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character. {YI, December 16, 1897 par. 5}

You may be thinking this quote would be a great piece of evidence in favor of the non-trinitarian view if it weren't for the words "From eternity." Similarly, a favorite Bible passage among non-trinitarians – Prov 8:22-23 – seems to invalidate their theory by the words, "I was set up from everlasting." I will now show you how I have recently come to see these two phrases.

As for the Bible phrase "from everlasting," this is a translation of the Hebrew **מֵעוֹלָם** which is translated "of old" in...

Gen 6:4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* to them, the same *became* mighty men **which were of old**, men of renown.

Nobody would argue these mighty men are here said to have existed throughout eternity past. Thus, "from everlasting" in Prov 8:23 could be referring to an ancient *point in time*. And the very next phrase in the verse proves this to be the case:

Pro 8:23 I was set up from everlasting, **from the beginning**, or ever the earth was.

"The beginning" is clearly an ancient point in time, not an eternity past.

Although Ellen White never used the phrase "throughout eternity in the past," she often used "from eternity," and in just two statements the phrase, "from eternity in the past."

Yet we see that since time is not God, time itself was one of the "invisible" "all things" the Father created (Col 1:16; Rev 4:11). Time's first moment was, by basic definition and logic, the fundamental "beginning" Christ was begotten in (Prov 8:22-23). And Christ even calls Himself "the beginning of the creation of God." All this amounts to the inescapable conclusion that there *is no such thing* as an infinite duration of time in the past.

Could it be that Ellen White's "from eternity"- and "from eternity in the past"-statements did not refer to an infinite duration of time past? I have come to believe they did not. I let Ellen White explain...

The history which the great I AM has marked out in His word, uniting link after link in **the prophetic chain, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future**, tells us where we are today in the procession of the ages... {Ed 178.3}

The prophecies which the great I AM has given in His word, uniting link after link in **the chain of events, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future**, tell us where we are today in the procession of the ages... {PK 536.3}

Especially we must here understand that there is a chain of events united link after link by the prophecies which the great I AM has given in His word. The first sentence of the paragraph in question is written in such a way as to obscure whether “the prophecies” or the “chain of events” or both are said to be “from eternity in the past to eternity in the future.”

But a simple question reveals exactly what is meant: *What* exactly “tell us where we are today in the procession of the ages”? The answer: both the prophecies of Scripture *and* the corresponding fulfillment events! Both prophecies and historical fulfillments *together are needed* to give us any sense of where we are in the ages, for prophecy in retrospect shows the sacred significance of history, and history reveals prophecy’s true meaning and stage of fulfillment. This is seen also in the way in which the same statement is varied across both quotes.

Clearly, what White means here is that both the prophecies and the event-links they unite – the whole, united chain of events predicted in Scripture – are “from eternity in the past to eternity in the future.” And the Bible does not prophetically point out an infinite number of events in the past nor does it point to a period of infinite duration in the past; the Bible’s chain of prophesied events has an obvious first link – “the beginning”! Thus “from eternity in the past” cannot here be intended to mean “throughout an infinite duration of time past.”

So again we ask... What is meant by “eternity in the past”? What is the character of White’s use of “eternity” here?

Please follow my reasoning with respect to a careful reading of several inspired statements...

Then will be opened before him the course of **the great conflict that had its birth before time began, and that ends only when time shall cease**. {Ed 304.3}

The Great Controversy began before the Creation Week and will conclude with the Lake-of-Fire Event immediately after which God will create a “new heavens and a new earth.” The “time” referred to by Ellen White above is limited in its reference to *old-earth* time...

The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from **the time it first began** in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God’s unchanging love. {CTr 7.3}

Putting Ed 304.3 and CTr 7.3 together, we see there is “time” “before time began.” Strange, right? What kind of time exists before time began, according to the prophetess?

The Lord reveals man's relative estimate of **time and eternity, of earth and heaven**. {5T 261.1} (“Time” is the era of this earth, “eternity” is the era of heaven.)

The words we utter today will go on echoing **when time shall be no more**. The deeds done today...will determine our destiny **for eternity**. {TM 429.3} (Words and deeds done before “time shall be no more” determine our destiny “for eternity.” Once we are beyond time, we are in eternity.)

Keep sowing the seed for **time and eternity**. All heaven is watching the efforts of the Christian parent. {AH 316.2} (There is time, and then there is eternity.)

When the veil shall be removed which **separates time from eternity**, then will come to many minds the clear perception... {HL 285.3} (There is a separation between time and eternity)

Apparently that which is not between “time began”/Creation Week and “time shall cease”/Controversy’s End is “in the light of eternity” or simply “in eternity.”

Not until he stands in the light of eternity will he see all things clearly. {Ed 304.2}

This statement cannot be speaking of someone reaching the end of an infinite time duration and from that vantage point seeing all things clearly. “The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward **throughout** eternity, ever progressing, never completed.” {8T 328.2} In the *Education* statement above, “eternity” is being used to refer to *an age* or *era* in which one may stand, not to an infinite duration of time.

In eternity we shall learn that which, had we received the enlightenment it was possible to obtain here, would have opened our understanding. {COL 134.1}

Again, since it does not take an infinite duration of time to receive “the enlightenment it was possible to obtain” in our short life below, the phrase “in eternity” here must be referring to some point in the *era* or *age* following old-earth time.

We are looking beyond time; **we are looking to eternity**. We are trying to live in such a way that Christ can say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” {3SM 192.3}

We are living in solemn times. We are looking forward to the judgment, and **onward to eternity**, and it is fitting for us to walk in great humiliation of soul before God. {RH, June 18, 1889 par. 3}

As it is not possible for anyone to see through an infinite duration of time, “looking to eternity” must simply mean looking to the coming *age*.

Historical events took place in “time” “before time” according to the following phrase:

...the great conflict...**had its birth before time began**... {Ed 304.3}

It stands to reason that events like the birth of the great conflict thus took place in an era or age Ellen White called “eternity in the past.” And since “in eternity” and “to eternity” refer to the coming age or an undesignated point in time after “time shall cease,” it stands to reason that “from eternity” refers back to a prior era or an undesignated moment of time in the age “before time began”.

Finally, let’s consider how the SDA church could possibly be so much in error now. I can only think the devil has been hard at work and has been far more successful than he wants us to know.

The SDA church didn’t originally subscribe to the Trinity doctrine.

That most of the leading **SDA pioneers were non-Trinitarian** in their theology has become **accepted Adventist history** {Jerry Moon. *The Trinity*. p. 190}

Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's fundamental beliefs. Most specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity. For Joseph Bates the Trinity was an unscriptural doctrine, for James White it was that 'old Trinitarian absurdity,' and for M.E. Cornell it was a fruit of the great apostasy, along with such false doctrines as Sunday-keeping and the immortality of the soul." {George Knight. "Adventists and Change." Ministry Magazine, Oct. 1993, p. 10.}

A survey of other Adventist writers during these years (up to 1881) reveals, that **to a man, they rejected the trinity**, yet, with equal unanimity they upheld the divinity of Christ. To reject the trinity is not necessarily to strip the Saviour of His divinity. Indeed, certain Adventist writers felt that it was the trinitarians who filled the role of degrading Christ's divine nature. {Russell Holt. "The doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, its rejection and acceptance." A term paper for Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, 1969.}

If you've read any of White's *Testimonies to the Church* you have no doubt noticed how faithful Ellen White was when it came to clearly, specifically, and repeatedly rebuking errors, fanatical movements and heresies. Non-trinitarianism *permeated* the SDA movement of her day, yet we do not find her ever told by her Instructor to "Meet it firmly, and without delay." We do read...

I am instructed to speak plainly. "Meet it," is the word spoken to me. "Meet it firmly, and without delay." But it is not to be met by our taking our working forces from the field to investigate doctrines and points of difference. We have no such investigation to make. **In the book Living Temple there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow**, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given. {1SM 200.1}

What exactly was it about Dr. J. H. Kellogg's book *Living Temple* which Ellen White found so troubling? The alpha apostasy –

The teaching regarding God that is presented in 'Living Temple' is not such as our students need. **Those who seek to define God are on forbidden ground. We are to enter into no controversy regarding God, -what He is and what He is not. He, the Omniscient One, is above discussion.** Those who express such sentiments regarding Him show that they are departing from the faith. {PH095 39.3}

In *Living Temple* Dr. Kellogg had taken it upon himself to do just that...give explanation and definition of God *beyond what is given in Scripture*. And we should note that Kellogg took a leap further down the dark road of heresy by becoming a trinitarian shortly after first publishing his book.

Dr Kellogg's plans for revising and republishing 'The Living Temple'.... He (Kellogg) said that some days before coming to the council, he had been thinking the matter over, and began to see that he had made a slight mistake in expressing his views. He said that all the way along he had been troubled to know how to state the character of God and his relation to his creation works... **He then stated that his former views regarding the trinity** had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement; **but that within a short time he had come to believe in the trinity** and could now see pretty clearly where all the difficulty was, and believed that he could clear the matter up satisfactorily.

He told me that **he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and his view was that it was God the Holy Ghost, and not God the Father, that filled all space, and every living**

thing. He said if he had believed this before writing the book, he could have expressed his views without giving the wrong impression the book now gives. (Letter: A G Daniells to W C White. Oct 29. 1903. p 1-2)

Could it be that Dr. Kellogg unknowingly hinted at what the omega apostasy would center on in a letter he wrote to G. I. Butler regarding his book? –

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

This letter was written in 1903, and at the time, G. I. Butler was president both of the South Union Conference and of the Southern Publishing Association of the SDA Church. From the letter we can see Butler did not believe “the Holy Ghost is a person.” Yet despite his non-trinitarian views in combination with his highly influential position, Ellen White spoke against the views of Kellogg, not the views of Butler.

But let’s not get distracted from the main take-away here. Ellen White said Kellogg’s book contained the “alpha of deadly heresies” (and that the “omega will follow”), for the book **gave speculative explanation and definition of God beyond what is stated in the inspired writings.**

Are you beginning to see what a core element of the Omega of deadly heresies must be? **The Trinity doctrine – One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal, coequal, individual Persons – stands to explain and define far beyond (and even contrary to) what may be found in Scripture regarding the Godhead.**

Scripture does not state nor even imply that the Holy Spirit is a separate individual God in Its own right. Holy writ repeatedly presents just the opposite (i.e. Rom 8:9-10; 1 Pet 1:11). Scripture nowhere says the Son of God is co-eternal with the Father; it says just the opposite – that Jesus was “the beginning of the creation of God,” that Jehovah begat Him “in the beginning of his way,” that He was “set up...from the beginning,” that He was the only begotten Son of God even before being sent into the world (Rev 3:14; Prov 8:22-23; 1Jn 4:9). Scripture does not place the Son on an absolute equality with the Father – this is evident even in the titles “Father” and “Son”! Glyn Parfitt, an SDA who in 2008 published an 850-page book answering objections to the Trinity, admitted that “Sadly...the Bible does not give us the words with which to express the Threeness and the Oneness of God.”³ Words and phrases “God the Son,” “eternal nature,” “co-eternal,” “co-equal,” “Trinity,” “triune,” “one in three,” “three in one” are *not to be found* even in the writings of Ellen White!

And as I have personally experienced, the Trinity doctrine naturally leads to *such repulsive conclusions* regarding the character of God *that it drives* those struggling to be intellectually honest and yet maintain a positive view of the divine Family *to rely on further speculative theorizing* about just what each Member may really be!

The Spirit of Prophecy wrote,

Satan is not ignorant of the result of trying **to define God and Jesus Christ in a spiritualistic way that sets God and Christ as a nonentity... Men have lost tract of Christ and the Lord God,** and have been obtaining **an experience that is Omega** to one of the most subtle delusions that will ever captivate the

³ <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2011/06/are-seventh-day-adventists-tritheists>

minds of men. **We are forbidden to . . . set the imagination in a train of conjecture.**--Diary, #48, pp. 153, 163, Aug. 25 and Aug. 28, 1904. {11MR 211.2}

Does this not plainly say the Omega apostacy *experience* is that of speculating to define the Godhead in a way that actually belittles and misrepresents its two Members? Certainly, no other theory exalts the Father and Son like the truth does! **And yes, the Trinity doctrine surely “sets God and Christ as a nonentity” in that it implies the only God-being *truly* with us now is the Holy Spirit, the only God-being *truly* powerful and omnipresent now is the Holy Spirit.** Woe is me...all my life I have been enthralled by “one of the most subtle delusions that will ever captivate the minds of men”! But no longer, I pray!

The same year that Kellogg wrote the letter to Butler we read, the Spirit of Prophecy warned,

The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that **this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith**, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? **The principles of truth** that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, **would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error...** The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, **but GOD BEING REMOVED**, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. **Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure.** {1SM 204.2}

I can only see that this “reformation” has indeed taken place. A major change in “fundamental principles” occurred in the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the 20th century. This can be clearly seen by comparing the current statement of Fundamental Beliefs⁴ with the 1872 Declaration of Fundamental Principles⁵, especially its first two principles.

I praise God and His Son for showing me to surrender up my “structure” – www.gospelpattern.org – just before the “storm and tempest” hit. It was built at least partly upon worthless sand. I have a little time to build my house wholly upon the Rock of truth, and so do you, if you are willing to see it.

Devin, you have given me a lot to study, think, and pray about. I can see you are fully convinced and what you are saying does make sense... This is going to take me some time to digest.

I have just one more question. Has this become more than merely theoretical to you? Have you experienced any practical difference in your spirituality since your views changed?

I am still digesting this myself. I think the internalization process of this truth for me will take more time. The change is very deep and though my mind changed quickly, my heart will take more time.

But I will tell you a personal story which took place just a few days ago. This story shows that my personal relationship with God has already turned a corner regarding this newly-discovered truth about who He is.

I was lying in bed late Thursday night, unable to sleep, coming down with a fever and afraid I was catching the terrible flu virus my wife had just suffered. I felt chilled, my body ached, I felt terrified of the onset of the same flu, and lacked sleep anyway because of consistent night-shift work. I was scheduled to open at work 4am and

⁴ https://szu.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/28_Beliefs.pdf

⁵ <http://maranathamedia.com/downloads/library/books/AdventMovement/1872FundamentalStatement.pdf>

knew I could not get out of this as nobody else could cover so early on such short notice. I was miserable, terrified, and I dreaded the morning.

In this situation, I craved psychological comfort most of all. Suddenly there came into my heart the urge to reach out to God directly and ask Him to be a Father to me right then! I remembered my new-found faith in a truly personal God who is with me by HIS spirit.

And **for the first time in memory**, I prayed directly to ***the Father!***

For the first time it made sense to do this. I finally saw He is not a distant God of some unaffected parallel-reality reachable only via two-stage relay – Spirit-Goddess to “Son”-God then “Son”-God to God “the Father.” I finally saw He is not the comparatively inactive God “co-equal” with His more accomplished and caring “Son.”

2Co 1:3-4 **Blessed *be* God**, even **the Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father** of mercies, and **the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us** in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith **we ourselves are comforted of God.**

Immediately I felt ***the Father*** comfort me as I **internalized** the belief He *need not outsource* care of myself to “another Comforter.”

I consider this to be practical indication of greatly-improved relations with God to come. I am humbled, but also so very happy!

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