

# "Watchman, what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,  
the hour and the end!"

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

## HISTORICAL DATA REVIEWED (Number Two)

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## REVIEW AND DEFINITIONS

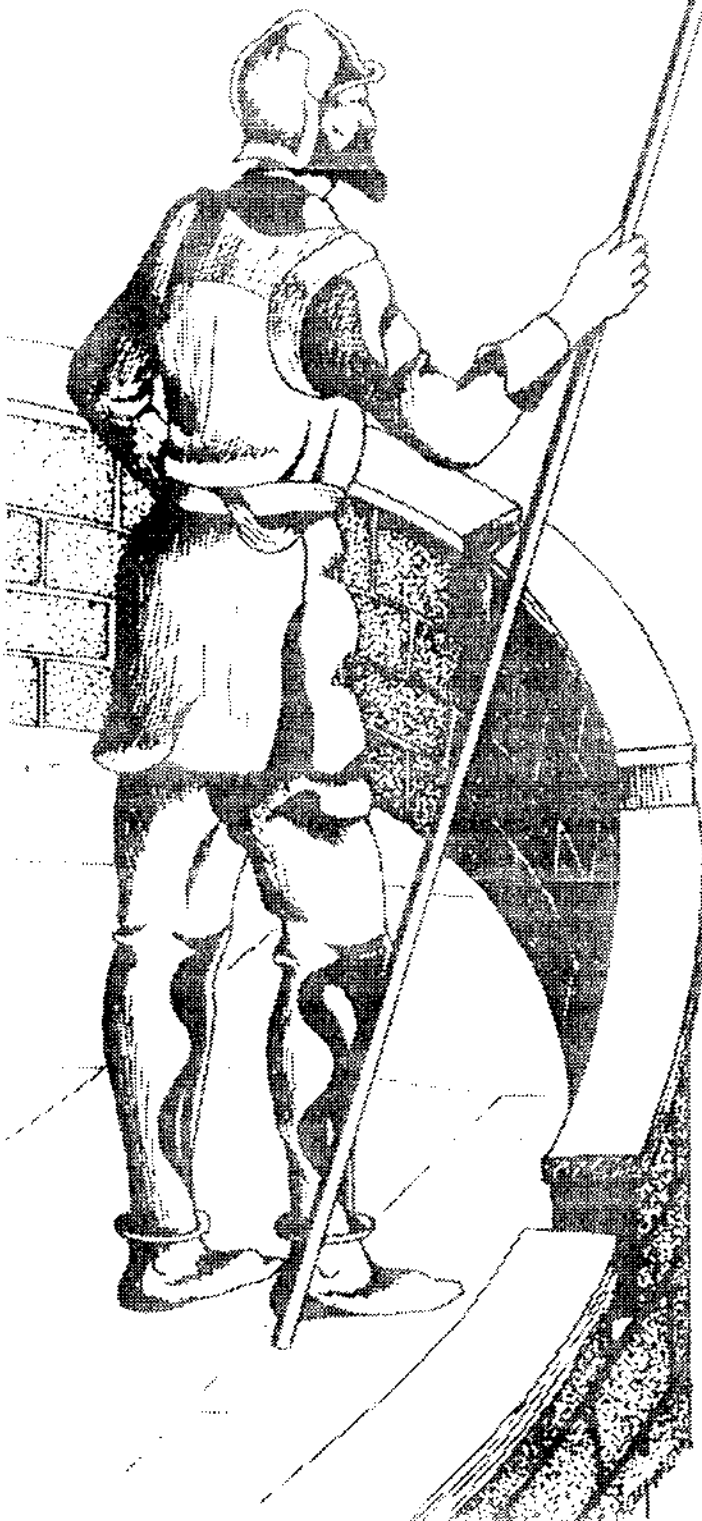
DOES "TRINITY" EQUAL "HEAVENLY TRIO"?

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### Editor's Preface

In the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church there have been three lay organizations which operated independent of the control of the General Conference, yet with their approval or quasi-approval. Two are a matter of past history: Dr. Harvey J. Kellogg and the Battle Creek Medical association; Madison College and its units. At present, there is only one "independent lay organization with official approval of the General Conference." That organization is the Association of Adventist Forums which received that approval in 1967. In the first article - "Historical Data Reviewed - 2" - we discuss the impact which this association has had on the Church giving special attention to the doctrinal teachings involved. One, the question discussing the age of the earth involving its origin strikes directly at the fourth commandment as well as the First Angel's Message. The other doctrine is the message the sanctuary conveys in typology. This latter question raised by Dr. Desmond Ford at a Forum meeting cannot be laid solely at the door of the Association. Ford was merely articulating the full implications of the compromises made at the SDA-Evangelical Conferences. One challenge raised by Ford needs to be given special study and an answer found that harmonizes with the type and other related Scriptural data. The whole of the agitation fomented over the "Investigative Judgment" points to the fact that we are still stumbling over what 1888 was really all about - the advancing light of truth.

Recently, we have received calls from folk in the field asking about a video which is being circulated on the subject of the Alpha and Omega. We have spent considerable time reviewing this video. "Review and Definitions" discusses some of the questions raised on the tape. The basic problem is that individuals want to make it so clear that they are anti-Trinitarian, that they have gauged their beliefs by what the "pioneers" said instead of by a "Thus saith the Lord." There is a difference; and the fact that Adventist "pioneers" did not all teach the same thing, requires then a selection of whom to quote. This is deceptive because the average viewer is not aware what unnamed, though leading "pioneers" taught.



# Historical Data Reviewed - 2

Not only did the SDA-Evangelical Conferences in the mid-1950s signal a doctrinal revision of some of the basic concepts of the Advent Movement, but in the decade of the 1960s, along with the controversy which ensued as a result of the compromises made with the Evangelicals, another "conflict developed in Adventism. For the first time in its history, a whole generation of scholars with doctorates from secular universities became active in church institutions" (Spectrum, Vol. 15, #2, p. 23) At this same time, a growing number of Adventists who were earning doctorates were also entering a secular society which increasingly regarded the role of the church in society as irrelevant. Many of these, though having been nurtured by the church, became convinced that their individual participation within the framework of the Church was ineffectual in helping them to meet the issues they faced in the late 20th century society in which they found employment. Others, though equally concerned, met together in small groups in America and abroad to seek a solution. Often these groups formed around a nucleus of graduate students and/or academic and professional people who had to deal directly with issues in interaction with their peers. The rapid growth of these groups and their contacts with each other made it clear that a co-ordinated effort was needed to extend the dialogue they were having to a wider community of interested people within Adventism.

"To further this spontaneous search for meaningful participation, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists invited representatives from several of these groups to meet with them in October of 1967. The purpose was to discuss possible methods of establishing a cohesive program to provide a dialogue between the church leadership and this segment of the laity and to involve the later more significantly in the activities and concerns of the formal church. The outgrowth of that meeting was an action by the officers of the General Conference (taken at the 1967 Fall Council) to approve the establishment of an organization known as The Association of Adventist Forums." Its overall purpose as stated in its constitution was "to provide a Forum in which thoughtful persons of Seventh-day Adventist orientation" would "be encouraged to examine and to discuss

freely issues and ideas relevant to the church in all its aspects." (Spectrum, #1, p. 5)

The Association of Adventist Forums is "the only independent lay organization with official approval of the General Conference." (Spectrum, Vol.10, #4, p. 42) One of the moving figures in the growth of the Association was Dr. Roy Branson, grandson of a former General Conference president, W. H. Branson. When still a senior English major at Atlantic Union College in 1959, Branson envisioned a publication which would "encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues" as well as "to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth." Two years after the approval of the Association of Adventist Forums, the Association decided to make Branson's journal concept a reality. Spectrum made its debut with Dr. Mollerous Couperus as its first editor. Seven years later Branson himself became co-editor with Charles Scriven. These two changed the publication from an academic journal to a contemporary magazine. After three years Branson became the sole editor and expanded the contents of Spectrum to include news about the denomination. It provided an independent voice in Adventism by which the journal acted as the "Fourth Estate" for the church.

In this role there are some pluses. Insight into legal cases involving the Church, such as, the Mary Kay Silver legal suit, as well as the Davenport scandal were made available to the laity in the pages of Spectrum. The 1919 Bible Conference minutes in a critical area of thought in Adventism were published. However, the minuses outweigh the pluses. Some of the forces at work in Adventism did not begin with the Association of Adventist Forums; they were forces which created the Association. The impact of higher education raised questions which struck at the very heart of Adventism. All secular higher education is structured in the framework of the evolutionary theory whether in scientific disciplines, or in historical studies. The Adventist scholars with doctorates from the secular universities, "imbued with the values and culture of higher education," began to re-evaluate Adventist tradition. Spectrum provided the "pulpit" for the articulation of these evaluations. The recognition of the Association in 1967 changed the face of Adventism and produced a chasm which has not been bridged. Liberal Adventism has gained the ascendancy.

The doctrine of Creationism was one point of the conflict. This involves the First Angel's Message and the Sabbath. Are we to take an "open-minded approach"

assuming that "it [is] just as easy to make a mistake in interpreting the book of Revelation [the Bible record] as it [is] to make a mistake in interpreting the book of nature"? Or do we accept the Word of God as the norm by which all judgments are to be governed? The Bible declares that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11). This requires no interpretation. Do we accept the Word of God as spoken? The fruitage of "higher [secular] education" is to question God. The approval to do so by those within the Church who had drunk at the broken cisterns of such education was given by the leadership of the Church at the Fall Council in 1967.

A comment on the division caused in the Church by the cadre of scholars with doctorates from secular institutions, written from the viewpoint of one of their own, is most interesting as well as alarming. It reads:

*During the early 1960s the conflict did not flare into an open fire. Perhaps the church did not yet clearly understand where the progressives were heading. Progressive theologians, for example, did not attack traditional views. They used traditional terminology and concepts but infused them with new meanings. It may have taken a while for conservatives to sense that although the words and symbols were familiar, the theological perspectives were new.*

*But the arrival of R. H. Pierson to the General Conference presidency [1966] brought a dramatic change. The new administration concluded that the progressives threatened the very soul and mission of Adventism. (Spectrum, Vol. 15, #2, pp. 25-26)*

Yet it was the Pierson administration who gave recognition to the Association of Adventist Forums which in turn gave voice to this growing segment in the Church.

From the theological point of view, the use of one of the Association of Adventist Forums meetings as a podium by Dr. Desmond Ford to express his opinion that "the doctrine of the Sanctuary as traditionally held by Adventists could not be supported by Scripture" sent shock waves through Adventism in 1979. The local Forum chapter at Pacific Union College was in its second year, and the Forum's co-leaders invited Dr. Ford to speak at the first meeting of the new school year on the subject, "The Investigative Judgment: Theological Milestone or Historical Necessity."

The results that followed are now history. Ford was given a year's leave of absence to document in writing

his views. The document was later privately published as Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment. Glacierview followed with Ford being defrocked, yet he still retains membership in the PUC campus Church. These events both preceded and followed the 1980 General Conference session in Dallas where a new Statement of Beliefs would be voted by the Church in session.

The challenge which Dr. Ford had raised in the Forum presentation was not a new issue but one that had been discussed discreetly in theological circles for years. With Ford's presentation it was now in the open. Actually, Ford's presentation was "the chickens come home to roost." The Church through its representatives had in the 1955-56 SDA-Evangelical Conferences, and in the publication of Questions on Doctrine, denied the final atonement. (See, WWN, XXXII-5(99), p. 6)

We ask, why have these challenges to basic Adventism come into the church? One reason can be found in Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 707, which reads:

**God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat.**

However, the context of this statement does not encourage "traditionalism." Two paragraphs prior to the revelation of God's intent is found this warning note:

**The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what. (ibid.)**

As a result of the status given in 1967 to the liberal element, which had developed within the church through the influence of "higher education," divisions resulted, divisions which are still with us. In the regular Church itself, there are the liberals, who prefer to see themselves as progressives, and the conservatives; while on the periphery of the Church are splintered groups of "independents" who can best be described as "traditionalists," many of whom designate themselves as "historic" Adventists.

Actually, one of the basic problems of 1888, is still with

us. We continue to discuss whether the message was accepted or rejected as well as what the message really was, and still do not face up to the real issue that was involved in the crisis - attitude toward truth. Those opposed to Jones and Waggoner were shouting "about standing by the old landmarks" when there was "evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were." (Ms. 13, 1889) The same thinking, articulated in different terms, is still with us. It was this attitude in 1888 and following, that caused the servant of the Lord to caution that "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." (R&H, March 25, 1890) In 1892, Ellen White would write:

***There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our positions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will loose anything by close investigation.*** (R&H, Dec. 20, 1892)

Earlier the same year, she had written:

***We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have an occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.*** (R&H, July 26, 1892)

Let me illustrate with one problem involved in the issue raised by Dr. Desmond Ford. In his 425 page tome plus 37 appendices which he prepared during the leave of absence granted him to prepare his defence, he alleges:

**Few Adventists are aware that the investigative judgment was a "late-comer" amongst us. It was not taught by our pioneers of 1845. It was not held by Edson, Crosier, or the Whites during the 1840s at any time. When Ellen G. White refers to the experience of searching out the landmarks in the forties, it is a plain fact of history that the investigative judgment teaching was not among these. Neither do we find in the original visions any reference to an investigative judgment. The cleansing of the sanctuary was certainly a landmark. By this term was meant the eschatological antitype of the Day of Atonement.** (p. 374)

There is no question but that Ford has fingered the core of the problem in the sanctuary teaching. While he claims to accept the position of the pioneers before the

investigative judgment factor was added during the 1850s, his explanation of the Heavenly ministry of Jesus is at variance with the type and the teachings of the pioneers. He states that the late Don Neufeld when associate editor of the Review wrote that we should not "equate the cleansing of the sanctuary with the investigative judgment." What Elder Neufeld concluded was most instructive:

**Some have not borne this distinction in mind and have made the judgment the major significance of 1844. The judgment is an important event, but the final atonement and the blotting out of sin were the items upon which the ritual of the Day of Atonement focused.** (R&H, Feb. 14, 1980, p. 15)

Here is a major area for study, an area which, if carefully studied, will prove the accuracy of the counsel that we have "many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn."

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Footnote: In the first issue of the Review for 1980, Elder Don F. Neufeld, associate editor, began a series of nine editorials on "How SDA's adopted the sanctuary doctrine." Two of these, February 7 and 14, focused on "The investigative judgment." Desmond Ford at this same time was in Washington D. C., preparing his defence which was later privately published as Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment. At the 1979 Annual Council a Statement of Beliefs had been voted to be recommended to the General Session in Dallas in April of 1980. This statement as voted by the Council appeared in the Review (Feb. 21, pp. 8-10) during these series of editorials. The fact that this statement was not published in the "General Organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" until four months after it was voted in Annual Council, and just two months prior to its consideration in General Session is indicative of the tensions which gripped the Church as the 1980 Session approached. These tensions will be noted further as we consider the course pursued in the adoption of the Statement in the next issue of WVN.

## *Review & Definitions*

When the subject of the Godhead is discussed, various terms are used to define the thinking of man, historically and currently. General terms, such as, polytheism, monotheism, tritheism, are employed. Complications of thought follow when the terms, "Trinity" and "triune God" are introduced as expressions of a monotheistic belief. In some forms of polytheism with its myriad of gods, one finds a triad presiding over the lesser deities, such as in Egypt, the triad of Issis, Horus and Serapis. In other forms of polytheism one has a single god reigning over these lesser gods, as in Grecian thought - Zeus the supreme ruler reigning on Mount Olympus. Add to this confusion the thinking of Gnosticism in both its pagan and Christian forms.

Today in the community of Adventism, Trinitarianism vs. Anti-Trinitarianism is being "hotly" contested. However, it is not new to Adventism. The pioneers, some of which the present-day advocates of an anti-Trinitarian stance wish to quote, held various beliefs. From believing that Christ was the first of all created beings (Uriah Smith), to the concept that Christ proceeded forth from God but so far back in eternity as to be perceived as having eternally existed (E. J. Waggoner), this range of concepts reveals only one thing, that is, our pioneers were not Trinitarians. To merely be "agin" an error does not mean that one has truth. Often the truth is in neither position being advocated.

The Scriptures plainly teach that there is a controversy between God and a created being named Lucifer who wished to exalt himself as a god (Isa. 14:12-14). In his rebellion against God, he took with him numberless other angels (Rev. 12:4). Polytheism is the worship of these fallen "spirits." However over these "spirits" in certain forms of polytheism is the triad - three. Lucifer well knew as John declared in the preface to his gospel (1:1-2), there were Two Being in the Godhead - the Theos and Logos. He, manifesting his original desire, placed himself in the godhead of polytheism. He did not place the Godhead as a "foursome" - a trinity plus one, but as a triad.

In the process of time, the controversy began at the throne of God and was carried out on earth with such intensity that the prophetic picture calls it war (Rev.

12:7). But Lucifer prevailed not, and his ultimate destiny was sealed. Vengeful, he turned his wrath against the victor and sought to denigrate Jesus Christ. Christ would be proclaimed as having had a beginning; a lesser God having emanated from the Father. He would not be the sole mediator between God and man, Mary would be placed as co-mediatrix, and other "saints" as intercessors. Anything except joining in the chorus - "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing. (Rev. 5:12).

Over what issue did this great controversy begin? For the answer to this question we are indebted to the insight which the prophetic gift has given us. In Spiritual Gifts, Ellen White wrote -

**The Lord has shown me that Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Jesus Christ. ... And I saw that when God said to His Son, Let us make man in our image, Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man. ... He wished to be highest in heaven, next to God, and receive the highest honors. Until this time all heaven was in order, harmony and perfect subjection to the government of God. (Vol. 1, p. 17)**

What was in God's plan which made the creation of man so objectionable to Lucifer?

Observe closely the following insights:

**Human beings were a new and distinct order (R&H, Feb. 11, 1902).**

**God created man a superior being; he alone is formed in the image of God, and is capable of partaking of the divine nature; of co-operating with his Creator and executing His plans (R&H, April 21, 1885).**

**Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God... (R&H, June 18, 1895).**

What does "counterpart" mean? In Websters' Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, the word is defined by three synonyms: "duplicate," "compliment," and "equivalent."

In the light of all of this, it doesn't require a graduate degree to understand why the fallen Lucifer was intent on bringing man under his dominion. Neither should it be difficult to perceive what God had in mind for Adam. Adam failed. However, the Scriptures presents a second

Adam, one who did not fail under a much severer combat with Lucifer. We usually use the motif of a second Adam in the contention over the nature Christ assumed in coming in humanity, rather than exploring to its depth, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus as the second Adam.

What Adam was to become in the purposes of God, the second Adam as man became. As a God-man, He returned to highest heaven and was there seated on the right hand of the Throne of Majesty on high. If the first Adam, "designed to be a counterpart of God," had "passed his test" would he have joined the inner council of Heaven? Would this then have made an "Heavenly Trio"? Not three Gods, or a Trinity, nevertheless Three, a Trio. When the God-man returned to the Courts above, the Writings note:

**There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these great powers - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ. (Special Testimonies, Series B, #7, p. 62 [1905])**

It needs to be kept in mind the time frame in which this was written. Two years previously Ellen White had written to Kellogg that he was "definitely not clear on the personality of God" (Letter 300, 1903). Kellogg had embraced the doctrine of the Trinity in seeking to establish his pantheistic teachings as orthodox. If language means anything, Ellen White was saying - No, there are not three fully Gods, a trinity; but there is a "Heavenly Trio" - a God-man, the Second Adam, has been added.

There is no question but that the Incarnation enters the picture in full force at this point, and with it mysteries which the human mind cannot explain, but can by faith accept the facts revealed. Since I have set this portrayal in the light of the revelation as given in the Writings, I shall keep it there as the counsel reads - "The testimonies will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture" (SM, bk. I, p. 42). Let us note two points that the Writings reveal about the Incarnation:

1) "Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity." (Ms. 29, 1899) The "how" remains sealed to human comprehension, as well as explanation.

2) [The Bible indicates that the angel said to Mary - "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of

the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, KJV). However, in the Greek text there is no word for "thing." Linguistically, it would have been better translated had the word, "spirit" be supplied] "He (Christ) united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. He united Himself with the temple" (4BC:1147).

Based on these references, we can conclude that Christ who was "in the form of God" (Phil. 2:6), which is "spirit" (John 4:24 Gr.), by a mysterious, and painful process united Himself with a temple of flesh formed in the womb of Mary. The condescension began at Nazareth (Luke 1:26-27) was concluded at Calvary.

We continue. The Scripture is clear, Christ "emptied Himself" (Gr. Phil 1:7, ARV) of "the form of God" in accepting "the temple of flesh," "the form of a slave." What became of "the form of God"? If the "form of God" is eternal, immortal as it obviously is, for Christ to be able to die had to lay it aside, then what became of it? If we should say, that it was assimilated back into God, we would be accepting two things: 1) That the Roman doctrine of the trinity has merit inasmuch as they claim that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit come from one substance; and 2) We would virtually suggest that Christ in His pre-existence emanated from the Father, a Gnostic related concept.

Another factor faces us: Luke states clearly that the Holy Spirit was the active agent in the conception of Mary. She conceived by the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit pre-existed Bethlehem. Yet the "divine spirit," (See above) the God-man born of Mary and which after His birth "shall be called the Son of God" could claim to be the "I AM." "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). At this point, the human mind can only define, not explain.

Whether we wish to accept the reality which Divine revelation demands, or not accept it, the inescapable conclusion is that which can be stated in two words, the God-man, Jesus the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit are alter egos, together the Paracletoi (Rev. 5:6; I John 2:1; John 14:16). United in counsel with Him who sits upon the Throne, for the redemption of man, these constitute the "Heavenly Trio."

Sin and the means heaven expended to redeem man was costly to the Godhead. There was the "sundering of the

divine powers" (Ms. 93, 1899). If one act above all others was more costly than another, it was the "emptying of Himself" which the Word did, "wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, (the God-man) and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). ("God" and "Lord" are synonyms in expressing quality of Being. Ps. 50:1, 3; 110:1, 4)

One needs to be exceedingly careful in his zeal to show how anti-Trinitarian he is, lest by so doing, he denigrates the Lord Jesus Christ and consigns Him a lesser place than God has placed Him as a result of the Incarnation. Prior to Bethlehem, "the Word was Divine" (John 1:2, Gspd), "equal with God" (Phil 2:6). Even as a Babe in Bethlehem's manger, God said - "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1:6). Only a God is worthy of worship. What is man to assign in his finite judgment "lesser" and "greater" to God? God is God, period. To quote statements of Jesus when in "the form of a slave," suggesting "lesser" and "greater" aspects of Being, is to show ignorance of the "emptying" involved in the Incarnation. Such categorizing is a neo-Gnosticism which marks a vocal segment of the current agitation on the periphery of Adventism today.

There is a warning that is too little heeded in the book of Hebrews which asks - "How much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (10:29)

Presently in circulation is a video captioned, "The Alpha and the Omega." The position taken is that the Trinitarian doctrine of Romanism placed in the 27 Fundamentals Statements of Belief at the 1980 session of the General Conference at Dallas, Texas, is the omega of apostasy. We hold no brief for the teaching of Rome regarding the Trinity, or of the other deviations from truth in the Statement of Beliefs; but we are concerned over some of the premises and historical positions taken on the tape along with suggestive filming which is deceptive. For example, What has Waco got to do with the doctrine of the Trinity? We have written a four page letter to the speaker on the video challenging some of the data with documentation. A copy of this letter is available upon request. The letter gives answering data to the assertions made on the video that every sincere seeker for truth on this subject needs to know.

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## Observations

We have refrained from any comment involving the change of leadership in the Church at the General Conference level. We well knew from past experience that the complete story in full detail would never be given to the laity through the official organs of the Church at the General Conference or Union Conference levels. However, *Christianity Today* (Apr. 5, p. 20) did have a write-up of Folkenberg's resignation. They indicated that the law suit had been settled. Further, they revealed the progress during his nine-year tenure, 68% growth in membership and a 57% jump in finances to \$1.5 billion. Here are the factors of recent Adventist criteria for success, numbers and money. However, the article in *CT* also noted Folkenberg's "brusque management style" and quoted one University president who accused him of "management by destabilization" It now appears that the law suit factors, as wrong as they may have been, were used to accomplish the objective of the liberal elements on the West Coast. The article in *CT* mentioned two issues, the ordination of women, and the proposed Board of Ministerial and Theological Education. It is interesting that the President of Andrews University chaired the Special Committee of Investigation.

Now a new president is in the chair, Dr. Jan Paulsen, who has served as a Vice President of the General Conference since 1995. A report of the meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee which elected him, as well as a resume of Paulsen's service in the Church is given in the *Columbia Union Visitor* (April 1, 1999, p. 5). One fact in Paulsen's service record as vice president should be noted. The article stated that his was "a key role as chairman of the board for ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency." Has the investigative report in the *Los Angeles Times* of ADRA been so soon forgotten?

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