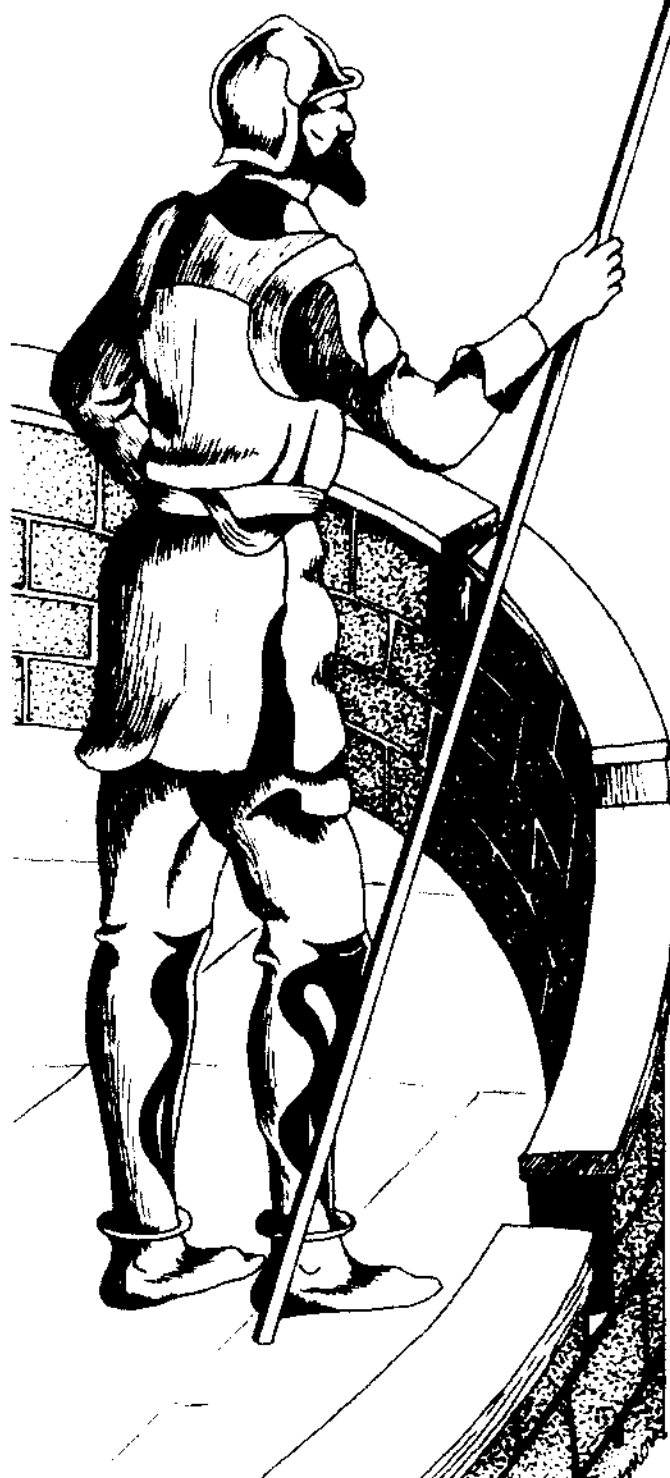


"Watchman,  
what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,  
the hour and the end!"  
Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



"OUR WONDERFUL GOD"

Page 2

THE FORMULATION OF THE ADULT LESSONS

Page 5

AN OVERLOOKED FACTOR

WHITHER BOUND?

Page 6

*Editor's Preface*

The students in the adult Sabbath School classes during the last quarter of 1998 were introduced to "the Principal Contributor" of the Lessons they would be studying. They were never informed as to what the late Dr. Edwin R. Thiele actually taught in regard to the Godhead. What Dr. Thiele did believe and taught had been published by the Southern Publishing Association in a small paperback in 1979 which could have been republished as a Study Helps for the Quarter's Lessons. It was not done. Instead of what Dr. Thiele did state, some unrevealed author led the Sabbath School into the study of the doctrine of the Trinity as taught by the Roman Church in the third lesson on "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." In the Foundation Library, we have the book, and have summarized the third chapter in the second article of the present issue.

In the Writings are to be found some unique statements as to God's design in the creation of man. These serve as a factor in the equation of the Godhead when understood of Christ becoming a God-man - Son of God and Son of man. Adam, a son of God, failed; Christ becoming a second Adam and a son of God, as Jesus, succeeded. In Jesus divinity united with humanity has been "highly exalted," and in Him, humanity has been carried into highest heaven to be a part of the Godhead.

Where is this emphasis on the Trinity doctrine leading? In the final article, "Whither Bound?" we have explored this question inasmuch as the Creed, which established the doctrine of the Trinity, has not only been made the basis upon which the teachings of Romanism are reviewed in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but it is also being used to promote the current program of the Faith and Order Commission to unite all churches in a visible unity. As one brings together all the available pieces in this theological drama and ecumenical thrust, questions surface as to what is really going on in the highest enclaves of the Adventist Church.

Unable to review all of the material currently surfacing on this subject, we must leave the balance for a regular issue.

# "Our Wonderful God"

With the Sabbath School Lessons for the Fourth Quarter of 1998 focusing on the Doctrine of God under the caption, "Our Wonderful God," the question of the Trinity again becomes a point of controversy and discussion within the community of Adventism. In any such discussion, certain facts need to be clearly stated and remembered in regard to the concept of "Trinity." This word is not used in the Scriptures, nor do we find it in the Writings. Further, this term is not found in any Statement of Beliefs expressing what Seventh-day Adventists believed until 1931. However, this is not saying that neither the Bible nor the Writings fail to express the concept of God in terms of "Three." Paul's benedictory close of his Second Corinthian letter reads - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen" (13:14). The Writings describe the Godhead as "the heavenly trio." (*Special Testimonies, Series B, No 7, p. 62*) This was written in 1905. It should be obvious that the introduction of the "Trinity" concept into Adventist thinking is of more recent origin.

What is the Trinity teaching in contrast to what the Bible says about God, and what is the difference between "Trinity" and "Heavenly Trio," a term which we shall borrow from the Writings to express the Godhead as it now is? Why is the "Trinity" concept being promoted now? These questions and others we intend to explore in this first special issue of WWN for 1999.

## The Basic Doctrine of Romanism

In the *Handbook for Today's Catholic*, it is stated:

*The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church.* (p. 11; emphasis supplied)

Consider for a moment what this is saying. If the Roman teaching of the Trinity is Biblically based, then the foundation of Romanism is in truth. Further, if this premise is accepted, "all the others teachings" of Romanism are likewise based in truth. Then why are we outside of Romanism? Should not we then return to the "mother church"? Was the key lesson (Number 3) of the Fourth Quarter's *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* a step in that direction?

How is this basic doctrine of Romanism stated? In the *Catechism for the Parochial Schools of the United States*, one section is captioned "The Blessed Trinity." Note carefully what it says and the confusion resultant from the explanation (p. 7):

Are there more Gods than one?  
There is but one God.

How many persons are there in God?  
There are three persons in God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Is each of these Persons true God?  
Each of the three Persons is true God.

...

Are these three Persons only one God?  
These three Persons are only one God.

...

What do we call three Persons in one God?  
We call one God in three Persons, the Blessed Trinity.

The second question is the transitional question. We would ask rather than, "How many persons are there in God?" - the question - "How many Persons are there in the Godhead?" One needs to recognize that Romanism does not mean by "Person" what we accept as the meaning of the Word. The Sabbath School Lesson #3 - "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" - was careful to explain this difference. The editors of the lessons commented:

*The word persons used in the title of today's lesson must be understood in a theological sense. If we equate human personality with God, we would say that these three persons means three individuals. But then we would have three Gods, or tritheism. But historic Christianity has given to the word person, when used of God, a special meaning: a personal self-distinction, which gives distinctiveness in the Person of the Godhead without destroying the concept of oneness. This idea is not easy to grasp - or to explain! It is a part of the mystery of the Godhead. (p. 24)*

How true - "not easy to grasp - or explain!" - It is pure Romanism. Harmonize this Romish definition with "the Heavenly Trio" concept. Impossible!

## The Biblical Perspective

Faced with this "historic Christianity" mystery many jettison the concept of a "Heavenly Trio" without carefully noting the Bible perspective of the Godhead. Even our Adventist pioneers were guilty of this, going to the extent that one of most respected pioneer theologians, Uriah Smith, wrote of Christ as "the first created being" in his 1867 edition of *Thoughts on Revelation* (p. 59). To emphasize the "pioneer" position as the basis of truth on the doctrine of God presents grave difficulties, for one must ask - "Which pioneers?" Such selectivity, which is deceptive, can be avoided by simply seeking the Biblical revelation.

One of the last books of the Bible, if not the last, to be written was the Gospel of John. The prologue - John 1:1-18 -

contains some of the most profound statements in regard to God of any Biblical revelation. Before considering these, it would be well to consider some other aspects of John's gospel.

The Gospel of John is considered didactic in contrast to the other three which are known as the synoptic gospels. This means that the emphasis in John is on the teachings of Jesus rather than specific experiences in the life of Jesus. In setting forth these teachings, John contains long direct quotes of what Jesus said. Note the discussion in John 6:27-63 as well as the intercessory prayer of John 17 as examples. Then consider the fact that these words were written some sixty years after they were spoken. Critics of the Gospel of John - faced with this fact - assert that John invented these dialogues of Jesus and thus the gospel has very little historical value. The answer from a fundamentalist view is that, since we cannot assert that John had a "computer-like" mind with a sixty plus years retention memory, this Gospel was verbally inspired in contrast to "thought" inspiration for the other gospels and New Testament books. Even John's experience in penning the Revelation approaches verbal inspiration.

This leaves us with the premise that the Gospel of John states the doctrine of God as Self-revealed as God would have us know it. This eliminates in one stroke all of the extant theories being promoted either as "new light", or the authoritative "voice" of Adventist pioneers.

### God's Self Revelation in the Gospel of John

God's introduction of Himself reads:

*In the beginning was (ην) the Word, and the Word was (ην) with God, and the Word was (ην) God. The same was (ην) in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was (ην) life and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)*

The first self evident fact is that there are Two distinct Beings - the Word (λογος) and God (θεος). John did not write that the Word was "in" God, but that the Word was with (προς) God "in beginning." "Though existing eternally with God the Logos was in perfect fellowship with God. Pros with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other." (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. V, p. 4) In his first Epistle, John wrote that this Word was "that eternal life, which (ητις) was (ην) with (προς) the Father" and had been manifested unto them (I John 1:2). Again this "Eternal Life" was not "in" the eternal God, but was "with God."

Two things emerge: John here uses correct Greek grammar. A relative pronoun must agree with its antecedent in gender and number. In the Greek language, "life" is considered feminine in gender, thus "which" (η) is a feminine

relative pronoun, but combined with τις, an indefinite pronoun, conveys the added concept of "somebody in particular." (See Robertson's *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 291) This "Somebody in particular" is "the Word (λογος) of life," (v. 1) or "that Eternal Life" which was with the Father."

This is the same concept as set forth in the prologue of John's Gospel. In "Him" (the Logos) was life" (John 1:4) The same as the Word was God, the same as He was in beginning with God, so likewise there was in Him - life - eternal life, original, unborrowed, underived. The verb, ην, is the Greek imperfect tense conveying continuous action in past time. The Word was the I AM, not only the ever-existent One, but also the self-existent One.

Into this picture of God and the Word with God, as much God as God is God, came a mysterious change. Simply stated, the revelation reads - "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us" (1:14, Gr). It was the same Word in another form. He had been "Spirit" for "God is spirit" [πνευμα ο θεος] (John 4:24). Now He tabernacles in flesh. Here is the great divide in time and eternity. We have been advised that "when we want a deep problem to study" we need to "fix our minds on the most marvellous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven - the incarnation of the Son of God" (Ms. 76, 1903) Unless we do get this problem solved as far as mortals can, we will never be able to rightly reconcile this foreword in John's gospel with the concept of a "Heavenly Trio" which emerges as the result of the Incarnation.

At this point there are some implications to be drawn from the fact that God is spirit. He is of the order of "Spirit" while we, children of dust, are of the order of "flesh." Thus God Himself, whom we call "our Father" could be designated as an "Holy Spirit." In the vision given to Isaiah, he sees "the Lord sitting upon a throne," and he hears the angelic attendants crying - "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (6:1, 3) Even Jesus when tabernacling in the flesh was recognized by the demonic world as "the holy One of God" (Mark. 1:24). He had not ceased to be what He was. This designation lends credence to fact that the supplied word, "thing" in Luke 1:35 should have been rather the word, "spirit." In this, the Writings concur stating that "a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh" (4BC:147)

Further, the declaration of Jesus that "God is Spirit" was not stated in John's hearing, nor is there a record that Jesus ever gave the disciples this concept. It was spoken to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, while the disciples were away buying food. (See John 4:8, 24, 27) The context of this declaration is an added factor to the premise that the gospel of John is a verbally inspired book of divine revelation and that revelation sets forth the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps at this point of the analysis, we need to consider

the KJV translation of "only begotten" for the Greek word, μονογενης in both verses 14 and 18 of John 1. This translation, "only begotten" is used to sustain the theory that somewhere in the vast recesses of eternity, the Logos was begotten, that He was not "that Eternal Life" who with God brought all things into existence. Arias, who was to assert that Christ was "begotten of God before all ages," at least used the correct Greek word - γεγεννημενον - to define such a position. The idea that Christ was "begotten" by the Father at some time in the eternity past is altogether foreign to the Scriptures. The Greek word, μονογενης, means "unique," "only (μονο) [one] of a kind (γενης). This Jesus indeed was. Actually some of the early New Testament manuscripts read verse 18 as, μονογενης θεος - the unique, one of a kind, God. This is exactly what the Logos, in contrast to the Theos, came to be at the incarnation as a God-man.

The translation of μονογενης as "only begotten" in the gospel of John and in his first Epistle originated with the fathers of the Roman Catholic church. It entered early English translations of the Bible through the influence of the Latin Vulgate, the official Bible of the Roman church. Various Old Latin manuscripts which preceded the Vulgate simply read, "only" rather than "only begotten." The idea that Christ "was born of the Father before all creation" appears first in the writings of Origen, about A. D. 230.

### The Holy Spirit Introduced in John's Gospel

Apart from the parenthetical insertion in John 7 (v. 39), the introduction of the Spirit in its relationship to the Logos is found in the discussions of Jesus with the Eleven in the upper room and enroute to Gethsemane. Here Jesus (14:16) called Him "another Comforter" (αλλος παρακλητος). The word, παρακλητος means "called to the side of" and is used only by John in his gospel and first Epistle. In John's first letter, the term is applied to Jesus. There he wrote - "If any man sin, we have an advocate (παρακλητος) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1) The resurrected Jesus was "called to the presence of God" as man's Advocate at the "throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). There the "Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6), ministers as "the surety of a better testament" (Heb. 7:22). Because Jesus was to be a Παρακλητος, He introduced the Holy Spirit as "another (αλλος) Comforter." Αλλος conveys the concept of one distinct from the other yet as real as the one from whom He is distinct.

Jesus could have used the other Greek word for "another" - ετερος. This would have raised the question of "kind" with regard to the Παρακλητοι. Was one different from the other? This distinction and use of these two words is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians. He wrote - "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him which called you into the gospel of Christ under another (ετερος) gospel, which is not another (αλλος); but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:6-7).

The Judaizers did bring another (ετερος) gospel to the Galatians believers, but it was a perverted gospel thus it could not be another (αλλος) true proclamation of the gospel as Paul had given them. Jesus by using the word, αλλος, was telling the Eleven that the coming Comforter, though distinct from Him would be the same as He. In fact, almost in the next breath, He tells them, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (v. 18. Gr.)

The next three contexts where Παρακλητος is used by Jesus to refer to the work of the Holy Spirit, another Greek word is introduced - εκεινος - a demonstrative pronoun, translated, "he," not "it" as some impersonal Force, such as an influence. In each of these references (14:26; 15:26; 16:8), the "he" (εκεινος) refers back to the "Comforter" (παρακλητος). However, another use of εκεινος in John 16:13 and translated, "he," when grammatically, it should have been, εκεινο, and translated "it," brings to the fore, the issue regarding the Holy Spirit. It has been clearly shown that John in his first Epistle demonstrated his knowledge of proper Greek grammar. (See above on 1 John 1:2). Further, in each instance of the use of παρακλητος as noted in this paragraph, εκεινος agrees in gender with its antecedent as required grammatically. Now in 16:13, the subject is "the Spirit of truth." In the Greek, the word "Spirit" is neuter gender, and the pronoun should be the neuter, εκεινο rather than the masculine, εκεινος. This brings us to an alternative. Either John is making εκεινος, "he" refer back to the use of the word in verse 8, or to verse 7 where "Comforter" is used. The other alternative is that the verbally inspired directive was to recognize "the Spirit of truth" not as an "it," but as a "he." Commenting on this verse, A. T. Robertson wrote - "It is more evident therefore in this passage that John is insisting on the personality of the Holy Spirit, when the grammatical gender so easily called for εκεινο. (Robertson, *op.cit.*, p. 709) Or we might say that the Holy Spirit dictating to John the words of Jesus that night insisted on His rightful acknowledgement as One of the "Heavenly Trio." How perilous is it then to "do despite unto the Spirit of grace"? (Heb. 10:29)

The Gospel of John gives us the Godhead that was prior to Bethlehem; the story of redemption in the glorious revelation of the God-man full of grace and truth, the manifestation of the Logos as the unique Son of God and Son of man; and finally the composition of the "Heavenly Trio" as it now is. To say that this answers all the questions would be presumptuous, but it does give all that we need to know to avoid the errors of so called "new light" on the one hand, and the deceptive teaching of the Roman "trinity" on the other hand,

The same close relationship which makes both Jesus and the Holy Spirit a Paraclete is symbolized in the Revelation given to John on the Isle of Patmos. John sees Jesus "in the midst of the throne" as "a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes." The "horns" and

"eyes" are defined as "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6). This symbolism can only be understood when reflected against the facts that Jesus came into this world conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20), and offered Himself without spot "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14), as "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

A word in regard to the expression, "the Heavenly Trio" is in order. When teaching at Madison College, there were two Ladies Trios. When in the Church Bulletin it was indicated that one of these groups would offer the Worship in Music, a soloist did not appear, but as the three sang together there was the harmony of word and sound that lifted our hearts heavenward. The message of the New Testament is that through the mystery of the Incarnation, a God-man is united with the Godhead, and through the working of the Heavenly Trio, "one pulse of harmony and gladness (will again) beat through the vast creation."

#

## The Formulation of the Adult Lessons

After the listing of the Adult Lessons for the 4th Quarter, 1998, the student of the Bible Study Guide is asked to "Meet the Principal Contributor of this Quarter's Lessons." A brief resume of the late Dr. Edwin R. Thiele is given. Thiele gained recognition as a Biblical chronologist. "His book, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, remains the foremost authority on Bible chronology in print today." (p. 2; Teacher's Edition, p. 3) However, Dr. Thiele also wrote another book, *Knowing God*, released in 1979 by the Southern Publishing Association. It conveniently contained 13 chapters which fitted the Sabbath schedule for the 4th quarter. But the book was not reprinted as "Helps" for the study of these lessons. In fact, Thiele's book is not even mentioned as the source of his contribution. A good reason appears as to why not. The controversial third lesson, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" did not teach what the "principal contributor" taught in his chapter 3, "The Triune God."

This raises questions: Was Thiele's book used as a facade to place before the Sabbath Schools of the Church, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Trinity? Is this telling us that the Statement in the 1980 Dallas Statement of Beliefs - "There is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons" - is in reality expressing the Roman teaching on God? Or is there another factor in the background of a growing ecumenism within the Church?

Before seeking to find answers to the questions asked, it will be enlightening to know what Thiele wrote. He first stated that among the worshipers of the God of the Bible there is a "considerable difference of opinion as to what

monotheism actually is" (p. 25). He devotes a number of paragraphs to the revelation of God in Isaiah: "The one God of Isaiah was the Creator of heaven and earth." Noting what Isaiah wrote and what John and Paul stated in the New Testament, he concludes the paragraph - "God the Father and Christ the Son were united in Creation" (p. 27)

Then, he continues - "The God of Isaiah was not only the Creator, but He was also man's Saviour and Redeemer" Citing both what Isaiah wrote and the testimony of the New Testament, Thiele again concludes - "God the Father and Christ the Son were associated in saving man" (*ibid.*) What then is Dr. Thiele's summation:

*From the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation the Bible hints that the Godhead consists of more persons than one. In the opening words of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," the Hebrew word here translated "God" is Elohim, which is a masculine plural. In the last chapter of Revelation John pictures "the throne [singular] of God and of the Lamb." Jesus the Son rules with God the Father.*

*The picture we have of God in the Bible is not of divine aloneness but of fellowship, of their doing things together, planning together, talking with one another, a copartnership, a mutual concurrence and co-operation. (ibid.)*

Amplifying the concept of "fellowship," Thiele cites Biblical examples of "God conferring with God" and concludes: "The Biblical picture of God is not a single supreme being alone by Himself, unsocial, lonely, and retiring. God is love, and love craves companionship. Certainly God could talk with men or angels, but even God needed fellowship and association with an equal who could think like Him. And so God communed with God, undertaking and carrying out plans through together. They reached united decisions and put forth united effort to carry them out" (p. 28).

Entering the New Testament revelation of God, the Holy Spirit is discussed, and concluding with texts from Revelation, Thiele wrote - "So the last chapter of the Bible refers to all Three Members of the Heavenly Triad" (p. 31). This expression, or "the Three Personages of the Holy Triad" (p. 34) is Thiele's definitive interpretation of "the Heavenly Trio."

The Sabbath school lesson stated - "If we equate human personality [and Thiele did] with God, we would say that three persons means three individuals. But then we would have three God, or tritheism" (p. 24) In the current controversy in the community of Adventism on this vital point, Thiele's contribution to the Lessons was set aside by some unknown author. Who? We are not informed. Why? The way it has been done is deceptive. By using the name of a well respected theologian, to forward an agenda which seeks to mould the thinking of the members of the Church toward the cardinal doctrine of Romanism

evidences "Jesuitical" fingerprints.

#

## An Overlooked Factor

The controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity is a growing issue in Adventism with advocates of non-Trinitarian views propagating their various theologies on several continents. There is no question that the Roman doctrine of the Trinity is gross error, but then are the various theologies being set forth as truth any less error? To denigrate in any way the Deityship of Jesus Christ; to do despite to the Spirit of truth is merely substituting one error for another. The Gospel of John sets for God: in the Prologue, God prior to Bethlehem and the Incarnation - "the Word became flesh." In the unfolding of that incarnate life, John is very plain as to his objective - "that ye might believe that Jesus [the Incarnate Word as man] is the Messiah, the Son of God" (20:31). Nowhere in his Gospel does he apply the term, "Son of God" to the pre-existent Word. We may eisegetically read this into what John wrote, but he did not so state.

The overall picture, though not so stated, is implicitly the two Adam's motif of Paul's epistles. Luke had declared of Adam - "which was the son of God" (3:38). Now in John, the Word became flesh, a Son of man, but He came to be a second Adam, a Son of God. It is this God-man, who was received into the Godhead that the divine objective in the Creation of man might be realized in a second Adam. The Word became "us" (Matt. 1:23), and "we" today sit in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). Simply stated it was God's purpose to have a "created" being represented in the Godhead. "Man was the crowning act in the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a *counterpart of God*" (R&H, June 18, 1895; emphasis supplied). Further, "All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in this world and of man. *Human beings were a new and distinct order.* (R&H, Feb. 11, 1902; emphasis supplied). More, "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, 21, 1885; emphasis supplied).

All of this present controversy obliterates the plan of redemption, and the price paid "to regain possession of the one pearl of great price" (*op. cit.*, 1895) These various anti-Trinitarian theologies of the Godhead fail to take into account the mystery of the Incarnation, though unexplainable, nevertheless the fact of what happened can be accepted by simple faith from the revelation of the Scriptures. It is the Incarnation alone that can bridge the gap between the revelation of God as set forth in John 1:1-2, and "the Heavenly Trio" as defined in the Writings.

#

## WHITHER BOUND?

At the beginning of this issue, we noted that "the mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith" (See, p. 2). The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sets the formulation of its body of teachings in this doctrine. The Catechism distinguishes between, "I believe," and "We believe." The "I believe" is the *Apostles Creed*, while the corporate, "We believe" is the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*. (par. 167) It is this later Creed which is summarized in "one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit," - the Trinity doctrine. Based on this "we believe," the Catechism moves to a summary point - "Believing' is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith ["We believe"] precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes our faith ["I believe"]. The Church is the mother of all believers. 'No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother' (St. Cyprian, *De unit.*)" (Par. 181) The steps back to Rome are simply: 1) Belief in one God ["We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Par. 178)]; and 2) "The Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding of the life of faith" (par. 171). This "language of faith" is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Now follow carefully some history. The Faith and Order Commission (FOC), the theological arm of the World Council of Churches (WCC) as well as the WCC itself have a common aim - "to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship," (Constitution of WCC, III, 1; See *So Much in Common*, p. 40) [It should be noted in passing that the Roman Catholic Church has twelve theologians on this Commission, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church has one. The vice-moderator, Jean-Marie Tillard, is a Roman Catholic]

To promote this unity of one faith, a Faith and Order study is seeking "to discover whether Christians today can confess their faith together ecumenically." They "will not write out a new ecumenical confession of faith. Rather, it asks whether churches today can 'witness to, confess, live out and celebrate in common. ... the same apostolic faith that was expressed in Holy Scriptures and summarized in the creeds of the early church. For this study, the Faith and Order Commission has chosen the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381 - already recognized by many churches - as a summary of the apostolic faith." (*One World*, #132, p. 15)

To aid in an understanding of this Creed, the FOC prepared a study document - *Confessing the One Faith*. In its preface, Jean-Marie Tillard OP, Moderator of the Apostolic Faith Steering Group, wrote:

*The coming together of all Christians in an authentic communion of faith, evangelical life and mission requires the common confession of the apostolic faith. ... The*

document *Confessing the One Faith Is an Instrument to draw the churches to a common understanding of this faith, which has to be confessed, especially in the celebration of baptism and eucharist, and proclaimed through missionary work for all Christian communities.* (p. viii)

In the "document" itself, the Creed is given in both Greek and English. Then the "Explication" - the act of explaining its meaning - begins. We shall quote one paragraph. Note the same emphasis on the wording as is emphasized in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

*The Nicene Creed as a confession of faith belongs to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. In the Nicene Creed the individual joins all the baptized together in each and every place, now and throughout the ages, in the Church's proclamation of faith: "we believe in." The confession "we believe in" articulates not only the trust of individuals in God's grace, but it also affirms the trust of the whole Church of God. There is a bond of communion among those who join together in making a common confession of their faith. However, as long as the churches which confess the Creed are not united with one another, the visible communion of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church remains impaired.* (p. 15)

In 1993 a world conference on Faith and Order convened in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. At this conference held in the Roman Cathedral, the delegates heard the Moderator state that the task of this conference was to "re-vision the goal of visible unity" in terms of *koinonia* [communion] which she termed "the most promising theme of contemporary ecumenical theology." During the session, one Orthodox theologian said that "the church as *koinonia* is rooted in faith in God as trinitarian." The official report of the conference "depicted this shared life of Christians as rooted in the Triune God, who is 'the ultimate reality of relational life.' Consequently, 'unity and diversity are inseparable.'" (*One World*, No. 189, p. 15)

On the last day of the conference, Jean-Marie Tillard, the vice-moderator, suggested "that consideration be given to 'a gathering of all the major leaders in the churches - perhaps in Jerusalem - simply to sing the creed together.'" Without specifying a date, he said that such an act "would be a wonderful expression of the degree of unity already present and of its origin." (*ibid.*) With the Pope desirous of being in Jerusalem, and the planned Jubilee year for A.D. 2000, the details are not hard to perceive.

Think a bit. A new Roman Catechism seeking to place the Church's teachings in the frame work of the Apostolic Creeds, and using the Nicene Creed to express its basic teaching; the Faith and Order Commission of the WWC choosing as the confession for "visible unity" the same Creed, and choosing as moderator of the Steering Committee to achieve that objective, a Roman Catholic priest, where are we? Are not the words of Ezekiel apropos? "Evil on evil says the Lord Eternal - it is coming, the hour

has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" (Eze. 7:5-6, Moffatt)

In this whole picture, there are some facts which every member of the Adventist Community must consider: 1) The Church in General Session at Dallas, Texas, in 1980 wrote into the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, the summary of the Nicene Creed. Statement 2. The Trinity reads - "There is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons." Now in 1998, the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide states:

*The doctrine of the Trinity, then, is a safeguard against unbiblical ideas. Historically, every great revival has adhered to complete Trinitarianism. It is not too much to say that the Trinity is the point on which all Christian ideas and interest focus, at once the beginning and the end of all true insight into Christianity.* (Teacher's Edition, p. 37)

Is not this the declared position of Romanism? Note again - "The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it based all the other teachings of the Church." Is there not then just one answer to the question - Where did the Sabbath School Lesson #3 for the 4th Quarter seek to lead the members of the Church? And the answer, "In the track of Romanism!" Dare one stay in that track? #

+++++

Note: There are other aspects of this subject which lack of space prohibited our discussing. These we shall discuss in a future regular issue.

+++++

An American architect and engineer, R. Buckminster Fuller wrote - "God is a verb [I AM], not a noun." Something to think about.

+++++

"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854, USA.

Editor, Publications & Research

Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

Regional Contacts:

Australia - P. O. Box 5023, Wodonga Plaza, VIC 3690

Canada - P. O. Box 117, Thorne, ON POH 2J0

The Caribbean - P. O. Box GM 537, Castries, St. Lucia

Any portion of the Thought Paper may be reproduced without further permission by adding the credit line - "Reprinted from WWN, Ozone, Arkansas, USA."

Current copy free upon request; previous and duplicate copies - 50c.

800-4-LAYMEN (800-452-9636)

FAX - (501) 292-3745; Regular Calls - (501) 292-3721