

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH
IN MODERN ADVENTIST ANTI-TRINITARIAN LITERATURE

by

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April 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Statement of the Purpose	2
Methodology	2
II. BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE RECOGNITION OF TRUTH	4
Philosophical Considerations.....	4
Main Philosophers	4
The Search for Truth	6
Logic as Grammar for Thinking	7
The Purpose and Possibilities of Science	8
Theological Considerations	10
The Historical Critical Method.....	10
Revelation and Inspiration.....	13
Different Views on Inspiration	15
The Sources and the <i>Norma Normans</i> in Theology	18
III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN MODERN ADVENTIST ANTI-TRINITARIAN LITERATURE	21
The Trinity and Teaching of God in General.....	21
The Doctrine of the Trinity is Unreasonable	22
The Doctrine of the Trinity is Unscriptural	23
The Doctrine of the Trinity is of Human Origin	25
The Teaching on the Holy Spirit.....	27
The Personality of the Holy Spirit.....	27
The Work of the Holy Spirit.....	30

IV. THE HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH IN MODERN ADVENTIST ANTI-TRINITARIAN LITERATURE.....	32
Premises and Assumptions	32
A Critical View of Theologians	32
The Revelation and Recognition of Truth do not Develop	33
The Question of the Last Norm	34
A False Understanding of Mystery	35
A Simplistic Black and White Thinking	35
The Methods	37
A Literalistic Reading of the Text	37
Ways to Deal with Problem Texts.....	39
The Selection of Information.....	46
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	48
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	51
Books	51
Periodicals.....	54
Unpublished Materials.....	56
Internet Materials	57

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The last decade saw a rise of Anti-Trinitarian attitudes in Adventism all over the world.¹ It seems to be an interconnected movement that is spreading more and more, especially among the more conservative Adventists.² These Anti-Trinitarian views draw very clear and sharp lines

¹In the United States see e.g. Lynnford Beachy, ed., *What did the Pioneers Believe?: Quotes from Early Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers* (Welch, W.Va.: Smyrna Gospel Ministry, 1996); Allen Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith: Over 150 years of Seventh-day Adventist Christology*, 5th ed. (Welch, W.Va.: Smyrna Gospel Ministry, 2003) Fred Allaback, “No new leaders ... No new Gods!: Holland 1995, 56th Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session,” (Creal Springs, Ill., 1995). For the German speaking countries see e.g. Bruno Fischer, *Ist das wirklich so?*, Schriftenreihe: “Von Unmündigen für Unmündige,” vol. 1 (Groß Gottschow: 2003); A. C. Gurtner, *Fragen zur Trinität: Antworten aus dem Worten Gottes*, 1st ed. (Missionsdienst Heart for Truth, 2005). Reports on the spreading of Semi-Arian views among Adventists see Denis Fortin, “God, the Trinity, and Adventism: An Introduction to the Issues,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 5, 9; Merlin D. Burt, “History of the Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 125; Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 8, 9; Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 114.

²David Clayton, “Das Licht scheint in Europa,” *Heart for Truth Newsletter*, September 2007: 1-8, gives e.g. a report on missionary activities in Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. The Anti-Trinitarian periodical *Present Truth* has many mission reports about camp meetings and missionary activities in Africa (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, Benin, Ghana), South America (Peru, Brazil), Europe (Germany, Denmark, Romania, Hungary, Poland), Australia, Asia (India), the Caribbean Islands (Dominican Republic, Jamaica), and North America (Canada, Utah, Arizona, California, Minnesota, Arkansas, Tennessee, Maine, Colorado, West Virginia, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Washington, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Montana). They have their own radio program which covers much of the eastern United States. See Lynnford Beachy, “New Radio Program,”

that are recognized by almost every more or less informed Adventist. The concept of the trinity is denied. The Son of God is not really God but only a being somehow derived of the Father in eternal ages past. The Holy Spirit is not a person but only an influence coming forth from the Father and the Son. What most people do not understand is that an adoption of these views is always inevitably combined with a special hermeneutical attitude. The adoption of these views presupposes several philosophical and theological changes in the mindset. The mostly unconscious embrace of these philosophical and theological *a priori* leads more and more to an insensibility to the Holy Spirit's working.

Statement of the Purpose

It is the purpose of this study to show that the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity and the personality of the Holy Spirit by modern Adventist Anti-Trinitarians is directly connected to their philosophical and hermeneutical approach to the Bible in search for the truth, and that this attitude makes them less and less sensible to the Holy Spirit's working.

Methodology

First, I want to give some foundational philosophical considerations on how human beings can recognize truth. Further, the function of logic is discussed, the possibilities and limitations of science, the search for an appropriate method in studying the Bible, the biblical self

Present Truth, December 2004: 5. They try to do evangelism through internet phone broadcasts that is available for many overseas countries. See idem, "Live Internet Phone Broadcasts," *Present Truth*, December 2006: 3. At the end of 2007 they even wanted to open a training center. See David Sims, "A New Training Center Opening Soon," *Present Truth*, September 2007: 9. They want to improve their outreach by training the local groups how to do personal Bible studies, small group studies, outreach, friendship evangelism, bridge events, reaping meetings, and follow up.

witness on revelation and inspiration, as well as the sources of theology and their authority of these.

Second, I want to examine what modern Adventist Anti-Trinitarians believe in regard to the personality and the work of the Holy Spirit. Preceding this the general context is giving in which this teaching stands, namely their understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Their denial of the Trinitarian concept is inseparably connected to their denial of the Spirit's personhood. This section is concluded by a brief survey of their thinking on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Third, I want to analyze their hermeneutical approach to that topic in particular and to the doctrine of the Trinity in general. The basic hermeneutic principles of the Anti-Trinitarians are (1) traditionalism, (2) straight logic, (3) literalism (in contrast to biblical exegesis), and even (4) the historical-critical method. In order to supply evidence for that there will be some examples. On the point of literalism there will be some examples of biblical exegetical research.

Fourth, the result of the study is summarized and several connections are drawn between their philosophical as well as hermeneutical attitude/approach and their understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER II
BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE RECOGNITION OF TRUTH

Philosophical Considerations

Philosophy is the critical rational attempt to interpret the world and the human existence at large by the process of thinking. Main areas of philosophy are logic, ethics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science. Many of the ancient philosophers were driven by the search of an answer to the question, What is truth? One might answer immediately that human perception helps to recognize the truth. However, this answer holds several problems, and during the history of humanity several ways were considered to solve these.

Main Philosophers

Plato (427 – 347 B.C.)¹ acknowledged that different persons may perceive and recount the same events and things differently. He concluded that the human perception is not a good guide in order to recognize the truth. Everything around man would be only a pale shadow of the

¹Johannes Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1949), 62, 65.

reality, what partly led to his teaching of the ideas.¹ Plato became the founder of the rational thinking humanities. The followers of Plato attempted to search for God in out of body experiences (orphyic cults).

Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.)² believed that the ideas have no value in themselves but that there is matter that can be perceived, seen, and touched. He became the founder of the experimental natural sciences.³ His understanding of God was less transcendent and mystical. He thought to find and prove God through the path of natural sciences.

Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804 A.D.) developed the transcendental epistemology. According to him we need both, reason and the examination of matter. Nothing can be categorized and systemized if reason is not used. It is necessary to observe, analyze, and come to new theories and findings.⁴

The Greek philosophers tried to perceive God through the above two ways. They searched for God with the means they had in order to get nigh to the question of God and through

¹Ibid., 77-90; Fernando Luis Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 10 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1987), 87-88.

²Hirschberger, 134, 136.

³Ibid., 144, 145, 152, 154-157; Canale, 90-95.

⁴Ibid., 96-104.

it to the question of truth. The Hebrews, however, had prophets and therefore revelation.¹ The Bible makes clear that we can understand truth only when it is revealed.²

The Search for Truth

Like in the past it is important to define just what truth is all about. There are several definitions here and there that are voiced as the basic element of the truth. (a) The corresponding theory of truth states that, “A statement is true just when it is true.” This statement is a tautology that is only helpful in the case of already known truths. But how can someone expand his/her knowledge of the true things? One solution could be that it must be revealed. The sum of all truths is the sum of all sentences that could be expressed of what exists or does not exist. Who alone can, as an issue of possible thinking, know the sum of all true sentences? Only God because he created and made all things.³ If Jesus is God then He can say what is truth. If the Holy Spirit is God He can say what is truth.

(b) The coherence theory of truth says that, “A statement is true when it suits without contradiction into a concept.” This is an attempt to get as close to the truth as possible but that

¹It is interesting that most of the Greek words for knowing and knowledge are related to the visual faculty. However, in the Hebrew OT “the emphasis is upon the significance of hearing and of the word in its being spoken.” See Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek*, The Library of History and Doctrine (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1960), 201; c.f. Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, Translated by Michael Francis Gibson (New York: Desclee Company, 1960), 123, 124.

²Canale, 196-198; Thomas F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 165, 167; Helge Stadelmann, *Grundlinien eines bibeltreuen Schriftverständnisses* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1985), 10; Adrio König, “Theology,” in *Introduction to Theology*, ed. I. H. Eybers, Adrio König, and J. A. Stoop. 2nd rev. and enl. ed. (Pretoria: D. R. Church Booksellers, 1978), 27.

³Ibid., 27.

does not necessarily mean that it is really true. Consistent lines of indices are not sufficient in court.

(c) The consensus theory of truth declares that, “A statement is true when we can agree on it without threatening or forcing anyone. We agree on a certain truth.” Here psychology enters into philosophy. That definition of truth is useless. It does not matter to a certain thing what we think about it.

Logic as Grammar for Thinking

Logic provides a kind of grammar for thinking. Kant called it “the necessary laws of thinking.”¹ It helps to think in a consistent and consequent way but does not say anything about the truthfulness of the content. When something is true it is logical, but not everything that is logical is also true. A consistent line of conclusions can lead to a wrong result in regard to the content. The cause is not the logic but wrong information put into the consideration. There are three principles of thought: (a) the principle of identity, (b) the principle of contradiction, and (c) the principle of the excluded middle.²

¹Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Introduction to Logic, and His Essay on the Mistaken Subtlety of the Four Figures*, Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), 6.

²*Metaph.*, IV.iii.9 – IV.v.7; VII.141a.15-20. See also Aristotle, *The Metaphysics, with an English Translation by Hugh Tredennick*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 161-185; Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 183. Some philosophers add a fourth principle, “the principle of sufficient reason.” See Kant, 43, 44. He contracts the first two principles to one “principle of contradiction and identity.”

Truth is accordance with reality, and it is not influenced by human knowledge or opinion. It is the purpose of science to discover which statements or sentences are true or false. The amount of true sentences does not change over time. Something that is true is true as a matter of principle whether human beings know of it or not. So God and His truths cannot be proven by scientific means. A person can believe in God's existence but cannot know it. Philosophy does not prove God's being there. It gives only the pattern for thinking where the thinking of human beings ceases and the dependence on the revelation of God begins. If the thinking is disciplined in such a way, there will be organization in the person's mind.

The Purpose and Possibilities of Science

A certain thing is scientific if it can be affirmed independently by a person through experiments. Another person must be able to reconstruct and accomplish the same result at another place and another time. A scientific statement can be checked. If that is impossible, the statement is not scientific. It can still be true. It means only that science does not have the means to verify or falsify it. Scientific truth is knowledge that was tested and verified by facts.

Science can only explore a certain part of the existing truths of the universe. It misses the means and the methods to find all the truths. So the sum of all true sentences is far greater than what science can verify or falsify. Further, in the area that science can explore it can only draw nearer to the truth. A thesis is set up, and experiments are run to prove or disprove the thesis. A person has specific information and tries to put these into a logical picture. However, there is

never all the information available, and so the picture of reality is always a little bit distorted.¹

That is the reason why it is the goal to get as many information on a certain matter to get as near to the truth as possible.

Theologians should work scientifically in that sense, and analyze what the Scriptures say or do not say on a certain point.² If two scholars worked consistent (logical) they should come to the same conclusion, unless they used different information (too few information; only a certain part of information; or their approach to the Scriptures cause them to interpret specific information differently).

God is far greater than what can be proven scientifically, and what we can think of.³ There do not exist any means and methods to find out more about God and His supernatural truths. Any mere rational considerations about Him and these truths without revelation will result in pure speculation. Revelation from God is necessary to get to know more about Him and the

¹König, 23.

²Stadelmann, 119-122, proposes a biblical epistemology.

³Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2003), 71. Tresmontant states that in this world there are no absolutes, but the absolute can be known by the world because it was created. "Without creation [...] God would not be known." He is the absolute. See Claude Tresmontant, *Christian Metaphysics*, Translated by Gerard Slevin (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1965), 37-39, 42, 43. The created things show that there is a supernatural being, although they do not reveal anything about his characteristics. Reason can recognize that there is a God. However, revelation is necessary to address human reason. God speaks to human reason by revelation. See *ibid.*, 120, 125; Stadelmann, 10.

supernatural truths.¹ God revealed himself to human beings through prophets, apostles, and His Son, Jesus Christ.²

Theological Considerations

The term “hermeneutics” is derived from the two Greek words ἐρμηνεία (interpretation, explanation, translation) and ἐρμηνεύω (interpret, translate, explain). The Latin counterpart is *interpretatio*. Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation, and deals with the basic principles for the right interpretation of a given text. When someone studies a text or does exegesis, he is influenced by his conscious or unconscious hermeneutic premises. These affect the means and ways that are used in the interpretation. Everyone has some opinions and premises which influence his understanding of the text and his interpretation. The approach and the principles, with which I study the Bible, decide what conclusions I will reach.

The Historical Critical Method

One approach to the interpretation of the biblical text is the so called historical critical method. It is used in a pure but also in a more or less adapted form.¹ The basic principles of this method were formulated by Ernst Troeltsch in a classical way.

¹Claude Tresmontant, *Le problème de la Révélation* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 79-93; Raoul Dederen, “The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers,” in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, and Leo van Dolson, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 10, 11; Stadelmann, 11; Torrance, 165.

²Raoul Dederen, “Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics,” in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 6, 7.

It is about three essential parts, the habituation to the historical critique as a matter of principle, the significance of analogy, and the correlation that happens between all historic events.²

The meaning of these principles is explained in the following paragraphs. (a) Critique: The reader does not turn to the Bible in an attitude of faith in the truthfulness of its statements but in a critical, prejudiced attitude that is effected by analogy and correlation. It is a methodical critique that mistrusts the statements of the text categorically. The author did not want to describe what really happened but what the afterworld should think about it.³

¹There are several theologians that use an adapted form of the historical-critical method, although the extent of the adoption may vary. See e.g. Jack H. Hexter, *Doing History* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1971); Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1975), 61; Ferdinand Hahn, "Probleme historischer Kritik," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums* 63 (1973): 1-17; Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974); Gordon Wenham, "History and the Old Testament," in *History, Criticism & Faith: Four Exploratory Studies*, ed. Colin Brown (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 13-75; I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Exeter, N.H.: Paternoster, 1977), 134-137; idem, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977); Bernhard Oestreich, "Vergleich der historisch-kritischen mit der biblisch-historischen Methode," *Spes Christiana* 11 (2000):23-45; Rolf Pöhler, "Historische und Kritische Überlegungen zur historisch-kritischen Methode," (Unpublished manuscript), n.d.

²Ernst Troeltsch, *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik*, reprint, 2nd ed., *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962), 731; c.f. Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 85-88, 107-115; Edward H. Carr, *What Is History?*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1962); Krentz, 59; Gerhard F. Hasel, "General Principles of Interpretation," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 165, 166.

³Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today: An Analysis of Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation and Proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 77-78.

(b) Analogy: The experience of the present time is the standard for the understanding of the past. The things that happened in the past must have taken place in an analogical way as the things that are known today. Analogy becomes the foundation for the principles of critique.¹

(c) Correlation: Everything that happens in this world has a cause. If there is an effect there must be a cause. This cause-effect-correlation is purely immanent, absolutely in history. The world is a closed system where one cannot assume a supernatural intervention from the outside.²

In this method faith has no entrance and no significance. This method renounces inevitably a supernatural source. The Bible is treated as every other historical work. This is a closed worldview. The method as such is atheistic from its very first principles.³ The work is done as if there is no God, no Holy Spirit.⁴

¹Ibid., 75-77.

²Ibid., 73-75. Some scholars recognize the possibility of events that are beyond what we can fathom, although these cannot be used in the formation of a history of events. See Marc L. B. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, Translated by Peter Putnam, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1953), 130-132; Carr, 102-104.

³Several objections to the historical-critical method are listed by e.g. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, 93-97; Hans-Jürgen Peters, "Die historisch-kritische Methode unter der Lupe: Beiträge zu den Motiven der historisch-kritischen Bibelauslegung sowie eine Bilanz," *idea Dokumentation*, no. 9 (1998); Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode*, 2nd ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1975); Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1973). The method does not do justice to the Bible truth. See Hasel, "General Principles of Interpretation," 167.

⁴There are many theologians that work with the different methods of the historical critical theology although they believe in the existence of God and stand true to many other Bible doctrines. I do not want to judge them. However, the described approach to the Bible and the chosen method are based on atheistic principles. Hasel says in *ibid.*, 167, that if this method is applied to the Bible there is no room for God to act in history.

Normally the thing to be examined decides which method should be used for the examination.¹ What does the Bible say about itself? What was the attitude of the biblical authors in regard to the text existing at their time? How treated Jesus, Luke, or Paul the Old Testament? So the Bible needs to be consulted concerning itself first, and then a decision can be made regarding an appropriate method.² If the decision for a certain method is made prior to the consultation, then any method is imposed on the object of investigation (the Bible) in a biased way. The Bible reveals a unique reality that wants to be taken seriously.³ It speaks about God himself and about His will. The researcher is not allowed to manipulate the object that it fits his method.

Revelation and Inspiration

According to the Scriptures revelation is that God shows things that are unknown and hidden to human beings (Dan 2:22). The English term “inspiration” is derived from the Latin word *inspirata*. The Greek term is θεόπνευστος, and means “breathed by God, coming from

¹So the examination of a chemical matter requires a different method than that of a physical object. See also Torrance, 165; König, 21.

²There are some scholars who look at the biblical self-witness before forming a method. See Stadelmann, 22-32; Dederen, “The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon,” 12-15; Eckhard Schnabel, *Inspiration und Offenbarung: Die Lehre vom Ursprung und Wesen der Bibel* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1986), 108-127. Schnabel makes clear that the hermeneutical premises are foundational in the decision for a certain method. See *ibid.*, 185-188. Frank B. Holbrook, “New Testament Uses and Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 127-141, shows the basic presuppositions of the NT writers and the hermeneutical principles employed by the NT writers.

³Stadelmann, 7-10, advocates that theology’s necessary main task is to regain an understanding of the Bible that is faithful to it.

God.” God reveals himself, His will, and important messages to certain people.¹ Further, these people were inspired by the Holy Spirit and the result corresponds in its content with what God has revealed. In the Old Testament the scripture is always the Word of God. All scripture, *πᾶσα γραφή*, means never only a book, but always the whole literature. The whole literature of the Old Testament is inspired and brought forth by God. The messages of the prophets were seen as the message of God.² In the Old Testament the speech often changes from the third person (prophet) to the first person (God).³ In the New Testament it says repeatedly “it is written.” The biblical writer itself equates that with “God has said.” That what the Scripture says is that what God says.⁴ The New Testament quotes sometimes from the Old Testament and it reads “the Scripture says” when in the OT it is written “God says.”⁵ For the biblical writers this book was not only a mere human reflection about God, but for them God himself is the one who encounters them in this book.⁶ The Bible itself claims that it comes from God. Even the words of the apostles and the writers of the New Testament were embraced by the believers as God’s word (1Thess 2:13).⁷

¹Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1st British ed., reprint (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 34; Dederen, „Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics,“ 4-6.

²2 Kgs 21:10; 2 Chr 36:15-16.

³Isa 3:1-4; Jer 5:3-4; Hos 6:3-4; Joel 2:23, 25; Zech 9:4, 7.

⁴Heb 1:5-13; Rom 9:17; Gal 3:8.

⁵Rom 3:2; 1:2.

⁶Rom 15:4-5; Acts 1:16; 4:25; cp. Exod 4:11, 12, 15, 16; Jer 36:1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 17, 18, 23-25.

⁷Hasel, “General Principles of Interpretation,” 164.

The Bible builds a special relationship between God and the interpreter. This relation is called obedience.¹ When God speaks through a prophet or an inspired person then the words are God's word and it is His will. These words have authority and He expects obedience to these words. Disobedience is seen as sin. The communication between God and man was interrupted by sin. If I as a human being want to understand what God wants to say then I must be willing to surrender myself to Him and to be changed by Him.² It is impossible to have knowledge about God apart from His Spirit, and through him we understand.³

Different Views on Inspiration

There are different definitions on how divine inspiration works. (a) Mechanic Inspiration: Every word of the Holy Scripture was dictated by the Holy Spirit word for word. The human side and dimension is totally eliminated. The writer is a will-less person who does exactly what the Holy Spirit dictates. There are only few people who have adopted this view.

¹Dederen, "The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers," 27-29.

²Frank M. Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, and Leo van Dolson, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 212; c.f. I. H. Eybers, "Old Testament Science," in *Introduction to Theology*, ed. I. H. Eybers, Adrio König, and J. A. Stoop. 2nd rev. and enl. ed. (Pretoria: D. R. Church Booksellers, 1978), 65; König, 25, cites Torrance who says, "To know the truth is to be in a right relation to him, to be in the truth with the Truth. To know this Truth in a medium and in a mode appropriate to him is to do the truth and to live the truth, to be true."

³Torrance, 165, 167. Further, the Holy Spirit will never contradict the wording of the Bible because he himself was the one who inspired the writers of the Bible. See Stadelmann, 116. The reader needs divine illumination in order to understand the written text. Then he will also understand that God addresses him personally through His word. See Dederen, "Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics," 13.

(b) Verbal Inspiration: This term is used quite often but does not always mean the very same thing. Actually it means that inspiration has an influence on the *verbum*, the word. Inspiration influences the result. Representatives of this view dissociate clearly from mechanic inspiration. However, this term is often confused with the above term. Because so many people will understand verbal inspiration in the sense of mechanic inspiration a use of this term is discouraged.¹

(c) Thought Inspiration: The writer or his thoughts are inspired. The Holy Spirit gives thoughts, which the biblical writers use in order to write these thoughts down with their own words through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Normally that means the inspiration of the thoughts as well as a process of watching over the resulting product. However, some people use this term and confine its meaning only to the thoughts. The prophet is cast upon himself and that is why in the process of writing it down there can creep the one or the other mistake. Only the thoughts would be inspired and inspiration would have no influence upon the resulting product. So this term is also disqualified for use.²

¹Gerhard Maier, *Biblische Hermeneutik*, 2nd ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1991), 94-100; Schnabel, 160, 161.

²Ibid., 162, calls it also personal inspiration or real inspiration. He states that the inspirational process is not only working in the thoughts of the writer but has an influence too on the result.

(d) Plenary Inspiration: Some people want to avoid the term verbal inspiration because of the negative use of it. They want to express by this new term that all the scriptures are inspired. They want to disconnect and get free from the term verbal inspiration.¹

(e) Wholistic Inspiration: Inspiration is a wholistic process that influences the person, the thoughts, and the resulting product.²

The text in 2Tim 3:16-17 shows that inspiration cannot be limited only on the thoughts. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. The Scripture is the resulting written product, the *verbum*, the word. In the biblical sense it is a wholistic inspiration. The Bible does not define directly and in every aspect how it happens. But the biblical writers suppose that inspiration affects also the resulting product. What use has a thought inspiration in regard to the reliability and credibility if the resulting product is defective? According to the Bible God reveals Himself and certain information to selected people. The Holy Spirit inspires these people that they can express these information with their own words. The Holy Spirit also watches the whole process so that resulting product corresponds with what God has revealed.³ Else revelation as well as inspiration makes no sense.

¹Ibid., 161, 162; Maier, *Biblische Hermeneutik*, 100-105.

²Ibid., 100-105; c.f. Schnabel, 167-185.

³Bernard E. Seton, "Interpretation of Biblical History, Wisdom, and Poetry," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 196, 197; Dederen, "The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon," 15-22; idem, "Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics," 8, 11, 12.

The choice of an adequate method for the study of the Bible presupposes an understanding of the attitude and the approach of the biblical writers and persons to the biblical writings.¹ Some hermeneutical principles can be derived for a biblical hermeneutic. Such principles might be: (a) to have respect for God and His word; (c) to see God as the source of this word; (c) to have an open and obedient attitude toward God and His word.² Based on these foundational principles can be formed a method that stands in accord with the self witness of the Bible.³

The Sources and the *Norma Normans* in Theology

In theology there are four sources: (a) the Bible; (b) tradition; (c) reason; and (d) experience. Normally all four sources are consulted and used in the study of a certain topic. Although the Bible may be used very much by certain researchers this is no guarantee that it is also the *norma normans* for their interpretation and final conclusions. In the question of God the application of these four sources as a last norm may happen in the following way:

(a) In the history of the church there may have been several understandings of the nature of God and the Holy Spirit. One view may have been the favorite of a major group. The

¹Ibid., 3, suggests that the „interpreter’s understanding of the whole message of Scripture and his view of the nature and authority of the Bible largely determine his hermeneutical methods“.

²Ibid., 3. Further, he states that faith is essential to understand God and His word (pp. 3, 4).

³The consideration of principles for a biblical approach to the study of the Bible can be found in Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, 100-111, c.f. Stadelmann, 88-116

understanding or its formulation is no guarantee for its truthfulness. Another view may have been a favorite of a minor group, but that does not make this view the truth. The study of history

(b) Some people long for a true experience of the Holy Spirit. Then they make some experiences, and they think that certain Bible texts confirm their experience. There may be the danger Other people do not make experiences of which the Bible speaks. So they think that it is not meant literally. Here experience becomes the *norma normans*. The Bible loses its power in the life of the believer. Certain Bible words are mere words of human beings and not God's word.

(c) Still other people think very logically. That is not bad. But if there are certain statements in the Bible that do not fit into their thought building, than they are either later changed or to be interpreted different. Reason becomes the last norm. Reason becomes the judge over what is God's word or what was edited (without having any evidence for it). The Bible loses its power in the life of the believer. The believer deprives himself the foundation, because he makes himself a judge over acceptable and unacceptable texts of the Scripture.

(d) The Bible should be studied exegetically.¹ Finally, all the studies should be put together and it should be put into a system that makes sense.² The result should be seen as a biblical teaching and be believed. The study of history (church- and advent history) can help the scholar to see how certain beliefs developed over time and from which sources certain views

¹Idem, "General Principles of Interpretation," 170-191.

²Peter Maarten van Bemmelen, *Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 13 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1988), 380.

came. The last norm for the understanding of the believer should be the Scripture. Reason, experience, and tradition must be tested by Scripture.¹ Scripture is the last norm and is its own interpreter.²

¹Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," 212, puts it this way: "Instead of setting myself up as the final norm, as one who could judge 'objectively' by reason or experience alone without a genuine faith commitment to God, Christ, and the Word of God which is given to us through the Holy Spirit, I had come to realize that the Word of God actually judges me." Further, he adds, "When the Bible is no longer accepted as the final authority, then I have to produce a human 'work.' It may be through philosophy, science, psychology, or history".

²Idem, "General Principles of Interpretation," 167-169.

CHAPTER III
THE HOLY SPIRIT
IN MODERN ADVENTIST ANTI-TRINITARIAN LITERATURE

The Trinity and Teaching of God in General

Since the beginning of the 3rd millennium several Adventist scholars in North America and Europe responded to the rising interest in the doctrine of the Trinity by clarifying how the Adventist teaching on that topic did develop and change.¹ However, there is apparently no study that has the modern Adventist Anti-Trinitarian literature in view.

Following the argumentation of the Christian Connexion in the first half of the 19th century and the Seventh-day Adventists in the second half of the 19th century, the modern

¹Merlin D. Burt, “Demise of Semi-Arianism and Anti-Trinitarianism in Adventist Theology (1888–1957),” (Term Paper, Andrews University, 1996); idem, “History of the Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity”; Gerhard Pfandl, “The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Adventists,” Shelf Document (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, June 1999); Whidden, Moon and Reeve, *The Trinity*; Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003): 275-293; idem, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1”; Michael Dörnbrack, “Die Rolle Ellen Whites bei der Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre in der Adventgemeinde: Aussagen, Auswirkungen und Reaktionen,” (Term Paper, Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, 2004). There were already some scholars in the last 50 years who did present studies on the development from a Semi-Arian view on the Godhead to a Trinitarian understanding of God in Adventist history. See Erwin R. Gane, “The Arian or Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen G. White Answer,” (M.A. Thesis, Andrews University, 1962); Russell Holt, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: Its Rejection and Acceptance,” (Term Paper, Andrews University, 1969); Hans Varmer, “Analysis of the Seventh-day Adventist Pioneer Anti-Trinitarian Position,” (Term Paper, Andrews University, 1972).

Adventist Anti-Trinitarians base the main reasons for their objection to the Trinitarian concept on three points: (1) The doctrine is unreasonable. (2) It is unscriptural, and (3) of human origin.¹

The Doctrine of the Trinity is Unreasonable

Gurtner criticizes the, in her view, oftentimes contradictory argumentation of Trinitarians.² Further, she adds that the Trinitarian doctrine cannot answer all the questions.³ It creates only still more questions.⁴ The interpretation of several Bible texts, that are used in support of the doctrine, is not consistent in itself. Two teachings that contradict each other cannot be both true.⁵

Fischer wants to show the unreasonableness of the Trinitarian doctrine. So he tries to explain how Trinitarians could bring together the concept of three gods being one God. In his views, Trinitarians divide the Father into two gods (body and spirit) and then add the Son in order to get three gods. However, the Bible speaks about one God. That's why Trinitarians, being aware of the contradiction between their three gods and the one God of the Bible, needed to invent a new kind of arithmetic. They made the three gods more equal than they are in the Bible

¹Denis Kaiser, "A Comparative Study on the Trinity as seen in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Christian Connexion, and among Seventh-day Adventists until 1870," (Term Paper, Andrews University, April 2008).

²Gurtner, 8.

³Ibid., 9.

⁴Ibid., 16.

⁵Ibid., 168.

in order to get at the end again one God.¹ Although they sometimes recognize that there are different Trinitarian concepts, they confuse them anyway.² When Trinitarians say that the Trinity is a mystery that can only be accepted by faith then Anti-Trinitarians respond that we are only asked to believe the revealed things.³

The Doctrine of the Trinity is Unscriptural

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity.⁴ It teaches, there is only one person that is the all-powerful God, and that is the Father.⁵ He is a literal Father, and Jesus is really His Son.⁶ If the terms “Father” and “Son” were only symbolic or spiritual, they would not mean

¹Fischer, 17.

²Stump e.g. understands that there is the view (a) of one God in three persons, (b) of two Gods in the person of the Father and the Son, (c) of three Gods in three persons (Tritheism). See Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 106. Again and again, he confuses the Trinitarian concept with Tritheism. Allaback, 14, 15, suggests that the trinity doctrine is used in two extremes, Modalism and Tritheism. See also Lynnford Beachy, “Do You Believe in the Trinity?,” *Present Truth*, November 2002: 11-13. One dissolves the distinct personalities of the Son and the Father, and the other produces three supreme Gods. However, the confusion of these concepts is also seen in idem, “How many God’s are there?,” *Present Truth*, May 2000: 5. He argues actually against Modalism and not against Trinitarianism when he states that God did not pray to himself in the garden of Gethsemane. See for similar examples in idem, “Questions and Answers,” *Present Truth*, August 2000: 3; idem, “Do You Believe in the Trinity?,” 10.

³Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 71.

⁴Gurtner, 8, 9; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 186; Allaback, 46. He further points out that Ellen White did not use the term “Trinity” either, and accordingly did not support the doctrine. See Allaback, 33.

⁵Ibid., 13; Gurtner, 10, 13, 50-51, 141, 142; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 108.

⁶Ibid., 108-109, 114-115; Gurtner, 15-17, 37-45, 141; Allaback, 63; David Clayton, “Satan’s Deadliest Lie,” *Present Truth*, September 1999: 9; Beachy, “Insights into the Love of God,” *Present Truth*, April 2002: 1.

anything.¹ Trinitarians teach that Jesus is Son of God through incarnation and resurrection.²

However, if the Son was not already begotten by the Father before the incarnation of Jesus he would not really be the Son of God before incarnation.³ Jesus has all the characteristics inherited by his Father.⁴ He has the divine nature because he is the Son of God, and that is why he is also worthy of worship.⁵ It is also added that the Father told humans to do so.⁶ Only the Father is eternal and immortal, and when Jesus died on the cross, not only his human nature died but also his divine nature.¹ Christ in his divinity is not equal to the Father; he is not omnipotent,

¹The accuse to Trinitarians is that they would use these terms only in a symbolic way. See Gurtner, 16, 45, 86; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 113, 114. Stump adds that it is a false gospel to say that the divine persons played only the roles of Father and Son, but were not really Father and Son. See *ibid.*, 127-131.

²Gurtner, 17. Gurtner says that Trinitarians would reject a Sonship of Jesus before his incarnation because there was no mother in Heaven. See p. 45. But she does not give a reference for this claim. I never heard or read such a argument from Trinitarians.

³Clayton, "Satan's Deadliest Lie," 9, states that Satan's deadliest lie is the doctrine that teaches Jesus not being really the Son of God prior to his incarnation. See also Gurtner, 15, 17. By this Trinitarians would "deny the pre-existence of the Son of God." In their understanding Christ was not created by the Father but emanated or came forth somehow from Him. It is interesting to note that they use Prov. 8:22-25 to prove that Jesus came forth from the Father before the creation of anything. Jesus coming into existence without a mother is compared with the creation of Adam and Eve. See *ibid.*, 33, 45, 141. Christ was born or brought forth from God in the time before the creation of the world. See Allaback, 17, 18, 20; Lynnford Beachy, "The Importance of Knowing the Truth about God," *Present Truth*, January 1999: 2, 3; *idem*, "Insights into the Love of God," 3, 4; *idem*, "The Sonship of Christ and the Gospel," *Present Truth*, November 2002: 1-3; *idem*, "Whose Son is He?," *Present Truth*, January 2008: 5, 6.

⁴Both, Father and Son, are God by their very nature. Yet, the Son "is not the original, true God." See *idem*, "Questions and Answers," August 2000, 5, 6. Although Christ is called God, he is it only in a very limited sense. See *idem*, "Worship God," *Present Truth*, January 2008: 3. In that way he tries to solve the problem that they do not have two Gods or a Binity.

⁵Gurtner, 10, 141, 161; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 121-127.

⁶*Ibid.*, 133.

omnipresent, omniscient, or immortal.² Christ could be tempted to sin, but the Father could not be tempted.³

The Doctrine of the Trinity is of Human Origin

In order to prove the human origin of the doctrine of the trinity four lines of argumentation are run. First, parallels are drawn between the Christian Trinity and the existence of three gods or a triad in other modern or ancient religions, e.g. the Sumerians, Akkadians, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Scandinavians, and the German tribes. This is to show that the Trinity has a pagan origin.⁴

Second, the development of the Christological controversies between 300 and 500 A.D. is presented. That is to show that Christians did not believe in a Trinitarian concept during the first

¹Gurtner, 15, 49, 113 . That is called the complete death of the Son (p. 16). See also Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 135-141; Beachy, "The Sonship of Christ and the Gospel," 3; idem, "The Importance of Knowing the Truth about God," 4, 5, 7. Beachy states that even the soul of Jesus died. It is interesting to note that although he does not believe in the immortality of the soul he understands Jesus having a soul rather than being a soul. Maybe he confuses the term with Jesus mind or spirit. However, the question might be asked whether he understands only Christ's spirit as the divine part. See *ibid.*, 7; idem, "Questions and Answers," August 2000, 4, 5; idem, "The Real Passion of Christ," *Present Truth*, April 2004: 8.

²Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 143; Beachy, "Questions and Answers," August 2000, 4; idem, "The Real Passion of Christ," 3-7; David Clayton, "The Truth of the Gospel," *Present Truth*, September 2004: 4, 5. Stump concludes that Christ is subordinate to the Father as men are subordinate to Christ, and women subordinate to men. See Allen Stump, "Gospel Order," *Present Truth*, April 1999: 8-10.

³Beachy, "The Importance of Knowing the Truth about God," 5.

⁴Gurtner, 162-163; c.f. Fischer, 14, 16-18; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 69-70, 106; Allaback, 46.

three centuries.¹ In the view of the Anti-Trinitarians the doctrine is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith.²

Third, it is shown that Seventh-day Adventists did reject every Trinitarian concept at first. This is to show that Adventists first had the right view on the topic.³ The development of a Trinitarian understanding is seen as a whole history of apostasy.⁴

Fourth, the ecumenical movement has only one common theological point, and that is the doctrine of the Trinity. A church can only be a member of the ecumenical council, whether it is on the local, regional, countrywide, or international level, if it stands to the doctrine of the Trinity.⁵

¹Ibid., 46; Gurtner, 16, 164; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 106, 132, 147, 187; Lynnford Beachy, "Christianity's Foundation Under Attack," *Present Truth*, November 2002: 4-6; idem, "The Abomination of Desolation," *Present Truth*, April 2008: 2, 3; idem, "How many God's are there?," 2-4; idem, *The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, available from http://www.present-truth.net/books/Form_Trin/Form_Trin.pdf; Internet, accessed March 13, 2008.

²Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 106, 147; Beachy, "How many God's are there?," 4, 5; idem, "Do You Believe in the Trinity?," 9; idem, "Christianity's Foundation Under Attack," 6; idem, "The Abomination of Desolation," 3. Fischer, 14, 16, 18, states that the doctrine of the trinity is "the characteristic sign of the Anti-Christian Papacy".

³Beachy, *What did the Pioneers Believe?*; Fischer, 11-13; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 59-70, 71, 187; Allaback, 11, 24, 47-59. Oftentimes several quotations are set in such a context that they appear to say that John Harvey Kellogg's statement were a kind of Trinity that Ellen G. White opposed. Apparently, he was the first Trinitarian starting the Alpha of apostasy, and his teaching would also be the object of the far greater Omega apostasy. See Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 190-193; Allaback, 10, 34.

⁴Ibid., 35-39; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 193-208.

⁵Ibid., 150-151, 187; Gurtner, 164-165.

Fifth, the charismatic movement emphasizes the personhood and the work of the Holy Spirit. They pray directly to the Holy Spirit and refer to the example of Pope Leo XIII. The charismatic experience is the unifying glue of the ecumenical movement.¹

The Teaching on the Holy Spirit

Studies that deal especially with the historical development of the understanding on the personality of the Holy Spirit have been very rare over the years, although the general studies on the Trinity included this aspect.² The following paragraphs describe the views on the Holy Spirit that are presented in modern Adventist Anti-Trinitarian literature.

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not “a third individual, separate and distinct from God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ.”³ Not one of the greetings in the NT epistles call the Holy Spirit a separate individual or as a third divine person.⁴ There is no place in the Bible where the Father or the Son “spoke to a third person called, ‘the Holy Spirit.’” Neither is there a text where the Holy Spirit

¹Ibid., 163. The Spirit that is working in the Charismatic movement is the same spirit that works similar experiences and miracles in pagan religions. So it is the devil who comes in the garment of the Holy Spirit. See pp. 161-162. Stump sees it as the devil’s masterpiece. See Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 108.

²Rare exceptions were e.g. Christie Mathewson Taylor, “The Doctrine of the Personality of the Holy Spirit as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church up to 1900,” (B.Div. Thesis, SDA Theological Seminary, 1953); Barry Carl Kimbrough, “The Holy Spirit and the Seventh-day Adventist Church: 1888-1900,” (Term Paper, Andrews University, 1991).

³Beachy, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 7; Allaback, 23, 31, suggests that Trinitarians believe the Holy Spirit to be another God beside the Father and the only-begotten Son.

⁴Beachy, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 7.

speaks to the Father or the Son.¹ So the Holy Spirit is not a distinct, separate person from the Father or the Son, but the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son send to the believers. To think that the Comforter is someone else than Jesus “is an invention of Satan.”² In fact, Satan is the god of this world who wants to be worshipped. So it is Lucifer who wants to receive worship through the mask of the third person of the Godhead.³ Someone who is influenced in his worship by Satan, will manifest Satan’s spirit. The religious persecutions of the past are an evidence for that.⁴

When Jesus was on earth he dwelled with the disciples physically. After Pentecost Jesus is abiding in the disciples through the Holy Spirit.⁵ In that sense it is not another comforter but the same person in another way.⁶ Actually it is the Son and the Father who dwell in the human disciple through the Spirit.¹

¹Ibid., 7, 8.

²Ibid., 8. According to Clayton it is a Satanic deception to teach that Christ and the Father are not really present with the believers today but sent only another person. It deprives the believers of the real presence of God, and replaces it with Satan’s presence. See Clayton, “Satan’s Deadliest Lie,” 9, 10.

³Gurtner, 10, 12, 51-53, 141, 142; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 108; Allaback, 5, 74; Beachy, “The Importance of Knowing the Truth about God,” 7; Clayton, “Satan’s Deadliest Lie,” 10; Doug Goslin, “Who is Worthy of Worship?,” *Present Truth*, October 1999: 11, 12.

⁴Gurtner, 13.

⁵Beachy, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 2.

⁶Doug Goslin, “The Promised Comforter,” *Present Truth*, February 1999: 5, 6; Allaback, 26, 27, 64, 65; Lynnford Beachy, “The Holy Spirit,” *Present Truth*, February 1999: 2, 3; idem, “The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit,” *Present Truth*, October 2003: 3; idem, “Christ in You,” *Present Truth*, October 2007: 2-4; idem, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 1, 2, 5. On page 4 the author refers to the usage of ἄλλος in 1Sam 10:6 in order to illustrate that this term is not always used for something totally different but something similar in another mode or

A distinction is made between the designations “Holy Ghost” and “Holy Spirit”. The later would be the right translation of the Greek πνεῦμα ἅγιον.² The term “ghost” is defined as “the spirit of a dead person,” that appears in a somewhat bodily form.³ The spirit is a “part of a person that can be grieved”, “that can perceive or understand things,” “that can be troubled,” and is “associated with the mind, will, and feelings.”⁴ God has a spirit, and that is what is called the holy Spirit of God.⁵ The Father is the source of this Spirit, because it is His Spirit.⁶ He sends His Spirit to His believers through the Son, and when they receive it, actually they receive the Spirit of the Father and the Son. “Two Persons come to live in us, and we have fellowship with *both* the Father and His Son.”⁷ Stump tries to convey that “when God pours out His Spirit, He does it

way. Further, he points to Jesus as the παράκλητος in 1Joh 2:1 in comparison to Joh 14:16. See p. 5; c.f. Gurtner, 75-78; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 157-160, 165.

¹Beachy, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 2; Allaback, 64; Goslin, “Who is Worthy of Worship?,” 11, 12.

²Beachy, “Christ in You,” 4; idem, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 1 f.n. 1.

³Ibid., 5.

⁴Ibid., 5, 6.

⁵Ibid., 6; Gurtner, 91, 92; Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 151. Allaback, 25, says that the Father and the Son share one Holy Spirit.

⁶Beachy, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 6.

⁷Ibid., 7; c.f. Allaback, 26, 63, 64. However, Beachy, “Christ in You,” 6, also states that actually it is the life of the Father and the Son that is imparted to us.

through words and concepts.”¹ Allaback suggests that the angels communicate the Holy Spirit to human beings.² God can be omnipresent by His Spirit, even though He has a bodily presence.³

The Work of the Holy Spirit

When speaking about the work of the Holy Spirit it is important to keep in mind that Anti-Trinitarians do not believe Him to be a third person of the Godhead but in fact Jesus Christ who is working in the human being through His Spirit. Every text that speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit is applied to Jesus and the Father working through their spirit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit “is still available to us today, and we can have it if we recognize and accept it.”⁴ The Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Christ, already worked on the hearts of the people and lived in the prophets before Pentecost. However, God has provided something better for us who live after Pentecost than for all those who lived before Jesus lived here on earth, because Christ was tempted as we are and that is why he can help us in a way he could not before his incarnation.⁵ The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Spirit that works in human hearts to turn them away from sin is actually Christ’s

¹Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 153, 166.

²Allaback, 66-70; c.f. Lynnford Beachy, “The Ministry of the Angels,” *Present Truth*, April 1999: 6, 7.

³Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 154, 155.

⁴Beachy, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 4.

⁵*Ibid.*, 3; *idem*, “Christ in You,” 3, 4.

Spirit, because Christ “is the best person qualified to do this job.”¹ God longs to give this gift to everyone who asks, but the world does not know who their Comforter is (namely Jesus Christ), and that is why they cannot receive him.² The Holy Spirit was sent into the hearts of the believers “to help them in the struggle against sin and temptation.”³ Further, the Spirit helps them in their study of the Bible to understand and get to know God better.⁴ When God’s holy Spirit rests upon something or someone, or if his voice speaks (Psalm 33:9-13), new and spiritual life comes into existence or is strengthened.⁵ When human beings listen to the voice of God to us, the voice of His holy Spirit, He makes angels, winds, and flames of fire, and sends them as ministering spirits to serve those who will inherit salvation.⁶

¹Idem, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 5.

²Ibid., 5; idem, „*The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*,” 6.

³Idem, *The Wonderful Gift of the Holy Spirit*; 8.

⁴Gurtner, 170.

⁵Gurtner, 98.

⁶Gurtner, 142.

CHAPTER IV
THE HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH
IN MODERN ADVENTIST ANTI-TRINITARIAN LITERATURE

In this chapter I will give some examples for the premises and assumptions as well as the methods with which Anti-Trinitarians approach the theological issue of the Trinity and the personhood of the Holy Spirit. The presented premise or method is always followed by a response and explanation of the inherent problem from my point of view.

Premises and Assumptions

As was explained in the first chapter the premises and assumptions a person has, directly influence the way the investigation is approached and which methods will be chosen.

A Critical View of Theologians

Theologians and pastors sometimes seem to deny simple church members the right to study and interpret the Bible for themselves. When questioned about their beliefs these studied people react in a judgmental way without really taking the pain to explain their views by Scripture. The reaction is a basic mistrust in the honesty and integrity of theologians within and

without the Adventist church, combined with a strong belief in conspiracies.¹ Yet, a look into several publications reveals that oftentimes the statements and conclusions of other theologians and historians are accepted without questioning their premises and presuppositions. Additionally, they themselves attempt to translate from the original languages of the OT and NT to correct apparently misinterpretations of Trinitarian scholars, but produce partly things that astonish everyone who has some knowledge in Greek or Hebrew. Some samples for that will be presented below. In conclusion, a very selective and biased work is seen in that they question everything from theologians that contradicts their views but accept everything that they can use for the argumentation.²

The Revelation and Recognition of Truth do not Develop

They have a very static understanding of the revelation of truth and its recognition by man. Seemingly, they perceive that everything about God was revealed right from the start in the Bible without any further progressive revelation and that early Sabbatarian Adventists had already recognized all the truth. Further, if a teaching like the doctrine of the Trinity needs to be invented or developed, then it did not exist before and cannot be biblical.³ They do not take into

¹Lynnford Beachy, "Don't Trust in a Guide," *Present Truth*, March 2000: 1, 2. According to Fischer, 15, Pastors would lose their jobs if they would reject the Trinitarian dogma. By this he questions the honesty and integrity of every pastor. Gurtner says that pastors have learned this doctrine through their studies in theology, and that is why they try to defend this doctrine. See Gurtner, 8.

²A behavior they charge to Trinitarians; see Gurtner, 8, 9.

³Fischer, 16.

account that there were several things not revealed until the NT times. Were in the OT is a clear statement that God has a son? Were are all the end-time events explained of which the Revelation speaks? Are there any obvious restrictions to polygamy in the OT? Does the OT teach the end of circumcision or the initiation of the ordinance of Baptism? There are far more examples of the progressive revelation of God in the Bible. Further, although the early Seventh-Adventists sought for a restoration of Bible religion, they were still on the way and had not arrived their goal. The reference to the eating of pork in the 1850ies, the time for the beginning of the Sabbath, the smoking of tobacco, the institution of the biblical tithe, several details in prophetic interpretation, etc. should be sufficient to show that even they were growing in several topics. The recognition of truth may take some time and even be hindered by false presentation of otherwise biblical concepts.

The Question of the Last Norm

Anti-Trinitarians always profess to stand true to the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. They say e.g., the Bible must be the foundation and the primary source for the faith of the believers;¹ the Bible must be read without preconceived opinions.² To this every Trinitarian can wholeheartedly agree. However, the question is, what source has the last authority, or is the last norm?

¹Gurtner, 8.

²Ibid., 9.

A False Understanding of Mystery

It is interesting to note that Anti-Trinitarians oppose any talking of a mystery. Some Adventists gave rise to questions because they stressed so much the mysteriousness of the Trinity.¹ However, almost always when I talked to Anti-Trinitarians and gave them biblical arguments for the plurality and unity of God their last retreat was to refer to a statement of Ellen G. White, where she says that the nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery.² If it is a mystery, why do they discuss the whole matter? It is possible to study that what is revealed in the Bible. What is revealed is not a mystery, but what is not revealed remains a mystery. That is the position of Trinitarians. God is far greater than everything than can be said about him. The Bible gives an outline but not every detail. We are not able to understand everything about God. Trinitarians try to summarize what they can find of what God has revealed about himself. But then they want to shut their mouth, and remain silent.

A Simplistic Black and White Thinking

It was already shown that Anti-Trinitarians consider the Trinitarian concept wrong because pagan worshipers, Roman Catholic Christians, and Charismatic Christians believe in a Trinity or three Gods too. Further, if the only common belief in the ecumenical movement is a profession of faith in the Trinity, it must be wrong. This kind of reasoning is an example of a

¹“The Trinity,” *Adventist Review*, July 1981: 4.

²Allaback, 76, 77; Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), 52. In German this statement is even more interesting because it uses the word “Wesen” which can mean anything, e.g. being, creature, character, essence, nature.

very simple black and white thinking. First, it is necessary to say that although many Christians confess a belief in the Trinity there are several diverse Trinitarian doctrines. Could it not be that the basic concept is a leftover of the original belief? And that it was altered and modified in such a way that it misrepresents God in one way or another?

On the other side they say that such godly and faithful persons like the Adventist pioneers could not be wrong because God blessed and guided them in such a wonderful way. It means implicitly also that Trinitarians cannot be blessed and guided by God. What about William Miller? He was an honest believer, a Trinitarian, a mighty instrument of God, who worked for the spiritual blessing of thousands. This again shows a picture of a God who is impatient with our mistakes, shortcomings, and developments. God could use and bless them all because they were honest and serious Christians who wanted to be led by God, but that needs time.¹

One example that shows God's way of thinking is how Ellen White dealt with Ellet J. Waggoner and George I. Butler in the issue of the law in Galatians. She told Waggoner that he was wrong in his view because God had shown it to her. Butler took advantage of that because now he believed to be sanctioned by God. However, he was also criticized by White. She herself did not know what was the right view. Nobody could understand her. Everything seemed to be black or white. At the end the right view was a mixture of both.

¹Further, they refer to Ellen White's recommending Uriah Smith's book on Revelation concluding that the book must be right in every respect. See Allaback, 33, 34.

The Methods

Based on the above premises and presuppositions follows a very interesting choice of methods. Those methods manifest a critical approach to the writings of the Bible as well as the literature of Ellen G. White. Both are highly esteemed by this group of believers but they do not really realize the hermeneutic on which their methods are based.

A Literalistic Reading of the Text

When Anti-Trinitarians invite someone to study the Bible with them, it has to happen their way. This kind of Bible study is outlined in some Anti-Trinitarian publications. The reader asks questions and needs to find Bible texts that give specific answers to these questions. He is allowed to reject every doctrine that is not explicitly stated in the Bible.¹ Directly or indirectly, the claim is made that the term “Trinity” should be found in the Bible to be acceptable as a proof for the doctrine.² In contrast, they believe also in other doctrines or teachings although they are not found in the Bible by name, e.g. vegetarianism, non-smoking, a healthy lifestyle, pre-advent investigative judgment, the vindication of God, Christ’s heavenly high-priestly ministry since

¹Gurtner, 8, 9. It is true that “the Bible was not written for pastors and theologians in the first place,” (p. 8) but that does not exclude the use of an understanding of the Greek and Hebrew language in Biblical exegesis. Neither does it mean that theologians and pastors have no right to say anything about the Biblical teachings.

²Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 107.

1844, abolition of slavery. Other terms as e.g. “only-begotten Son” are understood in a literal way although an exegetical study shows a different meaning.¹

¹Some examples for that: (a) The Greek term is μονογενής which is a composite of the two terms μονος (one, unique) and γενος (a kind, a sort of). The literal meaning of μονογενής is “one of a kind,” and not “only-begotten” which would be μονογεννητος. Both terms come from different roots, and have nothing in common. In the NT the term μονογενής is used five times for Jesus (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1John 4:9), and four times for other persons (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb 11:17). When the word is used for other persons the meaning is quite clear, “the only daughter, the only boy, the only son.” The emphasis lies on the uniqueness of the object. The use in the LXX shows a further field of meaning. Texts like Judg 11:34; Ps 22:20; 25:16; 35:17 give the meaning of “darling, lonely, only, precious.” The Hebrew word is יָחִיד, which means “only, lonely, abandoned.” The question arises how then it could happen that the term μονογενής was translated with “only-begotten?” Some old Latin texts render the term “by *unicus*, which is the original meaning, rather than by *unigenitus*, which became the accepted Latin rendering so soon as controversies arose about the Person and Nature of Christ.” See J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1953), 1:23. Jerome used the latter term to indicate that Christ had the genes of the One, doing a disservice by that. Christ is unique, the only one of his kind, and the most precious one. And yet, Beachy, “Christianity's Foundation Under Attack,” 6, 7, wonders why newer translations delete the term “begotten.” (b) The Greek term ἐξέρχομαι (e.g. John 16:27, 28) is translated as having the meaning of “born of, arise from, come forth physically from.” See idem, “The Importance of Knowing the Truth about God,” 3; idem, “How many God’s are there?,” 6. However, a simple word study in the gospel of John shows that the term, besides the respective texts, is *always* used for a movement away from one place to another, and never for a birth, see e.g. John 1:43; 4:30, 43; 8:9, 59; 10:9, 39; 11:31, 44; 12:13; 13:30, 31; 18:1, 4, 16, 29, 38; 19:4, 5, 17, 34; 20:3; 21:3, 23. (c) The term πρωτότοκος is not applied to Christ to indicate that he was already born prior to his incarnation although Anti-Trinitarians understand it that way. See idem, “The Importance of Knowing the Truth about God,” 3. The NT uses the term only a few times. Col 1:15 (also Heb 1:6) could suggest that but Col 1:18 makes clear that the term is not meant literally. There he is the “firstborn from the dead.” Rev 1:5 is similar. According to Rom 8:29, Christ is the firstborn among many brethren in every respect (in life and in death). The only other text in the NT in regard to Christ is found in Luke 2:7, where he is called the firstborn of Mary which is meant literally but points only to his incarnation. Christ is the second Adam, and that is why he is called the firstborn. Second, he is called firstborn of the dead because through him every believer can have the hope of being resurrected as Christ was. (d) The term γίνομαι in John 1:15, 30 must be translated as “begin to be, come into existence,” according to Anti-Trinitarians. See *ibid.*, 3. Yet, the term can be understood in that way, but can also simply mean any form of “to be.” In fact, that term is used almost 2,400 times in the LXX and the NT. Only the use in John shows that both meanings exist. (e) They suggest that λαμβάνω must be translated as “receive” in John 10:17 because the same Greek term is translated as “receive” in the next verse. See *ibid.*, 7; idem, “The Real Passion of Christ,” 7, 8. Yet, the term can be translated in both ways, and John does use it quite often in both ways in his gospel.

Ways to Deal with Problem Texts

Everything they read in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White regarding God and the Holy Spirit is read through the glasses of Anti-Trinitarianism. When a text does not fit into this mindset, a conflict arises that must be solved. This is done in different ways.

(a) The text needs to be interpreted in a way that it stays in consistency with their view.

Some examples are presented as follows. First, the text in John 1:1-3 makes very clear that the Word, Jesus Christ, was God, although distinct from the Father. Because Anti-Trinitarians do not believe that Jesus is God in the same sense as the Father, they need to re-interpret this statement. One explanation is that the θεός without the article must be translated with “divine,” “divine essence,” or “like God,” and not simply with “God,” because it cannot have the same meaning as θεός with an article.¹ Every Greek student has to learn the following rule:

There is one important exception to this rule. It will be recalled that the function of a noun in Greek (unlike English) is indicated by case ending rather than by word order. When two nouns in the nominative are linked by the verb ‘to be’, it may not be clear which is the subject and which is complement. [...] In such cases the complement usually drops the article, and is usually placed before the verb.²

¹Gurtner, 159, 160. Although Lynnford Beachy, “Answers to Verses Trinitarians often use,” *Present Truth*, June 2000: 7, 8, does not go that far as Gurtner does, he too sees a difference due to the difference in the use of the article.

²J. W. Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 35; c.f. James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1979), 78.

And that is exactly the case with the last part of John 1:1.¹ Moreover, a look at the following verses reveals that θεὸς without the article is also use for the Father, and is not merely employed to point to a lesser kind of divine nature of the Son as Anti-Trinitarians suggest.² In fact, John makes no difference in the grammatical use of θεὸς regardless of whether it is used for the Son or for the Father.

Second, the reading μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὦν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς in John 1:18 is interpreted as a modern redactional addition because it was different in the old German Luther-Bible (from 1534 until 1912).³ It is seen as an attempt to support the Trinity after the “more exact translation” of John 1:1 became known.⁴ However, the reading of μονογενῆς θεὸς is supported by papyri and uncials from the second, third, and fourth century A.D. The variant reading μονογενῆς υἱός is found the first time in uncials from the fifth century. Both readings are

¹Applied to John 1:1 this rule goes like this. Because the word order in Greek does not say very much, it would not be clear whether it should mean “the Word is God” or “God is the Word,” when the text would say, ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεός. That is why the article of θεός is left away, so that it is clear that λόγος is the subject and θεός is the complement. Further, the word θεός usually has the definite article, as long as the above mentioned exception does not become effective.

²See John 1:6, 12, 13, 18; 3:2, 21; 6:45; 8:54; 9:16; 9:33; 13:3; [16:27,] 30; 19:7; and 20:17 for the use of θεός (without the article) for the Father, and John 1:18 as well as 20:28 for θεός (with the definite article) for the Son.

³Gurtner, 160. The point of contention is whether it reads “the only one, who is God“ or rather “the only-begotten.”

⁴Ibid., 160. It was already shown above that this “more exact translation” lacks any foundation in the Greek grammar.

used in the writings of the church fathers between the second and the fifth century.¹ There is nothing that could indicate which reading is the original one.²

Third, it is suggested that the right translation of אֲבִי עָלְמַי in Isa 9:6 would be “father of prey” rather than “everlasting father.”³ The truth is that both translations are possible. However, there are more texts that use אֲבִי in the sense of “ever, continually, everlasting” than “prey,” especially the texts in the book of Isaiah itself.⁴ Beachy argues that the phrase “mighty God” must not indicate that Christ is the “almighty God” because the term “mighty” is used.⁵

Fourth, it is explained that the term “spirit” is neutral in Greek, and not masculine as e.g. in German, as a proof that “it” is not a person.⁶ Nevertheless, there are many texts that show the

¹See Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 314.

²It is true that John uses the phrase μονογενής υἱός a few times (John 3:16, 18; [1John 4:9]). Given the fact that the μονογενής θεός reading is found earlier in the manuscripts, θεός, in addition, explains the origin of the υἱός reading, because it is difficult to see why a scribe who found υἱός in the text, he was copying, would alter it to θεός. Scribes would naturally change it to the wording θεός, since μονογενής υἱός is used three other times in the Johannine writings. Thus the older and more difficult writing would be μονογενής θεός.

³Gurtner, 160-161.

⁴Exod 15:18; Job 20:4; Ps 111:8; Isa 26:4; 45:17; 64:8; Hab 3:6 use the term in the sense of eternal and ever. Only Gen 49:27 employs the term in the sense of “prey”. Beachy, “How many God’s are there?,” 6, argues that “everlasting” can also point only to the future.

⁵Ibid. Yet, it is quite astonishing that he states at the same page that Christ can be called παντοκράτωρ (Almighty) because He was given all power (Rev 1:8; Mat 28:18).

⁶Gurtner, 161. Trinitarians oftentimes refer to the masculine pronoun ἐκεῖνος in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8, 13, 14, to suggest that it points to the neutral πνεῦμα and therefore makes clear that John saw πνεῦμα as a person. However, it is necessary to admit that in every instance ἐκεῖνος points to the masculine παράκλητος (John 14,26; 15:26; 16:7), and the mentioning of τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας or τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον is only a nearer specification.

Holy Spirit on the same level¹ as the Father and the Son, as a distinct and separate² entity besides the Father and the Son, as something that has deep personal characteristics³, and as someone who acts⁴ as a distinct personality. God cannot be pressed into and defined by the grammar or orthography of a certain language. Further, there are many languages where “spirit” is masculine.⁵

Regarding the writings of Ellen G. White they state “that most statements that appear to be Trinitarian will collate with the majority of her writings with further study.”⁶ It is true that some statements can be understood in either way. Other statements, however, are very clear Trinitarian statements that leave no room for Anti-Trinitarian views on God. Such statements oftentimes cannot be reinterpreted “with further study.”

Lynnford Beachy, “Questions and Answers,” *Present Truth*, August 2001: 4, 5, states that ἐκεῖνος and αὐτός are not gender specific. Later he has to admit this statement to be wrong, and that he is not a Greek scholar. See Lynnford Beachy, “Questions and Answers,” *Present Truth*, November 2001: 9, 10.

¹c.f. Matt 28:19.

²c.f. Isa 48:16.

³The Spirit has a will (1 Cor 12:11), a reason (1 Cor 2:11), feelings (Eph 4:30), as well as a mind and thoughts (Rom 8:27).

⁴He loves (Rom 15:30), creates fellowship (2 Cor 13:13), listens (John 16:13), gives comfort (John 14:16,18), gives gifts (1 Cor 12:1-11), and pleads for us before the Father (Rom 8:26, 27, 34). He can speak and instruct (Acts 13:2, 4; 10:19, 20), deny something (Acts 16:6-7), teach (John 14:16-18; 16:13). He is the source of prophecy (2 Pet 1:21).

⁵Some examples of old and modern languages are Latin (*Spiritus*); Italian (*lo Spirito*); Spanish (*el espíritu*); German (*der Geist*). The Hebrew רִיחַ is both masculine and feminine.

⁶Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 94, 95.

(b) Other Anti-Trinitarians cite historical critical scholars who conclude that this text could not be there originally or was later edited to support Trinitarianism.¹ However, these scholars have a religion historical approach. In their understanding the Trinitarian concept could not have been evolved among the Jews, but far later among heathen Christians. It was settled as a doctrine at the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and at the council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. Thus Trinitarian texts could not have been there originally, although they do not have any textual support.

For example, the apostolic commission seems to support the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus followers should baptize new believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mat 28:19). In the Book of Acts the apostles always baptized in the name of Jesus. So some scholars conclude that Mat 28:19 originally read “in the name of Jesus”, and the Trinitarian formula is a later edition that developed from the baptism on the name of Jesus. In their view it is impossible and “not an authentic verse”. It is not a true, real word of the Lord (“Herrenwort”).² Anti-Trinitarians accept the result of an application of the religion-historical method in order to support their point without really understood how those scholars came to their conclusions.³

¹Gurtner, 153.

²Ibid., 79, 80, 153. Other Anti-Trinitarians try to solve the text by re-interpreting. The singular term “name” is understood as meaning “character”. Christ and the Father send their character through the Spirit to the believer. See Beachy, “Answers to Verses Trinitarians often use,” 5. However, although the name should stand for the character of a person, the terms are not interchangeable.

³There is no manuscript or papyri that has a variant reading which would change the text of Mat 28:19. Further, the Didache, which was written between 100 and 150 A.D., refers to Mat 28:19 and reads as follows: “Concerning baptism, baptize in this way : having first rehearsed all these things, baptize in the Name of the Father,

This can not be only seen in their approach to the Bible but also to the writings of Ellen G. White. Led by the aforementioned mistrust in theologians and pastors the use also a methodological criticism in their study of the writings of Ellen G. White. The claim is made of conscious alterations and editorial changes in her writings done by her assistants to support an Anti-Trinitarian view.¹ Further, it is claimed that certain things were not only altered but not even written by her.² One popular example in the German speaking countries is the claim that the book *The Desire of Ages* (1898) is a fabrication.³ The original has been a book with the title *The Life of Christ*, that was already published in the 1880ies and of which several German editions exist from that time.⁴ It is true that since 1886 several editions of *The Life of Christ* were published in Danish-Norwegian, Swedish, German, and French, in Europe as well as in the United States.

the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But, if you have no running water, baptize in other water, and if you can not in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, pour water three times on the head in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (*Did.* 7.1-3). However, the *Did.* 9.5 refers also to the baptism “in the name of the Lord,” which makes clear that the twofold mentioning of the baptism, found in Mat 28:19 and in Acts 2:38; 10:48, can also be found in this early Christian writing, indicating that the reading of Mat 28:19 was already as it is known today.

¹Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 96-102; *Leichte Veränderungen in den Büchern von Ellen G. White und in anderen Büchern?*, available from http://www.sabbat.biz/html/leichte_veraenderungen_.html, Internet, accessed March 30, 2008. Tim Poirier, “Ellen White's Trinitarian Statements: What Did She Actually Write?,” *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium 2* (2006): 18-40, shows very clearly, using pictures of the originals, that the respective statements were really written by Ellen White.

²Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 87-94.

³*Trinität*; available from <http://www.shabbath.biz/index.php?id=10>; Internet; accessed March 30, 2008.. According to the author of the website 1898 edition of *The Desire of Ages* was not written by Ellen G. White, and does not correspond to the truth.

⁴*Trinität*, available from <http://www.shabbath.biz/index.php?id=10>, Internet, accessed March 30, 2008.

However, these versions are only a partly edited translation of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2 and 3, but there has never existed one English original book.¹

(c) It happens that Anti-Trinitarians understand the view of Trinitarians on a certain text but do not agree with them because they see a contradiction between the first text and another text which they interpret from their Anti-Trinitarian view. An example for that is Deut 6:4. Stump rightly draws the parallel to Gen 2:24 to show the compositional meaning of $\aleph \beth \aleph$. The text from Deut 6:4 is quoted in Mark 12:28-34. Stump understands the “one” in verses 29 and 32 as being mathematical “one”. That’s why he raises the question of why Jesus did not correct the statement of the scribe, and clarify that there are two/three Gods.² That example shows clearly that they have difficulties to approach a text from a Non-Anti-Trinitarian view.

(d) If a text casts up questions that cannot be answered the text is ignored. Stump is totally silent on any question regarding the plurality of God in texts like Matt 28:19; Gen 1:26 altogether in his more than 200-pages work. One very interesting incidence of ignoring the existence of clear statements and a poor attempt to interpret a statement differently is presented as follows. Stump quotes a text of Ellen G. White.

¹There is an advertisement for this book in the “The Life of Christ,” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, January 1, 1891, 15, and it is stated that it is “issued only in French, German, Swedish, and Danish [...] The Life of Christ in English is supplied in two volumes known as The Great Controversy, vols. II. [sic] & III.” In a forthcoming study I will present the history of this book from its inception at the General Conference Session in 1883 to its great success in the mission field and in contrast also the criticism because of mistakes in the translation. This study will be founded on primary sources. The only secondary information that touches the history of this book a little bit, can be found in Fred Veltman, “Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project,” (Angwin, Calif., 1988), 119-123, 157.

²Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 106-107.

The world was made by Him, “and without him was not any thing made that was made.” If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. *He was with God from all eternity*, God over all, blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, *existed from eternity*, a distinct person, yet one with the Father.¹

Stump refers to the use of “ever and ever” in Rev 14:11 and 20:10 to make clear that “eternity” does not really mean without beginning. According to him “there was a period in history before time or eternity existed.” If Christ created time, he could have come into existence before.² This is the way he tries to reinterpret White’s statement. Nevertheless, he totally ignores her statement that “Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. [...] God over all.”

The Selection of Information

Again and again, a very selective way of working can be seen. Information that can be used in favor of their view is selected and put into the argumentation. In contrast, information that is unfavorable to their view is totally left out.³

¹Quoted in *ibid.*, 83 (emphasis is from the author). Originally it was published in Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, April 26, 1899; *idem*, “The Word Made Flesh,” *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906: 4.

²Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, 83-85.

³Beachy, “Answers to Verses Trinitarians often use,” 6, 7, admits that John 8:58 refers to Exod 3:14 but argues that it is the only “I am” text in the OT that applies to Christ. Again, he states that Christ does not claim to be the Most High God. Yet, no one denies the fact that Christ is not identical with the Father. However, there are texts in the OT that talk about two Jahwehs, as e.g. Gen 3:22; 11:6, 7; 19:24. The comparison of Gen 18:1, 3, 13, 14, 22, 33, and John 8:56-58 suggests that the Jahweh in Gen 18 was no one else than the pre-existent Christ. Other Jahweh-Texts in the OT are referred to in the NT and applied to Christ. See e.g. Isa 40:10 (Rev 22:12); Isa 44:6 (Rev 22:13); Ps 102:26 (Heb 1:10); Isa 43:11 (Acts 4:12); Deut 32:3, 4 (1 Cor 10:4); Isa 45:21, 23 (Phil 2:10); Ps 68:19 (Eph 4:7, 8). See also 1 Cor 10:1-4 for Christ accompanying Israel in the desert. Beachy, “Questions and Answers,” August 2000, 6, claims that Jahweh in the OT is always and only the Father.

That can be seen in the use of church history. The council of Nicaea in 381 A.D. is used as the turning point in the Christian history. This picture is, however, a little bit fabricated. There are very early statements that present the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as the three central entities of Christian belief, and also some that state clearly a belief in the Trinity.¹ That shows that the Trinitarian concept of God was not unknown to the Christians before Nicaea.

Lucian of Antioch wrote a clear Trinitarian statement around 300 A.D.² He was an extremely influential theologian and teacher in the eastern part of the Roman empire, and was probably put to death by the sword in 312 A.D. He believed in the literal sense of the biblical text, stressed the need of textual accuracy, and opposed the allegorizing tendencies of the Alexandrian school. The great leaders in the Arian movement received their training from him. That shows that a clear black or white thinking is impossible.

¹Irenaeus (ca. 180 A.D.) believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He saw Christ as worthy of worship because he was “our Lord and God and Savior and King.” Yet, he believed only in one God. The Spirit “furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth.” See Philip Schaff, and David S. Schaff, eds., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007), 2:13-16. Theophilus of Antioch (ca. 180 A.D.) said that the “triad” was engaged in the creation of the world. See *Aut.* 2.15. Tertullian (ca. 213 A.D.) reacted against modalism and used the word “Trinity”. He also introduced the language of God being one substance but three persons. See *Prax.* 2.4; c.f. *Prax.* 11.10—12.1; 14.6-7; 21.5; 24.8; 26.9. See also Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of the Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 92. Further, he stated that the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, the leader into all truth.

²Schaff and Schaff, 2:26-28. On p. 27 he says, „These names [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] being assigned not vaguely nor idly, but indicating accurately the special personality, order, and glory of those named, so that in Personality they are three, but in harmony one“.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

A study of the view on the Holy Spirit in modern Adventist Anti-Trinitarian literature shows that there is a unity in the rejection of the distinct and separate personality of the Holy Spirit. However, there are some slight nuances on what the Holy Spirit actually is. Most of them simply say that “it” is the holy Spirit of the Father and the Son. Others say that the Holy Spirit is the spirit that speaks through the Word to the reader, or that it is actually the life of God imparted to the believer. Anti-Trinitarians have a high view of the Scriptures, and maybe they study the Bible more than normal church members who are Trinitarians. Yet, the Bible and the tools of exegetical study are used in a selective way to prove a certain preconceived view, and the Bible is not allowed to speak for itself. Some deal with problem texts in a way that is not scientifically honest, although there are others who make mistakes out of ignorance because they think to be able to deal with the original languages of the Bible.

They do not take into account all available biblical information and reject some inconvenient information without having any factual reason for doing so, except their own reasoning and tradition. That leads to a distorted picture of the truth. By reconstructing the primary source of information (the Bible), they deprive themselves of the sure foundation, leaving them back on a slippery slope. They become the judges of what is original and what is

not, making themselves unfit to recognize the whole picture of what constitutes the truth. This operating method is used in the study of the Bible and of the writings of Ellen G. White.

Tradition and reason become the final authority for the interpretation of the specific text, for what the text is allowed to say and not to say.

In that way the Holy Spirit who leads into all the truth is unable to speak to the interpreter because He is only allowed to “reveal” already known truths or truth that fits into their preconceived picture and mindset. The Holy Spirit is not allowed to lead into all the truth and to change views which might require a change. When the reader tries to change the text that it fits into his concept the Bible loses its power, and the Holy Spirit loses gradually its possibilities to speak to the reader through the word.¹

The personality of the Holy Spirit is seen as a mask used by Satan to receive worship by Christians. Communion with people who adore and worship Satan is an impossible thing for Anti-Trinitarians which understandably leads to a separation from the official Seventh-day Adventist Church. Eventually they become the accusers of the brethren, and start fighting the church.

What can the church learn from that? Scholars, pastors, and church members should show more respect for the Bible as the inspired Word of God, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the

¹Frank Hasel, “Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture,” 213, says, „Through dissecting, conjecturing, and reconstructing more or less difficult passages in the Bible according to my own (autonomous) standard of reasoning the Bible had become a lamp without oil to me“. The Bible uses oil as a symbol for the Holy Spirit, and although Hasel made that statement in another context, it applies also to the methods of the Anti-Trinitarians.

heritage of the pioneers. Scholars and pastors should explain to church members the importance of the premises they have. They should teach them how to approach the Bible, and how they can study the Bible based on principles and methods that stand in accord with a biblical hermeneutic. Pastors and scholars should be willing and ready to talk, discuss, and study with Anti-Trinitarians in a friendly, patient, and honest way. Further, some questions are cast up by them which should be answered exegetically.

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