

Overview – The Relevance of this article

I thought thought you might be interested in this information from the SDA Greater Sydney Conference's (GSC) position on the trinity on 25 October, 2005, and 1 December 2005 compared to the 31 March 2006 Adventist Theological Society (ATS) Symposium on the trinity. There are some rather startling observations.

From the following meeting notes, it can be seen that the Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) appears to deny that God has a physical form (despite Scripture and EG White's comments to the contrary) and that Christ was begotten from the Father. GSC theologians maintain that Christ “had a beginning without a beginning.” However the SDA Adventist Theological Society symposium in Tennessee last weekend, which also examined the doctrine of the trinity, affirms many of the points that non-trinitarians have been raising – and those for which disfellowshipping has been recommended - are actually correct – according to ATS' leading SDA theologians. Perhaps you might be interested in reading the latest on the trinity doctrine which came out of the very recent ATS symposium at Southern Adventist University, Chattanooga, Tennessee. To read more about the Trinity Symposium, visit the SDA Adventist Theological Society's website at:

<http://www.atsjats.org/article.php?id=4&PHPSESSID=1246a334cd16ff4e81cfdee5c2528343>

SDA Adventist Theological Society Symposium - Chattanooga, Tennessee USA

On 31 March, 2006, the SDA Adventist Theological Society held an "international" symposium to study the doctrine of the trinity in Tennessee. It was attended by prominent SDA theologians from many divisions, including representatives from Smyrna Gospel Ministries (a non-trinitarian group). Smyrna representatives commented that it was “a good study of the trinity.” From notes taken at the symposium, the ATS scholars admitted that Prov 8:22 **is** speaking of a real divine birth of Jesus Christ, but that it apparently refers to His birth into the priesthood ministry. The conference re-affirms that, as already noted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 1 John 5:7,8 are non-genuine texts (not in the original manuscript) and cannot be used in support of the doctrine of the trinity (an interpolation). The ATS Symposium considered Matthew 28:19 with its claim that Jesus commanded baptism into the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is not an interpolation. The theologians suggest however, that despite the fact that there are no examples of the disciples baptising people in that 3 name formula does not mean that the trinitarian formula baptisms didn't happen, but just that they weren't recorded in the Bible. (But, one tends to wonder why the only baptismal events that **were** recorded, were those that were made in the name of Jesus – the only name under heaven whereby we must be saved).

On the subject of "Elohiym" which is the Hebrew word for 'god' - it is finally admitted by the theologians, that it cannot be used to support the concept of plurality within the Godhead – the trinity doctrine. Elohiym can only be considered to be a plural noun if it is used with a plural verb and a plural adjective (if an adjective is used). Elohiym, when used in Scripture as referring to the One True God, is **always** used with a single verb. If Elohiym was to refer to god as 3 beings, the plural verb would be necessary to indicate this intention.

If you want to read more about the Adventist Theological Society's Trinity Symposium at their website you can visit:

<http://www.atsjats.org/article.php?id=4&PHPSESSID=1246a334cd16ff4e81cfdee5c2528343>

Outcomes

A casual glance at the outcomes of the symposium reveals that the views of the Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) in Australia on the trinity, do not appear to be completely harmonious with some of those views held by the Adventist Theological Society (ATS).

For a short example, some of the differences between the findings of the ATS and the GSC are these:

1. Proverbs 8:22 refers to "begotten" of the Son of God (ATS says Yes) - (GSC says No).

2. Elohiym, the Hebrew term for 'god' is plural and therefore proves the plurality of the trinity.

(ATS says Yes) - (GSC says No).

Other points are still held in common by GSC and ATS, such as the assertion that the Holy Spirit is another person – the 3rd member of the Godhead. A lot of evidence is made by referring to the use of the pronoun "HE" in the Bible - but this belief can only be supported by twisting grammar rules of the Greek language, which the Bible translators of many versions have done.

In Truth in Translation, p 141, Jason David BeDuhn (associate professor of religion at Northern Arizona University, states:

*"In John 14:26, Jesus says, 'But the defender (parakletos) the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name ---that one will teach you everything.' Here a relative pronoun and a demonstrative pronoun are involved in the sentence. The demonstrative pronoun 'that one' (ekeinos) refers back to the word 'defender' (parakletos), a masculine noun meaning a defence attorney or supporter, a role thought appropriate only for males in the male-dominated society in which the Greek language was formed. Since Greek grammar requires gender agreement between a pronoun and the noun it refers back to, 'that one' is in the masculine form, like 'defender.' The relative pronoun 'which' (ho) refers back to **the phrase 'holy spirit,' which as always appears in the neuter form.** So the neuter pronoun 'which; (ho) is used rather than the masculine form (hos). In John 14:26, the subject under discussion is the neuter 'holy spirit'. Therefore the use of the pronoun 'he' is inappropriate here." Now it turns out that both 'masculine' and feminine' Greek nouns can be used for impersonal things as well as persons. **But 'neuter' nouns are used only for impersonal things, such as objects, animals, forces, abstract principles, and so on. The same holds true for 'masculine,' 'feminine' and 'neuter' pronouns..... 'the Holy Spirit' is referred to by a 'neuter' noun in Greek. Consequently, it is never spoken of with personal pronouns in Greek. It is a 'which,' not a 'who.' It is an 'it,' not a "he."***

So what is the SDA's church's position on the trinity now? It appears that it is confirming many of the objections that non-trinitarians have made against the trinity, yet, it still holds onto the doctrine as being Biblically supported through other texts. In all fairness, there were other Biblical texts suggested by the theologians which we hope to examine as soon as they become available to us.

The following material are the notes from the meeting that the Sydney Conference had with Restitution Ministries - a non-trinitarian group in NSW.

Greater Sydney Conference of SDA discussions with non-trinitarian group Restitution Ministries – 25 October, 2006.

The Full Story

What really took place behind the scenes?

(A response regarding the action taken by the

Greater Sydney Conference towards Restitution Ministries)

(*Intrasyd*, March/April 2006, p.3)

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March, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

The grace and peace of our Father and His Son be multiplied unto you all.

The main purpose of this release is for our fellow Brothers and Sisters who may be affected by the recent decision that appeared in the *Intrasyd*. We share this information with you all in light of what is written “And being let go, they went *to their own company*, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them” Acts 4:23. We pray that you will stand strong in the Lord at this time of trial. Remember Isaiah 66:5.

We believe it is your right, our Brothers and Sisters in the faith, to know *exactly* what took place between us and the Conference. We want to set the record straight, and to establish the faith of all brethren. The Son of God lives and reigns, bless His holy name!

In light of the recent Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) statement regarding Restitution Ministries, we feel it is our duty to acquaint everyone with the details of the dialogue and the exchange that occurred between the two parties, especially concerning the “Bible study” that we had with the leading brethren. Please feel free to share this with others who do not know the reasons for our faith in the Son of God.

We do not wish to cause confusion, but to bring truth to light. People are confused when they do not have all the facts; we therefore provide these facts here that all men may know for themselves what really took place. We do not want people to form a wrong opinion based on little or no facts, and we therefore provide here the details and the background of what led up to the “Bible study” with the leading brethren; its summary and conclusion; and the resultant steps that led to the decision expressed in the March/April *Intrasyd* article.

We do this in obedience to the counsels of our heavenly Father given to us through His delegated messenger:

“When man assails his fellow-men, and presents in a ridiculous light those whom God has appointed to do work for Him, *we would not be doing justice to the accusers, or to those who are misled by their accusations should we keep silent*, leaving the people to think that their brethren and sisters, in whom they have had confidence, are no longer worthy of their love and fellowship. ... And on every point the accusers should be called upon to bring their proof. Every charge should be carefully investigated; it should not be left in any uncertain way, *the people should not be left to think that it may be or it may not be.*” {EGW,

7MR 332

By the Father's grace, we shall seek to follow His holy counsel.

The letters and reports all appear in their chronological order. We provide here a copy that all men may see and inquire for themselves if there is a "Thus Saith the Lord" for the recent GSC decision, or is it merely a "Thus Saith the Church". We are told ever so plainly that "A "Thus saith the Lord" is not to be set aside for a "Thus saith the church" or a "Thus saith the state.""{AA 69}

We pray for wisdom and grace to God's people, that they may not be sharers in the guilt of these leading men. The Jewish leaders urged the people of Israel to take an action which they later came to severely regret. The Jewish leaders were able to deceive the people into going along with their wicked and murderous plots because the people were not told what was really happening behind the scenes. We do not want God's people today to be placed in a similar position; a position which will be severely regretted in the near future.

We read of the priests and elders of the Jewish nation how they rejected the Son of God, for "They would not accept His rebukes and warnings, and they set themselves to turn the people against Him and to compass His destruction." {COL 304.4}. These leaders, by their disastrous decision, were responsible for the ruin of many. "For the rejection of Christ, with the results that followed, they were responsible. A nation's sin and a nation's ruin were due to the religious leaders. {COL 305.1}

We sincerely pray that the Father will grant His people the anointing eyesalve that they may see where their feet are tending.

Restitution Ministries

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September/October 2005

Our first communication with the Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) was when we received a phone call from them requesting us to attend a meeting to discuss certain differences between us.

We took time to pray and ask for the Father's leading as to which course to pursue. The meeting took place a few weeks later, on October 25, 2005.

Report of first meeting between the Greater Sydney Conference and Restitution Ministries

Date: Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Location: Greater Sydney Conference office, Epping.

Start time: 9:00 AM

Finish Time: Approximately 11:00 AM

Greater Sydney Conference representatives

(representing the body of believers):

Pastor David Blanch (President)

Pastor Bruce Grosse (Fairfield church pastor)

Pastor Bob Manners (General Secretary)

Pastor Garth Bainbridge (Ministerial Association - Secretary)

Br. Pablo Lillo

In the meeting the discussion revolved around the working relationship between us and the Conference. The leading brethren were seeking harmony and unity between us that we all may "speak with one voice." This we most heartily agreed to, provided that the unity is

based on truth.

The two hour discussion finally boiled down to one question. Were we, Restitution Ministries, going to be a supportive or a non-supportive ministry? To determine this stance, the brethren were using the "27 which are now 28" Fundamental beliefs.

We objected to this test, recognizing only the authority of the inspired word of God. We did not want to be tested by a man-made "creed", even if it was the 27/28 Fundamental beliefs. We further declared to the leading brethren that there was a serious flaw and error in the Fundamental beliefs which they were seeking to test us with.

The GSC further informed us about "the Guidelines" which we were required to sign to determine our stance. This step we were not ready to take until we had resolved the issue of the Fundamental beliefs. We felt that this was a far more important matter to resolve, for we declared that there was a major error in Fundamentals #2-5; the "Trinity", "God the Father", "God the Son", and "God the Holy Ghost". We told the brethren this is where the difference lay.

The discussion finally reached a point where it was realized by the President that in order to proceed, a Biblical examination of the differing positions was required. This he graciously granted us in an upcoming meeting which would be scheduled just for that matter. The meeting would involve the theologians and learned men of our church.

We were rather surprised by this unexpected offer but did agree to give an answer for the hope that is within us. We could not help but see the leading hand of our Father in providing for us and the brethren an opportunity to discuss the most vital and crucial truth in the Bible. The truth upon which our eternal life depends (John 17:3).

The meeting closed. We were to be notified of the next meeting once it was arranged.

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Restitution Ministries representatives:

Br. Tom Pinto
Br. Bill Pinto
Br. Imad Awde
Br. Nader Mansour

November 2005

(E-mail correspondence received from the GSC)

From: <dblanch@adventist.org.au>

Sent : Thursday, 10 November 2005 2:46:39 PM

To : PPetersen@adventist.org.au, allan.lindsay@avondale.edu.au,
mhatton@bigpond.com,

gchristian@adventist.org.au, KenVogel@adventist.org.au

CC :

cstanley@adventist.org.au, bmanners@adventist.org.au, "garthbain@pnc.com.au\"
<garthbain@pnc.com.au0xLD0Dz>, Bruce Grosse <grosse00@optusnet.com.au>,
restitution_ministries@hotmail.com

Subject : Restitution Ministries Meeting GSC

I have been able to finally nail down a date for our meeting with 'Restitution Ministries'. The date we have negotiated is December 01 Thursday meeting at 9.00 am in our Epping

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Office. I am suggesting we be finished by 1.00 pm or earlier. I want to thank you for your willingness to be involved for it is a serious matter when our church members cannot agree on a fundamental belief. I have not been able to contact the four men from 'Restitution Ministries' by phone so this email will be their first indication of the date and time and meeting process. Thanking you all again and looking forward to some good Bible study.

I am suggesting that the program be as :

D. Blanch - Welcome

G. Bainbridge - Devotion and Prayer - 5 minutes

Restitution Ministries - Anti trinitarian position - 30 minutes

Paul Peterson - SDA Teaching of Godhead - 30 minutes

Restitution Ministries - Ellen White position - 30 minutes

Allan Lindsay - Ellen White and God head position - 30 minutes

Max Hatton - Summary

Conclusion - Restitution Ministries

Conclusion - Garth Bainbridge

D. Blanch - Closure

Closing Prayer - B. Grosse

David D Blanch

President

Greater Sydney Conference

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November 2005

(E-mail correspondence sent to the GSC and other recipients)

To: PPetersen@adventist.org.au, allan.lindsay@avondale.edu.au, mhatton@bigpond.com, gchristian@adventist.org.au,

KenVogel@adventist.org.au, cstanley@adventist.org.au, bmanners@adventist.org.au, "garthbain@pnc.com.au"

<garthbain@pnc.com.au0xLD0Dz>, Bruce Grosse <grosse00@optusnet.com.au>, restitution_ministries@hotmail.com

Thursday, November 24, 2005

Dear Brother Blanch,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

We are praying earnestly for our upcoming meeting. We realize very much the importance of that meeting, and the resultant outcomes. We are certain this realization is shared by all the other participants of the meeting.

In light of this, we would like to make a request which we are sure you will immediately see the import of. Can we please have the presentations at the meeting recorded? We believe such a recording will be of value to all parties involved in the meeting.

Everyone is well aware of the fact that this meeting will result in certain outcomes based on the presentations given. Such outcomes may have a far reaching impact on us as well as you. Therefore, we sense the need to have a recorded copy of the presentations from both sides. None of our presenters object to this idea. We are certain that brethren Peterson and Lindsay will see the import of this request regarding their presentations, and would not object to this either. We know that no one has anything to say that they would be ashamed of; therefore we make this request in good confidence. We are actually surprised this request did not come from anyone else.

Seeing that the presenting brethren will clearly set forth the “SDA teaching of Godhead” as well as “Ellen White and Godhead position” we feel it is a valuable opportunity not to be missed. We know that brother Peterson and Lindsay are well recognized experts in their respective fields, and their presentations will clearly and plainly set forth the espoused position. Sensing the importance of this fact is what prompted us to make this request.

Furthermore, we might also mention the added benefit of such a recording. You will realize the pitfall of misrepresentation and misquoting that usually results in painful misunderstandings. We are fully aware of this danger and do not want to be guilty of it. We in no wise want to misrepresent or misquote the position which you will present. We also are sure that you do not want to misrepresent or misquote our position. We believe a recording of the presentations will protect you as well as us from this danger, and will show clearly the honesty and openness of all involved.

We do not believe there is any reason on the part of any involved not to second this important request. We would actually be surprised if it is not. After all, we all know that the recording angel will record every word that will be uttered at that meeting.

Thank you for your serious consideration regarding this important matter. We await your response.

Kind Christian regards,

On behalf of everyone,

Nader

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November 2005

November 30, 2005

Phone call received from the GSC. Request for recording denied. GSC presenters “were not comfortable with it”. Alternatively, presentation notes were to be made available in transcript form.

(E-mail correspondence from GSC)

From : <dblanch@adventist.org.au>

Sent : Wednesday, 30 November 2005 4:08:57 PM

Subject : Meeting - 1 December 2005

Dear Friends

This is just a reminder of our scheduled meeting to tomorrow morning, 1 December 2005, at 9 am at the Greater Sydney Conference office, 4 Cambridge Street, Epping - Level 2 (top floor).

We have agreed that there will be no recordings of this meeting but that written material presented will be made available to members of this meeting.

We look forward to warm fellowship and a Christ-centred dialogue as we spend this time together.

If you are unable to find parking on the street outside of the Conference office please feel free to access our undercover parking area through the roller door. You may gain access by pressing the button on the righthand side of the door and our receptionist, Merilyn, will give you entry.

We seek God's blessing as we meet.

Yours in Christ
David Blanch
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December 2005

Report of second meeting between the Greater Sydney Conference and Restitution Ministries (Bible study meeting)

Date: Thursday, December 1, 2005

Location: Greater Sydney Conference office, Epping.

Start time: 9:00 AM Finish Time: Approximately 2:00 PM

Greater Sydney Conference representatives (representing the body of believers):

Pastor David Blanch (President)

Pastor Bob Manners (General Secretary)

Pastor Bruce Grosse (Fairfield church pastor)

Pastor Garth Bainbridge (Ministerial Association - Secretary)

Pastor Graham Christian

Dr. Allan Lindsay (Writer/presenter of *Keepers of the Flame* series)

Br. Pablo Lillo

Pastor Paul Peterson (Field Secretary, South Pacific Division)

Pastor Max Hatton (Author of *Understanding the Trinity*)

We share this report with all our brethren in light of what is written in the word of the Living God:

“And being let go, they went *to their own company*, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.” Acts 4:23.

We shall, by the Father’s grace, do our best in giving an accurate report of what the “chief priests and elders” have said unto us. In giving this report we are well aware that to every story there are two sides, which may not agree on how to tell the story. We present our experience as we have gone through it and as we recall from the notes taken down. We present this with a clear conscience before our God and Judge knowing full well that “A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.” Proverbs 19:5. This is in no way a detailed report; rather it is a concise summary of the meeting, noting the highlights as perceived by us.

First and foremost, we are exceedingly thankful to our loving heavenly Father for answering all the prayers that have ascended to the throne of mercy regarding this meeting. We are thankful for all our brethren for petitioning the Lord to bless the meeting. The Lord has blessed mightily in that a plain testimony was borne which clearly and unquestionably declared His truth. Indeed, the Lord has fulfilled His word in giving us a mouth and wisdom which all our adversaries were not able to gainsay nor resist. (Luke 21:15)

The meeting was started by a welcome from Pastor David Blanch where it was made clear that there would be no recordings of the proceedings. But that the speakers’ notes would be made available.

Pastor Garth Bainbridge then had a devotion which was taken from Matthew 16:13-16. The point was made that “it is very important to know who Jesus is”, to which we heartily

agreed. This was followed by opening prayer.

Next we had a 30 minute opportunity to present the Biblical evidence for our position which was done by Brother Bill Pinto. It was clearly and plainly stated that we believed in one God, the Father, of whom are all things. It was also very plainly and clearly stated that we believe Jesus is the only begotten Son of God the Father. It was also made clear that we did not believe that Christ was a created being. The Bible testimony was given regarding the Holy Spirit being the spirit of God and Christ; the personal presence of God and Christ in the soul.

The eighth chapter of Proverbs (verses 22-30) was shared with the brethren, in which Christ clearly says He was “brought forth”. The brethren objected to this application, claiming that it does not apply to Christ but to wisdom. **(The SDA Greater Sydney Conference disagrees with what the SDA Adventist Theological Society's international symposium declared – that it does refer to Christ - in Chattanooga last weekend 31 March 2006. Note by S. Turner)**

When scripture evidence as well as Spirit of Prophecy evidence was given showing clearly that it was Christ speaking, then the brethren said **the passage was not literal but poetic.** We honestly fail to see how the creative acts of God could not be literal, but only poetic. We believe in a literal creation, commemorated by a literal Sabbath. There is not one thing in that passage that is not literal. Yet, the brethren would not concede.

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Restitution Ministries representatives:

Br. Tom Pinto
Br. Bill Pinto
Br. Imad Awde
Br. Nader Mansour
Br. Steven Prahin

The next 30 minutes were given to Pastor Paul Peterson to present the Biblical evidence refuting our position. He clearly set forth from scripture that Christ is divine (which we fully believe) and that the Holy Spirit is more than a mere force (which we also believe). We could not help but wonder who was meant to be the target of the presentation, for it did in no wise refute our position. Of this fact Pastor Peterson was aware as he expressed “But I know you do not believe that.” **The position of difference that did apply in this presentation was the beginning of Christ. It was argued that Christ had no beginning. When we asked them to explain how Jesus is a Son if He was not begotten of the Father, no clear answer was given. We were presented with the ambiguous paradox of an “open ended beginning” a number of times. When we asked if this meant “a beginning without a beginning” the answer was “yes”.** We just wonder how this principle will hold when applied to the opening statement in the Holy Scriptures!

The suggested 5-minute break time was spent in discussion. We found that none of the points we presented were refuted by any scripture. **We were rather saddened to see some of our ministering brethren smirking and laughing and at times scoffing at the Biblical truth that Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father.** We finally were driven to comment on such unbecoming behavior in light of the seriousness and importance of the matter at hand. It seemed to us that the ministering brethren were not taking the

situation very seriously.

A 30 minute opportunity was ours to give Ellen White's position regarding the Godhead. This was done by Brother Nader. **It was clearly demonstrated from the Spirit of Prophecy that the Godhead was a pillar doctrine of our church.**

This was not appreciated by the pastors who clearly saw that their position would then be out of harmony with the prophet. **When plain questions were asked to demonstrate the weakness of their position they resorted to silence.** It was plainly shown from the Spirit of Prophecy that "That which was truth in the beginning is truth now." Clear and plain statements were given in support of the truth. When the brethren were asked about such plain statements silence was the most common answer.

The next 30 minutes were given to Dr. Lindsay to present Ellen White's position favoring their argument. This was attempted using the now classical argument that the "prophet grew in her understanding". **That such a growth contradicts her earlier position was not commented upon in the presentation. When Dr. Lindsay was asked why half statements were given, rather than the full quotes which give the true meaning, no reason was given, but we were advised that "people can check the original if they want."** We were left wondering why someone who is well acquainted with the Spirit of Prophecy would use statements that were edited to bolster his claim. Further questions were discouraged, therefore we held our peace. The question in our minds was: if this doctrine was only a latter development, then how could the prophet, when speaking of the period of 1844, say "all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds"?

Time was then given after the presentation for a brief discussion and a clarification of points. Not once were we presented with a clear testimony of Scripture or Spirit of Prophecy which contradicted our position. To many of our plain questions we received only silence for an answer.

We again asked the brethren to explain to us how Jesus is a Son if He was not begotten of the Father, and again no clear answer was given. We asked this question a few times. "If Jesus is not begotten of the Father, then how could he be a Son? You have not given us an answer." We just could not understand why these seasoned pastors would not answer this question clearly.

When we expressed our belief that God the Father had a form and a physical shape, and that He sits on His throne in heaven, we were horrified to hear objections to this fact. The ministering brethren expressed their ridicule at such an absurd suggestion. It came as a surprise to them that we believed God has a form. They looked at us as if we were out of our minds to make such a suggestion. We expressed our faith in this fact from the numerous visions where the holy prophets have seen God sitting on His throne, with hair pure as wool, and garments white as snow, as Daniel records. (This startling objection to God having a form, reveals that the SDA Greater Sydney conference leaders, agree with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the trinity, that God has no physical form, but is only "pure spirit."

(The following insert is made by S. Turner)

The Roman Catholic Encyclopedia states:

New Advent Encyclopedia (Roman Catholic) - Nature and Attributes of God

“Yet sometimes men are led by a natural tendency to think and speak of God as if He were a magnified creature -- more especially a magnified man -- and this is known as anthropomorphism. Thus God is said to see or hear, as if He had physical organs, or to be angry or sorry, as if subject to human passions:...The same reasons that justify and recommend the use of metaphorical language in other connections justify and recommended it here, but no Theist of average intelligence ever thinks of understanding literally the metaphors he applies, or hears applied by others, to God, any more than he means to speak literally when he calls a brave man a lion, or a cunning one a fox....God is a simple being or substance excluding every kind of composition, physical or metaphysical....There is not, therefore, and cannot be any physical or real composition in God.... From this it follows that we cannot know God adequately in the way in which He knows Himself....God they are all ultimately identical in meaning and describe the same ultimate reality -- the one infinitely perfect and simple being. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06612a.htm>

see footnotes at end of letter. (End of insertion by S. Turner)

John also saw God holding a book in His hand sitting upon a throne surrounded by elders and angels. We did not think it strange to believe and repeat that record. But to our surprise, the ministering brethren told us “but that was in vision”! Yet, in those very same visions the prophets saw the heavenly Sanctuary, the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, etc. If the language concerning God cannot be taken literally, then what else are we to discard as not literal? Is the Sanctuary not literal? Is the New Earth not literal? Where do we stop? Is everything a mere metaphor just because it is in a vision? This is the very thing that the Messenger of the Lord warned us about, yet “Our ministering brethren were looking on... but they did not seem to understand. The foundation of our faith, which was established by so much prayer, such earnest searching of the Scriptures, was being taken down, pillar by pillar. Our faith was to have nothing to rest upon-- *the sanctuary was gone, the atonement was gone. . . .*” {UL 152.5}

The servant of the Lord has plainly written for us regarding this matter. “I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. *I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had*, but I could not behold it, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.” {EW 54} and “*The Father in heaven has a voice and a person which Christ expressed.*” {GCDB, March 6, 1899 par. 8} and again “I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a *person*. I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, “I am in the express *image* of My Father's *person*.” {EW 77}

We greatly fear that these men have adopted the spiritual view of God (a mysterious intangible essence, which is pure Popery and Romanism) and believe Him to be a metaphor. We do not say this lightly, for we were told by one of those ministers that the Father-Son relationship is only a metaphor. This claim was not objected to by any of the other ministers. If the highest and noblest relation in the entire universe is only a metaphor in the eyes of these men, then we honestly wonder if they take anything literally!

“Through Jesus Christ, *God--not a perfume, not something intangible, but a personal God--created man*, and endowed him with intelligence and power.” {TDG 273}, “The theory that *God is an essence* pervading all nature is received by *many* who profess to believe the Scriptures; but, however beautifully clothed, *this theory is a most dangerous deception.*” {MH 428}

In our discussions we were alarmed to hear a number of times the comment “Just because Rome believes it does not make it wrong”! And “Just because it’s Catholic doesn’t make it wrong”, “we can’t help it if Rome has some truth”! We leave it with the good judgment of every intelligent reader to consider the implications of such comments from the ministers and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Sydney. Knowing that Rome is represented by her ‘infallible’ leader, the Pope, we are sure that the careful reader will be reminded of the words of the prophet in *The Great Controversy*, that the Bishop of Rome is none other than “the representative of Satan” (P. 50). Yet, in spite of this glaring fact “Romanism is now regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in former years.” (P. 563).

We greatly fear that such a favorable regard will lead into perilous paths of perdition. According to Isaiah 8:20 there is “no light” in Rome. As faithful Protestants we sound again the words recorded in the same book concerning the true Protestants who “taught their children to abhor popery and held that to seek harmony with Rome would be disloyalty to God. But how widely different are the sentiments now expressed!” (P. 563). Indeed, how widely different. How sad to hear such sentiments expressed from the ministers and pastors of our beloved church. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” 1 Peter 2:9

We indeed lament with the lamenter, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.” Lamentations 4:1

Words cannot express our utter amazement and shock as we listened to ordained ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God spend four hours doing their very best to deny that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God. It only makes us wonder what the rest of the ministry believes.

We were heartbroken to see the scenes of the seventh chapter of Acts re-enacted again before our eyes. It is indeed a sad day in Israel. “Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: *for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God*, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.” Hosea 9:1.

In the presence of so many pastors who were endeavoring to deny “the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” one could not help but think of what was penned by the inspired prophet long ago “Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.”

Jeremiah 12:10

The same prophet also records this ominous warning, “For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.” Jeremiah 10:21

May the Lord have mercy upon His flocks at such a time as this. We herewith sound the warning call to all who will heed the sound of the trumpet: “For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed”, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”, “O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths”, “Now

the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Isaiah 9:16; Matthew 15:14; Isaiah 3:12; 1 Timothy 4:1. end of page 9

"There are those *in the ministry* who have had light and a knowledge of the truth, who will *not* be overcomers." {8T 75}

"There is need that the converting power of God should come upon *our ministering brethren, for many of the people are far in advance of them in experience in the things of God.*" {11MR 297}

A brief summary was then given by Pastor Max Hatton. The summary repeated the same thing that was voiced by all; that the trinity doctrine is Biblical truth. Yet, we were not given any Biblical proof for that claim. The conclusion was by Pastor Garth Bainbridge in which he strongly suggested that we cease the work we were doing in sharing this truth with others. It was suggested that this would be true love indeed, rather than showing a lack of love by continuing the 'damaging' work that we are doing. We do not see how the spread of truth can be damaging. Our Lord told us it will rather liberate and sanctify.

Pastor David Blanch had the closing words in which he reluctantly warned us of the dire consequences of continuing in the path we are taking. Such consequences would involve certain measures that would have to be taken by the church to curtail us. One wonders at the oft used tactic which, when failing to discredit the message, attempts to silence the messengers! We had to witness a demonstration of this tactic in our meeting which, after failing to counter our message, proceeded to counter its messengers; us.

We were finally warned that if we were to continue this work of sharing truth, then we would incur "church discipline". Has it come to this? **The church will discipline those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God!**

One cannot help but recall the same warning given by the stubborn Jews, "for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." John 9:22. Such warning was again repeated to the apostles of our Lord, "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Acts 4:18. What can we answer except how the apostles answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19, 20.

We yet plead with God's people, the Israel of God, not to turn the Great Controversy onto their own heads "Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?", "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out." Micah 6:2; Ezekiel 18:31; Numbers 32:23. Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear: "Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if it refuses to receive and walk in the light that God has given. Jerusalem was favored of God as the depository of sacred trusts. But her people perverted the truth, and despised all-entreaties and warnings. They would not respect the counsels." {PH086 28.1}. "A nation's sin and a nation's ruin were due to the religious leaders. In our

day are not the same influences at work? Of the husbandmen of the Lord's vineyard are not many following in the steps of the Jewish leaders?" {COL 305} "The words of God to ancient Israel have a solemn warning to the church and its leaders today. Of Israel the Lord said, "I have written to him the great things of My law; but they were counted as a strange thing." Hosea 8:12. And to the priests and teachers He declared, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; . . . seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Hosea 4:6. Shall the warnings from God be passed by unheeded? ... Will they reject God's word as the Jewish leaders rejected Christ? The result of Israel's sin is before us. Will the church of today take warning?" {COL 306}

We share this most solemn warning with all who read this, for we know that "God will withdraw His Spirit unless His truth is accepted." {1888 124}. But if ye will not hear it, our souls shall weep in secret places for your pride; and our eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive. (Jeremiah 13:17)

Time and time again we kept asking for a plain "Thus Saith the Lord" to show us our error, but to no avail. It was indeed sad to see ministers of the Gospel answer in silence to such a request! We do not wish to cause trouble or be difficult. We were honest in our request. If we are in error we want to know it, but only by the inspired word of God not the edicts of man. Like the reformers of old, we dare not dishonor God or His truth merely to please man. It was Luther who said "prove to me from the writings of the prophets that I am in error. As soon as I shall be convinced, I will instantly retract all my errors, and will be the first to cast my books into the fire", "Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture...I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen." (4SP 132; GC 160)

We ask for nothing more, and we will do nothing less. We can only stand on the word of God, may God help us. Amen. End of page 10

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December 2005

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January 2006

Restitution Ministries

P. O. Box 7137

Kariong, NSW 2250

Australia

(Letter sent to:

Pr. David Blanch

Pr. Bob Manners

Pr. Garth Bainbridge

Pr. Bruce Grosse)

Tuesday, January 10, 2006

The Greater Sydney Conference

4 Cambridge Street,
Epping, NSW 2121

Dear Brethren,

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the "Guidelines" you have shared with us. We are more than surprised at the absence of any Scripture or inspired counsel which we hold in higher regard than all the words of men.

In light of this, we can only respond with the words of inspiration. For whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. We earnestly appeal to you in the name of the Lord to carefully consider the following counsel.

"The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and *speaking in the temple to the people* all the words of this life." ***We see here that the men in authority are not always to be obeyed, even though they may profess to be teachers of Bible doctrine. There are many today who feel indignant and aggrieved that any voice should be raised presenting ideas that differ from their own in regard to points of religious belief.*** Have they not long advocated their ideas as truth? So the priests and rabbis reasoned in apostolic days: What mean these men who are unlearned, some of them mere fishermen, who are presenting ideas contrary to the doctrines which the learned priests and rulers are teaching the people? ***They have no right to meddle with the fundamental principles of our faith. But we see that the God of heaven sometimes commissions men to teach that which is regarded as contrary to the established doctrines. Because those who were once the depositaries of truth became unfaithful to their sacred trust, the Lord chose others who would receive the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and would advocate truths that were not in accordance with the ideas of the religious leaders.*** And then these leaders, in the blindness of their minds, give full sway to what is supposed to be righteous indignation against the ones who have set aside cherished fables. They act like men who have lost their reason. ***They do not consider the possibility that they themselves have not rightly understood the word. They will not open their eyes to discern the fact that they have misinterpreted and misapplied the Scriptures, and have built up false theories, calling them fundamental doctrines of the faith.*** But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; ***and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them.*** That wonderful "I" may attempt to put down the Holy Spirit's teaching. Men may for a time attempt to smother it and kill it; but that will not make error truth, or truth error. The inventive minds of men have advanced speculative opinions in various lines, and when the Holy Spirit lets light shine into human minds, it does not respect every point of man's application of the word. ***God 14 impressed His servants to speak the truth irrespective of what men had taken for granted as truth. Even Seventh-day Adventists are in danger of closing their eyes to truth as it is in Jesus, because it contradicts something which they have taken for granted as truth but which the Holy Spirit teaches is not truth.*** {TM 69-71}

"The churches have an abundance of the religion and zeal that Paul had. ***Many persecute those who differ from them in religious matters. But no true Christian will persecute one who conscientiously differs from him in faith. Those who try to force the consciences of their fellowmen do it because Christ is not abiding in their hearts. They do not realize that they have the attributes of Satan, but he delights to make***

them his instruments to bear witness against God's chosen ones. They strive to make them observe rites that have no foundation in the Word of God. When these persecutors have the Spirit of Christ, they will hear and receive the words of Christ "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm" (1 Chron. 16:22). Christ and Him crucified will absorb the whole soul." {12MR 51, 52}

"Any man, be he minister or layman, who seeks to compel or control the reason of any other man, becomes an agent of Satan, to do his work, and in the sight of the heavenly universe he bears the mark of Cain." {1BC 1087.3}

We earnestly hope you will prayerfully consider this serious counsel from God. We sincerely pray you will not place yourselves in a position out of harmony with God's counsel. Brethren, be careful, exceeding careful, what position you take. God will hold you responsible for the decisions and actions you take contrary to His revealed will. Please be warned that the decision you take will be registered in the books of heaven, which register you will meet again in the Judgment of God.

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ *is* the only-begotten Son of the Living God. In light of this, how can you consider taking any action against those who hold to this glorious truth?

We do not mean any disrespect towards you, dear Brethren, by these serious words. We are motivated to speak plainly for the love and concern that we hold for you. Were the matter not so serious we would not have spoken so plainly. We realize there is a great weight of responsibility upon you, as the leading brethren, in the decisions and actions that you take. How we pray that you will not make a decision to cause Christ to be ashamed of you.

We appeal to you in the name of Jesus to ponder well the steps you consider taking. You would do well to heed the counsel of Gamaliel "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men...And now I say unto you, **Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.**"

Wishing you God's anointing eyesalve as you consider what you intend to do as touching "these men."

Kind Christian regards.

Sincerely yours,
The *Restitution* team
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March 2006

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March/April 2006

(*Intrasyd*, March/April 2006, p.3)

Having presented the facts of the matter, we now leave it with every intelligent Seventh-

day Adventist reader to consider again what the leaders are doing.

As of this writing, we are yet to be shown our error by a plain "Thus Saith the Lord". We do not understand why the "leading theologians from the South Pacific Division" could not answer our simple Bible questions in the "shared Bible study." We were not aware that believing on the Son of God was a church offence. We rather thought the church to be founded and built on this very truth, that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matthew 16:16). Is the church no longer building on this rock?

We indeed feel sorry for the "local churches" who are counselled to "take appropriate action in harmony with the scriptures" regarding the membership of those who believe on the Son of God. We feel sorry for them because there is no scriptural authority that condemns our faith in the Son of God. There are no Bible guidelines to 'ex-communicate' those who believe on the Son of God! It is indeed sad to see that the Protestant principle of "the Bible and the Bible only" (GC 448) has now been replaced with the Roman principle of "the Scriptures and the church manual." Speaking of the early history of our work, the time when our foundations were laid, the Lord's messenger tells us "We then took the position that the Bible, and the Bible only, was to be our guide; *and we are never to depart from this position.*" {CW 145.3}. Why is there a departure now?

We recognize the authority of only one creed, "*The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony.*" {1SM 416}.

Dear brethren, please show us our error from the Bible. Please show us why we are to refuse to believe that Jesus is *truly* "the Son of God."

The story of the blind man comes to mind. He was "cast out" for His 'blind' faith. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?* He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, *Lord, I believe.* And he worshipped him." John 9:35-38. We also believe. Do you?

For this very same faith, the faithful eunuch asked to be baptized "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*" Acts 8:37.

We also believe the Jesus Christ *is* the Son of God. Has the devil so deceived men today that they will do the reverse of what Philip did?

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By this very same faith, the ardent Paul was converted. Upon his conversion the fire burned in his heart to declare his new found faith. With all fervor and love he preached the heart of the Gospel. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, *that he is the Son of God.*" Acts 9:20. We also preach the same thing.

These all believed that Christ *is* the only-begotten Son of God. We hold and maintain the very same belief. Is this our crime? Is this our 'heresy'? Yea, we declare with Paul "that after the way which they call heresy, so worship [we] the God of [our] fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" Acts 24:14.

If Jesus came to church today, would His "membership" be threatened as well? Because He is and avows Himself to be the Son of God. Jesus has not changed, and to persecute Jesus again in the person of those who believe His words is to follow in the footsteps of the Jewish leaders. "Because He was, and avowed Himself to be, the Son of God, they were bent on destroying Him." {DA 470}

Every reader will easily recall what happened to those Jewish leaders who rejected the testimony of Jesus. Every intelligent reader will not fail to see the same sad story being repeated today. The leaders of this people are again rejecting the testimony of Jesus. Let it be known unto all men that we did not refrain from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God, whether ye will hear or whether ye forbear (Ezekiel 2:7). But be it known unto all, that whether you do hear, or whether you do forbear, your decision is registered in the books of heaven. This decision you will have to meet again in the Judgment.

"As Christ spoke, the scribes and Pharisees listened to words such as they had never heard before. But instead of receiving the speaker as the long-expected Messiah, they angrily rejected His claims. *He questioned their doctrine, and this was regarded by them as a sin never to be forgiven. They were determined to stand by their traditions and commandments. They would teach them just as strenuously as if no counter-influence had been exerted to correct their errors and deceptions.*" {RH, March 26, 1901par. 17}

To the brethren who are following in the steps of the leaders, hear the word of the Lord "O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths." Isaiah 3:12

To our dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters in the faith we say, "**Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.**" Isaiah 66:5

Amen

For more information visit

www.acts321.org end of page 19

Sherlene Turner's Comments:

The tritheistic belief which the church embraced in 1980 (after an official vote by a General Conference in session), appears now to be considered by some SDA theologians, at least in Australia, to be 'paganism.'

*SDA minister, Pastor Max Hatton, **Understanding the Trinity**, p 135*

"An unbalanced view leads to such errors as Tritheism, Modalism and Bi-theism. Tritheism results from an overemphasis of the threeness. It results really in there being three completely separate persons or Gods. This is really Polytheism (which, really, is paganism)" [Parentheses in original].

On 25 October, 2005, representatives of the non-trinitarian group Restitution Ministries (RM) were invited by the Seventh-day Adventist Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) to discuss the doctrine of the trinity at the Sydney Conference office.

According to RM's report of the proceedings, the conference theological leaders denied that God possessed a body (i.e. A physical form with eyes, hair, feet, arms). RM referred to Scripture as evidence to support their view that God indeed was a divine Being with a physical form, but this information was passed over as being symbolic, "having only been revealed in visions."

By taking this position, support appears to be accumulating that suggests that the Seventh-day Adventist religion, at least in Australia, has indeed 'changed' and is 'progressing' closer to the Roman Catholic position.

To read the SDA GSC's response to the meeting with RM, visit:

<http://www.gscadventist.org.au/ministries/communication/intrasyd>

A Real Concern

*Some objections raised by the representatives of the Greater Sydney Conference, against the non-trinitarian position, appear to be in **harmony** with the orthodox version of the trinity as taught by the Roman Catholic church.*

Both the SDA GSC theologians and the Roman Catholic New Advent Encyclopedia appear to agree that:

God has no physical form;

- Metaphores and symbolism concerning God's physical form are not to be taken literally;*
- Men cannot know God to any great extent because God, is a mystery;*

It appears that the GSC theologians, by asserting that God is only 'spirit,' are drawing closer to the Roman Catholic orthodox trinitarian belief. The orthodox version maintains that:

- God is one being - not three beings (tritheism) - but one being which has 3 parts/hypostases to it.*

The New Advent Roman Catholic Encyclopedia states:

“The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion -- the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.” In this Trinity of Persons the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet, notwithstanding this difference as to origin, the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent.”
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm>

Seventh-day Adventist Fundament Belief

2. The Trinity:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.
<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

In order to hold the orthodox trinitarian view of God, it is not possible that the divine Person “God” possesses a literal body.

Should Seventh-day Adventists be concerned that their leading theologians – in harmony with the Catholic leaders - maintain that God does not have a physical form, though this aspect of God is clearly described in the Bible?

New Advent Encyclopedia (Roman Catholic) - Nature and Attributes of God

*“Yet sometimes men are led by a natural tendency to think and speak of God as if He were a magnified creature -- more especially a magnified man -- and this is known as anthropomorphism. Thus God is said to see or hear, **as if He had physical organs**, or to be angry or sorry, as if subject to human passions:...The same reasons that justify and recommend the use of metaphorical language in other connections justify and recommended it here, but **no Theist of average intelligence ever thinks of understanding literally the metaphors he applies, or hears applied by others, to God**, any more than he means to speak literally when he calls a brave man a lion, or a cunning one a fox....**God is a simple being or substance excluding every kind of composition, physical or metaphysical.....There is not, therefore, and cannot be any physical or real composition in God.... From this it follows that we cannot know God adequately in the way in which He knows Himself....God they are all ultimately identical in meaning and describe the same ultimate reality -- the one infinitely perfect and simple being.***
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06612a.htm>

1 John 2:22

“He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.”