

# LAYMEN MINISTRIES

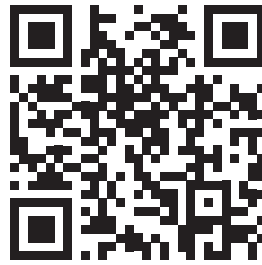
No. 230 A Journal Dedicated to Laymen

Winter 2024

A full-page portrait of John Harvey Kellogg, a man with a prominent white beard and mustache, wearing a brown suit jacket over a red vest and a red tie. He is looking slightly to the left with a gentle smile. The background is a soft, painterly mix of green and blue.

## JOHN HARVEY KELLOGG

*and the Trinity*



# JOHN HARVEY KELLOGG

## and the Trinity

**H**e was influential, intelligent, and one of Adventism's most prominent medical doctors at the turn of the century. His name was John Harvey Kellogg.


He was known all over the world because of the famous Battle Creek Sanitarium, of which he was the administrator and leading physician. He, along with some of his family, started the Kellogg food company, making items like granola and Corn Flakes. Because of his fame and powerful mind, he was very influential within the Adventist denomination. Theologically, Kellogg started to drift away from Bible-based Christian thought into the nebulous of mysticism and theosophy. It was at the 1897 General Conference Session that he started to voice his new views about the personality of God.

We have here the evidence of a universal *presence*, an intelligent *presence*, an all-wise

*presence*, an all-powerful *presence*, a *presence* by the aid of which every atom of the universe is kept in touch with every other atom. This *force* that holds all things together, that is everywhere present, that thrills throughout the whole universe, that acts instantaneously through boundless space, can be nothing else than God himself. What a wonderful thought that this same God *is in us* and *in everything*.<sup>1</sup>

It's generally assumed that Dr. Kellogg was delving in the age-old doctrine of pantheism, but in reality, he was promoting what is referred to as "panentheism." There are similarities to pantheism, yet it is uniquely different. It teaches that a universal



A portrait of Dr. J. M. Kellogg, a man with a full white beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a high collar. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression.

spirit is present everywhere, and this spirit “transcends” all created things. But there is also a supreme deity from which this life-giving force emanates to all living things. Whereas with pantheism, there is the Brahman, which taught that god is everywhere and in everything—sometimes referred to as “the all.”

So, when Dr. Kellogg stated, “God is in us,” he was not referring to a converted man who had Christ dwelling in him by the Holy Spirit, but rather a personal presence from God was *already* dwelling in *all men because they have life*. To him, wherever there was “life” there was God. Since all men have “life,” it was evidence to him that Christ was already personally *dwelling* in everyone! This same personal presence of God dwelt in all living things such as trees, grass and the air. He was teaching a theosophical concept that was becoming quite popular at that time regarding God’s personal eminence.

### THE LIVING TEMPLE

In the month of February 1902, while Dr. Kellogg was coming more out in the open about his “new philosophy,” God sent a warning to the doctor by allowing the Battle Creek Sanitarium to burn to the ground. Immediately the doctor started laying plans for a new sanitarium. In these plans “it was agreed that a medical book should be written, on popular lines, to be sold by our people for the benefit of sanitarium work.”<sup>1</sup> This idea seemed like a good way to raise the needed funds. Dr. Kellogg went right to work, and by the middle of the summer of 1902, he had his manuscript done. The title of the book was to be *The Living Temple*.

It was about this same time, the summer of 1902,

that Dr. Kellogg invited W.A. Spicer over to spend the Sabbath. Spicer, who was at that time the secretary of the General Conference, mentions his visit—

Where is God?” I was asked [by Dr. Kellogg]. I would naturally say, “He is in heaven; there the Bible pictures the throne of God, all the heavenly beings at His command as messengers between heaven and earth.” But I was told that *God was in the grass and plants and in the trees* (with motions to the grass and trees about us, as we sat on the veranda.)

“Where is heaven?” I was asked. I had my idea of the center of the universe, with heaven and the throne of God in the midst but disclaimed any attempt to fix the center of the universe astronomically. But I was urged to understand that heaven is where God is, and God is everywhere, in the grass, in the trees, in all creation.... To think of God as having a form in the image of which man was made, was said to be idolatry.

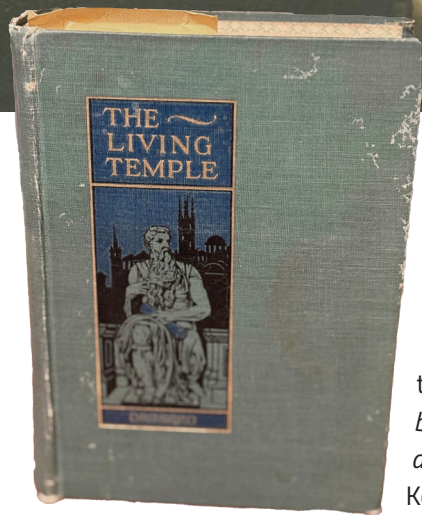
By any understanding I had of language, I was listening to the ideas of the pantheistic philosophy that I had met with in India.... Trying to get the import of it all, it seemed to me these ideas set all earth and heaven and God swirling *away into mist*. There was in it no objective unity to lay hold of. With scripture terms and Christian ideas interwoven, it seemed the old doctrine of the Hindus—all nature a very part of Brahma, and the Brahma the whole.<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 1902, Dr. Kellogg ordered the Review and Herald to print five thousand of *The Living Temple*,





IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE  
ALPHA OF APOSTASY THAT WAS  
SPEARHEADED BY KELLOGG WAS AN  
INFILTRATION OF WHAT WE WOULD  
CALL TODAY “NEW AGE” TEACHINGS.



against the wishes of many. Just as it had been put in pages and had received its final corrections, and was to be run through the press, a fire burned down the factory and destroyed the plates. But Dr. Kellogg immediately sent his copy out and had the book

printed elsewhere. A.G. Daniells, then General Conference President, mentioned that the doctor was trying to leaven this denomination with what he believes to be veiled heathenism.<sup>3</sup>

When the book came off the press, the denomination refused to market the book, so it was recalled and some of the most offensive pages containing pantheism were removed using a penknife and new pages were “tipped in.” After this the book was still not welcome by the church leadership, for warnings were being sent out by Sister White that this book contained “spiritualistic sentiments representing the Creator as an essence pervading all nature.”<sup>4</sup>

Some copies of the book were sent to England where it was welcomed, not so much by the Adventists, but by a society called *Order of the Golden Age*, a center propagating theosophy and eastern mysticism. In a journal published by the same organization *The Living Temple* was being sold side by side with another book entitled *The Life of Dr. Anna Kingford*, which was a “book that teaches much concerning transcendental truth and higher forms of Spiritualism.”<sup>5</sup>

### NEW OLD-AGE TEACHINGS

Ellen White stated that “the burning of these two institutions was verily a judgment from God.”<sup>6</sup> Time and time again she warned about the teachings that were coming into our church through the doctor and those who were under his influence, some of which were Adventisms’ most respected and powerful preachers. Note what she sent out in an urgent testimony—

These words were spoken to me in the night season. The sentiments in *Living Temple* regarding the personality of God have been received by men *who have had a long experience in the truth*. When such men consent to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we are no longer to regard the subject as a matter to be treated with greatest delicacy.<sup>7</sup>

It is quite clear that the Alpha of apostasy that was spearheaded by Kellogg was an infiltration of what we would call today “New Age” teachings. This was the Alpha of deadly heresies and should give us some idea of what the Omega will be. Ellen White said that the “*Living Temple* contains the Alpha of these theories. I knew that the Omega would follow in a little while; and *I trembled for our people*.”<sup>8</sup>

Scientific sentiments in a beautiful, scriptural framework were being introduced, and some of our prominent, leading men were involved. These spiritualistic philosophies were eating away at the foundations of our faith. The Omega will be of the same nature as the Alpha but will be greater and much more deceptive. New Age teachings have now infiltrated various aspects of our society. We need to be grounded in the truth as it is in Jesus, or we will be deceived.



## KELLOGG AND THE TRINITY

Some people have speculated that the heart of Kellogg's downfall was due to his accepting the concept of the Trinity. There is no doubt that he claimed to have accepted some concept of this theological idea, but then, the pioneers of the church, from its earliest years, had a lot of speculation regarding the Godhead/Trinity doctrine. There was no doubt that some of the early pioneers were anti-trinitarian, in the Catholic sense of the word. Most believed in a concept of the Godhead, but views were mixed at best, and yet they never let this teaching divide the church or interfere with a relationship with each other. In other words, it did not overshadow the Three Angels' Messages as being the most important focus of the church.

So obviously it was not a teaching that was elevated to something like the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, State of the Dead, etc. I find it interesting that no books were published on the topic. What did surface were some general references that were mixed into large works dealing with other topics. The only standalone publication I could find was a Bible Student Library tract published in 1892 entitled *The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity*, by Samuel Spear.

To speculate that the whole Alpha of Apostasy was founded upon the teachings of the Trinity is a stretch at best. Some quote Letter 253, November 20th, 1903, from Ellen White which was written to Dr. Kellogg regarding the book *The Living Temple* as if she was rebuking him for accepting the Trinity. She makes no reference to the Trinity in that letter, yet people quote this letter as proof that the Trinity is deceptive and will lead to the Omega of Apostasy. Such evidence is circumstantial at best. Ellen White was not one to mince words when it comes to pointing out error, and if the Trinity was at the heart of the matter, she would have clearly said so. What we have is a case of "twisting evidence to fit a person's view" versus "accepting the truth based on the evidence."

EGW was clear what the issue was. Kellogg's position on the personality of God undermined the atonement that Jesus made on the cross. This is why in Letter

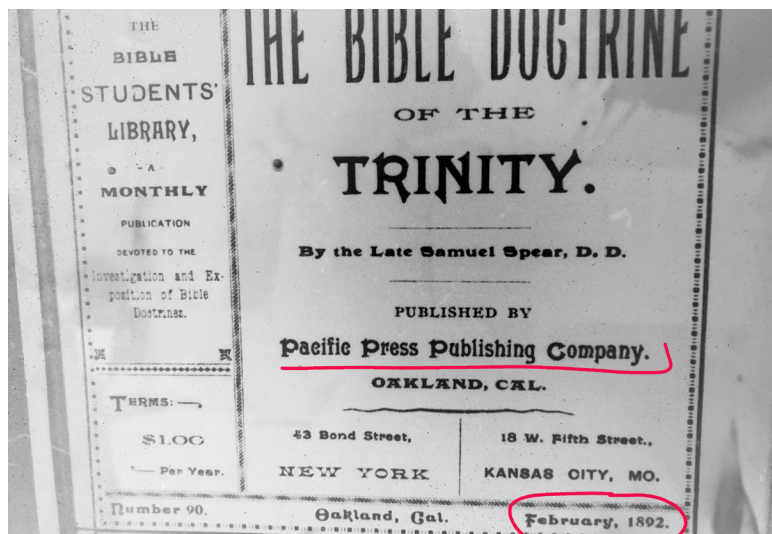
253 to Dr. Kellogg she stated:

"The Father, the omniscient One, created the world through Christ Jesus. Christ is the light of the world, the way to eternal life. He, the anointed One, God gave to make an atonement for the sins of the world. You need to understand that unless you believe in that atonement and know that you are bought with the price of the blood of the only begotten Son of God, you will assuredly be bound up with the wicked one. If you continue to cherish the theories that you have been cherishing, you will be left to become the sport of Satan's temptations."<sup>9</sup>

Ellen White continues to clarify the issue in that letter:

"There is a *strain of spiritualism coming in among our people, and it will undermine the faith of those who give place to it*, leading them to give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Errors will be presented in a pleasing and flattering manner. The enemy desires to divert the minds of our brethren and sisters from the work of preparing a people to stand in these last days.

"I am instructed to warn our brethren and sisters not to discuss the nature of our God. Many of the curious who attempted to open the ark of the





testament, to see what was inside, were punished for their presumption. We are not to say that the Lord God of heaven is in a leaf, or in a tree; for He is not there. He sitteth upon His throne in the heavens.

"The work of the Creator as seen in nature reveals His power. *But nature is not above God, nor is God in nature as some represent Him to be. God made the world, but the world is not God; it is but the work of His hands.* Nature reveals the work of a positive, personal God, showing that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."<sup>10</sup>

She does not say "the Trinity" was the issue but instead she clearly says, "The sentiments in *Living Temple* regarding the personality of God..." was the real issue. And these concepts undermined the atonement that Christ made on the cross. If indeed the issue was

the deception of holding to the teachings of the Trinity, she would have come out and plainly stated that. She is very clear as to what the real issue was.

"These words were spoken to me in the night season. The sentiments in *Living Temple* regarding **the personality of God** have been received by men who have had a long experience in the truth. When such men consent to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we are no longer to regard the subject as a matter to be treated with greatest delicacy."<sup>11</sup>

## OTHER PIONEERS AND THE TRINITY

There is no doubt that the early pioneers held divergent views of the Godhead, but the teaching was never elevated to a "testing truth." In fact she told the church leadership to treat this doctrine with great delicacy. I have studied their positions for years. But what is interesting is, that while holding divergent views on this subject, they never allowed that doctrine to divide them, have arguments about it, and none of them wrote any books or pamphlets on the subject. At the best, there were just comments that came up here and there in their written works.

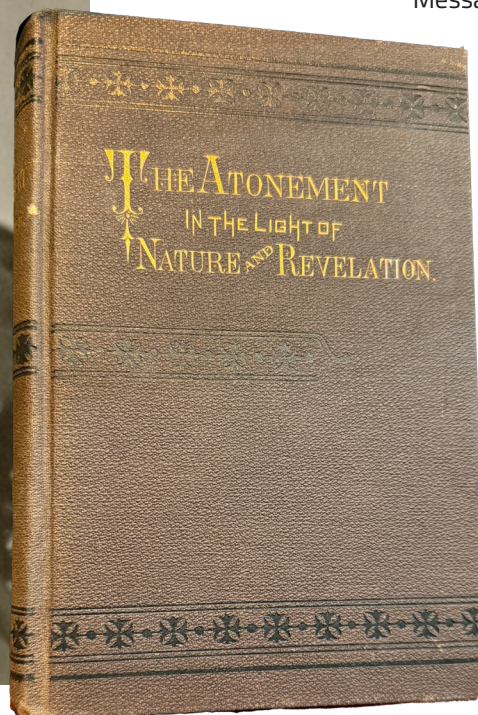
So, my point is, this was not a pillar of the church. If indeed the doctrine was so important, why is there not books written on the subject like you find on topics like the Sabbath, the State of the Dead, the Three Angels'

Messages, the Sanctuary, the 2300-Day Prophecy, etc.? People today are making this doctrine a test of fellowship and are elevating the subject to being one of the pillars of our faith. It never has been and never should be. It is dividing churches and families. It is just sad.


One prominent pioneer named JH Waggoner made one of the boldest statements about the Trinity in his book entitled *The Atonement*.



▲ J.H. Waggoner







JH Waggoner was father of EJ Waggoner of the historic 1888 General Conference who, being influenced by his father, also held to interesting and different views on the Godhead. JH Waggoner has a chapter in that book called *Doctrine of a Trinity Subversive of the Atonement*.

But in his anti-trinitarian views, he went too far with his views on the atonement of Christ, and this set him at direct odds with Ellen White. Undermining the atonement of Christ is a serious issue. JH Waggoner brought out the idea that to make an atonement on the cross, Christ's humanity *and His divinity* both had to die. Here is what he wrote:

"Trinitarians hold that the term 'Christ' comprehends two distinct and separate natures: one that was merely human; *the other, the second person in the trinity, who dwelt in the flesh for a brief period, but could not possibly suffer, or die; that the Christ that died was only the human nature in which the divinity had dwelt.* Both classes have a human offering, and nothing more.

"No matter how exalted the pre-existent Son was; no matter how glorious, how powerful, or even eternal; if the manhood only died, the sacrifice was only human. And so far as the vicarious death of Christ is concerned, this is Socinianism. Thus, the remark is just, that the doctrine of a trinity degrades the Atonement, resting it solely on a human offering as a basis...

"We trust that we have shown to the full conviction of everyone who 'trembles at the word' of the Lord, that the Son of God, who was in the beginning, by whom the worlds were made, suffered death for us; the oft-repeated declarations of theological writers that a mere human body died are, by the Scriptures, proved untrue."<sup>12</sup>

But JH Waggoner's position was totally contrary to the counsel of Ellen White. She is very clear about this subject and how it undermines the Atonement—the very issue JH Waggoner's book was addressing:

"When the voice of the angel was heard saying, 'Thy Father calls thee,' He who had said, 'I lay

**NO MATTER HOW EXALTED THE  
PRE-EXISTENT SON WAS; NO MATTER  
HOW GLORIOUS, HOW POWERFUL, OR  
EVEN ETERNAL; IF THE MANHOOD  
ONLY DIED, THE SACRIFICE WAS  
ONLY HUMAN.**

down my life, that I might take it again,' 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. **Deity did not die. Humanity died,** but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' *In His divinity Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.* He declares that He had life in Himself to quicken whom He will."<sup>13</sup>

It was due to Christ's divinity that broke the bonds of death, making a provision that we too can break the chains of death. Waggoner said Divinity died, and Ellen White stated Divinity cannot die, and that it was Christ's divinity that saves us. She continues making this very clear:

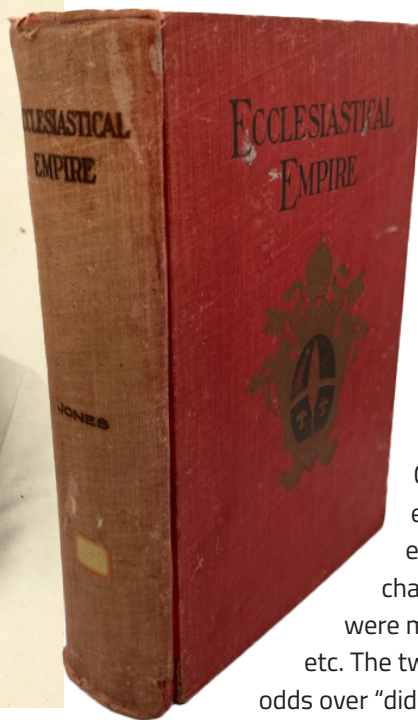
"'I am the resurrection, and the life.' He who had said, 'I lay down my life, that I might take it again,' came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. **Humanity died: divinity did not die.** In His divinity, *Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.* He declares that He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will."<sup>14</sup>

This is a classic example how Ellen white clashed with a key pioneer over this subject. JH Waggoner's book was published in 1884. It was four years later at the 1888 General Conference session where the issues of Christ's divinity were clearly spelled out and brought a clear understanding of the Godhead.





▲ A.T. Jones



centuries and the connection of the Trinity between those two groups. Churches were burned, people were murdered, all over a doctrine that no one could clearly understand. It became a testing truth which involved a life-and-death decision.

Then in A. D. 512 the *Trisagion* riots broke out in Constantinople all over the emperor of Rome adding extra words to a Trinitarian chant, in which many more were murdered, palaces set on fire, etc. The two opposing groups were at odds over "did *one* of the Trinity suffer in the flesh or did *one* person suffer in the flesh"!

## HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

History does repeat itself—in a greater or lesser degree. Back in the 1990s I remember diving deeply into a study on the Trinity. One time I partook of some meetings with a mostly anti-trinitarian group of Adventist Christians. At first there was an appearance that they were all in harmony with each other. Being a simple guy like I am, I always like to keep things as easy to understand as possible. I started asking specific questions about the role of Christ in the Godhead, the function and nature of the Holy Spirit, the relationship of the Father with the Son, and soon the whole group was in a heated debate.

I soon found out that on the surface a lot of these people appeared to agree with each other, but when it got down to really defining things, they were at odds, and understandably so. Why? Because we can't understand everything about the Godhead any more than a two-year-old child can explain quantum physics. But there was one thing that united them, and that was the assumed "fact" that the Adventist Church had it wrong, and they had it right! And they couldn't even define the details of what "right" was!

I remember reading history books while researching Arianism versus non-Arianism views in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

They were hung up on the term "person" in explaining the Trinity. Does that seem like a big thing? Well, it was to them! Here is what AT Jones stated about this:

"Then in 519 A.D. another dispute was raised, growing out of the addition to the *Trisagion*. That was, 'Did **one of the** Trinity suffer in the flesh? or **did one person** of the Trinity suffer in the flesh?' The monks of Scythia affirmed that 'one of the Trinity' suffered in the flesh and declared that to say that "one *person* of the Trinity suffered in the flesh," was absolute heresy."<sup>15</sup>

Far as I can tell, they are arguing over minutia back as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. This debate has gone on from that century till today. Some have resurrected this age long debate and the question begs to be asked, are we any more able to decipher this particular biblical doctrine than those in the past? Poor, finite mortals trying to explain, and then make testing truth about, the unexplainable.

Another example: A debate connected to this was made about if Jesus **was substance** of the Father or **in like substance** of the Father. They were hung up again on one word, "like". And which side you took on that matter was again, a life-and-death choice. It is all totally crazy! AT Jones, in his book *Ecclesiastical Empires*, gives great details about the trinitarian/anti-trinitarian wars



of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and mocks the ignorance and pride of people taking something that is beyond our abilities to understand and then turning it into a testing truth. Will humanity ever learn?

I appreciate JH Waggoner's humble conclusion in the closing of that chapter found in the book *The Atonement* about the Trinity, where he makes this gracious admission:

*"'The mystery of godliness,' the mystery of the incarnation, is great indeed. It is to be doubted whether a finite mind will ever be able to comprehend it. This does not speak against it as a fact; for we may accept a fact revealed, when we cannot comprehend the nature of the fact. We may believe that a certain star is thousands of millions of miles from the earth, but the human mind can have no just conception of such a distance. We believe in the being of the omnipotent God, but we cannot comprehend his being."*<sup>16</sup>


I wholeheartedly agree! It is not my burden to try to convince people about the nature of the Godhead. I will say that I am not a Trinitarian in the Catholic sense. But I also do not agree with some of the beliefs held by the early Adventist pioneers. I choose to use the word "Godhead" when referring to God, as it is more Biblical.

Regarding the Godhead/Trinity issue, I have my beliefs. I frequently get asked where I stand on this issue, and I avoid it, especially if I sense the person asking me is out to "set me straight" on the subject. But like the pioneers of the church, I like to keep that discussion very low-key because as the scripture says, "...if any man thinks that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." 1 Corinthians 8:2. Such is the case with truly understanding everything about the "Godhead."

One thing that really bothers me is the arrogance of some people in thinking they understand so much about the Godhead/Trinity that they make it a "testing truth". History testifies the outcome of such individuals. On one hand we have local churches and Conferences making this a test of membership and on the other hand individual members making it a test of faith. The point of this article is to validate both sides are wrong. The Trinity/Godhead is a matter of personal conscience,

**PAUL SAW THAT THE CHARACTER  
OF CHRIST MUST BE UNDERSTOOD  
BEFORE MEN COULD LOVE HIM OR  
VIEW THE CROSS WITH THE EYE OF  
FAITH. HERE MUST BEGIN THAT  
STUDY WHICH SHALL BE THE SCIENCE  
AND THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED  
THROUGH ALL ETERNITY.**

and our personal convictions on this teaching should be just that. We have so much to learn, and unlearn, when we discuss the character of God, and like Moses at the burning bush, we need to take off our shoes, as we are walking on holy ground.<sup>18</sup>

In the book *Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen White writes, "Paul saw that the character of Christ must be understood before men could love Him or view the cross with the eye of faith. Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity" <sup>17</sup> Think about that - the study of "God" will be revealed to us throughout eternity! 

- 1 1897 General Conference Bulletin, JH Kellogg talk, p. 83.
- 2 Ibid. p. 20.
- 3 Letter to W.C. White from A.G. Daniells, September 29, 1903
- 4 Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, p. 36.
- 5 *How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis*, unpublished manuscript by W.A. Spicer, 1938, p.47. White Document File 15c.
- 6 Special Testimonies, Series B, No.7, p. 9.
- 7 Special Testimonies, Series B, No.7, p. 36, 37
- 8 Special Testimonies, Series B, No.2, p. 53
- 9 Letter 253, 1903, Paragraph 21
- 10 Letter 253, 1903, Paragraphs 14-16
- 11 Special Testimonies, Series B, No.7, p. 36, 37
- 12 *The Atonement*, JH Waggoner, Page 165
- 13 *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, page 1113.4
- 14 *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, page 1113.6
- 15 *Ecclesiastical Empires*, AT Jones, page 201
- 16 *The Atonement*, JH Waggoner, Page 164
- 17 *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 273