

My response to Richard Mendoza's Facebook comments

5th July 2020

To Richard Mendoza

Between the 5th and the 26th October 2015, I received 7 emails from you comprising around 30,000 words. You were then a SDA minister in Michigan.

In these emails, which you sent to at least two other people, one of whom, like yourself, was a minister of the SDA Church, you made an abundance of accusations. The majority of these were in connection with my website articles dealing with the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. You said I was falsifying this history.

In your emails, you described my portrayal of this history as “erroneous”, a “false Adventist History”, an “erroneous portrayal of SDA history”, and a “false fabricated history”. You also described me personally as an “unreliable source of truth”, as “fabricating false history”, “willfully bearing false witness”, a person who “should not be trusted in the communication of Biblical and historical facts” and “indeed a false prophet teaching false doctrine”. You also described me as “unethical in Christian journalism” and someone who has “falsified information”. You described my views as “The false doctrine of Terry Hill”, saying also that I was guilty of misquoting Ellen White. As to how many others your friends passed on your emails, that is anyone's guess.

Personally speaking, I believe that these remarks, from someone who was supposed to have been a minister of the Gospel, particularly a minister of the SDA Church, left much to be desired. This is apart from the fact that you sent these emails not only to me personally but also to at least two other people. Many would regard your accusations as not only an attack on my portrayal of SDA history, but also on my character.

After a few initial replies to you, I realised that attempting to disprove your accusations by email was not the answer. I therefore compiled a document in which I could, in an orderly and intelligent manner, not only address these accusations, but also show you that I was correct in what I had written.

This document comprised 122 pages. On the 1st March 2016, I emailed it to you. I also sent it to your friends. Up to this day, you have not responded to it. You did not even acknowledge that you had received it. Eventually, after giving you time to object to anything I had written (which you didn't), I put it on my website. In fact since October 26th 2015, you have not emailed me.

What you did though, just a matter of days after receiving my rebuttal of your accusations, was to send me a ‘friend request’ from Facebook. I would think that not too many people, if they had been the recipient of your allegations, would have accepted you as a friend, but I did.

Since then, on Facebook, you have, at every opportunity, continued to criticise my portrayal of SDA denominational history. This has continued for over 4 years. During this time you have put across your views, and in reply, I have put across my views. It is obvious we do not agree with each other – and perhaps never will. This is with respect to theology as well as the history of the SDA Church.

You flood me with all sorts of posts, which, on numerous occasions, you have previously used on Facebook. Take for example Tuesday 16th June 2020. Within minutes of me posting an article on my timeline, you began to post your comments. You did not even have time to read what I had written (it comprised 14 pages). Your first words were, “You're still promulgating [sic] SDA Pioneer historical falsehoods.” The fact is that in this document, I simply set out to show what our church meant, when declaring our fundamental beliefs, by the use of the word *trinity*. I cannot see how anyone could argue with what I had written. It was simply factual.

Within minutes you had posted 23 posts to my timeline, which, in the next hour or so, had increased to 43. A short while after, this had risen to 58. Not once though, in any of your posts, did you even make reference to anything I had written. This tells me that all you want to do is to make a nuisance of yourself. I believe your intention is to distract people from reading what I have written. Certainly you do not refer people to what I have written.

On Sabbath 20th June, you posted 52 posts in argumentative replies to one of my friends on my timeline. I believe your approach to this Godhead controversy is not conducive to promoting Christian behaviour or Christian discussion. You are, I believe, by your polemic attitude, putting people off from intelligently discussing these things.

On Sabbath the 27th June you did exactly the same. I had posted an article in which I had shown that the White Estate, in a cut down version of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, had omitted the very things that the non-trinitarians use in defence of their beliefs. Altogether, during the day, you made 50 posts, yet none of them addressed the issue of the White Estate omitting these things. In the space of one 15-minute period, you posted 20 posts.

Once again, in your posts, you accused me of being deceitful. You said I had “purposely left out” other statements from Ellen White but as I explained to you, I did no such thing. The article was simply dealing with the White Estate’s condensed version of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. It was not intended to be a full-blown treatise on Godhead theology. If this is what I had intended it to be, it would have been written very differently. That’s your problem Richard. You cannot seem to deal with what I have written. You divert people’s attention to something else and then lead them into a discussion about it. Regarding your accusation, if anyone was guilty of omitting things from Ellen White’s writings, it was the White Estate, not me.

I can only conclude therefore that in the future, whenever I post something on my timeline, the same thing will happen again and again. You have been doing this for over 4 years, so why should you stop now? This is why I am calling it to a halt.

During these 4 years, you have presented what you believe, and in response, I have made clear what I believe. You are saying the same things over and over again – and I am giving you the same replies over and over again. What is the point of it all? I see no value in this situation continuing.

Last week I posted a link to video on the divine Sonship of Christ. You continually objected to what was said in that video (that Christ, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God). On the 3rd July, Facebook reported that there had been 330 comments to my post. Over 200 of them were made by you. I believe that this is more than enough to make your point. If you cannot do so in this amount of posts, you never will. This is why I am saying that enough is enough.

The reason for me writing this communication is not only because of the amount of comments you make whenever I post something (albeit that would be a good reason), but more importantly, your continuing allegations, on Facebook, that my account of the history of the SDA Church is a false history. This again needs to be addressed.

So what is your claim? What is it that you say is wrong with my portrayal of SDA denominational history, and what is the basis for your continuing accusations?

Your claim

In your emails in 2015, you made the claim that during the time of Ellen White's ministry, the trinity doctrine was one of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church. As you said in one email to various recipients, including your friend in the ministry (all your emphasis)

“He [Terry Hill] is willfully misleading everyone who reads what he has written about Adventist history and the Trinity. If that is all they read, they will end up being deceived into believing that the Trinity Doctrine DID NOT exist in the Adventist Church in 1913 and was not accepted as one of its fundamental beliefs until AFTER EGW was dead ,...” (Richard Mendoza, Email, 13th October 2015, to various recipients)

This is the continuing basis of all your objections and allegations. You say that I am deliberately (wilfully) leading people to believe error. The main thrust of your argument is that you believe that when Ellen White was alive, the “Trinity Doctrine” was one of the fundamental beliefs of SDA's. In contrast, I maintain that our denomination did not accept this teaching until decades after she died. The next day you wrote (all your emphasis)

“The FORMER Anti-Trinitarian view of the denomination RECEIVED a COMPLETE REVISION! and WAS CHANGED while EGW was still ALIVE!” (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill, 14th October 2015)

The main 'evidence' that you repeatedly produce to prove your claims is when F. M. Wilcox, in the R&H in 1913 (he was then its editor), wrote the following (this was a special missionary edition of the R&H)

“For the benefit of those who may desire to know more particularly the cardinal features of the faith held by this denomination, we shall state that Seventh-day Adventists believe,— 1. In the divine Trinity. This Trinity consists of the eternal Father, a personal, spiritual being, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite in power, wisdom, and love; of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal Father, through whom all things were created, and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the one regenerating agency in the work of redemption.” (F. M. Wilcox, *Review and Herald*, October 9th 1913 ‘*The Message for Today*’)

Was Wilcox here referring to the trinity doctrine? You say he was. I say he wasn't. I believe he was only saying, as Ellen White wrote here, that

“There are three living persons of the heavenly trio;” (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B, No 7, page 63, ‘Come out and be separate’*)

In this document I will show you why I am correct. First though, we need to understand what constitutes a trinity doctrine.

Ekkehardt Mueller, of the SDA Biblical Research Institute, correctly explained the trinity doctrine this way (this is in support of the trinity doctrine as stated in the current SDA Fundamental Belief No. 2)

“There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), however, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all called God (Matthew 27:46, John 20:28: Acts 5:3-4). Consequently, we do not worship three Gods, but one God who reveals Himself in and consists of three “persons”. The three persons share one indivisible nature. Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, each person of the Godhead is inseparably connected to the other two.” (Ekkehardt Mueller, *Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 8, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*)

Notice what I have highlighted in red. This is crucial to any trinity doctrine. Without this inseparable oneness there is no trinity doctrine. As Paul Petersen (Professor, Religion Department, Andrews University) explained

“The core elements of the doctrine of the Trinity are oneness and distinctiveness. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one, yet three. To express this conviction, words and expressions came into use that are not explicitly used in the Bible. The oneness of God we confess by claiming that God is one in being; the distinctiveness we confess by teaching that there are three persons.” (Paul Petersen, *Andrews University, May 2015, page 3, ‘God in 3 Persons — in the New Testament’*)

It is this “one in being” that confirms a Godhead belief to be trinitarian. It is this that constitutes the trinity doctrine’s inseparable oneness of God (see Mueller above). This is why Ellen White’s “three living persons” statement (see above) does not constitute a

trinity doctrine. The oneness of the trinity doctrine is noticeably absent – as it is in Wilcox’s 1913 “divine Trinity” statement (see above).

Another place where we find the trinity doctrine correctly stated is in the Handbook of SDA Theology. This is in support of the SDA Fundamental Belief No. 2

“In Scripture God has revealed His transcendent nature as Trinity, namely three distinct divine Persons who act directly and historically in history **and constituting the one divine Trinitarian being.**” (Dr Fernando Canale, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, page 138)

What is stated here by Dr Canale is the official current (2020) position of the SDA Church. As the editor explained in the Preface of this volume

“The 28 articles that make up this volume have been in process for some 10 years....We are not arguing a point of view peculiar to a small avant-garde school of Adventist thinking. What is presented here is broadly representative of mainstream Adventist theology and biblical scholarship as they are practiced throughout the world-wide Adventist Church.” (Raoul Dederen, *Handbook of SDA Theology* ‘Preface’, page x, 2000)

There can be no doubt that what is written in this volume is claimed to be, by the SDA Church, the beliefs of its world-wide membership

Your claim rejected

Over the years I have repeatedly shown you that Wilcox’s 1913 “divine Trinity” statement (see page 4), was not an expression of the trinity doctrine. I have shown you that at the best, it was to show that SDA’s believed there are three persons of the Godhead. You cannot though, for some reason, accept the evidence I have provided.

Even our own church historians do not agree with you. As Merlin Burt explained (Burt is Professor of Church History, Director, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews Theological Seminary)

“One of the remarkable aspects of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the development of its position of the trinity and the deity of Christ. **These doctrines did not become normative in the church until the middle of the twentieth century.**” (Merlin D. Burt, 1996, *Preface to ‘Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-trinitarianism in Adventist Theology, 1888-1957’*)

His conclusion was

“The church gradually shifted during from the 1930s to 1950s to the ‘orthodox’ Christian view on the trinity and deity of Christ.” (*Ibid*, page 47, ‘Conclusion’)

If these doctrines did not become “normative” until the 1950’s, and the church gradually shifted to the orthodox view of the trinity between the 1930’s and 1950’s, how could it

have been a part of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church when Ellen White was alive? She died in 1915. Perhaps you believe that Burt is also falsifying the history of our denomination.

My research has led me to conclude that it was somewhat later than the 1950's that the trinity doctrine became "normative" among SDA's, but this is beside the point. At least Burt agrees with me that during the time of Ellen White's ministry, it was not one of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church.

I have also shown you that in 1919, the executive committee organised a Bible conference to which, solely by invitation, only high-ranking church personnel were permitted to attend. Those invited (65 in total), were such as Bible and history teachers in our colleges, heads of our schools and colleges, editors of our publications and other leading personnel. This of course included those of the executive committee.

At this conference, some of our leadership attempted to persuade the other delegates that what we had been teaching about Christ, for the entire time of Ellen White's ministry, was not Biblical. As our historical records attest, at that time (1919), our denominational teaching concerning Christ was that in the endlessness of eternity, in a way that has not been revealed or can even be imagined, He was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. Certain of our leaders were urging that as a denomination we should stop teaching this belief and instead promote a trinitarian (co-eternal) view of Christ. Some agreed. Some did not.

This effort to change our belief concerning Christ from a non-trinitarian view to a trinitarian view, is absolute proof that at that time (1919), trinitarianism was not a fundamental belief of the SDA church. If it had been, then why was there a push from our leadership to change our belief to a trinitarian view? That would not make sense.

Each morning at the conference, W. W. Prescott, a very powerful preacher, gave a presentation on the person of Christ. In his presentations he urged the attendees to accept a trinitarian view of Christ (as opposed to what we had taught throughout the time of Ellen White's ministry). On the first day of the discussions he made this comment (this was when promoting a trinitarian view of Christ)

"Not to teach that is Arianism. Ought we continue to circulate in a standard book a statement that the Son is not co-eternal, that the Son is not co-eval or co-eternal with the Father? That makes him a finite being. Any being whose beginning we can fix is a finite being. We have been circulating for 40 years a standard book which says that the Son is not co-eternal with the Father. **That is teaching Arianism. Do we want to go on teaching that?"** (*W. W. Prescott, the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D.C. July 2nd*)

So as we can see, there was a definite push to accept a trinitarian view of Christ.

In reply to Prescott, one of the delegates, C. P. Bollman, who was Managing Editor of the *Liberty* magazine, made this comment

“The scripture says Christ is the only begotten of the Father. Why should we go farther than that and say that He was co-eternal with the Father? And also say that to teach otherwise is Arianism?” (C. P. Bollman, *Ibid*)

It is clearly evident that trinitarianism, in 1919, could not have been the stance of the church. As L. L. Caviness is recorded as saying 4 days later (he had arrived late at the conference)

“I missed a good deal of this discussion and I do not know whether the idea is that we are to accept the so-called Trinitarian doctrine or not”. (L. Caviness, *op cit* July 6th 1919)

Caviness was then an associate editor of the Review and Herald. F. M. Wilcox was its editor.

At this conference, some were very much against the idea of making a change to what we were then teaching about Christ. In fact, at times, the discussions became so heated that the chairman, A. G. Daniells, who was also the General Conference President, told the stenographers to stop recording the discussions. As Michael Campbell explained in his dissertation on the 1919 Bible Conference

“When topics became heated, the conference chairman, A. G. Daniells, asked the stenographers to stop recording. At other times, when Daniells wanted to talk candidly to conferees, he also asked the stenographers to stop recording or to have pages already typed struck from the record. The only reason this is known is because the stenographers recorded his request before quitting.” (M. W. Campbell, *"The 1919 Bible Conference and its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology"* (2008). *Dissertations*. 21)

This happened after Caviness had explained his reasons for rejecting the trinity doctrine. As the stenographers recorded

“Elder Daniells here made some suggestions as to the delegates not becoming uneasy because we are studying a subject that we cannot comprehend. He asked that these be not transcribed.” (A. G. Daniells, *1919 Bible Conference notes op cit*, July 6th)

Whatever it was that Daniells said to the delegates, we shall probably never know but it does appear that he was somewhat perturbed about what Caviness had said about the trinity doctrine. It obviously troubled Daniells. Later in the discussions he said to those present

“Perhaps we have discussed this as long as we need to. We are not going to take a vote on Trinitarianism or Arianism, but we can think”. Let us go on with the study.” (A. G. Daniells, *op cit* July 6th)

We can see from the above that what we had been teaching about Christ, during the time of Ellen White's ministry, Prescott described as "Arianism". We can also see that his proposal was that we should change this belief to a trinitarian view of Christ – which was that Christ is everlastingly begotten of God. This would have been the same belief as held by the Roman Catholic Church. Daniells reasoned though, because of what had been said, that this was not the right time to take a vote on it. How therefore, at that time (1919) could the trinity doctrine have been a fundamental belief of SDA's?

Prescott was also teaching that the coming of the Comforter was the coming of the Spirit of Christ (Christ's personal presence to the believer). As he said (referring to John 14 and Christ's promise of the coming of the Comforter)

"The advent of the Spirit is the advent of the Spirit if [sic] Jesus Christ, -his personal presence....Now the promise of the Spirit - the Comforter – in the 17th verse was that "he shall be in you." which was to be fulfilled "in that day when ye shall know that I am in you. That is the advent of the Comforter, the advent of this person of Christ in the spirit - divested now of his humanity to dwell with our humanity" (*W. W. Prescott, 1919 Bible Conference notes, July 14th 1919*)

Prescott, after quoting from Scripture, then said

"All these Scriptures that speak of the indwelling Christ are fulfilled by the indwelling of the Comforter, and we have just that measure of the indwelling Christ that we have of the indwelling of the Comforter" (*Ibid*)

This shows that Prescott, just like the non-trinitarians today, regarded the Holy Spirit to be a spiritual manifestation of Christ – meaning that the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself divested (stripped) of His humanity. This of course is a non-trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit. There was no argument from the delegates concerning what Prescott had said about the identity of the Comforter (the Holy Spirit). This is further evidence that at that time (1919), the SDA church was still a non-trinitarian denomination.

I have also shown you Richard that 17 years later in 1936, the SDA Church, through its Sabbath School lesson studies, set out in detail our official denominational beliefs. This was spread over 7 consecutive quarters (1¾ years). These studies were given the title of "Bible Doctrines". Whether the underlying reasons for these studies were disagreements among the ministry over certain of our beliefs (including the Godhead) I do not know, but anyone who has any understanding of theology, would realise that the Godhead beliefs, portrayed in these studies, could only be described as non-trinitarian. It was still being said that before anything was created, Christ was begotten of God.

Under the heading of *The Deity of Christ* , the study asked

"Of whom was Christ begotten? (*Sabbath School Lesson Studies, 4th Quarter, 1936 page 12*)

It also asked (under the heading of *Pre-existence of Christ*)

“What is the source of the Son's life?” and “When does the prophet say the life of the Son began?” (*Ibid, page 13*)

It also said of the Holy Spirit (this was under the heading of *The Trinity*)

“The Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.” (*Ibid page 11*)

The Godhead beliefs, in these studies, were the same that had been taught during the time of Ellen White's ministry. How could the trinity doctrine therefore, during the time of her ministry, have been one of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church? It wasn't even one in 1936 – which was 21 years after her death. Interestingly, F. M. Wilcox helped to put together these Sabbath School studies. As I have told you so many times previously, you will find an article about this here

[The Official 1936 official beliefs of SDA's](#)

Wilcox's apology and confession

On the subject of Wilcox: I will now give you further proof, by using his own confession, that by his 1913 “divine Trinity” statement, he could not have meant the trinity doctrine.

In 1931, which was 18 years after publishing his “divine Trinity” statement, he published an article in the R&H (he was still then its editor) called *Modern Liberalism*. In this article he referred to Christ as “the one and only true God, to whom worship and glory should be rendered...” (R&H, September 3rd 1931). This of course, as you would agree, is definitely a trinitarian statement. This article was also published the next month in the October 19th editions of both the Australian Signs of the Times and the Australian Record.

Wilcox received objections to what he had written. Some weeks later, in the Review and Herald of 29th October, he apologised for his mistake.

“When we referred to Christ as the “one and only true God,” the thought in mind was to contrast Him with the gods of the heathen world. **The expression was not properly elucidated, and so was unfortunate.**” (*F. M. Wilcox, Review and Herald, October 29 1931, ‘Christ is Very God’*)

Wilcox admitted that saying Christ is the “one and only true God” was “unfortunate”. He could only have been agreeing therefore, along with SDA's at the time, that this designation belonged to the Father alone. This is not a conclusion that would be drawn by a trinitarian. Wilcox therefore, in 1931, was definitely not speaking as a trinitarian.

In his article, which he wrote shortly after the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs had been inserted into our yearbook, Wilcox also explained how SDA's understood the “divine unity” of the “divine Trinity” (this was under the heading of ‘The Trinity Explained’). He said this unity is “similar to the unity existing between Christ and the believer, also between the different believers in their fellowship in Christ Jesus.” – which of course is actually a denial of the trinity doctrine (see Mueller, Petersen and Canale pages 4 & 5).

In fact in his article, Wilcox also explained

“There has been through the centuries some very unfortunate and speculative teaching regarding the divine Trinity, and these philosophies have created great divisions in the Christian church....As may be expected when one seeks to penetrate the mystery of divinity, it only entails much idle speculation regarding the incarnation of Christ and the precise relationship of the three persons of the Godhead, which the Bible has not clearly revealed, and which makes all theorizing and speculation profitless.” (F. M. Wilcox, *Review and Herald*, October 29 1931, ‘Christ is Very God’)

I believe it reasonably apparent that Wilcox, when explaining the SDA divine trinity, did not mean the trinity doctrine, which, as we all know, does speculate about how the persons of the Godhead have their existence together.

In the same article, Wilcox also said that Christ “partook of the very nature and essence of the Eternal Father” thus concluding He was truly God. This, at that time, was in keeping with the SDA belief that Christ, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God. Wilcox therefore was still agreeing with this begotten belief.

Wilcox’s article was re-published (modified, minus his Christ is “the one and only true God” statement) in the Signs of the Times of January 14th 1947. It was the second in a series he had written called “Pillars of the Christian Faith”. This shows that even in 1947, this was the faith of SDA’s. In other words, in 1947, Wilcox’s explanation was still how SDA’s were explaining their 1931 statement of denominational beliefs. It was still being said that the unity in the Godhead is similar to the unity between Christians. Take note here of what Wilcox also wrote in his 1947 article

“Christ was condemned by the Sanhedrin on the charge of blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of God. The high priest said to Him: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said." Matthew 26:63, 64. Compare Mark 14:62.

It is inconceivable that Christ would have falsified as to His true relationship with the heavenly Father. To deny that He was very God while here on earth, even as He is very God today, is virtually to charge Him with gross deception. No one who believes the Divine Record will do this. (F. M. Wilcox, *Signs of the Times*, January 14th 1947, ‘Christ is very God’)

Wilcox was referring here to Christ’s *divine* Sonship with His Father. It had nothing to do with the incarnation or the resurrection of Christ. Just as he had said in his 1931 article, he said in the opening paragraph

“The modernists impute only divinity to Christ, but not Deity. They say that He was a good man, a supergood man, but He had goodness in the same sense that good men today possess it. On the contrary, the Bible represents Christ as very God, as Deity itself; He partook of the very nature and essence of the Eternal Father. The

Father is represented as addressing the Son as God: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom." Hebrews 1:8" (*Ibid*)

The truth of the matter is that the belief that Christ, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God (partook of God's essence and nature) therefore He is truly the Son of God, was the belief taught in our denominational publications for over 100 years.

Today though, our church says that this teaching is not Biblical. It is said to be "false doctrine" (*William Johnsson, Review January 6th 1994*). We now say, as a denomination, that Christ is not really the Son of God. Some in the ministry say that this designation of 'Son' is just a metaphor. Those who take this view say that just like the Father and the Holy Spirit, He is only role-playing the part of a son. Others say that Christ is only called a son because of the events of Bethlehem (the virgin birth). Amongst the SDA ministry today regarding this subject, there does not seem to be a consistency of beliefs. In fact there appears to be confusion over it. This is very sad because what is believed about Christ, by the vast majority of Christians, is the most important belief of Christianity. Within Seventh-day Adventism today, there appears to be no unity about it.

Wilcox had made his apology shortly after he had compiled, and had inserted into our yearbook, the 1931 statement of beliefs. This statement said

"That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matt. 28:19." (*Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, 1931 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, page 377*)

Seeing that Wilcox, shortly after writing out this belief, had explained that Christ was NOT the one true God, also that the divine unity between the persons of the Godhead was SIMILAR to the unity between fellow believers, there is no way that this belief was intended to be understood as a trinity doctrine. In fact no theologian would accept it as such. It simply speaks of the three persons of the Godhead. This falls far short of a trinity doctrine. This is even though it contains the word *trinity*.

Wilcox, as he had done 18 years earlier in his 1913 "divine Trinity" statement, only referred to the Godhead as *consisting* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There was no mention of any unity (oneness) as the 'one God' as depicted in the trinity doctrine. In fact in his 'apology' article, Wilcox denied the oneness of the trinity doctrine. He was still doing the same in 1947.

That Wilcox was NOT saying in 1913 that the SDA Church held the trinity doctrine as one of its fundamental beliefs is evidenced by the fact that 34 years later in 1947 he was still not saying it. It really is that simple.

It is interesting that C. H. Watson, who in 1931 had been General Conference President, told LeRoy Froom that it would not have been possible, 10 years earlier (in the 1920's), to have put that 1931 statement of faith into our yearbook, at least not without strong objection from some (*Movement of Destiny page 418*). If the trinity doctrine had been a fundamental belief of SDA's when Ellen White was alive, then why should anyone, over 16 years later in 1931, have protested about this statement which, when all is said and done, is only a profession of three persons of the Godhead (not even a trinity doctrine)?

The other point is this (and this is very important): Watson told Froom that this 1931 statement of beliefs was put together by Wilcox "as a summary of our fundamental beliefs to see how it would be received" (*Movement of Destiny page 419*). What sense would that make if the trinity doctrine had been a fundamental belief of SDA's since the time of Ellen White? It would make no sense whatsoever. This was now 16 years after her death.

Your understanding of the SDA trinity

In your emails to me in 2015, you explained that you supported what the church is teaching today about the trinity doctrine (your emphasis).

"The Trinity Doctrine IS the No. 2 Fundamental Doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. No. 1 is that the Bible is the sole standard and rule for our faith and practice. You can be disfellowshipped for NOT adhering to the fundamental beliefs of the church and teaching contrary to them I say this on the authority invested in me by the World Wide Church through ordination to the gospel ministry and by the due authority of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual. You ought to read it, even if you do not regard it as authoritative. At least you would know what Seventh-day Adventist minister are obligated to preach, teach and support and practice.

One of my churches just disfellowshipped a man for his anti-Trinity belief and teaching, and the same has been taking place throughout my local conference and the entire Adventist Church." (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, Email to Terry Hill, 14th October 2015*)

In the same email you wrote (all your emphasis)

"That ORGANIZED Body has now VOTED **the Trinity Doctrine** as well as "**God the Eternal Father . . . God the Eternal Son, and God the Eternal Holy Spirit . . . a UNITY** (think "Trinity") **of THREE Co-Eternal Persons**" as the Fundamental Belief of ALL Seventh-day Adventists, including yourself." (*Ibid*)

At one time I pointed out that in your emails, you had used the word *trinity* 114 times, so I asked you to explain what you meant by your use of it. You replied (your emphasis in all caps – mine in red)

"The word "Trinity" is equated to believing in ONE God in 3 Divine Persons. God is NOT ONE Person. He is 3 Persons. He is NOT 3 God's, **He is ONE God. The ONE**

True God is NOT limited to just ONE Divine Person-God the Father. To do this is to eliminate the Son and the Holy Spirit FROM the Godhead.” (Richard Mendoza, Email to Terry Hill 26th October 2015)

This of course is in keeping with the trinity doctrine as explained by Mueller, Petersen and Canale above (see pages 4 & 5). So let’s reason together.

Wilcox, when referring to beliefs of SDA’s in 1931, said that Christ was NOT the one true God – which is NOT trinitarianism. You are saying that Christ, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, IS the one true God – which IS trinitarianism. How can you say therefore that you agree with Wilcox? How can you say also that Wilcox was saying, in 1913, that one the fundamental beliefs of SDA’s was the trinity doctrine? As we have just seen, he wasn’t even saying it in 1947.

You also expressed your idea of God being a trinity this way (again your emphasis in caps – mine in red)

“The concept of the “TRINITY” is found within the pages of the Bible, that there is really a TRIUNE GOD, ONLY ONE TRUE GOD Who consists of 3 Individual and Equally Divine Persons. It is not of TRI-Unity of 3 Persons in 1 Person, but rather 3 Persons in 1 GOD just like the word “GOD” is a Tri-UNITY of 3 Letters in 1 Word.” (Richard Mendoza, Email to Terry Hill, 6th October 2015)

This is in keeping with SDA Fundamental Belief No. 2. In the same email you wrote

“The fullness of the Godheads dwells in EACH ONE of the 3 Persons of the Godhead. Each ONE is FULLY GOD, but we do not believe in 3 GODS but only ONE True God.” (Ibid)

Here you are saying that the “TRIUNE GOD” is the “ONLY ONE TRUE GOD”. This is trinitarianism all the world over. You also say that there is “only ONE True God” “Who” (denoting a person) “consists” of three individual divine persons who each are also the “one true God” (see above). This again is in keeping with the trinity doctrine but it is NOT in keeping with what Wilcox was saying. This is whether it was in his 1913 “divine Trinity” statement, or in the 1931 statement of fundamental beliefs. He wasn’t even saying it in 1947. You therefore are completely misunderstanding what he meant by his use of the word *trinity*. This is what I have been telling you for the last 5 years. Just because someone uses the word *trinity*, it does not necessarily mean the trinity doctrine. This appears to be a lesson you have yet to learn.

More evidence

I have also repeatedly shown you that in 1939, one of the most prolific preachers to grace the pulpit of the SDA Church, namely Judson Washburn, wrote an open letter to the General Conference warning that the trinity doctrine was, as he put it, “seeking” to find its way into the message of the SDA Church. He wrote this letter in response to a sermon preached by W. W. Prescott. How can it be reasoned therefore that at that time (1939), the trinity doctrine was one of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church, let alone during

the time of Ellen White's ministry? Are we to imagine that Washburn did not understand what then, in 1939, constituted the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church? How much sense would that make?

Washburn's letter can be read here

[Judson Washburn's trinity letter to the General Conference](#)

I have also repeatedly shown you that even into the 1960's, it was published in our periodicals, by those of the ministry, that (a) the divine person of Christ died at Calvary, also that (b) that it was possible for Him to have sinned and, if He had sinned, would have lost His eternal existence. No trinitarian would ever believe or profess such things. How therefore could these SDA's have been trinitarian? Obviously they were not. Trinitarians say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable united together as the one true God (see Mueller, Petersen and Canale pages 4 & 5). This is the entire point of the trinity doctrine. If this is missed, then everything is missed.

Ellen White also maintained that the divine person of the Son of God died at Calvary. She also made clear that it had been possible for Him to lose His eternal existence. On that score alone we know that she was definitely not a trinitarian. You can read her remarks here

[Ellen G. White - The death at Calvary of the divine Son of God](#)

[Ellen G. White - The risk taken concerning Christ's existence](#)

The end result

Unfortunately Richard, and very sadly, in spite of all the above evidence, you still continue to promote the idea on Facebook that my history of the SDA Church is false – also that the trinity doctrine was one of the fundamental beliefs of SDA's when Ellen White was alive.

So now do you see why I am calling a halt to you flooding my timeline with misleading information and allegations against myself? There is no point in carrying on like it. You are not getting anywhere with me, and I am not getting anywhere with you. This is why it is time to call it a day. You are saying the same things over and over again – and I am giving the same responses over and over again. Even last week (3rd July), you posted 17 consecutive posts in 6 minutes to my Facebook page. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Four years is enough. You have had plenty of time to air your beliefs, - and I for one certainly cannot accept them. In all of this time you have not come up with anything to change my mind about our denominational history, or my theology, so it really is time to stop. I cannot see any reason for continuing.

You are welcome to your beliefs. It is your privilege to believe what you want to believe, but I do not see why I should allow you to flood my Facebook page with a misguided understanding of our church history. It is just as though I am allowing you to mislead

people. I cannot permit myself to be party to this any longer.

In conclusion therefore: I do not believe that God wants me to continue to allow you to do what you have been doing for the last four years. You have had your say, and I have had mine. It appears to me that I cannot say any more to convince you that you are wrong. If you do not believe you are wrong upon the evidence I have produced, then I cannot see how continuing discussions with you will make any difference. It is therefore time to stop. You have your own Facebook page. You can put whatever you want on it. You can also tag people into it as you wish. You do not need my timeline to air your beliefs.

I have one request. If in future you wish to comment on what I believe (whether this is on your own Facebook page or any other), please quote a reference as to where I said it. Do not say, as you have done so on many occasions in the past, that Terry Hill believes this – and Terry Hill says that – without giving a reference to where I said it. This is unfair journalism. It could be just a case of you setting up straw men and knocking them down.

If you wish to respond to what I have written, please feel free to do so, and I will publish it on my website. The only thing I ask, apart from you doing this in an intelligible and orderly manner, is that you address yourself *only* to the historical development of the trinity doctrine within Seventh-day Adventism. Please do not go off on a tangent like you usually do and talk of numerous other subjects such as the various theological aspects of the Godhead. If you do, I will not publish it. This is because the whole point of this communication is the historical aspect. You have accused me of presenting a false history of our denominational history. This is what I have addressed in this document. Please keep any remarks confined to this subject.

I am sure you can see why I am calling this to a halt. Neither of us are getting anywhere. We haven't done so since you emailed me in 2015. To continue would be just a complete waste of time – and I mean for both of us. Go in peace.

Christian regards

Terry Hill

Website: <https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk>

Last edited 16th January 2021