

Richard

This is the second of my replies addressing your claim that my portrayal of our denominational history is a falsified history. I will now show that this allegation is completely without foundation.

For ease of reference – and because it is a very lengthy reply - I have divided it into the following hyperlinked sections

\*Richard please note

With the exception of colour (now blue) and font type (now Arial), all of the quotations extracted from your emails are as you sent them to me. All emphasis in your quotes therefore is yours. All other emphasis (bold-italic) in other quotes, unless stated, is mine.

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## The allegations

On the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015 I received an email from you that began

“I have continued my studies on the Divine Trinity since I first wrote to you in 2012, where in I confronted you about your false Adventist History which you have published on your web page. Particularly, your stating that the doctrine of the Trinity did NOT enter the Adventist Church until the mid 1950’s and AFTER the death of EGW.

Well I recently ran into one of your disciples [name removed] ... and he was disseminating the same delusion that you have been under. I told him I had been writing to you since 2012 and that I shared with him the same historical documents I had shared with you 4 years ago, proving your church history to be erroneous. I am speaking of the 1913 Advent Review & Sabbath Herald October 9 which stating in no uncertain words that the “cardinal features of the the faith of this denomination” included that “Seventh-day Adventists believe in . . . 1. The Divine Trinity. . . This Trinity consists of Father . . . Son. . . and Holy Spirit.” (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

First of all I would like to make something very clear. I can remember you emailing me in 2012 but what you actually wrote I have only a small recollection. It does not help that I did not keep your emails. My replies though I did keep. This concerned Christ being the only-begotten Son of God. As to regards the Wilcox statement (that you make reference to above) I cannot find anything I sent. This is not a denial you mentioned it. I am simply saying I have no record of it.

What I do know is that since then (2012) you have not contacted me. I wanted to make this absolutely clear. I did not want anyone who reads this rebuttal to assume by your remarks (above) that since 2012 you have continued emailing me (which you could be taken as saying). To the best of my knowledge your emails of October 2015 are the first I have received from you since 2012. Your comments about the Wilcox statement I will deal with later. You continued

”I sent you this information way back in 2012 and you still have not corrected your erroneous portrayal of Seventh-day Adventist History. I checked this again on your web site and still found it fabricating false history. I implore you to CORRECT this immediately, for it brings any integrity you have into serious question, thus demonstrating you are a unreliable source of truth, willfully bearing false witness, and should not be trusted in the communication of Biblical and historical facts. I really do not mind if you never make the correction, for then I can continue to cite your public web page as evidence that you are indeed a false prophet teaching false doctrine about what Seventh-day Adventist really believe. I will continue to share your site with those whom I am dealing with on the Trinity Truth so they can see with their own eyes what you have written.” (*Ibid*)

You accuse me of disseminating “delusion”, also of being “a false prophet”, someone who is “fabricating false history”. You say, because of this, I have demonstrated myself to be “a unreliable source of truth, willfully bearing false witness”, also someone who “should not be trusted in the communication of Biblical and historical facts”. In other emails you described me as “unethical in Christian journalism” and someone who misquotes Ellen White. As I am sure you will agree, all of these are very serious charges.

It is also very serious that you chose to make known these allegations to others. This includes your colleagues in the Seventh-day Adventist ministry. Your remarks therefore have no doubt affected the way that others, ministry or otherwise, regard me. This is not only with respect to my account of our denominational history but also me personally. In order to defend myself therefore against your allegations. I need to express myself in this reply as though others are going to read it. This is one of the reasons why this reply is so detailed. It serves to show anyone who reads it that what I have written is not as you have said so many times 'a falsified history' but a genuine history.

The fact that you disagree with my theology is another matter. We must not use theology to determine a person's character; neither must we use it to determine a person's standing with God. Two people may have different points of view yet still be brothers and sisters in Christ. Just because someone holds a different viewpoint than our own is not reason enough to pass judgement upon that person. We must not, when disagreeing with a person's theology, seek to usurp the prerogatives of Christ by judging them by it (John 5:26-27). With respect to this there should be no need for me to say any more. I would have thought that because of your status as a Seventh-day Adventist minister that you would know these things.

I must admit that I do find it rather strange that you do not mind if I never correct what you term my falsified history. I would have thought that as a minister of the gospel you would only be too glad for me to turn from my 'erroneous beliefs' – not that you don't mind because then you can continue to call me a false prophet. This does seem rather strange to me – quite alien in fact to my understanding of Christianity. The other thing is: I did not realise I was not telling the truth about what Seventh-day Adventists believe. Perhaps you can enlighten me sometime.

After spending some time reviewing the facts of our denominational history, which your continuing accusations prompted me to do, I can only conclude that all of your allegations are completely without foundation. I also believe that anyone reading this document - after giving due consideration of the facts presented therein - will agree with my conclusions. In other words Richard, anyone reviewing the facts of our history will conclude your accusations to be false.

You went on to say

*“If you are are current member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church then this MEANS that YOU believe in the Trinity because you cannot be baptized and commit to the 2015 Baptismal Vows, of which No. 2 is belief in the TRINITY. You may say you do not believe in it, but your being a member of this denomination means that YOU DO no matter what you say. If you say you are a Seventh-day Adventist you in that SAME breath just said you are a Trinitarian, because ALL who are baptized members of this church are required to believe in the Biblical Trinity BEFORE they can become members. Read the Baptismal Vows for yourself;” (Ibid)*

As I explained to you Richard, I was baptised over 40 years ago at the age of 32. This was in 1975. This means that because our currently stated fundamental beliefs did not exist at that time, I could not have committed myself to them. These beliefs were voted in at the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas. This was 5 years after my baptism. This was the very first time a trinity doctrine had been voted into our beliefs. This is why this teaching was not included in my baptismal vows or put into my baptismal certificate.

To help you understand, I did, on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015, email to you the beliefs listed on my baptismal certificate. Under the heading “Summary of Doctrinal Beliefs” it says

*“The following is a brief summary of the doctrinal beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, together with some of the Scriptural references upon which they are based:*

1. The true and living God, the first person of the Godhead, is our heavenly Father, and He, by His Son, Christ Jesus, created all things. (Matt. 28: 18, 19; I Cor. 8:5, 6; Eph. 3:9; Jer. 10:10-12; Heb. 1:1-3; Acts 17:22-29; Col. 1:16-18.)

2. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, and the eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour from sin; and man's salvation is by grace through faith in Him. (Matt. 28; 18, 19; John 3:16; Micah 5:2; Matt. 1:21; 2:5,6; Acts 4:12; I John 5:11, 12; Eph. 1:9-15; 2:4-8; Rom. 3:23-26.)

3. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, is Christ's representative on earth, and leads sinners to repentance and are obedience of all God's requirements. (Matt.

28:18, 19; John 14:26; 15:26; 16,7-15"; Rom. 8:1-10; Eph. 4:30.)”

The first statement of my baptismal vow reads.

“1. I believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.”

The above, when I was baptised in 1975, are the beliefs that the Seventh-day Adventist Church required me to believe. As you can see for yourself, there is no mention of a trinity doctrine.

The next day, even though I had shown you my baptismal beliefs, you still said to me

“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.

IF you do not support what the Seventh-day Adventist Church of 18 Million Members believes and teaches, how in the world can you honestly be a member of a church denomination for which you could not pledge yourself to their baptismal membership vows before God and the World Church membership? Now, we are dealing with a very serious problem of your personal view of what church membership involves. Did not you read the Baptismal Vows I sent you a photo of? Do I really have to include them again?”  
*(Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

You appeared to find great difficulty in understanding that I have not been unfaithful to my baptismal vows (as above). From reading your emails you also appear to be very caught up in the idea of disfellowshipping members. In your latest email you said

“There are those who have been and are now being disfellowship for disseminating Anti-Trinitarian doctrine within the church. You can do this in the general public . . . **but have no right to go after our church members.** God start your own church.” *(Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill. 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

I assume you mean, “Go start your own church”.

You also asked me (this was the day after I had shown you my baptismal beliefs)

“Why don’t you send me a photo of your certificate? I hope you realize that what you just quoted is NOT the Baptismal Certificate, though they should say the same thing. Where did you copy this from? Please give the reference so it can be validated. I do believe it is truth, but I want to see the source of it to verify that it is exactly what is one the baptismal certificate.” *(Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

This is something that the day previous (13<sup>th</sup> October) I had already done but you had failed to notice it. I had sent scanned copies to you. The reason why I did this, even though under no obligation to do so, was to allay any further suspicions you may have had regarding the authenticity of my claims to be a valid member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I hope now you are satisfied I was telling the truth.

I did make it very clear that regardless of what you say – and even though I am a Seventh-day Adventist, I do not believe the trinity doctrine. I cannot say it any plainer. I believe that this

teaching should have no place in the theology of those who trust to what the 'Bible only' has to say. My beliefs are no secret. They are known worldwide. You can, if you wish, label me as "false brethren" (your email dated 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015) but I can assure you I do not consider myself as such. When all is said and done, you will believe what you want to believe.

You enquired of me

*"Do you now believe the SDA Church is "Babylon?" What then is your mission and purpose of your website?" (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

I do not believe our church is 'Babylon', neither do I believe it is any part of it. This is something I have never believed and hopefully, nothing will lead me to believe it. If I thought our church to be 'Babylon' I would not still be part of it. I thought that would have been reasonably obvious.

I believe our denomination to be God's remnant church of Bible prophecy. I believe God called it into existence to proclaim the three angel's messages of Revelation 14. This I believed at my baptism in 1975 and I still believe it today.

I also believe that our church has gone astray regarding its Godhead theology. I believe that what we once taught, before we changed it to accommodate trinitarianism, is the truth. Just because a belief is voted in at a General Conference session does not automatically make it Biblically correct; neither does it make it in keeping with what God has revealed through the spirit of prophecy. I believe that anyone, reasoning things through intelligently and with a modicum of common sense, would arrive at the same conclusion.

I would also like to add that just because those at a conference session, or those of our leadership, deem a certain belief to be correct, this does not mean that because of this I need to change my beliefs. My beliefs are based upon what God has convicted me of through my study of Scripture and through the spirit of prophecy. I need to answer to God alone for those beliefs. I take my stand, not on the decisions of erring finite men but on the Bible. I cannot afford to do any other. My salvation is at stake. Again I would have thought this was something a minister would understand.

In your latest email you said

*"As a representative of this denomination, I can tell you the World Church Body of nearly 19 million members and its highest authority under God have a problem with people who are living a lie and who do not submit to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, and especially to FB No. 1" (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

Richard, I am not living a lie, neither have I done anything in secret or undercover. I have been very honest and very open in my beliefs. No one has the right to say differently. This is whether they are a Seventh-day Adventist minister or otherwise. Certainly a Seventh-day Adventist minister such as yourself should not publicly broadcast this type of accusation concerning another church member.

The local ministry has known my beliefs for over 13 years. I have shared these beliefs with such as Gerhard Pfandl, Dr, Fernando Canale, Denis Fortin, Roy Adams and many other ministers. I also, in 2011, sent my 470-page study on the Godhead (found at the following link) to the Biblical Research Institute in America. I do not consider any of this as keeping my beliefs a secret or living a lie, especially as these beliefs are on my website for the whole world to see.

[A study of the Godhead – as it pertains to Seventh-day Adventism](#)

In the same email you wrote

“I know that when you publically attack this church with the publication of your personal website that we cannot let you get away with presenting a lop-sided view of Adventist History about the Trinity, as you have done. Its time for you to be called into account and held accountable for your false allegations of the SDA Church Organization...” (*Ibid*)

I do not know of any “false allegations” that I have made towards our church organization. If you can find where I have misrepresented the beliefs or the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church then I will change it accordingly. The fact that I disagree with their theology does not, as far as I am concerned, constitute a false allegation. I do not believe that my presentation of our history is, as you put it, “a lop-sided view”. The document you are now reading will testify to that fact.

In your email you also enlightened me with this little insight

“I have no problem speaking directly with your pastor about this, and it may come to that eventually, just give him my email address and have him write to me so we can set up a time for discussing your case. **AS I said, I am NOT pursuing this option.** I am writing to you and want to address you directly and iron out the issues for which you have charged the church denomination with.” (*Ibid*)

Richard – you make yourself sound as though you are the church inquisitor but like everyone else, you are free to do as you believe God wants you to do. Please do as you wish. There is no need to consult me. My only desire is to reason with people intelligently.

When I launched my website in 2008, my intent was, regarding the Godhead, to show those things that through the spirit of prophecy God has revealed to our church (hence the title of my website - 'The Prophet Still Speaks'). I did this because our church, at that time, as it is still doing today, was using Ellen White's writings to justify its changeover to trinitarianism. It is my belief that when correctly understood, these writings confirm that the beliefs held by our people whilst the prophet was alive is the truth concerning the Godhead. This is contrary to what is being taught today by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our church today is claiming that Ellen White's writings condemned the Godhead beliefs of her contemporaries. It is our present leadership therefore, also the present-day ministry, that is attacking the Godhead beliefs once held by God's remnant church. In so doing they are attacking the church as it was in Ellen White's time.

So you see Richard, my intent is not to label our church Babylon, neither is to demean the purpose of its God-given mission to the world. It is to bring our people back to what I believe are the truths that through Scripture and through the spirit of prophecy, God has revealed to us. Hopefully I have accomplished this with respect for our leaders, also with an attitude and a spirit that is representative of my Saviour.

I also like to believe that I do so in a way that appeals to a person's God-given capabilities to reason things through intelligently. As Ellen White so aptly put it when writing to her son

“We are to be guided by true theology and common sense! Our souls are to be surrounded by an atmosphere elevated, refined, and sanctified.” (*Ellen G. White, Letter 211 July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1905 to James Edson White*)

Throughout your October 2015 compendium of emails, your accusations, in their various forms, were continually repeated. There are far too many of them to quote here. As I think you will agree, this is a very serious matter, especially as they come from a Seventh-day Adventist minister toward another church member. I will now address these allegations. I will begin with the Wilcox statement of October 9<sup>th</sup> 1913. This seems to be the focus of your reasoning.

## The 1913 Wilcox statement

Richard, your basic argument is:- because you believe that by 1913 the trinity doctrine had become the No. 1 cardinal feature (belief) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (you mentioned this 'cardinal feature' belief something like 30 times in your emails), you say that my account of our denominational history, which shows that this teaching came in much later, is a 'falsified history'. This appears to be the bottom line of your accusations. As you said in one email to a friend of mine (this concerned my account of our denominational history)

“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...”  
(*Pastor Richard Mendoza, copy email to Terry Hill, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

Your reasoning is based mainly upon one statement found in the Review and Herald of October 9<sup>th</sup> 1913. This is when its editor, namely F. M. Wilcox, in an article called 'The Message for Today' (this was under the main heading of 'General Articles') wrote the following

“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*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1913, 'The message for Today')

Personally speaking - and I believe that most who are in a position of authority in the church would agree with me - this statement by Wilcox was not an official declaration by our church of our fundamental beliefs. In other words, this was not 'the church at large' saying what constituted an official fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventism. In fact up to then (1913), we did not even have a list of officially declared fundamental beliefs. We simply had a list of beliefs, published in our Yearbook in certain years, which were said to be the consensus of beliefs held by us as a people throughout the world. We will see this shortly.

It needs to be remembered that Wilcox was the editor of the Review and Herald. This means that when making this statement he had 'carte blanche' to say what he wanted to say. Even if someone objected to what he had said it would be too late. It would already have been in print. I believe too it should go without saying that just because someone, even an editor, makes a pronouncement in the Review and Herald (or in any other of our denominational publications), this should not be accepted as a fundamental belief of our denomination.

Having said that, I would ask you to take particular note of the exact wording used by Wilcox. He said that Seventh-day Adventists believed in “the divine Trinity”. He did not say they believed in 'the trinity doctrine'. This is saying two entirely different things. Wilcox chose his words very carefully. He did exactly the same when he compiled (or helped compile) the 1931 statement of beliefs. We will also see this later. Whether by his statement he intended it to look as though we were a trinitarian denomination is not for me to say. Only Wilcox could answer that question.

Interestingly, the year previous in the same paper, an article was published concerning the three persons of the Godhead. Its author was a Seventh-day Adventist minister by the name of W. R. French. In his article he had said that the three divine persons were 'one' but when explaining this oneness, even though he gave a number of illustrations of it, he never said they

were one in the sense of the trinity doctrine. In fact in his article, French did not use the word 'trinity'. Why I say this is interesting is because the article is called 'The Trinity' although it is quite possible that it was Wilcox, as editor, who gave it this title. French, just like the vast majority of Seventh-day Adventists living at that time (1912), was devotedly non-trinitarian. He remained that way until his death in 1968.

In the book 'The Trinity', which is a publication issued by our church in 2002 in support of our changeover from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism – also supposedly depicting an accurate history of this changeover (which personally speaking I do not believe it does) - the following observation is made

“Probably the most well known of the later prominent anti-Trinitarians were long time college religion teacher W. R. French and religious liberty advocate and editor Charles Longacre (1871-1958). Roger Coon tells the story of an alumni weekend at Pacific Union College in the mid-1960's when the retired W. R. French, who had been asked to give a brief vespers presentation, promptly proceeded to deliver a strong one and a half-hour discourse in defense of his anti-Trinitarian views.” (*The Trinity* by Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon and John W. Reeve, 2002, Introduction footnotes, page 14)

That's right Richard. Even in the 1960's there were still those who spoke out against the trinity doctrine – and they did not get disfellowshipped because of it.

Anyone though, looking at the article written by French, also seeing the title 'The Trinity', could easily draw the conclusion that he was a trinitarian (or that he was promoting the trinity doctrine) but he wasn't. This is why in my email of the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015 I asked if you would define what you mean by your use of the word 'trinity' (in your emails you had used it over 100 times). I explained to you that unless it is defined, it could mean all sorts of things. I asked if you believed the explanations presented by three of our present-day theologians – namely Ekkehardt Mueller, Gerhard Pfandl and Fernando Canale. This is where they wrote respectively

“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 newsletter Reflections, July 2008*)

“Trinitarianism is the orthodox belief that there is but one living and true God. Nevertheless this one God is a unity of three persons, who are of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director, Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists', 1999*)

“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, the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 138*)

All three of these theologians explained the trinity doctrine as the three persons of the Godhead existing inseparably in one indivisible substance (in one indivisible divine being) as the 'one God' - which any version of the trinity depicts otherwise it would not be a trinity doctrine. Unfortunately, in your return email of the same day (26<sup>th</sup> October 2015), although you said many things, you did not answer my question. All that you would say (in summary) was that you believed what was stated in our fundamental beliefs. This of course is your prerogative. You are not obligated to answer my questions. This is no more than I am obligated to answer your questions.

I would also ask you to note something else that in his 'divine trinity' statement, Wilcox worded very carefully.



Twice he described the Father as eternal but did not say the same of Christ. He said that Christ is “the Son of the eternal Father”. He also refers to the Holy Spirit as “the third person of the Godhead”. I would agree with him. It is also more than likely that many Seventh-day Adventists living at that time (1913) would have said exactly the same. Along with Ellen White they would have said there are “three living persons of the heavenly trio” (Bible Training School, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1906, see also Special Testimonies Series B No. 7 page 63, November 1905). Very few though, if any, would have professed to believe the trinity doctrine. This includes Ellen White. She was definitely not a believer in the trinity doctrine. This is something else we shall see later.

I will now proceed to show you that by 1913, our church had still not accepted the trinity doctrine as one of its fundamental beliefs. Most certainly this teaching had not by this time, become its No. 1 cardinal belief.

### The 1914 Yearbook

In our Yearbook for 1914 - which amongst other things had made known the beliefs held by Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world - it says (under the heading ‘FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS’)

“Seventh-day Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to certain well-defined points of faith, for which they feel prepared to give a reason " to every man that asketh " them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as is known, entire unanimity throughout the body.” (*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 1914, page 293*)

Note very importantly the final sentence – also that 1914 was the year **after** Wilcox made his ‘divine trinity’ statement. Here our beliefs are called “the principal features” of our faith. These were then listed. Here is No. 1 and No. 2

“1. That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the Creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal; infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139: 7.

2. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom he created all things, and by whom they do consist...” (*Ibid*)

These beliefs were first published in 1872 (in pamphlet form) as 25 statements. Two years later they were published in the very first Signs of the Times. Here is part of the preamble

“In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them. We often find it necessary to meet inquiries on this subject, and sometimes to correct false statements circulated against us, and to remove erroneous impressions which have obtained with those who have not had an opportunity to become acquainted with our faith and practice. Our only object is to meet this necessity.” (*Pamphlet, 'Fundamental Principles taught and practised by the Seventh-day Adventists', 1872, see also Signs of the Times, June 4<sup>th</sup> 1874, 'Fundamental Principles'*)

The above beliefs were said to be those held by Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world. Notice that in this statement of beliefs, just as Wilcox had written in his 1913 statement, it said that Christ is “the Son of the Eternal Father”. Neither the 1874 statement, nor Wilcox in his 1913 statement, applied the word 'eternal' to the Son.

Six months following the publishing of these statements in the 'Signs', they were published in the Review and Herald. The preamble said

“As already stated, S. D. Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to certain well defined points of faith, for which they feel prepared to give a reason to every man that asketh them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as we know, entire unanimity throughout the body” (*Review and Herald, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1874, 'The Seventh-day Adventists'*)

In 1883, after a number of years of debate, it was decided that our church should not have a church manual. With respect to this decision, G. I. Butler, then General Conference President, was asked to say a few words. In the Review and Herald that year he wrote of the reasons for its rejection. One reason was

“The Bible contains our creed and discipline. It thoroughly furnishes the man of God unto all good works. What it has not revealed relative to church organization and management, the duties of officers and ministers, and kindred subjects, should not be strictly defined and drawn out into minute specifications for the sake of uniformity, but rather be left to individual judgment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Had it been best to have a book of directions of this sort, the Spirit would doubtless have gone further, and left one on record with the stamp of inspiration upon it.” (*G. I Butler, Review and Herald, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1883, 'No Church Manual'*)

Early Seventh-day Adventists were very strongly opposed to making a creed (of any sort) but in 1889, so that the world would know what we did believe, the above list of beliefs (slightly revised and with added explanation) was inserted into our Yearbook (pages 147-151). By 1914, this list had not changed. There was still no mention of the word 'trinity'. Certainly it was not said that the 'one God' is a three-in-one entity.

As duly noted though, Wilcox did, in 1913, say that Seventh-day Adventists believed in “the divine Trinity” but what did he mean by this expression? As previously stated, I too believe in the divine trinity (if this is to mean the three persons of the Godhead) but I do not accept the trinity doctrine. This is saying two entirely different things. To maintain a trinity doctrine it must be said that all three persons exist inseparably in one indivisible substance (one divine being) as the 'one God'. If this is absent then there is no trinity doctrine. This is duly recognised by our theologians such as Ekkehardt Mueller, Gerhard Pfandl and Fernando Canale (see above).

I will admit though that anyone giving this Wilcox statement a superficial reading could quite easily draw the conclusion he was saying that Seventh-day Adventists had accepted the trinity doctrine but there is no proof to support this reasoning.

### **A gradual changeover**

So when did the transition from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism take place - which obviously it did take place because as most Seventh-day Adventists know today, we were once a predominantly non-trinitarian denomination? The truth of the matter is that no exact date can be given. This is because it happened very gradually over a long period of time.

Merlin Burt, Professor of Church History, Andrews University, Director (also founding director), Center for Adventist Research (CAR), correctly captured the spirit of this changeover. He wrote in his review of this history (these are his opening remarks)

“One of the remarkable aspects of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the development of the position of the trinity and the deity of Christ.” (*Merlin Burt, 'Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-trinitarianism in Adventist theology, 1888-1957 page iv 'Preface'*)

In contrast to what you claim Richard, Burt then said

“These doctrines did not become normative in the church until the middle of the twentieth century”. (*Ibid*)

He is referring to the 1950's. He further explains

“The church gradually shifted during from the 1930s to 1950s to the ‘orthodox’ Christian view on the trinity and deity of Christ. . . . During the 1940s an ever increasing majority of the church was believing in the eternal underived deity of Christ and the trinity, yet there were some who held back even actively resisted the change.” (*Ibid, pages 47-48*)

Burt is saying here that our changeover from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism began during the 1930's. We shall see why he said this later. He also said that this was a *gradual shift* and that during the 1940's, even though some never changed their beliefs (from non-trinitarianism), an “*ever increasing majority*” believed in the trinity. He says it was not until the 1950's that this teaching became “*normative in the church*”. Personally I believe it was somewhat later.

So whilst I do not go along with everything that Burt says in his review of our denominational history, I do agree in principle as to what he says here (that it was a gradual changeover). I actually believe that the main shift began later than he does although having said that, I would agree that by the 1930's, a number of our leaders were very much pro-trinitarian. This though does not mean the church as a whole or even the majority was pro-trinitarian - far from it. We shall see the evidence for this later. This is when we review the stand that our denomination took on this matter as the 1940's approached.

What I will also say is this: If in 1913 the trinity doctrine had *already* become a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (as you claim Richard), then Burt's statement makes no sense. It can only be concluded therefore that either he is wrong or you are wrong. Certainly you cannot both be correct. Perhaps as well as disagreeing with my portrayal of our denominational history, you also disagree with his portrayal of it.

This does actually seem to be the case Richard because you wrote to me saying

“First all, you have misled people in teaching them that the Trinity did NOT come into the church and the term was not used in their published statements of faith until AFTER EGW died, and not until the “mid-1950s” and that Wilcox just put the Trinity in the the Adventist Year Book of his own volition and under the “general conference directive” of those 4 leaders. You said that his was published in the Church Manual as well, but it was not until the mid-1950's that it became the established doctrine of the church. ALL of this is completely false.” (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

“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, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

Richard:- I sincerely believe you should re-think your position. It does not comply with the facts of history. When this article is read this will become only too evident.

I can only reiterate: - I 100% agree with the statement made by Wilcox (if his use of the word 'trinity' means the three persons of the Godhead) but I am definitely not a trinitarian – neither do I believe that the vast majority of Seventh-day Adventists living at that time (1913) were trinitarian. Certainly I do not believe that by 1913 the trinity doctrine had become a fundamental belief (or the No. 1 cardinal belief) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I believe that the evidence of history overwhelmingly confirms this to be true. We shall see this as we go along.

## Early 1900 trinity doctrine statements

Here I would like to backtrack. I would like to share with you a few statements that when they were written (between 1900-1906), summarised our denominational reasoning concerning the trinity doctrine. These statements may not be directly relevant to your allegations (that my portrayal of our denominational history is falsified history) but I do believe that in themselves they are very enlightening. Certainly they are very true and well worth reading. This is why I would like to share them with you. They also serve to show, concerning the trinity doctrine, what we believed in the early 1900's when Ellen White was alive.

In the 'Editor's Corner' of the British Present Truth (this is where the editor answered questions sent in by the readers) this comment was made concerning one question that was asked

"You ask what we teach about the Trinity. Inasmuch as we find no such expression in the Scriptures, we do not teach anything about it. But as to the Being of God, - the Godhead, - Divinity as revealed in the Father, the Word (the Son), and the Holy Spirit, we believe and teach just what the Bible says, and nothing else. No man can by searching find out God. No creature can understand the Almighty to perfection. The finite mind cannot comprehend infinity. Therefore, in discussions about the Trinity, about the nature of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, are manifestations of gross presumption." (*E. J. Waggoner, Present Truth February 6th 1902, 'The Editor's Private corner, 'The Spirit that Witnesses'*)

How very true are these words. If Seventh-day Adventists today, whatever their persuasion concerning the Godhead, would take them to heart, we would have far less controversy than we have at present. The editor at this time was E. J. Waggoner of 1888 Minneapolis fame.

Almost eighteen months later, in answer to another question concerning 'the trinity', the same editor made this remark (the question was "Do you believe in the trinity?")

"If I knew what you meant by the term [trinity], I might tell you; but from the days of Athanasius until now all discussion about the Trinity has been an attempt to define the indefinable and the incomprehensible. Thousands have been put to death for not professing belief in a formula which even its professors could not comprehend, nor state in terms that anybody else could comprehend." (*E. J. Waggoner, Present Truth – British edition, 30th July 1903, 'The editor's private corner'*)

Less than a year later, there was another question on the trinity. The editor answered

"While the Bible speaks clearly of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and tells us all we need to know, or can understand of their relation to one another, it does not define any of them within exact limits, as men have tried to do... God does not wish us to spend time in guessing at His Divine and Infinite Being." (*Present Truth, Questions and Bible Answers, March 10th 1904, page 149, 'The Trinity'*)

Again I quite agree with what is said here. This is one of the reasons I am not a trinitarian.

Almost two years later (in 1906) came this answer to another question concerning the trinity

"With regard to your further question concerning the Trinity, we shall better understand the Bible the more closely we hold to its teaching. The ideas of the Trinity which are found in the Creeds are human attempts to define an incomprehensible mystery, and bewilder rather than assist the mind... The truth concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is altogether too large to be bound about by any definitions that created minds can frame." (*Present Truth, January 11th 1906, 'Questions and Bible Answers, 'The Unpardonable Sin'*)

All of these observations are very true. Note that this latter statement was made only 7 years before Wilcox would make his 'divine trinity' statement. It must also be remembered that the above statements – which can only be described as 'anti-trinity doctrine' - were made in the light of Ellen White saying that the Holy Spirit is a person. Interesting – wouldn't you agree?

This was also many years after the publication of Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages* (1898). Many claim today, including you Richard, that what she wrote in this book confirms the trinity doctrine to be true but quite obviously, during the early 1900's, our church did not seem to think so. This is even though Ellen White had said that the Holy Spirit is a person. This can be seen by the above remarks. We will also see later that by the late 1930's/early 1940's, this had not changed.

Has it crossed your mind Richard why these readers of the *Present Truth* were asking about the trinity doctrine – also whether Seventh-day Adventists believed it or not? More than likely it was because nothing could be found in our books, periodicals or magazines promoting this teaching. People were left wondering what we did believe about it. This may have been accentuated by the fact that it was becoming common knowledge, at least amongst Seventh-day Adventists, that we had accepted the Holy Spirit to be 'the third person of the Godhead'.

This invites another question. Within this very short space of time (the 7 years between 1906-1913), was it possible that our church could change from being antagonistic to the trinity doctrine (as we have just noted) to adopting it as a denominational fundamental belief? I would not think so Richard. This really would be stretching the imagination. To convince people of this would necessitate re-writing our denominational history – which as you know, some have tried to do.

On the other hand it must be asked, can the above 'anti-trinity' statements be reconciled with Wilcox's "divine trinity" statement? In other words, can there be agreement between the two views? I believe there can be. It all depends upon what is meant by the word 'trinity'. When referring to the three persons of the Godhead (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), this can be said to be a 'divine trinity' but this is far from making a profession of the trinity doctrine. Just because the word 'trinity' is used does not constitute the trinity doctrine. It can simply be conveying the belief that there are three persons of the Godhead.

During the same time period (the early 1900's), Ellen White also made statements addressing this same subject (the attempts to explain God – which when all is said and done is what the trinity doctrine is said to do). I include here a few of these statements. Remember, God has given us this counsel (and much more like it) to help and protect us. We would do well to heed it. Note that Ellen White made all of these statements **after** the publication of *The Desire of Ages* – also after saying that the Holy Spirit is a person.

"The revelation of Himself that God has given in His word is for our study. This we may seek to understand. But beyond this we are not to penetrate. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God; but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion." (*Ellen G. White, 8th Volume Testimonies, page 279, 'The essential knowledge', 1904*)

"There are some things upon which we must reason, and there are other things that we must not discuss. In regard to God—what He is and where He is—silence is eloquence. When you are tempted to speak of what God is, keep silence, because as surely as you begin to speak of this, you will disparage Him. Our ministers must be very careful not to enter into controversy in regard to the personality of God. This is a subject that they are not to touch. It is a mystery, and the enemy will surely lead astray those who enter into it. We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world. God is a person, and

Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as “the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.” (*Ellen G. White, Ms 46, May 18th 1904*)

“God’s Word and His works contain the knowledge of Himself that He has seen fit to reveal to us. We may understand the revelation that He has thus given of Himself. But it is with fear and trembling, and with a sense of our own sinfulness, that we are to take up this study, not with a desire to try to explain God, but with a desire to gain that knowledge which will enable us to serve Him more acceptably. Let no one venture to explain God. Human beings cannot explain themselves, and how, then, dare they venture to explain the Omniscient One? Satan stands ready to give such ones false conceptions of God.

To the curious I bear the message that God has instructed me not to frame answers to the questions of those who enquire, in regard to the things that have not been revealed. The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children. Beyond this, human beings are not to attempt to go. We are not to attempt to explain that which God has not revealed. We are to study the revelation that Christ, the great Teacher, has given of the character of God, that in spirit and word and act we may represent Him to those who know Him not.

In regard to the personality and prerogatives of God, where He is and what He is, this is a subject which we are not to dare to touch. On this theme silence is eloquence. It is those who have no experimental knowledge of God who venture to speculate in regard to Him. Did they know more of Him, they would have less to say about what He is. The one who in the daily life holds closest communion with God, and who has the deepest knowledge of Him, realizes most keenly the utter inability of human beings to explain the Creator. Let men beware how they seek to look into the mysteries of The Most High” (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 132, Nov. 8, 1903, "God's Chosen People", 'A right knowledge of God'*)

I believe that this counsel alone is enough to prohibit Seventh-Adventists depicting God in trinitarian terms. Certainly it should have been enough to stop us from formulating a trinity doctrine - particularly from holding it as a fundamental belief. Unfortunately this warning was not heeded. So it is today we have this trinity dispute. Did you notice that Ellen White said she had been instructed “not to frame answers” to questions regarding things not revealed? She said this in the context of attempts to explain God. This is why there cannot be found in her writings anything that resembles the trinity doctrine. The closest she gets is by saying there are three persons of the Godhead – which is far from being a trinity doctrine.

As noted already, by the time Wilcox made his ‘divine trinity’ statement, the idea that the Holy Spirit is a ‘person’ was, within Seventh-day Adventism, becoming more and more acceptable, thus it could truly be said, as Wilcox wrote, that we believed in ‘the divine trinity’. This is even though we denied the trinity doctrine.

This brings us to another salient point – which is also very interesting. This is that the Wilcox statement of 1913 was not the first time when explaining our Godhead beliefs we had used the word ‘trinity’. By this time (1913), we had been ‘officially’ doing so for over 20 years. This we did in a tract for the public. We shall see this now. To do so we need to return our thoughts to the time period shortly following the now famous 1888 General Conference Session held at Minneapolis. This will show that the word ‘trinity’ can be ‘officially’ used without professing a belief in the trinity doctrine.

### **The Spear article**

I will now show you that we did, when officially declaring our denominational beliefs in the 1890's (this was over 20 years previous to the Wilcox ‘divine trinity’ statement), use the word ‘trinity’ but we made no profession of believing the trinity doctrine. This will necessitate taking a look at an article written by the Rev. Samuel Spear D. D. I will only relate the basics of it here (enough to make my point) but if you wish to read more you will find it at the following link. From

my preamble you will see how highly our church regarded Spear's article. I would invite you to read it – also the preamble. It is very enlightening

## The Spear Article

Samuel Spear was not a Seventh-day Adventist. He was a Presbyterian minister. In 1889, which was the year following the now famous General Conference session held at Minneapolis, his article was published in the New York Independent. It had the title 'The Subordination of Christ'. Two years later in 1891 (the year of Spear's death) it was published across two editions of the Signs of the Times (December 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>). In these publications the same title was retained. To a great extent, this reveals what was then believed by Seventh-day Adventists.

Spear's article, because it adequately represented what Seventh-day Adventists believed and taught, was published (with the original publisher's permission) as tract No. 90 of our 'Bible Student's Library'. This 'library' was a series of pamphlets that could be purchased and given to the public to show what Seventh-day Adventists officially taught (as opposed to what some purported we taught). It can be seen therefore that although the tract itself was not an officially declared fundamental belief, it was 'official' - and its title did contain the word 'trinity'. This 'library' which in 1915 could boast 209 titles, was discontinued in 1922.

When Spear's article was made into a tract it was given the title 'The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity'. So why the change of title? To be honest with you I cannot say with any certainty but it is quite possible we wanted it to appeal to Christians of other denominations, many of whom would have been trinitarian. The title would have appealed to them.

I would ask you to take particular note of this title. You may ask why I believe this to be significant. Is not this article promoting the trinity doctrine? No it is not. It is explaining what the **Bible alone** has to say about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is as opposed to the extreme suggestions (speculations) made by the trinity doctrine – thus Spear concluded

*"It is only when men speculate outside of the Bible and beyond it, and seek to be wiser than they can be, that difficulties arise; and then they do arise as the rebuke of their own folly. A glorious doctrine then becomes their perplexity, and ingulfs them in a confusion of their own creation. What they need is to believe more and speculate less." (Samuel Spear, The New York Independent, 1889, 'The Subordination of Christ', published as tract No. 90 of the SDA Bible Student's Library)*

To put it in a nutshell, Spear's article was non-trinitarian. At that time (1890's), this was in keeping with the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. This is why it was used to represent our beliefs to the public. As it said in the Signs of the Times in 1892 and 1894 respectively (concerning the tract)

*"While there may be minor thoughts in this worthy number which we might wish to express differently, on the whole we believe that it sets forth the Bible doctrine of the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with a devout adherence to the words of Scripture, in the best brief way we ever saw it presented." (Signs of the Times, April 4<sup>th</sup> 1892, Volume 18, No. 22, page 352)*

*"It presents the Bible view of the doctrine of the Trinity in the terms used in the Bible, and therefore avoids all philosophical discussion and foolish speculation. It is a tract worthy of reading." (Signs of the Times, 28th May 1894, 'Bible Students Library, No. 90, The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity')*

Spear had also said in his article

*"Bible trinitarians are not tritheists. They simply seek to state, in the best way in which they can, what they regard **the Bible as teaching**." (Samuel Spear, The New York*

*Independent, 1889, 'The Subordination of Christ', published as tract No. 90 of the SDA Bible Student's Library)*

The reason why Spear used the phrase “Bible trinitarians” was because the only information he used in his article is that which can be found in the Bible. This was good reason why we (our denomination) gave it the title ‘The **Bible Doctrine** of the Trinity’. Spear’s article did not express the doctrine of the trinity as is generally known amongst Christians. The latter, as I have said previously, is that all three persons of the Godhead exist inseparably as the one God in one indivisible substance (the one divine being of God). Spear made no such profession. He must have realised that Scripture cannot substantiate such reasoning. Thus the very first sentence of his article reads

“The Bible, while not giving a metaphysical definition of the spiritual *unity* of God, teaches His essential *oneness* in opposition to all forms of polytheism, and also assumes man’s capacity to apprehend the idea sufficiently for all the purposes of worship and obedience. John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6.” (*Ibid*)

This is very true. Nothing can be found in Scripture explaining how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist together; neither can be found anything concerning God being a three-in-one entity. This is why anything said in this respect (as in the trinity doctrine) can only be mere conjecture (philosophical reasoning). Thus Spear’s article was devoid of anything that constitutes orthodox trinitarianism. Some upon realising this (that it lacked the one God/one indivisible substance/one divine being idea) might say that Spear was teaching ‘tritheism’ (a belief in three separate Gods) – hence his above remark about **Bible trinitarians** not being tritheists. Spear must have realised how his article would be viewed – especially by trinitarians.

A number of our present-day scholars, one of whom is Merlin Burt, have correctly recognised that although we re-named Spear’s article to read ‘The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity’, it was in fact a non-trinitarian article. As he said in his study of our changeover to trinitarianism

“The first positive reference to the term “trinity” in Adventist literature was by Samuel Spear, a non-Adventist, in a reprint from the New York Independent of November 14 1889. It was published as number 90 in the Bible Students Library series in 1892.” (*Merlin Burt, 'Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-trinitarianism in Adventist Theology, 1888-1957', pages 5-6, December 1996*)

Notice Burt did not say 'trinity doctrine'. He continued by saying (as I have already pointed out)

“The title, *Bible Doctrine of the Trinity*, implied that the work would be sympathetic to the doctrine of the trinity. Upon reading the tract, one finds almost nothing which nineteenth-century Adventists would have found objectionable.” (*Ibid*)

Nineteenth-century Seventh-day Adventists were non-trinitarian. This is why they would not have found anything objectionable in this tract. What Spear had written was, at that time, in keeping with the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It would be nonsensical to say that this article, used by our church to convey to the public our non-trinitarian beliefs, supported the trinity doctrine. As Burt further explained

“Spear also argued against the idea of tritheism, and for the separate personalities of the Father and Son, both important concepts in Adventist literature up to 1892.” (*Ibid*)

Again this is very true. Burt can only be saying this because Spear’s article was devoid of trinitarian oneness. This could have made Spear’s reasoning look tritheistic (a belief in three Gods) but a correct reading of what he said (as we noted above) clearly nullifies this conclusion.

Burt is also correct in saying that the concept that the Father and the Son are two separate



divine beings was paramount in old-time Adventist theology. This is because it was believed that during the incarnation, the pre-existent Son of God actually became separated from the Father. This 'separating' also maintained the belief that if Christ had sinned (which could have happened) this would have brought about an eternal separation. Both of these beliefs (separation during the incarnation and eternal separation) are prohibited in trinitarianism. This is one of the reasons why the trinity doctrine destroys the gospel. It is also the reason why I do not accept it.

In 2007 I asked an orthodox Priest to define what trinitarians really believed. He explained it to me this way (which I have come to realise has been basic trinitarianism ever since the doctrine was first invented in the 4<sup>th</sup> century)

*"We [orthodox trinitarians] maintain rather the invariability of the Godhead (its simplicity and unity) in the sense that no action can lead to ontological change; namely in this case that the Word, one ousia with the Father and the Spirit, never leaves the Father's side even when He joins with our human nature in the Incarnation." (Email, Father Gregory Hallam, Orthodox Priest, to Terry Hill, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007)*

This is basic trinity theology. It is that "no action", whatever it is, can lead to change in the 'trinity structure of God'. This is even when Christ became incarnate. This means that even then, in the incarnation, He did not become separated from His Father.

In Theodoret's 5<sup>th</sup> century Ecclesiastical History, there is recorded "A confession of the Catholic faith which Pope Damasus sent to Bishop Paulinus in Macedonia when he was at Thessalonica". In one place, setting out the anathemas for those who held or taught certain beliefs contrary to the trinity doctrine, Pope Damasus wrote

*"If any one says that the Son of God, living in the flesh when he was on the earth, was not in heaven and with the Father, let him be anathema" (Pope Damasus to Bishop Paulinus, Theodoret's Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, chapter XI)*

This very same theology can be seen in a hymn that was written by a 7<sup>th</sup> century monk named St. Germanus. This hymn is still popular in many orthodox churches today. It is called 'A Great and Mighty Wonder'. It is a Christmas carol depicting trinitarianism. The second verse says (this is with respect to the incarnation of Christ and the trinity belief)

*"The Word becomes incarnate **and yet remains on high**,  
And cherubim sing anthems to shepherds from the sky.  
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory  
And peace on earth to men!"  
(St. Germanus, Hymn, 'A Great and Mighty Wonder')*

This is trinity theology in song. It is saying that whilst Christ was here on earth, He also remained "on high" with the Father. This was in keeping with what the orthodox priest had explained (see above); meaning that even in the incarnation the Son never leaves the Father's side. It is basic trinity theology. Nothing like this can be seen in Spear's article. He avoided all such speculation. It can be seen though how trinitarian theology affects the incarnation.

This trinity reasoning (speculation) is not what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. Ellen White wrote in the testimonies

*"Christ left heaven and the bosom of His Father to come to a friendless, lost world to save those who would be saved. He exiled Himself from His Father and exchanged the pure companionship of angels for that of fallen humanity, all polluted with sin." (Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 3, page 190, 'Laborers in the Office').*

*"His sacrifice consisted not merely in leaving the royal courts of heaven, in being tried by*

wicked men as a criminal and pronounced guilty, and in being delivered up to die as a malefactor, but in bearing the weight of the sins of the world.” (*Ibid*, page 407 ‘*Tithes and Offerings*’)

“He resigned his position as commander in the heavenly courts, and for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. He did his glory under the guise of humanity, that his divine, transforming power might touch humanity.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 24<sup>th</sup> October 1899 ‘Our Example’*)

Here we are told, as in many other places in Ellen White's writings, that Christ actually vacated Heaven, thus exiling Himself from the Father. This is far from trinitarianism. As we shall see later, Ellen White believed that if Christ had sinned it would have caused an eternal separation between Him and His Father. This is another reason why we know she was not a trinitarian. More about this later.

One person who made some very interesting comments concerning this ‘one indivisible divine being’ (one substance/essence) belief was a very well known Seventh-day Adventist minister by the name of William T. Hyde. His entire family were very well known in Seventh-day Adventism (too much to detail here). He contributed to the compilation of the 1966 Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedias.

Hyde was born in England but spent many years in America. He became a teacher in the religion department of Pacific Union College. He was there for over 30 years. Whilst he was at the college he wrote a textbook on Adventist theology. Under the heading of ‘The Godhead’, in what he termed ‘A Tentative Edition’, his first words are

“The essential nature of God which corresponds to the physical nature in man -- what God is made of, how He exists, how He can be eternal -- has not been revealed. It may be that it would be beyond our finite comprehension even if it were revealed to us.” (*William T. Hyde, Theology of an Adventist, A Biblical theology, 1965, Section 3 page 1*)

This was no different than was said by Spear (see above). It is true in every respect. It is also very similar to when Ellen White wrote in 1906 (8 years after the *Desire of Ages* was published)

“There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh’*)

Returning to the thoughts of William Hyde:- In answer to the question “Is the Divine Essence Indivisible?” he explained

“This may seem to be a question of no real importance, but it is always important when the results of speculation are made tenets of belief.” (*William T. Hyde, Theology of an Adventist, A Biblical theology, 1965, Section 3 page 5*)

As we all know, this ‘indivisible essence (substance)’ belief is nothing more than mere speculation but without it there cannot be a trinity doctrine. Unfortunately, within Seventh-day Adventism today, a confession of belief in the trinity is made a test of fellowship. This means that speculation has become a test of fellowship – which in turn means that to become a Seventh-day Adventist today, a belief in Scripture alone is not enough.

Hyde then went on to explain

“There is nothing in the Bible about the substance or essence of God being indivisible.

More importantly, it conflicts with a central doctrine of the Christian faith. As will be shown later, if the essence of the Godhead is indivisible, there can be no real incarnation.” (*Ibid*)

When referring to the trinity creeds that say the persons of the Godhead exist in one indivisible substance (essence) Hyde commented

“The source of this almost universal belief is Greek philosophy” (*Ibid*)

This again is very true. This one indivisible substance idea is nothing more than intellectual (Greek) philosophy, yet it is an “almost universal belief”. It is trinity theology. Nothing regarding this can be found in Scripture but without it there would not be a trinity doctrine.

Two pages later, again commenting on the ‘one substance/one divine being’ philosophy of the creeds Hyde stated

“The Adventist view that the Word was made flesh so that “all that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with His body in the tomb,” sleeping, would be regarded as “intolerable tritheism” by such, since it entails a complete separation between the persons of the Godhead” (*Ibid page 8*)

Here in 1965 is a Seventh-day Adventist minister who says that the indivisible oneness teaching, as in the trinity doctrine (that makes the three persons inseparable), is not conducive to what was then the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the incarnation. This minister therefore, in 1965, was denying the trinity doctrine as our church today teaches it. Notice he said that some would consider the lack of this one substance idea as “tritheism”. Again this was exactly the same as said by Samuel Spear.

Hyde went on to say of those who believe in this speculative oneness

“To maintain their own philosophical view that the Prime Mover must be one single Being, they are willing to make a virtual denial of the incarnation. If the Word could not be separated from the Father and Holy Spirit, He did not become flesh (John 1:14), but was an extension of part of the divine substance into the man Jesus.” (*Ibid*)

This is perfectly correct. If this one and the same indivisible substance idea was true then Christ never really became flesh. It can only be one way or the other. He either became flesh or He didn't.

This trinitarian type of understanding (of the incarnation) could also be likened to a puppeteer (the divine person of Christ) who is separate from, and who is manipulating, the puppet (the human body). Whatever happens to the puppet (humanity), whether it is good or bad, does not affect the puppeteer (the divine person). In other words, as Hyde quite rightly said, the Word does not really become flesh but is only “an extension of part of the divine substance into the man Jesus”.

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the trinity doctrine is that it teaches that the divine person of the Son of God did not die at Calvary. This has been recognised by a number of past Seventh-day Adventist non-trinitarians. Two of these are Joseph Waggoner and Judson Washburn.

Speaking of the trinity doctrine, Washburn wrote in a letter to the General Conference in 1939

“Any doctrine that leads a man to deny that the Son of God died must be an evil doctrine, an anti-Christian doctrine, not from God but from Satan.” (*Judson Washburn, ‘The Trinity’, letter to the Seventh-day Adventists General Conference, 1939*)

A few pages later he expressed his dismay at the trinity doctrine this way

“Seventh-day Adventists claim to take the word of God as supreme authority and to have “come out of Babylon,” to have renounced forever the vain traditions of Rome. If we should go back to the immortality of the soul, purgatory, eternal torment and the Sunday Sabbath, would that be anything less than apostasy? “If, however, we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central root, doctrine of Romanism, the Trinity, and teach that the son of God did not die, even though our words seem to be spiritual, is this anything else or anything less than apostasy? and the very Omega of apostasy?” (*Ibid*)

We shall return to Washburn and the “Omega of apostasy” later.

Over 50 years earlier, Joseph Waggoner (the father of Ellet Waggoner), spoke out a great deal against the trinity doctrine. In summation of his views I would quote him as saying

“I believe the Trinitarian views are unscriptural, and greatly disparage the atonement by denying that the Son of God died; . . .” (*J. H. Waggoner, Review and Herald, November 19th 1867, ‘What think ye of Christ?’*)

For those who would like to read what Ellen White (and others) had to say concerning this topic I would recommend the article here ('No more than swine's blood')

[No more than swine's blood](#)

A list of spirit of prophecy statements showing that the divine person of Christ did die at Calvary can be found here

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

Again this shows that Ellen White was not a trinitarian.

Some have made a little bit too much of the fact that when Spear's article was published as Tract No. 90 it carried with it the word 'trinity'. Take for example Gerhard Pfandl who as Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute wrote in his paper 'The Doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists'

“Although this pamphlet was certainly an improvement on previous positions it still fell short of the true picture of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the fact that it was printed by Pacific Press indicates that the concept of the Trinity was beginning to be accepted by the church.” (*Gerhard Pfandl research paper ‘The Doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists’, page 4 June 1999*)

Certainly it “fell short of the true picture of the Trinity” (as in the trinity doctrine). Spear intended it to fall short. I would say that this was the entire point of him writing it. It is also why we, as a denomination, published it as explaining what we believed and taught as non-trinitarians. We can see why Pfandl said it fell short. All that needs to be done is to look at his explanation of this teaching. He wrote in the same paper (as we noted above)

“Trinitarianism is the orthodox belief that there is but one living and true God. Nevertheless this one God is a unity of three persons, who are of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*Ibid*)

Spear had deliberately avoided such reasoning. This is one reason why Pfandl said it fell short of a trinity doctrine. The 'one substance' (one being) idea, which as we have seen is basic trinitarianism, is just human philosophy.

Just because we used Spear's article in such a way (and included the word 'trinity' in the title) did not mean the trinity doctrine itself was becoming acceptable to Seventh-day Adventists.

Recall to mind the early 1900's quotations we have just read (see above). These were made **15 years after** we first published Spear's article. These anti-trinitarian statements were also made when we were still promoting this non-trinitarian tract in our publications. This should say everything. Reason it through and you will see what I mean.

Others, like Max Hatton (a retired Seventh-day Adventist minister living in Australia), appear to have completely misunderstood our publishing of the 'Spear article' as a tract. He reasoned

“The pamphlet is defective in some of its statements but this is not the important point.”  
(*Max Hatton, article, 'Ellen G. White and the Trinity'*)

Of course the tract was defective – at least to someone like Max Hatton who supported the trinity doctrine. It was non-trinitarian. How it can be said therefore, “this is not the important point”? I would think it was very much the point.

Hatton, who authored the much-publicised Seventh-day Adventist book 'Understanding the Trinity' (published Autumn House, UK, 2001), is a typical trinitarian. In the same article he wrote (referring to the 'trinitarian hymn' we just mentioned)

“In summary we can say that St. Germanus had it right when he wrote in a seventh century hymn:

The Word becomes incarnate And yet remains on high!” (*Ibid*)

Here Hatton is agreeing with basic trinitarian theology – as taught today within Adventism. He also made this comment (referring to the publishing of the Spear article)

“What is important to note is that an Adventist Publisher in 1892 could include an item on the Trinity as one of its publications. Certainly, this must indicate that the doctrine was quite acceptable to at least many Seventh-day Adventists at that time.” (*Ibid*)

This was the same as when he wrote

“Obviously, to publish the pamphlet would be unthinkable if Trinitarianism was not acceptable among Adventists at the time.” (*Max Hatton, Website article, 'The Checkered History of the Trinity Doctrine'*)

Needless to say, the acceptance of Spear's (non-trinitarian) article in our Bible Student's Library did not mean that the trinity doctrine had become acceptable to “many Seventh-day Adventists at that time”. This would be completely missing the point.

Another person who managed to misunderstand was Christy Mathewson Taylor who in 1953 said in a thesis presented to the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Society (in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Divinity)

“The most striking acknowledgement of Trinitarianism was made when the denomination published a fourteen page pamphlet entitled “The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity” as one of the numbers in the Bible Student's Library.

This tract, issued in 1892, was a reprint of an article written in 1889 by Samuel T. Spear, D.D., a Baptist and a Trinitarian. Spear took a very forthright position concerning the Trinity.”(*Christy Mathewson Taylor, A Thesis presented to the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Society, August 1953, 'The Doctrine of the Personality of the Holy Spirit as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church up to 1900', pages 35-36*)

Spear, who was a Presbyterian minister not a Baptist, certainly did take a forthright position. His article opposed the trinity doctrine. The author also wrote concerning the publication of Spear's

article

“No Adventist writer had, up to this time, declared himself freely upon the doctrine, but the Pacific Press Publishing Association, a denominational publishing house, reached out in 1892 beyond previous denominational doctrinal expressions, and made use of a thoroughly Trinitarian paper in its leading series of pamphlets. One must conclude from these circumstances that Trinitarian thinking had come to predominate in the staff of the Pacific Press Publishing Association by this time.” (*Ibid, page 37*)

Spear's article was not “thoroughly Trinitarian”, at least not in any sense than can be termed orthodoxy. Secondly, because this was not the case, it does not show that “Trinitarian thinking had come to predominate in the staff of the Pacific Press Publishing Association”. This is a misunderstanding of what the tract was actually saying, also what was conveyed by the publication of it.

I am left wondering what the author meant by the opening remarks in this paragraph. This is because it does not take long for anyone studying our denominational history to realise that our denominational writers for decades spoke out very strongly against the trinity doctrine. We have even seen this in the early 1900's statements above. In our very early days we were quite vocal in our rejection of the trinity doctrine. Perhaps the author meant speaking openly in favour of this teaching. If this is the case, then it must be said that as a denomination we did not, until decades after the first publication of the Spear article, say anything in favour of it.

On the next page the author concluded

“The ten years from 1889 to 1899 show a specific trend towards Trinitarianism. There were, however, still some anti-Trinitarians in positions of influence on the denomination.

The use of the Spear article was very significant. It indicates a changing view on the doctrine of the Trinity.” (*Ibid, page 39*)

Again this is a total misunderstanding. It did not show any changing view. The article was in keeping with what Seventh-day Adventists believed and taught at that time (early 1890's). This can only be described as non-trinitarianism.

Very interestingly, when Spear's article was published as tract No. 90 for our Bible Student's library, the following words in red were omitted. This is quite revealing.

“The distinction thus revealed in the Bible is the basis of the doctrine of the tri-personal God or tri-une God, which has so long been the faith of the Christian Church.” (*Samuel T. Spear, D. D., as published in the New York Independent on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1889 as 'The Subordination of Christ'*)

The words in red refer to the trinity doctrine. Note that Spear said that what he had set out was the basis for this teaching. In other words, if only what the Scriptures say concerning the three persons of the Godhead is taken into consideration, there would be no such thing as the trinity doctrine. To put it another way: In order to have a trinity doctrine, speculation must be introduced. This is why it said in the 'Signs' when promoting Spear's article

“It presents the Bible view of the doctrine of the Trinity in the terms used in the Bible, and therefore avoids all philosophical discussion and foolish speculation.” (*Signs of the Times, 28th May 1894, 'Bible Students Library, No. 90, The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity'*)

I will now offer further proof that in 1913 when Wilcox made his 'divine trinity' statement, the trinity doctrine had not been accepted within Seventh-day Adventism. Certainly by then it had not become one of our denominational fundamental beliefs.

## The 1919 Bible Conference

I am going to detail here some of the dialogue from the Bible Conference held at Takoma Park from July 1<sup>st</sup> – July 19<sup>th</sup> 1919. Although somewhat lengthy, it is well worth the read. This is because it highlights one of the first efforts made to change what we had been teaching about Christ throughout the entire time period of Ellen White's ministry. It was also the first major step towards changing our Godhead beliefs from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism. This was **6 years after** Wilcox had made his 'divine trinity' statement. We were still then a non-trinitarian denomination. It also shows the varying views of those in attendance.

### Part (a) A 'secret' Bible council

This Bible Conference was a watershed in Seventh-day Adventist history yet many fail to understand what took place at this conference. In fact some do not even realise it took place. This is mainly because it was not until 55 years later in 1974 that Dr. Donald Yost, elected in 1973 as Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church archives, found the stenographer's records of the conference in the archives. These records, wrapped as two packages, consisted of over 2400 pages of notes. As is reported here

“The record of the 1919 Bible Conference was lost until December 1974,” Couperus reported, “when Dr. F. Donald Yost found two packages wrapped in paper at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Takoma Park.

Inside the packages were 2,400 pages of typewritten material, transcribed from stenographic notes taken at the conference.” (*Bonnie Dwyer, Spectrum magazine, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009, 'The Most Significant Article that Spectrum Has Published—So Far'*)

It appears that up to when Yost found these reports (1974), very few (if any) outside of those who attended the conference, had knowledge of the dialogue that had taken place amongst the delegates. All these years, from 1919 to 1974 it had remained 'secret'. Of these 2400 pages, only approx 1100 were the actual dialogue of the Bible Conference. The rest of the pages comprised duplicates and copies of it; also the notes on the Bible and History Teachers Council that took place afterwards (July 20<sup>th</sup> – August 1st).

In his book 'More than a Prophet', Graeme Bradford relates

“Little was known of the 1919 Bible Conference until December 6, 1974, when Donald Yost, the senior archivist at the General Conference headquarters in Washington, DC was setting up the newly formed archives. He accidentally discovered two packets of papers containing some 2400 pages of typewritten material that were stenographic notes taken at the Bible Conference held in Takoma Park, Maryland, in July 1919.” (*Graeme Bradford, More than a Prophet, Chapter 18 page 152*)

Bradford says the records of the conference were found “accidentally” but the late Robert Olsen (Ellen White Estate Director) reports

“In 1974, at the urging of Don Mansell, who had somehow learned of the 1919 conference, Dr. Donald Yost sought for and found the detailed stenographic report of the proceedings.

Nearly half of the 2494 pages preserved are a duplicate of the other half, so that the record of the two meetings actually comes to about 1308 pages . . . The remaining 1186 pages are duplicate or second copies” (*R. W. Olsen, Centre for Adventist Research, The 1919 Bible Conference And Bible And History Teachers' Council, 1979*)

This record of the dialogue that took place between the delegates reveals emphatically that at

that time (1919), which was **6 years after** Wilcox made his 'divine trinity' statement, the trinity doctrine was not a belief held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church although it does show that with regards to Christ, a number of our leading men were dissatisfied with what our church up to then (1919) was teaching. This belief was that at a time so far back in eternity that it was incomprehensible to the human mind, Christ was begotten (brought forth) of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. Whilst this belief maintained that Christ is God, it did not express it in such terms as in the trinity doctrine.

At this conference there was a decided 'push' by some to 'get away' from a certain aspect of this teaching. This aspect was the 'time' factor. In opposition to this, some of our leaders were attempting to put across the idea that Christ's personality was eternal. This shows Richard that your idea that the trinity doctrine was already a fundamental (cardinal) belief of our church is false. If we had already been a trinitarian denomination, there would have been no need for such a push. It would have already been accepted theology.

I will quote here some of the deliberations of the delegates. It can also be found in sections 35 and 36 at the following link

### [A Detailed History of the Trinity Doctrine](#)

The entire conference notes, also the notes of the Bible and History Teacher's meeting that followed, are available here

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fResources%2f1919BC&FolderCTID=0x01200095DE8DF0FA49904B9D652113284DE0C8000B5857BEC3C5DB4F96C32A1C24765988>

This conference has been referred to as 'a secret conference'. This is not only because the discussions were confined to the dusty archives of our church for 55 years but also because the Seventh-day Adventist ministry in general (meaning ministers like you Richard) were prohibited from attending. As Michael Campbell wrote in 2010 (this was when he was reviewing the events of this conference)

*"The meetings were closed to anyone except those invited by the General Conference Executive Committee specifically so that they would feel free to express their viewpoint without fear of recrimination." (Michael W. Campbell, Adventist Review, January 28<sup>th</sup> 2010, 'Sifting Through the Past')*

The question must be asked here. If the ministry in general (or the laity in general) had attended the conference, why should these leaders have feared recrimination? The only conclusion that can be drawn is that because it was the intent of some by reason of this conference to change what Seventh-day Adventists had been teaching over the years, particularly concerning Christ, this in itself would probably have brought about a tremendous amount of protest. It would have also made public that our leadership were divided on certain issues. The way the conference was convened, at least these differences would only be made known to a small group of people – the leadership itself.

In a letter to A. G. Daniells the General Conference President, also chair of the 1919 Bible Conference, Judson Washburn (a prolific evangelist whom we will speak more of later) wrote saying

*"When Dr. Albertsworth was on trial before the College Board, I heard him say that he was teaching in harmony with the Bible Institute that had been held in Washington during the summer of 1919. When asked to state the teachings of that Institute, he said that Institute was secret, and that to reveal its teachings would be a breach of confidence. That it was held for the benefit of the leading ministers and the educational leaders, and*



not for the ordinary ministers or workers or the common people.” (*Judson Washburn letter to A. G. Daniells, May 1<sup>st</sup> 1922*)

What we know for sure is that the ‘elected attendees’ of this Bible conference were all ‘very high-ranking’ officials. These were such as presidents, treasurers and field officers of the various conferences. It also included members of the General Conference Committee, Bible and history teachers, presidents of colleges, as well as editors of our publishing houses. The chairman of this conference was A. G. Daniells, then the General Conference President. As Michael Campbell reported

“Although the concept of Bible conferences was certainly not new to Adventism, this conference was different from previous meetings. It was the first time that such a highly educated group of educators, editors, administrators, and other thought leaders had gathered to discuss such a plethora of controversial topics. The planning committee had done this deliberately.” (*Michael W. Campbell, Adventist Review, January 28<sup>th</sup> 2010, ‘Sifting Through the Past’*)

Taken overall, this really was an extremely influential group of delegates who, if persuaded to do so, could have a very persuasive influence on the future thinking, also the future theology, of Seventh-day Adventism. This, as some must have reasoned at that time, was the intention of the calling together of such a select and elite body of Seventh-day Adventists.

In his opening address, the General Conference President made the following remarks. This was regarding those whom the General Conference Committee had elected to attend.

“It was to be the members of the General Conference Committee in America who could attend; the Bible and history teachers in our colleges, junior colleges, and seminaries; and a number of our leading editors in this country.... Since the appointment a great many people have wanted to come to the Conference, and we have not been able to open the door. When people have approached me, I have said they would have to make application to the General Conference Committee, and some of them have done so. But we have not felt free to change our arrangements until we could get here in session. We have felt if there were persons here or elsewhere that we ought to invite, we could take the action here.

Another thing is that a good many people feel very much afraid of what we are going to do. They wonder if we are going to fix up a creed for them to subscribe to. They are much disturbed about it. The secrecy alarms them. We have never had anything like this before, and they are very fearful. Some almost felt we ought to abandon the plan, and stop because of this difficulty.” (*A. G. Daniells. Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park in Washington D. C. July 1<sup>st</sup> 1919, page 10-11*)

It appears that some who had come to know of the conference had very serious fears about it. As Daniells said, “We have never had anything like this before”, “The secrecy alarms them”.

At this conference, which had originally been planned to take place in 1917, W. W. Prescott (General Conference Field Secretary, former editor of the Review) delivered a series of presentations on the person of Christ. Later, the delegates would discuss the various issues arising from these presentations.

As will be seen if the dialogue is read in full, Prescott was urging the delegates to change concerning Christ, what our church had been teaching since its beginnings. This was that sometime in eternity (the emphasis being on time), Christ had been begotten (brought forth) of God therefore He is truly the Son of God.

It is apparent from your emails Richard that you and your trinitarian colleagues of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry are adamantly opposed to this teaching, yet this was our teaching throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry. It was still our denominational teaching at the time of this conference. This was only 4 years after the death of Ellen White.

#### Part (b) The question

At the beginning of the afternoon session of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, A. G. Daniells asked the delegates if they had questions concerning Prescott's morning presentation on the person of Christ. It was W. E. Howell, Secretary of the Department of Education, who first responded (Howell had chaired the committee that organised the conference). He asked

"I would like to ask Professor Prescott if he is willing to enlarge just a little on the point of the "beginning" as he explained it this morning." (*W. E. Howell, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, page 18*)

Prescott response was

"Taking the first chapter of John, the third verse: At a certain point where finite beings begin time, it does not mean that that is where the word began. When the scriptures says, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God," it does not mean that when you get back to that point that we denominate the beginning, then looking back into eternity, you can point to the time when the word was." (*Prescott, Ibid*)

H. C. Lacey (teacher of Bible and Biblical languages at Washington Missionary College) then asked the question

"Can we go one step further and say that the word was without beginning?" (*H. Lacey, Ibid*)

Here then was the question. Was Christ co-eternal with the Father? Prescott replied

"I was going to raise the question. Are we agreed in such a general statement as this, that the Son of God is co-eternal with the Father? Is that the view that is taught in our schools?" (*W. W. Prescott, Ibid*)

C. M. Sorenson (Dean of Theology, Washington Missionary College) replied

"It is taught in the Bible." (*C. M. Sorenson, Ibid*)

Prescott responded with this comment

"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." (*Prescott, Ibid*)

This co-eternity of the personality of the Son with the Father was not the standard denominational belief of Seventh-day Adventists. The denominational belief was that in the endless ages of eternity, so far back it is incomprehensible to the human mind (almost forever), Christ came out of (was begotten of) the Father. It was not believed that this made Christ any less than God, neither was it believed that Christ was some sort of a demigod. He was considered to be - because He was begotten of God - God. In other words, Christ was believed to be God Himself in the person of the Son.

## Part (c) Old time Adventism - Christ is truly God

On this subject of Christ's divinity, there had been no change since our beginnings to our beliefs. Let me share with you a few examples of what we believed as non-trinitarians. There are many more. Far too many to quote here.

As early as 1869, J. G. Matteson wrote the following

"Christ is the only literal Son of God. "The only begotten of the Father." John i, 14. **He is God because he is the Son of God...**" (*J. G. Matteson, Review and Herald, October 12th 1869, 'Children of God'*)

Seven years later, James White had this to say about the differences in belief between Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh-day Baptists

"The principal difference between the two bodies is the immortality question. The S.D. Adventists hold the divinity of Christ so nearly with the trinitarians that we apprehend no trial here." (*James White, Review and Herald, Oct 12th 1876, 'The two bodies - The Relation Which the S.D. Baptists and S.D. Adventists Sustain to Each Other'*)

This shows we believed that what we taught about Christ, as a denomination in 1876, was on a par with the trinitarians. It was that Christ is God Himself – albeit in the person of the Son. If this had not been the case, this remark by James White would make no sense.

In 1967, Russell Holt wrote a term paper for Dr. Mervyn Maxwell. In this paper he referred to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (concerning Christ) up to the time period of the death of James White (1881). He said

"A survey of other Adventist writers during these years reveals, that to a man, they rejected the trinity, yet, with equal unanimity they upheld the divinity of Christ." (*Russell Holt, "The doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination: Its rejection and acceptance", A term paper for Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, 1969*)

Holt then wrote of the beliefs of these early Seventh-day Adventists

"To reject the trinity is not necessarily to strip the Saviour of His divinity. Indeed, certain Adventist writers felt that it was the trinitarians who filled the role of degrading Christ's divine nature." (*Ibid*)

This stand though, against the trinity doctrine, brought about serious misconceptions. It was thought by some that we did not believe in the divinity of Christ. This is a common misconception.

This was seen in a book the Methodist Church published in 1889. In this book it mentioned that Seventh-day Adventists did not believe that Christ is divine. Ellet Waggoner, who at that time was joint-editor of the Signs of the Times with Alonzo Jones, wrote a series of articles (published in 'the Signs') that addressed this very serious misapprehension. In the first of these articles he wrote

"We believe in the divinity of Christ, because the Bible says that Christ is God" (*E. J. Waggoner. Signs of the Times, March 25<sup>th</sup> 1889, article 'The Divinity of Christ'*)

Earlier in the article, after quoting John 1:1, Waggoner had written (also saying that if no other text existed this one alone would prove Christ to be God)

"Indeed, we have never heard of anyone who doubted that the evangelist has reference to Christ in this passage. From it we learn that Christ is God." (*Ibid*)

After quoting Isaiah 9:6 he remarked

“It would be impossible to find titles which would more completely show the exalted nature of Christ than these: “The mighty God, The everlasting Father.”” (*Ibid*)

Waggoner drew the conclusion

“The writer to the Hebrews, speaking of Christ's superiority to the angels, says that it is because “he hath by inheritance a more excellent name than they.” Heb. 1:4. What name is it that he has by inheritance? It is, “The mighty God.” As the only begotten Son of God, he has that name by right. It is most natural that the Son should inherit the name of the Father. That he has this name, is shown still further by the words of the Father himself, who addresses the Son by it. Speaking of God the Father, the apostle says: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.” Heb. 1 : 8.” (*Ibid*)

The following week in another article addressing the same allegation (this was after making a comparison of Scriptures that he believed supported the view that Christ is God) Waggoner wrote the following

“From these texts we have proof not only that the inspired writers call Jesus the divine Son of God, but that Jesus himself claimed to be God.” (*Ellet J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times article ‘The Divinity of Christ (continued)’, April 1<sup>st</sup> 1889*)

In his book ‘Christ and His Righteousness’ published the following year, Waggoner wrote such as

“The Word was “in the beginning”. The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase. It is not given to men to know when or how the Son was begotten; but we know that He was the Divine Word, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created. . . . We know that Christ “proceeded forth and come from God” (John 8:42) but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man.” (*E. J. Waggoner, ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, page 9, 1890*)

On pages 21-22 and 23 respectively are found these words

“There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42 and 1:18) but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning. But the point is that Christ is a begotten Son and not a created subject.” (*Ibid pages 21-22*)

“Christ “is in the bosom of the Father;” being by nature the very substance of God and having life in Himself, He is properly called Jehovah, the self existing one and is thus styled in Jer. 23:56, where it is said that the righteous Branch, who shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, shall be known by the name of Jehovah-tsidekenu--THE LORD, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (*Ibid page 23*)

The belief of Seventh-day Adventists was that because Christ is begotten of God, meaning because He is the divine Son of God, He is God. Christ's Sonship confirmed His deity.

In 1894, which was now 6 years after the 1888 Minneapolis Conference Session, also four years after the publication of Waggoner's book ‘Christ and His Righteousness’, notes concerning our current Sabbath School lesson study were published in the Review and Herald. In these notes it said

“Therefore the life of God is the law of the universe. **But Christ is God.** In him is life,

*even the life of God” (Review and Herald, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1894, Notes on Sabbath School Lessons for May 26<sup>th</sup> 1894, ‘Lessons from the book of Luke’)*

There is no doubt that in their early days, Seventh-day Adventists believed that Christ is God.

The next year, in a General Conference Bulletin, Alonzo Jones (one of the main speakers at the 1888 General Conference session held at Minneapolis) said the following of Christ

“He who was born in the form of God took the form of man. In the flesh he was all the while as God, but he did not appear as God. He divested himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of man. The glories of the form of God, he for awhile relinquished.” (A. T. Jones, *General Conference Bulletin, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1895, ‘The Third Angel’s Message – No. 23’*)

Jones was emphasising the begotten concept. This is that because Christ is begotten of God then He is God. Ellen White had no problem with this begotten concept. She endorsed it.

At the 1899 General Conference Session, Jones preached a sermon in which he said of Christ (this was the year after the *Desire of Ages* was published)

“He was born of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Jesus Christ was born again. He came from heaven, God's first-born, to the earth, and was 'born again'. . . .He whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity, the first-born of God, was born again, in order that we might be born again.” (A. T. Jones, *Sermon preached on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1899 at the General Conference Session in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, see Review and Herald, August 1st 1899, ‘Christian perfection’*)

The next year (this was now 2 years after the publication of the *Desire of Ages*) the following was found in the *Signs of the Times*.

“Jesus Christ was born again, born of the Spirit, in order that sinful, mortal man might be born again; for in no other way could we escape the penalty of sin, which is death. " Ye *must* be born again." Christ was the " first-born of every creature." **He was with God, and He was God.** John I : 1. In order to save our lost race, He must be born again. **He put off the nature of the Highest** that He might take on the nature of the lowest. He was born again, not for the attainment of life, for that He already had. " (*Signs of the Times, January 17<sup>th</sup> 1900, ‘Necessity of being “Born Again”*)

Again this is the begotten concept.

The same year, in a Bible-Text book that he had written for his students, O A. Johnson, as instructor in Bible and History in Union College, wrote the following (Bible references removed to keep text shorter)

“That which proves Christ to be God is the fact that he is the Son of God, and that he created all things by the word of his power... Since Christ is God and Creator, he can therefore make laws binding upon conscience...” (O. A. Johnson, *Bible Text-Book, page 41, chapter 12, ‘Christ and antichrist’, 1900*)

Johnson was a very well known and respected minister. As his obituary said

“He raised up his first church in the year 1874. He was ordained to the ministry in the year 1876. and shortly after this raised up a church at Debello, Wis.” (*Obituaries, Review and Herald, March 22nd 1923, Elder O. A. Johnson*)

After referring to a number of other churches Johnson set up it went on to explain

“In 1890 he was called to the presidency of the South Dakota Conference. The following year Union College opened a Scandinavian department, and Elder Johnson was called to take charge. In 1894 he was elected to the presidency of the Wisconsin Conference, serving in that capacity two years. From 1896-97 he labored extensively in the general camp-meetings held in the Central and Northern Union Conferences. He was again called to the Scandinavian department of Union College, where he remained for three years. In 1900 he accepted a call to the presidency of the conference in Norway, where he remained for seven years. During the years 1904 and 1905 he conducted a mission school in Christiania, Norway. A little later the three conferences of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark united in opening a training school in Nyhyttan, Sweden, and Elder Johnson was placed in charge. In 1908 he responded to a call to the Bible department of Walla Walla College, where he remained until 1922.” (*Ibid*)

It was as Head of the Bible Department at Walla Walla College that Johnson compiled a more detailed and expanded text book for his students. The book was called 'Bible Doctrines'. It was first published in 1910. This book, because of its continuing popularity, had a number of editions (printings). The final one was in 1921 (Johnson died in 1923). We shall take a look at this book now. We shall see what Johnson had to say about the Godhead. Whilst the page numbers differ across the various printings, the wording is the same. Remember, in 1921 and probably later, the students at Walla Walla College were still using this book. It was very popular. It was in keeping with what Seventh-day Adventists then believed and taught.

In the study called 'The Godhead', Johnson noted the following (all Bible references removed to keep the text shorter)

“There are three persons in the Godhead; viz., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. . . . God the Father is the first person of the Godhead, and, as such, he is the greatest.” (*O. A. Johnson, Bible Doctrines, 1921, The Godhead, Lesson IX, 'God the Father'*)

Note the last sentence. Following the study itself, one of the questions asked of the reader was

“Who stands at the head of this trinity?” (*Ibid*)

The expected answer was, because of what had already been said, 'the Father'.

In the next study (on the next page), called simply 'Divinity of Christ', Johnson says (Bible references again removed again to keep text shorter)

“Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father . . . . Since Christ is begotten of the Father, he must therefore be of the same substance as the Father; hence he must have the same divine attributes that God has, **and therefore he is God . . . . The Father calls his Son “God,” and therefore he must be God.**” (*Ibid Lesson X, 'Divinity of Christ'*)

Johnson concluded

“Although Christ is the Son of God, yet he says his Father is greater than himself.” (*Ibid*)

On the same page, the following questions were asked of the students (the answers were to be derived from the study previously)

“Of Whom is Christ the only begotten? . . . .” “Since Christ is begotten of the Father, of whose attributes must he partake? . . . .” “Who is the greater, the Father or the Son?” (*Ibid*)

This 'begotten belief', in 1921, was still then the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. What we see here is the continuing thought of the subordination of Christ as seen in Samuel Spear's article (see above). This was Christ being the respectful Son (of God).

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Johnson made these observations (Bible texts again removed)

"The Holy Spirit is the third name in the trinity. . . . "The Holy Spirit" is "the third person of the Godhead." It "is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof." *Desire of Ages*, large edition, pages 669, 671. . . . The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and comes to us in name of Christ. . . . Since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, it must have the same divine attributes as God. . . . The Holy Spirit is called: (a) The Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit. . . . (b) Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ." (*Ibid, lesson XI*)

In this study (in Johnson's book) we again see the use of the word 'trinity' but we also see that Christ is still regarded as truly begotten of God. Notice too that whilst the Holy Spirit is referred to as person, this is said to be the "**Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ**". This is exactly the same as believed by past and present-day Seventh-day Adventist non-trinitarians.

From reading Johnson's book, it could readily be said, as said by F. M. Wilcox, that Seventh-day Adventists did believe in the 'divine trinity' but certainly they did not, as one of their fundamental beliefs, hold to the trinity doctrine.

In 1921, the belief that Christ is begotten of God – and is therefore God - was still the preponderant belief of Seventh-day Adventists. This was now 23 years after the publication of the *Desire of Ages*. By this time, regardless of what some have attempted to have us believe, Ellen White's book had not changed the theology of our church. For decades to come, this same theology remained the official belief of our denomination.

Note very importantly that this was now 8 years AFTER Wilcox's 'divine trinity' statement. It was also 2 years after the 1919 Bible Conference.

Very interestingly, during 1942 and 1943, Johnson's studies were repeated on a weekly basis as Bible Studies in the 'Australian Signs of the Times'. This shows that even then, during the 1940's, it was still officially taught that Christ was truly the Son of God, begotten of God in eternity. This strongly suggests that even in the 1950's and onwards, this was still the faith of many (if not the majority of) Seventh-day Adventists. We shall see this later.

Concerning Christ, it is reasonably obvious that Ellen White knew exactly what was believed and taught by Seventh-day Adventists yet never once did she say they were wrong in what they were teaching. In fact she said exactly the opposite. In 1893 (she had spent part of that year in New Zealand) she told how she had encountered this misunderstanding (that Seventh-day Adventists did not believe in the divinity of Christ). In relating her experience to the readers of the *Review and Herald* she explained

"For instance, an effort was made to obtain the use of the hall at a village four miles from Hastings, where some of our workers proposed to present the gospel to the people; but they did not succeed in obtaining the hall, **because a schoolteacher there opposed the truth, and declared to the people that Seventh-day Adventists did not believe in the divinity of Christ.**" (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th December 1893, 'An appeal for the Australasian field'*)

Notice she said that the schoolteacher had "opposed the truth". She went on to say

"This man may not have known what our faith is on this point, but he was not left in ignorance. **He was informed that there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists.**" (*Ibid*)

This could not have been said any more clearly. Certainly it could not have been misunderstood. Concerning Christ's pre-existence, Ellen White fully supported and endorsed what Seventh-day Adventists were teaching. This is even though we rejected the trinity doctrine

and believed that Christ is begotten of God. This is the way that every Seventh-day Adventist who read this statement would have understood what she was saying. It would have confirmed them in their Sonship (begotten) belief. As you said to me Richard (your emphasis)

*“The **Review & Herald** was the official VOICE of the Church and WHAT Seventh-day Adventists Believed...” (Email, Pastor Richard Mendoza to Terry Hill, 5th October 2015)*

The Review and Herald was far from being the *official* voice of the church but everyone who read the above article by Ellen White (published in the Review and Herald) would know for sure that she fully supported what Seventh-day Adventists were then teaching concerning Christ - which was that He was truly the Son of God (begotten of God in eternity).

We can see from what she said, also from other things that she wrote concerning Christ, that Ellen White had no argument with either the begotten concept or our rejection of the trinity doctrine – and I very much doubt whether this was the first time she had experienced this misunderstanding. From what I can gather as I have read our history, it was ongoing.

We can also see from the above that although early Seventh-day Adventists were not trinitarian, they did believe in the full and complete divinity of Christ – meaning they believed that He is God. We have seen this over and over again. This Sonship (begotten) belief was endorsed through the spirit of prophecy. We shall see this more fully later. For now we need to return our thoughts to the Bible Conference and Prescott's presentations.

#### Part (d) The debate

In 1895, in a letter written from Melbourne Australia to her son Edson White, Ellen White spoke very highly of Prescott. She said of him (paragraphs not contiguous)

*“The Lord is working in power through His servants who are proclaiming the Word. God has given Brother Prescott a special message for the people. The truth comes forth from human lips in the demonstration of the Spirit and in power.”*

*“Seldom can I give myself the pleasure of listening to discourses from our ministering brethren; but Sabbath forenoon I attended the meeting and heard Professor Prescott preach. I know that since coming to this place he has had the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; his lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. We know and can distinguish the voice of the True Shepherd. The truth has been poured forth from the lips of the servant of God as the people had never heard it before; unbelievers turn pale and say, That man is inspired. The people do not stroll about the grounds, but go immediately into the tent, and listen as if spellbound.” (Ellen White, Letter 82 1895 to Edson White, November 1895)*

She also wrote to S. N. Haskell the same month (again speaking highly of Prescott)

*“The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon Brother Prescott in great measure. Camp meeting has now been in session for three weeks last Thursday, and will continue until next Tuesday. Brother Prescott has been bearing the burning words of truth such as I have heard from some in 1844. The inspiration of the Spirit of God has been upon him. Unbelievers say, “These are the words of God. I never heard such things before.”” (Ellen White, Letter 25 1895 to S. N. Haskell, November 6<sup>th</sup> 1895)*

A few months later, Prescott professed the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This is when he wrote

*“Jesus Christ was God in heaven, and he came to this world, and was born of the flesh, and thus he who had been born of the Spirit was afterward born of the flesh, and by this double birth this family was established . . .” (W. W. Prescott, Review and Herald March*



17<sup>th</sup> 1896, 'The Christ of Judea')

"As Christ was twice born, -- once in eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and again here in the flesh, thus uniting the divine with the human in that second birth, . . ." (*Review and Herald, April 14<sup>th</sup> 1896, 'The Christ for to-day*)

This was exactly the same as was said by Alonzo Jones (see above). It was also the view that Ellen White was saying is the truth concerning Christ (see above). Remember too, Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon Prescott "in great measure", also that the "inspiration of the Spirit of God has been upon him". She said that Prescott was "bearing the burning words of truth".

In 1896, the above was the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. Now though, 23 years later at the 1919 Bible Conference, which was 4 years **after** the death of Ellen White, Prescott was putting a different slant on things. As we noted above, he had said at this conference (this was in response to Sorenson saying the Bible taught that Christ is co-eternal with the Father)

"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." (*W. W. Prescott, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, page 18*)

Prescott was now referring to the begotten (Sonship) faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This was as he had previously professed it. Now, at the Bible Conference, he is referring to it as "Arianism". The book he was referring to was more than likely Uriah Smith's 'Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation'. This book was considered to be a Seventh-day Adventist classic.

C. P Bollman's (Editor 'Liberty Magazine') response was

"I would like to ask, Do you think it is necessary, or even helpful in the defining of Christian doctrine, to go outside of the New Testament for terms to use in the definition? ... 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, page 19*)

Prescott responded

"I do not find in the New Testament expressions as "co-eternal," but I find expressions that are equivalent to that, as I understand it." (*Prescott, Ibid*)

It is very important to note that Prescott was not urging the delegates to believe other than Christ was begotten of God (that Christ was truly the Son of God). If he had done this he would have been refuting the bottom line of what was believed by Seventh-day Adventists. As he made very clear a few minutes later (this was in reply to Bollman who had asked him to give examples from the Bible that are equivalent to 'co-eternal')

"I think the expression "I am" is the equivalent of eternity. I think these expressions, while they do not use the term co-eternal, are equivalent in their meaning. That brings up the whole question of the relation of the Son to the Father. There is a proper sense, as I view it, according to which the Son is subordinate to the Father, but that subordination is not in the question of attributes or of His existence. It is simply in the fact of the derived existence, as we read in John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself." (*Prescott, Ibid, Page 20*)

Prescott had said, "...derived existence". He could not say that Christ was not begotten (neither

do I believe he wanted to say it) but at the same time he wanted to put across the idea that Christ was co-eternal with God. As he explained to the delegates

“Using terms as we use them, the Son is co-eternal with the Father. That does not prevent His being the only-begotten Son of God. We cannot go back into eternity and say where this eternity commenced, and where that eternity commenced. There is no contradiction to say that the Son is co-eternal with the Father, and yet the Son is the only-begotten of the Father.” (*Ibid, page 20*)

Remember, this was 6 years **after** Wilcox had made his ‘divine trinity’ statement. This belief that Christ was begotten of God was still then the denominational belief of Seventh-day Adventists. This can be seen in what Prescott was saying. If he had denied this belief than more than likely he would have lost his credibility.

This ‘time versus eternity’ discussion has been around for a very long time. In the Review and Herald in 1896 there is an interesting explanation of it. It was given in answer to a letter sent in by a reader. The questioner had asked

“PLEASE explain the following expressions in Micah 5 :2, " Whose goings forth have been from old, from 'everlasting," and in Rev. 3 : 14, " The beginning of the creation of God." W. H. L” (*Review and Herald, May 26<sup>th</sup> 1896, To Correspondents*)

The reply was given

“They undoubtedly refer to Christ. The marginal reading of Micah 5:2 is, " from the days of eternity," which places the origin of Christ in the days of eternity. The following expression is used in the Bible more than once, " from everlasting to everlasting," or, from eternity to eternity. This, I understand, indicates the interval in the circle of eternity which we call time. Time is bound on both sides by eternity; in fact, it is a little piece in eternity. Christ's existence extends from eternity to eternity, and spans the whole course of time. We cannot say that the time was when Christ was not ; for he has always existed in time. The claim that Christ is a created being is sometimes predicated upon the expression in Rev. 3:14, but no such conclusion is necessary. It is elsewhere stated in the Scripture that Christ was " begotten " of God, and as such, was not a created being.” (*Ibid*)

This reasoning (which is much the same as Prescott's reasoning) tends towards, at least theoretically, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the trinity. This is the orthodox trinity doctrine that is also held by many protestant denominations. In this teaching, Christ is depicted as eternally (continually) begotten of God therefore there was never a time when He was not begotten. This makes Him 'a begotten Son' but also co-eternal with the Father.

C. P. Bollman replied to Prescott's remarks

“I think we should hold to the Bible definitions.” (*C. P. Bollman, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, page 20*)

Prescott replied

“We take the expression co-eternal, and that is better.” (*Prescott, Ibid*)

Bollman realised what Prescott was attempting to do so in order to protect the denominational Sonship belief he objected to the use of non-biblical terminology.

Bollman was obviously not very pleased concerning Prescott's claim that the church had been teaching (what Prescott had labelled) ‘Arianism’. This is because this terminology presents to people's minds a teaching that says Christ is a created being. Whilst Ellen White was alive, as

we have just seen for ourselves, this was definitely not the teaching of Seventh-day Adventists. During this time period they believed that Christ is God. This is what this begotten concept meant to them. Even Prescott (see above) said that Christ “was God in heaven”. This is even though he had said Christ was “twice born, -- once in eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and again here in the flesh”.

I have found that today, amongst Seventh-day Adventists, almost 100 years on from the Bible Conference, similar misconceptions (that Prescott was urging at the conference) are being promoted and taught. Those who believe that Christ is begotten of God (God's true Son) are made to look as though they are teaching that Christ is a created being (often termed 'Arianism'). This though, as we have already seen, is not true. Those who believe this begotten concept believe that Christ is God.

In the book 'The Trinity' Woodrow Whidden wrote

“Furthermore, other anti-Trinitarians also want to make essentially the same point – that Jesus is not merely a human being, but some sort of semi – or demigod who in some sense derived His divine nature from the Father somewhere in the dimly comprehended ages of eternity past. Such concepts about Jesus reflect the classic thinking of Arianism.” (*Woodrow Whidden, 'The Trinity', page 59, 'The full and eternal deity of Christ – part II', 2002*)

Whidden also said (after asking “what are we to make of the fact that God calls Christ “My Son,” “begotten” by God, and the “firstborn”?”)

“The anti-Trinitarians are quick to give these terms a very literal interpretation in the sense that Christ is a ‘truly’ “begotten, firstborn Son” generated by the Father. Thus they conclude that Christ is a “god” of lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father.” (*Ibid, Biblical Objections to the Trinity, page 101*)

As can be seen from the remarks at the conference, also from what we have seen was believed by early Seventh-day Adventists, this statement by Whidden is far from being true yet many such statements have been made. Here is one from Gerhard Pfandl

“Not only did Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*, believe until his death in 1903 that Christ had a beginning, but during the first decades of this century there were many who held on to the view that in some way Christ came forth from the Father, i.e., he had a beginning, and was therefore inferior to Him.” (*Gerhard Pfandl, 'The doctrine of the trinity among Adventists', 1999*)

Again as we have seen, the past begotten belief of Seventh-day Adventists did not make Christ inferior to God but God Himself in the person of the Son. Later, when we take a look at what our church said was the official faith of Seventh-day Adventists (this was in 1936), this is made very clear.

Woodrow Whidden also made this comment

“Ellen White's hearty support of Jones and Waggoner is unquestioned. The key issue, however, seems to be whether this strong support meant *total* support for all their theological positions. For instance, did she support their view that Christ was a created god (Arianism)?” (*Woodrow Whidden, Ellen White on Salvation, Chapter eleven, page 90, 'The Significance and Meaning of Minneapolis and 1888', 1995*)

Whidden had previously written (here he is referring to Ellen White)

“What is truly remarkable about her Trinitarian views is that she held them at a time when many of the leading nineteenth-century Adventist ministers had strong Arian influences.

Arianism is an ancient heresy which denies that Jesus has existed coeternally with God the Father. It teaches that Christ was created, and thus there was a time He did not exist." (*Ibid page 60*)

Here we see all sorts of very serious misconceptions. They are based upon the misunderstanding that Christ being begotten makes Him some sort of 'created god'. As we have seen from the above – and will see again later – the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God (begotten of God in eternity) teaches that Christ is none other than God Himself.

Whilst in this article we have not dealt with Ellen White's support of Waggoner and Jones at the 1888 General Conference session at Minneapolis, it is nonetheless a very well known fact of our denominational history that she did fully support them. Never though, as we have seen from the above, did Waggoner (or Jones) teach that Christ is "a created god" - something termed as "Arianism". If they had done this, then Ellen White would never have given them her support. Remember she said that what Seventh-day Adventists were teaching about Christ is the truth (see above).

Whidden's remarks totally misrepresent what was once believed and taught by past Seventh-day Adventists. We must be guarded against such unwarranted and deceptive misconceptions. We must study for ourselves and not depend upon what others try to persuade us to believe. We must remember - our salvation is at stake.

This same purported misconception by Prescott (at the 1919 Bible Conference) is why Bollman said it would be better to use only scriptural terms. The reply came back from Bollman

"My conception of the matter is this; that at some point in eternity the Father separated a portion of Himself to be the Son. As far as the substance is concerned, He is just as eternal as the Father, but did not have an eternal separate existence I do not think that approaches *any* nearer to Arianism than the other does to \_\_\_\_\_." (*C. P. Bollman, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, page 20*)

For some reason, the last word in the sentence is missing but as I am sure you will agree, it could easily have been 'trinitarianism'. This would seem an obvious choice. Prescott's response was

"Suppose you say, There is the point where He had His beginning, and that back of that there was a time when the Father went forth in His Son. When you say a point, you conceive of it as a definite place and bring it into finite terms." (*Prescott, Ibid, page 21*)

Notice Prescott had said, "...when **the Father** went forth in His Son". He is not arguing about the begotten concept. It is the time factor that was concerning him. He was bothered by the belief that *at a point in eternity* Christ was begotten of God. A little earlier he had said

"If we can conceive this idea: When God the Father went forth he went forth in the person of his Son. He himself is the way, and there is no other way back to God than by the way He manifested himself. He is the way." (*Ibid pages 15-16*)

Here again we see the begotten concept (the Father going forth in the person of the Son). It is that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. Here we are reminded of when Jesus said

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? John 14:9

Christ is not the Father but He is the exact representation of the Father (God's express image). In beholding Christ we behold the Father. It could be said that Christ is God's second self.

H. C. Lacey then gave a lengthy reply (based upon John 1:1) in support of the belief that Christ's existence is 'eternal'. He concluded

"I think we ought not to teach that there was a time when He produced another being who is called the son. I want to know. The son is called eternal with the Father, another person living with him, a second intelligence in that Deity: The relationship between them is expressed by our human words father and son. The one was first in rank, the second, second, and the third third." (*Lacey, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, pages 23-24*)

A few minutes later, the following dialogue took place between J. Anderson and Prescott. This was in response to a lengthy reply from Prescott supporting Lacey who had said the Son is co-eternal with the Father.

"J. Anderson: Did you state that he derived life from the Father?"

W. W. Prescott: No. Simply in the fact that equality with the Father is derived equality, but equality is the same.

J. Anderson: I thought you said that he derived life from the Father.

W. W. Prescott: No. I used the Scripture statement -- John 5:36: "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. But the two expressions referred to must apply equally both to the Father and the Son." (*Ibid, pages 27-28*)

As the stenographers recorded though, Prescott had used the word 'derived' (see above) but he was also putting across the idea that the Son was co-eternal with the Father. This is what Anderson was questioning. How do the two concepts go together?

There then followed a discussion regarding whether Christ was inferior to the Father (too much to include here). This came about because Prescott had commented that Jesus had said "the Father is greater than I" also "I and my Father are one". Prescott said both statements are true. The question then arose "How could Jesus being God, still be inferior to God". This led to the discussion.

Prescott denied using the word 'inferior' but concluded (after the discussion)

"One with the Father, one in authority, in power, in love, in mercy, and all the attributes -- equal with him and yet second in nature. I like the word second better than inferior - second in rank." (*Prescott, Ibid, page 30*)

P. Bollman replied

"Subject to the Father -- is not that the meaning of the word" (*Bollman Ibid*)

Prescott had the last say in the matter. He said

"We might speak of many things beyond our comprehension" (*Prescott, Ibid*)

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, a minister by the name of L. L. Caviness (Associate editor Review and Herald) joined in the discussions. For some reason he had arrived late. What he said is well worth noting. As we shall see, it brought about quite a 'knee-jerk' reaction from the General Conference President. The stenographers recorded Caviness as saying

"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".... "Personally, I have not been able to

accept the so called trinitarian doctrine...” (L. L. Caviness, July 6<sup>th</sup>, pages 56-57)

These delegates were the ‘elite’ of Seventh-day Adventism. None were higher in rank and authority. If they didn’t know what was believed and taught by Seventh-day Adventists then no one did. Note here that Caviness was Associate Editor of the Review and Herald. F. M. Wilcox was still its editor. It should go without saying that trinitarianism was not then an accepted belief within Seventh-day Adventism.

Caviness then said that from a personal perspective, he could not, without disbelieving what Jesus had said about Himself, accept the trinity doctrine. He explained

“Without contradicting what he [Jesus] said about himself, I cannot agree with the [trinity] doctrine. As I understand it, his statement of the deity rests upon his Sonship, and I do not think there is any one thing through the book of John that is more constantly referred to than the Sonship. I cannot believe that the two persons of the Godhead are equal, the Father and the Son, --that one is the Father and the other the Son, and that they might be just as well the other way around.

There is another statement he makes. He says that the Father, who has life in himself, gave the Son to have life in himself. When that took place, I do not know, but I believe it took place somewhere away back in eternity. I have to take Christ word for it, that at some time that was true, that the Father had life in himself, and gave the Son to have life in himself.

There is also that other statement, that he had received glory - from his Father. In praying he said it was his wish that the disciples might see the glory which he had with the Father, and which the Father had given him. It was not something he had all through eternity, but the Father had same time given to him the glory of God.

He is divine, but he is the divine Son. I cannot explain further than that, but I cannot believe the so-called Trinitarian doctrine of the three persons always existing.” (*Ibid*, page 57)

The words that Caviness spoke must have greatly disturbed Daniells. This is because immediately following his remarks, 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.” (*Stenographer’s report, Ibid, page 58*)

Why would Daniells do such a thing – and what did he say to the delegates that he did not want recorded? One is left to wonder but because the stenographers were not allowed to record his words, we shall never know. Neither do we know of the remarks (if any) that the delegates said in response. What Daniells (and anyone else) said therefore must be left to the imagination. Remember, Daniells was the General Conference President.

Note that the stenographers recorded that Daniells had said to the delegates that they were studying a subject that cannot be comprehended. This is very interesting because whenever they are challenged, this is what trinitarians usually say regarding their trinity doctrine.

Of this 'hiccup' in the day’s proceedings, Merlin Burt wrote the following

“L. L. Caviness, who came late to the discussion, expressed a fear that the church might be heading towards the Trinitarian doctrine.” (*Merlin Burt, History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity, Andrews Theological Society, page 133*)

Notice Burt says “**heading** towards the Trinitarian doctrine.” Again we see a church historian

denying your claim Richard that in 1913 the trinity doctrine was already a fundamental (cardinal) belief held by Seventh-day Adventists. This was now 1919 – and it was still not accepted. Remember, you had said

“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, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

As can be seen, this is not true. Certainly by 1919 the trinity doctrine had not been accepted. This was now 4 years after the death of Ellen White. Did you notice that Burt said that Caviness was expressing “**a fear** that the church might be heading towards the Trinitarian doctrine”? An interesting choice of words – wouldn't you agree?

When the proceedings of the conference continued, Prescott, by making reference to where Ellen White had said that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, addressed the delegates by saying

“I deal with it because it has brought great personal blessing to me, and has given me a view of the gospel that I never had before, and not because I am trying to establish a theory of Trinitarianism, Unitarianism or any other ism.” (*W. W. Prescott, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 6th, page 58*)

The stenographers reported Wilcox as saying (it doesn't say whether it was F. M. or M. C. Wilcox)

“We all believe the deity of Christ. It is not a question as to his deity or non-deity. In all this discussion there is no question regarding this.” (*Wilcox, Ibid, page 62*)

This is very true. That Christ was begotten of God did not deny His deity. His Sonship confirmed He was deity (God).

As the day's discussions concerning Christ came to a close, the General Conference President made this comment

“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, Ibid, page 67*)

W. T. Knox (General Conference Treasurer) replied

“Does the discussion, so far as it has gone, involve the question of trinitarianism or arianism? I can't see that it does.” (*W. T Knox, Ibid*)

Knox was right but Prescott's responded

“Some things have been said this which I think a word will just help the whole thing. I refer to this scripture; 'For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' I also referred to other scriptures of the same character in my studies. Perhaps some will remember, and brought out the point that Christ's attributes, what he was, was subordinate to the Father in this sense, that it was derived from the Father, but not that it was any less. The same glory, the same power, that the Father had. But you can't put those things to cold reasoning after our manner of dealing with such things, *and say* that the one who derived is just as great as the one from whom he derived it.” (*Prescott, Ibid, page 68*)

Again when referring to Christ, Prescott uses the word “derived”. Note well the final comment.

This is not trinitarian language. If you remember, Merlin Burt wrote in his history of the changeover to trinitarianism (please note emphasis supplied)

“The church gradually shifted during from the 1930s to 1950s to the ‘orthodox’ Christian view on the trinity and deity of Christ.... During the 1940s an ever increasing majority of the church was believing in **the eternal underived deity of Christ and the trinity**, yet there were some who held back even actively resisted the change.” (*Merlin Burt, ‘Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-trinitarianism in Adventist theology, 1888-1957 page iv ‘Preface’*)

John Isaac (Bible teacher, Clinton Theological Seminary), who had recently come to the end of 5 years as the President of the Oklahoma Conference, made this remark

“What are we Bible teachers going to do? We have heard ministers talk one way. Our students have had Bible teachers in one school spend days and days upon this question. Then they come to another school, and the teacher does not agree with that. We ought to have something definite so that we might give the answer. I think it can be done. We ought to have it clearly stated. Was Christ ever begotten, or not, or this thing, or that thing.” (*John Isaac, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 6th, page 68*)

This summarises the entire problem being dealt with at this conference – at least with respect to our denominational beliefs concerning the person of Christ. It also summarises what a main part of this Bible Conference was all about. At this time, this begotten belief concerning Christ was still the predominant belief within Seventh-day Adventism. This is how it had been since our beginnings. Daniells then had this to say

“Perhaps in another study we might have a study on the word begotten. I thought this morning when Brother Bollman spoke of it, if we could have five or ten minutes on that word, bring in the law of precise meaning in that interpretation, it would be well. But we will have to drop it here this time.” (*A. G. Daniells, Ibid*)

It appears that Daniells underestimated the issue but we must remember that it does appear that Prescott was not attempting to ‘get away’ from this begotten belief, only define it in terms that would make Christ co-eternal with the Father. Daniells possibly reasoned the same way.

Concerning the 'begotten question' at the conference, Gerhard Pfandl made this comment

“This discussion indicates that twenty years after Ellen White’s clear statement on the eternal divinity of Christ and his absolute equality with the Father, many in the church still held on to the idea that Christ, although divine, had a beginning.” (*Gerhard Pfandl, research paper ‘The Doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists June 1999 page 5*)

Previously he had said

“The word “begotten” was taken literally which meant that Christ at some point in eternity proceeded from the Father, and was therefore subordinate to Him” (*Ibid page 4*)

Then, referring to certain statements made by Ellen White found in the Desire of Ages etc., Pfandl wrote

“In spite of these clear statements from the pen of Ellen White, it took many years before this truth was accepted by the church at large. Not only did Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*, believe until his death in 1903 that Christ had a beginning, but during the first decades of this century there were many who held on to the view that in some way Christ came forth from the Father, i.e., he had a beginning, and was therefore inferior to Him.” (*Ibid*)



As we have seen, this subordination had nothing to do with Christ being inferior to the Father. Rather, it was because He was the Son of God. Christ's Sonship makes Him equal with God. It makes Him God Himself in the person of the Son. This is what those who accepted the begotten concept believed. Pfandl's remarks therefore are a misrepresentation of those who believe that Christ is truly God's Son.

#### Part (e) Present-day Seventh-day Adventist theology

Generally speaking, the doctrine of the trinity known to Seventh-day Adventists living at that time was not the trinity doctrine held today by our denomination although the one indivisible substance concept is exactly the same. If it wasn't then it would not be a trinity doctrine.

The version that these early Seventh-day Adventists would have been more acquainted with (the orthodox version) depicted Christ as being eternally (continually) begotten of God with the Holy Spirit eternally (continually) proceeding. In stark contrast to this, the version held by our denomination today says that all three persons of the Godhead are co-eternal but with none begotten and none proceeding. The three divine persons therefore are said to be only role-playing the parts of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (not really a Father or a Son or a Holy Spirit) - meaning that any one of them could have chosen to be the one to be 'made flesh'. Whichever one it was though would still be called 'the Son' (at least according to present-day Seventh-day Adventist theology). This is the alternative to the begotten concept.

This was borne out in a 2008 Sabbath School Lesson Study. The principal contributor was Roy Adams. The study said

“But imagine a situation in which the Being we have come to know as God the Father came to die for us, and the One we have come to know as Jesus stayed back in heaven (we are speaking in human terms to make a point).” (*Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Quarterly, page 19, Thursday April 10<sup>th</sup> 2008, 'The Mystery of His Deity'*)

Here we see the reasoning that the roles could have been switched. The lesson study concluded

“Nothing would have changed, except that we would have been calling Each by the name we now use for the Other. That is what equality in the Deity means.” (*Ibid*)

Not everyone would agree with this reasoning. Certainly the non-trinitarians would not agree with it. This is whether it was the early Seventh-day Adventist non-trinitarians or the present day non-trinitarians. Not even those at the 1919 Bible Conference would have agreed with it. This theology though is the same as Woodrow Whidden wrote in the book 'The Trinity'

“While the three divine persons are one, They have taken different roles or positions in the Godhead's work of creation, redemption, and the loving administration of the universe. The Father has assumed overall leadership, the Son has subordinated Himself to the leadership of the Father, and the Spirit is voluntarily subordinate to both the Father and the Son.” (*Woodrow Whidden, The Trinity, page 243, 'Why the Trinity is important – part 1'*)

This chapter in the book is called “Why the Trinity is important” but this role-playing idea actually destroys the individual personalities of the three persons of the Godhead. It also destroys the belief that the Father gave the Son as a sacrifice (John 3:16). In this trinity belief system, there is neither a Father nor a Son therefore no one really gives anyone. As I have already said, this current reasoning, as far as I can see, is the only alternative to the begotten concept. In His pre-existence, Christ was either a true Son or He was not. It cannot be both. Our present denominational theology says He is not a true Son – meaning that He is only role-playing the part of (pretending to be) a Son.

This is in total contradiction to what God has revealed through the spirit of prophecy for we are told

“In this important sermon to Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded before this noble Pharisee the whole plan of salvation, and his mission to the world. In none of his subsequent discourses did the Saviour explain so thoroughly, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the human heart, if it would inherit the kingdom of Heaven. He traced man’s salvation directly to the love of the Father, which led him to give his Son unto death that man might be saved.” (*Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy Volume 2, page 133*)

“O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that the infinite God would consent to the humiliation of his own dear Son!” (*Ellen G. White, Christian education, page 107 ‘The book of books’, 1893*)

“Said the angel, “Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no.” It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them. . . . I saw that it was impossible for God to change His law in order to save lost, perishing man; therefore He suffered His darling Son to die for man’s transgressions. . . .Satan again rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man’s fall, pull down the Son of God from His exalted position. He told his angels that when Jesus should take fallen man’s nature, he could overpower Him and hinder the accomplishment of the plan of salvation.” (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pages 127 and 152*)

“Satan is determined that men shall not see the love of God, which led him to give his only begotten Son to save the lost race; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.”(*Ellen White, Review and Herald, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1894, ‘Christ the center of the message’*)

Do you remember what Caviness said when he explained why he could not accept the trinity doctrine? He said (see above) that he could not believe that “one is the Father and the other the Son, and that they might be just as well the other way around”. This though has now become current Seventh-day Adventist theology. This is because Seventh-day Adventists are now advocates of trinitarianism.

#### Part (f) The president counsels the delegates

Returning our thoughts to the Bible conference, Daniells continued by counselling the delegates

“Now we will go on. Now let’s not get a bit nervous or scared.” (*A. G. Daniells, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 6th, page 68*)

So what was it that the delegates were being told not to get scared or nervous about? The President’s next words reveal the answer.

Realising that there was, over this trinity issue, a mixture of feelings amongst the delegates (remember here that at that time he was General Conference president) he said

“Don’t let the conservatives think that something is going to happen, and the progressives get alarmed for the fear that it won’t happen. Let’s keep up this good spirit. Bring out what you have. Let us get all the light we have, believe what we can, and let the rest go.” (*Ibid*)

From what Daniells said, we can see that in respect to what we, as a denomination, then taught about Christ, there were those who wanted change. At the same time though, there were others who obviously resisted the change. These believed that concerning Christ, what our church was then teaching (that He really is the Son of God) is the truth. It is evident that the

“progressives” were pushing for a trinitarian view of Christ, thus showing that at that time (1919), the trinity doctrine was definitely not a fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventists – which of course Richard shows your understanding of our history to be false. Yet you say (referring to the 1913 'divine trinity' statement by Wilcox)

“Now, it may well be that there were those who were opposed to this public denominational statement of cardinal beliefs, and who engage in fighting it, like at the 1919 Bible Conference.” (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, copy email to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

Richard:- This really is very imaginative. All the delegates at this conference were top-ranking officials. They all knew the trinity doctrine was not a fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventism. Anyone reading the dialogue that took place between them could see this to be true.

#### Part (g) What to do with the stenographer's records?

When the time came to make a decision concerning what to do with the stenographer's records there was a huge amount of debate over it. You can read the suggestions at the aforementioned link to the SDA Archives. There are 8 pages of them. Here are some of the suggestions. Remember, the discussions referred to here concerned the whole of the Bible conference and not just the discussions concerning Christ. Remember too that these things were said prior to the 'Bible and History Teachers Council' that followed the Bible Conference. The latter was when the writings of Ellen White were discussed. Daniells informed the delegates

“Many have come to me and asked if they could get these manuscripts, and some have expressed a willingness to pay for the reproduction. We have appointed a committee to bring us some counsel. You are the conference, what do you say? Do you realize the labor and the expense that will be involved in reproducing this matter?” (*A. G. Daniells, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C July 16<sup>th</sup>, page 40-g*)

It was F. M. Wilcox who made the first suggestion. He suggested that those who had presented the studies (like Prescott) should be allowed to write an outline of them, then have these duplicated and given to the “members of the conference”. Daniells responded

“Do you mean, have Brother Prescott take his studies and reproduce them as he wants to have them appear, and W. C. Wilcox the same, and Brother Lacey, and all the studies given? (*Ibid,*)

F. M. Wilcox (Editor of the Review and Herald) replied

“That would eliminate all discussion.” (*Ibid, F. M. Wilcox*)

It would also have eliminated all the record of the controversy.

R. A. Underwood (then president of the Central Union Conference) said

“I think if we publish this in pamphlet form it will be used against us, even though an explanation may be made.” (*R. A. Underwood, ibid, page 40-k*)

G. B. Thompson (North American Division Secretary) made this comment

“I think that the publishing of this matter would sow seeds of division and discord, and as far as I am concerned, I am not in favour of sending out anything.” (*G. B Thompson, ibid, page 40-m*)

A. G. Daniells

“I sometimes think it would be just as well to lock this manuscript up in a vault, and have anyone who wishes to do so come there for personal study and research.” (A. G. Daniells, page 40- n)

Elder Knox

“Now there will be enough feeling upon the part of our brethren who are not here, who feel that they have been excluded from this study, so we need not take any step in the future to intensify this feeling by withholding from them what they know will be put in some kind of a permanent form. I believe it would be better not to -print it at all, or else we ought to be willing to face criticism and send it out to them. The latter, I am sure you will all agree with me, would be a wrong step to take” (Knox, *Ibid*)

F. M. Wilcox made the final comment. He said

“I would like to make this further suggestion that there be gotten out a brochure containing the historical extracts alone, that have been read in this convention, and furnish this to anyone whom wishes it, but that all the discussion and the papers be not printed.” (F. M. Wilcox, *ibid*, page 40-o)

We can see now why the record of these discussions remained ‘undiscovered’ in the General Conference archives for 55 years yet in the Adventist Review (in 2010), Michael Campbell made this comment

“Although the transcripts were never published, there is no evidence to suggest that they were “hidden” or kept “secret” by church leaders. (Michael W. Campbell, *Adventist Review*, January 28th 2010, ‘Sifting Through the Past’)

Not everyone would see it this way, neither would they agree with what Campbell says here

“Most of the differences among the participants of the conference revolved around issues in Adventist eschatology, issues such as the identity of the “king of the north” in Daniel and problematic dates in the sequence of prophetic chronology.” (*Ibid*)

In his article, Michael Campbell made no mention of the discussions at the conference concerning the person of Christ. Why this was so I do not know. Obviously it was a crucial part of it. Hopefully though, most would disagree with Campbell when he said

“Most Adventists today would quickly yawn and lose interest if they were somehow transported back in time to the 1919 Bible Conference.” (*Ibid*)

If this were true I would say that this was a very serious indictment concerning present-day Seventh-day Adventists.

The month after the conference when reporting on it to the readers of the Review and Herald, A. G. Daniells made this comment

“The Bible and history teachers, the editors, and the members of the General Conference Committee, who came together from all parts of North America, rejoiced to find themselves in agreement on all the great fundamental truths of the Bible. It was the first time that all these men had compared their views and teachings in this way. Time and again there was expressed the deepest gratitude and rejoicing over the unity and harmony that prevailed regarding the vital, saving truths of the gospel.” (A. G. Daniells, *Review and Herald*, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1919, ‘The Bible Conference’)

Whether or not one agrees with Daniells' and Campbell's remarks, we can see from the above that the trinity doctrine, by 1919, had definitely not become one of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That much really is certain.

### **My observations of your observations**

Richard:— In the various emails you sent to me, you made the following remarks (all your emphasis)

“I have long time ago gone far enough with you to start addressing some of your errors. First of all was your erroneous portrayal of SDA history and that only after EGW died did the Trinity come into the Adventist Church. Your 13 years of study was not enough for you to find this historic documented fact that in 1913 the denomination had as their No. 1 Fundamental Belief- “cardinal feature of faith” THE DIVINE TRINITY!” (*Email, Pastor Richard Mendoza to Terry Hill, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

“You have falsified information; such as the first time the word 'trinity' was included in our published statements of belief **being 1931** when it was actually **1913**.” (*Ibid*)”

“The **Review & Herald** was the official VOICE of the Church and WHAT Seventh-day Adventists Believed . . . That's why the article by Wilcox, though written "solely" by him . . . . was allowed to be published as stating WHAT Seventh-day Adventists indeed believed!” (*Ibid*)

“The real question is not how many men held on to one pen in writing the statement of faith in 1913 BUT did the WHOLE denomination believe in the truth of what was written? In Wilcox's own words he stated that these were "**the cardinal features of the faith**" as "**HELD!**" by "**THIS denomination**", and that it was **the whole church organization**, including EGW, that are included in saying "**Seventh-day Adventists believe . . . 1. In the divine Trinity.**" This was NOT "solely" one man's belief! **It was that of an entire denomination known as Seventh-day Adventists!**

What does it mean "as HELD by this denomination?" It means that these are the established doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Now you are in real serious trouble with your false fabricated history.” (*Ibid*)

“That the No. 1 Fundamental Belief (“cardinal feature of faith”) was the belief “In the divine Trinity.” The Trinity (“Divine Trinity”) **was a Fundamental Belief in 1913!** long before the 1950's! or 1931! another falsification of Terry Hill.” (*Copy email, Mendoza to Terry Hill, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

“THE TRUTH IS: **That by 1913 the Doctrine of The Divine Trinity had become ESTABLISHED as the No. 1 Cardinal Feature of Faith HELD by THIS Denomination of Seventh-day Adventists!**

Terry Hill work is not “spot on” for he said that the Trinity did not come into the SDA Church till AFTER EGW died and not until the 1950s. I can't understand how it is that you do not see his error.” (*Ibid*)

There were many more statements such as this but enough is quoted here to see the point you are making. This is you believe that (a) by 1913, the trinity doctrine had become a fundamental belief (the No. 1 cardinal belief) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and (b) my presentation of our denominational history, using your words, is a “false fabricated history”. This is based upon the reasoning that in 1913 in the Review and Herald, its editor F. M. Wilcox wrote

“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*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1913, ‘The message for Today’)

I have explained previously that as far as this statement goes, I believe that it was an acceptable summation (although maybe ambiguously stated) of what was then believed by Seventh-day Adventists (that there are three persons of the Godhead) but I do not go along with your understanding of it - meaning that you believe that the trinity doctrine was then (in 1913) a teaching of Seventh-day Adventism.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015 you sent me a copy of an email you sent to a friend of mine. You wrote

“I missed sending you a copy of this important document Terry. Please take it seriously.”(Pastor Richard Mendoza, copy email to Terry Hill 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015)

In this email you made this statement

“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. . . .”  
(*Ibid*)

This really is an extremely serious allegation. As I have said to you previously, the word “willfully” carries with it the very strong implication that I am deliberately and knowingly leading people astray.

Richard: Here is a question for you. If it is true as you say, “***That by 1913 the Doctrine of The Divine Trinity had become ESTABLISHED as the No. 1 Cardinal Feature of Faith HELD by THIS Denomination of Seventh-day Adventists!***”, then why, during this time period, can no articles be found in our periodicals promoting this teaching? Why are there only articles and statements condemning it? If by 1913 the trinity doctrine was ***already*** a fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventists (as you say) then surely there should be found scores of articles promoting it. Wouldn't you agree?

If you cannot see what I mean then allow me to explain.

Take for example the seventh day Sabbath. There was – and still is - in our various publications, article after article promoting and supporting it. This is because it was – and still is - a fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventism. If by 1913 the trinity doctrine had become our No. 1 cardinal belief (as you say), would it not have had the same coverage? Would not there be found scores of articles promoting it? What if no articles could be found in our periodicals promoting the seventh-day Sabbath? What conclusions would be drawn?

I believe that what you have done is to misunderstand what Wilcox was saying. You have read far too much into it.

There is always the question too of the 1919 Bible conference. Much of what was said there (as we have just seen) would make no sense if by that time the trinity doctrine had been the No. 1 cardinal belief of our church for many years.

I believe too you have misunderstood a statement made by Jerry Moon (Associate Professor of Church History, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University). In support

of your belief (that the Wilcox statement of 1913 shows that the trinity doctrine was then a cardinal doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) you quoted him in an email to me (dated October 2015) saying “This is the truth”.

So what had Jerry Moon written? He had said (Moon is referring here to statements from the pen of Ellen White)

“These affirmations of belief in one God in three persons were sufficiently influential that by 1913, during her lifetime, was published the first explicitly trinitarian belief statement among Seventh-day Adventists.” (Jerry Moon, *The Quest for a Biblical Trinity: Ellen White’s “Heavenly Trio” Compared to the Traditional Doctrine*)

In one respect I quite agree. This is inasmuch there were no such statements previously (Wilcox's was **the first**). How then can it be said (as you claim) that by 1913 when Wilcox made his ‘divine trinity’ statement, the trinity doctrine was **already** an established fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventists? As I said before, if this had been the case, then prior to 1913 there would have been an abundance of pro-trinitarian statements and articles. Jerry Moon was not agreeing with your conclusion Richard. He was disagreeing with it. In fact in 2003 he explained (this was with reference to the 1946 General Conference session where for the first time in our history a statement of beliefs with the word trinity was voted in)

“This [the vote at the 1946 General Conference session] marked the first official endorsement of a trinitarian view by the church, although “the last of the well known expositors “continued to “uphold the ‘old’ view” until his death in 1968.” (Jerry Moon, *The Adventist Trinity Debate, ‘Andrews University Seminary Studies, part 1, Historical Overview’, 2003*)

Notice that Jerry Moon did not say trinity doctrine. He said “trinitarian view”. This is two entirely different things. The non-trinitarian person that Moon refers to is W. R. French. We spoke of him earlier. Notice too that Moon speaks of the “the ‘old’ view””. This again is the admittance that over the years we have changed our beliefs. This was with reference to our beliefs concerning Christ. In part 2 Moon says

“Part 1 of this study noted that the 1946 General Conference session was the first to officially endorse belief in the Trinity, just 100 years after James White's strong rejection of that idea in the 1846 Day-Star. (*Ibid, part 2*)

It was not the trinity doctrine that was voted in at the 1946 General Conference session but a statement of beliefs that included the word 'trinity'. Again this is two different things. We shall return to this statement of beliefs in the next section. Look at it this way Richard. If you are correct (meaning that in 1913 the trinity doctrine was our No. 1 cardinal belief), then why was it not voted in until many decades afterwards?

Allow me to come at this from a different angle.

You and I - also the rest of the Seventh-day Adventists who have a reasonable knowledge of our denominational history - know that our church was once very much against the trinity doctrine. We have even seen this said in the early 1900's by the various editors of the British Present Truth. This means that if you are correct, meaning that by 1913 the trinity doctrine “**had become ESTABLISHED as the No. 1 Cardinal Feature” of our church**, not only would this have been an extremely (and seemingly impossible) short space of time to for the entire denomination to change from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism but it would also have necessitated an abundance of articles, in our denominational publications, explaining and supporting this changeover. Where are these articles? The answer is they do not exist. Now what does that tell you?

As Merlin Burt wrote

“From 1900 to the 1930s, opinion on the eternal self-existent deity of Christ remained split in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The use of the word “Trinity” in describing God continued to be avoided in print except for rare exceptions” (*Merlin Burt, History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity, Andrews Theological Society, page 134*)

I quite agree with Burt. The evidence is there for all to see (or not to see – whichever way you look at it). In our publications from the 1900’s to the 1930’s, the use of the word ‘trinity’ was very rare indeed. If you are not sure this is true, then do as I did. Search through the SDA archives.

As I have said Richard, saying there are three persons of the Godhead, or using the word ‘trinity’ (as a covering word for the three) does not constitute a trinity doctrine. You must differentiate between these two concepts. This is where you are getting confused. It’s like when you said to me

**“Now, let’s stop beating around the bush and come right down to where the real issue are;**

**The TERM “Godhead” IS *the equivalent* of “Trinity” in 2015 Adventism.”** (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

You may like to think that you can persuade people to believe this sort of thing Richard but you would be leading them to confuse terminologies. This is something that you, as a Seventh-day Adventist minister, should not be doing. It is leading people astray in their thinking. In Scripture, the word ‘Godhead’ is totally devoid of anything that could be interpreted as tri-unity or three-in-one. The word is a variant (albeit archaic) of the old-English word ‘Godhood’, meaning that which comes under the umbrella of divinity (the condition/quality of being God). It’s like the word ‘manhood’. Again it is archaic but it means that which comes under the umbrella of humanity (the condition/quality of being human).

You confirmed your confusion when you said to me in one email

**“So, if you still believe your 1975 Baptismal Vows, which clearly state you believe in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Persons of the 1 Godhead THEN YOU ARE a “Trinitarian” by definition, though you refuse to use the term “*Trinity*” and are now vowed to *an absolute rejection* of The Trinity Doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Denomination.”** (*Email, Pastor Richard Mendoza to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

No Richard, I can assure you I am definitely not a trinitarian. I do not believe that the one God consists of three inseparable divine persons in one indivisible substance as purported by the trinity doctrine – and certainly I do not believe a teaching that says the three divine persons are only role-playing the parts of (pretending to be) the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – which as you know is the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine. If many Seventh-day Adventists today (who call themselves ‘trinitarian’) understood what the trinity doctrine was all about, especially the Seventh-day Adventist version of it, it is more than likely they too would stop calling themselves trinitarian.

Those like myself who believe there are three persons of the Godhead do not necessarily believe the trinity doctrine. We shall see this later with Ellen White and her beliefs.

### **The 1931 statement of faith and its background**

In our publications during the 1920's there continued to be many more statements that spoke of Christ as the only-begotten of the Father. I will share some of them with you here. Before I do this though there is one article I would bring to your attention. It was published in the 'Signs' just previous to the 1919 Bible Conference taking place. The article was called “Ours is a Triune God”. Its author was the missionary George Francis Enoch. In one place he wrote (this was under the sub-heading of “One God, but three persons”)



“But this one God, in His relations to the external universe, has revealed Himself as three distinct Persons, and as such comes within the range of human knowledge.” (George F Enoch, *Signs of the Times*, April 15<sup>th</sup> 1919, ‘Ours is a Triune God’)

Later he said this of the Father

“In the trinity of Persons in the Godhead, God the Father, the first Person, is supreme. “My Father is greater than I.” John 14:28. Of Himself, the Father is unfathomable to His creatures. The Bible reveals Him as the source of all life, the foundation of all being, the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.” (*Ibid*)

We can see here the ‘norm’ in Seventh-day Adventism. It was that the Father is the greatest – the source of all life. George Enoch said of the Son

“The second Person is God the Son, the eternal stream flowing from this eternal fountain. Of Him revelation says, “Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,” or “from the days of eternity.” Micah 5:2. Our finite minds cannot conceive of eternity. So far as we are concerned, these scriptures do not warrant our fixing any time when God the Son had a beginning. He is coeternal with the Father. He is the eternal stream flowing from that eternal source of all life and being, the Father. However, the Bible does fix an order of existence which is not chronological. “For to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.” (*Ibid*)

What we see here is the belief that the Father is supreme – the source of all life – and Christ “the eternal stream” flowing from “the Father”. Enoch says though, because we cannot conceive eternity, that Christ is “coeternal with the Father”. This was much the same as Prescott’s reasoning at the Bible Conference. Notice Enoch concludes that the Bible does, as he puts it, “fix an order of existence which is not chronological”. This makes the Father ‘the first’.

The year following the 1919 Bible Conference, W. W. Prescott (who led out in the presentations at the conference concerning the person of Christ) compiled a book called ‘The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries’. The title speaks for itself. The book itself reveals that since the conference, the author had not changed his theology. On page 20 we find these words

“We may conceive the Father existing from eternity and possessing infinite powers, simply because he wills so to exist, without any cause external to himself, eternal and infinite and underived; and of the Son existing with the Father from eternity, and possessing to the full the Father’s infinite powers, **but these received from the Father, existing because the Father wills him so to exist, eternal and infinite and derived. This conception will account for the entire language of the New Testament about the Son of God.**” (W. W. Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries*, page 20, 1920)

This is a blend of Christ begotten from the Father and also co-eternal with the Father. Prescott continued

“The Son is equal to the Father in everything except that which is conveyed by the terms Father and Son. He is equal to the Father in that he shares to the full the Father’s existence from eternity and his infinite power and wisdom and love. **But inasmuch as the Father possesses these divine attributes from himself alone, whereas the Son possesses them as derived from the Father, in this real sense and in this sense only, the Father is greater than the Son.**”

Evidently in an eternal Father and an eternal Son the ideas of older and younger can have no place. As we lift up the conception of son ship out of time into eternity, these elements of it, ever present in human fathers and sons, at once disappear. When they fall away, does any conception essential to our idea of son ship remain? **Yes; there still remains the chief idea, viz., personal existence and powers derived from another person.** And this idea is plainly embodied in John 5:26, and in other express assertions from the lips of Christ describing his own relation to God.” (*Ibid*)

Prescott is putting across the idea, as he did at the 1919 Bible Conference, that when we talk in terms of eternity, time as know it ceases to be (that we cannot reason in terms of time) – at least this is the way I understand what he is saying. Note very importantly Richard that Prescott's book was intended for teaching in our colleges and seminaries. This was in 1920. This was in keeping with Johnson's book on 'Bible Doctrines' that he compiled for his students (see above). What is all of this telling us?

The same year, W. H. Branson, in an article in the Signs of the Times (putting it a little bit differently than Prescott) wrote the following

**“Far back somewhere in the eternity of the past, before any of the worlds and suns now comprising the vast universe were created, before angels or men were brought into being, God, who had existed from all eternity, brought forth a Son.** This Son was **“the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.”** Colossians 1: 15. Paul declares that He was **“the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.”** Hebrews 1: 3.” (*W. H. Branson, Signs of the Times, October 12<sup>th</sup> 1920, 'Jesus Christ - Creator and Lawgiver*)

In 1920, after being President of the Southeastern Union Conference for 5 years, Branson became President of the African Division. He later became General Conference Vice-President (1930), President of the China Division (1946), as well as holding other senior offices until he became General Conference President (1950). He obviously knew exactly what Seventh-day Adventists believed – and he taught it.

He further reasoned in his 'Signs' article

**“God bestowed upon His Son all the glory He Himself had, and made Him a coworker with Him in all His subsequent acts. He was to be one with the Father, exercising the same power, bearing the same titles, and sharing equally in the glory that should come to the Father through the things He should create.”** (*Ibid*)

A few more Sonship statements are as follows. Note some are from our Sabbath School Quarterly

**“The greatness of His position is proportionate to the excellency of the name of Son. This name He has not obtained by favor nor attained by effort, but inherited by indefeasible right. . . . He is Son.”** (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1921, Our Personal Saviour Jesus Christ, page 17-18, lesson 6 for February 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, 'The Son of God'*)

**“Here the fact is again emphasized that the priesthood of Christ is based upon, and grows out of, His unique relation to God as the only begotten Son, arising from His inherent nature rather than from a merely arbitrary choice.”** (*SS Lesson Quarterly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 1921, lesson 7 for May 14<sup>th</sup> 1921, 'Christ Our Priest — After the Work of Melchizedek'*)

**“Christianity has been built upon the fundamental belief that Jesus Christ was indeed the only begotten Son of God. On this foundation stone has been erected the beautiful structure of the Christian plan of salvation.”** (*A. S. Maxwell, The Canadian Watchman, April 1925, 'Certainties of the gospel'*)

This Sonship belief, as the 1930's approached, was still taught within Seventh-day Adventism. In fact in 1930, in a Sabbath School lesson it said

“Jesus was the Son of God before He was born of the Virgin Mary. He was the only-begotten Son of God from the days of eternity.” (*SS Lesson Study, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1930, The Epistle to the Romans, page 5, lesson 1 for October 4, 1930 ‘Servants of the Son’*)

Two years later (1932) in the 'Question Corner' of the Signs of the Times, a reader (H. G. Thompson) asked the following very important question. It was put under the heading “THE ORIGIN OF CHRIST”. This speaks for itself. The reader asked

“Was Christ born of God in heaven before He was born of the Virgin Mary on earth? . . .” (*Signs of the Times, April 9th 1932, The “Signs” Question Corner, ‘The Origin of Christ’*)

In answering this question, William G. Wirth (a religion teacher at Pacific Union College) began by saying

“The whole question of the definite origin of our Lord before He came to this earth is shrouded in the inscrutable mind, will, and purpose of God. All attempts to answer this are utterly profitless, and but the vain play and byplay of human speculation. For us to understand this divine problem would be to make us as God Himself.” (*Ibid, William G. Wirth*)

This is very true. Interesting is that Wirth explained

“Human thought can never hope to solve the *homoiousianism* of Arius or the *homoousianism* of Athanasius; can never determine fully whether the Son is "like" the Father or whether He is the "same" as the Father.” (*Ibid*)

Wirth was referring here to the original 4<sup>th</sup> century debate at Nicaea – which eventually led to the formulating of the very first trinity doctrine (too much to go into here). Wirth's remarks are definitely not trinitarian. Trinitarianism says that the Father and the Son are definitely of the one and same indivisible substance (“*homoousianism*”). That is the entire point of this teaching.

After a detailed reply and saying that Christ was not part of creation, Wirth also explained (concerning Colossians 1:15)

“Moffatt makes the expression, "the first-born of all creation," plainer by translating the Greek: "born first before all the creation;" and with this Goodspeed is in substantial agreement. The word "born" is used because, in contrasting the creation with His creation, it postulates the nature of the Lord's origin. He was not created as were creatures, but was born out of God as God; and so is of the same nature as the Father. Just as a human son is born human by nature because his father is human so the divine Son of God is by nature "born" God (in what way we must not attempt to explain) because His Father is God.” (*Ibid*)

Two years later in the ‘Eastern Tidings’ (Southern Asia Division) of June 1<sup>st</sup> 1934, there was an editorial called ‘This day have I begotten Thee’. This was study No.5 in the book of Hebrews. After quoting Hebrews 1:5-6 the author commented

“In our text in Hebrews we find revealed our Lord's unique relation to God, the Father, **and also His unique mode of derivation from the Father**. In another place Paul calls Jesus, "His own Son (Rom. 8: 8)," thus separating Him from all the created intelligences by an infinite gulf. The highest archangel in glory is but a created intelligence; the brightest of the angels who are the closest to God are but the creatures of His hand. Jesus Christ alone occupies the throne of the universe, reigning conjointly with the

Father, and receives the adoration and worship of the celestial throng. Rev. 5:6-14. There is light for us in the description here given **of the mode of the Son's derivation.**" (G. F. Enoch, *Eastern Tidings*, June 1<sup>st</sup> 1934, 'This day have I begotten Thee')

We noted Enoch's beliefs on pages 48-49. Interestingly he also said

"There is no need to search for an analogy to the "mother" in the divine revelation of the pre-existence of the Son of God, as the Moslem erroneously argues. Every human son derives his life from his father". (*Ibid*)

A little later he introduces the thought that the generation of the Son is eternal. Referring to the text "This day have I begotten thee", Enoch makes this comment

"The expression "this day" has one meaning when used in connection with things of time, and quite another when used in connection with eternity. Dean Alford quotes the consensus of opinion of orthodox Christians as endorsing the view that the expression "this day have I begotten Thee" "refers to the eternal generation of the Son," and regards it as the "nunc stans" as it was called by the early Christian expositors. The church of Christ as a whole has stood stiffly through the centuries for the eternity of the Son of God.

But the Son is subordinate to the Father. He has "life in Himself ," but this attribute is the gift of the Father. Jesus Himself said, "The Father is greater than I. ... **This subordination is directly traced to the derivation of His life from the Father....**He who is absolute deity, who was the Son of God by eternal generation, became flesh as the Son of man and was designated to be the Son of God by the resurrection." (*Ibid*)

Three times the editor of the 'Eastern Tidings' refers to the "derivation" of the Son from the Father. This was the same as was said so many years earlier by W. W. Prescott (see above). The editor did not mean that the Son is a lesser divine being than God the Father but rather that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son. This again was the same as was said by Prescott and others who held the begotten belief.

In the Australian 'Signs of the Times' in 1935, there was an article written by Raymond Bullas. In this article he expressed the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. He wrote

"What the apostles taught and wrote were the words which Christ had given them. Let us examine the apostolic teaching of the "deity of Christ" in this connection. *Hand in hand with the "deity of Jesus" goes*, (1) His equality with the Father; (2) His pre-existence; (3) His Creatorship; (4) His Sonship." (*Raymond Bullas, Australian Signs of the Times, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1935, 'The Authority of Apostolic Teaching - Truth or tradition?'*)

Under the sub-heading of "His Sonship" Bullas wrote

"The question of His Sonship assumes a very important place in the mind and thoughts of Jesus. In His day, as well as in ours, there were many who questioned, derided, and rejected His claims on this point, and many times He was called to answer His critics and defend His claims. When He asked the blind man whom He had healed if he believed on the Son of God, and the blind man asked who that one was, Jesus said: "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." See John 9:33-37

**As the Son of God He claimed equality with the Father.** See John 10: 29, 30. On the basis of His equality and His Sonship He claimed to have the power to forgive sins against God, raise the dead, cast out devils, pass condemnation on sinners, and to control nature itself. . .His Sonship rested upon a different basis from ours. We are "sons of God," being the product of His creation and redemption. He was neither created nor redeemed, but His Sonship comes by virtue of His derived power and attributes. This thought has been well expressed by another in the following quotation:— "*(Ibid)*

Note again the reference to Christ's "derived power and attributes", also that this makes Him a true (literal) Son. The quotation that Bullas referred to is from Prescott's book 'The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries'. This book had been published in 1920. We quoted from it on page 49 and 50 of this document. It was obviously still in good use in 1935.

It would be too much to copy here all that Bullas quoted but the following was rather significant. It was said

"The Son is equal to the Father in everything except that which is conveyed by the terms Father and Son. He is equal to the Father in that he shares to the full the Father's existence from eternity and his infinite power and wisdom and love. **But inasmuch as the Father possesses these divine attributes from himself alone, whereas the Son possesses them as derived from the Father, in this real sense and in this sense only, the Father is greater than the Son.**" (Ibid)

During the 1920's and 1930's there can be found many more statements that speak of the Sonship (begotten) belief but enough has been cited to show that it was a continuing belief of Seventh-day Adventists. This is whether it depicted this begetting as from a point in eternity or from everlasting. These statements were made in our leading publications including in our Sabbath School lesson quarterlies. They came from those in leadership roles and positions of authority. Notice that Wirth said the above in 1932. This was in answer to a reader's question concerning Christ (was He born in Heaven before He came to earth?).

Referring to the year previous (meaning 1931), LeRoy Froom, in his book 'Movement of Destiny', made this observation

"We now come to another in the series of vital turning points in Adventist history. Or perhaps it might more accurately be called a point of concurrence—one that marked the beginning of a new epoch, a drawing together in a united front. After 87 years of conflicting viewpoints over the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the Personality of the Holy Spirit, a unified position that honored Bible truth—and was in accord with the Spirit of Prophecy - came to be accepted by both sides." (LeRoy Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, page 409, 1931 *Opens New Epoch of Unity and Advance—No. 1*)

Note here what Froom "called a point of concurrence" that "came to be accepted by **both sides**". This was now in the 1930's. What we see here is a reference to the dispute concerning Christ that we noted took place between the delegates of the 1919 Bible Conference. Froom was referring here also to something that he says was acceptable to "both sides". This dispute therefore was ongoing.

I do not believe though as Froom claimed, that from the beginning there was an ongoing dispute concerning Christ's deity etc. In the main, this only began after Ellen White had died. Throughout the time period of Ellen White's ministry there had been harmony. As we noted in the report of the 1919 Bible Conference, even then it was said that regardless of the differences in opinion between the delegates, Christ's deity was never in question (see above).

We have seen that what was taught in our major publications, including our Sabbath School lesson studies, was that in eternity Christ was begotten of God. This was still the same in the 1930's. It does not appear therefore that the laity had any problem with this belief. Was the 'problem' therefore mainly confined to certain of our leadership? More than likely!

Froom reports that Harvey Edson Rogers (General Conference Statistician) urged in various places that a statement of beliefs be prepared for inclusion in our Yearbook. This is because from the time of Ellen White's death (1915) through to then (1930), no list of beliefs had been published. The last time had been in the 1914 edition. Previous to that they had been included in the 1889 and 1905 editions, also the editions from 1907-1913. We noted these beliefs

previously so we will not do so again here.

This urging by Rogers apparently led to the same request being presented by the African Division. To accommodate this, the General Conference committee voted that the General Conference president (C. H. Watson) select four men to do the work. The president chose himself, M. E. Kern, E. R. Palmer and F. M. Wilcox. The General Conference Committee minutes state

“STATEMENT OF OUR FAITH FOR YEAR BOOK:

A request was presented from the African Division that a statement of what Seventh-day Adventists believe should be printed in the Year Book, since they feel that such a statement would help government officials and others to a better understanding of our work.

VOTED, That the chair appoint a committee of which he shall be a member, to prepare such a statement for publication in the Year Book.

Named: H. E. Kern, F. M. Wilcox, E. R. Palmer, C. H. Watson.” (*General Conference Committee minutes, December 29<sup>th</sup> 1930, page 195*)

As Froom duly noted

“It was a distinguished committee—one that surely knew what Adventists believe.” (*LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, 1931 Opens New Epoch of Unity and Advance—No. 1, page 413*)

It was Wilcox though who appears to have written the list of beliefs. Froom explained

“As no one else seemed willing to take the lead in formulating a statement, Wilcox—as a writer and editor—wrote up for consideration of the committee a suggested summary of “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.” It was in the form of a 22-point statement.” (*Ibid*)

Jerry Moon explained (referring to the statement that was eventually formulated)

“The third statement of “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” was prepared under the direction of a committee, but it was actually written by F. M. Wilcox, editor of the Review and Herald. Fifteen years later, in 1946, it became the first such statement to be officially endorsed by a General Conference session.” (*Jerry Moon, The Adventist Trinity Debate, Andrews University Seminary Studies, part 1, Historical Overview, 2003*)

Notice particularly Moon's last sentence. This “first such statement” is one that included the word 'trinity'. This was first officially voted in at the 1946 General Conference Session.

When this 1931 statement was finalised (according to Froom), Wilcox asked his Associate Editor (Francis D. Nichol) what he thought of it. Froom again explains

“After carefully reading Wilcox's “Fundamental Beliefs” statement, Nichol expressed appreciation and approval of its scope and balance. He noted that it was conservatively stated—doubtless framed that way in the hope that it might be acceptable to those who had held divergent views, especially over the Godhead. Yes, that was true, Wilcox assented.” (*LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, 1931 Opens New Epoch of Unity and Advance—No. 1, page 414*)

Let's consider what is being said here.

Froom, if he is to be believed, said that Wilcox had framed this statement of beliefs in order to accommodate the “[divergent views](#)” that at that time (1930’s) pervaded Seventh-day Adventism. He said it had been “[conservatively stated](#)”. This was particularly in respect of Christ and the Godhead. This means that Wilcox framed it to suit both camps – namely those who believed that at a point in eternity, Christ was begotten of God and those who believed Christ to be co-eternal with the Father. As I have said, it is more than likely that this 'difference' in beliefs was primarily amongst some of our leadership rather than anyone else.

In this 'newly written' statement of beliefs, the belief concerning the Godhead reads as follows

“2. 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.

3. That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father...” (*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1931, page 377*)

As previously noted, the word ‘Godhead’ does not contain the idea of ‘tri-unity’ or ‘threeness’. This is why the words ‘Godhead’ and ‘trinity’ are not compatible. They are a mismatch. Those who try to make it appear that both these words serve the same function are causing unnecessary confusion. As Froom relates though, this statement was carefully worded to satisfy both camps of beliefs. It appears therefore that this is the reason why the belief said “[the Godhead, or Trinity](#)” (even though these two words do not mean the same thing).

This statement of beliefs would certainly have accommodated those who still believed that at a point in eternity, Christ was begotten of God (a true Son). Note that this ‘new’ statement (as it did in the previous Yearbooks) said that Christ is “[the Son of the Eternal Father](#)” but does not say that the Son is eternal. Only the Father is referred to as eternal. It did though refer to the Holy Spirit as a person. This really was a very cleverly worded set of beliefs.

Froom went on to report

“APPROVAL BY COMMITTEE NOT REQUIRED.—Elder Wilcox felt that he had drawn up a balanced summarizing statement. With full knowledge and approval of the committee of four, he passed it over to Rogers, who placed it in the 1931 *Yearbook* (pp. 377-380).... The authorizing action did not call for submission to any other committee for approval.” .” (*LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, page 409, 1931 Opens New Epoch of Unity and Advance—No. 1, page 414*)

Note Froom’s remarks about this statement being “a **balanced** summarizing statement”. He also says neither the church nor any other authoritative body of people such as the General Conference Committee had voted it in. He says that with the approval of ‘the four’, Rogers just inserted it into our Yearbook. Burt takes this view

“1931 Statement of Faith. Throughout their history, Adventists have refused to adopt any creed but the Bible. They have realized that an understanding of truth is never complete. At various times, though, summary statements of faith have been published. But until the 1946 General Conference session, **these were never intended to be the official position of the church.**” (*Merlin Burt, History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity, Andrews Theological Society, page 135*)

Note well the latter sentence. The same can be said for the 'divine trinity' statement made by Wilcox in 1913. That too, like the 1931 statement, was “[never intended to be the official position of the church](#)”.

Burt went on to say that “Curiously, doctrinal summaries were consistently avoided during the first decades of the twentieth century”. He also related that Froom had said that because of the divergent views concerning Christ’s pre-existence, “no Statement of Faith or Fundamental Belief had appeared in the annual *Yearbook*.” This though was only from 1915 (the year Ellen White died). Up to then, our beliefs had been in our Yearbook although not every year (see above). It was after Ellen White had died that this dispute came to the surface. Burt then commented concerning the beliefs not being in our Yearbook

“This changed in 1931, when an “unofficial” statement of Fundamental Beliefs” was included in the *Adventist [sic] Year Book*. F. M. Wilcox was the person principally responsible for the statement.” (*Ibid*)

Burt refers to the 1931 statement of beliefs as “unofficial” - which was very true. If this particular statement of faith was unofficial then what does this say about the 1913 statement also made by Wilcox? At least the General Conference Committee originally ordained the 1931 statement to exist. No such authority can be found for the 1913 statement. Wilcox wrote this on his own authority as the editor of the *Review and Herald*. He seemed unyielding in his attempts to get the word 'trinity' inserted into our fundamental beliefs. He was one who was pushing for a trinitarian view of the Godhead.

Jerry Moon said of this event

“Lest anyone think that Adventists intended to make a creed, "no formal or official approval" was sought for the statement. Fifteen years later, when the statement had gained general acceptance, the General Conference session of 1946 made it official, voting that " no revision of this Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, as it now appears in the [*Church*] *Manual*, shall be made at any time except at a General Conference session." This marked the first official endorsement of a trinitarian view by the church, although "the last of the well known expositors "continued to "uphold the 'old' view" until his death in 1968. (*Jerry Moon, The Adventist Trinity Debate, part 1, 2003*)

I believe it reasonably obvious to anyone at this point that the trinity doctrine was not then, in 1931, the No. 1 cardinal belief of Seventh-day Adventists. If it had been then there would have been no such fuss as what was going on here in 'secretly' formulating this so called fundamental belief. This statement may have included the word 'trinity' but it was certainly not a trinity doctrine.

Interestingly (this is especially in the light of your claims Richard that by 1913, the trinity doctrine was a fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventists) Froom related

“WOULD PREVIOUSLY HAVE BEEN PROTESTED.—It would have been well-nigh impossible for a statement of "Fundamental Beliefs," such as was drafted by Wilcox in 1931—and published that year and appearing thereafter annually in the *SDA Yearbook*, and thenceforth in the official *Church Manual*—to have been issued a score of years, or even a decade prior to 1931, without strong protest by some.” .” (*LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, page 409, 1931 Opens New Epoch of Unity and Advance—No. 1, page 418*)

According to Froom, even if this 1931 statement of belief had been published in the early 1920's there would have been strong protests. This would have been 8 years **after** the Wilcox statement.

So why would there have been protests? It could not have been because Christ was described in these beliefs as the Son of the eternal Father, nor could it have been because the Father was described as eternal. These beliefs had been the long-time standard belief in Seventh-day Adventism. I cannot imagine either that there would have been too much protest because the Holy Spirit was described as a 'person'. Ellen White had said the same a number of times. I can



only imagine the protest would have been because of the use of the word 'trinity' (in our stated fundamental beliefs) and the way the belief was worded. When read superficially, this statement could be interpreted as saying that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had accepted the trinity doctrine (like you are trying to get people to believe Richard) which we had not.

Either way Richard, whatever the reason for Froom saying there would be strong protests back then (in the 1920's), this does not tie in with your interpretation of our denominational history. If as you say that by 1913 the trinity doctrine had been held by our church as its No. 1 cardinal belief, then why would there have been any sort of protest?

I would now like to advance your thinking even further.

Assuming Froom to be correct – meaning that there would have been protests in the 1920's if our 1931 statement of beliefs (which did not include a trinity doctrine) had been put in our Yearbook in the 1920's - then how about if our 1980 voted statement of beliefs (which is fully trinitarian) had been put in our 1920's Yearbook? This does not bear imagining. There would have been riots of protest. How therefore can it be said (as you say) that in 1913, the doctrine of the trinity was already a cardinal belief of Seventh-day Adventists. It is impossible.

In the October 15<sup>th</sup> 1931 issue of the Review and Herald, a reader asked

“Please make plain the doctrine of the Trinity. Are Seventh-day Adventists trinitarians? N. B.” (*C P Bollman, Review and Herald, October 15<sup>th</sup> 1931, Bible Questions Answered*)

The paper's Associate Editor returned the answer

“It is not an easy matter to make plain the doctrine of the Trinity, for there is perhaps no other Christian doctrine about which there has been so much controversy or so many shades of opinion.” (*Ibid*)

Bollman (who opposed Prescott's 'trinitarian' views at the 1919 Bible Conference) went on to say that our beliefs concerning the trinity could be found in the 1931 Yearbook. This was the very first year that the 'new statement' had been included in it. He was being very diplomatic with his answer. F. M. Wilcox, the promoter of 'the trinity', was still the paper's editor.

The question arises here: If the trinity doctrine had been held for such a long period of time by Seventh-day Adventists as their No. 1 cardinal belief, which according to you would be even for many years previous to 1913 (because by then you say it had already become an established fundamental belief), then why was this person asking if we believed it? It would be like someone asking if we believed that God's seventh-day Sabbath should be observed.

Is it possible that this person had seen (or had heard about) our new statement of belief and was wondering if we were professing trinitarianism? After all, up to then it had not been held as a denominational belief. In fact up to 1931 there had been very little – if anything - in our periodicals promoting this teaching. As Burt reported (we noted this in full above)

“From 1900 to the 1930s ... The use of the word “Trinity” in describing God continued to be avoided in print except for rare exceptions” (*Merlin Burt, History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity, Andrews Theological Society, page 134*)

I would say very rare exceptions. Would this be 'normal' if we had held the trinity doctrine as a fundamental belief for over 20 years previously as you purport? If this had been the case, our periodicals would have been replete with pro-trinity articles – and with the word 'trinity'.

For those who believe the 1931 statement of faith was a declaration of the trinity doctrine, allow me to share this with you.

When Francis D Nichol was editor of the Review and Herald (remember he had given his approval of the way the 1931 statement was worded), there was a section called 'From the editor's mailbag'. This is where the editor would answer questions sent in by readers. Here is one question from 1953 - which was **22 years after the 1931 statement of beliefs** was formulated and put into our Yearbook (please note:- this was a church member asking this question)

"A church member writes that he has been hearing of late certain new ideas concerning the trinity. Evidently some—whether clergy or laity, he does not indicate—are attempting to go into details as to the relationship of the Divine Father and Son both before and after the time of Adam's fall. We need not here set forth the intricacies of the view to which our correspondent refers. But inasmuch as questions concerning the Godhead come to us betimes, we give the substance of our reply:" *(Francis D. Nichol, Review and Herald, April 1<sup>st</sup> 1953, Editorials, 'From the Editor's mailbag')*

Did you notice that the relationship that was the questioner was asking about here was between the Father and the Son? The Holy Spirit was not included.

Nichol eventually quoted our 1931 Fundamental Beliefs but first of all he said the following

"Through the long centuries of the Christian Era devout men, and some not so devout, have from time to time speculated on the nature of the Godhead. Not infrequently churchmen have even engaged in most bitter controversy over the mystery of God. One of the chief causes of the split between eastern and western Christendom, which occurred in the eleventh century, was over one aspect of the doctrine of the trinity. Such speculation is both profitless and dangerous. The Bible does not say a great deal that throws light on the mystery of the Godhead. Indeed, I don't believe it would be possible for the Bible to throw much truly helpful light on it, and for the simple reason that the Godhead involves mysteries so profound that human language is incapable of explaining them, and human minds are incapable of understanding them." *(Ibid)*

After quoting Job 11:7 and Isaiah 40:28, Nichol continued

"On some great Bible questions silence is golden. It is more honest to admit the darkness of our own understanding than to darken counsel with words. On great mysteries of Scripture it is often far better to admit that there are apparent contradictions than to make the inevitably inadequate attempt to remove them. I confess frankly that I cannot explain how there is but one God and yet three persons in the Godhead. Nor have I ever heard anyone explain it satisfactorily. Yet I believe it. And why? Because the Book of God so declares. Someday, when by God's grace I reach that better land, I hope to begin to understand the mystery and remove the apparent contradiction." *(Ibid)*

Obviously there is no profession of the trinity doctrine here – and this was now 1953. What is here is condemnation for those who would say that this doctrine explains God. The questioner had said he had heard there were "certain new ideas concerning the trinity". What these were it did not say but we know this was in 1953. This must have been the time when some were pushing for a full-blown trinity doctrine. This is why I do not agree with Burt where he says

"The church gradually shifted during from the 1930s to 1950s to the 'orthodox' Christian view on the trinity and deity of Christ..." *(Merlin Burt, 'Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-trinitarianism in Adventist theology, 1888-1957 page iv 'Preface')*

I believe it was later that the trinity doctrine became 'normal' within Seventh-day Adventism.

From the above, we have seen how our 1931 statement of beliefs came into being. We now move on 5 years to 1936. This is where (bearing in mind the dispute that had been taking place regarding our beliefs about Christ) it becomes very interesting.

## The official 1936 begotten (non-trinitarian) beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists

This is a very long section but well worth reading. Not only does it show what our official Godhead beliefs were in 1936 but it also shows why we believed them. This is revealed in a set of Sabbath School lesson studies designed by our church to 'show the world' what was *officially* believed by Seventh-day Adventists.

### Part (a) Why the lesson studies?

As we have seen above, shortly after the death of Ellen White, a Bible Conference was convened. This was in 1919. It had been authorised by the General Conference. We noted that the objective of some at this gathering was to change concerning Christ, what we, as a denomination, were then teaching.

At that time (1919), just as it had been throughout the time of Ellen White's ministry, the belief was that Christ is truly the Son of God (begotten of God in eternity). During this same time period, the Seventh-day Adventist Church rejected the trinity doctrine.

Following the death of Ellen White, this begotten belief was being challenged (this we noted from some of the conversation at the 1919 Bible conference). This challenge came particularly from our leadership. It was being urged by some that Christ was co-eternal with the Father (a trinitarian view). Nevertheless, not even Prescott (who could be described as one of the 'leaders' of those at the conference who wanted change) denied that Christ was begotten.

As From noted (see above), this dispute was ongoing. This is possibly one of the reasons why it was voted by the General Conference Committee in 1934 that a series of forthcoming Sabbath School lesson studies should detail the official beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It could also have been because some were disputing the still 'new' 1931 statement of beliefs that had been put into our Yearbook - also into the newly produced church manual in 1932 - thus there was controversy over what we really taught as a denomination.

Whatever the reasons, these sets of lesson studies were designed to make clear, especially to newcomers to the church, what we, as a denomination, officially believed and taught. This was as opposed to what a minority said we believed and taught - albeit the minority may have been some of our 'very persuasive' (and what we could term 'progressive') church leadership. These doctrines therefore would be the 'official doctrines' of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (as opposed to the personal views of some).

As the General Conference Committee meeting notes of November 8th 1934 stated

*"We recommend, The following as ways and means for helping to foster and care for the large harvest of souls coming into our ranks annually:" (General Conference Committee meeting minutes. November 8<sup>th</sup> 1934, page 1401)*

One of these "ways and means" was to produce a set of Sabbath School lessons that would explain the official beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. As the minutes went on to explain

*"That the Sabbath School Department be requested to provide at an early date lessons as follows: On Bible doctrines." (Ibid)*

So it was that for the "foster and care" of people coming into our church, a set of Sabbath School lessons was to be prepared detailing our denominational beliefs. These studies were to be known as "Bible Doctrines". The same minutes also recorded the request

*"That in the preparation of these lessons, our large and rapidly growing membership in mission lands be kept in mind, thus making it possible to adapt these lessons to the*

needs of the native mind.” (*Ibid*)

The next year (1935) at a General Conference Committee meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup>, it was reported under the heading of “Sabbath School Lesson Manuscripts”

“The Sabbath School Department desiring special help in their Lessons Committee during the time when they will be considering the manuscripts for the lessons on Bible doctrines, it was

VOTED, That I. H. Evans, W. H. Branson, O. Montgomery, M. E. Kern, F. M. Wilcox and W. E. Howell be appointed to read the manuscripts and sit with the Sabbath School Department Lessons Committee when consideration is given to the lessons on Bible doctrines,” (*General Conference Committee Minutes, December 6th 1935*)

This was over a year after the original decision to compile these studies. At that time the Sabbath School had been requested for them to be provided “at an early date”. Why then were they now asking for help? Had they not started putting these studies together as yet or was it because they had come to a ‘sticky point’ on a certain teaching? The minutes do not say but what we do know for sure is that these leading figures of Seventh-day Adventism (as named above), all of whom were on the General Conference Committee, were voted to give “special help” to those compiling the Sabbath School studies. These people would know for sure what Seventh-day Adventists believed – thus it was assured that no mistake would be made in detailing these beliefs. Note that two of the ‘helpers’ were F. M. Wilcox and M. E. Kern. They were amongst those elected to formulate the 1931 statement of beliefs. This was now 4 years after the ‘new’ statement of belief had been put into our Yearbook (1931), also 22 years after F. M. Wilcox, in the Review and Herald, had made his ‘divine trinity’ statement (1913). Wilcox was still editor of the Review and Herald.

The above reveals how important these studies were at that time to the General Conference. Our church leadership obviously did not wish them to contain even the smallest error. As we shall now see, these studies on Bible doctrines were intended to ‘tell the world’ what Seventh-day Adventists officially believed. They were to commence from the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1936 and continue for seven consecutive quarters (one and three-quarter years). The final quarter of these studies therefore was the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1938.

Prior to the first of the above lesson studies being published (the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 1936), they were also spoken of at the General Conference Session held that same year in San Francisco. This took place during the final day’s proceedings (Monday June 8<sup>th</sup> 1936).

After discussing a number of other items, recommendations were made concerning the Sabbath School work. This included the “urging greater efforts toward the reaching of Sabbath School goals and standards” also “greater care in the selecting of Sabbath School teachers and officers” (Review and Herald, June 18<sup>th</sup> 1936). There was concern that our teachings in our Sabbath School lesson studies should be presented correctly. Other recommendations were made including the encouraging of branch Sabbath Schools.

In the afternoon session, the future Sabbath School Lessons came up for discussion. These were for the 7 consecutive quarters on “Bible Doctrines” spoken of above. In the Review and Herald report of the conference it said

“Beginning with the fourth quarter of 1936, the Sabbath school lessons for the denomination for seven consecutive quarters are to cover the essential doctrines of this message. It was recommended that our people everywhere be encouraged to use these lessons as a basis for conducting Bible readings and cottage meetings in the homes of neighbors and friends, and that Bible training classes be organized in every church for this purpose.” (*Carlyle B Haynes, Review and Herald, June 18<sup>th</sup> 1936, Report of the final day’s session at the 1936 General Conference held at San Francisco, ‘The Sabbath*

### *School Lessons for 1936')*

We can now see why these studies were so very high profile. It was said at this General Conference session that they were to explain “the essential doctrines” of our message. These studies were also recommended as a basis for conducting Bible studies and organised cottage meetings etc. They were in fact then, the ‘officially taught doctrines’ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Note again - this is 1936.

Four weeks later, again in the Review and Herald, - this time under the title of ‘Home Missionary Department Meetings’ - it spoke of the recent councils of the secretaries of the Home Missionary Department. It reported the chairman as saying (as regards to making use of the lesson studies)

"For years there has been a demand from many parts of the field for a series of doctrinal Sabbath school lessons framed in such a way that our church members could use them as outlines for Bible studies in the homes of friends and neighbors. Now that we have such a set of lessons, we should thank God, and improve the opportunity to lead all our people into the broad field of Bible evangelism." (*Grace D. Mace, Review and Herald, July 16<sup>th</sup> 1936, 'Home Missionary Department Meetings'*)

This observation was also made

"It is estimated that there are about 100,000 Sabbath school teachers in our churches throughout the world, who will stand before their classes each week and give instruction on all doctrinal subjects. It would be wonderful if these hundred thousand Sabbath school teachers would spend a little time each week in teaching the lesson to groups of people or to individuals upon whose pathway the light of truth has not yet dawned." (*Ibid*)

These lesson studies were regarded as a blessing from God – therefore believed to be having His divine approval. It was said that “we should thank God” for them. As we can also see, these lesson studies were also very much in demand from “the field”. The chairman also added

"But this is not all that we should aim to accomplish. Every member of each Sabbath school class should be encouraged to make contact with some person who is seeking for a better understanding of God's word, and in an informal way give him a Bible study each week on the lesson which he has already studied and received personal instruction upon in the Sabbath school class. What can we do, brethren, to lead the entire 'church at study' into the place where it becomes the entire 'church at work'?" (*Ibid*)

In the Review and Herald of December 17<sup>th</sup> 1936 (this was when the first quarter's lessons on 'Bible Doctrines' were being studied), after making the appeal that the time had come when we should take what we learn from our Sabbath School lesson studies to a further audience than our Sabbath School classes and teachers etc., the studies on Bible Doctrines were promoted. G. A. Roberts said of the Sabbath School work

"Has not the time come when each Sabbath school student who studies the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath school lesson should recite or teach that Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath school lesson to some one who is without its blessing of truth - to a neighbor, to some friend, to a group in a cottage meeting, as a Sunday night sermon in a tent or hall, or in some other way to some other persons?

Should not each Sabbath school pupil lift up his eyes and look on the field of his own neighborhood or circle of acquaintances that is white to harvest, and carry to that field the message contained in the present Sabbath school lessons? Should not each thus become an open channel as well as a reservoir of truth.

The opportunity of a lifetime is now before us to teach the truth to our neighbors and

communities, **for the Sabbath school lessons on Bible doctrines are well adapted to that very purpose.**

The outline at the close of each lesson will helpfully guide in the matter; **and as the present lessons on doctrines are fully authenticated by the lesson committee of the General Conference Sabbath School Department, any one can know that what he teaches as he presents the lesson as a Bible reading or a sermon is correct.**" (G. A. Roberts, *Review and Herald*, December 17<sup>th</sup> 1936, 'The Sabbath School Lesson')

There then followed an appeal that every Sabbath School teacher should be an instructor of the truth to those seeking baptism.

"With the instruction gained from week to week, when several quarters have passed the Sabbath school teachers should be competent instructors for baptismal classes, and can easily take charge of such classes for the evangelists. If there is no evangelist or pastor, the Sabbath school teacher can prepare candidates for baptism from the membership of his Sabbath school class, and then request that a minister be sent to baptize them." (*Ibid*)

According to what is being said here, if the Sabbath School teacher instructed an individual in the teachings found in these 1936 lesson studies, this would be a preparation for baptism. These beliefs were obviously regarded as of prime importance – also that a belief in them was a prerequisite to church membership.

Very interesting is that the following January (1937), also in the *Review and Herald*, there was an advert for a binder in which to keep these Sabbath School Lessons. It said in the *Review and Herald* concerning this binder

"It will preserve all your lesson pamphlets, covering Bible Doctrines as outlined in the Sabbath school lessons for seven full quarters. These lessons have been prepared under the careful supervision of the Sabbath School Department, and you will want to keep them. They are invaluable for continuous reference." (*Review and Herald*, January 14<sup>th</sup> 1937, 'Preserve your Lesson Quarterlies on Bible Doctrines')

Again we can see that these sets of lesson studies were said to contain the truly authentic faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This was as it was during the time period leading up to the 1940's. Notice how much care was taken in the preparation of these studies. They were said to be "invaluable for continuous reference".

After reading the above, it should go without saying that by the General Conference in 1936, this set of studies on "Bible Doctrines" was rated as extremely important – especially as an outreach to non-Seventh-day Adventists. They were to be used as teaching 'the truth' to all those who had not yet received our message, also to the care of those who came into the church. According to the General Conference (this was as the 1940's approached), this set of studies contained the "essential doctrines" of the faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We can safely assume therefore that in the 1940's and 1950's, these very same doctrines were still the predominant faith of our membership worldwide. This conclusion is based upon the premise that a denomination cannot change the beliefs of its entire membership overnight. It takes time and death to do it – particularly the latter. This I believe is fair and reasonable to conclude.

So what did these lesson studies say concerning the Godhead?

#### Part (b) Beliefs concerning Christ and the Godhead

In the third week's study of October 17<sup>th</sup> (which had the title 'The Godhead') the word 'trinity' was used twice. It was used once as a heading (page 9) and once as a sub-heading (page 11). In the following week's study of October 24<sup>th</sup> (which carried the title 'Deity and pre-existence of Christ') it was not mentioned.

The only other time during that quarter it was mentioned was in Lesson No. 10 of December 5th (which had the title 'The Promise and the Work of the Holy Spirit'). On page 31 it said

*"Since the divine Trinity is composed of three persons, there is established a personal relationship between the Godhead and the one baptized" (Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, page 31)*

Notice the words "the divine Trinity". This is the same phrase as Wilcox had used in 1913 (see above). It did not say trinity doctrine.

Nothing else was said concerning the word 'trinity'. It was not therefore very high profile. As far as I can see, the phrase 'trinity doctrine' or 'doctrine of the trinity' was not used in any of the 7 quarterlies. In fact the word 'trinity' was not used again after the first set of studies (4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1936) – meaning for the next 6 quarters (18 months) it was not used. The lesson study for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1936 can be viewed here

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/SSQ/SS19361001-04.pdf>

In the third week's study of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter it was asked (this was under the heading 'Unity of the Godhead')

*"How is the place of the Son in the Godhead emphasized? (Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, Lesson 3, page 11)*

As Colossians 2:9 is cited, the answer must be that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The next question asks

*"How is the unity of the Godhead expressed? John 10:30; 14:11." (Ibid)*

Here was the perfect place to express a belief in the trinity doctrine but nothing was mentioned. It was not even implied. All that the study said was

*"NOTE.—The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. The Spirit is "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ." Hence all three dwell together, and the three are one." (Ibid)*

This was the answer in totality. Nothing more was said of this oneness. The next question asked

*"How may the believer enter into this unity?" (Ibid)*

As Ephesians 3:17 and 1 John 4:15 are cited, it can be seen that this has nothing to do with trinity oneness but the believer's experience in Christ.

Interestingly the lesson study also stated (under the heading 'Lesson Outline')

*"[The Godhead is a most interesting study. All that God wishes to reveal to us should satisfy us, and we do not need to indulge in fancy or speculative theories. The lesson presents a simple chain of thought.] (Ibid)*

Was this said with the trinity doctrine in mind? It does not say so but it is quite possible.

In the next week's study, under the sub-heading "Deity of Christ" (its main heading was 'Deity and Pre-existence of Christ'), the very first question asked

[“Of whom was Christ begotten? \(Ibid, Lesson 4, page 12\)](#)

This shows that the ‘begotten faith’ that was held by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive was still then, in 1936, the accepted denominational faith of its members. This was 21 years after her death (1915). It was also 23 years after Wilcox had made his 'divine trinity' statement (1913) – also 38 years after the publication of Ellen White's book *the Desire of Ages* (1898). This is the book that our church today uses to promote the trinity doctrine and to deny the belief that Christ is begotten. Obviously in 1936 this was not the thinking of our church. Remember, these were the official beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism, not just the personal views of a certain minority – albeit the minority may be some of the church leadership. Some of this minority (who would disagree with these beliefs) may have been amongst the committee that had approved these beliefs for these studies.

The above question (“[Of whom was Christ begotten](#)”) was asked of all those who participated in these lesson studies – meaning those participating as students and those who were teaching the studies. This was ministry and laity alike. It must also be remembered that these very same studies went around the world not only to Seventh-day Adventists but also to non-Seventh-day Adventists. This was not simply as teaching what was accepted by ‘the few’ as the truth concerning Christ but as detailing what was then, in 1936, the denominational faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This ‘begotten faith’ therefore, in 1936, was still the worldwide faith of Seventh-day Adventists. It was this belief that the newcomers to the church were to be taught.

The General Conference endorsed these studies. We have also seen that they were deemed by the conference to explain the *official* denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This means that in the 1940’s – even perhaps the 1950’s - this faith must still have been our official faith. This is because, as I have said previously, no denomination can change the preponderant belief of its entire worldwide membership overnight. It does take time and death. This 'begotten' belief was to be held by Seventh-day Adventists for many more years to come.

As containing the answer to this ‘begotten’ question (“[Of whom was Christ begotten](#)”), the lesson study cites Psalms 2:7 and John 1:14. This means that the expected answer is that Christ was begotten of God. This is in direct contrast to what is taught today by Seventh-day Adventists. Today, as a denomination, we deny that Christ is begotten – therefore denying in the process that He is truly the Son of God. Our church today therefore is condemning our 1936 church – also the 1936 church leadership - for promoting such a belief. Today this begotten belief is said to be heresy. Members are being censured (even disfellowshipped) for believing it. Such is the change that has been made to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. It is this that led William Johnsson, as editor of the *Review*, to write in 1994

[“Adventists beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of present truth. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.”](#) (*William Johnsson, Adventist Review, January 6th 1994, Article ‘Present Truth - Walking in God’s Light’*)

Johnsson went on to say concerning Christ being the divine Son of God, begotten of God in eternity (as taught in this Sabbath School lesson study)

[“Only gradually did this false doctrine give way to the Biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen Whites writings in statements such as “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. \(Desire of ages p 530\)”](#) (*Ibid*)

We can see therefore that by the trinitarians today, particularly our church leadership and ministry, the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God is classed as “**false doctrine**”. We can also see that our church is using the writings of Ellen White in support of this claim.

Merlin Burt commented regarding the above statement from the *Desire of Ages*



“Curiously, for years after the publication of *Desire of Ages*, the church generally ignored these statements. There continued to be plenty of oblique statements which stopped short of taking a clear position. Also there are inferential comments which suggest the traditional view.” (Merlin D. Burt, *Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-trinitarianism in Adventist theology, 1888-1957 page 10, Chapter 2, ‘A time of transition: 1888 to 1900’, 1996*)

I don't believe for one moment that our church ignored what Ellen White had written. They just did not see this 'life original, unborrowed' statement as changing their views concerning Christ. Why would they? As we have seen, they already believed that Christ is God. There is nothing curious here at all.

As far as the trinity doctrine is concerned, the evidence of history is very clear. By 1936, Ellen White's book had not changed the views of our church – even though some try to make it look as though it had done so

Burt refers to “inferential comments which suggest the traditional view”. This view was that Christ is begotten of God. I think we can safely say that the remarks in this 1936 Sabbath School lesson study were a little bit more than just “inferential”. Burt also says that it was “years after the publication of *Desire of Ages*” that we allowed these statements to change our theology but we can see here that almost 40 years later our church was still teaching – and officially – that in eternity Christ was begotten of God.

Later in his study Burt made this observation

“During the 1930's there continued to be statements teaching the “old view”. As we shall see later in the chapter, this largely changed during the 1940's. The fourth quarter of 1936 Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly was prepared by T. M. French. French concluded regarding Christ's pre-existence with these words: “He was therefore no part of creation but was ‘begotten of the Father’ in the days of eternity, and was very God Himself”. It seems that French was mixing Wilcox's fundamental beliefs reference to Christ as “very God” with the “old view” of a “begotten” Christ.” (*Ibid, page 40*)

French may have been the main contributor of this study but these lessons had been validated and approved by the Sabbath School Committee, also by the 'special help' given to them by members of the General Conference Committee (see above). It was 'the church' that was declaring these beliefs to be the official beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

French was not mixing the 'new view' with the 'old view'. As we have seen, this 'old view' (the begotten belief) was that because Christ is begotten, He really is God. This we noted in the section dealing with the 1919 Bible Conference (see above). It can also be seen throughout these 1936 studies on Bible Doctrines.

By saying “During the 1930's there continued to be statements teaching the “old view”, Burt could be taken to mean these 'statements' were far and few between but as we can see here, from this 1936 study, this begotten (Sonship) belief was still the official faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

Some will say that those who believe that Christ is begotten do not believe that He is God. This is a deceptive teaching. It is designed to put in a bad light those who believe in the Sonship of Christ. They are made to look as though they believe heresy.

In 1999, after referring to certain statements Ellen White had made in ‘*The Desire of Ages*’ (this of course included the ‘life original unborrowed statement’) also in other places, Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute wrote

“These statements [from Ellen White] clearly describe Christ as God in the highest sense.

He is not derived from the Father as most Adventists up to that time believed, nor has divinity been bestowed upon him.” (Gerhard Pfandl, *Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Institute, 'The doctrine of the trinity among Adventists' 1999*)

Pfandl is implying that those who believe Christ is begotten do not believe He is “God in the highest sense”. This is far from being true. The begotten belief teaches that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son.

Pfandl's remark “up to that time” refers to when ‘The Desire of Ages’ was published (1898). This means he is saying that up to then, because almost all Seventh-day Adventists believed that Christ was begotten of God, they all had it wrong concerning His pre-existence. This is quite an accusation.

As we have seen, this ‘begotten concept’ was denominationally taught even going into the 1940’s. This means that Pfandl is saying as did William Johnsson (see page 55) that what was officially taught by Seventh-day Adventist Church in the late 1930’s/early 1940’s concerning Christ was error (false doctrine). This is another very serious claim. This allegation is aimed at the church itself – meaning those who authorised and approved these lesson studies.

We have also seen that previously, at the 1919 Bible Conference, it was still being said then that Christ's existence derived from God. This conference had taken place 21 years after ‘The Desire of Ages’ was published. These Sabbath School studies were now 38 years on from its publication.

In the next paragraph Pfandl says

“In spite of these clear statements from the pen of Ellen White, it took many years before this truth was accepted by the church at large.” (*Ibid*)

These “many years” extended to at least into the 1940’s and even beyond. What Pfandl refers to as “this truth” is the belief that Christ is not begotten of God therefore He is not truly God's Son. This portrays current Seventh-day Adventist thinking (the trinitarian view). It is now being said that what we declared in 1936 to be the official faith of Seventh-day Adventists is error. It is also of course saying that what we taught as a church concerning Christ during the entire time of Ellen White's ministry was also error (heresy). This really is quite an accusation.

The question must be asked though, if by this “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived” statement Ellen White was denying this begotten (Sonship) belief, then why, in 1936, which was almost 40 years after she said it, had our church not recognized it? This I believe is a fair and reasonable question to ask.

#### Part (c) Reflections on the spirit of prophecy

As I have studied this claim (that it was Ellen White's 'Desire of Ages' that led us to abandon the begotten concept concerning Christ), I have found that it is quite a recent innovation. Mostly it has come about since the adoption of the trinity doctrine in 1980. This was when this teaching was voted in at the General Conference session held that year.

In the 'Ministry' magazine of June 2002 we find these words.

“Church publications are now saying more clearly that only with the publication of The Desire of Ages (1898) did a full trinitarian theology burst upon the Adventist scene.” (Andrew Bates, *Ministry*, June 2002, ‘The use and abuse of authority’)

As we have seen above though, when challenged over what we believed concerning Christ, God's messenger to the remnant said

“This man may not have known what our faith is on this point, but he was not left in ignorance. **He was informed that there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists.**” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th December 1893, 'An appeal for the Australasian field'*)

This was when we still rejected the trinity doctrine – also when we were still teaching that Christ was begotten of God – just as we were still doing in 1936.

Does 'truth' change? Did Ellen White change her mind? In Volume 5 of the Testimonies are found these words

“The truth of God is not in harmony with the traditions of men, nor does it conform to their opinions. Like its divine Author, it is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (*Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 5, page 62, 'The Testimonies slighted'*)

In the penultimate quote, Ellen White, albeit indirectly, fully endorsed this begotten belief. This is because we were still teaching then that Christ is begotten of God. In fact the next year she addressed the youth of our church by asking

“Who is Christ? . . .” (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1894, 'Grow in grace'*)

The answer she gave was

“He is the only begotten Son of the living God” (*Ibid*)

This is emphatic. Every Seventh-day Adventist living at that time (1894) would have understood what God's messenger meant by it. It was in keeping with what was taught then by our denomination. Notice very importantly that Ellen White differentiated between whom she describes as “the only begotten Son” and “the living God”.

At that time to Seventh-day Adventists, this differentiating between the two persons was very important. We mentioned this previously when referring to the Spear article (see above). If Ellen White had believed that Christ was not begotten (not a true Son), then this would have been a very irresponsible statement to make. She would have known that it would only serve to confirm Seventh-day Adventists into their Sonship (begotten) belief.

She then said with regards to Christ

“He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought, -- as a thought made audible. Christ is the word of God. Christ said to Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." His words were the echo of God's words. Christ was the likeness of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person.” (*Ibid*)

The following year, Ellen White again supported the Sonship (begotten) belief. This was when explaining the differences between the 'sons of God' referred to in Scripture she wrote

“A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, **but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person**, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1895, 'Christ our complete salvation'*)

Just 6 weeks later, as though in confirmation of what she had written earlier (as above), she again explained

“The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, gave his only begotten Son, tore from his

bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 9<sup>th</sup> July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People'*)

Note that in the penultimate quote, Ellen White had said that Christ was "a Son **begotten** in the express image of the Father's person" whilst in the next quote she said He was "**made** in the express image" of the Father's person. This is with reference to Hebrews 1:3.

In 1899, with reference to Christ saying, "Before Abraham was I am", Ellen White made this comment (this was written the year following the publication of the Desire of Ages)

"Here Christ shows them that, altho they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation. The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures" (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1899 'The Word made flesh'*)

By 1905, 7 years after the publication of the Desire of Ages, Ellen White was still confirming the begotten belief. She wrote

"The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, but not in personality." (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 116, Dec. 19, 1905, 'An Entire Consecration'*)

Again this is the begotten concept. God and Christ are two separate personalities: also Christ is "truly God in infinity". The statement that Christ is not God in personality completely invalidates the trinity doctrine.

In a sermon in 1910 Ellen White spoke these words

"Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer, that glorious angel, got up a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth." (*Ellen G. White, Ms 86 1910, Sermon, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1910*)

This was the controversy from eternity. Is Christ really the Son of God? This was Satan's challenge. It was this same challenge concerning His identity that Jesus faced in the wilderness (Matthew 4:3, 6). This was an ongoing challenge from Satan. This therefore is the question to be answered. Is Christ really the divine Son of God? Was He a Son prior to coming to earth? These answers come back from the spirit of prophecy

"The whole nation [of Jews] called God their Father, and if Jesus had done this in the same sense in which they did, the Pharisees would not have been so enraged. But they accused Jesus of blasphemy, showing that they understood that Christ claimed God as His Father in the very highest sense." (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 5<sup>th</sup> March 1901, 'Lessons from the Christ-Life'*)

"Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father." (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1874, 'Redemption No. 2', see also Signs of the Times, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1883, 'Christ's triumph for us'*)

"Satan well knew the position which Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father; and that Christ should leave the joy and honor of Heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension. He knew that this condescension on the part of the Son of God boded no good to him." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1887, 'Christ's triumph in our behalf'*)

"They [the loyal angels] clearly set forth that Jesus was the Son of God, existing with him

before the angels were created; and that he had ever stood at the right hand of God, and his mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned; and that he had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1879, 'The fall of Satan', see also Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1 page 17, 'The Fall of Satan'*)

"This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ. One angel began the controversy and carried it on until there was rebellion in the heavenly courts, among the angels." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 42, to Elder D. A. Parsons, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1910, as quoted in 'This day with God, page 128'*)

"There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions." (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 36, 'Why was sin permitted'*)

"When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission by assuming the likeness of a man when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God." (*Ellen G. White, letter, to J. H. Kellogg, Letter No. K-303, August 29<sup>th</sup> 1903*)

"Said the angel, "Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them. . . . I saw that it was impossible for God to change His law in order to save lost, perishing man; therefore He suffered His darling Son to die for man's transgressions. . . . Satan again rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man's fall, pull down the Son of God from His exalted position. He told his angels that when Jesus should take fallen man's nature, he could overpower Him and hinder the accomplishment of the plan of salvation." (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pages 127 and 152*)

"Satan is determined that men shall not see the love of God, which led him to give his only begotten Son to save the lost race; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance." (*Ellen White, Review and Herald, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1894, 'Christ the center of the message'*)

Richard: Take special note of this last quote. Satan is doing his utmost to obscure the fact that God really did give His Son to die for you. Will you accept a theology that denies this fact?

A mere belief though of Christ being the true Son of God will not save us. This counsel from Ellen White comes to mind

"It is a great thing to believe in Jesus. We hear many say, "Believe, believe; all that you have to do is to believe in Jesus." But it is our privilege to inquire, What does this belief take in? and what does it comprehend? There are many of us who have a nominal faith, but we do not bring that faith into our character. The statement is made that the devil believed and trembled. He believed that Christ was the Son of God while he was in heaven; and when upon this earth he was in conflict with Him here on the field of battle, he believed on Christ; but could this save him? No, because he did not weave Christ into his life and character." (*Ellen G. White, Ms 5 1886, Sermon June 19<sup>th</sup> 1886*)

#### Part (d) Christ and His deity

Concerning what the Scriptures tell us about Christ and His deity, the 1936 Sabbath School lesson study concluded

“The teaching of the scriptures in this lesson is little short of over whelming in its marvelous meaning to us in the personal life. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God Himself, who existed with the Father "from the days of eternity," who made the world and all things therein—even this Jesus "gave Himself for our sins," and by believing on the name of this Son of God, we obtain the gift of eternal life, and may share it with Him throughout the eternal ages, world without end.” (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, Lesson 4, page 13*)

This is the begotten concept. It is that Christ is “the Son of God, and God Himself”.

From the above we can see that concerning Christ, God had, through the spirit of prophecy, endorsed what Seventh-day Adventists were then teaching – that in eternity He was begotten (brought forth) of God. It is no wonder then that in 1936 when officially declaring to the world what we believed, this belief had remained unchanged. We were then still standing by what God had revealed through Scripture and the spirit of prophecy.

The study then asked

“What did the Father call His Son? (*Ibid*)

As Hebrews 1:8 is cited, the expected answer was that the Father called His Son ‘God’.

The lesson then notes (because the Son is begotten of the Father)

“Hebrews 1:4 tells us that the Son's name, God, was "a more excellent name" than the angels received, because He obtained it "by inheritance," that is, as "heir of all things."” (*Ibid*)

Christ received this “inheritance” because He was begotten of the Father. This is why some of the early Christian writings say “very God from very God”, ‘true God from true God’. As the study explained

“A son is the natural heir, and when God made Christ His heir, He recognized His sonship.” (*Ibid*)

This is with reference to Christ’s pre-existence – when He was originally begotten of the Father. This is referring to in eternity when this happened. The Sabbath School lesson study concluded

“This is why the Son bore the same name as His Father.” (*Ibid*)

Here again we see the past ‘begotten faith’ of Seventh-day Adventism. It is that Christ is truly the Son of God and is therefore God Himself in the person of the Son. As God says of Christ, ‘my name is in Him’ (see Exodus 23:21). The lesson then asked

“When Jesus was born in the flesh, by what name was He called? Matt. 1:23. NOTE.— Here again the Son is called by the Father's name, "God." This is because He "was God." John 1:1” (*Ibid*)

Again this is exactly the same as was taught by Seventh-day Adventists whilst Ellen White was alive – that Christ “was God”.

After asking how did the apostle Paul affirm the deity of the Son (in 1 Timothy 3:16), the lesson says

“Paul's language is equivalent to John's when the latter says, "The Word was made flesh." John 1:14. He affirms that the Jesus who was "born of a woman" was really God.” (*Ibid*)

Here then is the main emphasis of the study. It is that Christ “was really God”. Over and over again throughout this 1936 Sabbath School study this same belief is stressed.

From this we can see that the remarks some have made recently saying that the begotten concept depicts Christ as 'some sort of derived or created semi-god', 'a god' of lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father, also as Prescott and Whidden called it – Arianism, are not only completely unwarranted but also totally misrepresentative of what is really believed by those who accept that the Scriptures say that Christ is truly the Son of God. In brief, it is misrepresenting the beliefs of the non-trinitarians. This 1936 study makes this abundantly clear.

This same study then asks (with reference to the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration)

“What public announcement of His Son's deity did the Father make on two different occasions?” (*Ibid*)

As Matthew 3:17 (the baptism of Christ) and 17:5 (Christ's transfiguration) is cited as containing the answer to this question, we can see that it is being said that the Father confirmed “His Son's deity” by calling Him ‘His Son’ (“this is my beloved son”).

The lesson study then helps us to realise just what it was concerning Christ's ‘origins’ that Seventh-day Adventists believed and taught in 1936.

After asking, “What testimony concerning His deity did Christ Himself give”, also citing John 16:27, 28 and 8:58 as containing the answer, the study notes said

“The direct statement of Jesus, "I came forth from the Father," reads literally, "I came out of the Father." Putting with this, His testimony in John 10:38, "The Father is in Me, and I in Him," we have His personal witness that He truly was "begotten of the Father," as John says in 1:14.” (*Ibid*)

This is another striking realisation. This reveals that in 1936, Seventh-day Adventists still maintained - just as they had done so during Ellen White's ministry - that Christ literally “came out of the Father”. This means, “He truly was “begotten of the Father”. This was also an affirmation of deity. The fact that Christ ‘came out’ of the Father is showing that He is God but notice that the study cites John 8:58 (see above). This is where Jesus said to the Jews “before Abraham was I am”. This is when the Jews, realising what our Saviour was claiming, wanted to stone Him.

In the same year as the *Desire of Ages* was published, our church also published a book by Uriah Smith. The accolades it was given were extraordinary (far too much to quote here). The book was called 'Looking Unto Jesus'. In this book Smith had written concerning Christ.

“His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in the mysterious expressions, 'his [God's] only begotten Son' (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), 'the only begotten of the Father' (John 1:14), and 'I proceeded forth and came from God.' John 8:42. “Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared.” (*Uriah Smith, 'Looking unto Jesus', 1898, p. 10, 1898*)

On page 13, Uriah Smith wrote

“With the Son, the evolution of deity, as deity, ceased. All else, of things animate or inanimate, has come in by creation of the Father and the Son — the Father the antecedent cause, the Son the acting agent through whom all has been wrought. No ranks of intelligences, it matters not how high, above or below; no orders of cherubim or seraphim; no radiant thrones or extensive dominions, principalities, or powers, but were created by our Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Ibid page 13*)

This is decidedly non-trinitarian theology but it was completely in harmony with that which Seventh-day Adventists believed at that time. It was that Christ is God Himself.

Part (e) In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived

On the next page, the following question was asked (this was under the heading of 'Pre-existence of Christ')

"What is the source of the Son's life? John 5:26." (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, Lesson 4, page 13*)

As John 5:26 tells us "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself", the expected answer must be the Father. Concerning this verse, this was the past reasoning of Prescott. If you remember he had said

"There is a proper sense, as I view it, according to which the Son is subordinate to the Father, but that subordination is not in the question of attributes or of His existence. ***It is simply in the fact of the derived existence, as we read in John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself."*** (W. W. Prescott, *Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D. C. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, page 20*)

"As we lift up the conception of son ship out of time into eternity, these elements of it, ever present in human fathers and sons, at once disappear. When they fall away, does any conception essential to our idea of son ship remain? ***Yes; there still remains the chief idea, viz., personal existence and powers derived from another person. And this idea is plainly embodied in John 5:26, and in other express assertions from the lips of Christ describing his own relation to God.***" (W. W. Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries, page 20, 1920*)

The 'Note' in the 1936 lesson study said with reference to John 5:26

"It is plain that the Son possesses the same kind of life as the Father —called here "life in Himself." (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, Lesson 4, page 13*)

This would be the same 'life' that in the Desire of Ages, Ellen White described as "life, original, unborrowed, underived" (page 530). As she says earlier in the same book

"All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 21, 'God with us' 1898*)

The source of this "life" is the Father ("the great Source of all). The life itself is "the Father's life". No wonder Ellen White refers to it as "life, original, unborrowed, underived". It is this life that flows from the Father through the Son to us.

The actual quote is

"Still seeking to give a true direction to her [Martha's] faith, Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection, and the life." In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. "He that hath the Son hath life." 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages', page 530, 'Lazarus, Come Forth'*)"

Ellen White is here referring to the *type of life* that is in Christ. She is describing this life. She is saying it is "life, original, unborrowed, underived". She is not saying that this life originated in Christ. As she said, the Father is "the great Source of all" (see above). She said it is "the



Father's life" that "flows out to all" through Christ. This is why in Christ is "life, original, unborrowed, underived". This life is, as Ellen White describes it here, "The divinity of Christ". It is the believer's hope.

We must always allow Ellen White to interpret her own words. It is true she said that in Christ is "life, original, unborrowed, underived" but in the same book she also said that "through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all". To attempt to make it look as though Ellen White says this life originated in the Son is to actually deny what she said.

In 1890, Ellen White made this statement

"Christ came to reveal the Source of his power, that man might never rely on his unaided human capabilities." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 18th February 1890, 'How to meet a controverted point of doctrine'*)

The Source of Christ's power was the Father. Christ received it from the Father. He passes it on to us. We too are the recipients of that power.

The previous month Ellen White had made this comment

"The world's Redeemer was equal with God. His authority was as the authority of God. **He declared that he had no existence separate from the Father.**" (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 7<sup>th</sup> January 1890, 'Christ revealed the Father'*)

Seven years later in 1897, the year previous to the Desire of Ages being published, she made the latter statement even clearer. She wrote

"God has sent his Son to communicate **his own life to humanity**. Christ declares, "I live by the Father," **my life and his being one.**" (*Ellen G. White, Home Missionary, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1897, 'A call to the work'*)

God is the originator of this life (divinity/immortality). It is God's life. Christ is the communicator of it yet God's life and Christ's life are one.

That in Christ is the life of God is only the same as the following statement made in 1894 in our Sabbath School lesson study. It shows that we did not have to wait for the Desire of Ages to be published to teach such truths.

"**But Christ is God.** In him is life, **even the life of God**" (*Review and Herald, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1894, Notes on Sabbath School Lessons for May 26<sup>th</sup> 1894, 'Lessons from the book of Luke'*)

This is no different to what Ellen White wrote in the Desire of Ages (see above). God's life is "original, unborrowed, underived". It is divinity itself.

To a great extent, the Desire of Ages was made up from past quotations of Ellen White's writings. This 'life original' quote came from an article published the previous year in the Signs of the Times. Here Ellen White shows that this life can be inherited

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. . . . Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself" (John 10: 18), He said. In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ." " (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, April 8<sup>th</sup> 1897, 'Christ the life-*

giver')

This "life, original, unborrowed, underived" can be passed on. In fact to those who wish to be saved it is essential that they are recipients of it. Here it is said that we can "possess it" therefore in us, as Christians, there must be "life, original, unborrowed, underived". Without this receiving (without this possessing) there is no salvation. This "life. Original" did not originate in the receiver. It originated in the Father. As Ellen White wrote, the Father is "the great Source of all". He is the source of all life. Christ passes this life on to humanity. As we noted was said by Ellen White

"Christ declares, "I live by the Father," **my life and his being one.**" (Ellen G. White, *Home Missionary*, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1897, 'A call to the work')

I may have missed something but the first time I can find a Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly that included the word 'trinity' and the "In Christ is life, original" statement together is in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 1976. Even then they were not directly associated with each other. The word 'trinity' was in lesson 1 whilst the Ellen White statement was in lesson 2. Interestingly on page 11 it said the following

"The paradox of a triune monotheism (Trinity) is not explained in the Scriptures. It is, however, a truth that is vital to the understanding of the plan of salvation. "The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God; but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. . . . Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion.... "We are as ignorant of God as little children, but as little children we may love and obey Him."—Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 279." (*Sabbath School Lesson Study*, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1976, page 11)

This is interesting because it is saying that in the Bible there is no explanation of how God is triune – which is very true. How therefore can we support a teaching such as the trinity doctrine that is said to explain it? Notice the use of the quotes from Ellen White saying that on this topic (of explaining God) "silence is eloquence". We quoted this on page 13.

In the 1936 Godhead studies on 'Bible Doctrines' (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 1936), the "In Christ is life, original" statement was not used. In fact I cannot find this statement anywhere in the entire 7 quarter's lesson studies. When searching through the archives of our Sabbath School Lesson Study Quarterlies between 1898 (when the Desire of Ages was published) and 1952, I could only find this statement used four times. Four times in 54 years does not constitute very high usage. Perhaps I have missed some. You would need to check for yourself.

The next question in the lesson study asks

"When does the prophet say the life of the Son began? Micah 5:2. margin." (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, Lesson 4, page 13)

Again this is very revealing. It shows that in 1936 it was still the preponderant belief of Seventh-day Adventists that the personality of the Son came out from the Father but as we have seen, this did not make Him a lesser divine being than God. It is because Christ is begotten of God that He is God Himself. This is the begotten belief. Throughout the entire Sabbath School study, this was the stress of its author(s). The main author of the lesson study was T. M. French.

We then find these words

"While we cannot comprehend eternity - without beginning and without ending - yet it is clearly affirmed here that the life which Christ possesses is "from the days of eternity."" (*Ibid* page 13)

This is a reference to Micah 5:2 but not exactly as quoted in the KJV. Instead of the words "from everlasting" as used in the KJV, the margin notes are employed ("from the days of eternity"). This was common practise within Seventh-day Adventism. Ellen White did this on a number of occasions. The margin note is nearer to the meaning of the original Hebrew.

In 'The Desire of Ages' (this was with reference to Jesus saying, "Before Abraham was I am" - John 8:58) she wrote

"Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin. (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 469, 'The light of Life'*)

Note again the use of the "margin" reading instead of the 'everlasting' of the KJV text.

In this same book she had also said previously concerning Mary the mother of Jesus

"She is of the lineage of David, and the Son of David must be born in David's city. Out of Bethlehem, said the prophet, "shall He come forth . . . that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin." (*Ibid, page 44, 'Unto you a Saviour', 1898*)

Ellen White also quoted the margin reading of Micah 5:2 in Patriarchs and Prophets (see page 697 - 'The Coming of a Deliverer').

The words "from the days of eternity" (margin notes) - rather than 'from everlasting' (as in the KJV) - were far better suited to what was then the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The words 'from everlasting' would tend to obscure the belief that in eternity Christ was begotten of the Father (thereby obscuring His true Sonship). This is probably why, in such an important book on the life of Christ, which was to go to non-Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world, Ellen White used the margin notes – although it must be emphasised she did not always use them. In this Sabbath School lesson study, this phrase, "from the days of eternity", was used four times.

The 1936 lesson study also made clear

"Cumulative evidence that the Son existed with the Father before creation is abundant in the Scriptures. In the few passages we have studied here, we find that Christ was with the Father "before the world was," "from the days of eternity," "before the foundation of the world," "before all things."" (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 1936, Lesson 4, page 13*)

It then explained

"He was therefore no part of creation, but was "begotten of the Father" in the days of eternity, and was very God Himself." (*Ibid*)

Over and over again this 1936 lesson study conveyed the belief that Christ was truly begotten of the Father therefore He was considered to be truly the Son of God - also as this lesson stated, "very God Himself". Note it makes clear that Christ was "no part of creation".

Part (f) Who is right and who is wrong?

In the book 'The Trinity', which our church published to supposedly show the truth of our denominational history and our changeover from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism, Jerry Moon offered this observation

“That most of the leading SDA pioneers were non-Trinitarian in their theology has become accepted Adventist history, surprising as it sounded to most Adventists 40 years ago when Erwin R. Gane wrote an M. A. thesis on the topic. More recently, a further question has arisen with increasing urgency: was the pioneers’ belief about the Godhead right or wrong?” (*Jerry Moon, ‘The Trinity’, chapter, ‘Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history, page 190*)

This would appear to sum up the entire problem. As Moon concluded

“As one line of reasoning goes, either the pioneers were wrong and the present church is right, or the pioneers were right and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth.” (*Ibid*)

This statement though, whilst true in itself, tends to mislead the unwary reader. What I mean is: even in the 1930's and 1940's, our denomination was still not trinitarian. That much can be seen from these 1936 Sabbath School studies. This non-trinitarian faith therefore was not just the belief of our pioneers but also the belief of our church in 1936. It would have been much better therefore if, instead of saying 'pioneers', Jerry Moon had said 'our church in 1936'. In other words, if instead of asking if our pioneers were correct, he should have asked if our officially stated denominational beliefs in 1936 were correct – also if since then, meaning since 1936, have we “apostatized from biblical truth”? This would have given the present situation its true perspective. Read his statement again and you will see what I mean (substitute the word 'pioneers' with the words 'our church in 1936').

That Christ is truly begotten of God is, according to this 1936 lesson study, the overwhelming evidence that He is none other than God Himself. This 'begotten' faith, as it was explained in our Sabbath School lesson quarterly in 1936, was undoubtedly a continuation of the faith of our pioneers and early Seventh-day Adventists. As we have just seen, in 1936 it was still the 'official' denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists.

Yet you claim Richard (this was with respect to what Ellen White had written in the Desire of Ages)

“Ellen G. White was clearly supporting **Trinitarianism** and the **Trinity Truth** of the Bible and that under the guidance of the Divine Holy Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit of God was leading God’s people, through the inspiration of a real genuine prophetic gift to the Remnant Church of Bible Prophecy, in the last hours of Earth’s History to ABANDON the Anti-Trinitarian-Literal-Begottenism of the “Pioneers” and now make a total CHANGE in their theology on the Deity of Christ.” (*Email, Richard Mendoza to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

If what you say is true Richard (and I do not believe it is), then our church, even 40 years after the publication of the Desire of Ages had failed to recognise it. This is because by 1936, our church was still saying that in eternity Christ was begotten of God – and this was official.

You later said in the same email

“The FORMER Anti-Trinitarian view of the denomination RECEIVED a COMPLETE REVISION! and WAS CHANGED while EGW was still ALIVE!” (*Ibid*)

Richard, this is definitely not true. As we have just seen, it was not even changed by 1936. The evidence of history tells us this much – and you say I present a falsified account of our denominational history.

In an email to a friend of mine, you wrote to him condemning my portrayal of our denominational history. You sent me a copy saying

“I missed sending you a copy of this important document Terry. Please take it seriously.”  
(Pastor Richard Mendoza, copy email to Terry Hill, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015)

Regarding my account of our denominational history you said (these paragraphs are not contiguous)

“Someone needs to be held accountable for such false accusations and inaccurate portrayal of SDA History. It was 1913 that it was officially published in the Church’s journal about what Seventh-day Adventists believed. **And don’t you realize that this was where non-Adventist would go to find out what Seventh-day Adventist believed.** And just what did they read? They read that the leading journal of the Church published that “Seventh-day Adventist believe in . . . The divine Trinity!” And that this was the No. 1 “cardinal feature of the faith of THIS DENOMINATION! In a court of law you would lose the law-suit case regarding the truth of when the Trinity Doctrine first became the established doctrine of the church (voted or not, makes no difference).” (Ibid)

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, and not until at least 1931 and even then it was not “official” nor “voted,…” (Ibid)

“Doesn't that bother you at all? Not even a little bit? That Terry Hill, and Anti-Trinitarian has to resort to such tactics to convince people that the Trinity is not the truth? (Terry, if you are reading this you NEED to answer these objections to your portrayal of Adventist History after your 13 years of study and research on the subject. Please)” (Ibid)

Personally speaking Richard, I believe that I have answered you. I also believe that if the two different accounts of our denominational history were to go to court to be judged as to which is the genuine article (as you suggest), I cannot see how any decision would go in favour of your account. My only appeal is to the facts themselves. I believe that no other persuasion is necessary.

You say a belief can be official even if it is not voted into our beliefs. Back then (in 1913), to a degree, I would agree with you but not today. Today, to be official, a belief has to be voted in by a majority vote at a duly appointed General Conference session.

So how in 1913 would we know what was 'official'?

Well, first of all we did have a list of beliefs that were published in our Yearbook. This would be the first place to look. These beliefs were said to have been held by Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world. As we noted (see above), these beliefs did not include the trinity doctrine. This was even in the 1914 Yearbook.

Apart from this, I would say that any belief, if it is to be concluded that it was, at any time, the preponderant faith of our denomination, would need to have been published across the entire spectrum of our publications for quite a long period of time. This I believe would be a fair and genuine test to apply. As I have already pointed out though, up to 1913, no articles can be found upholding the trinity doctrine. All that can be found are articles doing exactly the opposite. So what does this mean? It means that your claim - that the trinity doctrine was a cardinal belief of Seventh-day Adventists in 1913 – has failed the test. In other words, it is a false claim.

#### Part (g) Regarding the Holy Spirit

In passing and as a matter of interest, I will now share something else with you. As regards to your trinity claims Richard, it is very significant.

In the final set of studies on "Bible Doctrines" (this was in the Sabbath School lessons for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1938) it had as a sub-title to one section (just as I have it here)

*"CHURCH MEMBERS SHARE FELLOWSHIP OF FATHER AND SON" (Sabbath School Lesson Studies, Bible Doctrines, Lesson 9 for May 28, 1938, page 26)*

You may be asking "why do I regard this as significant?" I will explain.

Ask yourself this question – Why didn't the lesson study say "Church Members Share Fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit"?

The answer is that just as it was during the time of the pioneers, the Holy Spirit, in 1936, was still not regarded as a divine person exactly like God and Christ are persons. He was said to be of a nature we cannot understand. In fact in the first quarter's lesson study it said

*"NOTE.—The Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son, that is, as the Son's representative. The Spirit "proceedeth from the Father," to do His work in the earth." (Sabbath School Lesson Studies, Bible Doctrines, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 1936, Lesson 3, page 11)*

It then says

*"Hence the Father sends the Spirit, and the Son sends the Spirit. The Son speaks what the Father gives Him to speak, and the Spirit speaks what the Son gives Him to speak. The Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. How could there be more perfect accord, more complete unity? (Ibid)*

On the previous page it said (with reference to Romans chapter 8)

*"In verses 8-11, the Spirit is called both "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ." (Ibid, page 10)*

The belief that the Holy Spirit was both God the Father and Christ omnipresent was the faith of the non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists. By 1936, this belief had not changed – even though regarded as a person. This is exactly the same as I believe today – as a non-trinitarian.

It is in keeping with when Jesus told his disciples that even after He had returned to His Father He would still be with them. He said

*"I will not leave you comfortless: **I will** come to you." (John 14:18)*

Jesus was the coming Comforter. Commenting on this Ellen White wrote the following

*"That Christ should manifest Himself to them, and yet be invisible to the world, was a mystery to the disciples. They could not understand the words of Christ in their spiritual sense. They were thinking of the outward, visible manifestation. They could not take in the fact that they could have the presence of Christ with them, and yet He be unseen by the world. **They did not understand the meaning of a spiritual manifestation.**" (Ellen G. White, Southern Watchman, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1898, 'Christ's representatives')*

*"In giving His commission to His followers, Christ did not tell them they would be left alone. He assured them that **He would be near them. He spoke of His omnipresence in a special way.** Go to all nations, He said. Go, to the farthest portion of the habitable globe, **but know that My presence will be there.** Labor in faith and confidence, for the time will never come when I shall forsake you.*

***The assurance of His abiding presence** was the richest legacy Christ could give His disciples. Having the High Priest of our profession close by our side, we need not imperil*

our souls by opening the secrets of our hearts to priest or minister. In all confidence we may open our heart to the head over all the church." (*Ellen G. White, Ms138, December 2, 1897*)

"The Lord is soon to come. We want that complete and perfect understanding which the Lord alone can give. It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. **We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ.** If we commune with God, we shall have strength and grace and efficiency." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 66 1894 to W. W. Prescott, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1894*)

"Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His Father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth. **The Holy Spirit is Himself**, divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 119, 1895, to James Edson White and Emma White, February 18<sup>th</sup> 1895*)

"It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in My name." "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you". **This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter.**" (*Ellen G. White, letter to Brother Chapman June 11<sup>th</sup> 1891, Manuscript Release volume 14, No. 1107*)

"The Saviour has not promised His followers the luxuries of the world; their fare may be plain, and even scanty; their lot may be shut in by poverty; but His word is pledged that their need shall be supplied, and He has promised that which is far better than worldly good, -- **the abiding comfort of His own presence.**" (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 367, 'Give Ye Then to Eat'*)

"The reason why the churches are weak and sickly and ready to die, is that the enemy has brought influences of a discouraging nature to bear upon trembling souls. **He has sought to shut Jesus from their view as the Comforter**, as one who reproves, who warns, who admonishes them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."" (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1890, 'The righteousness of Christ'*)

Take particular note of this last quote.

From the 1936 Sabbath School Lesson study, it can very clearly be seen that even though 5 years earlier in the 1931 statement of beliefs Wilcox had used the word 'trinity' (the statement had said 'Godhead or Trinity'), the Seventh-day Advent Church was not a trinitarian denomination. In other words, it did not have the trinity doctrine as one of its fundamental beliefs. This is no more than it did in 1913 when Wilcox said that we believed in the 'divine trinity'.

Before moving on to the next section, I would like to make this one observation. You said, as we noted above (referring to what Ellen White had written in the Desire of Ages),

"...the Holy Spirit of God was leading God's people, through the inspiration of a real genuine prophetic gift to the Remnant Church of Bible Prophecy, in the last hours of Earth's History to ABANDON the Anti-Trinitarian-Literal-Begottenism of the "Pioneers" and now make a total CHANGE in their theology on the Deity of Christ." *Email, Richard Mendoza to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

It is reasonably obvious that our church, well over 50 years after the publication of the book the Desire of Ages, had not abandoned the begotten concept. We know this to be true because not

only were we teaching it in the Sabbath School lesson studies but we also declared it in 1936 to be our official belief. It is no wonder that for years afterwards, as we can see from the above, we were still teaching it.

At this point you may be asking, why am I repeating myself. My answer is: It is because you said to me (your emphasis)

***“WE MUST accept documented history whether we agree with it or not, whether it supports our views and beliefs or not.” (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015)***

I believe it quite safe to say that what I have written is a “documented history”. So facing up to the facts, would you Richard, if you had been a minister back then in 1936, been willing to teach to existing church members and to newcomers alike, that this concept of Christ being begotten in eternity was the truth? After all, the church did say that this was its official position so it would expect its ministers to teach it.

Here is another question for you. Do you believe that what our church was teaching in these Sabbath School lessons in 1936 invalidated the trinity doctrine?

### **Misconstruing the words of Ellen White**

There are certain quotes from Ellen White’s writings that some trinitarians, quite understandably, will cite to so say ‘prove’ that Christ was not begotten (attempting to show that Ellen White denied Christ was begotten). Here Richard is how you quoted two of them (all your highlighting and emphasis). In the first quote I would ask the reader to note the ellipses. This denotes that some of the wording has been omitted. We shall see what this is later.

***“The Pre-existent, Self-existent Son of God—Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.... In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.—The Signs of the Times, August 29, 1900.” (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 14th October 2015)***

***“The world was made by him, "and without him was not anything made that was made." If Christ made all things, he existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.” (Ellen White, Review and Herald, 5th April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh’) (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 14th October 2015)***

As you have quoted them here – especially with your yellow highlighting and your emphasis - these quotations give the impression that Ellen White was saying that Christ was not begotten. Is this though what she meant by them? Let’s give this some consideration.

First of all let’s ask ourselves how we use inspired writings? Do we take one of two sentences and build a doctrine from them? Well, we shouldn't do. What we should do is to take what the writer has to say overall (about any given subject) and then compare statement with statement.

What if we don’t do it? Let’s give an example. The prophet Isaiah wrote the following words (note the words I have highlighted)

***“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and***



***create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.***” Isaiah 45:5-7

Is God the author of evil? Does He create evil (bad things)? I ask this because this is the way this text could be taken.

Neither you nor I would ever draw such a conclusion. Instead we would take into account other verses of Scripture that would modify and explain (interpret) these words. It is the same with any statement we find in Scripture. We allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. If we take one solitary statement (like the one above) and build an entire teaching on it we could soon be in very serious trouble. Certainly we could get a perverted idea of what God is saying to us.

It is no different with the writings of Ellen White. She penned thousands upon thousands of statements therefore to arrive at a balanced view of that which God has revealed through her we need to take into account all of what she wrote on any particular subject. We must also, just as we do with Scripture, allow her to interpret her own words.

As can be seen from what we have already quoted in this rebuttal, one way or another, Ellen White repeatedly said that Christ is truly God’s Son (begotten of God in eternity). What she wrote in the above quotes therefore, if she is not to contradict herself, must be in keeping with this belief. The truth she wrote concerning Christ can only be understood if we take overall what she wrote. This is the larger context.

Secondly, as a smaller context, we must consider the immediate setting in which she wrote certain things. This is extremely important. To show you what I mean I am now going to quote again the above statements (that you quoted) but this time, not as you have them above, but in this 'smaller (immediate) context'. Here is the first one. She wrote it two years after the publication of *Desire of Ages*.

After referring to the command that God gave to Abraham to slay Isaac – also after saying that the Jews wanted to stone Jesus because He had said, "Before Abraham was, I am", Ellen White wrote the following. The red is what you quoted. The blue is what you omitted to quote (denoted by the ellipses in your quote).

"Before Abraham was, I am." **Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.** The message He gave to Moses to give to the children of Israel was, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." The prophet Micah writes of Him, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, tho thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of Thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Through Solomon Christ declared: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. . . . When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

**In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, 29th August 1900 *'Resistance to Light'*)

Richard, you have omitted a great deal. You omitted where Ellen White wrote that Christ is the wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8 “brought forth”. This is the begotten concept – that Christ was

brought forth of God.

Why did you omit to quote this part? Was it because you disagreed with it – or that you wanted to conceal it? I know that this is how it is quoted in the book 'Evangelism' but the same question remains. Why was this "brought forth" concept of Proverbs 8 omitted? What was the purpose?

Here now is your second quote. Again I have highlighted in red what you have quoted. What you did not quote is in blue.

"The world was made by him, "and without him was not anything made that was made."If Christ made all things, he existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by him as his right. This was no robbery of God. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way," he declares, "before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth." (*Ellen White, Review and Herald, 5th April 1906, 'The Word made flesh'*)

Again you have omitted to quote these verses from Proverbs chapter 8. These are verses that Ellen White clearly says speaks of Christ "brought forth" (the begotten concept). These are serious omissions. Why have they been omitted?

When we quote Ellen White we need to ensure that what we are quoting does not make it look as though she was saying something that can be misconstrued. Taken on their own, these statements (as you have quoted them above) could be used to so say 'prove' that she did not believe that Christ was brought forth of God (begotten of the Father). This though, as have so clearly seen, was not her belief.

In Patriarchs and Prophets she wrote (again applying the wisdom of Proverbs 8 to Christ)

"Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father--one in nature, in character, in purpose--the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2. And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22-30." (*Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 34, 'Why was Sin Permitted?'*)

Again we see the Lord's messenger apply the verses in Proverbs 8 to Christ. Clearly Ellen White believed that in eternity Christ was brought forth (begotten) of the Father. This is His Sonship (His inheritance). It reveals, in keeping with John 1:1-3 etc., that He is God Himself in the person of the Son (God essentially).

It is also in keeping where she wrote (this was the year following the publication of the Desire of Ages)

"The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old," Christ says. "When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." But the only-begotten Son of God humbled Himself to come to this earth. He took the sinner's place; the guiltless suffered for the guilty. This was the hiding of His glory. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 22nd February 1899, 'The Measure of God's love'*)

Repeatedly we have seen that Ellen White applies the wisdom of Proverbs 8 to Christ.

Ellen White spoke a number of times concerning those who misquote and misconstrue her writings. Here are a couple of statements. They speak for themselves so I will not comment.

"Those who are not walking in the light of the message may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and by separating these statements from their connection and placing them beside human reasonings, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn. I charge you not to do this work. To use my writings thus, and at the same time reject the message which I bear to correct errors, is misleading and inconsistent." (*Ellen G. White, Letter to G. C. Tenney, 29th June 1906, MR760 28.4*)

"There are some who, upon accepting erroneous theories, strive to establish them by collecting from my writings statements of truth, which they use separated from their proper connection, and perverted by association with error. Thus seeds of heresy, springing up and growing rapidly into strong plants, are surrounded by many precious plants of truth; and in this way a mighty effort is made to vindicate the genuineness of the spurious plants."—Letter 136, 1906, pp. 3, 4. (*To Brethren Butler, Daniells, and Irwin, April 27, 1906*)

That which has been omitted from the above quotes (that Christ is the wisdom brought forth of Proverbs chapter 8) completely distorts what Ellen White meant by her words - thus it is that these quotes are used to mean something she never meant them to mean. Ellen White's words must not be removed from their original context. This is no more than Scripture should be removed from its original context. Ellen White's writings need to be taken overall. This is like my writings need to be understood overall. It should not be said that I believe something just because of one turn of phrase or expression I use. The same can be said of Ellen White.

Seventh-day Adventists living in Ellen White's time would have known exactly what she meant by her words. They would not have interpreted them as her saying that Christ was not begotten (not brought forth). As I said, we must not try to make a full-blown theology out of just a couple of words or a single phrase. As far as I am concerned it is not an intelligent way to understand what someone believes or has written.

When we speak - whether it concerns Scripture or anything else - we do not say everything in one single statement. It is the same when we listen. We do not take any one statement (made by someone) on its own merits but we interpret it by what we already know they said or believe (the larger context). In other words, when we listen to what someone says we take into account whatever else he or she said. This surely is normal. It is just common sense.

Before we close this little section, let's consider for a moment where Ellen White said, "He [Christ] assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God". This bothers some people because they say 'How can this be if Christ is begotten?'

If I were to say to you "I have always loved my wife" or, putting it in a way in keeping with the

above quote “There never has been a time when I have not loved my wife”, would you take this literally? Of course not! You would say it was only since I met her. You would not interpret 'always' or 'never has been' to mean forever. This is because you would use your common sense and put it in the larger (unspoken) context – which is that I have not always known my wife.

Look at it another way: if I said to you that there never was a time when I was not in close fellowship with my father, would you think that this means it has been this way throughout all eternity. Of course not! Again you would use your common sense in understanding what I meant. It is the same in these quotes from Ellen White. At the time she wrote them, Seventh-day Adventists knew that she believed Christ to be God’s true Son, begotten of God in eternity. This undoubtedly is the application they would have made of her words found in the above quotes.

We must remember too that the Bible is not a complete revelation of God. I believe though that what we have been given is enough to take us through this 'emergency situation'. The Bible is very clear, as is the spirit of prophecy, that Christ is God's only begotten Son but this is as far back (in eternity) as we can go. In other words, how God had His existence prior to this we have not been told therefore we must not conjecture. It is not given to us to speculate.

More could be said Richard but I believe enough has been said to make my point.

I will now share you more evidences that your claim - that in 1913 the trinity doctrine was a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church - is a false claim.

### **The Carr letter (1935)**

In 1935, H. W. Carr, a Seventh-day Adventist minister who was once president of the Western New York Conference, sent a letter to W. C. White (Ellen White’s son) asking him to relate his mother’s views on the Holy Spirit. Ellen White had died 20 years previously in 1915.

The response of W. C. White to Carr is well worth noting. This is because it does reveal that when this letter was written, a change in the ‘thinking’ of Seventh-day Adventists regarding the Holy Spirit was taking place (a new idea was being promoted). It also reveals that by this time (1935), the trinity doctrine had not yet become established within Seventh-day Adventism (which we have seen anyway in our review of the 1936 Sabbath School lesson). It is also proof that even though Ellen White had said that the Holy Spirit was a person, everyone did not accept this to mean (not even by 1935) that this was a person exactly like (of the same nature as) God and Christ.

Carr wrote saying to W. C. White

“In the first pages of Great Controversy it is stated that the ‘Father had an associate - A co-worker...The only being that could enter into all the councils and purposes of God.’ ‘The Father wrought by His son in the creation of all heavenly beings...He holds supremacy over them all.’ ‘Sin originated with Satan, who next to Christ had been most honoured of God, and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Next to Christ he was first among the hosts of God.’ ‘The Son of God had wrought the Fathers will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven.’ The Son of God was exalted above Satan as one in power and authority with the Father.’ Christ created Satan. Ez. 28:15.”  
*(H. W. Carr, letter to W. C. White, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1935)*

In none of these statements from Ellen White is the Holy Spirit mentioned. In fact it is said that Satan is “next to Christ”. Ellen White said this twice. Why therefore, if the Holy Spirit is a person just like God and Christ, is He not seen and spoken of as being next to Christ? This appears to be what Carr was pointing out to Willie White. Ellen White had also said that the Son of God was the “only being that could enter into all the councils and purposes of God” - bringing to

mind the question, if the Holy Spirit is a person exactly like God and Christ, why could He not be included in these councils? Carr continued

“It is urged by some of our leaders now that The Holy Spirit is a third person of the same nature of the Father and Son, a member of the heavenly trio, cooperative in creation and personally active with the Father and Son.” (*Ibid*)

Here we can see a ‘changing Holy Spirit’. This was the transitional time. Carr then said to W. C. White

“For many years I have used these statements of Sr. White in combating false teachings relative to defining the Holy Spirit. “Will you kindly tell me what you understand was your mother’s position in reference to the personality of the Holy Spirit?” (*Ibid*)

Carr ended his letter by saying

“I know Brother White you would not depart from your mother’s teachings, and that you have as perfect an understanding of them as any one. I shall appreciate your opinion very much. Assuring you of the high esteem and respect I have had from my childhood in your father, mother and family, I am very truly yours in this blessed faith.” (*Ibid*)

In his reply to Carr, Willie White said such as (the paragraphs are not contiguous)

“In your letter you requested me to tell you what I understand to be my mother’s position in reference to the personality of the Holy Spirit. This I cannot do, because I never clearly understood her teachings on the matter.” (*W. C. White to H. W. Carr, letter, April 30th, 1935*)

“There always was in my mind some perplexity regarding the meaning of her utterances, which to my superficial manner of thinking, seemed to be somewhat confusing. I have often regretted that I did not possess that keenness of mind that could solve this and other perplexities. And then remembering what Sister White wrote in “Acts of the Apostles”, pages 51 and 52, “regarding such mysteries which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden”. I thought best to refrain from discussion and have endeavored to direct my mind to matters easy to understand”. (*Ibid*)

“There are many Scriptures which speak of the Father and the Son and the absence of Scripture making similar reference to the united work of the Father and the Holy Spirit or of Christ and the Holy Spirit, has led me to believe that the spirit without individuality was the representative of the Father and the Son throughout the universe, and it was through the Holy Spirit that they dwell in our hearts and make us one with the Father and with the Son.” (*Ibid*)

Whilst the Holy Spirit was regarded as a personality, He was not thought of as having “individuality” like the Father and the Son. To Seventh-day Adventists, as Jesus said (John 14:18, 23), He was both God the Father and Christ omnipresent. In other words, the Holy Spirit ‘belonged’ to God and Christ. It is both of them omnipresent. In 1936, this was still the standard belief of Seventh-day Adventists although some were pushing for a trinitarian view.

W. C. White was Ellen White’s third son. He was not someone who as we might say was ‘a bit slow on the uptake’ or perhaps even naïve, neither was he totally ignorant of his mother’s views.

Can you imagine how many of his mother’s sermons that he had heard over the years, also the number of Bible studies that he attended with her? Can you also imagine the number of private discussions that he had with her about matters of a spiritual nature, probably even about the Holy Spirit? These are obviously inestimable.

If as the Seventh-day Adventist Church claim today that Ellen White regarded the Holy Spirit as just another person like the Father and the Son, do you think that this would have been something that was beyond the intellectual capabilities of Willie White to comprehend? Is that a fair question to ask? Let's put it this way. If you are a trinitarian, is it too much for you to comprehend that the Holy Spirit is a person like God the Father and Christ?

If Ellen White's view of the Holy Spirit was that He was just a person exactly like the Father and the Son, Willie White would not only have known about it but he would have quite easily understood it. Certainly it would not have been beyond his capabilities to fathom it. This is why we can see that Ellen White did not just simply believe the Holy Spirit to be a person like the Father and the Son but regarded His nature (His being) a much more complex issue.

This can be borne out by the words of W. C. White to Carr. This is when he said in his letter

“The statements and the arguments of some of our ministers in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit is an individual as are God the Father and Christ, the eternal Son, have perplexed me and sometimes they have made me sad.” (*Ibid*)

Now what is this telling us?

This is telling us that in 1935, there were those of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry who were trying to introduce a trinitarian concept (idea) of the Holy Spirit into Seventh-day Adventism but it was saddening Ellen White's Son (W. C. White). We can readily and safely assume therefore that this trinity view of the Holy Spirit was not the 'standard' view of either Ellen White, or the belief of the other pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism, neither was it, in 1935, the views of W. C. White and perhaps tens of thousands of other Seventh-day Adventists living throughout the world at that time. Certainly in 1936 it was not the view presented in the Sabbath School lesson studies on 'Bible Doctrines'.

It seems that in irony of this realisation (that some were attempting to make the Holy Spirit a person like God and Christ) W. C. White said to Carr

“One popular teacher said “We may regard Him [the Holy Spirit] as the fellow who is down here running things”. (*Ibid*)

This today is the way that many Seventh-day Adventists regard the Holy Spirit. They see Him as an individual person like the Father and the Son who is here on earth directing God's will in the affairs of men.

Note that this letter was sent from Carr before the previously mentioned set of Sabbath School lessons were published. The studies would have confirmed to Carr the words of Willie White.

### **The Benjamin Wilkinson letter (1936)**

At the same time as the 1936 set of Sabbath School Lesson studies on 'Bible Doctrines' were issued (this was the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 1936), Benjamin Wilkinson wrote in a letter to T. S. Teters

“Replying to your letter of October 13 regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, I will say that Seventh-day Adventists do not and never have accepted the dark, mysterious Catholic doctrine of the Trinity.” (*B. G. Wilkinson, letter to T. S. Teters, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1936*)

Benjamin Wilkinson was a very high profile Seventh-day Adventist minister. He wrote this letter whilst he was President of Washington Missionary College (now Columbia Union) where he served as president until 1946. If anyone knew what was believed and taught by Seventh-day Adventists it was Wilkinson. He also wrote

“Now to show you that we have never taken the position of Arius or the position with

which the Catholics accuse him, namely, that Jesus Christ was created; nor have we taken the Catholic position on the other hand to the effect that “there never was when Christ was not.” Rather we have taken the Bible position in which Christ said; “I proceeded and came forth from the Father;” and again when Jesus said, “My Father is greater than I.” To show you this I will now quote from Daniel and Revelation, by Uriah Smith, page 430.” (*Ibid*)

This of course was in keeping with what we have just seen was said in the 1936 SS lesson studies on 'Bible Doctrines'.

A part of that which Wilkinson quoted is as follows (there was more)

‘The Scriptures nowhere speak of Christ as a created being, but on the contrary plainly state that he was begotten of the Father. (See remarks of Rev. 3:14, where it is shown that Christ is not a created being.) But while as the Son he does not possess a coeternity of past existence with the Father, the beginning of his existence, as the begotten of the Father, antedates the entire work of creation, in relation to which he stands as joint creator with God. John 1:3; Heb 1:2.” (*U. Smith, Thoughts on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation, p. 430. 1882*)

Smith also said of John 5:26, Philippians 2:9 and Hebrews 1:8

“These testimonies show that Christ is now an object of worship equally with the Father; but they do not prove that with him he holds an eternity of past existence.’ (*Ibid*)

In 1944, these statements, as well as others, were removed from Smith's book. This is when it was edited by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. More about this later.

### **The Judson Washburn letter (1939)**

During the late 1930's/early 1940's, Judson Washburn (1863-1955) can only be described as very vocal in objecting to the General Conference concerning the attempts to make trinitarianism part of the teachings of Seventh-day Adventism. So that we can see the importance and the relevance of his objections, we need to know a few facts about the man himself. As one writer described him – 'The man who made the difference'.

Judson Washburn was a prolific preacher/evangelist. Through his ministry there were countless numbers who were brought to the knowledge of the saving grace of God. Washburn knew Ellen White very well. He often communicated to her the progress with regard to the spreading of the message of Seventh-day Adventism.

The people of England and Wales should know particular of the work of Judson Washburn. This is because in our denominational history, it is said that the work here in the British Isles owes so much to his endeavours. His ministry in England and Wales was between the years 1891-1902. In 1903, after returning to America, he played a major part in transferring the denominational headquarters to Washington D. C. He was a well-esteemed man.

So how did it all begin for Judson Washburn?

At the age of twelve, Washburn had been baptised by James White (the husband of Ellen White). This was following being convinced of 'the truth' by J. N Andrews. In 1884 at the age of 21, Washburn joined the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. During this time he remained a close friend of Ellen White. They wrote to each other. It would not be presumptuous therefore to believe that he knew precisely what her views were on the relationship between God and Christ. Certainly he knew of the warning of the 'omega' (the final falling away from the Seventh-day Adventists 'faith') that in 1904 Ellen White had given to Seventh-day Adventists. Just like many have come to believe, he reasoned that it could possibly be linked to the trinity

doctrine. We shall return to this omega later.

The word 'success' does not truly reflect the effect of Washburn's preaching. His was a prolific contribution. In a 1974 Centennial Historical Special Edition of the British 'Messenger', it relates that in 1893 at the Victoria Rooms in Southampton, Washburn began a series of evangelistic meetings. It reports

"The attendances were so large that, despite the fact that no fewer than four meetings were held each Sunday, a move had to be made to the more commodious Philharmonic Hall, while retaining the Victoria Rooms for subsidiary meetings. Even so it was found impossible to control the crowds desiring to gain admittance and as a result the Victoria Rooms were abandoned altogether." (*D. S. Porter, 'A century of Adventism in the British Isles' 1974*)

In itself, the above statement speaks volumes so further comments are not really necessary but note the comments made in another magazine that was issued to celebrate the year 2000. This magazine relates that one particular researcher had concluded that British Seventh-day Adventism might well have perished but for Washburn's contribution. This reveals how highly this one man's contribution to the work in the British Isles is rated. This magazine recounts (take note of the title of the article)

"In Bath and in the south Welsh cities, Sunday preachers thundered against Washburn by name. They printed tracts against the advent faith. Nevertheless, Washburn could explain to Ellen White: 'You see, all who know anything about us, know that we believe in the Gospel and that our doctrine is not simply a legal theory' (*'A century of Adventism in the British Isles', 2000, 'Judson Washburn' (1863-1955) - The man who made the difference*)

Here is revealed the 'secret' of Washburn's success. It was the preaching of righteousness by faith, a 'living' faith in God. The article then continues

"In the Britain of the 1890s the work of an evangelist was still sufficiently newsworthy as to attract the hacks from the local newspapers. In Bath, Newport and Cardiff, Washburn's sermons were reproduced verbatim" (*Ibid*)

Without saying any more, it can be clearly seen that Washburn's dynamic preaching brought about a varied and animated response from the inhabitants of the British Isles. This was so much so in fact that the article said that in the local newspapers his sermons were "reproduced verbatim". It should go without saying that Seventh-day Adventists today would do well to emulate Washburn.

As regards to the 1919 Bible Conference (of which we have spoken), Washburn was clearly not very impressed. He said in a letter to F. M. Wilcox (who as we have seen was responsible for the wording of the 1931 statement of beliefs in which the word trinity was used for the very first time)

"You were in that secret Bible Council which I believe was the most unfortunate thing our people ever did, and it seemed to me you were losing the simplicity of your faith." (*Washburn to F. M. Wilcox, letter July 3, 1921*)

Here we have a renowned Seventh-day Adventist minister calling the 1919 Bible conference "that secret Bible Council". He was saying that it was the worse thing that Seventh-day Adventists had ever done. Wilcox was the one who had written 'the divine trinity' statement 6 years earlier in 1913.

This leads us to the very long letter that Washburn wrote to the General Conference objecting to the attempts that were being made to bring the doctrine of the trinity into the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We shall now note just a few of the comments he made.



It was in response to a sermon preached by W. W. Prescott that Washburn wrote his letter to the General Conference. Prescott was the very same man whose presentation on the person of Christ, because it contained trinitarian concepts, brought about a very 'mixed reaction' amongst the 1919 Bible Conference delegates. Concerning what he regarded as 'trinitarian' views being preached by Prescott, Washburn strongly made his objections known to the General Conference. In his letter he said such things as

"The doctrine of the Trinity is regarded as the supreme test of orthodoxy by the Roman Catholic Church", ... "The leading doctrines of the Roman papacy were taken directly from heathenism", ... "The doctrine of the Trinity is a cruel heathen monstrosity, removing Jesus from his true position of Divine Savior and Mediator"... "Satan has taken some heathen conception of a three-headed monstrosity, and with deliberate intention to cast contempt upon divinity, has woven it into Romanism as our glorious God, an impossible, absurd invention." (*Judson Washburn, The trinity, Letter to General Conference in 1939*)

In Washburn's letter to the General Conference, I would ask you now to note one very important statement. This is that concerning the doctrine of the trinity - and remember, this was in 1939, which was 3 years after the Sabbath School lesson studies on Bible Doctrines, 8 years after the word 'trinity' was first used in our fundamental beliefs (1931) and 26 years after Wilcox had made his 'divine trinity' statement (1913) - he said

"This monstrous doctrine transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church **is seeking** to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel's Message." (*Ibid*)

Notice here the emphasis. Washburn said that the trinity doctrine was "**seeking to intrude its evil presence**" into Seventh-day Adventism. This was **in 1939**, therefore it can be seen that at this time, the trinity doctrine was far from being established within Seventh-day Adventism. This is confirmed of course by reason of the 1936 Sabbath School lesson studies on 'Bible Doctrines'. These were definitely non-trinitarian.

Washburn still regarded non-trinitarianism as the preponderant faith of Seventh-day Adventists. This is hardly surprising. This is because it was still then the preponderant faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The above is further evidence that the trinity doctrine was not, in 1913, a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was not even one in 1939. This is even though in 1931 the word 'trinity' had been added to a published list of our fundamental beliefs.

As I think you will agree Richard, if as you say the trinity doctrine had been a cardinal belief of Seventh-day Adventists since before 1913, Washburn would have looked rather silly in writing this letter to the General Conference in 1939.

We shall now see that from the 1940's onwards, the begotten (Sonship) faith was still being taught within Seventh-day Adventism.

### **A continuing (1940's onward) begotten (Sonship) faith**

During the years 1942 and 1943 in the Australian Signs of the Times, there was presented each week a series of Bible Studies. This was a repeat of the studies in O. A. Johnson's text book ' Bible Doctrines'. This is the book we looked at previously (see pages 29-31). If you remember, the study concerning the Father said

"There are three persons in the Godhead; viz., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Rom. 1: 20; Matt. 28: 19. . . . **God the Father is the first person of the Godhead, and, as such, He is the greatest.** Matt. 28: 19; John 14: 28; 1 Cor. 15: 27, 28." (*Signs of the Times Australia, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1942, 'A Bible Study, the Godhead'*)

The next weeks study, titled "Divinity of Christ" said the following

"Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father. John 1: 14; 3: 16, 18.. **Since Christ is begotten of the Father, He must therefore be of the same substance as the Father; hence He must have the same divine attributes that God has, and therefore He is God.** . . . **The Father calls His Son "God," and therefore He must be God.** Heb. 1: 8-10. . . . Although Christ is the Son of God, yet He says His Father is greater than Himself. John 14: 28." (*Signs of the Times Australia, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1943, 'A Bible Study, the Godhead'*)

These beliefs therefore had not changed since our beginnings. Certainly they were the same as in the 1936 Sabbath School lesson studies on 'Bible Doctrines'.

In the same year (1943), in the 'Bible School' section of the Signs of the Times, there was a Bible Study called 'Christ's pre-existence and Deity'. This reveals what was being taught in 1943 by Seventh-day Adventists. Arthur S. Maxwell was then the 'Signs' editor. In the Bible study the question was asked

"Did Christ exist before He was born of the Virgin Mary? (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1943, 'Signs Bible School', 'Christ's pre-existence and Deity'*)

After giving the answer as being found in Colossians 1:17, Youngs added this note

"NOTE.—"Before the world was." That is, from eternity, before this world was created. Jesus, praying the Father in John 17: 24, said, "for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Before the creation of this world, or the starry heavens, even before an angel was brought into existence by the creative *hand* of God, **God begot His Son, Jesus Christ, of His own substance.**" (*Ibid*)

We see here that in our periodicals in 1943, the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God (begotten of God) was still being taught. This was in the form of a Bible study. Notice it is said again that Christ's claim to divinity is integral to Him claiming to be the Son of God. As Youngs went on to explain (this was after saying that the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy for making Himself God)

"The Jews of Christ's time would not accept His claim to divine Sonship. They were willing to accept Him as a great prophet. They were willing for Him to have the temporal throne, and to deliver them from Roman bondage. But whenever Jesus laid claim to divinity, and called Himself the Son of God, or made Himself equal with God, they persecuted Him, and then finally put Him to death. **The only explanation of Christ is that He was God revealed in human form. He is the I AM of ancient Israel.**" (*Ibid*)

The next year (1944) in the 'Canadian Signs of the Times', there was published a Christmas article. The paper's editor, Robert Bruce Thurber, had been working for our church since his youth in the early 1900's. In this article are found these words

"**Jesus was born again nineteen centuries ago. Sometime, in infinity before that, He was "begotten" of His Father.** Whatever that may mean, and more than that, we do not know. And wise is the man who refrains from speculating on what has not been revealed about divinity." (*Canadian Signs of the Times. December 1944, 'Ring out, bells of Heaven!'*)

To be "born again" a person would need to have already been born once. We noted previously that both Prescott and Jones had said, "Christ was twice born" (see above). It was later said in the article

"Our first birth was similar to His second birth; our second birth may be similar to His first; except that He is the "first begotten" and the "only begotten." God "hath begotten us

again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I Peter 1:3."  
(*Ibid*)

In the 'Signs of the Times' in 1946, in a section called 'Bible Lessons' (this was a short study called 'God of the universe'), this question was asked

"In what particular is the Father superior to all?" (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1946, 'Bible Lessons' – 'God of the universe'*)

The answer was given

"As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5:26. The superiority of the Father lies in the fact that He is the source of all life. No creature in the vast illimitable universe of God may boast of underived life." (*Ibid*)

Later the question is asked, "Who is the First-born of every creature? In whose image is the Son? The answer is returned that Christ is "the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature." Colossians 1:15." The study then asks this very important question

"When was the Son brought forth?" (*Ibid*)

In answering this question, the author quoted Proverbs 8:22-30, showing that Christ is the wisdom brought forth by God. After quoting these verses Youngs added

"Before any other creature was given life, **God brought forth His Son, His only-begotten Son, made of His own divine substance and in His express image. Christ was "first-born. The Son was given self-existent life. He was made immortal; that is, He was given perpetual life within Himself"** (*Ibid*)

There can be no mistaking that this begotten concept concerning Christ (that He was truly the Son of God) was still being taught within Seventh-day Adventism in 1946.

Three years later in 1949 the same concept was presented

"According to the Bible **the Father is the First Cause, the source of all power**; the Son is the active agent in all creation and is the Redeemer; while the Holy Spirit is the representative of both the Father and the Son." (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1949, 'Seekers after truth', No. 7, Heaven first family'*)

This again is the begotten concept (the Father "the First Cause"). The Father is the source of all life etc.

In the Canadian Signs of the Times of June 1954, in the section 'Bible Answers' the question is asked, "How is it that Christ has power to forgive sins the same as does the Father?" This is the answer that was given

"Christ has this power because it was given Him of His Father. It is resident in the fact that Christ is God (divine) the same as is God the Father. He belongs to the divine family because He is the only begotten Son of God. God gave His Son all the powers and prerogatives of deity. "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5:26.

In giving consideration to this question we do well to remember that Christ did not begin His existence at the time of His birth of the virgin. He who gave His life a ransom for sinners existed with the Father from the beginning. Paul says: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the *first born of every creature*." Colossians 1:14, 15. Christ, as Paul says,

was "first born."

He was before any creature in the universe. Of course we do not believe that He was born in the sense that humans are propagated, but He was given existence in the divine way. He is of the same essence and substance as the Father. He partook of the same divine powers, among which was the power to Forgive sins." (*Canadian Signs of the Times, June 1954, 'Bible Answers'*)

Notice that this was in 1954. The begotten concept is still being taught.

Very interesting is a remark made in the Australian Signs of the Times in 1970. It said

, "It is no accident that Jesus is called the only begotten Son of God. **What God begets is God**—just as surely as what man begets is man, or what beast begets is beast. What man makes is not man, and what God makes or creates is not God. If Smith begets a son, that son, too, is Smith, and when he is a man, those two Smiths are equals, though different in many ways. **In God's case the begetting itself is eternal and is thus different from any earthly begetting.**" (*J. D. Beyers, Australian Signs of the Times, January 1970, 'How many Gods in the Godhead'?*)

We can see from the above Richard that the begotten concept (Sonship belief) concerning Christ did not die out when the Desire of Ages was published (1898). That type of reasoning concerning our history is just a fallacy.

On this topic allow me to make this one observation. Back then, when this begotten belief was spoken of in our publications, there was no talk of censuring or disfellowshipping those who taught or believed it. The latter is quite a 'modern' innovation. It has come very much to the fore since 1980. This was when the trinity doctrine was first voted into our fundamental beliefs. Prior to this time, church members were not 'persecuted' for believing that Christ truly is the Son of God – or for not believing the trinity doctrine.

### **Warnings through the spirit of prophecy not to depart from the early 1900's faith**

We can see from the above that in our denominational publications throughout the 1940's and later, the Sonship belief concerning Christ continued to be presented. At the same time as this was happening, the 'new view' was being introduced (hence Washburn's objections to the General Conference in 1939). The promoting of the 'new view' was accomplished through our periodicals, magazines, Sabbath School lesson studies and our ministers in their preaching etc. Almost imperceptibly (so it seems), with the passing of time (and it did take time as well as death), the 'old view' was gradually phased out.

For the 'new view' to become fully effective, it was not enough to promote it within the publications coming off our presses. The books containing the 'old view' had to be allowed to go out of print. This has been so successful (apart from the promotion of these books by certain individuals in an attempt to bring our attention to the old view), it is just as though they had never existed.

One book in particular that was almost sacrosanct with Seventh-day Adventists therefore could not be taken out of print was completely rewritten from cover to cover (too much to detail here), thereby in the process of the editing, completely removing from it the 'old view'. This book is Uriah Smith's 'Daniel and the Revelation' (we noted some of what was removed when we looked at the Wilkinson letter above). This old view was that in eternity, Christ was brought forth (begotten) of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. After the editing, this book was then re-issued as though the same author had written it. This rewriting and republishing was completed by 1944. This was part of the process of the onward march towards trinitarianism.

It would be almost impossible to explain how much editing was done to Smith's book. Sentence

after sentence, also paragraph after paragraph, were restructured (rewritten). Names, dates and references were removed. Whole sentences and paragraphs were deleted whilst others, not written by Smith, were inserted. Even whole pages not written by him were added. The end result was that he would not have recognised it as his own work but it was reissued as being written by him. He had died over 40 years earlier in 1903. If you have the 1944 edition on your bookshelf, you can be sure it is not Smith's work. To understand how much was changed you would need to compare versions for yourself.

Ellen White had quite a lot to say concerning those who thought about changing what was in our books. In a letter to A. G. Daniells who was then the General Conference President she wrote the following (paragraphs not contiguous)

“Message after message has come to me from the Lord concerning the dangers surrounding you and Elder Prescott I have seen that Satan would have been greatly pleased to see Elders Prescott and Daniells undertake the work of a general overhauling of our books that have done a good work in the field for years. But neither of you is called of God to that work.”

“In some respects, you and Brother Prescott have done a strange work. It is not for the best interests that either one of you be associated together so closely as heretofore. It is not best for you to follow a way of your own choosing. You both have need of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit of God.”

“If we should now sow broadcast seeds of doubt as to the correctness of our printed books and tracts, and encourage the thought that there must needs be a general revision of our published books, a work will have begun that the Lord has not appointed us to do ... If you and Brother Prescott were to sow broadcast seeds of uncertainty and distrust in the minds of others, God would call you to a stern account for this evil.” (*Ellen G. White Letter 70, August 11<sup>th</sup> 1910 to A. G. Daniells*)

Daniells (GC President) and Prescott (GC Field Secretary) were two of the delegates at the 1919 Bible Conference. This is where concerning Christ, attempts were made to change our denominational beliefs.

In the advancing tide of trinitarianism, the truth of what we once taught, whilst Ellen White was alive - also what was taught by reason of the 1936 Sabbath School lessons studies on 'Bible Doctrines' (see above) – was to be obscured from sight. No reminders of the past Godhead theology of Seventh-day Adventism were to remain – at least this is what appears to have been the intent of those leaders who were seeking to bring the trinity doctrine into our fundamental beliefs.

One of those leaders was LeRoy Froom. Jerry Moon commented

“From the retirement of F. M. Wilcox in 1944 to the publication of *Movement of Destiny* in 1971, L. E. Froom was the most visible champion of trinitarianism among Seventh-day Adventists.”(*Jerry Moon, The Adventist Trinity Debate, Andrews University Seminary Studies, part 1, Historical Overview, 2003*)

This is why Froom appears to have been proud of the editing done to Smith's book. In his own book 'Movement of Destiny', he said to his readers in the chapter “Changing the Impaired Image of Adventism' (this was under the sub-heading “Door of Access and Dialogue Open to Us”)

“Time and circumstance had done their work. A new day had dawned. As a Church we had achieved unity of view as concerns the *complete and eternal Deity of Christ—expressed* initially through our "Fundamental Beliefs" statement of 1931, followed by others. The *Act of Atoning Sacrifice completed on the Cross—in* right relation to Christ's

Priestly Mediation—was similarly set forth in the Baptismal Certificate of 1941, with both permanently ensconced in the *Church Manual*.” (LeRoy Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, page 465, Chapter 30, ‘Changing the Impaired Image of Adventism’)

I would ask you here to note the title of this chapter, also the sub-heading (Changing the Impaired Image of Adventism' - “Door of Access and Dialogue Open to Us”).

Froom is here reflecting on the events of the 1950's. This is when because of changes we had made to the wording of our fundamental beliefs (in 1931) which made us look as though we were a trinitarian denomination, also changes made to the wording of our baptismal certificate, also the production of a church manual which included these 'new' fundamental beliefs etc., the way was open for us to dialogue with the other churches (once depicted as Babylon), which in the main were trinitarian. During the time we had opposed the trinity doctrine (as we had done for 100 years previously) this dialogue was impossible. This is because according to most (if not all) of these denominations, the trinity doctrine was the foundational belief of Christianity. Now can be seen the importance of the chapter title and the sub-heading.

Froom refers to “Time and circumstance”. He said they “had done their work”. This led him to conclude, “A new day had dawned”. By this time, meaning the 1950's, the vast majority of those in prominent positions who had stood against the acceptance of the trinity doctrine had gone to their rest whilst those who were 'trinitarian' in their thinking were taking their place. Froom was correct. A new day had dawned.

Concerning the re-writing of Smith's book (remember this was edited and re-issued in 1944), Froom said

“The removal of the last standing vestige of Arianism in our standard literature was accomplished through the deletions from the classic D&R in 1944. And the lingering "sinful-nature-of-Christ" misconception was remedied by expunging the regrettable note in the revised *Bible Readings* of 1949.” (*Ibid*)

As said previously (when discussing Prescott's remarks at the 1919 Bible Conference), the word “Arianism” is often used to depict a belief that Christ is not truly God but as we have seen documented in this article, this was not the belief of ‘old-time’ Seventh-day Adventists. To apply this terminology to what they believed is not telling the truth. The belief that Christ is truly the Son of God, begotten of God in eternity, maintained the belief that He is truly God (or as the 1936 Sabbath School lessons put it “really God” and “is very God”). Froom's remarks therefore, to say the very least, are again very misleading. Some may use much stronger language.

Seventh-day Adventists have never taught Arianism (if this terminology is meant to convey the belief that Christ is less or any other than God). This remark by Froom therefore (and others who have used it to describe our non-trinitarian beliefs concerning Christ), is often used of any teaching that opposes the trinity doctrine. Froom appears to be attempting to make our past non-trinitarian beliefs look like serious error. As we have seen though, God has, through the spirit of prophecy, given His approval of these beliefs. Who then are 'mere men' to think that they could tamper with them?

Froom's remarks concerning Christ's human nature are with reference to where it once said in 'Bible Readings' (another classic book of Seventh-day Adventism) that in the incarnation, Christ partook of our sinful fallen nature. The note said, after quoting Hebrews 2:17 and asking (with reference to this text) “How fully did Christ share our common humanity?”

“NOTE.— In His humanity Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature. If not, then He was not “made like unto His brethren,” was not “in all points tempted like as we are,” did not overcome as we have to overcome, and is not, therefore, the complete and perfect Saviour man needs and must have to be saved. The idea that Christ was born of an immaculate or sinless mother, inherited no tendencies to sin, and for this reason did not

sin, removes Him from the realm of a fallen world, and from the very place where help is needed. On His human side, Christ inherited just what every child of Adam inherits,—a sinful nature. On the divine side, from His very conception He was begotten and born of the Spirit. And all this was done to place mankind on vantage-ground, and to demonstrate that in the same way every one who is “born of the Spirit” may gain like victories over sin in his own sinful flesh. Thus each one is to overcome as Christ overcame. Rev. 3:21. Without this birth there can be no victory over temptation, and no salvation from sin. John 3:3–7.” (*Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 1914, pages 174-175, 'A sinless Life'*)

The edited 1949 version reads

“NOTE.—Jesus Christ is both Son of God and Son of man. As a member of the human family "it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren"—"in the likeness of sinful flesh." Just how far that "likeness" goes is a mystery of the incarnation which men have never been able to solve. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ was tempted just as other men are tempted—"in all points. . . like as we are." Such temptation must necessarily include the possibility of sinning; but Christ was without sin. There is no Bible support for the teaching that the mother of Christ, by an immaculate conception, was cut off from the sinful inheritance of the race, and therefore her divine Son was incapable of sinning. Concerning this false doctrine Dean F. W. Farrar has well said: "Some, in a zeal at once intemperate and ignorant, have claimed for Him not only an actual sinlessness but a nature to which sin was divinely and miraculously impossible. What then? If His great conflict were a mere deceptive phantasmagoria, how can the narrative of it profit us? If we have to fight the battle clad in that armour of human free-will, . . . what comfort is it to us if our great Captain fought not only victoriously, but without real danger; not only uninjured, but without even the possibility of a wound. . . . Let us beware of contradicting the express teaching of the Scriptures, . . . by a supposition that He was not liable to real temptation."—The Life of Christ (1883 ed.), vol. 1, p. 57.” (*Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 1949 edition, pages 143-144, 'A sinless Life'*)

You can see the changes for yourself. As Fromm said, in the 1949 edition, the “sinful, fallen nature” remark was completely removed. The remainder was rephrased accordingly.

This re-phrasing though was not saying the same as it did previously. It was not saying that Christ overcame in our sinful nature. It now said “Just how far that "likeness" goes is a mystery of the incarnation which men have never been able to solve”. Whilst to a degree this comment may be correct, it obscured the reality of Christ overcoming in the very nature that you and I need to overcome sin.

The outcome of such a change in thinking can be seen in a conversation I had quite recently with a Seventh-day Adventist minister, who, needless to say, is a trinitarian. I had said that in the incarnation, Christ had overcome in the same fallen human nature that we possess (which is what the note in 'Bible Readings' originally said). This minister disagreed with me. He said that Christ had taken the nature that Adam had BEFORE the fall. My question therefore is this:- can this be a valid interpretation of Romans 8:3? In other words, is saying that Christ took upon Himself the sinless nature of Adam before the fall, saying the same as Christ possessed “the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3)?

Through the spirit of prophecy we have been told

“It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.” (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 48, 'Unto you a Saviour'*)

“Think of Christ’s humiliation. He took upon himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. He took our sorrows, bearing our grief and shame. He endured all the temptations wherewith man is beset. He united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh.” (*Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1899, ‘Christ’s humiliation’*)

“In taking upon Himself man’s nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1898*)

“Be careful, exceedingly careful, as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set him before the people as a man with the propensities to sin. . .He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. ”(*Ellen G. White to Bro W. L. H. Baker, Letter 8, 1895, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1896*)

Regardless of any debate concerning this issue (and there is lots to discuss), it can be seen from Froom’s remarks that in the process of bringing in the ‘new belief’ (involving trinitarian concepts of the Godhead) changes were made to standard books that were in circulation whilst Ellen White was alive. This, in its train, has brought in very serious misconceptions. These concern Christ’s pre-existent relationship with the Father and His nature during the incarnation.

Regarding the results of these changes to our books, Froom had this to say

“It is significant that once these were cared for—and even beginning back in the late 1930’s—searching questions began to be asked with remarkable frequency, and vital contacts through inquiry made by scholars as to the fundamental faith of Seventh-day Adventists in relation to the Eternal Verities. It seemed to be spontaneous and simultaneous, and became a pronounced phenomenon. It was clearly the beginning of a new outreach for understanding by non-Adventist scholars.”(*LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, page 465, Chapter 30, ‘Changing the Impaired Image of Adventism’*)

This is the end result of these changes. It opened up dialogue with the trinitarian churches (Babylon). It would be too much to comment concerning this here, suffice to say that changes were made to our books in accordance with our advance towards a trinitarian concept of the Godhead. This, in the eyes of those who promoted these changes, elevated us to a level equal with the other trinitarian denominations. In his book, Froom went on to elaborate on this dialogue with the other denominations. Notice that men at ‘the top’ were making these changes. Much more could be said about Froom’s ‘Movement of Destiny’ but for now this must suffice.

Did the prophet see anything of this ‘change’ happening? She certainly did.

In a letter dated October 1903, which was also published in Special Testimonies Series B No. 2 (‘The foundation of our faith’), also Series B No. 7 (‘Decided action to be taken now’), she wrote a fearsome warning. Every Seventh-day Adventist living today should take note of it. This letter was prompted by John Harvey Kellogg’s views concerning God which led him to accept a trinitarian view of the Godhead. She warned

“The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that **this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith**, and engaging in a process of reorganization.” (*Ellen White, Letter 242, To physicians and ministers, October 1903*)



Note the highlighted. What doctrine would constitute the 'pillar of faith' of any Christian denomination? Undoubtedly it would be what a denomination believes concerning God and Christ. No other beliefs are more important. The whole concept of Christianity hangs on these beliefs.

So why would Satan suggest a reformation was needed in Seventh-day Adventism? Why would he say the doctrines we held whilst Ellen White was alive needed to be changed? Would it be because they were wrong? Of course not! If these beliefs had been wrong he would have been delighted. Certainly he would not seek to change them. The only reason he would suggest they needed changing is because he knew they were the truth, yet strangely enough, our church today says our belief concerning the Godhead, as held by us during the time of Ellen White's ministry, needed to be changed. This is because, so they say, it is not the truth.

Our Godhead beliefs are the only teachings since the death of Ellen White that have changed. All of our other teachings have remained the same. As I think you will agree, this teaching that has been changed is the most important of all the teachings of Scripture. It would not be a surprise to learn that Satan would target (attack) this belief.

So what would happen if this satanic suggestion was heeded? Ellen White continued (note emphasis supplied)

“Were this reformation to take place, what would result? -- ***The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error.*** A new organization would be established. ***Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced.*** The founders of this system would go into the cities and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath, of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement.”  
(*Ibid*)

So have any of these things happened? Has our religion changed since 1903? Everyone who knows the truth about our denominational history has to say 'yes' to this particular question. Even those who would argue that our denominational beliefs today are the truth would admit this much - in fact they more so than anyone else.

Have the “***The fundamental principles*** held by Seventh-day Adventists for 50 years prior to 1903 been “***accounted as error*”? That is a definite yes. We have seen this in this rebuttal of your beliefs Richard.**

Have “***Books of a new order*” been written? Of course they have. They are now 'trinitarian'. They were once non-trinitarian.**

Has a “***system of intellectual philosophy*” been introduced? Again most definitely! This aptly describes the trinity doctrine. Certainly this teaching cannot be proven from Scripture therefore it can only be “***intellectual philosophy*”****

Ellen White also wrote in the same letter

“Who has authority to begin such a movement? We have our Bibles. We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. ***We have a truth that admits of no compromise.*** Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth?” (*Ibid*)

It is quite apparent that Ellen White saw nothing wrong with the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. She had no doubt that what they were teaching (in 1903) is the truth. Her words are unmistakably clear. Read them again if you are not sure.

The following year came more warnings. We will note a little of them here.

When warning Seventh-day Adventists of false sentiments concerning the presence and personality of God she wrote in 1904

““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.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B, No. 2 ‘The Foundation of our Faith’ Page 53 1904*)

This is about as serious as it gets. This “omega” that Ellen White saw coming made her tremble for Seventh-day Adventists. Note too she said it would appear within Seventh-day Adventism “in a little while”. She said this in 1904, over 111 years ago. We must ask therefore, has this “omega” already arrived within our denomination, with most Seventh-day Adventists not even realising it? Some will reason that 111 years is a very long time and not just “a little while”.

She then gave this warning

“I knew that I must warn our brethren and sisters not to enter into controversy over **the presence and personality of God**. The statements made in “Living Temple” in regard to this point are incorrect. The Scripture used to substantiate the doctrine there set forth, is Scripture misapplied.” (*Ibid*)

To every Seventh-day Adventist today, particularly in the light of our present Godhead controversy, this testimony should be regarded as a matter of extreme importance. This is because as most will realise, the trinity doctrine concerns the “**the presence and personality of God**”. Note too Ellen White said that regarding this matter the author of “Living Temple” was **misapplying Scripture**. It is therefore only reasonable to assume that this would also be happening with “the omega”. The misapplication of Scripture is very often the vanguard of false teachings.

In a letter addressed to our leading physicians Ellen White warned

“Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B, No. 2 page 16, ‘A Letter to Leading Physicians’, Letter 263, July 24th 1904, ‘Teach the Word’*)

In the above ‘alpha and omega’ testimony, Ellen White was warning Seventh-day Adventists not to depart from what was then, in 1904, our denominational ‘faith’. If this is not what she was doing then the warning doesn’t make sense. I say this because whatever it was that Seventh-day Adventists were then teaching in 1904, it is only reasonable to conclude that Ellen White did believe it to be the truth that God had given to His remnant people. She was warning not to depart from it.

It should go without saying that Ellen White fully understood what constituted “the faith” of Seventh-day Adventists. It is also reasonable to conclude that she expected her readers to understand it. If they did not understand it they would not have had a clue as to what she meant by this warning – and that would not make sense either.

Even more reasonable to conclude is that if Ellen White had not believed that this 1904 faith was a correct faith - meaning a faith that had been given to them by God - she would not have been warning Seventh-day Adventists not to depart from it. I would like to think that most would agree with this reasoning. When all is said and done it is only common sense reasoning. Certainly it is not ‘rocket science’. Look at it this way: If it was not the 1904 faith that Ellen White was warning Seventh-day Adventists not to depart from then what was it?

I would ask you to note something very important here. This is that in the early 1900's, Ellen

White referred to Kellogg's views of God as being the 'alpha of heresies'. So what does the word 'alpha' mean? It means the first or beginning.

I am pointing this out because all during the time of Ellen White's ministry, including during the time she was sending out these 'alpha and omega' warnings, our church was teaching that Christ was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. Why therefore, if she believed, as our church today believes, that this is 'gross error' (heresy), why did she say Kellogg's view of God was the 'alpha' (the first or beginning) of the heresies? In other words, why didn't she say this begotten belief was the first of the heresies? We had been teaching it since our very beginnings.

Ellen White did not believe that this begotten (Sonship) concept was error. As we noted above, she said that concerning Christ's pre-existence, the beliefs held by Seventh-day Adventists were the truth. This should be of the utmost significance and importance to those who are seeking the truth of this Godhead controversy. As said previously, if she had thought that the begotten concept was wrong then she would not have been referring to Kellogg's views of God as the 'alpha of heresies' (the first or the beginning of heresies).

In the above warning, take particular note that Ellen White said that the "omega" (whatever it is) would be of "a **most startling nature**". This clearly reveals the seriousness of what this messenger of the Lord saw was coming upon Seventh-day Adventists. This reminds me of where we noted William Johnsson (editor of the Review) as saying

*"Adventists beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of present truth. **Most startling** is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord." (William Johnsson, *Adventist Review*, January 6th 1994, Article 'Present Truth - Walking in God's Light')*

Johnsson went on to say concerning Christ being the divine Son of God, begotten of God in eternity

*"Only gradually did this false doctrine give way to the Biblical truth, and largely under the impact of Ellen Whites writings in statements such as "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. (Desire of ages p 530)" (Ibid)*

Should this be telling us something today? Ellen White did warn of this happening. She also warned in 1904

*"In the book "Living Temple" there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given." (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies Series B No. 2*, page 50, 'Beware', see also letter 277, July 31<sup>st</sup> 1904)*

From the above, it is reasonable to conclude that Ellen White saw something of a 'theological nature' coming upon Seventh-day Adventists that made her tremble with fear. This is why she gave these warnings with such clarity. We must ask therefore, as God's remnant people, can we today afford to ignore them?

A study of the history of the Kellogg crisis reveals that he tried to 'explain away' his 'God in nature' beliefs by saying he had come to believe in a trinitarian concept of the Godhead. This was a view that up to that time, the early 1900's, was not professed by Seventh-day Adventists. There appears to be a strong link therefore between "the alpha", "the omega", "the presence and personality of God" and a trinitarian view of the Godhead.

Kellogg spoke about his book ('The Living Temple') to A. G. Daniells the General Conference President. This was just after the church had refused to publish it. Daniells wrote to W. C. White telling him what Kellogg had told him. In his letter Daniells wrote

“He [Kellogg] then stated that his former views regarding the trinity had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement but that within a short time **he had come to believe in the trinity** and could now see pretty clearly where all the difficulty was and believed that he could clear up the matter satisfactorily.” (*Letter, A. G. Daniells to W. C. White Oct 29<sup>th</sup> 1903*)

Daniells went on to report that Kellogg had explained that he had come to believe in “God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost” - which as we all know is trinitarian language (theology). There is much evidence to show that prior to this time, Kellogg was just as much against the trinity doctrine as were any of the other early Seventh-day Adventists. This is why Kellogg had said that concerning this teaching, he had changed his mind.

Returning our thoughts to the previous testimony Note very importantly Ellen White said that this “omega” would be received by those who are “**not willing**” to heed the warnings that had come from God. This means that it will be a matter of personal choice as to whether or not we allow ourselves to be deceived by it. For this reason we need to study and heed the warnings else we shall be amongst the deceived. This is the testimony of Jesus.

In 1905, at the General Conference Session held at Takoma Park, Ellen White spoke the following words to the delegates. This was at a time when our beliefs concerning the sanctuary (by Albion Ballenger) and the Godhead (by John Harvey Kellogg) were under attack from within

“Let not any man enter upon the work of tearing down the foundations of the truth that have made us what we are. God has led His people forward step by step though there were pitfalls of error on every side. Under the wonderful guidance of a plain, "Thus saith the Lord," a truth has been established that has stood the test of trial. When men arise and attempt to draw away disciples after them, meet them with the truths that have been tried as by fire.” (*Ellen G. White to the delegates at the 1905 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park, Washington D. C., May 24<sup>th</sup> 1905, "A Warning against False Theories," MR 760*)

At this conference, Seventh-day Adventists were being told that the “foundations of the truth” that had made them what they were was the truth that had “stood the test of trial”. This is why Ellen White said that those who would attempt bring in wrong teachings that would lead our people astray, should be confronted with “truths that have been tried as by fire”. Note that this was in 1905. This was the year following the alpha and omega warnings.

Then, after quoting Revelation 3:1-3 (which was God’s message to Sardis telling them to hold fast to their beliefs) she said

“Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith **concerning the sanctuary or concerning the personality of God or of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift without an anchor.” (*Ibid*)

Notice the two areas of belief that Ellen White said were under attack (in 1905). One was the sanctuary whilst the other was the **separate personalities of God and Christ**. Notice too Ellen White said that the teachings some were attempting to bring into the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism were “uncertainties”. This means that these things, whatever they were, were only human conjecture (intellectual speculation). That sums up the trinity doctrine. It is simply a speculative theory that destroys the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventist did not heed the warnings. This is why we are where we are today. If we had maintained the status quo as Ellen White advised us to do, we would not have this Godhead/trinity debate.

So it was that through the introduction of the 'new view' of the Godhead itself, also new views of the three persons of the Godhead, Seventh-day Adventists were led and encouraged to believe something entirely different than what was taught in our church even up to the 1950's and later. Thus it was that minds were prepared to accept the final milestone in our denominational quest to become a fully-fledged trinitarian organisation.

We are now heading towards the 1980 General Conference Session held at Dallas, Texas. This was when for the very first time in our history, the trinity doctrine was officially voted in as one of our fundamental beliefs. First though there was one more step to be taken. This was taken at the 1946 General Conference session.

### **The 1946 General Conference Session**

At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting held on June 13<sup>th</sup> of the 1946 General Conference Session held at Takoma Park, a partial report was received from the Plans Committee. It read as follows

#### **“Revision of Church Manual**

WHEREAS, There are several points in the present edition of the *Church Manual* which present problems in the administration of our church work in various lands,

*We recommend:*

1. Manual be revised, and that all changes or revision of policy that are to be made in the Manual shall be authorized by the General Conference session.
2. That the General Conference Committee is hereby authorized to appoint a representative committee to edit and rearrange the *Church Manual* and bring it up to date, and that this committee render its report to an Autumn Council.
3. That the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs now found in Section XI, be placed at the beginning of the Manual as Section I.
4. That no revision of this Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, as it now appears in the *Manual*, shall be made at any time except at a General Conference session.” (*Review and Herald*, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1946, *Revision of Church Manual*, Fifteenth Meeting, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1946)

This was voted at the conference. This meant that from that time on (1946), the only revision that could be made to the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, as they were detailed in our Church Manual, would be at a duly appointed General Conference Session. So it was that until they were changed and revised at the 1980 General Conference Session held at Dallas, our statement of beliefs, as they were listed in the 1931 Church manual, remained unchanged. They were now official. We now had a creed.

### **The 1980 General Conference session**

I include here in this very important section, various comments from the proceedings of the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas, Texas. This is where our fundamental beliefs were revised and re-written. These comments show the problems that the delegates had in putting together the belief of the trinity doctrine. This is the belief that is now No. 2 of the fundamental beliefs listed in our church manual etc. These comments can be found in full in the General Conference Bulletin, *Review and Herald*, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1980. They come under the heading 'Seventh Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session'.

We will begin with Leif Hansen who is reported as saying

"In this discussion of the Trinity, which is always a difficult matter to discuss, I wonder if a certain misunderstanding could be eliminated by saying "a unity in purpose" so that the matter of physical unity may be eliminated." (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1980, Leif Hansen*)

Hansen appears to reject trinitarian oneness. The General Conference President Neal C. Wilson replied

"I see your point there. Maybe we ought to make it a unity in purpose rather than a physical unity." (*Ibid, Neal C. Wilson*)

If the president's suggestion had been accepted, there would have been no such thing as the trinity doctrine. J. G. Bennett replied

"The statement about the Godhead and the Trinity goes on to use the pronoun He. Later as the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are discussed, we use the same pronoun He. I do recognize and accept the Trinity as a collective unity, but I would have a little difficulty in applying the pronoun He to the Trinity or the Godhead. For me this has deep theological implications" (*Ibid, J. G. Bennett*)

This is quite correct. If the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are a 'he', then how can all three of them united together as the one God be a 'he'? Having said that, if you take a look at our belief No. 2, this is exactly what it says (note the 'He' and 'His'). Does not 'He' and 'His' denote a person? As Bennett said, "this has deep theological implications".

H. J. Harris later said

"It seems to me we have a conflict or a contradiction in this statement, "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of Three co-eternal Persons." Would not it be more clear if we were to say "There is one God consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"? We begin with "one God." Then, without any explanation, we use "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Later, we go to "a unity of Three." (*Ibid, H. J. Harris*)

W. G. C. Murdoch contributed to the discussion by saying

"I would suggest that we use the expression "The Godhead or Trinity" rather than "Trinity." (*Ibid, W. G. C. Murdoch*)

W. R. Leshar also commented (this was after saying that the expression "consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" seems to introduce a limiting factor)

"It is much more in harmony with the mystery of God to simply say there is one God-- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My same observation would apply to the expression "a unity of purpose." We assume that there is a unity of purpose in the Godhead. Still, God is a mystery. And we do not know in what ways that unity might exist other than in purpose. There are some ways in which we can seem to say that God is not a unity. But even then we are not sure what we are talking about. The idea of three Beings that are One is a mystery, and it seems to me that we should not try to remove all of that mystery from the statement." (*Ibid, W. R. Leshar*)

The following discussions took place on the final day of the conference. These can be found in the General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, May 1<sup>st</sup> 1980. They are under the title 'Fifteenth Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session'.

Charles Upshaw remarked

"I have a question on Article 2, "The Trinity." I believe when we first studied the document

the term was Godhead. My objection to the use of the word Trinity is the fact that in many Christian congregations it refers to one God and also means one person. Yet in our explanation we refer to three co-eternal persons, and in Article 13 we refer to a triune God. I would like to suggest that we either change the title to "The Godhead" or "The Triune Godhead." (*Ibid, Charles Upshaw*)

W. Duncan Eva replied (showing some frustration – he was the one who had originally worded the belief)

"We discussed this back and forth. We had both, and we did not like that. Now we have used one of them and this isn't popular. We had "Godhead" in the old Manual and we didn't like that. I think it would be better just to ask the folk to express what they would prefer. Trinity to me seems to be a perfectly good word, even though we don't like some of its connotations. Many other words have connotations we are not happy with either!" (*Ibid, W. Duncan Eva*)

What these "connotations" were that Duncan Eva had in mind that Seventh-day Adventists would not have found acceptable concerning the word 'trinity' are not stated. We can only conjecture.

In the light of that statement there is something really important to note here. This is:- why say anything at all about it? Allow me to explain.

In the Scriptures, nothing is said concerning how the three persons exist together, so why try to formulate a doctrine trying to explain it? Anything said in this direction can only be human speculation. Would it not be wiser therefore just to say what the Scriptures say concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without adding anything else? I know if we did this that we would not have a trinity doctrine but would this not be more in keeping with what God would have us do (remember the Spear article)? If God has chosen to be silent upon something then He has done so for a purpose. It is not for us to speculate about that which God has chosen not to reveal. If He had wanted us to know then He would have told us.

Richard Hammill then responded to Duncan Eva's remarks by saying

"We used the word Godhead here earlier because it was a Biblical term. When we really checked it in the Greek New Testament, we found it was not an accurate translation. The word that appears in the King James Version as Godhead is really Deity. Because it was not a Biblical term, we felt we should leave this word that is Biblical, as it is better understood in the Christian world at large." (*Ibid, Richard Hammill*)

It is reasonably evident that if we had held the trinity doctrine previously as a fundamental belief, then none of this discussion would have been necessary. This shows that the 1931 statement of beliefs, although it did contain the word 'trinity', did not constitute a trinity doctrine. If it had constituted it, the only thing that would have been necessary was to leave the belief as we had it. As it happened it was necessary to formulate a completely new belief. This is because we were actually bringing a new belief into the voted fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventism. This therefore, in 1980, was the very first time a trinity doctrine had been voted into the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

At a General Conference Committee meeting the year previous to the 1980 General Conference session, the re-writing of our beliefs was discussed. Here is how it was then proposed that belief No. 2 should be expressed

## 2. The Trinity

That there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a self-existing Unity in Trinity. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, transcendent and immanent, the absolute

Reality whose infinite and personal being is a mystery forever beyond human comprehension. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:6, 7.) (*General Conference Committee Meeting notes, October 5<sup>th</sup> 1979*)

Notice it included the word “Trinity” (“Unity in Trinity”).

Here now is how it later appeared in our Yearbook and Church Manual. We can see how much this belief has been re-worded. Notice amongst other things that the word “immortal” to describe this trinity God was added and the word 'trinity' removed.

## 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. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.) (*2013 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, page 7*)

Did you notice that the voted fundamental belief does not contain the word 'trinity'? It is the heading that suggests the trinity doctrine.

Very interestingly, before the discussions of the revision of our beliefs at this General Conference Session (before the wording above was established), the president Neal C. Wilson addressed the delegates with the following remarks

“For some time we have been considering a refinement of our Statement on Fundamental Beliefs. I think you have that document in your hands. No doubt you have done both some studying and some praying.

We have heard a variety of interesting rumors. Some, it is said, understand that the church leaders want to destroy completely the foundations of the church and set the church on a course that would be un-Biblical, contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism. My fellow delegates, there is nothing that is further from the truth. We have also heard that any time we touch the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs we would be introducing the Omega, the final confusion of theological and doctrinal positions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I suggest to you that this is also a very unfortunate statement.” (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1980, Neal C. Wilson*)

First of all notice that Wilson called this event “a refinement of our Statement on Fundamental Beliefs”.

From what the president said here we can see that there were many at that time who were afraid of what was happening with this revision of our beliefs. As the president said, some even thought it tantamount to the 'omega' that Ellen White had warned about (see above). Wilson therefore knew that Ellen White said it was coming into Seventh-day Adventism. I wonder what he thought about it? In fact I am wondering what our ministers today think about it. After all, Ellen White said many Seventh-day Adventists would accept it. Why therefore do we not hear anything about it today from the ministry?

Wilson said that some feared we were going “contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism” but he told the delegates “there is nothing that is further from the truth”. Were we though going contrary to our past beliefs? I believe the evidence is overwhelming. We were definitely going contrary to past beliefs. This is undeniable.



The president's remarks were something similar to A. G. Daniells' opening remarks at the 1919 Bible Conference (see above). Both spoke of the 'fears' of the people regarding what was happening.

We know that regarding the Godhead, what was decided at the 1980 conference was contrary (completely the opposite in fact) to what we once believed and taught. We have seen this in this study.

Wilson continued

"I can understand how individuals far removed from where some of these things are being studied, and who may not themselves have been asked to participate in a restudy or refinement of wording, might feel that there is something very sinister, mysterious, and secret going on that will suddenly confront us, and that it may contribute to the ultimate detriment and demise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My fellow delegates, I assure you that no one who has been struggling with some of these matters has any such intention.

There are others who think they know why this is being done. They believe it is being prepared as a club to batter someone over the head, to try to get people into a narrow concept of theology, not leaving any opportunity for individual interpretation of prophecy, or any individual views with respect to theology or certain areas of doctrine. This also is unfortunate, because this never has been and is not the intention of any study that has been given to the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs.

Some academicians, theologians, and others have expressed the fear that this statement was being developed so that the church could confront them with a checklist to determine whether they should be disqualified from teaching in one of our institutions of higher education. It is very, very tragic when these kinds of rumors begin to develop." (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1980, Neal C. Wilson*)"

Since then, because they will not accept this trinity teaching voted in at Dallas, many members have been stopped from teaching and preaching. Many have also been disfellowshipped or censured for the same reason. Just a few days ago someone emailed me saying that because of his refusal to accept the trinity doctrine, his church has stopped him from preaching. As you said to me Richard

"There are those who have been and are now being disfellowship for disseminating Anti-Trinitarian doctrine within the church." (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill. 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

"You can be disfellowshipped for NOT adhering to the fundamental beliefs of the church and teaching contrary to...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. ... if you were in my conference you would have be disfellowshipped long ago. It may be different in the UK, but it will not fly here in the US. You really are not, nor is anyone who does not believe in the Trinity a Seventh-day Adventist. . ." (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

So had what Wilson had heard people saying simply rumour? Your testimony Richard tells us very clearly it was not. By the way, why do you believe you have the right to say who is not a Seventh-day Adventist?

Wilson also said later in his address

"We are not suggesting changing any belief or doctrine that this church has held. We have no interest in tearing up any of the foundations of historical Adventism. This

document is not designed to do that, nor to open the way so that it can be done. It should be clear that we are not adding anything nor are we deleting anything in terms of historical Adventist theology. We are trying to express our beliefs in a way that will be understood today.” (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1980, Neal C. Wilson*)

Is this true? Up to 1980 we did not have, as one of our fundamental beliefs, a trinity doctrine. In fact early Seventh-day Adventist repeatedly spoke out against it. We have seen that we did not even have a trinity doctrine as one of our official beliefs when they were declared in 1936 through our Sabbath School lesson studies. How can it be said therefore that we were not changing our beliefs – and how could it be said that we were not “deleting anything in terms of historical Adventist theology”? Quite obviously we were changing our beliefs – and we were rejecting what Seventh-day Adventists once believed. That much really is obvious. We were not simply trying to re-express our historic beliefs.

As George Knight, a leading historian of Seventh-day Adventism wrote in 1993 (this is when was Professor of church history at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University)

“Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs. More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief Number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity.” (*George Knight, 'Ministry' magazine, October 1993, page 10, 'Adventists and Change'*)

We have seen previously that thousands of Seventh-day Adventists, even in the 1940's would not have accepted it let alone early Seventh-day Adventists. Note the title of the article.

George Knight's remarks were no different than when a few months later, William Johnsson, as editor of the Adventist Review, boldly asserted in a 1994 article called 'Present Truth – Walking in God's light'

“Some Adventists today think, that our beliefs have remained unchanged over the years, or they seek to turn back the clock to some point when we had everything just right. But all attempts to recover such “historic Adventism” fail in view of the facts of our heritage.” (*William Johnsson, Adventist Review, January 6<sup>th</sup> 1994, Article 'Present Truth - Walking in God's Light'*)

“Adventists beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of present truth. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.” (*Ibid*)

These changes have come about because of the introduction of the trinity doctrine into our fundamental beliefs. This includes a change of beliefs concerning Christ. What our church today says about Christ is not the same as believed by Seventh-day Adventists during the time of Ellen White's ministry: neither is it the same as the officially stated beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists in 1936 (see above). In fact our church today say that these past beliefs are heresy. This is why church members today are being disfellowshipped for believing them.

It is no wonder that Johnsson exclaimed that the “Most startling” of the changes made to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists is “the teaching regarding Jesus Christ”. This must say everything. Certainly it is saying that Seventh-day Adventists, even up to 1936 and beyond, would not, concerning Christ, accept what our church today is teaching. That really is a startling realisation. It is also a refutation of where Neal C. Wilson had said about the re-writing of our beliefs in 1980

“We have no interest in tearing up any of the foundations of historical Adventism, , ,It should be clear that we are not adding anything nor are we deleting anything in terms of historical Adventist theology.” (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> April*

1980, Neal C. Wilson)

In an article in the Review this year (2015) that dealt with the changes in wording of our 28 fundamental beliefs (at the 2015 GC session), Artur Stele (now a General Conference vice president), chair of the revision committee is quoted as saying

“Looking at all the changes, I must say there are none that bring anything new to our beliefs,” Stele said. “This is what we have always believed.” (*Adventist Review, November 2015, ‘28 Fundamental Beliefs Get an Update’ by*)

Our present day fundamental beliefs are not what we have always believed - far from it. After reading this document, no explanation should be needed. Wilson concluded his 1980 address

“I want to make it very clear that the introduction of this Statement does not suggest that we are not really sure what we believe and that there is a great deal of indecisiveness. This is not the case. There are a few little pockets of concern here and there, and there always will be. We can expect a lot more of those in the future, We have seen only the beginnings of questions, attacks, and endeavors to wipe out certain beliefs. There are those who would like to see some things changed or diluted, watered down, or even wiped out.” (*General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1980, Neal C. Wilson*)

From what we have seen from the remarks of the delegates when trying to formulate the trinity belief, there did seem a great deal of confusion over what we did believe. Certainly there was a great uncertainty as to how to explain it.

Wilson spoke of “endeavors to wipe out certain beliefs”. As we have seen from this document, this is something that had already been accomplished by the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our past Godhead beliefs had been completely wiped out. This is especially concerning Jesus. Even you Richard will admit to that one.

In 2011, Richard Rice (professor of theology and philosophy of religion at Loma Linda University) made an interesting observation concerning how the two editions of our hymnal (1949 and 1983) have reflected our changed denominational Godhead theology. The 1949 edition reflected our non-trinitarian theology whilst the 1983 edition, which was 3 years after the trinity doctrine was first voted into our fundamental beliefs at Dallas Texas, was changed to suit trinitarianism. He explained

“The 1949 publication altered a number of familiar Christian hymns in order to remove their Trinitarian references. The 1985 publication restored the Trinitarian references to these hymns. Thus, the closing line of “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the 1949 hymnal—“God over all who rules eternity”—becomes in the 1985 hymnal “God in three persons, blessed Trinity!” The 1949 version of “Come Thou, Almighty King” deletes a stanza that begins with the words “To Thee, great One in Three, Eternal praises be.” The 1985 version restores that stanza. The 1985 publication also adds no fewer than ten new hymns containing straightforward Trinitarian language. Consequently, we can now sing the following lines: “Praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Spirit, three in One” (in hymn 2); “Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name You” (in hymn 30); “The Trinity whom we adore, forever and forever more” (in hymn 148)”. (*Richard Rice, Adventists Finding Identity in God, January 2011*)

Rice concluded

“If a community’s worship provides an important indication of its religious understanding, it is clear that significant developments have taken place in the past few decades in the

Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God.” (*Ibid*)

These “past few decades” would be from the 1980’s onward. The 1983 changes in our hymnal were made to suit our change in theology – to trinitarianism.

The question is Richard: if (as you say) we had been a trinitarian denomination since before 1913, why did we produce a hymnal in 1949 reflecting non-trinitarian theology (removing trinitarianism from the hymns) – and why did we publish another one, 3 years after the Dallas General Conference, reflecting trinitarianism? This is a case of every picture telling a story.

### **Ellen White – not a trinitarian**

Richard:- Along with others, you believe that what Ellen White wrote, particularly in her book the Desire of Ages, contributed to us becoming a trinitarian denomination. I would refute this claim. Ellen White was as much a non-trinitarian as I am. I believe that what is happening is that her writings are being misused.

That Ellen White was not a trinitarian is very easy to prove. All that we need to do is to understand what constitutes the trinity doctrine and then compare it with what she wrote. I will do this now.

#### Part (a) The trinity doctrine

In my first reply to you I did ask you what you meant by your use of the word 'trinity'. I asked you if you believed the same as our theologians were teaching. I asked you if you believed as explained here by Ekkehardt Mueller, Gerhard Pfandl and Fernando Canale.

“There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), however, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all called God (Matt. 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 newsletter Reflections, July 2008*)

“Trinitarianism is the orthodox belief that there is but one living and true God. Nevertheless this one God is a unity of three persons, who are of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director, Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists', 1999*)

“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, the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 138*)

The reason why I asked you this was because if by your use of the word 'trinity' you were meaning something else – and I did not realise it – we would end up talking at cross purposes to each other. As I said to you in my email, the above is the trinity doctrine. Without the three persons being of the one and the same indivisible substance as the ‘one God’ – and without them being inseparable - there is no such teaching. This is why I said to you.

“In a flurry of emails I received from you dated 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and (two on the) 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, the word trinity was used 114 times. If you include the attachments you sent it totals over 160 times. On the basis of this, as I think you will agree, it is imperative to understand what the use of this word is meant to convey. I say this because if you intend it to mean one thing and I take it to mean something else, then it is reasonably obvious that we shall have very serious problems.” (*Terry Hill, email to Pastor Richard*)

*Mendoza, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

Your reply to me I thought rather strange. I could not understand it. I still don't understand it. You said

“And therein is **YOUR problem** . . . You do not take the word “Trinity” to mean what Seventh-day Adventists say and believe it to mean, but rather superimpose YOUR own meaning upon the use of the SDA Church of “The Trinity.” (*Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015*)

What you mean by this Richard I have no idea. Was it because I quoted Pfandl, Mueller and Canale? Perhaps you can explain. You then added

“Does it really matter how many time the word “Trinity” is used? be it 114 or 1114? Does it matter how many emails the word was used in? No.” (*Ibid*)

I would say it certainly does matter. This is because if I (or anyone else for that matter) do not know what you mean each time you use the word ‘trinity’ then how can I (or anyone else) have a reasonable conversation with you about it? After all, you are the one who is insisting that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has held the trinity doctrine as a fundamental belief for well over 100 years. It is imperative therefore to understand what you mean when you say ‘trinity’ or ‘trinity doctrine’.

As we can see from what was written by Gerhard Pfandl, Ekkehardt Mueller and Fernando Canale, the trinity doctrine says that the three persons of the Godhead are of one indivisible substance (one being), inseparable and unchangeable. Ellen White would deny that this could be proven from Scripture or from her writings. This is why she would never have supported trinitarianism. In fact she said in one place

“There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh*)

This tells us that prior to the creation of our world there was a ‘certain oneness’ between God and Christ but even if it was explained to us (says Ellen White), we would not be able to comprehend it. This is where we should leave it - not attempt to explain it. This was the counsel we noted on pages 13 and 14 of this document. Particularly we should not invent or adopt a teaching such as the trinity doctrine to do it. Did you notice she did not include the Holy Spirit in this oneness?

Part (b) “There are three living persons of the heavenly trio”

The above sub-title is a quotation from a testimony that Ellen White wrote in 1905. The testimony concerned John Harvey Kellogg. I am sure that most Seventh-day Adventists have encountered it. Here is the complete sentence.

“There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit-those who receive Christ by living faith are baptised, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.” (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No. 7, page 62 1906 ‘Come out and be Separate’*)

Quite understandably, Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians use this quote to so say ‘prove’ that

Ellen White was a trinitarian but in reality, when understood in its context, it tells us exactly the opposite. It shows she was denying trinitarianism, not upholding it. I will explain.

As we noted on page 99, John Harvey Kellogg attempted to justify his 'God in nature' idea by saying that his past understanding of the trinity doctrine was wrong. Like Seventh-day Adventists in general, his past understanding was that the trinity doctrine was an unscriptural teaching so he rejected it. Now though, in the early 1900's, he said he had come to believe it.

When writing this testimony concerning Kellogg, Ellen White addressed this issue. She did so by quoting from a popular book of that time. This book is called 'The Higher Christian Life'. Its author was a very well known Presbyterian minister by the name of William Boardman. Ellen White probably had Boardman's book in her personal library. It was very popular amongst Christians (too much to explain here).

In his book, Boardman had penned some three-in-one illustrations of God. These had been used by trinitarians to explain their trinity teaching. Here is what Boardman had written

"The Father is as the light invisible. The Son is as the light embodied. The Spirit is as the light shed down. . . . The Father is like the dew in invisible vapor. The Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form. . . . The Father is like to the invisible vapor. The Son is as the laden cloud and palling rain. The Spirit is the rain — fallen and working in refreshing power. The Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life" (*W. Boardman, The Higher Christian life, part 2, chapter 1, page 101-3, 'For me: what then must I do?'*)

He said of these illustrations

"These likenings are all imperfect. They rather hide than illustrate the tri-personality of the one God, for they are not persons but things, poor and earthly at best, to represent the living personalities of the living God." (*Ibid page 103*)

To a degree, as we shall see, Ellen White agreed with this statement (at least where Boardman says that these illustrations are imperfect). Boardman then wrote of these three-in-one illustrations

"So much they may do, however, as to illustrate the official relations of each to the others and of each and all to us. And more. They may also illustrate the truth that all the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, dwells in each person of the Triune God." (*Ibid*)

Boardman penned these illustrations to help explain the three-in-one (trinity or triune) concept of God. Whilst admitting that they were "imperfect" he did say that they "illustrate the truth" that "all the fulness" of the Godhead dwells in each of the divine personalities. Note that according to Boardman, this "living God" was the "triune God", meaning a composite three-in-one entity as described by the trinity doctrine. Note too he says that these illustrations do "illustrate the official relations of each to the others".

Ellen White did not see it the same way. She said in this testimony concerning Kellogg (note well her very first words – also the title of the testimony)

"I am instructed to say," (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, page 62 'Come out and be separate'*)

Ellen White was not voicing her own opinion. She had been instructed by God to write it. She then quotes Boardman's three-in-one illustrations

"The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted. Such representations as the following are made: "The Father is as the light invisible; the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad." "The Father

is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beautiful form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life." Another representation: "The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power." (*Ibid*)

Here we are told that these three-in-one types of ideas concerning God "are not to be trusted". She then condemned them by saying

"All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God can not be compared with the things His hands have made. These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. "The Father can not be described by the things of earth." (*Ibid*)

Notice Ellen White called these three-in-one illustrations "spiritualistic representations".

By quoting these illustrations from Boardman's book, we can see clearly that as did Boardman, Ellen White was making reference to the trinity doctrine (the "triune God" as Boardman had called God). We can see therefore that in 1905, Seventh-day Adventists were being told that all illustrations that attempt to make God's being as three-in-one are wrong. In fact Ellen White says that they are all "imperfect" and "untrue". How much more of a plain testimony could Seventh-day Adventists receive about not depicting God as being three-in-one as in the trinity doctrine? This was a very serious and very pointed testimony. Ellen White, although she did not use the word 'trinity', was undoubtedly referring to the trinity doctrine.

I would now ask you to note something really very interesting. Following on from his three-in-one illustrations of God, Boardman made the following statement (note the capitalised words are as they are in Boardman's book)

"THE FATHER IS ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD INVISIBLE.  
THE SON IS ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD MANIFESTED.  
THE SPIRIT IS ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD MAKING MANIFEST" (*William Boardman, The Higher Christian Life, part ii 'How attained, chapter 1, page 105 'For me: then what must I do?*)

In similar fashion, Ellen White said the following (this was following on from her condemnation of Boardman's three-in-one illustrations)

"The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight.

The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be "the express image of His person." "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is shown the personality of the Father.

The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour." (*Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No. 7, page 62 1906 'Come out and be Separate'*)

Here we can see that Ellen White used Boardman's statements as a basis for what she wrote. In so doing she expanded, modified and elaborated upon them. Now notice what Boardman concluded. This is where it becomes very interesting. He wrote

"The persons are not mere offices, or modes of revelation, but **living persons of the living God.**" (*William Boardman, the Higher Christian Life, part II 'How Attained, chapter I, 'For me: then what must I do?*)

This has now become a trinitarian statement. To the three “living persons” has now been added the oneness of “the living God”.

Ellen White concluded in similar fashion but note the very important modification she made to Boardman’s words

*“There are three living persons of the heavenly trio ...” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No. 7, page 62 1906 ‘Come out and be Separate’)*

The way that Ellen White modified Boardman’s statement is extremely important to note. It is highly significant in the present trinity debate within Seventh-day Adventism. Boardman had said that the three personalities were “living persons of **the living God**” but Ellen White said that they were “living persons of **the heavenly trio**”.

So, you may ask, what is the difference?

The difference is that Boardman’s is a trinitarian statement whilst Ellen White’s statement is not. Boardman spoke of the one God as being three-in-one whilst Ellen White did not. She just said that the three made up the Godhead not that the three made up the one God. This really is very, very important.

Here then concerning the Godhead, direct from the pen of Ellen White, which Seventh-day Adventists believe was motivated by the leading of God’s Spirit, was an all-encompassing and very important statement. Obviously it also depicted what Seventh-day Adventists then believed. This was in 1906. It was still non-trinitarianism.

Some have used this statement to try and prove that Ellen White was a trinitarian but this is not a valid use of her writings. This is because she does not say that all three personalities are all united into one indivisible God (essential trinitarianism) as Boardman said (a living God) but is a trio of divine personalities. In fact as we have seen in this testimony, she condemned the three-in-one illustrations of God that made Him look triune as in the trinity doctrine.

It is very important to recognise here that Ellen White took what many would say was a genuine (authentic) trinitarian statement and turned it into one that was non-trinitarian. Here therefore is a question.

If as some say Ellen White was a trinitarian (remember this testimony was initially written in 1905 and reproduced in the testimonies in 1906 which was 8 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’) then why, when copying what Boardman had written, did she remove the trinitarianism from it and make it non-trinitarian? She must have had a very good reason for doing so or she would have used it as Boardman had written it. After all, it was a perfectly sound trinitarian statement. It was a statement that all trinitarians would endorse.

It is reasonably obvious that Ellen White removed the trinitarianism (from Boardman’s statement) because it was not in keeping with what God had shown her. Remember she had said that she had been “instructed to say” what she wrote. This was God stepping in saying that the trinity doctrine is wrong. Seventh-day Adventists would do well to heed this testimony.

Unfortunately, this has not happened. In our publications we have often described God by using three-in-one illustrations. I believe that the worse one I have seen is where God is likened to an egg. This is presently on the Seventh-day Adventist official website here

<https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/trinity/>

This to me, as is the speaker’s reference to the Father as being ‘the guy who lives up in Heaven’, is about as irreverent as it gets. This though is where this trinity reasoning has led



Seventh-day Adventists. Needless to say, the Testimony of Jesus is being ignored. It was also ignored in our Sabbath School Quarterly in 2006. This is when in attempting to describe God as three-in-one, the lesson author asks Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world

“What analogies—such as **a triangle or a three-pronged fork** — can help someone understand the idea of how one God can be composed of three equal Persons?” (*The Seventh-day Adventist Lesson quarterly, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2006 Sunday March 26<sup>th</sup> page 7*)

To describe God this way I believe is denigrating. Never should we describe His being as like “a triangle or a three-pronged fork” or as an egg. It really is disparaging. We have the testimony of the spirit of prophecy on this one.

Ellen White explained why she had written the testimony. Here are her words

“I write this because any moment my life may be ended. Unless there is a breaking away from the influence that Satan has prepared, and a reviving of the testimonies that God has given, souls will perish in their delusion. **They will accept fallacy after fallacy, and will thus keep up a disunion that will always exist until those who have been deceived take their stand on the right platform. All this higher education that is being planned will be extinguished; for it is spurious. The more simple the education of our workers, the less connection they have with the men whom God is not leading, the more will be accomplished.** Work will be done in the simplicity of true godliness, and the old, old times will be back when, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, thousands were converted in a day. When the truth in its simplicity is lived in every place, then God will work through His angels as He worked on the day of Pentecost, and hearts will be changed so decidedly that there will be a manifestation of the influence of genuine truth, as is represented in the descent of the Holy Spirit.” (*Ibid*)

#### Part (c) The Infinite risk

There is one belief held by many non-trinitarians such as myself that would be totally impossible to hold in the trinitarian model of God yet it was a belief held by Ellen White. As of yet I have never heard a trinitarian Seventh-day Adventist theologian or minister even promote this belief; let alone use her writings in support it. The truth is though, she believed and taught it. Personally I believe that this teaching should be paramount in our understanding of God's love for fallen humanity. It shows the depth of God's love for humanity.

This is the belief that when the decision was made for Christ to become incarnate, a risk was taken concerning His eternal existence. As I said, this belief is prohibited in trinitarianism. This is probably why you will never find trinitarians promoting it – even though it is of the utmost importance. What other teaching can say any more about God's love for us – that in order to save us, He was willing to put His Son's eternal life at risk?

So what did Ellen White have to say concerning this risk? Here for you to ponder are some statements from her writings.

“We do not comprehend the infinite condescension of Christ in consenting to war with the enemy, or the infinite risk he ventured in engaging in the great controversy in our behalf.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times 25<sup>th</sup> April 1892, ‘The purpose and plan of grace’, see also The Present Truth UK, February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1893*)

Regarding this “infinite risk” we will allow Ellen White to explain

“To the honor and glory of God, His beloved Son -- the Surety, the Substitute -- was delivered up and descended into the prisonhouse of the grave. The new tomb enclosed Him in its rocky chambers. If one single sin had tainted His character the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber, and the world with its

burden of guilt would have perished." (*Ellen G. White, Ms. 81, 1893, p. 11, Diary entry for Sunday, July 2, 1893, Wellington, New Zealand*)

"Christ has found his pearl of great price in lost, perishing souls. He sold all that he had to come into possession, even engaged to do the work, and run the risk of losing his own life in the conflict." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 119, 1895*)

"Remember that Christ risked all; "tempted like as we are," he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict." (*Ellen G. White, General Conference Bulletin 1<sup>st</sup> December 1895 'Seeking the Lost'*)

"Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages. Page 49 'Unto you a Saviour'*)

"Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God. Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages page 131, 'The victory'*)

"Had there been the least taint of sin in Christ, Satan would have bruised His head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1898, see also Selected Messages Book 1 page 256*)

"Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His Deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty." (*Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, 10th May 1899, 'Christ glorified'*)

"He became subject to temptation, endangering as it were, His divine attributes. Satan sought, by the constant and curious devices of his cunning, to make Christ yield to temptation." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 5, 1900, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventists Bible Commentary Volume 7 page 926*)

"He Took the Infinite Risk        The issues at stake were beyond the comprehension of men, and the temptations that assailed Christ were as much more intense and subtle than those which assail man as His character was purer and more exalted than is the character of man in his moral and physical defilement. In His conflict with the prince of darkness in this atom of a world, Christ had to meet the whole confederacy of evil, the united forces of the adversary of God and man; but at every point He met the tempter, and put him to flight. Christ was conqueror over the powers of darkness, and took the infinite risk of consenting to war with the enemy, that He might conquer him in our behalf. (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1915, 'The Mighty and Inspiring Conflict', see also Signs of the Times, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1893, 'The plan of salvation'*)

Perhaps it was Roy Adams who in more recent years has perfectly summed up the theory that there was no risk in Christ becoming incarnate. In 2008 as sub-editor of the Review he wrote

"To say there was no risk in the Incarnation is to argue the biblically untenable position that it was impossible for Jesus to sin. If that were the case, then we'd be into divine playacting of the most cynical kind. And Jesus' 40-day fast in the desert, His all-night prayer vigils, and His agony in Gethsemane would all amount to a cruel farce." (*Roy*

*Adams, Advent Review, April 17th 2008, 'An impenetrable mystery')*

If God is a trinity as purported in our fundamental beliefs (meaning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute the 'one God' - therefore they are inseparably connected to each other as the one indivisible being of God), then it is impossible for any of the three to lose their eternal existence. Ellen White obviously disagreed with this reasoning. She was definitely not a trinitarian.

Very interesting is a remark that was made by Ella Robinson. She was the eldest granddaughter of Ellen White. In an interview with James R Nix (present Director of the Ellen G. White Estate) she spoke of a sermon she had heard her grandmother (Ellen White) preach. She recalled

*"I see grandma standing in the pulpit, dressed in her loose fitting, black sack suit, narrow cuffs of white, narrow white collar secure at the throat by a small broach. She's been telling of the matchless love of Christ in suffering ignominy and death **and even running the risk of eternal separation from His Father in heaven by taking upon Himself the sins of the world.** She pauses, look up, and with one hand resting on the desk and the other lifted heavenward she exclaims in a ringing voice, 'Oh, Jesus, how I love you, how I love you, how I love you.' There is a deep hush. Heaven is very near." (Ella Robinson, Interview with James R Nix, October 12th 1969)*

It is evident that those close to Ellen White - those who had heard her preach and those who knew of her beliefs - knew she firmly believed that in entering into a plan of redemption for the human race, there was a risk taken concerning Christ's eternal existence. As Ella Robinson recalled, Ellen White spoke of Jesus *"running the risk of eternal separation from His Father in heaven"*. This is in keeping with the statements of Ellen White that we have read above. She said that *"tempted like as we are," he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict* - also that if Christ had sinned, *"the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber"*, thus He would never have been resurrected by His Father. This would have been an eternal separation.

In 1899, the year after the Desire of Ages was published, Ellen White wrote these words

*"The Captain of our salvation was perfected through suffering. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was necessary for the awful darkness to gather about His soul because of the withdrawal of the Father's love and favor, for He was standing in the sinner's place, and this darkness every sinner must experience. The righteous One must suffer the condemnation and wrath of God, not in vindictiveness; for the heart of God yearned with greatest sorrow when His Son, <the Guiltless,> was suffering the penalty of sin. **This sundering of the divine powers will never again occur throughout the eternal ages.**" (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 93, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1899)*

\*The words "the Guiltless" were added by Ellen White in her own handwriting after the manuscript was typed.

If Christ had sinned, this *"sundering"* would have been permanent. It would mean the eternal separation of the Father and the Son. The above was written by Ellen White the year following the publication of the Desire of Ages. Note too that it was after the publication of this book that Ellen White made a number of these risk statements. What should that be telling us? It is telling us that in this book, Ellen White could never have meant to depict God as a trinity of divine beings as in the trinity doctrine.

If I knew nothing else of Ellen White's writings other than we have just read above, it would be impossible to conclude that she was a trinitarian. There is no way a trinitarian can believe what is written in the above statements. This is why I say that trinitarianism destroys the gospel. In other words Richard, your trinity doctrine not only conceals what Christ risked to save you but also denies it. I could never be a trinitarian. It would be like being a traitor to both God and

Christ. On that subject I could say more but that's enough for now.

### The Andreasen testimony

It would be amiss of me here not to mention what has become known as the 'Andreasen testimony' – and it is quite obvious Richard, because of the number of times you refer to it in your emails, that you personally give it a great deal of credibility. I must say though I cannot go along with you on this one, or agree with your use of it. I believe Andreasen's testimony is somewhat suspect. This may seem a rather 'out of place' thing to say (and I am very sorry to have to say it) but I can only be honest. What he says I find very confusing. I will try to explain.

In a chapel talk at Loma Linda on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1948, Andreasen said the following (this is as you quoted in your email with your emphasis)

*“I remember how astonished **we** were **when Desire of Ages was first published**, for it contained some things that **we** considered unbelievable, **among others the doctrine of the Trinity** which was not then generally accepted by the Adventists.” (M. L. Andreasen, Chapel Talk, Loma Linda, California, November 30<sup>th</sup> 1948”)*

He later explained (he is referring to the visit he said he made in 1909 to Ellen White's home where he says she allowed him to read her original writings) (again with your emphasis)

*“I was particularly interested in the statement in Desire of Ages **which at one time caused great concern to the denomination theologically**; “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.” p. 530. That statement may not seem very revolutionary to you, but to us it was. **We could hardly believe it**, but of course **we could not preach contrary to it**. I was sure Sister White had never written, “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.” But now I found it in her own handwriting just as it had been published. It was so with other statements. As I checked Up, I found that they were Sister White’s own expressions.” (Ibid)*

These two statements are often used by the trinitarians in an attempt to show that when the Desire of Ages was published in 1898 it had a tremendous impact on the Godhead theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. So much so in fact that it completely changed it. This was particularly with respect to our beliefs concerning Christ and the trinity doctrine. This Richard, unless I have it wrong, is what you would like me to believe.

I did notice that quite a number of times in Andreasen's statement you have highlighted the “**we**”. I assume by doing this you intend it to mean the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general - including of course Andreasen. You claim (again your emphasis)

*“**THESE 2 Historical Facts** (the 1913 R&H document and Adreasen's [sic] testimony about the powerful change that DA 530 had made upon the beliefs of the denomination) spell doom to the Anti-Trinitarian fabricated history of HOW the Trinity Doctrine was mischievously brought into the church by a few men!” (Pastor Richard Mendoza, email to Terry Hill, 13th October 2015)*

In this rebuttal I have already shown you that the 'divine trinity' statement made by Wilcox in 1913 did not prove that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had accepted the trinity doctrine. This is because by then (1913) we had not accepted it. It really is that simple. As our denominational historical records reveal, it was not until many decades later that it was first accepted. This is in keeping with the way that Merlin Burt and others have reported our history. So whilst this 'divine 'trinity' statement by Wilcox can quite rightly be said to be a 'historical fact', it does not prove what you claim it to prove.

I will now show you the 'problem' I have with Andreasen's testimony. I believe it will be seen that his testimony cannot mean what you claim it to mean. First of all the evidence from history.

Regardless of the claims by Andreasen (whatever he meant by his words and I believe that what he meant was not as purported today by the trinitarians who use his testimony to support their trinity reasoning), I believe I have shown very clearly that when *The Desire of Ages* was published in 1898 it had no affect whatsoever on the theology of Seventh-day Adventists. You have seen this for yourself. Even going into the 1940's, which was over 40 years after the publication of Ellen White's book, we were still (a) a non-trinitarian denomination and (b) still teaching, in our officially declared beliefs, that in eternity Christ is begotten of God. These are the beliefs that the trinitarians say, by reason of the publication of the *Desire of Ages*, were eliminated from the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. As you insist Richard (making reference to what Ellen White wrote in the *Desire of Ages*)

*“Ellen G. White was clearly supporting **Trinitarianism** and the **Trinity Truth** of the Bible and that under the guidance of the Divine Holy Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit of God was leading God’s people, through the inspiration of a real genuine prophetic gift to the Remnant Church of Bible Prophecy, in the last hours of Earth’s History to ABANDON the Anti-Trinitarian-Literal-Begottenism of the “Pioneers” and now make a total CHANGE in their theology on the Deity of Christ.” (Email, Richard Mendoza to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015)*

After studying the facts of our history, it should go without saying that those who believe this sort of thing are wrong. In one place you quote Andreasen as saying (this is with respect to the quotes in *Desire of Ages*) (your emphasis)

*“**We could hardly believe it**, but of course **we could not preach contrary to it.**” (M. L. Andreasen, Chapel Talk, Loma Linda, California, November 30<sup>th</sup> 1948”)*

These words are usually presented in such a way (by the trinitarians) as to give the idea that the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general, which included Andreasen, were 'shook up' when Ellen White's book was published. This in itself is a real problem. This is because at that time, Andreasen was not even in the ministry. In fact by then (1898) he had not even gone to college in order to train for the ministry. He was working in a young people's home just outside of Omaha. A Seventh-day Adventist named Luther Warren ran the home. This means that not only was Andreasen not a minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1898 (when the *Desire of Ages* was published), he was probably unheard of by the vast majority of the ministry. The question is therefore, who is the **“we”** who **“could not preach contrary”** to what Ellen White had written in *Desire of Ages*? Certainly this could not have included Andreasen – at least not as one of the ministry. Regarding being at the home, Andreasen is reported as saying

*“Several things happened at this children's home that were certainly a help to me. I had not had a Christian upbringing, nor had I become very well grounded in the Adventist faith.” (Virginia Steinweg, *Without Fear or Favor*, page 45, “In the work” 1898-1899’)*

There is something else I would point out.

If the ministry were 'shook up' up when they saw that Ellen White had made this **“In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.”** statement in *The Desire of Ages* in 1898, then why were they not 'shook up' when she wrote it the previous year in an article in the *Signs of the Times* (April 8<sup>th</sup> 1897)? Did not Andreasen and the **“we”** see it at that time? Did they all miss it? To say the least, it really is all very, very strange. Wouldn't you agree?

As I am sure you already realise, to a great extent *The Desire of Ages* was 'put together' by Ellen White's helpers – mainly Marian Davis. They did this by using extracts from across the entire spectrum of her past writings (from books, articles, manuscripts and letters etc.) thus creating chapters in scrapbooks on the life of Christ. That's how the quote in question (on page 530) probably came to be used. It was definitely not 'new' in *The Desire of Ages*.

Regarding those now famous words (on page 530), Andreasen may have seen them in Ellen White's own handwriting (in some form or another) but certainly they did not originate with her. She acquired them from the Scottish minister the Rev. John Cumming. He had penned them in his book 'Sabbath Evening Readings on the New Testament'. When referring to the opening verses of John's gospel he wrote

"In him was life,"—that is, original, unborrowed, underived. In us there is a streamlet from the Fountain of Life; in him was the Fountain of Life. Our life is something we receive, something that the Giver takes back again to himself,—over which we have no control, and for which we must give God the account and the praise. But in Jesus was life, underived, unborrowed; he was the Life; and that Life, it is said, "was the light of men" (*Rev. John Cumming, Sabbath Evening Readings on the New Testament: St. John', pages 5-6, 1856*)

The following is how they were in the Signs of the Times in 1897

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men". It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself", He said. In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent". This is the open fountain of life for the world." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1897*)

I have found several other things in Andreasen's testimony rather confusing. Perhaps if he were here with us today he could satisfactorily explain them but I cannot do so. They remain therefore, at least to me, something of a mystery. Perhaps others can explain them.

At the beginning of his chapel talk at Loma Linda – this was when he was 72 years of age – Andreasen said

"I became an Adventist as a young man. I was not brought up an Adventist - - you might say not a Christian either. When I accepted the truth, I accepted it without knowing all that was involved as a part of a general program." (*M. L. Andreasen, Chapel Talk, Loma Linda, California, November 30<sup>th</sup> 1948", page 1*)

Andreasen had been baptised in 1894. He then explained

"I soon came face to face with the question of the Spirit of prophecy, as revealed in the writings of Sister White. I read her published volumes and found them to be very good but I didn't find any special inspiration in them. Indeed, I did not know they were supposed to be inspired. However, I considered them very good writing. At that time I was taking work in Chicago University, and majored in English." (*Ibid*)

I have read Andreasen's biography but I cannot place him at Chicago University until after the publication of The Desire of Ages. The earliest I can place him there is 1900. He is saying that at that time, whilst he had found Ellen White's writings to be good, he hadn't found "any special inspiration in them", neither did he realise "they were supposed to be inspired". How therefore, in 1898 when The Desire of Ages was published, would he have been 'shook up' over what she had written in it.

Later in his chapel talk Andreasen made this comment

“When I began to preach, I came directly face to face with the question of Sister White. If I were to teach others, I felt I must know for myself. Believing in direct action, I went out to California to see Sister White.” (*Ibid*, page 3)

This is something else I cannot understand. Andreasen was ordained in 1902 but he must have been preaching long before then but he never went to see Ellen White until 1909 (according to Andreasen), which was 7 years after his ordination and 11 years after the publication of *The Desire of Ages*. Yet he said that when he started preaching, “Believing in direct action, I went out to California to see Sister White”. What did he mean by “direct action”? He did not go until 1909. He was then President of the Greater New York Conference.

In the testimony he gave to the Ellen White Estate in 1953, he again referred to the same events. From what I can gather from this testimony, his words in his 1948 testimony (“When I began to preach”) actually refer to the time when he was called to head the newly formed Hutchinson Seminary in Minnesota. In the chapel talk therefore, perhaps he meant when he was called to teach (at the Hutchinson seminary). It seems that at this time (1909), he wasn't really convinced about Ellen White's writings. This is what he wrote

“My personal contact with Mrs. E. G. White was confined to the latter years of her life and was of short duration. I had read her writings and to some extent studied them from the time of my baptism as a young man in 1894, and had met her personally on several occasions.

It was not until 1909, however, that I began serious consideration of what the Testimonies meant to the remnant church. I was at that time president of the Greater New York Conference and had read with interest the various messages concerning the work that should be done in the larger cities of the land and was perplexed over the fact that apparently but little had been done to comply with the instruction given.” (*M. L. Andreasen, Testimony of M. L. Andreasen, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953*)

He later said

“This study led me to a review of such evidence as was available to me bearing on the question of the origin of the writings of Mrs. E. G. White. Hitherto I had accepted the testimonies of others without any critical appraisal or profound conviction one way or the other. Now, however, I felt I had come to a point in life when I must make definite decisions for myself. This became the more necessary as I was shortly called to head the newly established seminary in Hutchinson, Minn., and would thus have to deal with young men about to enter the ministry of the denomination. For their sakes I decided that I must know for myself, and not depend upon any secondary authorities however good they might appear to be.

This led me to consider a journey to St. Helena, California, where Mrs. White at that time resided. I wished to have first-hand knowledge as far as it was obtainable. I did not wish to be deceived, nor did I wish to deceive others.

Consequently, in due time I arrived in St. Helena, and was cordially received by Sr. White. I stated my reason for coming, which was to obtain permission to examine her writings in manuscript, before anyone had done any editorial work on them. I had brought with me many quotations from her writings, which were of outstanding interest, either for their theological import or their beauty of expression.

In my own mind I was convinced that Sr. White had never written them as they appeared in print. She might have written something like them, but I was sure that no one with the limited education which Sr. White had, could ever produce such exquisitely worded statements or such pronouncements on difficult theological problems. That must have

been produced by a well trained individual, conversant not only with theological niceties but also with beautiful English.” (*Ibid*)

I have also listened to Andreasen's testimony as he gave it at the 1955 Ohio camp meeting. This is when he spoke on the spirit of prophecy. You will find his talk at the following link. You may like to listen to it. It is very similar to his 1948 chapel talk, also the testimony he gave to the White Estate in 1953.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcQah7Q67Mc>

If you listen at around 10 minutes into the talk, you will hear him say that when he went to visit Ellen White he did not believe that *The Desire of Ages* had actually been written in her own words. He said he thought it had been 'fixed up' by the proof readers (or the like). He did say though, after he had seen what she had written (in her own handwriting), that they could only have been written by someone who had been led by God to write them.

The question is this: if Andreasen had not, up to the time he had seen these things written in Ellen White's own handwriting, believe that she had written them, why did he say that when *The Desire of Ages* was published, what she wrote completely changed his theology? This is something I cannot understand. Perhaps I am missing something.

One other thing I would mention is that in his 1953 testimony, Andreasen says

"When I was ready to leave St. Helena, Sr. White presented me with a complete set of her writings, inscribed on the flyleaf with her own name and also a small printed wish for the Lord's blessing. These books I lent out to various individuals with the result that after a few years all the fly leaves had been removed, doubtless by persons who desired her signature. The only book I have left with her name in it is *Desire of Ages*. I do not lend that any more.

I also carried with me an immense amount of her writings, not printed, which she graciously gave me. Many of these were handwritten, but mostly they were typewritten copies of communications sent out, many of them with corrections in her own hand.” (*Ibid*)

The only comment I would make is that I find it rather strange (almost difficult to believe) that Ellen White gave Andreasen “an immense amount of her writings”, many of which were “handwritten”, also typewritten ones “with corrections in her own hand”. In fact in his Ohio talk, he says he took so much with him it took a number of stenographers 2 years to copy it.

Andreasen was a fine man – a tribute to Seventh-day Adventism. I have read with admiration his books 'The Sanctuary Service' and 'The Book of Hebrews'.

As regards to Andreasen's testimony, I do not doubt his sincerity in saying these things but I am left wondering if his memory of them (he was 77 in 1953) was beginning to fade a little bit. Perhaps he put thoughts together that became somewhat mixed up. Sometimes this happens when we get older.

Andreasen will remain one of the 'greats' of Seventh-day Adventism. This is regardless of his conflict with the church in his later years (this was with respect to his objections to 'Questions on Doctrines' – which really is another story in itself). No one can deny the unique contribution he made to Seventh-day Adventism.

One final point. I hope you find it interesting.

As I have said, ministers such as yourself use Andreasen's testimony to try and prove that (a) in



the Desire of Ages, Ellen White spoke of God as a trinity as in the trinity doctrine, also (b) that our denomination changed its theology because of this book. Here is what is interesting.

In his book 'The Book of Hebrews', Andreasen quoted in full the Spear article that we used in our Bible Students library. As we have seen, this article was strictly non-trinitarian. We used it to explain to the public our then non-trinitarian beliefs. Why therefore, if Andreasen had been a trinitarian all of these years (since 1898 when Desire of Ages was published), did he put Spear's non-trinitarian article in his 1948 book? This was now 57 years after we had first published it and 50 years after Ellen White's book was published. What do you think Richard - interesting or not?

I would say it was very interesting. It appears to put a big 'dent' in the belief that Andreasen was a trinitarian in the orthodox sense of meaning. It also puts a big 'dent' in his recollection that Ellen White spoke of the trinity in her book Desire of Ages - at least in the way the trinitarians today use his testimony.

In the Collegiate Sabbath School Quarterly for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 1979, our youth were informed

*"As late as 1942 M. L. Andreasen could state that "The field is divided on the subject of the Trinity". (Tim Crosby, Collegiate Quarterly, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1979, M. L. Andreasen, private letter to J. L. McElhany and W. H. Branson, December 25, 1942)*

Now that's an interesting comment from Andreasen. This being the case – and if Andreasen was upholding the trinity doctrine as this teaching as said today by our denomination - then why, six years later, would he put Spear's non-trinitarian article in his book?

Quite obviously when Andreasen said 'trinity', it meant something different to him that what is professed today by our denomination. Our leadership today says (see above) that Spear's article "is defective in some of its statements" (Hatton), that it "fell short of the true picture of the Trinity" (Pfandl) – also that in it there was "almost nothing which nineteenth-century Adventists would have found objectionable" (Burt). As we know, nineteenth-century Seventh-day Adventists were non-trinitarian.

The other thing to note is that if Andreasen upheld the beliefs of our church when the Sabbath School lessons studies on Bible Doctrines came out in 1936 (which I assume he did), he would have needed to teach that in eternity, Christ was begotten of God. This would also have needed to been his belief throughout his ministry. This is because it was then the accepted belief of our church.

To the best of my knowledge, the White Estate has no record of the visit that Andreasen said he made to Ellen White's home in 1909. Not that this means anything in itself because many church members, ministry and laity, paid visits to her home that were not recorded. I also noticed that Andreasen is not mentioned anywhere in Ellen White's writings. He did though, at her funeral at Battle Creek Tabernacle on Sabbath July 24<sup>th</sup> 1915, have a very distinct privilege. He was one of the guards of honour as the crowds filed by Ellen White's casket in respect of this humble woman whom God had used so mightily to help make the Seventh-day Adventist Church God's remnant Church of Bible Prophecy.

This brings me to the end of my rebuttal. The only thing left now are the conclusions – also a request.

## **Conclusions**

Richard: - From the above evidence, there are two conclusions that can be drawn.

The first is that your claim - that in 1913 the trinity doctrine was already a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church - is a false claim.

The second conclusion is that your allegation - that my portrayal of our denominational history is a falsified history - is a false allegation.

Regarding these matters, nothing more needs to be said. The evidence speaks for itself.

I do have a request though. Can I ask you please to pass on this document to your colleagues in the ministry. They too may like to read it. Particularly I would ask you to pass it on to those to whom you have made known your allegations concerning my understanding of our denominational history. This is I believe would be the honest and fair thing to do. Certainly it would be the Christian thing to do.

Christian regards

Terry Hill (UK)

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