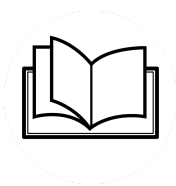


WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY? PART 2-VARIANTS AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST TRINITARIANS



Jason Smith · June 12, 2018

This article is Part 2 of “What is the Doctrine of Trinity.” In part 1 I discussed what the doctrine of the trinity is according to Christendom. I hope that you were edified by that post. In case you missed it, click [HERE](#).

There is a vast amount of confusion on the subject of trinity within the current adventism. To begin, let’s have a look at the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief, specifically no. 2.

It states:

“There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal 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. God,

who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.)"

While the Seventh-day Adventist have gradually changed their view on the doctrine of the personality of God, what is quoted above is the very first Trinitarian doctrine ever officially voted upon by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1980.

Consequently the church has been "*officially*" trinitarian for about 38 years now. This is not to say that trinitarian belief was not in the ranks prior to this but it is actually not as old as some suspect. In fact it really wasn't until around the 1940s and 1950s that trinitarianism became the clear prevailing view. With that said, there is a tremendous amount of confusion, even among leading men, as to what this doctrine really means.

The following compilation of statements are taken from different theologians, pastors, professors or conference officials and what you will see are some very serious variants among them with regard to how they understand the church's doctrine of trinity.

So, without further ado, here are a few points of variations among current Seventh-day Adventist Trinitarians (and remember we are dealing here almost exclusively with theologians, professors and pastors):

1. Current SDA scholars do not agree as to whether the doctrine of the trinity is explicit in the Bible.

"The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed." (Handbook of SDA Theology, SDA Encyclopedia Vol 12, page 138)

"The New Testament does not have any explicit statement on the Trinity—apart from 1 John 5:7, which has been rejected as a medieval addition to the text—but the Trinitarian evidence is overwhelming. (Dennis Fortin

<http://www.perspectivedigest.org/article/17/archives/15-4/god-the-trinity-and-adventism>)

“Explicit in the New Testament, implied in the Old, the doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to Adventist faith.” (R. Allan Anderson, Review and Herald, September 8th 1983, ‘Adventists and the trinity’)

“Internal evidence provided below, however, indicates that the Trinity can rise to the level of being explicit in the Old Testament.” (Systematic Theology God as Trinity, Norman Gulley pg 26)

Note: As the quotes above demonstrate there is disagreement among SDA trinitarian scholars about whether the doctrine of the trinity is explicit in God's Word. Some say that it is not explicit in the Bible, others say explicit in the New Testament only, and one even says that it is explicit in the Old Testament, etc.

This list is simply illustrative of the spectrum. Could it be that God's Word is being read with trinitarian goggles and thus men are reaching conclusions based on wishful thinking rather than actual exegesis?

Let's compare the claims of modern day scholars with two claims from SDA pioneers of old:

“The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ and his divinity; but they are entirely silent in regard to a trinity. (J.H. Waggoner, 1884, The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation, p, 173)

“The greatest fault we can find in the Reformation is, the Reformers stopped reforming. Had they gone on, and onward, till they had left the last vestige of Papacy behind, such as natural immortality, sprinkling, the trinity, and Sunday-keeping, the church would now be free from her unscriptural errors.” (James White, February 7, 1856, Review & Herald, vol. 7, no. 19, page 148, par. 26)

2. Current SDA trinitarianism is not agreed as to how many Divine Beings there – 3 Beings or 1 Being?

Note: What I will do here is list one statement that says there are 3 Beings followed by another statement saying there is 1 Being. These are not given in any particular order but will simply show the contrast. This section is going to be a bit lengthy.

Samuel Bacchiochi:

"The increasing evangelization of Christians by those of non-trinitarian religions, makes it imperative today to reaffirm the biblical revelation of God, consisting of THREE BEINGS, equally divine and yet inseparably one. This unique doctrine is of great importance because, as we shall now see, it is intimately connected with the message of salvation. (Endtimes Issues Newsletter, number 147)

Raoul Dederen:

"Related to THE DIVINE BEING, his nature and mode of being, this knowledge affects every man's understanding of God as the object of his worship, whether he regards him as one in essence and one in person, or admits that in the unity of the Deity there are three equally divine persons...A belief in the divine mission of Jesus and the experiencing of the Holy Spirit culminated in a doctrine of one God in three persons, a doctrine understood as a more intimate knowledge of THE DIVINE BEING...It is true that with respect to men, who are the only intelligent beings besides God and the angels of whom we have any knowledge, this notion of perfect unity in plurality of persons does not correspond nor fit into the framework of our human existence- perhaps because man's nature was purposely meant to be different from the nature of God. In other words, it was the will of the Creator that man should be so. Therefore, even the best analogies fall short in their attempt to describe THE DIVINE BEING...Therefore, we must confess that the Trinity is ONE INDIVISIBLE GOD and that the distinctions of the persons do not destroy the divine unity. This unity of God is expressed by saying that HE IS ONE SUBSTANCE. Nevertheless, in this divine unity there are three co-eternal and co-equal persons, who, though distinct, are the ONE UNDIVIDED and adorable God. This is the doctrine of Scripture (Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity pg 1, 3, 16)

*Dederen also speaks of the Spirit as "a fully personal being" (pg 7) thus it appears that he has some double-talk. Consequently it is unclear whether he believed in one Divine Being composed of 3 Persons or 3 Divine Beings with the word "being" being synonymous with "person." This imprecision is, quite unfortunately, an oft repeated problem with SDA trinitarian theology. However, based on his latter assertions about the One God being "indivisible" and "undivided" and his claim that "He is one substance" it appears that he is firmly in the one Being camp.

W.R. Leshar (Minutes from discussion of 1980 Fundamental Belief):

"W. R. LESHAR: ...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.

(Review and Herald, April 23, 1980 pg 14)

SDA Blurb on main website about 1980 Fundamental Belief:

“God is a relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The ONLY BEING worthy of our worship...”

(SDA Website: <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/>)”

Whidden, Moon and Reeve:

“Not only does the passage support the personality of the Spirit, but it also suggests the profound unity or oneness inherent in the doctrine of the Trinity. Here are THREE DIVINE BEINGS lined up together in such a way as to point to Their oneness of purpose in imparting grace and love to God’s people through Their deep fellowship with one another and the redeemed. (The Trinity pg 83)

From the original 1979 Annual Council Propose for a Fundamental Belief:

“2. THE TRINITY – That there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a selfexisting 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 (Review and Herald, February 21st 1980)

Ralph Lawson:

“I have seen it tried. I have watched a class of highly educated graduate students spend an entire hour trying to work out a definition of the Godhead that would express clearly both the unity of the Godhead and the individuality of the Godhead. When they were finished they had nothing better to offer than the simple Bible affirmation that there are THREE DIVINE BEINGS, and that the three are one (Ralph Lawson, [http://www.spirit-of-prophecy-1844.com/...](http://www.spirit-of-prophecy-1844.com/))

SDA Bible Commentary:

“The “oneness” of God refers to THE SINGLENES OF HIS BEING.” (Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, pg 109)

Joel Sarli and Gerald Wheeler:

“The New Testament associates THREE BEINGS together in its doxologies of praise to God, and the Old Testament speaks of MORE THAN ONE DIVINE BEING.

(<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1995/07-August/god-organized-for-our-salvation>)

Jan Voerman:

"TRINITARIANISM is the orthodox belief that there is only one living, true God, or "Godhead," in a unity of three eternal divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These are of one substance, power, authority, and glory. True orthodox Trinitarian dogma insists on three difference hupostaes (or ousia) IN ONE BEING- a Tri-Unity. (Ellen White and the Trinity by Pastor Jan Voerman pg 9)

Lionel Matthews:

"While God has been declared to be one God (Duet. 6:4,1 Tim. 2:5), HE has also been presented as A PLURALITY OF BEINGS (1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:5). (Lionel Matthews, <http://fae.adventist.org/essays/34B...>)

Richard Rice:

"...These expressions suggest a complexity within the BEING of God...We cannot, for example, think of God as a family of three, or as a committee that always votes unanimously. THIS SEPARATES THE PERSONS AND COMPROMISES GOD'S UNITY." (Richard Rice, The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective', pg 60, 61)

Kevin Paulson:

"Yet Ellen White, in the following statement, identifies the Members of the Godhead AS INDIVIDUAL BEINGS (Kevin Paulson, <http://advindicate.com/articles/201...>)

Andrews Study Bible:

"There is only ONE BEING who merits the title "God," and that is Yahweh (Hebrew personal name), translated "the Lord" (see also v. 39; 32:39; compare 1 Kings 8:60; Is. 44:8: 45:5-6)... (Deut. 32:16-17; 1 Cor 10:20)... (Andrews Study Bible on Deut 4:35)

Dennis Priebe:

"There are THREE BEINGS that are God and yet there is one God.. (Dennis Priebe, New Light for Adventists sermon, July 21, 2016, Hartland Summer Campmeeting, Rapidan, Virginia, USA.)

SDA Bible Commentary:

"In other words, since the God of the Bible is one and not many, all the various revelations about Him presented throughout the Bible refer to the same, one divine reality and NOT TO A PLURALITY OF DIVINE BEINGS (Handbook of SDA Theology pg 121)

SDA Bible Commentary:

"The reality of divine forsakenness is possible only when the one God is understood in His biblical, Trinitarian structure, which involves Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as divine, personal, conscious BEINGS, mutually interacting among themselves and with the created universe. (Handbook of SDA Theology pg 127)

*Careful readers will note that the SDA Bible commentary contradicts itself. The reference on pg 127 might be a typo but it is difficult to say for certain. However throughout this article we read multiple references to "being" (singular) such as "three distinct divine Persons who act directly and historically in history and constituting the ONE DIVINE TRINITARIAN BEING" (pg 138) and again "in the BEING of God is an essential coprimordiality of three coequal, coeternal, nonoriginated persons" (pg 150) and again we read about "the inner structure of God's BEING" and "the inner trinitarian BEING of God." This one plural usage appears to be the exception. Also emails from Fernando Canale, the author of this article, to Terry Hill indicate that he understands the 3 Persons to comprise a singular Being. Thus it would appear that he too is firmly in the one Being camp.

David Read:

"The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not only equal, they are all ONE BEING (Deut. 6:4; John 10:30; 12:45; 14:9). (The Adventist Ordination Crisis pg 53)

Chris Blake:

"You'll blow a mental microcircuit if you try to figure out how God³ can be THREE BEINGS in one. Some have described God³ as an egg, with its yolk, white, and shell. All these are egg, but the forms and functions are different. Others compare God³ to water, with its three states: solid (Father), liquid (Son), and gas (Spirit). (A Reason to Believe: What being an Adventist is all about, Lesson 1 "Divinity")

Max Hatton:

"Within THE ONE BEING that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and co-eternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit..." (The Trinity

Doug Batchelor:

"We need to keep in mind that when Moses said, "The Lord is one," Israel was surrounded with polytheistic nations that worshiped many gods that were constantly involved in petty bickering and rivalry (Deuteronomy 6:4), whereas the God who created is composed of THREE SEPARATE BEINGS who are perfectly united in their mission of saving and sustaining their creatures. (Amazing Facts "The Trinity")

David Asscherick:

"The very idea of A SUPREME BEING, an omnipotent God, boggles our finite human minds. And yet our curiosity is unstoppable. We can't help but wonder if God exists, and if God does exist what kind of BEING are we talking about? (David Asscherick, James Rafferty, Ty Gibson, <http://tabletalk.online/02-what-and...>)

Note: This quote is taken from the blurb and not the actual talk.

Gorden Jensen:

"A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, ONE OF THE DIVINE BEINGS accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, ANOTHER the role of the Son. The REMAINING DIVINE BEING, the Holy Spirit, was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation. All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven.

"By accepting the roles that the plan entailed, THE DIVINE BEINGS lost none of the powers of Deity. With regard to their eternal existence and other attributes, they were one and equal. But with regard to the plan of salvation, there was, in a sense, a submission on the part of the Son to the Father." (Adventist Review, October 31, 1996, p.12)

Angel Rodriguez:

"But the most we can say contextually is that the plural may be a veiled way of suggesting a plurality within the ONE/SINGULAR DIVINE BEING.... The easiest solution would be to recognize that the text testifies that the main character of the

Bible is ONE GOD WHOSE INNER BEING IS A PLURALITY. Since this plurality deliberates with ITSELF, one could go a step further and suggest that there is a plurality of persons within the One God....The most we can say is that in Genesis we find, within the INTRADIVINE BEING, the one God, a plurality of persons that through further divine revelation will be identified as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Angel Rodriguez, 'The Lord our God is One, Biblical Research Institute)

Bob Pickle:

"Most Christians agree that the Godhead is comprised of THREE BEINGS: the Father, Son, and Spirit. SOME, HOWEVER LIKE THE UNITED PENTECOSTALS, MAINTAIN THAT THE FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT ARE THREE MANIFESTATIONS OF ONE PERSON OR BEING. They would strongly object to Ellen White's statement since they believe that Jesus is God the Father and the Son and the Spirit all at the same time. (Bob Pickle <http://www.truthorfables.net/50-con...>)

*Note: It would appear that brother Pickle does not realize that most Christians, including quite a few Seventh-day Adventists as quoted above, believe that the Father, Son and Spirit are three persons who are one Being. In fact, I would argue that his assessment is wrong here. Most Christians strongly disagree with the idea that there are three Divine Beings. As noted in part one this is identifiable to them as tritheism. The website cultorchristian.com actually documents this view in Seventh-day Adventism its effort to re-apply the cult label to Adventism.

Now some have tried to minimize this difference in number of beings as presented by these various SDA sources by arguing that the words "person" and "being" are synonyms so all the authors actually mean the same thing. In fact if you read Bob Pickle's quote above it would appear that he uses the words "person" and "being" as synonyms. I have personally talked with ministers who have argue this same thing. Take for instance this quote:

"PERSON" as applied to God INDICATES A BEING with personality, intellect, and will. Unlike the multiple gods of polytheism, the three persons of the biblical Godhead are profoundly united in purpose, mind, and character, to that despite Their individuality, they are never divided, never in conflict, and thus constitute not three gods, but one God. (The Trinity, pg.192)

Yet stop and think about this friends. If "person" as applied to God "indicates a being" then what does "being" when applied to God indicate? Obviously it must

mean a “*person*” right? The equation would work both ways. Let’s try to apply that to even just one of the one Being quotes as listed above.

“The ‘oneness’ of God refers to THE SINGLENESSE OF HIS BEING.” (Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, pg 109)

If “*being*” means “*person*” then “*the ‘oneness’ of God refers to the singleness of His Person.*” Is there any SDA trinitarian who wants to argue that? Let’s try another one.

“In other words, since the God of the Bible is one and not many, all the various revelations about Him presented throughout the Bible refer to the same, one divine reality and NOT TO A PLURALITY OF DIVINE BEINGS (Handbook of SDA Theology pg 121)

Again if “*being*” means “*person*” then this quote would mean that God is not a plurality of persons. That’s what this quote would be teaching us right? Again does any trinitarian want to take that view? Do you see the problem? If we try to evade this issue as one of mere semantics and say that “*being*” means “*person*” then we have just created a formula whereby we can turn all of the “*one Being*” quotes into “*one Person*” quotes.

Now I have no doubt that for some of these authors this issue is semantics but I also have no doubt that it is not that way for all of them. Basically, the one Being statements are an attempt to sound orthodox that have left Seventh-day Adventists in a serious catch-22.

The salient point here is that any effort to blur it all away by saying that it is just semantics will not work. Yet this is a tactic being taken by some leading men when it comes to the variations, even while they are simultaneously attempting to do damage control by silently editing certain trinitarian documents.

The following quote is from Ekkehardt Mueller. It was sent as an email reply to a line of inquiry by Randall Sargent. I may type a critical examination of that whole interaction at a later time. However, for the purpose of this op we note that Randall Sargent asked this brother directly what the official SDA position was on the trinity - whether there was One Being or Three Beings. Randall gave 9 quotes that he copied/pasted from me interspersed with some very good questions in between. He concluded by asking for an explanation between the disparity he saw between his personal understanding of inspiration which was of “God as three Persons and three Beings” and the view promoted by the quotes he shared that spoke of one Being.

Brother Mueller evaded the questions marvelously and, for the purpose of this op, here is the salient portion of his reply.

*"...I would not *[pit] the various Adventist scholars listed below against each other, because they may actually mean the same thing. The issue may be one of semantics / definition... [Email from Ekkerhardt Mueller to Randall Sargent. *The word in brackets was originally "pitch" and presumably brother Mueller meant "pit" so I have corrected the typo]*

Is no one else amazed by this? The various Adventist scholars listed may actually mean the same thing and this issue may be one of semantics? That is an incredibly naïve outlook if you ask me. I can irrefutably demonstrate that it is patently false. In fact, if we examine the view of Max Hatton (see down below) it is very apparent that he does not mean the same thing, not even close! I believe there is a clear effort by some in Seventh-day Adventism to avoid this issue because they know that the current doctrine is problematic and ultimately indefensible. There is a wide variety of variation of interpretation within Adventism regarding trinitarian doctrine and, basically, we are like sitting ducks. What I am seeing more and more is an avoidance of this issue. The church is caught between a rock and a hard place and I think the wise men among us know it. Thus they will not touch it with a ten foot pole. Perhaps discretion is the better part of valor but, all the while, the problem remains that these variations are all perfectly acceptable if they are labeled with the moniker of the trinity. If you do not use that word then you are an heretic and you can be disfellowshipped for it. This is what I am protesting. Let's move on to number 3.

3. In harmony with Catholic trinity our out of harmony?

SDA trinity in harmony with creedal trinitarianism:

"The member churches of THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ARE IN AGREEMENT ON THE FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AS SET FORTH IN THE THREE ANCIENT SYMBOLS (Apostolicum, NICAENON-CONSTANTINOPOLITUM, ATHANASIUM). This agreement finds expression in UNQUALIFIED ACCEPTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY and the Two-Natures." (So Much In Common, p. 107 (1973) Co-authored by B.B. Beach and Dr. Lukas Vischer- Faith and the Order Secretariat of the WCC.)

"Nature of God. A reading of the above statements will show that with respect to their doctrine of God SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ARE IN HARMONY WITH THE GREAT CREEDAL STATEMENTS OF CHRISTENDOM, including the Apostles' Creed, NICEA 325), and the additional definition of faith concerning the Holy Spirit as reached in CONSTANTINOPLE (381)". (George Reid, Seventh-day Adventists: A Brief Introduction to Their Beliefs, Biblical Research Institute)

"...THE CATHOLIC SIDE RECOGNIZES in the document the Christocentric character of our beliefs, AND ESPECIALLY OUR BELIEF IN THE TRINITY, as well as ecclesiological identity of the Church, a status affirmed by an act of the Polish Parliament. On our part, we spoke of a need to change attitudes toward our denomination and recognized the openness of the Catholic Church, especially in recent times, toward the Bible," Lyko explained. ["Adventist Church Cannot be Treated as a Sect," Say Adventists and Catholics in Poland, Feb, 14, 2000]

[Picking up papers] "This statement here is from THE OFFICIAL CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ON THE TRINITY, ladies and gentlemen, 26 pages long. I've read most of it but let me share something with you. Right in the beginning the dogma of the trinity here is the official position of the Roman Catholic church. And I'm not here trying to defend the Catholic church, I'm showing you that we should not be speaking contrary to what they believe and falsely representing them. Because when you do that, whether you are a pastor or a lay person, ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you what's happening – you are breaking the 10 commandments of God, whether you know it or not. Because if you do that you are bearing false witness against your neighbor and, ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to do that. And if I can find equal ground, equal footing, with somebody of another religious persuasion so that I can get them, convince them, to sit down with me and study Bible prophecy and say 'Hey listen we have some similarity here.' And if God has opened the door for that to happen, ladies and gentlemen, why would I want to turn around and make an enemy out of that certain individual simply because I have a misunderstanding of their doctrinal position on something. I don't want to do that. I want to find commonality with people so that I can share with them the 3 angels' message, what do you say? And that's what I want to do as a Christian but look at this. [Reading now from paper] "The trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion, the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are 3 Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These 3 Persons being truly distinct one from another" – that sounds like the statement I just read here at the beginning of this, concerning this book – 3 distinct

personalities all inclusively being part of the Godhead, which I see more as the family name in the nature of God. [Reading from paper again] “Thus in the words of the Athanasian creed the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God and yet there are not three Gods but one God. In this trinity of persons the Son IS BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER BY AN ETERNAL GENERATION” – in other words they’re saying we really don’t understand it, that’s what they’re really saying from what I’m getting from this. They go on and say, very interestingly, and [reading from paper again] “THE HOLY SPIRIT PROCEEDS BY AN ETERNAL PROCESSION FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON notwithstanding THIS DIFFERENCE AS TO ORIGIN the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal, all alike are uncreated and omnipotent” – NOW ISN’T THAT WHAT WE BELIEVE AS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHRISTIANS? THAT’S WHAT WE BELIEVE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. They go on to say here [reading from paper] “This the church teaches is the revelation regarding God’s nature which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came upon the earth to deliver to the world and which she (talking about the church) possesses to man, oh sorry, proposes to man as the foundation of her whole dogmatic system.” – that’s amazing, that is amazing. And I can honestly, I can say to a Catholic who’s my neighbor, I can say to that Catholic, THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT MY CHURCH TEACHES AND BELIEVES, WE HAVE THE SAME PERSPECTIVE ON THIS ISSUE AND THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRINITY. But to turn around and say the Catholic believe that 3 entities emanating out of one being that is not Biblical and the Catholics don’t teach that or believe that themselves... (The Mystery of the Trinity (Part 1) by Pastor Justis St. Hilaire 55:19- 58:21 White Horse Media Presentation)

SDA trinity not in harmony with Catholic trinity:

“Secondly, as several of the gentlemen have pointed out, THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY THAT WE TEACH IS NOT IDENTICAL TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AS DEVELOPED BY THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH...” (A panel participant at the Q&A Session at the end of the Adventist Theological Society’s 2006 “Trinity Symposium,”)

“It is true that the Council of NICAIA and the Council of CONSTANTINOPLE did make declarations THAT WE MUST NOW REJECT BECAUSE THEY DISAGREE WITH SCRIPTURE... (The Trinity by Whidden, Moon and Reeve pg 150)?

Note: The sad reality here is that no one can really “officially” say that Seventh-day Adventist trinitarianism is or is not in harmony with creedal trinitarianism. Why not? The answer is that the fundamental belief avoids defining the matter. Thus even

though the BRI says that it is in harmony anyone else can say otherwise and certain men do. Honestly it looks like you can take your pick according to your preference. If you study the minutes you will see that this doctrine was written to avoid sounding tritheistic while simultaneously avoiding the issue of defining the pre-incarnate relationship between the 1st and 2nd Persons of the Godhead. This, by the way, leads us to point number 4.

4. Interchangeable Roles or Not?

Interchangeable:

“A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, ONE OF THE DIVINE BEINGS ACCEPTED, AND ENTERED INTO, THE ROLE OF THE FATHER, ANOTHER THE ROLE OF THE SON. THE REMAINING DIVINE BEING, THE HOLY SPIRIT, WAS ALSO TO PARTICIPATE in effecting the plan of salvation. All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven. By ACCEPTING THE ROLES THAT THE PLAN ENTAILED, THE DIVINE BEINGS lost none of the powers of Deity. With regard to their eternal existence and other attributes, they were one and equal. But with regard to the plan of salvation, there was, in a sense, a submission on the part of the Son to the Father.” Gordon Jensen, Adventist Review, October 31, 1996, p.12 (Week of Prayer readings)

“The gospel commission commands surrendered souls to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The apostolic benediction lists the Three and names Christ first. Paul usually places God the Father first but here it is reversed. To me THIS SIGNIFIED THE INTERCHANGEABLENESS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GODHEAD since they are on in action and purpose.” – [J.R. Spangler Review & Herald, Oct. 21, 1971 (I BELIEVE in the Triune God)]

“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). NOTHING WOULD HAVE CHANGED EXCEPT THAT WE WOULD HAVE BEEN CALLING EACH BY THE NAME WE NOW USE FOR THE OTHER. (Roy Adams, Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Lesson for April 10, 2008.)

Note: Roy Adam's quote does not present this as an actual viable possibility but, considering that others before and after him have (I heard it preached by the pastor at my old church) this idea is certainly prevalent in Adventism.

Not Interchangeable:

"The Godhead makes its appearance in the great plan for human salvation. God in this plan is brought before our thoughts under the personal titles of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, with diversity in offices, relations, and actions towards men. These titles and their special significance, as used in the Bible, ARE NOT INTERCHANGEABLE... (The Bible doctrine of the Trinity Pacific press 1892)

5. God has a body or is God formless?

God has a body and so does His Son:

"ONE ASPECT OF CREEDAL TRINITARIANISM REJECTED BY THE PIONEERS WAS THE SOMEWHAT CURIOUS STATEMENT THAT "THERE IS BUT ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD, EVERLASTING, WITHOUT BODY OR PARTS'...The pioneers vigorously refuted this, citing several biblical passages that portrayed God as having both 'body' and parts' (Ex. 24:9-11; 33:20-23; John 1:18; Heb. 1:1-3; cf. Smith, State of the Dead, pp. 27-30)...James White had declared that 'this class can be no other than those who spiritualize away the existence of the Father and the Son, as two distinct, literal, tangible persons...The way spiritualizers...have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural trinitarian creed'...ELLEN WHITE EVIDENTLY AGREED WITH HER HUSBAND THAT CHRIST AND THE FATHER 'WERE TWO DISTINCT, LITERAL, TANGIBLE PERSONS,' ... Significantly, ELLEN WHITE CONDEMNS KELLOGG'S VIEW OF THE TRINITY IN ALMOST IDENTICAL TERMS TO THOSE HER HUSBAND JAMES USED IN 1846 WHEN HE REJECTED THAT 'OLD UNSCRIPTURAL TRINITARIAN CREED' FOR 'SPIRITUALIZ[ING] AWAY THE EXISTENCE OF THE FATHER AND SON, AS TWO DISTINCT, LITERAL, TANGIBLE PERSONS.'... Further, Ellen White claimed that in Kellogg's heresy she 'recognized the very sentiments' she had opposed among spiritualizing ex-Millerites in 1845 and 1846 (Selected Messages, book 1. p. 203). It implies that SHE ASSOCIATED THE SPIRITUALIZING OF THE POST-DISAPPOINTMENT FANATICS, THE CREEDAL TEACHING THAT GOD IS FORMLESS AND INTANGIBLE and Kellogg's impersonal concepts of God ALL UNDER THE GENERAL HEADING OF 'SPIRITUALISTIC THEORIES' (ibid., p. 204)." (The Trinity, by Whidden, Moon and Reeve pp. 206, 207; 217, 218.)

The Holy Spirit truly walks as a person –the implication here is that He has legs:

“Is the Holy Spirit “as much a person as God is a person” (Ibid., pg 616)? Does this Holy Spirit TRULY ‘WALK’ among humanity as a “person” who “bearers witness with our spirits that we are the children of God” (ibid.)? (The Trinity, by Whidden, Moon and Reeve pp 12, 13)

SDA minister claims the Holy Spirit does not have a form or physical body:

“The Holy Spirit has NO “form” or “physical body” like Jesus and the Father, and yet He is still a DISTINCT INDIVIDUAL SEPARATE INDIVIDUAL PERSON, like the Father and the Son. (Pastor Richard P. Mendoza to Jason Smith March 20 at 7:49 am in the One God = Trinity Discussion)

“The Holy Spirit is a REAL Living PERSON AS MUCH AS A PERSON AS GOD IS A PERSON, without FORM or BODY And is like the WIND (Pastor Richard P. Mendoza to Jason Smith March 20 at 8:44 am Ibid)

“We do not purport 3 tangible Being-forms. The Holy Spirit does not and is not “cumbered” with “humanity” nor “physical divinity of body.” THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS NO FORM AND NO PHYSIOLOGICAL BODY. He is not limited to a physical form or body or He could not be OMNIPRESENT (Pastor Richard Mendoza March 20 at 11:39 pm Ibid)

Note: While doing prison ministry earlier this year a brother from Wildwood health center came to help out. He taught the prisoners that God was a formless entity. After the service was out, I spoke with him in the parking lot and shared with him the Bible verses and SOP quotes that show that both God the Father and His only begotten Son have bodily forms. He was very appreciative and said he had always wondered about that. The next week I taught the men in prison the truth of this matter through by using Adam and Eve as types. They were very appreciative and a former minister of another denomination (yes, pastors sometimes commit crimes and get incarcerated too) was there at the study. He was the most conversant with the Bible out of all of them. He was very excited about the teaching and expressed conviction that it was truth and it helped him reconcile a problem he had in his mind for years.

God does not have a body and EGW who says otherwise got this wrong:

“James White, and I guess others, were successful IN HELPING PERSUADE THE YOUNG ELLEN WHITE TO ACCEPT THAT GOD DOES HAVE BODY PARTS. HOW THEY

COULD RECONCILE THIS WITH THE FACT THAT HE IS PLAINLY SAID TO BE SPIRIT IS QUITE BEYOND ME. A BODY WOULD PLACE SEVERE LIMITS ON GOD AND CONFINDE HIM TO PARTICULAR PLACES CONSTANTLY.

“....

“Not long after I became an Adventist I was quite astonished to read a statement from Ellen White which says:

“Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character.”
(emphasis supplied) *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 45.

‘I was quite puzzled by this. I had recently spent well over a year intensely studying things about God that caused me to become a Trinitarian. NOW COULD I ACCEPT THAT GOD WAS MUCH LIKE ME TO LOOK AT? I was busy with other things and didn’t understand how the statement related to other matters in Ellen White writings, so for the time being I just let it go at that.

“Now I can see this was from THE PEN OF ELLEN WHITE WHO HAD BEEN CONDITIONED TO BE A SEMI-ARIAN. God looks something like me? How could a single human look something like THE GREAT SPIRIT TRINITY GOD WHO IS EVERYWHERE PRESENT AT THE SAME TIME? THE STATEMENT OF OUR DEAR LADY DOES FIT THE SEMI-ARIAN GOD QUITE WELL, BUT CERTAINLY NOT THE TRINITARIAN GOD!...

“....

“The attributes of God are far beyond our complete understanding really. It is clear however that God is everywhere. Yet Scripture says we are made in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27). IT CANNOT BE PHYSICALLY FOR GOD IS A SPIRIT OF IMMENSE, EVEN UNLIMITED, PROPORTIONS. We have, in a limited way, some of His characteristics, for example the ability to love and to reason. Perhaps when God manifested Himself to the Angels he appeared in a form that He later moulded man into?

“In some way we are made in God’s image, but does that suggest that He exists in our physical image? SURELY WE CAN AGREE THAT SUCH A CONCLUSION WOULD BE TAKING THE MATTER TOO FAR

“....

"...THE FACT THAT MRS. WHITE SAYS SHE SAW IN VISION THAT JESUS AND THE FATHER ARE QUITE SEPARABLE INDIVIDUALS DOES NOT FIT WITH THE TRINITARIAN CONCEPT FOUND IN SCRIPTURE....(Max Hatton "Ellen G. White and the Trinity doctrine" <http://thetrinitydoctrine.com/artic...>)

Note: Max Hatton does not believe that EGW's visions fit with the trinity conception found in Scripture! He even believes that the pen of inspiration was influenced by others! He is completely undermining the inspiration of the Spirit of prophecy and not even subtly. Yet he is still a SDA in good standing isn't he? But those non-trinitarians who believe in the inspiration of the testimonies and teach a begotten Son because of this are frequently kicked out aren't they?

Internal Conflict between SDA trinity experts: Max Hatton:

"IT SEEMS TO ME THAT JERRY MOON AND OTHERS HAVE MAINTAINED THE VIEW THAT THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE TRINITY ARE HUMAN LIKE FIGURES. That being so THEY CAN'T FOR A MOMENT THINK OF THE THREE BEING IN THE ONE SUBSTANCE. NO, THEY THINK OF THEM BEING SEPARATE BUT BEING UNITED IN SUCH THINGS AS CHARACTER AND PURPOSE. This recent thought of mine has helped me a lot to understand the reason why SOME ADVENTISTS HAVE A TRITHEISTIC TYPE OF TRINITY...I have to also say that THIS TYPE OF TRINITY DOES NOT COME FROM A STUDY OF SCRIPTURE...I would like people who maintain this Tritheistic type of Trinity teaching to prove it from Scripture." (Max Hatton Killing God the Paper)

Note: As we can see the idea that the differences are just semantics and that all mean the same thing is far from true. Jerry Moon believes that the idea that God is without a body is the doctrine of the spiritualizers. Max Hatton, on the other hand, believes that the idea that there are 3 God Beings is tritheism! Now Max Hatton , quoted above, is one of the leading SDA trinitarians in Adventism. His books are sold in the ABC and he is referenced positively in other SDA books defending the trinity including, ironically enough, Whidden, Moon and Reeve's book. Yet Hatton believes that Jerry Moon and others do not have a trinity that comes from the Scripture!

Richard Rice:

"...These expressions suggest a complexity within the BEING of God...WE CANNOT, FOR EXAMPLE, THINK OF GOD AS A FAMILY OF THREE, OR AS A COMMITTEE THAT ALWAYS VOTES UNANIMOUSLY. THIS SEPARATES THE PERSONS AND

COMPROMISES GOD'S UNITY." (Richard Rice, The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective', pg 60, 61)

Erwin Gane:

"Thus the oneness between the Father and the Son is declared to be a mysterious union not yet explained to mortals. The relationship between Christ and the Father presents no real problems to the tritheist. TO HIM THERE ARE THREE GODS WHO ARE UNITED IN PURPOSE AND IDENTICAL IN CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES, BUT NONETHELESS JUST AS DISTINCT AS CHRIST WAS FROM HIS DISCIPLES. What is there infinitely mysterious about this?... The tritheist, who limits the oneness between Christ and the Father to that between Christ and His disciples, is now obliged to explain in what sense it might be true that Christ and His disciples are "of one substance, possessing the same attributes.(Erwin Gane, "The Arian or Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen G. White Answer, chapter XIII)

Note: According to Rice, who views God as One Being, if we think of God as a family of three or a committee (aka: 3 Beings) who always vote unanimously then that would compromise God's unity. There has to be more to the unity in his estimation for there to be only One God. According to Gane if there is just unity in purpose and identical character and attributes but a distinction among the three just like Christ from His disciples then that is tritheism.

Whidden, Moon and Reeve:

"Unlike the multiple gods of polytheism, the three persons of the biblical Godhead are PROFOUNDLY UNITED IN PURPOSE, MIND, AND CHARACTER so that despite Their individuality, they are never divided, NEVER IN CONFLICT, and THUS CONSTITUTE NOT THREE GODS, BUT ONE GOD. " (The Trinity, pg.192)

"The concept of God that is explicit in her later writings portrays the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three eternal Persons of intellect, will, and emotions who are united in character, purpose, and love. THERE IS NO CONFLICT AMONG THEM, NO WORKING AT CROSS-PURPOSES, NOT EVEN DISAGREEMENT. THUS THEY ARE NOT THREE GODS (as in polytheism or tritheism), BUT ONE. (Jerry Moon, The Quest for a Biblical Trinity, Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, Vol. 17, Number 1, Spring 2006, pg 143)

Note: According to Moon, Whidden and Reeve, who apparently view God as 3 Beings, the fact that These Beings are never in conflict is what constitutes them as One God! They do not present anything more as a requirement to make Them thus and so, in their theology, presumably the only way these 3 Divine Beings could ever be counted as 3 Gods is if they ever disagreed with each Other. Hopefully you can see that there is a fundamental disagreement here as to what constitutes the unity necessary for monotheism. Agreement or something more? As an aside let's look at what one of the SDA pioneers had to say on the matter:

J.H. Waggoner:

"There were some very early that turned the doctrine of the Trinity into Tritheism and, instead of three divine persons under the economy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, brought in three collateral, co-ordinate, and self-originated beings, make them three absolute and independent principles, without any relation of Father or Son, which is in the most proper notion of three gods..." (J.H. Waggoner, Review and Herald, June 6th, 1878)

Let's move on to point number 6.

6. God the Father is the Head vs. there is no Headship when it comes to the Godhead.

No Eternal Pre-incarnate Headship of the Father:

"THE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE TRINITY provide the ultimate model of love and self-sacrifice for us. As such, they DO NOT FURNISH A MODEL FOR A TOP-DOWN GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE for human leadership within the Church. (Andrew's University document "On the Unique Headship of Christ pg 4)

"In the godhead, FINAL AUTHORITY RESIDES IN ALL THREE MEMBERS. (SDA Believe pg 30, 2005)

"In this Trinitarian hierarchy the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to be ontologically equal but eternally subordinate in role and authority to the Father with the Holy Spirit also functionally subordinate to the Son. THIS NOVEL ARGUMENT has shifted the gender debate from anthropology and ecclesiology to theology proper, a shift that has been called the "turn to the Trinity." While theology proper should inform

all other areas of theological studies, reading perceived differences of gender roles into the immanent Trinity has serious systematic consequences.

“This paper argues that THE UNIFIED EQUALITY OF THE TRINITY MUST BE PRESERVED BY EXCLUDING NEO-SUBORDINATIONISM from the discussion on gender roles... (Pastor Matthew Tinkham “Neo-Subordinationism: The Alien Argumentation in the Gender Debate” Paper for Adventist Theological Society Autumn Symposium, 2016 San Antonio TX)

“Here’s a bit of Wednesday morning theology. IN ADVENTISM THE THEORY OF THE ETERNAL SUBORDINATION OF THE SON TO THE FATHER HAS GAINED TRACTION IN RECENT YEARS. Essentially the idea is that from eternity Jesus has always been in submission to God the Father, and God the Father has authority over Jesus. This idea is really less about the nature of God and more about the nature of man, because the real goal is to use this authority over-under relationship as a model for men and women. The argument is that men are like God the Father, and women are like Jesus, in that women submit to men and not the other way around. (As you might guess, this is a core part of the argument against ordaining women. But we digress; that is not our focus today.) (Pastor Matthew Shallenberger, Facebook post February 8th, 2017)

Note: These two pastors above are staunch proponents of women’s ordination as church overseers. They do a most amazing thing when I interact with them about this subject. Even after I show them quotes from Ellen White that teach that the pre-incarnate Son of God ruled “under God” and was “next in authority” to Him they just ignore these quotes and/or say that I have taken them out of context. You can read about this here:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/seve...>

There was Eternal Pre-incarnate Headship of the Father:

“THERE IS NO ESSENTIAL CONFLICT BETWEEN ONTOLOGICAL EQUALITY AND SUBMISSION, for God and Christ are ontologically equal, yet Christ submits to His Father. The submission is functional, providing for different role relationships; it does not express any ontological inequality...THE ROLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS FATHER EXTEND FROM ETERNITY PAST to eternity future. (Edwin Reynolds, “Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians” Paper presented at the Meeting of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Silver Springs, MD, 22-24 July 2013 pg 22)

"JESUS' SUBMISSION TO THE FATHER extends into eternity, even after the sin problem has been resolved...NOT ONLY DOES THE SON'S SUBMISSION TO THE FATHER EXTEND INTO THE FUTURE IT HAS ALWAYS EXISTED." (The Adventist Ordination Crisis pg 53)

"The 'mystery of godliness' captures THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION, and this mystery WHICH IS INHERENT IN THE TRINITY is to be manifested in conduct and order within the church" (J.W. Peters "Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission," Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Columbia MD, January 2014, 26 unrevised paper)

7. The Son of God?

Is His pre-incarnate Sonship a reality or a metaphor? Was He always the Son? Or do we not know if He was the Son back then? Was He installed as the Son at the beginning? Or is He only the Son because of the incarnation? Was He just functioning as a Son back then? Are the Old Testament references to His Sonship in anticipation of incarnation? Or was He, in His pre-incarnate existence, begotten as a Son?

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...{EGW Lt303-1903.14}

"The term "Son" IS USED METAPHORICALLY when applied to the Godhead" (Angel Rodriguez, "A Question of Sonship" BRI article)

"The Son of GOD never "took that ROLE upon himself" nor was it GIVEN to Him, FOR He WAS ALWAYS "The ETERNAL SON of God" (Facebook communication from Pastor Richard Mendoza to Jason Smith)

"...And if we agree that "in the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God" we probably should admit that we don't know anything about something before that beginning. WE DON'T KNOW IF THE SON WAS A SON AT THAT POINT. We don't know that He was. And we don't know that He wasn't..." (Eugene Prewitt, The Godhead for Seventh-day Adventists at bible.doc.org)

"Rather, the passage seems to refer TO THE TIME OF HIS INSTALLMENT INTO HIS OFFICE OF SONSHIP "in the beginning" (which in light of the allusions to the "in the

beginning” [using the same Hebrew word] of Gen 1:1, REFERS TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF CREATION IN THE UNIVERSE.” (Richard Davidson “Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity, Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 17/1 (Spring 2006): pg 50)

“HE BECAME THE SON BY BEGETTING AS A CHILD IN THE WOMB OF MARY, WHEREAS BEFORE THAT HE WAS THE SON IN A FUNCTIONAL SENSE, not begotten, created, or adopted, but of the same essence with different role and functions, submissive to the authority of the Father (Email from Edwin Reynolds to Jason Smith, November 15th, 2014 at 6:12 pm)

“There are references in the Old Testament to “Sonship” but THESE ARE ALWAYS IN ANTICIPATION OF THE INCARNATION.” (Ministry Magazine “Is Jesus Jehovah God” June 1982 pg 24)

“The second person IS THE SON of the first person ONLY BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE IN THIS WORLD. (J.R. Hoffman “Is Jesus Jehovah God” 1980 audio tape)

“That’s part of my point, Kevin. Denying and attacking the part of the Trinity doctrine about the processions is going beyond what inspiration says. And WE CAN’T USE THE FACT THAT CHRIST IS ETERNAL TO REFUTE THE IDEA OF THE PROCESSIONS, SINCE BOTH IDEAS ARE PART OF THE TRINITY DOCTRINE. (Bob Pickle, Comment to Kevin Paulson on Advindicate Article “Three Co-eternal Persons” posted Monday, May 29th, 2017 at 7:51 am)

“IT IS TRUE THAT MANY OF US ON THE TRINITARIAN SIDE IN ADVENTISM, HAVE NOT ONLY DENED THAT JESUS WAS INDEED BEGOTTEN BY THE FATHER FROM ALL ETERNITY (A TRUTH MRS. WHITE and all the SDA pioneers upheld, just like all Trinitarians historically), but, IN OUR POOR HANDLING OF THE TRUTH THAT A TRINITY OR LITERAL TRIO OF SEPARATE BEINGS ARE INDEED IN THE GODHEAD, HAVE GONE TO THE EXTREME OF TEACHING THAT THEY ARE ALL ETERNALLY, SELF-ORIGINATE BEINGS, WHO ARE SIMPLY ‘ROLE-PLAYING’ AS FATHER AND SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT. That I have unreservedly rejected several years now, and continue to agitate for its rejection as a recent teaching... (Derrick Gillespie, Pre-1915 SDA Pioneers Debunk Modern SDA Anti-Trinitarians – Part 3 pg 11)

“G.N. BANKS: Is our position as fundamentalist-believers that the Godhead is a unit of three equal members, pre-existent to all things, AND THAT THERE WAS A PERIOD WHEN THERE WAS NO SONSHIP INVOLVED- JUST THREE MEMBERS OF

THE GODHEAD? Is that our position? DID THE TERM FATHER COME INTO PLAY ONLY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE SONSHIP EXPERIENCE AS A RESULT OF SIN AND THE NEED OF THE ATONEMENT?

NEAL C. WILSON: Well, YOU ARE GETTING INTO AN AREA THAT COULD LEAD US INTO CERTAIN ARIAN COMPLICATIONS...

W. DUNCAN EVA: Mr. Chairman, WE DID NOT WANT TO GET INTO THOSE AREAS that Elder Banks has talked about... (Review and Herald April 24, 1980 pg 18)

8. Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ vs. Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of God or Spirit of Christ.

"Is the Holy Spirit a Person? Let's stick with the Bible only this time. No pioneers, historians, or SOP. Can we do that? In John 16:13 Jesus refers to "the Spirit of truth." Then, "HE [the Spirit] will take of what is MINE, and declare it to YOU" (vs. 14). To me, this proves that "He" (the Spirit) is separate from Jesus, yet they are united. He takes what is "Mine," Jesus said, and reveals it to us. YES, THE NT SAYS THAT THE SPIRIT IS "THE SPIRIT OF GOD" AND THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST," BUT THIS DOESN'T MEAN THEY ARE THE SAME ENTITY. I strive to be a "man of God" (2 Tim. 3:17), yet I am not God. (Pastor Steve Wohlberg Facebook post on August 1st, 2016)

"SO THE "SPIRIT OF GOD" IS NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT! IF the "spirit of Christ" was "DIVESTED FROM Christ's BODY" then the body without the "spirit" IS DEAD. The DEAD BODY of Christ is in Heaven while the "spirit of Christ" is here upon the earth? Bazaar and foolishness (Pastor Richard Mendoza Facebook post November 17th at 2:26 am)

"5. False dilemmas, like the claim heard so often in this discussion that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and thus can't be a distinct Person. BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN IN FACT BE BOTH, AS INSPIRATION ATTESTS" (Pastor Kevin Paulson, Comment on AdVindicate Article "Three Co-Eternal Persons" posted Thursday, May 11, 2017 5:39 AM)

"This "interesting point" is where I've been waiting for the conversation to go. You are absolutely right. ONE CANNOT BE DIVESTED OF SOMETHING THAT SAID ONE WAS NOT AT ONE POINT "INVESTED" WITH. IF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS "HIMSELF DIVESTED OF THE PERSONALITY OF HUMANITY" THEN THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A

TIME WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS "INVESTED" WITH "THE PERSONALITY OF HUMANITY." So the question then is when did the Holy Spirit become "invested" with "the personality of humanity?" In other words, was there some point in time when the Holy Spirit became connected with "the personality of humanity" in Christ? If so, when was the spirit "invested" with this personality? When did the "Spirit" come to dwell upon and within Christ, thus connecting and becoming invested with the personality of humanity? (Pastor Ivor Myers to Jason Smith Comment in Seventh-day Adventism Defending the Pillars forum on June 29th, at 1:44 am)

"The holy Spirit at the baptism of Christ WAS INVESTED WITH THE PERSONALITY OF HUMANITY, JUST AS AT OUR BAPTISM, the third person, the "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,". Romans 8:16. This is exactly what happened at the Jordan. This spirit became Christs at his baptism. We can speak of it as Christ's (his human name) spirit. THIS SAME SPIRIT WAS THEN DIVESTED OF THE PERSONALITY OF HUMANITY WHEN CHRIST COMMENDED "HIS" SPIRIT INTO THE FATHER'S HAND. This is why he could "breathe" the Spirit upon his disciples after his resurrection. This is the same Spirit, person we receive at our baptism the third person, the spirit "of Christ" which represents Christ. In short, in Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Father at birth, Holy Spirit at Baptism. Jesus as our example was "born" of the water and spirit, just as we must be. He received the Spirit, in the same way we may receive the same spirit. That spirit was distinct from him, just as it is distinct from us. (Pastor Ivor Myers Ibid June 29th at 6:30pm)

*Note: The comments from pastor Myers above are most interesting. He believes that the holy Spirit is a separate entity from Christ. With this belief in mind he has attempting to answer as to how inspiration can teach that *"the Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof."* (EGW Present Truth, May 30, 1895 par.7). The answer he has come up with is amazing! Basically his doctrine is that the holy Spirit was invested with the personality of humanity for approximately 3 years when Christ was anointed and then the Spirit Himself was divested of human personality when Christ died. I disagreed with this idea for the following reasons:

Jason wrote: In your system you have the Spirit becoming a human personality at the baptism. In your theology that makes It (or Him) a human personality for approximately 3 years. And then what? He stops being a human personality after

that? Do you really think 3 years is enough for the holy Spirit to operate as our Comforter? What? Is the previous experience of Jesus not a necessary component? Do children not need this comfort? I think we need His whole humanity, not just the ministerial phase. It makes so much more sense if we hold that from birth to death, it was His Spirit going through the whole gambit of the human experience. Then, after His ascension, He divested His Spirit of the restriction of the personality of humanity and thus became omnipresence in Spirit one more, an attribute of His Divine individuality. And why was this necessary? It was needed so that He could personally bring comfort to all humans no matter where they are or what they are going through. Since He knows in Spirit what it's like as a human from birth to death He can therefore help us by His Spirit no matter where we are or what we are going through. Does this really not make sense to you? Anyhow though, your latest comment answers question one. I appreciate that and it is good to hear your view. However that still leaves question 2 and the rest.

Q2) How is the anointing really taking the personality of humanity?

When God anointed Christ with His Spirit at His baptism is that really the Spirit becoming a human personality to you? Was He not separate at that time? Also then what about when we are anointed with the holy Spirit? Is that also the Spirit being vested with the personality of humanity? And if not why wouldn't that be the same thing too? That's what I am trying to get at via question 4.

Q4) Isn't the holy Spirit connected with certain humans right now? Aren't we, as believers, anointed by the Spirit too? Also wasn't He connected with certain humans back in the OT era? If the connection with the human Christ was how the Spirit was vested with the personality of humanity then how could He ever be divested of the personality of humanity? Was there ever a time when the Spirit was not connected with at least one human on earth?

And that also leaves questions, 3, 5, 6, and 7

Q3) When connecting with Christ did this separate Person also lose His omnipresence?

Note: This is where I see a big weakness in your doctrine. The personality of humanity is definitely not omnipresent. Not a single one of us has omnipresence. So unless you are going to argue that there was no omnipresent Spirit for those 3 years then I don't think you can really say that the holy Spirit was actually vested with the personality of humanity.

Q5) Why did this 3rd separate Person have to divest Himself of the personality of humanity?

Q6) Wouldn't that divesting mean a disconnect from the personality of Christ based on what you previously argued?

Q7) Is the Son therefore now empty of (or disconnected from) the holy Spirit?

The theology you are creating seems contradictory to me in several ways. Also, based on what you have written above, it would seem that you do not really have Christ possessing the fullness of the Godhead at His birth because you hold that He was absent of the Spirit until the baptism. According to your own theological system how is that the fullness of the Godhead if He is missing? Again all of these problems are solved, or at least much less difficult, if we simply accept the inspired truth that the holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ. (Jason Smith to Ivor Myers June 30th at 1:56 am).

These inquiries were never answered.

Continuing on with variations among SDA trinitarians we have number 9.

9. Separable and thus capable of dying forever or Inseparable and thus incapable of dying?

Statements that say it was possible for the Son to be eternally separated:

"Christ was willing TO BE ETERNALLY SEPARATED from His Father, TO DIE FOREVER, to reconcile the human family to God. This was the supreme sacrifice He believed He had made when He cried out in His humanness, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?' Yet his declaration, 'It is finished,' marks willful assent to His own eternal death, that we might choose life." (Karen Flowers <http://familyministries.gc.adventist.org/...>)

Note: It is unclear whether or not Karen Flowers believes that Christ was actually capable of being eternally separated from God the Father. She notes His willingness to experience this and His belief that this had occurred when He cried out. However her statement could be read either way. For the time being I am giving her the benefit of the doubt of having the truth position even though the statement does not spell it out explicitly.

"The Father was willing to RISK ETERNAL FAILURE AND LOSS OF HIS SON. " (Pastor Stephen Bohr, GYC 2014 sermon entitled Risk of Eternal Loss"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFz...>)

Note: Stephen Bohr, on the other hand, explicitly taught this. The quote above was taken from his sermon at the General Youth Conference in 2014. At the time he preached that sermon brother Bohr believed that the pre-incarnate Son of God was begotten. I know this because I actually heard a phone conversation where he said so explicitly. I was in the theology department at Southern Adventist University at the time and I asked a professor, Alan Parker, what he thought of the sermon. He commented to me that they (presumably meaning the theology department) needed to respond to it. The clear implication was that pastor Bohr's teaching was deemed unacceptable. I am not clear whether or not this was because the sermon clearly implied pre-incarnate begotten theology or because it implied that the Son could permanently die or perhaps because of both reasons. Another of my professors, in my personal communication with him, opposed the doctrine of potential eternal death for the Son of God. He explained to me in personal conversation that he had been taught trinitarian theology by Fernando Canale while in seminary. I suspect that this is where the following theory came from.

"The danger in Jesus incarnation was that if he sinned, THEN DIVINITY AND THE TRINITY WOULD BE ETERNALLY LINKED TO JESUS' DEAD HUMANITY. JESUS ACTUALLY RISKED A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH, BEING ETERNALLY CONNECTED WITH SIN. (Email from Douglas Jacobs to Jason Smith, Monday, January 26, 2015 at 9:56 am)

Now amazingly Fernando Canale has written this:

"THE REALITY OF DIVINE FORSAKENESS IS POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN THE ONE GOD IS UNDERSTOOD IN HIS BIBLICAL, TRINITARIAN STRUCTURE....(Handbook of SDA Theology pg 127)

Even while speaking about *"the reality of divine forsakenness"* being possible *"only when the one God is understood in His biblical, Trinitarian structure"* Canale appears to simultaneously deny the very real possibility of eternal death that the Son of God faced while here on earth! And on what basis? His understanding of the trinitarian structure of God! (see the quotes below where he emailed Terry Hill). Thus the very doctrine which he suggest as the *"only"* way for it to be possible for there to

be Divine forsakenness actually prevents him from seeing the full extent and actual reality of what this would have actually have been if Christ had sinned!

Before we get to that though we need to understand why he believes this. I suspect this is due to the view that the 3 Persons are one inseparable, indivisible, inseparably connected God Being.

Inseparable, Indivisible, Inextricably bound triune God:

“Therefore, we must confess that the Trinity is ONE INDIVISIBLE GOD and that the distinct

ions of the persons do not destroy the divine unity. This unity of God is expressed by saying that HE IS ONE SUBSTANCE. Nevertheless, in the divine unity there are three co-eternal and co-equal persons, who, though distinct, are THE ONE UNDIVIDED AND ADORABLE GOD. This is the doctrine of Scripture.” (Raoul Dederen, Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity, page 16, Andrews University Seminar Studies, Vol. VIII, No. 1 January, 1970)

“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)

“The Three are obviously One, INEXTRICABLY BOUND TOGETHER IN ONE DIVINE SUBSTANCE.” (Max Hatton, Our God is an awesome God, page 21, April 2014)

Note: This idea of indivisibility, inseparable connection, inextricably bound is the apparent reason why my professor believes that the trinity would have been “*eternally linked*” to Jesus dead humanity. In his theology you cannot break the link. Now I had written him previously and demonstrated how Max Hatton’s idea that “*In the Divine/human Jesus we have Divinity and humanity somehow merged together but not inextricably*” was wrong (Email, Max Hatton to Terry Hill, 28th February 2014). I showed him that EGW “*contradicts this by stating that “Christ’s humanity could not be separated from His divinity.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, April 14th 1898, ‘Christ and the Law’)*” [Email from Jason Smith to Douglas Jacobs and Jud Lake on Sunday, January 25, 2015 2:43 PM]. Thus it looks like my professor took the two ideas – one that contradicts inspiration about an inseparable Son and the other that is inspired about an incarnated Son whose humanity could

not be separated from His Divinity – and merged them together. Thus the result is that “*Divinity and the Trinity would be eternally linked to Jesus’ death humanity.*” Thus He “*actually risked a fate worse than death, being eternally connected with sin.*” No amount of Scripture and EGW quotes seemed to be able to break through both sources make it clear that the Son would have died and that He would have lost His eternal existence.

Inseparable, indivisible, inextricably bound triune God equals out to an incarnated Son of God who had no risk of eternal death, even if He had sinned this is viewed as impossible:

“...Deity is immortal and THEREFORE CANNOT DIE IN ANY SENSE. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR AN IMMORTAL BEING TO GIVE UP LIFE. Immortality is deathlessness... (E. Gane “Ellen G. White on the Absolute Deity of Christ)

“Thank you for reading the treatise on the Doctrine [sic] of God. GOD THE SON COULD HAVE SINNED BUT HE WOULD NOT HAVE LOST HIS EXISTENCE. I do not know where you get the idea that sin would have brought the death of the eternal Son of God. GOD, BECAUSE HE IS GOD CANNOT DIE. Humans can die. SIN IN CHRIST would have determined death for all humans, and would have affected the life of the Son and the trinity in ways we cannot comprehend but WILL NOT HAVE CAUSE THE DEATH OF THE SON AND CHANGED THE TRINITARIAN STRUCTURE OF GOD’S BEING.” (Fernando Canale, email to Terry Hill, 14th September 2007)

“I THINK THAT WHEN WE GO TO THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE DIVINITY IF CHRIST HAD SINNED, we enter into the mystery that has not been revealed and probably cannot be revealed because IT TOUCHES THE INNER STRUCTURE OF THE DIVINE BEING we cannot understand. The idea that Christ will not have resurrected if he had sinned seems contradictory to the fact that he has life in itself. By definition the divinity cannot cease to exist, or to be the fountain of life. Besides, THE REAL INEXISTENCE OF THE SECOND PERSON OF THE DIVINITY WILL PROBABLY MAKE THE OTHER TWO DISAPPEAR AS WELL BECAUSE GOD IS ONE. Yet, please bring in mind that we can indulge in our questionings but we should be respectful of divine mystery (privacy) were silence is golden as Ellen white used to say.” (Fernando Canale, email to Terry Hill, 16th September 2007)

“So now you know where I stand on the little game the Anti-Trinitarians like to play. They try to set you up for a big fall by their use; I should say misuse, of Ellen White. I would answer them on No. 1. “Yes He could have sinned.” On No. 2. “It would have

affected Him terribly if He had sinned. He would be shattered to a depth that we could never understand. God would be defeated, the human family would be forever lost, the residents of the other occupied planets would be in great distress and would probably lose a lot of confidence in God. It would have adversely affected Christ's humanity somehow BUT HIS DEITY WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED TO THE EXTENT THAT HE WOULD BE OBLITERATED. HE IS ETERNAL, OMNIPOTENT, AND SUCH-LIKE AND COULD NEVER DIE." {Max Hatton, HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST FROM ANTI-TRINITARIANS}

"Thank you for collecting the Ellen White quotes in this area. I have examined each one of them and find that THEY DO NOT STATE EXACTLY WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF CHRIST HAD SINNED. THERE WAS A RISK, THAT IS CLEAR, BUT JUST WHAT THAT RISK WAS IS NOT CLEARLY SPELLED OUT. (Glyn Parfitt to Terry Hill, 8th October 2009)

Note: Due to their trinitarian view of a 3 Persons being inseparable, indivisible, inextricably bound these leaders are in denial of what inspiration teaches would have happened to the Son of God if He had sinned. Yet the Bible and Spirit of prophecy spell it out very clearly. That data is available at the following link.

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/seve...>

Now if any of you have actually made it through this entire document I must applaud you. It is quite long Yet I wrote all of this for an express purpose. In my experience it is a fairly common thing for SDA pro-trinitarians to say that the SDA non-trinitarians have no accord among themselves. I do confess that there is quite a bit of variation among this group. Yet I would argue that the variance among SDA trinitarians is just as much, maybe even greater, and those whom I have quoted above, for the most part, are leaders. Personally I find it to be shameful that this assumptive doctrine has become a test of fellowship for Seventh-day Adventists. The trinity doctrine allows for the SDA church to have fellowship in ecumenical movements with professed Christians (many of them sincerely in ignorance) who teach antinomianism and purposefully trample the Sabbath, disbelieve 1844 and the sanctuary message, disparage Ellen White, believe in futurism and the pre-tribulation rapture, speak in false tongues, teach immortal soul theology and who swallow the wine of Babylon in gulps. Yet when it comes to SDA anti/non-trinitarians who establish the law by faith and keep God's holy Sabbath, believe in 1844 as a fulfillment of end time prophecy, teach the sanctuary message, firmly advocate for the inspiration of the testimonies, who defend and teach historicism as the correct

method of interpreting apocalyptic prophecy, who stand against the false satanic spirit sweeping through the churches, teach that death is a sleep and who refuse to even look upon the wine of Babylon lest it tempt them, these are kicked out of the church. Are we really at the point where fellowship with Babylon due to harmony over the trinity is the deciding factor above all else? And is this really the way it should be?

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