

The Development of Trinity Theology within the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Part 2 - The Father and the Son

By Terry Hill

This is Part 2 of a study on how trinity doctrine theology developed within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Here we shall be taking a detailed look at what SDA's once taught, through their various denominational publications, about the Father and the Son. We shall then compare this with what is being taught today, which, as we shall see, is something entirely different. Part 1 of this study can be found here

https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/History/Development_of_SDA_Trinity_Theology_1.pdf

Overview and introduction

From their very beginnings as a denomination, right through until decades after the death of Ellen White, SDA's believed and taught that Christ, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. God therefore, according to early SDA's, was truly the father of Christ. During my research, I have not found anywhere, at least not during the time of Ellen White's ministry, where this was disputed. Christ therefore, according to early Seventh-day Adventism, was truly a son – and the Father was truly a father.

The article you are now reading is not simply meant to debate certain theological positions. Its intent is to show, as time has progressed, the development of theology, within Seventh-day Adventism, regarding the Father and the Son. Having said that, this author takes the view that what was believed and taught by SDA's, during the time of Ellen White's ministry, also for decades after her death (that God is truly a father, and Christ is truly a son), is the truth concerning these two divine personalities.

Context is always very important. For this reason, I have not only quoted those things I would bring to your attention but have also included enough of the surrounding wording to show that it has not been removed from its original setting. This allows the reasoning behind the beliefs of these early SDA's to be clearly shown. As this has made some of the quotations lengthy, I have, in red, highlighted the relevant part. I hope this adds to making this study easier to follow.

This part of the study (Part 2) is divided into 2 sections. Section A reveals that the belief of these early SDA's (that God really is the Father of Christ, and that Christ really is the Son of God) was still being taught, in our publications, even through to the 1970's, although by then, a 'new theology' was fast becoming established within Seventh-day Adventism. We shall discover this 'new theology' in Section B.

May you be blessed as you read.

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Email: terry_sda@blueyonder.co.uk

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Section A: Past Seventh-day Adventist Father and Son theology

Period: 1850-1859

General publications:

In the *Youth's Instructor* of June 1854, Uriah Smith spoke of the evils of spiritualism.

“Antichrist is one that denies Christ, or opposes the doctrines of christianity; now these mediums and believers in spirit teachings do this openly. They teach that the soul is immortal; a doctrine which is not taught in the Bible; and they positively deny the divinity of Christ. So they answer exactly the description given by Peter, when he says that they “shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.” (Uriah Smith, *Youth's Instructor*, June 1854, ‘The Last Time’)

It is evident that Uriah Smith believed in “the divinity of Christ” (that Christ is divine). Those who did not believe this he described as “antichrist”. He also described the belief that Christ was not divine, as one of the “damnable heresies” spoken of by Peter. This gives an indication of what the early SDA’s (although not yet officially a denomination) then believed about Christ. Notice that this was being brought to the attention of the youth.

The *Youth's Instructor* was launched in the August of 1852. Its first editor was James White. Its intent, which should not be necessary to explain, was to cater for the spiritual needs of the young people.

Ellen White is said to have made a contribution of over 500 articles to the *Youth's Instructor*. Her first was in the very first issue. It was called *Communications*. In this article she wrote (after explaining that Adam and Eve had forfeited eternal life by eating of the forbidden fruit)

“But the Son of God, who was with the Father before the world was, took pity upon us in our lost condition, and offered to step in between us and the wrath of an offended God. Said Jesus, I will give my life for them. I will take the burden of the sins of the world upon me, and will make a way possible for these transgressors to find pardon, and enjoy thy favor again, that they may repent and keep thy commandments. and again have access to the tree of life. God consented to give his only Son to die for lost man.” (Ellen White, *Youth's Instructor*, August 1852, ‘Communications’)

In this very first issue of the *Youth's Instructor*, an explanation was given for its production

“The young, at this day, are exposed to many evils and dangers, and they must have right instruction to enable them to know how to shun them. And although the world never was so full of books and papers as at the present time, yet there is but very little written that is calculated to lead the youth to feel the need of the Saviour, and to impress them with the importance of shunning vice, and living a virtuous, sober and holy life.

The young are receiving impressions, and forming characters for Eternal Life or for Death, in an unfortunate age of the world, when spiritual darkness, like the pall of death, is spread over the earth. Pride is fostered; self-will, anger and malice are not timely and faithfully rebuked.” (James White, *The Youth's Instructor*, August, 1852, ‘Address’)

In 1854 (this was the same year as the above Uriah Smith article was published in the *Youth's Instructor*), J. M. Stephenson had a book published by the *Advent Review*. It was called *The Atonement*. It was also, between August and December of the same year, published in sections in the *Review and Herald*. In the November 7th issue, Stephenson had this to say about Christ (this was after extensive coverage in previous sections of the meaning and the purpose of the atonement)

"The pre-existence of the Son of God claims our attention. The testimony on this point is so clear and explicit, that comment will be almost unnecessary." (J. M. Stephenson, *Review and Herald*, 7th November 1854, 'The Atonement')

Stephenson then goes on to show that the Scriptures provide abundant evidence that Christ had a pre-existence with the Father (too much to quote here). Following this he says

"In reference to his dignity, he is denominated the Son of God, before his incarnation. Hear his own language: "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true." John vii, 18. "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God." Chap. x, 36. "In this was manifest the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. I John iv, 9, 10. The idea of being sent implies that he was the Son of God antecedent to his being sent. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that a father can send his son on an errand before that son has an existence, which would be manifestly absurd. "To say that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," is equivalent to saying that the Son of God assumed our nature; he must therefore have been the Son of God before his incarnation." (Ibid)

Some may say that this is reasonably apparent, but not everyone believes that Christ, prior to the incarnation, was a son. Some believe He became a son when He was born of the virgin Mary. Others believe that the terminology 'the Son of God' is simply a metaphor.

Stephenson then goes on to say there was no greater honour than being the Son of God.

"It would be considered an honor in the world's estimation to be a son of Nicholas, and heir to all the Russias; but what is this in comparison to the honor of being the only begotten Son of God, and heir to the throne of this world; ...Would it not be an honor for our adorable Redeemer to share the unclouded glory of all the angels in heaven; nay, to have all the celestial choirs join in unison to hymn his praise, and fall adoring before his throne ? But what are all these demonstrations when compared with the eternal weight of glory he had with the Father "before time world was?" (Ibid)

There is no mistaking that Stephenson believed that Christ, in His pre-existence, was "the only begotten Son of God". He continued by explaining

"The creation of the world, with all its vast oceans and mighty continents, and its numerous and varied population, is ascribed to this August Personage in his pre-existent nature. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." John i, 1, 3." (Ibid)

As we shall see, Stephenson, like Uriah Smith, believed that Christ was divine.

After quoting Hebrews 1:3 as saying "Who being the brightness of his (the Father's) glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.", the same author concluded

"But in conclusion on this interesting part of the subject, let us investigate more critically the import of the term, only begotten Son of God: and, first, the bearing it has upon his original nature. To appreciate the atonement, we must not only understand the exaltation, glory and honor, our blessed Redeemer sacrificed in taking upon him the infamy and degradation of our nature, but also the nature he possessed previous to his incarnation; for if it was a human nature, then it was a human sacrifice: if it was an angelic nature, it was an angelic sacrifice; but if, as I shall attempt to show, it was a Divine nature, then the offering of our Lord and Saviour, was a Divine Sacrifice." (*Ibid*)

Stephenson believed that Christ was divine, also that a divine person died at Calvary. He continued

"It has already been demonstrated that the term, "only begotten Son of God," is applied to Christ previous to his incarnation. I will adduce one more passage on this point. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father:, full of grace and truth." John i, 14. Here the Word, and the only begotten Son, are used synonymously; thus, the Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, i. e., the Word's glory, &c. By reference to the first verse of this chapter, we learn that this Word, i. e., the only begotten Son of God, was in the beginning, and was the instrumentality by which all things were made, which were made." (*Ibid*)

Stephenson realised that the Scriptures clearly say that Christ, in His pre-existence, was the "only begotten Son of God", also that through Him, the entire creation came into being.

In the following issue of the *Review and Herald*, Stephenson continues his understanding of why the Scriptures say that Christ is the only begotten Son of God. His opening remarks are

"To be the only begotten Son of God must be understood in a different sense than to be a Son by creation; for in that sense all the creatures he has made are sons. Nor can it refer to his miraculous conception, with the virgin Mary, by the Holy Ghost; because he is represented by this endearing title more than four thousand years before his advent in the village of Bethlehem. Moreover, he is represented as being exalted far above the highest orders of men and angels in his primeval nature. He must therefore be understood as being the Son of God in a much higher sense than any other being. His being the only begotten of the Father supposes that none except him were thus begotten; hence he is, in truth and verity the only begotten Son of God; and as such he must be Divine; that is, be a partaker of the Divine nature. This term expresses his highest, and most exalted nature. Neither the Father, the prophets, nor the apostles apply a higher term to him. The Son of God himself never claimed a higher title. The Jews accused him of blasphemy upon this high claim. John x, 36. This claim also excited their rage to the highest degree. John v, 18" (*J. M. Stephenson, Review and Herald, 14th November 1854, 'The Atonement'*)

Stephenson is saying here that Christ is not a son by creation, as are the angels, neither is He a son because of the incarnation. He says that Christ is a Son because He is the "only

begotten of the Father". He concludes therefore that Christ "must be Divine; that is, be a partaker of the Divine nature". As we shall see, these were the beliefs held by SDA's throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry, also for decades beyond. We shall also see that Ellen White confirmed these beliefs to be the truth (see pages 64-68).

With reference to Hebrews 1:6, the same author remarked

"In the last clause of the previous verse the Father says, "And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son:" and as has been shown, these passages refer to his primeval nature. And in this character he is represented as the Creator of the worlds. Heb. i, 2, 3; John i, 1-3." (*Ibid*)

This realisation (that Christ was truly a son and truly divine), led Stephenson to conclude

"The question now to be considered, then, is not whether the only begotten Son of God was Divine, immortal, or the most dignified and exalted being; the Father only excepted, in the entire Universe; all this has been proved, and but few will call it in question; but whether this august Personage is selfexistent and eternal, in its absolute, or unlimited sense; or whether in his highest nature, and character, he had an origin, and consequently beginning of days." (*Ibid*)

The author then reasons this way

"The idea of Father and Son supposes priority of the existence of the one, and the subsequent existence of the other. To say that the Son is as old as his Father, is a palpable contradiction of terms. It is a natural impossibility for the Father to be as young as the Son, or the Son to be as old as the Father. If it be said that this term is only used in an accommodated sense, it still remains to be accounted for, why the Father should use as the uniform title of the highest, and most endearing relation between himself and our Lord, a term which, in its uniform signification, would contradict the very idea he wished to convey. If the inspired writers had wished to convey the idea of the co-etaneous existence, and eternity of the Father and Son, they could not possibly have used more incompatible terms." (*Ibid*)

Stephenson is correct. The terminology "Father and Son" does strongly imply that one existed before the other.

He then spoke of the orthodox trinitarian view of Christ which says that Christ was *eternally* (everlastingly) a Son. He concludes

"The idea of an eternal Son is a self-contradiction. He must, therefore have an origin." (*Ibid*)

After saying that Christ was the "first born of every creature", Stephenson quotes John 1:1-3 and then says

"In the beginning," evidently refers to the commencement, of the series of events brought to view in these verses, which was the creation of all things. This gives "the only begotten of the Father" (see verse 14) intelligent existence before the first act of creative power was put forth, and proves that it is his Divine nature here spoken of; and that too, in connection with the creation of all things. In verse 14, this Word, who was "in the beginning" "with God," who "was God," and by whom "all things were

made, that were made," is declared to be the "only begotten of the Father," thereby teaching that in his highest nature he was begotten; and consequently as such, he must have had a beginning." (*Ibid*)

Again Stephenson says that Christ's pre-existent nature was divine, also that Christ was the "only begotten of the Father". He also says that Christ was "God". Notice too he says that the Son of God had an "intelligent existence before the first act of creative power was put forth".

In this issue of the *Review and Herald* (14th November 1854), a great deal more was said by Stephenson with respect to Christ, but it is far too much to quote here. It can be read though at this link

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH18541114-V06-14.pdf>

In the next issue (21st November 1854), Stephenson went to great lengths to show that it was the pre-existent divine Son of God who died at Calvary – not only human nature as believed by trinitarians. Stephenson, as did certain SDA's, condemned the trinitarian understanding of the atonement (remember, his book was called *The Atonement*).

As we shall see as we progress through this study, Stephenson's thoughts, as quoted above, were perpetuated by SDA's throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry. They were also held for decades after she had died. Admittedly these SDA's did not agree with absolutely everything that Stephenson wrote, neither did Ellen White, but they did agree upon the basics. This was that (a) Christ, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God, (b) Christ was truly the Son of God, (c) Christ, in His pre-existence, was divine (He had a divine nature), (d) Christ was God, and (e) the divine person of the Son of God died at Calvary.

In summary of Stephenson's beliefs, I would offer the statement that he made in the section published in the *Review and Herald* of 21st November 1854.

"This, this, is the sacrifice, the "only begotten of the Father" offered as an atonement for the sins of the world; this is the being who was actually sacrificed, and this the price the Son of God actually paid for our redemption. Hence, in reference to its dignity, it is the sacrifice of the most exalted and dignified being in the vast empire of God; nay, the sacrifice of the King's only begotten Son. In reference to its intrinsic value, who can estimate the worth of God's darling Son." (*J. M. Stephenson, Review and Herald, 21st November 1854, 'The Atonement'*)

Throughout his book, Stephenson says that Christ is the begotten Son of God. In fact, as we have seen above, he says, in keeping with Scripture, that Christ is the *only* begotten Son of God, and that in His pre-existence, He had a divine nature (Colossians 2:8-9, John 1:1). That the pre-existent Christ had a divine nature was repeatedly stated by Stephenson.

Unfortunately, some, in their criticism of Stephenson's beliefs, only quote him where he refers to Christ as a creature. In this they fail to take into account he says that Christ is divine, also that He is begotten of God. Stephenson, in the *Review and Herald* issue of 14th November 1854, had this to say when referring to the first chapter of Hebrews

"In verse 2, the Father declares that he made the worlds by the same Son he is here represented as sending into the world. His Son must have existed before he created the worlds; and he must have been begotten before he existed; - hence the begetting

here spoken of, must refer to his Divine nature, and in reference to his order, he is the first-begotten; hence as a matter of necessity he must have been "the first born of every creature." Col. i, 15. "The first born of every creature" Creature signifies creation; hence to be the first born of every creature, (creation) he must be a created being; and as such, his life and immortality must depend upon the Father's will, just as much as angels, or redeemed men: and as the Father has given his Son to have life in himself, so his Son will give this life to all his children." (J. M. Stephenson, *Review and Herald*, 14th November 1854, 'The Atonement')

As I have said, it is very unfortunate that all too often, some only quote Stephenson where he refers to Christ as a "created being", thus they give a totally wrong impression of what he believed. This is what happens when a writer's words are divorced from other things that he or she has written. It tends to give a serious misrepresentation of a person's beliefs.

We must also remember that the apostle Paul, after saying that Christ was the very image of the invisible God, also the first born of every creature, and that by Him all things were created, (Colossians 1:15-17), followed this by saying that all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ by the pleasure of the Father (Colossians 1:19, 2:9). This denotes that this indwelling was by the will of God. This brings us back again to the concept of Christ being begotten of the Father, which in turn makes Him truly the Son of God.

Although it may be said (and I would quite agree) that Stephenson could have expressed himself in a way far less likely to be misunderstood (this is because we usually reserve the term 'creature' to those who are created like angels, also like Adam and Eve etc), it must be remembered that he was simply trying to point out, as he had often done, that Christ, unlike His Father, was not unbegotten. Certainly Stephenson was not relegating Christ to the order of created beings such as angels etc. He believed Christ to be the *divine* Son of God, a partaker of the very essence of God's nature – the *only* begotten of God. As he later said of Christ

"The Father publicly acknowledged him as his beloved Son on the bank of Jordan. "And lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am Well pleased." Matt. iii, 17. At his transfiguration: "And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him." Luke ix, 35. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. xvi, 16. Paul "preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Acts ix, 20. Not only did the Father, the Son and the apostles, acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, but the devils acknowledged him to be such. "Thou art Christ the Son of God." (*Ibid*)

When Stephenson's articles were published in the *Review and Herald*, its editor was James White, the husband of Ellen White. It appears therefore that he fully approved of Stephenson's book. As we shall see later, James White, as did his wife, endorsed the view that Christ was fully and completely divine, also that He was the *only* begotten of God

In the *Review and Herald* in 1856, it was reported by M. E. Cornell

"By special request we concluded to return and bear further testimony in Monterey. We tarried over two Sabbaths, from the 12th to the 24th inst., and gave fifteen lectures. The truth had free course in the midst of bitter opposition and persecution. By request appointments were made in the day-time at private dwellings, for investigation, and to answer inquiries and objections.

Several professors became perfectly desperate against the truth and its supporters. One man (a Baptist Deacon) forbade the investigation of the subject in his house; and finally turned his hired man and his own son out of his house, on account of their interest in the truth. A kind neighbor opened his doors for these, and gave out word that if any more were cast out for the same reason, they could have a home with him.

For the want of arguments a wonderful mixture came forth, of which the following is only a mere tithe. Says one, "It is Millerism;" and another, "It is Mormonism;" and so on, to "Campbellism," "Judaism," "Literalism," "No-soulism," and "He don't believe in the divinity of Christ," nor "getting religion;" "Believes in annihilation;" "At Battle Creek he is known to be a regular infidel;" "He is a heretic, and ought to be burnt;" &c., and that their victory might be complete they talked of using "tar and leathers," and made an effort to close the schoolhouse." (*Review and Herald*, March 6th 1856, 'Second Course of Lectures in Monterey. Mich').

Such was the hostility – and the false arguments – that were directed at early SDA's in the preaching of our God-given message. Note that one of the misrepresentations was that "He don't believe in the divinity of Christ". As I have researched our denominational history, I have noted that this accusation was repeatedly levelled against SDA's. One of the reasons for this would have been the fact that we rejected the trinity doctrine.

In the *Review and Herald* of October 22nd 1857, an article was published decrying the seeming 'slumber' of the churches at that time. This article was a letter circulated by the Washtenaw Baptist Association. The first paragraph says (as an introduction explaining the publishing of the letter)

[WE believe that an important prophecy has of late years been fulfilled in the nominal churches of the land, [Rev. xiv, 8.] to which they are from time to time unconsciously bearing testimony. The readers of the REVIEW will understand the following "Circular Letter of the Washtenaw Mich. Baptist Association," which we copy from the Mich. Christian Herald—ED. Review]" (*Review and Herald*, October 22nd 1857, 'Christian Activity to be Aroused')

The letter, denouncing the results of the apathy in the churches of that day, said

"The minds of men are called off from the old themes of thought and conversation, and hurried to new and, falsely so called, more practical things. Christians no longer sit by their firesides, as of old, and debate the high doctrines of election, the sonship and divinity of Christ, the atonement and relations of faith and repentance and regeneration. The Christian mind has been diverted from the deep and ever needful heart-work of self-examination, and the prayerful struggle for purity of heart and assurance of faith, and led to expend its forces in external activities." (*Review and Herald*, October 22nd 1857, 'Christian Activity to be Aroused, Circular Letter Washtenaw Association')

In 1859, D. W. Hull wrote a lengthy article concerning the divinity of Christ. In it he condemned the trinity doctrine. His opening words were

"THE inconsistent positions held by many in regard to the Trinity, as it is termed, has; no doubt, been the prime cause of many other errors. Erroneous views of the divinity of Christ are apt to lead us into error in regard to the nature of the atonement." (D. W. Hull, *Review and Herald*, November 10th 1859, 'Bible Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ')

Hull is referring here to the belief of trinitarians that only the human part of Christ died at Calvary, not the divine person Himself. In SDA literature, this same trinitarian belief was continually highlighted and condemned. Early SDA's believed that a divine person – namely the pre-existent divine Son of God – died at Calvary.

After explaining that the teaching he was going to examine was the divinity of Christ as established by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 (which led to the doctrine of the trinity being formulated), Hull had this to say (to show he was not throwing the baby out with the bathwater)

“Just here I will meet a question which is very frequently asked, namely, **Do you believe in the divinity of Christ? Most unquestionably we do; but we don't believe, as the M. E. church Discipline teaches, that Christ is the very and eternal God; and, at the same time, very man; that the human part was the Son, and the divine part was the Father**” (*Ibid*)

As we continue through this study, we shall see that SDA's did believe that Christ was divine, also that He was God, but not as explained in trinitarian orthodoxy.

Period: 1860-1869

General publications:

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In a notice in the *Review and Herald* of March 11th 1862, it was explained by Moses Hull (under the heading of *A Discussion on Spiritualism*)

“THERE will be a discussion between F. L. WADSWORTH and myself, in Stuart's Hall, in the city of Battle Creek, commencing on Monday, March 17, at 7 o'clock P. M. and continuing three or four evenings.

The proposition for discussion reads as follows:

"Resolved, That the teachings of Spiritualism are better adapted to the moral advancement of the human family than the teachings of Christianity."

All who are interested in an examination of the relative merits of Spiritualism and Christianity, are invited to attend. Moses Hull” (*Moses Hull, Review and Herald, 11th March 1862, 'Discussion on Spiritualism'*)

Two weeks later, under the heading *The Discussion on Spiritualism*, it was reported by Uriah Smith

“THE notice for a Discussion on Christianity and Spiritualism, in Battle. Creek, between F. L. Wadsworth, and Bro. M. Hull, having appeared in the Review, some of its readers may be desirously waiting to learn the result. The discussion commenced Monday evening, the 17th inst., as per appointment, and continued four evenings. The interest, great at the commencement, continued to increase as the discussion advanced; **and on the last evening, though a driving and disagreeable March storm of snow and sleet was raging at the time, the large hall was more densely filled than on any of the previous evenings, it being estimated by some that about eight hundred persons were present.**” (*Uriah Smith, Review and Herald, March 25th 1862, 'The Discussion on Spiritualism'*)

Uriah Smith explained that Hull, during these discussions, by using the literature of spiritualists, had pointed out those things that spiritualists believed that denied Christianity. Smith reported

“Many are not aware of the light in which Spiritualism holds the Bible and its doctrines. It was Bro. Hull's policy to draw out his opponent on these points, that the congregation might see for themselves what position Spiritualism leads people to take in regard to the Holy Scriptures. And when some, who have been disposed to regard Spiritualism as a higher type of Christianity, were enabled to see that it is the direct antagonist of Christianity, that it denies the authenticity and integrity of the Bible, denies the existence of the Devil, denies the divinity of Christ, and scouts the idea of a vicarious atonement, leaving man to depend for his salvation upon his own merits, their eyes were opened as to its true nature and tendency, and the result cannot fail to be good.”
(*Ibid*)

Moses Hull, as did Uriah Smith (see pages 3 above), was pointing out that one of the serious failings of spiritualism was that it “denies the divinity of Christ”.

J. H. Waggoner (the father of E. J. Waggoner) was one of the most outspoken anti-trinitarians of Seventh-day Adventism. He was also a prolific writer. His article, *The Atonement*, was very well accepted by SDA's. In one form or another, spread over 21 years, it had at least five different printings (the later publications were longer and more detailed). In an early edition of his work he wrote

“THE great mistake of Trinitarians, in arguing this subject, seems to be this: They make no distinction between a denial of a trinity and a denial of the divinity of Christ. They see only the two extremes, between which the truth lies; and take every expression referring to the pre-existence of Christ as evidence of a trinity. The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ and his divinity; but they are entirely silent in regard to a trinity. The declaration, that the divine Son of God could not die, is as far from the teachings of the Bible as darkness is from light.” (*Joseph Waggoner, Review and Herald, November 10th 1863, 'The Atonement – 'Part 2'*)

There is no problem regarding early SDA's believing that Christ was divine, but they could not accept how the trinitarians depicted Him in their trinity doctrine. As we noted in Part 1 of this series, trinitarians say that only the humanity of Christ died at Calvary – not the divine person of the Son of God. For this very reason, Joseph Waggoner, as well as other of our pioneers, spoke out against the trinitarian doctrine.

In 1865, in an article called *Popular Errors and their Fruits*, W. C. Gage wrote about the error of the trinity doctrine.

“When the evils of a false position are apparent to the mind, there is a dangerous tendency to rush as far from it as possible into the other extreme, instead of taking position on safe medium ground. Thus it is in the present case. Some who cannot endorse the doctrine of the trinity, go to the other extreme, and utterly deny the divinity of Christ. Having gone so far, they are ready to doubt his miracles, and the inspiration of his utterances, and finally to look upon the Bible as little or no better than any other book.” (*W. C. Gage, Review and Herald, August 29th 1865, 'Popular Errors and Their Fruits. No. 3'*)

This again is very true. In rejecting one belief, some people do retreat to an extreme position

whereby the baby is thrown out with the bathwater.

In 1865, Uriah Smith, in his book *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation*, had this to say about Christ when commenting upon Revelation 3:14-22.

"Moreover he is "the beginning of the creation of God." Not the beginner, but the beginning, of the creation, the first created being, dating his existence far back before any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. On this expression Barnes makes the following significant admission "If it were demonstrated from other sources that Christ was, in fact, a created being, and the first that God had made, it cannot be denied that this language would appropriately express that fact." (Uriah Smith, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation*, page 59, 1865)

In similar fashion he later wrote

"To the Lamb, equally with the Father who sits upon the throne, praise is ascribed in this song of adoration. Commentators, with great unanimity, have siezed upon this as proof that Christ cannot be a created being; for in that case, say they here would be worship paid to the creature which belongs only to the Creator. How does it prove this?. We read that Christ is the beginning of the creation of God, that is, the first created being, Rev.iii, 14, and that all subsequent creations of conscious intelligences or inanimate things, were made through him. John i, 3; Heb. i, 2" (*Ibid*, page 91)

Smith went on to explain

"To all beings, therefore, of a lower order than himself, Christ holds the relation of joint creator. Could not the Father ordain that to such a being, worship should be rendered equally with himself, without its being idolatry on the part of the worshiper? He has raised him to positions which make it proper that he should be worshiped, and has even commanded that it should be done neither of which acts would have been necessary, had he been equal with the Father in eternity of existence. Christ himself declares that as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. John v, 26" (*Ibid*).

Notice that Smith refers to "beings" who were of a "lower order" than Christ, also that as the Bible says, the Father gave "to the Son to have life in himself".

Just as some have criticised J. M Stephenson for saying that Christ is a created being, so too they have done the same with Uriah Smith. This is understandable, because he does give the impression that Christ was created as were angels and humanity etc. As we have noted about Stephenson though, he meant no such thing. He meant that Christ was begotten of God therefore Christ was a partaker of God's divine nature. It appears therefore that Uriah Smith reasoned the same way. As we noted on page 3, Smith, like Stephenson, did say that Christ was divine – which, during this time period, was the preponderant belief of early SDA's. It appears therefore that like Stephenson, Smith was pointing out that Christ, unlike His Father, was not unbegotten. Smith's wording (Christ a "created being"), was misleading.

It is interesting that Smith, in the same book (this was when referring to New Jerusalem descending from Heaven at the close of the millennium as a dwelling place for God) said

“If an objection should arise in any mind that this is too permanent a place to be called a tabernacle, we reply that the word tabernacle sometimes has the signification of a permanent dwelling place. And it seems that the great God takes up his abode on this earth. We do not suppose that God is confined to this, or any other one of the worlds of his creation but he here has a throne, and earth enjoys so much of his presence that it may be said that he dwells among men. And why should this be thought a strange thing? God's only begotten Son is here as ruler of his special kingdom” (*Ibid*, page 307)

This is where it says in Revelation 21:3

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them. and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

Smith is referring to the presence of God's only begotten Son, on the new earth, as being the presence of God. This shows how he regarded Christ.

For those who would criticise Uriah Smith (or J. M Stephenson), for referring to Christ as a created being, I would point out that 30 years later in the 1895, Ellen White referred to Christ, in His pre-existence, as a Son “begotten” in the express image of the Father's person (*Signs of the Times*, 30th May 1895). She also referred to Christ as a begotten Son who had been “made” in the express image of his Father's person (*Review & Herald* 9th July 1895). In Ellen White's mind therefore, the word “begotten” was synonymous with the word “made”. We shall see this on pages 64-68. We shall also see she said that SDA's were teaching the truth about Christ's pre-existence.

We shall also see later (on page 27) that Uriah Smith, in his book *Daniel and the Revelation* (which was his two books, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation* and *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the book of Daniel* combined into one book) emphasised that the Scriptures speak of Christ, not as a created being, but as a begotten Son.

In the *Review and Herald* of June 18th 1867, which was 4 years after the SDA Church was officially organised as a denomination, an article was published that explained in detail what SDA's believed about the pre-existence of Christ. By this time, the major doctrines of our church had been settled. This article was called *Jesus Christ the Son of God*. It had been written by Dudley Canright, a very well-known minister.

Canright's article was set out as 25 separate clauses. As can be imagined, it would be far too much to comment upon all of these here. I will though list some of the headings. This will give the reader an overall insight into what Canright presented. These were such as

- Christ came into existence first of all things.
- He is the only begotten Son of God.
- He is the Son of God.
- The Son is not as great as the Father.
- The Son derives all his power from the Father
- The Son is partaker of the Father's nature
- Christ is called God.

- Jesus was in the form of God
- All things were made by Jesus Christ
- He is called the Almighty
- Christ, the everlasting Father

Everything Canright wrote in his article was based upon the premise that Christ was truly the Son of God, begotten (brought forth) of God in eternity. I will now share with you some of his comments.

In the first clause (*Christ came into existence first of all things*), Canright wrote

"My grounds for this proposition are Jno. i, 1, 2; Col. i, 17; Prov. viii, 22, 30. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." *Here, the existence of the Word, or Christ, is placed as far back as language can place it, even in the beginning with the great God.* "And he (Christ) is before all things, and by him all things consist." (*Dudley Canright, Review and Herald, June 18th 1867, 'Jesus Christ the Son of God'*)

In keeping with Scripture (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2 etc), Canright places the existence of Christ before anything was created. The terminology "great God" would be referring to the Father. He follows this by saying (quoting Proverbs 8:22-30 as referring to Christ)

"But the following is still plainer if possible. "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 was no depth, 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; when he established the clouds above it; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the water 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." *Here he is said to have been from "everlasting," and many other terms reaching away back to the beginning of all things.*" (*Ibid*)

As did the early Christians, early SDA's believed that these verses in Proverbs chapter 8 (verses 22-31) referred to Christ. On a number of occasions, this was confirmed as true by Ellen White (see *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 34, *Signs of the Times* 22nd February 1899 and the 29th August 1900, also *Review and Herald* April 5th 1906), Notice that Canright emphasised that Christ was from "everlasting".

In the fourth clause (*He is the only begotten Son of God*), Canright explained (showing that the Scriptures declare Christ to be begotten)

"This is very plainly stated many times. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." John 1, 14. Again, verse 18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And chapter iii, 16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten

Son," &c." (*Ibid*)

Regarding Christ being begotten of God, Canright then continued his explanation

"According to this, Jesus Christ is begotten of God in a sense that no other being is; else he could not be his only begotten Son. Angels are called sons of God, and so are righteous men; but Christ is his Son in a higher sense, in a closer relation, than either of these. God made men and angels out of materials already created. He is the author of their existence, their Creator, hence their Father. But Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father's own substance. He was not created out of material as the angels and other creatures were. He is truly and emphatically the "Son of God," the same as I am the son of my father. This will appear more plain as we proceed." (*Ibid*)

This is the belief that was generally held then by early SDA's. It was that Christ, in a manner not revealed in Scripture, was truly begotten (brought forth) of God (of God's own substance). God therefore, according to this reasoning, is truly a father – and the Son, is truly a son.

Under the clause *He is the Son of God*, Canright wrote

"Nothing can be more plainly stated than this is repeatedly in the Bible" (*Ibid*)

As an example, Canright quotes Hebrews 1:1-8. Afterwards he added

"By this we see that a very plain and great distinction is made between the Son and all the angels. They are all commanded to worship him. No created being can ever be worthy of worship, however high he may be, neither would it be right nor just for God to bid one order of his creatures to worship another. Divinity alone is worthy of worship, and to worship anything else would be idolatry. Hence Paul places Christ far above the angels, and makes a striking contrast between them. He asks, "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" The implied answer is, that he has said it to none but Christ. Of him he says, he was "made so much better than the angels." He says that the angels are simply ministering spirits, but to Christ, God has said, "Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever." But while the Son is so plainly placed far above all created beings, he is at the same time just as plainly stated to be distinct and separate from the Father. He is not the Father himself, but only the Son of the Father. This is very distinctly stated in 2 John 3: "Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in truth and love." (*Ibid*)

Canright made it abundantly clear that Christ is not a created being, Rather, he says, Christ is fully and completely divine - begotten (brought forth) of God's own substance. This is why, according to Canright, that God (the Father), when addressing Christ, calls Him "God" (Hebrews 1:8). Canright makes it clear too that God the Father and Christ are two distinct beings (personages), yet both are rightly called God.

Under clause No. 8 (*The Son is partaker of the Father's nature*), Canright quotes Hebrews 1:4

"Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (*Ibid*)

He then explains (concerning Christ's inheritance because He is begotten of God)

"The Son of God has inherited a more excellent name than any of the angels. How is this? To illustrate: A son naturally inherits the honor which his father possesses. The son of a beggar can not inherit a very honorable name from his father; but the son of a king does inherit from his father a very excellent name. So Christ, being the Son of God, has inherited the name, the nature, and the glory of God his Father. Hence he is by inheritance placed far above all other things. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily." Col. ii, 9. What a testimony to the divinity and exalted character of Christ! All the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him! "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Col. i, 19. The wisdom, the love, the majesty, the divinity of God dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth." (*Ibid*)

Repeatedly Canright returns to the begotten concept. All that Christ is, so he reasons, is because He is begotten. Thus Christ inherits everything from His father.

Under clause No. 9 (*Christ is called God*), Canright first quotes John 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

He then writes by way of explanation

"Here Christ is plainly called God. Many argue from this that he is the very and eternal God, the Father. But this is not a necessary conclusion, especially since other scriptures plainly deny the idea. Paul explains it when he says that Christ has inherited a more excellent name than the angels; that is, being the Son of God he inherits his Father's name, hence is called God. Thus Heb. i, 8, 9, makes a very plain distinction between the Father and the Son, though each one is called God." (*Ibid*)

Again Canright returns to the begotten concept. This is why, he says, that Christ is God, albeit not God the Father.

Canright wrote much more concerning Christ being the Son of God. Those wishing to read his entire article can do so here

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH18670618-V30-01.pdf>

One week later, also in the *Review and Herald*, there is recorded a conversation that took place, on a train journey, between two SDA's (a lady and a man) and two Congregationalists.

The older of the Congregationalists, upon realising that the lady was a seventh-day Sabbath keeper, attempted to persuade her that Sunday was the correct day of rest. This Congregationalist was totally silenced by her reasoning. The younger Congregationalist then asked the SDA lady if she believed in the divinity of Christ (this was to try and prove that Christ had the authority to change the day of rest to Sunday). At this point, the other SDA, a man named Johnston, decided to join in the conversation. He explains

"I now thought it was my turn to join in; so I replied, Why, yes sir. We believe that Christ is all divine; that in him dwelt "the fullness of the God-head bodily;" that he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power," &c., &c." (*Review and Herald, June 25th 1867 Bro. Johnston,*

letter to Uriah Smith,)

Note again. This was in 1867. There is no doubting that even though they did not hold to the trinity doctrine, these very early SDA's believed in the full and complete divinity of Christ. This is because they believed that Christ was begotten of God. Christ was not regarded as a 'secondary deity' – albeit, as we shall see later, their non-trinitarian faith was often misunderstood and misrepresented.

The next year (1868), an answer was given to a question that was asked by a reader who is simply referred to as "A. S.". The letter was not published but it does appear the writer was asking for confirmation that SDA's did not deny the divinity of Christ. The reply to him (or her) said

"To A. S. You are correct in saying we do not deny the divinity of Christ. If those who assert such a thing are acquainted with our faith they know better; if they do not know they are guilty of speaking evil of the things they know not." (*Review and Herald*, July 14th 1868)

The following year (1869), again in the *Review and Herald*, R. F Cottrell, in speaking against the trinity doctrine, had this to say (paragraphs not contiguous)

"For myself, I have never felt called upon to explain it, nor to adopt and defend it, neither have I ever preached against it. But I probably put as high an estimation the Lord Jesus Christ as those who call themselves Trinitarians."

"But if I am asked what I think of Jesus Christ, my reply is, I believe all that the Scriptures say of him. If the testimony represents him as being in glory with the Father before the world was, I believe it. If it is said that he was in the beginning with God, that he was God, that all things were made by him and for him, and that without him was not anything made that was made, I believe it. If the Scriptures say he is the Son of God, I believe it. If it is declared that the Father sent his son into the world, I believe he had a son to send." (*R. F. Cottrell Review and Herald 1st June 1869 'The Doctrine of the Trinity'*)

Referring to the question of worshipping the Son, Cottrell made these comments (paragraphs contiguous)

"The Father says of the Son, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Should angels refuse to worship the Son, they would rebel against the Father. Children inherit the name of their father. The Son of God "hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent [sic] name than" the angels. That name is the name of his Father. The Father says to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Heb. i. The Son is called "The mighty God." Isa. ix, 6. And when he comes again to earth his waiting people will exclaim, "This is our God." Isa. xxv, 9. It is the will of the Father that we should thus honor the Son. In doing so we render supreme honor to the Father. If we dishonor the Son we dishonor the Father; for he requires us to honor his Son.

But though the Son is called God yet there is a "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1,3. Though the Father says to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," yet, that throne is given him of his Father; and because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, he further says, "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee." Heb. i, 9. "God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ."

Acts. ii, 36. The Son is "the everlasting Father," not of himself, nor of his Father, but of his children, His language is, "I and the children which God hath given me." Heb. ii, 13." (*Ibid*)

A few months later, J. N. Andrews (a highly respected theologian) published an article called *Melchisedec*. In his article he made this comment

"Even the angels of God have all had beginning of days, so that they would be as much excluded by this language as the members of the human family. **And as to the Son of God, he would be excluded also, for he had God for his Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have beginning of days.** So that if we use Paul's language in an absolute sense, it would be impossible to find but one being in the universe, and that is God the Father, who is without father, or mother, or descent, or beginning of days, or end of life." (*J. N. Andrews, Review and Herald, 7th September 1869, 'Melchisedec'*)

Andrews, like Canright, is referring to when Christ, in eternity past, was begotten (brought forth) of God.

John G. Matteson (1835-1896) was a prolific SDA minister and evangelist. Much could be said of his achievements, also his work, in the SDA Church. In 1869 he wrote the following (this was after saying that the resurrection does not make a person a literal child of God, no more than creation made Adam a literal child God)

"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; not by virtue of his resurrection. If Christ is the only begotten of the Father, then we cannot be begotten of the Father in a literal sense. It can only be in a secondary sense of the word." (*J. G. Matteson, Review and Herald, October 12th 1869, 'Children of God'*)

At this time (1869), the concept that Christ was literally begotten of God was the standard belief of SDA's.

Period: 1870-1879

General publications:

In the May of 1871, S. B. Whitney, a convert from the Congregationalist Church, spoke of how it was said of him that he now denied the divinity of Christ

"SINCE my last effort, have spent several days in North Elba, visiting among the friends interested in the truth, and preaching to them as opportunity offered. **There I had an excellent opportunity to publicly deny a false report that a Wesleyan minister had been spreading through the country to the effect that I denied the divinity of Christ;** and a very good impression seemed to be made, even upon some who had been strenuously opposed to us." (*S. B. Whitney, Review and Herald, May 9th 1871, Essex Co., N. Y*)

The accusation that early SDA's denied the divinity of Christ was an ongoing problem for them. It is more than likely that this was assumed because we did not accept the trinity doctrine.

In the June of 1871, James White related a conversation he had, on a train journey, with a

Christian missionary. This missionary had spent almost twenty-four years in China. James White reported

“This missionary seemed very liberal in his feelings toward all Christians. But after catechizing us upon the trinity, and finding that we were not sound upon the subject of his triune God, he became earnest in denouncing unitarianism, which takes from Christ his divinity, and leaves him but a man. Here, as far as our views were concerned, he was combating a man of straw. We do not deny the divinity of Christ. We delight in giving full credit to all those strong expressions of Scripture which exalt the Son of God. We believe him to be the divine person addressed by Jehovah in the words, "Let us make man." (*James White, Review and Herald, June 6th 1871, 'Western Tour'*)

Trinitarians tend to regard anyone who rejects the trinity doctrine as denying the divinity of Christ. As we have seen though, a person does not need to accept the trinity doctrine to accept that Christ is divine. In the next paragraph James White explained

“The simple language of the Scriptures represent the Father and Son as two distinct persons. With this view of the subject there are meaning and force to language which speaks of the Father and the Son. But to say that Jesus Christ "is the very and eternal God," makes him his own son, and his own father, and that he came from himself, and went to himself. And when the Father sends Jesus Christ, whom the Heavens must receive till the times of restitution, it will simply be Jesus Christ, or the eternal Father sending himself.

We have not as much sympathy with Unitarians that deny the divinity of Christ, as with Trinitarians who hold that the Son is the eternal Father, and talk so mistily about the three-one God. Give the Master all that divinity with which the Holy Scriptures clothe him.” (*Ibid*)

James White is here denying the trinitarian concept of Christ. He says that Christ is not the “very and eternal God”. He reasons that we should speak of the divinity of Christ only as expressed in the Scriptures – no more, no less. He concluded

“Our adorable Redeemer thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and let all the people say, Amen! Thank Heaven! Here we may sing, Worthy, worthy, is the Lamb; and on the other shore, by the grace of God, we will join all the redeemed in the highest ascriptions of praise for their salvation to both Him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb, forever and ever.” (*Ibid*)

In 1874 J. N. Andrews wrote

“That God is the fountain and source of immortality is plain from the statement of Paul. He speaks thus of God the Father: ‘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.’ 1 Tim. 6:16. This text is evidently designed to teach that the self existent God is the only being who, of Himself, possesses this wonderful nature. Others may possess it as derived from him, but he alone is the fountain of immortality.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the source of this life to us. ‘For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.’ John 5:26.” (*J. N.*

Andrews, Review and Herald, January 27th 1874, 'Immortality through Christ, see also Signs of the Times, December 12th 1878)

Two years later in 1876 (this was when commenting on the difference in beliefs between SDA's and Seventh-day Baptists) James White wrote

"ON the broad platform of the divine law, and redemption from its transgression through the death and mediation of the divine Son, both the Seventh-day Baptists and the Seventh-day Adventists stand in general agreement. Here are the great tests of the Christian life, and a fitness for Heaven; and besides these there are no others.

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')

James White would have known exactly how the Seventh-day Baptists regarded Christ. He knew that they believed Him to be as depicted by the trinity doctrine. He said though that SDA's, even though they were not trinitarians, regarded Christ's divinity as almost the same as did the Baptists. It was because of this, so he said, that he did not see this as being a problem between the two denominations. This, as I am sure you will agree, is a very interesting observation. He also wrote in 1877

"Paul affirms of the Son of God that he was in the form of God, and that he was equal with God. "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Phil. 2:6. *The reason why it is not robbery for the Son to be equal with the Father is the fact that he is equal.* If the Son is not equal with the Father, then it is robbery for him to rank himself with the Father." (James White, Review and Herald 29th November 1877, 'Christ Equal with God')

He says though with respect to the trinity doctrine

"The inexplicable Trinity that makes the Godhead three in one and one in three, is bad enough; but that ultra Unitarianism that makes Christ inferior to the Father is worse. Did God say to an inferior, "Let us make man in our image?" (Ibid)

James White rejected the trinity doctrine but he certainly believed in the full and complete divinity of Christ. He continued by explaining

"The great mistake of the Unitarian is in taking Christ when enfeebled with our nature as the standard of what he was with the Father before the creation of the world, and what he will be when all divine, seated beside the Father on his eternal throne.

True, Christ prayed to a superior. This is during the time of his humiliation, when enfeebled by the seed of Abraham. There was no such dependence before he humbled himself that he might reach the feeble sinner in all his weakness and shame. Neither will there be when Christ shall be seated at the right hand of power in Heaven.

We may look upon the Father and the Son before the worlds were made as a creating and law administering firm of equal power. *Christ did not then rob God in regarding himself equal with the Father.*" (Ibid)

In 1878, Dudley Canright wrote a series of articles called *The Sonship of Christ*. These were published in the *Signs of the Times* when James White, J. N. Andrews and Uriah Smith were editors. At the beginning of his article, (under the sub-heading *The Pre-existence of Christ*), Canright goes to great lengths to establish that Christ had an existence before He came to earth. He writes

“That the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did exist as a personal, intelligent being, separate from the Father, before he was born of the virgin Mary, or even before this world was created is very plainly taught in the Scriptures. We have no sympathy with that doctrine which begins the existence of Jesus Christ with his birth in Bethlehem. Many trinitarians, as Dr. A. Clarke, held that his Sonship commenced at this time, that he was never the Son of God before that time. The unitarians claim that Jesus of Nazareth who was called the Son of God, absolutely began his existence here the same as any man, and that neither his soul, body, or spirit ever had a conscious existence before his birth in Bethlehem.

We regard all these positions as being utterly false, and the last two in particular, as being exceedingly derogatory to the honor and character of Christ. It degrades him to a mere man, than which nothing could be farther from the truth, as we shall see presently.” (Dudley Canright, *Signs of the Times*, 21st March 1878, ‘*The Sonship of Christ*’)

After quoting John 1:1-4 and 10, Canright asks

“But does it not say that the Word was God? Yes; and it says that he was with God. Being the Son of God, of course he is properly called God. That is his name; but he was not the very and eternal God himself, for it says that he was with God. If he was with God this implies that he was distinct from God the Father. The first chapter of Hebrews is also a strong testimony upon the pre-existence of Christ.” (*Ibid*)

In order to show that Christ made all things, Canright quotes Hebrews 1:2, 10 and 12, then says

“This is too explicit to be evaded. This Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son did lay the foundation of this earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands.” (*Ibid*)

Canright concludes

“In the very first chapter of Genesis we have a manifest reference to the existence of the Son of God at that time. " And God said let us make man in our image." Evidently this was the Father counseling with the Son. There were two of them. Testimony almost without limit might be given proving the pre-existence of Christ; but as this is generally admitted except by the unitarians, we leave it here. (*Ibid*)

In another article in the same series, published in the May 30th issue of the *Signs of the Times*, Canright explained (this was under the sub-heading of *Jesus Christ is called God*)

“If our position be correct, that Christ is truly the Son of God, begotten of the Father's own substance, then of course it would be proper for him to take the name of his Father, that is God. Hence we find that he is called God in the Bible. " But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre, of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;

therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Heb; 1:8, 9. Notice the fact that while the Son is here explicitly called "God," yet he is at the same time carefully distinguished from God his Father. "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God," &c. "Therefore, God, even thy God, hath annointed," &c. Because Christ is called God, we must not therefore confound him with God the Father, because the above scriptures plainly show the distinction. Again, in John 1:1, 2, he is plainly called God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." (D. Canright, *Signs of the Times*, 30th May 1878, 'The Sonship of Christ')

Again Canright is emphasising that SDA's believed that Christ is begotten of God – also that He is quite rightly called God. Canright then explained (this was under the sub-heading of *Jesus Christ the Son of God is now to be honored the Same as the Father*)

"Christ himself explicitly declares this. "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath 'sent him." John 5:23. God 'forbid, then, that we with the unitarians should regard Jesus as merely a man, and forbid to worship him. No he our Lord and our God, and we will honor him even. as we honor his Father." (*Ibid*)

In the next section called *Jesus Christ is to be prayed to and worshiped*, Canright also had this to say

"As strange as it may appear, some have denied this, and called it idolatry to worship Jesus Christ. They claim that it is not lawful to pray to any except the Father. But the Scriptures are against them. Let us read a few texts. In the first place, God has commanded the angels to worship him; and if they; worship him, why should not we? "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. 1:6. Peter makes a similar statement. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." 1 Pet. 3:22. Shall we; not worship him whom angels serve?" (*Ibid*)

Canright concluded this section of his article with these words

"Christ never reproved any one for worship offered to himself. But says one, If Jesus Christ is a person distinct from the Father, it must be idolatry, a violation of the commandment to worship him. The law says you shall not worship a false God, an image, or an idol but Jesus is neither one nor the other. He is not a false God; he is not an image: he is not an idol. Christ is the Son of the living God, and hence it is not at all derogatory to the honor of God to associate his own Son with him in his glory, honor, and worship." (*Ibid*)

The next month, a reader of the *Review and Herald* asked if SDA's were Unitarians or Trinitarians. The answer was given

"Neither. We do not believe in the three-one God of the Trinitarians nor in the low views of Jesus Christ held by unitarians. We believe that Christ was a divine being, not merely in his mission, but in his person also; that his sufferings were penal and his death vicarious." (*Review and Herald*, June 27th 1878 'To correspondents')

Two months later, Dudley Canright addressed the problem of the trinity doctrine.

"The Bible says nothing about the trinity. God never mentions it, Jesus never named it, the apostles never did. "Now men dare to call God, Trinity, Triune, etc." (D. M. Canright, *Review and Herald*, August 29th 1878, 'The Personality of God')

Canright of course is correct. Nowhere in the Scriptures, nor in the writings of Ellen White, is God spoken of as in the trinity doctrine.

After saying that God is the source of all life and immortality, Canright also says

"Even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, derives his existence and his life from the Father, for so he himself says, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John 6:57. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John 5:26. This statement is unequivocal. The Father has life in himself, and in his great love for his Son he bestows the same gift upon him; but it will be noticed that the Father is the one from whom the gift came." (*Ibid*)

Again Canright's reasoning was based upon Christ being begotten of God. He says that Christ received his life from His father. He continued

"In harmony with this, the apostle says, "But 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 [sic] all things, and we by him." 1 Cor. 8:6. How carefully Paul distinguishes between the Father and the Son. He says, "The Father, of whom are all things," and "Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." The Father is the source of everything. Jesus is the one through whom all things are done. All the authority, the glory, and the power of Christ he received from his Father. It was given to him, he had it not in himself." (*Ibid*)

Canright concluded (this was with respect to Jesus saying, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.")

"We must know the Father as the only true God. Then there is no true God besides the Father. But we must also know his Son Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. How simple and plain is this doctrine, and how abundantly sustained by the Holy Bible." (*Ibid*)

This is the faith that was once held by SDA's. It was, as the 1880's approached, their preponderant denominational faith.

Period 1880-1889

General publications:

In the March of 1880, a paper known as the *Golden Censer* openly condemned what J. H. Waggoner had written in his work *The Atonement* (we mentioned Waggoner's article previously on page 11). In the *Signs of the Times* of May 6th 1880, there was published a brief rebuttal of what the *Golden Censer* had said we believed. We replied in part In defence of our beliefs

"We do not believe that Christ had but one nature, and that the human." And our statement to the contrary is so plainly made that no one can possibly mistake it. In justice to Seventh-day Adventists and to our readers we shall early take opportunity

to give our views on this subject. We cannot believe, as does the editor of the Censer, that the sacrifice of Christ was merely human; we hold that the divine being, known in the Scriptures as "the Son of God," died for our fallen race. Any other view destroys the great "mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. 3:16, and degrades the atonement. The sufficiency of the atonement rests upon the dignity and divinity of the offering made to the infinitely holy law of God. To hold that "the Christ" merely took on him a human nature for a season, and let that die, while the divine Son of God neither suffered nor died, belittles the gospel system and brings the doctrine of the atonement down to the level of the lowest Socinianism; it is to make our salvation depend on a merely human sacrifice" (*Review and Herald, May 6th 1880, 'The Nature of Christ'*)

Again we return to the refutation, by the SDA Church, of the belief of trinitarians that only the human nature of Christ died at Calvary. We, as SDA's, held strongly to the belief that the divine person of the Son of God had died. Socinianism is the belief that Christ was only human therefore, according to this reasoning, only humanity could have died at Calvary

Two months later in the *Review and Herald*, James White, with regards to Christ, wrote a number of small articles. In the first he made these comments

"The person that appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush is called "the Angel of the Lord," "the Lord," and "God." He declares, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. These terms can all be applied to Christ without doing violence to the simple language of Scripture, or the truth of God. He who appeared in the burning bush had seen the oppression of his people and had come to their deliverance. Paul speaks of this deliverer under a figure of "that spiritual Rock that went with them, and that Rock was Christ. 1 Cor. 10: 4." (*James White, Review and Herald, July 29th 1880, 'Christ in the burning bush'*)

In the second article he wrote

"It has been shown that He who went with the Hebrews to deliver them from the house of bondage was Christ. He, then, is the angel whom the Father sent before the Hebrews. The Father put his name in the Son, who represents the mind and will of God in that wonderful deliverance." (*James White, Review and Herald, July 29th 1880, 'My name is in Him'*)

In the third article he explained (paragraphs contiguous)

"And if God did not communicate directly with Adam, Noah, and Abraham, for the reason that he could not speak to sinful men and maintain the dignity of his throne, he did not speak with Moses and the hosts of Israel when assembled at the base of Sinai to hear the ten precepts of the moral code. The Son, burdened with the word of the Father, descends upon Sinai wrapt in fire and flame, and speaks the ten commandments in the audience of the people.

That Christ was with Moses in the Mount Sinai, is evident from the address of Stephen, who bears this important testimony: "This [Moses] is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel [Christ] which spake to him [Moses] in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us." Acts 7:38. The conclusion seems irresistible that the Son of God spoke the ten commandments from Sinai." (*James White, Review and Herald, July 29th 1880, 'Christ speaks from Sinai'*)

All these statements show that James White believed that Christ was no less a person than God, albeit not the Father. The Bible tells us that it was God who spoke the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-2). This was the begotten faith of SDA's.

Two months later, also in the *Review and Herald*, it was said

"JESUS CHRIST, as the Father's "only begotten Son," is heir of the whole estate. The Father delighted in him, and " appointed him heir of all things." This is according to the law of primogeniture. But the Son will not enjoy the estate alone. Unlike many earthly sons, he is willing, yea, anxious, to share it with as many as will accept it. He is willing his Father should adopt other children; and though they be adopted, he will acknowledge them as brethren." (*Review and Herald*, September 9th 1880, 'Our Elder Brother')

Briefly and simply stated: "the law of primogeniture" is the right of the firstborn child, regardless of existing siblings, to inherit everything belonging to his father, This is saying that because Christ is the "only begotten Son" of God, He is sole inheritor of everything belonging to His Father.

In the *Review and Herald* in the December of 1880, an article was published that had been written by the Rev. L. Anderson. It had been published in the *Golden Censer*. We mentioned this paper previously when they had criticised the beliefs of SDA's regarding Christ (see page 23 above). This article, carrying the title of *Christ's Divinity Ignored*, must have been highly regarded. I will quote all of it here. It reflects what was then believed by SDA's.

"MANY there are, even in Christendom, who deny the proper divinity of Jesus Christ, while pretending at the same time to be Christians; as if an intermediate position were possible. It is not. Their very compliments paid to him as a good and pure man, cover a terrible charge against him, even of lying and hypocrisy. Did he not declare his divinity? did he not represent himself as the Son of God, as well as the Son of man? To ask these questions is practically to answer them. To deny his claims to divinity is to proclaim him a liar in the face of truth.

If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, and therefore divine, the gospel ought to be thrown to the winds, and the Bible torn to pieces as an imposture. He spoke falsely all his life, if he is not divine; yea more, he practiced duplicity towards his disciples, even the last night he spent with them before his crucifixion.

Let the deniers of his "divinity speak no more of his moral purity, of his holiness. If he was not divine, then the Jews and Pilate condemned him justly as an impostor. Let those who detract from his divinity think seriously of these logical sequences.

But we inquire, what can be the possible motives that impel men to reject the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ? Is it done under a pretense of honoring God? as if, for divinity to be associated with humanity, in the person of Christ, would be a detraction from the honor of divinity —a condescension below the proper dignity of a God ? Does it not rather show a compassion for man who needed a revelation of such compassion ? Nothing is more worthy of God than the voluntary humiliation of the Saviour, his Son, in behalf of a sinful race; "God was manifest in the flesh."

To deny the divinity of Christ, moreover, is to stifle, and thus embarrass the doctrine of the atonement (for his divinity is necessary to the atonement); is to take water from

the soul's burning thirst, and bread from its consuming hunger is to mock the cherished aspirations of the soul, that have asked these six thousand years for a manifested God as a Saviour. The world without a divine Saviour would be utterly at a loss whither to turn; for since the promise to Adam, all eyes looked forward to the coming Christ until his advent, and all since he came have had only him to fix their hearts upon.

There is plainly no middle position. Either the church must rightfully acknowledge Christ's perfect divinity, as well as humanity, or it is idolatrous to worship Jesus when he is not a God. If there is any doctrine established by the most undeniable testimonies, it is the doctrine of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ. With this doctrine, as a foundation, Christianity stands, but without it, the whole system is foundationless.

Hence all deniers of this doctrine, in the pulpit or out of it, are, as far as their influence is felt, the destroyers of Christianity. Wherever and whenever this doctrine has been impaired even, the foundation of religion has been shaken in the confidence of those who have been deceived by such mockers of God. So it is written on the pages of the world's history.

Does not this doctrine alone respond to the promise of God that "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head?" That seed is the incarnate Christ. By his incarnation he allied himself to the race—became the seed of the woman, and yet the Satan-bruising God. The Word of God became man, to enable man to receive God, that he might become a partaker of the divine nature.

We conclude that to deny the divinity of Christ, it must be done in violation of a human consciousness and conviction that has pervaded the human mind in all the ages of its history. Such denial is born of human pride. Man is unwilling to be dependent, and affects to scorn the idea of aid in the regeneration of his character. Such pompousness does not bespeak thorough religious intelligence; but rather shows a want of knowledge of one's self, as well as a want of knowledge of God's ways with men. The pulpit therefore that discards the doctrine of Christ's supreme divinity is not true to its wiser convictions, is not true to truth. And the result of such preaching, is invariably an unsaved congregation, and a spiritually bankrupt minister.—Rev. L. Anderson, in *Golden Censer*." (*Signs of the Times, December 9th 1880, 'Christ's Divinity Ignored'*)

There can be no doubt that SDA's believed that Christ was divine.

James White, the year he died (1881), wrote the following

"In his exaltation, before he humbled himself to the work of redeeming lost sinners, Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, because, in the work of creation and the institution of law to govern created intelligences, he was equal with the Father. The Father was greater than the Son in that he was first. The Son was equal with the Father in that he had received all things from the Father." (*James White, Review and Herald, 4th January 1881, 'The Mind of Christ'*)

We can see from this that even up to the time of his death (1881), James White, along with his fellow SDA's, rejected the trinity doctrine – but he did not reject the full and complete divinity of Christ. He was still maintaining, as did SDA's in general, that Christ "had received all things from the Father".

A. C. Bourdeau, in a section of the *Review and Herald* called *Progress of the Cause*, commented on the work at St. Armands

“St. Armands.—Since my brother, Eld. D. T. Bourdeau, commenced holding meetings at Chapel Corners, St. Armands, I have met with the friends there seven times, holding from four to six meetings each time. On one occasion, Eld. Hurlbert, of Brome, and Eld. Brand, of Shefford, made a desperate effort in opposing the Sabbath and the law. They tried to represent that S. D. Adventists all hold that the door of mercy has been closed ever since 1844, and that they deny the divinity of Christ. I reviewed them successfully.” (A. C. Bourdeau, *Review and Herald*, April 26th 1881, ‘Progress of the Cause’)

SDA’s did not deny the divinity of Christ. That much is for sure – although probably, because we were not trinitarian, many either believed, or attempted to persuade others to believe, that we did deny it. In our periodicals, this is seen again and again.

Russell Holt commented on this aspect of SDA history. In a term paper he produced in 1969 (regarding the rejection of trinity doctrine within Seventh-day Adventism), he wrote concerning the time period of the early pioneers (this was up to 1881, the year of the death of James White)

“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 pioneers’ beliefs

“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*)

Uriah Smith held exactly the same view as James White. In his much-loved book, *Daniel and the Revelation* (1882 edition), he wrote

“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)

In the *Review and Herald* in 1883, a question from a reader was published. It was asked

“Will you please favor me with those scriptures which plainly say that Christ is a created being? (Question No. 96, *Review and Herald*, April 17th 1883, The commentary, *Scripture questions*, ‘Answers by W. H. Littlejohn’)

The person who asked the question was only identified by the initials J. C., so we do not know anything more about his or her identity. W. H. Littlejohn replied

“You are mistaken in supposing that S. D. Adventists teach that Christ was ever created. They believe, on the contrary, that he was "begotten" of the Father, and that he can properly be called God and worshiped as such.” (*Ibid*)

This indeed, in 1883, was the preponderant belief of SDA's. This was 5 years prior to the Minneapolis General Conference session. Littlejohn continued

“They [SDA's] believe, also, that the worlds, and everything which is, was created by Christ in conjunction with the Father. They believe, however, that somewhere in the eternal ages of the past there was a point at which Christ came into existence. They think that it is necessary that God should have antedated Christ in his being, in order that Christ could have been begotten of him, and sustain to him the relation of son.” (*Ibid*)

This again, concerning Christ's pre-existence, refers to the begotten concept.

As previously noted (see page 11), J. H. Waggoner (the father of E. J. Waggoner) was one of the most outspoken SDA anti-trinitarians. His published work, *The Atonement*, was highly valued by the church. In one form or another it had at least five different printings spread over 21 years. His article was reproduced in a book called *The Atonement in the Light of Nature and Revelation*. In this book, Waggoner said with reference to trinitarian theology

“Many theologians really think that the Atonement, in respect to its dignity and efficacy, rests upon the doctrine of a trinity. But we fail to see any connection between the two. To the contrary, the advocates of that doctrine really fall into the difficulty which they seem anxious to avoid.” (*J. H. Waggoner, 'The Atonement in Light of Nature and Revelation', 1884 Edition, chapter 'Doctrine of a Trinity Subversive of the Atonement'*)

Waggoner further explained

“Their difficulty consists in this: They take the denial of a trinity to be equivalent to a denial of the divinity of Christ. Were that the case, we should cling to the doctrine of a trinity as tenaciously as any can; but it is not the case.” (*Ibid*)

This is perfectly correct. It is commonly thought, amongst Christians, that if a person is a non-trinitarian then he or she does not believe in the divinity of Christ. As Waggoner says though, this “is not the case”. He explained

“They who have read our remarks on the death of the Son of God know that we firmly believe in the divinity of Christ; but we cannot accept the idea of a trinity, as it is held by Trinitarians, without giving up our claim on the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption.” (*Ibid*)

The reason why Waggoner spoke of the trinity doctrine as being subversive of the atonement is because trinitarians do not believe that a divine person died at Calvary. They believe instead that only human nature died – thus giving fallen humanity, as an atonement, only a human sacrifice. This is why Waggoner said that to accept the trinity doctrine would be equivalent to “giving up our claim on the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption”. SDA's then believed that a divine person did die at Calvary. The latter is not something that is generally taught within Seventh-day Adventism today. See Part 1 of this series, pages 24-35.

When Waggoner said that trinitarians “really fall into the difficulty which they seem anxious to avoid”, he was making a good point. They insist that Christ is divine, as depicted by their trinity doctrine, but then say that at Calvary, only human nature died – which does appear to make a confusion of their reasoning. Why make an issue of Christ being divine, as depicted in the trinity doctrine, then say that only humanity died? What is the point?

Referring to Exodus 23:20-21, J.O. Corliss wrote in 1885

“There are some things in this scripture to carefully note. 1. God sends his Angel to conduct them to the promised land. 2. He would utter words that must be obeyed. 3. **God's name was, in him, thus giving him authority to speak as God.** Who could be clothed with so much authority but the Lord Jesus himself? **And if Christ was the actual leader of the armies of Israel, how plainly evident that the expression, "And the Lord spake unto Moses," which occurs so frequently in the narrative-of the exodus, refers to directions given by Christ himself to Moses.**” (*J. O. Corliss, Signs of the Times, January 8th 1885, 'Needless Alarm'*)

Two months later, a question was sent into the *Review and Herald* by someone known only as J. D. C. It was answered by J. H. Littlejohn who said

“J. D. C.: The title "Son of man" was assumed by our Lord because of the fact that he was born of the Virgin. **He was also called the Son of God because he was begotten of God.** In him were united a human and a divine nature. It was therefore fitting that titles should be applied to him which when taken together, should express this fact.” (*W. H. Littlejohn, Review and Herald, March 17th 1885, Scripture Questions*)

Notice the reason Littlejohn gave for Christ being called “the Son of God”. It was not because of His birth in Bethlehem but because “**he was begotten of God**”. This was then the standard belief amongst SDA’s.

Later that year, in an article called *The Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice*, this was written

“We are told that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us:" We waste no time in splitting hairs over the union of the divine nature and the human nature, the independence of the two, and, the functions and provinces of each— this to the human and that to the divine—"the Word was made flesh;" and though subjected for a time to the humiliation and the limitations of the human sphere, **he was all divine, because he was the only begotten Son of God.**” (*Review and Herald, October 20th 1885, 'The Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice'*)

Here again we see it said that Christ, because He was begotten of God, was “**all divine**”.

In 1886, Uriah Smith, as editor of the *Review and Herald*, published a book called *The Captain of our Salvation*. He was not the author of this book. It had been written by Charles Wesley Stone who, at one time, had been secretary to the General Conference. He was also a teacher and editor. Stone wrote his book in 1883. He was then teaching in public school at Battle Creek. Unfortunately, the same year, he had died tragically in a railroad accident. Smith regarded what he had written as worthy of publication, so 3 years later he published it. On page 17 of Stone’s book we find these words

"The Word then is Christ. The text speaks of His origin. He is the only begotten of the Father. Just how he came into existence the Bible does not inform us any more definitely; but by this expression and several of a similar kind in the Scriptures we may believe that Christ came into existence in a manner different from that in which other beings first appeared; That He sprang from the Father's being in a way not necessary for us to understand." (C. W. Stone, *The Captain of our Salvation*, page 17, 1886)

This again was the begotten concept then believed by SDA's. Note well the final sentence. This was also the standard belief of SDA's.

In an article called *Jesus' name above every name*, published in the *Review and Herald* of January 26th 1886, T. M. Steward wrote

"The name of Jesus has become so familiar to us that way often use it without considering what it means, or who it is that bears it. Before he came into the world, his name was the Word of God. He is the only begotten son of God. Only son of God! What a position!" (T. M. Steward, *Review and Herald*, 26th January 1886, 'Jesus' name above every name')

Steward later says

"Now we come to the hardest question to answer, How is it that he himself is God?"

After quoting Hebrews 1:4-8 he says

"Paul thus teaches us that Jesus has inherited a name above the angels. Every son inherits the name of his father. Paul refers to this in the 2d chapter of his epistle to the Philippians, verse 9: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name." And the Father has required of the angels of God that they honor the Son even as they honor the Father. John 5 : 23. "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." From all of which we see that Christ has a right to the name "God". (Ibid)

In the same year, A. T. Jones, in the notes for the *International Lesson* wrote (emphasis as in the article)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." In the beginning," that is, before creation, before time was; for in his prayer at the last supper he said: "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John 1.7: 5, 24. for long before, no finite mind can measure; for in the announcement by the prophet of the place of his birth, when he came into the world, it is said, But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though 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." Micah. 5:2. The margin reads, Hebrew, from "the days of eternity." The mind must be able to grasp eternity before it can measure the length of days of the Saviour of the world; before it can know how long the Word was before the world Was." (A. T. Jones, March 25th 1886, *Signs of the Times*, 'The Word made Flesh')

Eternity, to the human mind, is a mystery. This is why trying to pinpoint exactly when Christ was begotten of God, is an impossibility. All that we know from Scripture is that He was begotten of God (John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, 1 John 4:9). This is where we should leave it. Further explanations are unnecessary. They are also beyond the knowledge of men. This is because God, in His Word, also in His wisdom, has chosen not to reveal anything about it. Jones said a great deal more concerning Christ. Far too much to quote here. All of it was standard SDA theology.

In 1887, in an article called *Our Father*, Ellet Waggoner, then co-editor of the *Signs of the Times*, wrote the following

"IF we are heirs of God, we are joint heirs with Christ. All that Christ has or is to have, we shall have also. **He is the Son of God by birth; the only begotten Son of God.** Angels are the sons of God (Job. 38:7) by creation. Adam was a son of God in the same way, only a little lower than the angels." (*E. J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, February 24th 1887, 'Our Father'*)

We shall return to Waggoner's reasoning later. We shall see it was repeated by him and Ellen White.

In an article published the same year (1887), A. T. Jones (co-editor of the *Signs* with Waggoner), after showing that the wisdom in Proverbs chapter 8 referred to Christ, also after going to great lengths to show Him to be the Creator of the universe (that all things were made by Christ), wrote

"Well, indeed, might Paul say of him that, "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" Heb. 1:4, 5. **Unto none of the angels did the Father say that, for none of the angels were begotten of the Father, they were all created by Christ,** for we have read that whether they be "thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers," all were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made; **while the Son himself was directly begotten of the Father, and so is called his only begotten Son,** saying, ".God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Therefore it was that "when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." (*A. T. Jones, Signs of the Times, July 7th 1887, 'The Excellency of Christ'*)

Notice that A. T. Jones wrote that the angels were created by Christ, but "the Son himself was directly begotten of the Father, and so is called his only begotten Son". This was the ongoing faith of SDA's. It was exactly the same as said by Waggoner above.

In the *Signs of the Times* in the December of that year (1887) it was written

"As Christ is your need in life, he is equally your need in death. Without him death is a dark future, so terribly dark no Christian would desire to look into it. With him you can look cheerfully beyond the grave, for he will guide you by his counsel, and afterward he will receive you to glory—his glory, Christ's glory, **the glory of the only begotten of the Father.**" (*Signs of the Times, December 1st 1887, 'Seek Christ First'*)

In an article in the *Australian Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* of January 1st 1889, an

article was published called *I and my Father are one*. Its opening words were

“These words of our Saviour were never intended by their Author to lead men to an irrational position on the personal oneness of the Father and Son. We are sufficiently guarded upon that point by other expressions from the lips of our divine Lord. He prays to the Father that his followers might be one " as we are.”” (*Australian Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, January 1st 1889, ‘*I and my Father are one*’)

This “irrational position on the personal oneness of the Father and Son” was probably written with reference to the trinity doctrine. We have seen this on pages 10-22 of Part 1 of this study – so we will not go into again here. The article continues

“As persons, the Father and Son are as distinct as any two individuals who partake of the same nature and substance and resemble each other in image.

But there is an infinite depth and breadth to the meaning of these brief words declaring the unity of Christ our Saviour with the infinite God of the universe. It does not come within the intended scope of this article to discuss this question in its various features and unsearchable bounds. It is a great comfort to every Christian to know that help has been laid "upon one that is mighty;" that our 'Redeemer is strong;" that it pleased the Father that in him should dwell "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is the Son of God, not simply by creation, but by a life-giving process which imparts the very substance, nature, and name of the parent to the offspring, whereby He who is our Saviour becomes God, in all the majestic dignity which the title can imply. His life spans the stream of time from eternity to eternity.” (*Ibid*)

This “life-giving process” would be alluding to when, in eternity (before anything was created), Christ was begotten of God.

Unfortunately, this Sonship faith was often misrepresented. It was claimed, because we did not present Christ as in the trinity doctrine, that we did not believe in the divinity of Christ. A classic example of this misunderstanding is found detailed in the *Signs of the Times* in 1889. This was one year after the now famous 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. As we shall now see, E. J. Waggoner, as co-editor of the *Signs*, related how this came about.

Waggoner explained that it had come to the notice of the SDA Church that the Methodist Church had produced a book in which it was said that SDA's were teaching error. This error, said the author of this book, was particularly with regards to the Sabbath, which of course, according to Methodist discipline, is Sunday. The SDA Church promised to review this book for its author, a minister by the name of Rev. Dr. M. C. Briggs, the results of which Waggoner detailed in the *Signs of the Times*. Before beginning to defend the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) though, Waggoner chose instead to defend the views of SDA's regarding the divinity of Christ. This is because in the preface to this book, the Rev. Briggs had said that along with our other wrong teachings, we, as SDA's, denied Christ's divinity. As has been said, this is more than likely because we were not trinitarian.

At that time (1889), both Ellet Waggoner and Alonzo Jones (the two main speakers at the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference Session) were co-editors of the *Signs of the Times* but it was Waggoner who, in the publication of March 25th 1889, began addressing himself to the question of Christ's divinity.

While it is not possible to quote everything here that was written in these articles, suffice to say for now that Waggoner made it abundantly clear that SDA's believed that Christ was God Himself manifest in flesh, also that in His pre-existence, He was truly the begotten Son of God. This was not from a trinitarian point of view but from one that was non-trinitarian.

The Rev. Briggs, in his book, had also said that certain SDA's were denying that human beings had a soul (spirit) but Waggoner denied this allegation. After making a repudiation of this claim, Waggoner then said with respect to the assertion that SDA's did not believe in the divinity of Christ

"But when the doctor [Briggs] states that Seventh-day Adventists deny the divinity of Christ, **we know that he writes recklessly.**" (*E. J. Waggoner. Signs of the Times, March 25th 1889, article 'The Divinity of Christ'*)

This was Waggoner's opening defence of the divinity of Christ. He said that the Rev. Briggs had written "**recklessly**". Waggoner then makes it clear that Briggs knew differently than what he was alleging.

"We are fully persuaded in our own mind that he [Briggs] knows better; but be that as it may, **the statement has been made so often by men who professed to know whereof they were speaking, that many have come to believe it;** and for their sakes, as well as for the benefit of those who may not have given the subject any thought, we purpose to set forth the truth." (*Ibid*)

Waggoner is saying that unfortunately, because certain people had been listening to those who *appeared* to know of that which they were speaking, many had come to regard SDA's as not believing in the divinity of Christ. For the benefit therefore of those who had been led to believe that this was true, as well as for those who "**may not have given the subject any thought**", Waggoner said that he was now going "**to set forth the truth**". Notice particularly that Waggoner said of this allegation that it "**has been made so often**" that people believed it to be true. This shows us that this was an ongoing problem, but as we shall see later, Ellen White maintained that in spite of this, what SDA's were teaching concerning Christ was the truth.

Before beginning to explain why SDA's believed in the divinity of Christ, Waggoner wrote

"We have no theory to bolster up, and so, instead of stating prepositions, **we shall simply quote the word of God, and accept what it says.**" (*Ibid*)

It should go without saying that those who were saying that SDA's were denying the divinity of Christ were probably the trinitarians. These are the ones who need to go outside of Scripture to prove their reasoning (see Part 1 of this study pages 13-22). Waggoner then begins to show what SDA's believed about Christ.

"The first text that we quote is that one so familiar to everyone who knows anything of the Bible, John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." That this refers to Christ is evident from verse 4: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men;" and from verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." **Indeed, we 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*)

Waggoner concluded

"That text alone, if we had no other, is sufficient to establish the divinity of Christ, for the word "divinity" means, "the nature or essence of God". We believe in the divinity of Christ, because the Bible says that Christ is God." (*Ibid*)

After quoting Isaiah 9:6, Waggoner follows on by saying

"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." But we read again from the beloved disciple:— "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:18. This text shows the closeness of the relationship between Christ and the Father. He is "the only begotten Son," and he is "in the bosom of the Father." No matter where Christ may be in person, he is "in the bosom of the Father;" that is a statement that is universally true, showing the unity of the Father and the Son." (*Ibid*)

Waggoner concluded his first article in support of SDA's believing that Christ was divine by saying

"Those who do not believe that Christ, as he was here on earth, was divine, do not give him credit for being even an honest man. The very name that was given to Jesus—Emmanuel—signifies, "God with us." See Matt. 1:23. 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*)

Here it is said that Christ is God because He is begotten of God. This Waggoner says, is His inheritance as the Son of God.

The following week, in support of the SDA understanding of Christ being divine, Waggoner continued his article. In the first paragraph he wrote

"PERHAPS as strong an argument for the divinity of Christ as can be found in the Bible, aside from positive statements, is contained in Matt. 19:17, for it is Christ's own claim that he was God. It is even more emphatic than John 14:9." (*E. J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, April 1st 1889, 'The Divinity of Christ (continued)'*)

Waggoner then spoke of the encounter that Jesus had with the young man who had said to Him "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:17). Commenting on the response of Jesus to the young man (Jesus had said "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God"), he explained

"What did Christ mean by his counter question? Did he mean to reprove the young man for calling him good? Did he mean to disclaim that epithet? Not by any means, for he was absolutely good; he was goodness personified. Then what did he mean by saying, "Why callest thou me good? He meant to impress upon the young man's

mind the fact that the one whom he was addressing as Master was not mere man, as one of the rabbis but that he was God. He claimed for himself absolute goodness, and since there is none good but God, he thereby identified himself with God." (*Ibid*)

Notice Waggoner said that Jesus had wanted to impress this young man that "he was God". He continued

"And with this we may connect the statement of the apostle Paul, that "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. There being this perfect likeness between the Father and the Son—this oneness—it would naturally follow that in very many instances in the Bible it is impossible to tell which one is specially referred to, and in many cases when the word God is used reference is doubtless had to both." (*Ibid*)

To show that Christ was divine, Waggoner then quoted numerous texts of Scriptures. He concluded

"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." (*Ibid*)

At the very beginning of his third article establishing the divinity of Christ (April 8th 1889), Waggoner wrote the following

"The fact that Jesus is spoken of as the only begotten Son of God should be sufficient to establish a belief in his divinity. As Son of God, he must partake of the nature of God. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John 5:26. Life and immortality are imparted to the faithful followers of God, but Christ alone shares with the Father the power to impart life. He has "life in himself," that is, he is able to perpetuate his own existence. This is shown by his own words when, showing the voluntary nature of his sacrifice for man, he said: " I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17, 18.

That Christ is divine is shown by the fact that he receives worship. Angels have always refused to receive worship and adoration. But we read of the Father, that "when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. 1:6. If he is to receive worship from angels, it follows as a matter of course that he should receive worship from men; and we find that even while here on earth, in the likeness of man, he received worship as God. The prophet John thus records the adoration which Christ will finally receive equally with the Father:

"And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 5:13. If Christ were not God, this would be idolatry. The great indictment against the heathen is that they "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator. Romans 1:25. It matters not what the position of a creature may be, whether a beast, a man, or an angel, worship of it is strictly forbidden. Only God may be worshiped, and since Christ may be worshiped, Christ is God. So say the Scriptures of truth." (*E. J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, April 8th 1889*"The Divinity of Christ (Continued))

Again and again Waggoner says that Christ is God. He concluded his article that week by explaining

"In arguing the perfect equality of the Father and the Son, and the fact that Christ is in very nature God, we do not design to be understood as teaching that the Father was not before the Son. It should not be necessary to guard this point, lest some should think that the Son existed as soon as the Father; yet some go to that extreme, which adds nothing to the dignity of Christ, but rather detracts from the honor due him, since many throw the whole thing away rather than accept a theory so obviously out of harmony with the language of Scripture, that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He was begotten, not created. He is of the substance of the Father, so that in his very nature he is God; and since this is so "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Col. 1:19.

Some have difficulty in reconciling Christ's statement in John 14:28, "My Father is greater than I," with the idea that he is God, and is entitled to worship. Some, indeed, dwell upon that text alone as sufficient to overthrow the idea of Christ's divinity; but if that were allowed, it would only prove a contradiction in the Bible, and even in Christ's own speech, for it is most positively declared, as we have seen, that he is divine. There are two facts which are amply sufficient to account for Christ's statement recorded in John 14:28. One is that Christ is the Son of God. While both are of the same nature, the Father is first in point of time. He is also greater in that he had no beginning, while Christ's personality had a beginning. Then, too, the statement is emphatically true in view of the position which Christ had assumed. He "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." Phil. 2:7, Revised Version. He was "made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death." Heb. 2:9. In order to redeem men, he had to come where they were. He did not lay aside his divinity, but he laid aside his glory, and veiled his divinity with humanity. So his statement, "My Father is greater than I," is perfectly consistent with the claim, made by himself as well as by all who wrote of him, that he was and is God." (*Ibid*)

Repeatedly Waggoner points out that because Christ was begotten of God then it follows that He must be God – yet not the Father.

In the articles that followed, Waggoner took great care to point out that Christ was not only our redeemer but also our Creator and the lawgiver. All of this would be too much to comment upon here, but the following is well worth noting. When commenting on Colossians 1:15 he wrote (assuring his readers that SDA's did not believe that Christ was a part of God's creation)

"The term "first-born of every creature " cannot by any possibility indicate that he [Christ] is a created being, standing related to other creatures simply as first, and highest in rank, because he is " the only begotten Son of God." There is none other in the universe that stands related to God the Father as he does. The term first-born does not in this case, at least, imply that others were born after him. It only shows his pre-eminence above all things, as stated in verse 18. 4. Verse 17 says that "he is before all things, and by him all things consist." This again separates him from the creation, except as creation's Lord; and this is what the text teaches. In him creation had its beginning, as stated in Rev. 3: 14. Creation existed in him, in embryo, as it were; "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Col. 1: 19. No language could more perfectly show the pre-existence and the creative power of Christ, than does the language of Col. 1:15-17. "By him all things consist." Literally,

"by him all things hold, or stay, together." This is equivalent to Heb. 1:3, which speaks of him as "upholding all things by the word of his power." He brought all things into existence, and he preserves them in existence. His word caused them to exist, and his word upholds them. In all these things he acts, not independently, but conjointly with the Father. Said he: "I and my Father are one." John 10: 30. Not a thought does one have that is not the thought of the other." (E. J. Waggoner, *Signs of the Times*, 15th April 1889, 'The Divinity of Christ (continued)')

As can be seen, SDA's believed exactly as the Bible says – that Christ is begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. It was also said that because of this, He was truly God, albeit in the person of the Son.

R. A. Underwood was a very prominent SDA minister. For 35 years he was a member of the SDA Executive Committee. During his time, he was President of conferences such as Ohio (1882-1889), Wisconsin (1893), Pennsylvania (1895-1897 and 1899-1903), Northern Union (1904-1912), West Pennsylvania (1913-1914) and Central Union (1914-1920). He well understood what was believed and taught by SDA's. In 1889, just a few months after Waggoner's articles 'Divinity of Christ', were published, he wrote

"The question is sometimes raised, Was Christ a created being? All we may know of this is simply what the Bible says. We quote a few texts, and leave the reader to form his own opinions." (R. A. Underwood, *Review and Herald*, August 6th 1889, 'Christ and His Work')

Underwood then quotes Revelation 3:14, Colossians 1:14-16, and John 5:26, after which he says (paragraphs not contiguous)

"Whatever construction may be placed upon the first two texts quoted, the last one shows clearly that the Son of God received his life, and all his mighty creative power as a gift from the Father." (*Ibid*)

"The apostle Paul contrasts Christ with the angels, as follows: "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. 1:4. The inheritance of Christ from God the Father was such as no other being in the universe received. God the Father delegated to the "beginning of the creation," "the first-born of every creature," his own name, and his own almighty, creative, life-giving power. We are in ignorance of when this was done. We only know that it was in the eternity of the past; before the worlds and all that in them is, were created." (*Ibid*)

"There are many names and titles given to this wonderful being called Christ. We will notice only a few. He is the " Prince of Peace," the everlasting Father;" the "mighty God," etc. Isa. 9: 6; Ps. 50:3; Titus 2: 13, 14. The eternal Father is represented as addressing him as God: " And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 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. 1:7, 8. Unless we recognize and Christ as bearing the name of God, we shall often be misled in correctly understanding his work mission." (*Ibid*)

This same reasoning – that in eternity Christ was begotten of God by a process only known by God - was the preponderant faith of SDA's throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry. It also continued for decades after she died.

In the *Sabbath School* lesson study for the 4th quarter of 1889 (which was a study of the book of Hebrews), we find the following comment

"The apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 8: 14, that if we are led by the Spirit of God, we are the sons of God; and John (1 John 3: 2) says that we are even now sons of God. The angels also are called sons of God (Job 38: 7), and Luke (chap. 3: 38) says that Adam was the son of God. But all these are sons in a far different sense from what Christ is. The angels are sons by creation, just as Adam was, who was created a little lower than they. But Christ is the "only begotten Son of God," having "by inheritance a more excellent name than they." (*Sabbath School lesson study, 4th quarter 1889, Oct 12th 1889 'Letter to the Hebrews'*)

Commenting on this, G. I Butler said in the *Review and Herald*

"When we consider the Scripture statements concerning him,—that he was the "Son of God," made in the express image of his Father; he "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" is One whom it is right and proper to call God in addressing him, since he takes his Father's name, is made of his substance; One who sits on the same throne with the Father; One to whom the Father has intrusted all authority and power, and by whom the Eternal God made the worlds above; the very personation of wisdom itself, — it seems strange, indeed, that such an one could be said to have "learned" anything by having to do with frail man. Yet his word declares such to be the fact. (G. I. Butler, *Review and Herald*, 10th December 1889, 'Learning Obedience by the things He suffered')

As the SDA church entered into the 1890's, this was still the preponderant faith of its membership.

Period: 1890-1899

General publications:

During the 1890's, apart from the general publications, there are 4 significant items that need to be highlighted. The first is the publication of E. J. Waggoner's *Christ and His Righteousness* in 1890. The second is a tract called *The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity*. This was a re-print of an article written by a minister who was not a Seventh-day Adventist. This was in 1892. The third is Ellen White's approval, in 1893 and 1895, of what SDA's were teaching about Christ, which, as we have seen so many times previously, is that in eternity He was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. The fourth is Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages* (1898). First, we shall detail the general publications.

In the March of 1890, G. I. Butler, who recently had just completed his second tenure as General Conference President (1871-1874, and 1880-1888), wrote concerning Hebrews 5:7-9 (this was in an article called *Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews*)

"When we consider the Scripture statements concerning him,—that he was the "Son of God," made in the express image of his Father; he "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" is One whom it is right and proper to call God in addressing him, since he takes his Father's name and is made of his substance; One who sits on the same throne with the Father; One to whom the Father has intrusted all authority and power, and by whom the eternal God made the worlds above; the very personation of wisdom itself,—it seems strange indeed that such a one could be said to have "learned" anything by having to do with frail man. Yet his Word declares such to be

the fact. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. " And being made perfect," etc., a statement corresponding to another in chap. 2:10—" to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings"" (G. I. Butler, *Bible Echo and the Signs of the Times*, March 15th 1890, 'Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews')

Notice the reference to Christ being "made in the express image of his Father", also that "he takes his Father's name and is made of his substance". This could only have been in His pre-existence (see Hebrews 1-3). This was when He, Christ, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God".

In the same issue, in an article called *God Manifested in the Flesh*, the author wrote of how God has manifested His glory – particularly at Mount Sinai when Moses asked God to show him His glory. He then writes

"But the most wonderful manifestation of the divine Personage has been made to mankind through the Son of God. He was the only begotten of the Father. In him dwelt all the " fullness of the Godhead bodily." He was and is God. He is the " brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." At various times he appeared to his people of old; but to confirm forever in our minds the knowledge and reality of this fundamental truth, Jehovah-Christ came and "dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Here was "God manifested in the flesh,"—Immanuel, God with us." (*Bible Echo and the Signs of the Times*, March 15th 1890, 'God Manifested in the Flesh')

In an article written about Christian fellowship, also expressing thoughts concerning the First Epistle of John, H. J. Farman wrote

"One object in the writing of this epistle was evidently to set forth the fellowship existing between the Father, the Son, and the children of God." (H. J. Farman, *Review and Herald*, January 20th 1891, 'Christian Fellowship, Thoughts on the First Epistle of John')

Notice Farman did not include the Holy Spirit in this fellowship. A little later he writes

"Fellowship," says Webster, means to be a partner, or an associate; to be associated with, or to be in partnership with. This was the relation that existed between the Father and the Son from the foundation of the world, from the days of old. They were associated together, even before the angels were made. The Father bestowed upon the Son the power and honor of a creator, and made him the active agent in the creation of the worlds. Heb. 1: 2; Col. 1: 15-17; John 1: 10. The most intimate relationship that could exist between a father and a son, existed between them." (*Ibid*)

This bestowing of power and honor was in keeping with the begotten concept.

At the 1891 General Conference session, E. J. Waggoner gave a Bible study on Romans 14.

"Christ was immortal before he came to earth. He was God. What is the essential attribute of divinity? Life. Christ was immortal, and therefore had life, how could he die? I don't know. That is a mystery, but I am so glad that one did die for us who had life that could not be touched by anything, and that was successful in resisting the attacks of the enemy." (E. J. Waggoner, *Review and Herald extra*, March 16th 1891,

Bible Study at the 1891 General Conference session on Romans 14)

The belief that the divine person of Christ died at Calvary was very important to early SDA's. Today, the trinitarian SDA's deny this belief.

Regarding immortality, T. H. Starbuck wrote in 1891

"A being having life in himself can create and impart life to other beings, and ordain laws for the perpetuation, of that life. **This is omnipotent power, and there was a time when God alone exercised it;** but omnipotence implies ability to bestow like power upon others. **The Bible teaches that God has bestowed his own attributes upon his only begotten Son.** As "the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John 5:26. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28:18. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. To have life (the source of life) in one's self is to have it in that independent sense in which its continuance does not depend upon the will or power of any other being. **God the Father, and Christ the Son, have immortality in this absolute sense.** The perpetuation of life in them is not dependent upon the operation of law, as we understand the term. The idea of self-existence forbids law. **They hold the power of existence within themselves."** (T. H. Starbuck, *Review and Herald*, December 1st 1891, 'Thoughts on Immortality')

The next year (1892), in an article called "*Is Christ a Created Being?*", J. P. Henderson wrote

"WE do not presume to fathom the depths of the question of the divinity of Christ, but there are a few points that should receive careful attention before we draw final conclusions.

In Rev. 3:14, it is said of Christ that he is "the beginning of the creation of God." If taken separately and alone, this text might be construed to imply that Christ's existence originated by creation, the same as other intelligent beings. Other texts, however, convey different ideas. Col. 1:14, 17 speaks of him as being "the firstborn of every creature," and that "he is before all things." John 1:1 says that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." **Again: we learn that he is the "only begotten of the Father."** (J. P. Henderson, *Review and Herald*, January 12th 1892, 'Is Christ a Created Being?')

Henderson concluded

"Taking the above definitions and quotations collectively, we are led to the. following conclusions: (1) That Christ existed as the first of, and before, all things; (2) **That he is begotten of the Father; i. e., born of his sum and substance;** (3) **As God, he must be equal to him in divine attributes, as well as in the nature of his existence.**

At his baptism there was a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17. **A word spoken under such circumstances can have none but a primary meaning. A son is one begotten of the father (1 John 5:11), and stands related in a much different sense from a servant, or even an adopted child.**

Christ is also said to be the Maker of all things, and that " without him was not anything made that was made." John 1: 3. If we concede that he was a created, being, this text

would involve us in the absurd difficulty of his having created himself. The statements in the Scriptures of his springing from the Father, having a prior existence, and then "being made flesh," and dwelling among us, are equally incomprehensible; but any other position has a material bearing on the atonement." (*Ibid*)

This "springing from the Father" is referring to Christ being begotten of God. Henderson denies any possibility of the Scriptures being understood to say that Christ is a created being.

E. J. Waggoner, commenting on Romans 1:4 which says, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.", made this comment

"And declared to be the Son of God, . . . by the resurrection from the dead." This must not be understood as meaning that Jesus was not the Son of God before his resurrection, nor that he was not declared to be the Son of God before that time. We well know that he was the Son of God before the world was, and he was then glorified with the glory of the Father. It was as the dearly-loved, onlybegotten Son of God that Christ came to this earth. When he was baptized, at the beginning of his earthly ministry, the voice of God came from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17. Upon the mount of transfiguration that voice again was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Matt. 17:5. And all through his earthly life, Jesus did not hesitate to declare himself the Son of God. So we know that the resurrection did not affect his relationship with God." (*E. J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, January 28th 1889, 'The Power of Christ', see also The Present Truth, July 16th 1892*)

In other words: Even though becoming incarnate, Christ had not lost His pre-existent identity. He was still the divine Son of God.

In the *General Conference Bulletin* of February 1893, it was reported that R. C. Porter had said at the conference (Porter was then President of the New England Conference)

"The new birth which we must experience to become the children of God is a new creation. We are born of the Spirit of God. This is beyond our comprehension. Neither can we tell how Christ was begotten of the Father. This is one of the "deep things of God."" (*Elder R. C. Porter, General Conference Bulletin, February 2nd-4th 1893, 'The Mind of Christ – No.4*)

This was the general belief of SDA's. It was accepted that Christ was begotten of God but that the process of begetting was a mystery known only to God.

In the same bulletin it was reported that R. A. Underwood had said

"Upon Christ, the only begotten of the Father (all other beings were created by Christ), was bestowed creative, life-giving, and law-making power. In these he was made equal with the eternal Father. Upon no other being were bestowed such gifts. With this power Christ not only created all things, but he up-holds all life in this and every shining world." (*R. A. Underwood, General Conference Bulletin, February 2-4, 1893, 'Christ's Ownership – No. 1'*)

In the second of his presentations on *Christ's Ownership*, Underwood explained

"The position which God had given to Christ was coveted by Lucifer, and he disputed Christ's priority of ownership of the world." (R. A. Underwood, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 5th 1893, 'Christ's Ownership – No. 2')

In summing up No. 3 in the series, Underwood wrote

"Lucifer became jealous of Christ, and sought the position to which the Father had called his only begotten Son ...Upon Christ and no other being, was bestowed creative-life-giving and law-making power." (R. A. Underwood, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 9-10, 1893, 'Christ's Ownership – No. 3')

In a sermon preached at the 1893 General Conference session, W. W. Prescott said this concerning the origin of sin

"From the very first, the purpose of Satan was to put himself in the place of Christ, and that was what started the rebellion in heaven, because Christ alone was exalted to an equality with the Father, though Satan stood in the next place; although he stood in the presence of God, so that the light and the glory of God shone upon him continually; although there enveloped him such a panoply of light as enveloped none others of the angels of God, yet he was not satisfied. He must needs be put in the place of Christ himself." (W. W. Prescott, *General Conference Bulletin* 1893, 'The Sermon, February 11th')

In the same year (1893), in an article called *The Glory of Christ*, Uriah Smith quoted Hebrews 1:8. He then said of this verse

"These words most clearly show the divinity of Christ, placing him directly on the plane of deity. The Father addresses him by the name of "God," and in verse 10, as "Lord," and distinguishes himself from Christ, only by calling himself, "Thy God." The scepter is the symbol and badge of authority; and this, with Christ, is, and ever has been, righteousness. He is inherent and essential righteousness, and has been so, from the day when God said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." And through him, all developments in the universe, from that time on, have been accomplished. As declared in Col. 1:16, all things were created by him, and for him; and by him all things consist. He is the head of the church, and our only channel of access to the Father. He is the fullness of the godhead bodily. In him all our comprehension or possible conceptions of deity are lost; and he is therefore as much God to us as the Father can be." (Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, July 25th 1893, 'The Glory of Christ')

After quoting Hebrews 1:10-12 Smith said

"By these beautiful figures, and in this sublime train of thought, the inherent self-existence of Christ is declared." (*Ibid*)

The next month, also in the *Review and Herald*, there was an editorial called *The Importance of the Gospel*. It was a study on the book of Hebrews. Uriah Smith was then the editor.

"Some ask the question if Christ was not immortal, in the most absolute sense, before he came into this world to die. He certainly was. Then, it is asked how could he die. This text says that he was made a little lower than the angels for this very purpose; and that should be satisfactory. John 1:14 says that the word was made flesh. How this change could be effected, and he lay aside his former position with his Father, his

glory and immortality, and made flesh, and die, is fortunately not required any man to explain. The facts are stated, and the history of Christ has demonstrated it, and that enough for our present knowledge. But while he was here in the flesh, having the nature of the seed of Abraham, he was just as much the Son of God as before he left his father and the glory of the heavenly world. And as the Son of God, in his entirety, he gave up his life upon the cross. We have a divine sacrifice, not merely a human one, a would be the case if it is true, as some affirm, the only the human nature of Christ died, and that he had another part, a spirit, an immortal part which went away somewhere and did not die at all. That "spirit" which he commended to the keeping of his Father, was simply the life which he laid down. Isaiah says that he "poured out his soul unto death." Isa. 53:12" (*Review and Herald, August 1st 1893, 'The Importance of the Gospel'*)

Trinitarians teach that only the human nature of the incarnate Christ died at Calvary. They do not teach we have a divine atonement for sin. Early SDA's believed that a divine person died at Calvary.

The same month, under the sub-heading of *Seeking not His Own*, it was said of Christ in the *Present Truth* (E. J. Waggoner was then its editor)

"When He was in the form of God, He " emptied Himself," because He did not count it a prize—a thing to be grasped—to be on an equality with God. "By inheritance" He had a more excellent name than the angels. He was the Son of God by birth, and so was by birth " heir of all things." Everything was His by right. " All things were created by Him, and for Him." His possession of them worked no injustice to any. And yet the mind that was in Him did not lead Him to grasp them and hold them fast." (*Present Truth, August 10th 1893, 'Christ and Antichrist'*)

Notice it says that all things were Christ's because of His "birth". This is with reference to Him being begotten of God prior to creation.

In the same month again, G. I Butler who had held the office of General Conference President from 1871–1874, also from 1880-1888), wrote the following (this was in article called *Our Saviour, Divine*)

"It is an inspiring thought to the true disciple ever to realize that our Saviour who has under taken our salvation, is a divine being, really and truly God, as properly so called as the Eternal Father himself, and therefore almighty to save. Such a Saviour we need." (*G. I. Butler, Review and Herald, August 22nd 1893, 'Our Saviour, Divine'*)

Over and over again it was said in SDA publications that Christ is truly God. Butler later wrote

"We need to study the blessed word, and learn all it teaches of the nature, position, character, and glory of our Messiah and his work. We should lift him up in our own minds and before our fellow-men, that his exalted station may be properly recognized. In doing this, we not only show true honor to him, but to the Father also who has assigned him this position, and between whom there is perfect union and sympathy." (*Ibid*)

Notice that Butler said that the Father had "assigned" Christ to His position. After quoting Colossians 1:14-19, and 2:9, Butler wrote

"This Jesus is the first-born of every creature. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The terms "only begotten" or "first begotten Son" are used at least eight times in the New Testament. These expressions positively imply his absolute pre-existence to every created being. He was not created, and therefore not a creature. He was "begotten" in some manner not revealed, and is therefore of the same substance or essence as the Father. His existence precedes that of all others excepting the Father." (*Ibid*)

Again it is said that Christ was ""begotten" in some manner not revealed". Again it is said He was begotten "of the same substance or essence as the Father". This was the continuing belief of SDA's. Notice the last sentence. This too was the belief generally held by SDA's. Butler also explained

"Personally he is precisely like his Father in appearance, in nature, in character, in substance, and essence. It was in this sense that his words to Thomas are to be understood: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen Philip could not grasp the thought, so he says, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The Saviour with impressing gravity replies: "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, Show us the Father?" With the divine glory enshrouding the Son and the Father, a glory more penetrating and powerful than consuming fire, none could behold either and live. But should the Father see fit to divest himself of that covering, he would be seen to be the exact counterpart of the Son. ... Not an attribute or power has the divinity of the Father withheld from the Son. When he begat him of his own substance, the infinite majesty, glory, and excellence, the supreme wisdom, omnipotence, omniscience, and self-supporting existence from which all the powers of the universe take their origin, was as a necessary consequence conveyed to him." (*Ibid*)

Butler's conclusion was

"Though two beings, distinct in individuality and person, they are one in all else, perfectly united in methods, character, love and goodness, power, prescience, and might. Yet Christ himself says, "My Father is greater than I." Sustaining the relation they do as the Father and the only begotten Son, precedence in a certain sense must necessarily be conceded to the Father. The existence of the Son is derived from the Father. This implies superiority in duration and rank." (*Ibid*)

Everything that Butler wrote in his article was in keeping with what was then, during the 1890's, believed by SDA's. One week later, he also wrote

"IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1:1-4. With these grand declarations John the beloved disciple begins the gospel of the Son of God. Christ is the divine Word (the Logos, Greek term from which "word" is translated). The Logos dates from the "beginning," "the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. 3:14), and he was the one who began that vast work. He commenced it, performed it, completed it every whit. Without him was not anything made that was ever created. The Father who begat him from his own substance, made him a fountain of life like himself. He is the Lifegiver in every sense, creating from

nothing myriads of worlds, bringing all living beings into existence, and restoring, when it pleases him, the dead to life; and this Logos is our divine Redeemer.

But why does John use this term, the Logos, or Word? We may search the Bible through, and I think we shall find no other writer using it in a single instance, in just that sense. The Greek word is used in many forms, and with a great variety of meanings. But John personifies it in these and other instances, as meaning that Being—the only begotten Son of God,—whom the Father ordained. to be his active agent in all the work of creation.” (G. I. Butler, *Review and Herald*, 29th August 1893, ‘Our Saviour the Divine Logos’)

Notice that Butler said that the Father “begat him from his own substance”.

Speaking of the wisdom and the power of God, Butler made these comments

“Christ is the personification of wisdom, as Solomon teaches in the first chapters of Proverbs. These attributes are not those held independent of the Father, but they were conferred in their fulness by him, at his own pleasure and choice. So there is no rivalry. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." That fulness embraces every excellency possessed by the Father. How, then, can Christ's words, "My Father is greater than I," be true?—Because the one who confers is greater than the one who receives. The Father must be in a sense superior to the Son, though he has chosen to impart an equality in all his own fulness. O the greatness, the glory, the excellency, preciousness, and worthiness of the Lamb slain for our sins and salvation!” (*Ibid*)

In the October of the same year (1893), M. E. Kellogg wrote with regards to Isaiah 25:9

“Two ideas are especially prominent in this text. They had waited for the Lord; they had believed He was coming, and thus expecting his return, they had made a preparation to such an extent that they were ready to receive Him. There was no surprise and no fear. They exclaim, "This is our God!" A very close and intimate relation is signified by these words.” (M. E. Kellogg, *Bible Echo*, October 15th 1893, ‘How will Christ be received?’)

The next month it said in the *Signs of the Times*

“Here crept in the first transgression in the universe, by just what process we do not know; for it we can give no reason, for there is no reason for sinning. The choice of honoring God and Him on whom God placed his honor, rested with Lucifer, as with all others. He could choose or refuse.” (*Signs of the Times*, November 6th 1893, ‘Two Powers-Two Principles’)

The “Him” is Christ.

The same month, in the *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* of November 8th, it was said

“The bestowal of creative power on his Son was not for CHRIST alone; it was for the good of every intelligence in the universe.” (*Bible Echo*, November 8th 1893, ‘Editorial’)

In the same publication (under the heading of *Questioning God's Ways*), A. G. Daniells, who was then the President of the *Australian Conference* (in 1901 he became General Conference President), had this to say when speaking of Satan's rebellion in Heaven (this

was after quoting from page 494 of Ellen White's *Great Controversy* where she says that Lucifer had coveted "the honour which the Father had bestowed upon his Son")

"The honour, the power, which the Father had bestowed upon his Son, and which Lucifer coveted, was creative and life-giving power. By it CHRIST made the worlds. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist," Col. 1:16, 17. It was CHRIST who brought Lucifer into being. It was by the life-giving power of CHRIST that Lucifer was held in the glorious position which had been given him. For his existence, his innocence, his high position, and his happiness, Lucifer was indebted to the Son of GOD. **Instead, therefore, of envying CHRIST because of the gifts which the Father had bestowed upon Him**, Lucifer should have adored Him for the use He had made of those gifts." (A. G. Daniells, *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, November 8th 1893, 'Questioning God's Ways')

Here again we can see it said that Christ had "creative and life-giving power" bestowed upon Him by God the Father, also that Lucifer was jealous of these gifts. In similar fashion, A. G. Daniells said the next week in a follow-up article

"**WHEN Lucifer questioned GOD'S ways for having bestowed creative power on CHRIST alone**, he sought to change the plans of the Most High with reference to the bestowal of his gifts. But Lucifer was informed that the gifts and calling of God are not to be repented of, and that no change could ever be made. Lucifer failed to appreciate the perfection of GOD'S ways, and allowed his desire to obtain what GOD had seen fit to withhold from him, **and to bestow upon CHRIST alone**, to lead him to open, determined, and everlasting rebellion." (*Bible Echo*, November 15th 1893, 'Editorial')

Notice that again it is said that Christ had "creative power" bestowed upon Him by God.

In the next issue of the *Bible Echo*, in continuing his article, Daniells made this observation (we noted this in Part 1 of this study)

"**The fall of man led the Son of God to imperil his eternal interests**. It led Him to take the fearful risk of losing his own existence forever.... The entrance of sin had jeopardised the wellbeing of every creature. In order to secure every one, in order to make it possible that not one 'need perish, **the Son of God imperilled his own existence. He could have yielded to temptation; but had He done so, all would have been lost**. How far-reaching and how terrible are the results of sin! He came from the courts above pure, spotless, righteous. Had He made one mistake, his mission would have been a failure, man would have perished forever, **and the Son of God could never have returned to his Father**. But praise be to his great name, He failed not." (A. G. Daniells, *Bible Echo*, 22nd November 1893, 'Questioning God's Ways – No. 3')

This 'risk belief' concerning Christ, was a continuing belief of early SDA's. We noted this in Part 1 pages 24-35, also pages 44-50. This was in direct opposition to the beliefs of trinitarians. They say it is impossible for this risk to have existed. They say the persons of the Godhead are inseparably one (inseparably united as the one God).

In the same month, in an article explaining the two opposing forces in the universe (God, and Satan) it was said

"Christ was in the form of God. He proceeded and came forth from God. John 8:42. He was of one nature and substance with his Father. Heb. 1:3; John 1:1-3. His angel, or messenger name, Michael ("who is like God"), shows the same thing. Certainly, if any, being in all this universe had any right to be ambitious to be like God, it was he "who is like God." If anyone among that glorious throng had a right to aspire to the throne of universal dominion, it was the Son of God." (*Signs of the Times, November 13th 1893, 'Two Principles, Two Manifestations'*)

The next week, in a follow-up article, it was explained

"Michael, or Christ Jesus, the only being in the universe who had the right to aspire to be equal with God, did not think such exaltation a thing to be grasped or seized, but emptied himself of himself, that God, might fill him with all the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9; 1:19), and that thus he might manifest in the flesh God to the world (1 Tim. 1:16; John 1:14); and he could only do this as God was in him (2 Cor. 5:19; John 14:9-11)." (*Signs of the Times, November 20th 1893, 'Two Principles, Two Manifestations. Two Religions'*)

When commenting on the *Sabbath School* lesson study for May 26th 1894, W. W. Prescott wrote the following

"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 15th 1894, Notes on Sabbath School Lessons for May 26th 1894, 'Lessons from the book of Luke'*)

This again was the ongoing faith of SDA's. It was that Christ is God because He is begotten of God. This was also the belief of early Christianity.

At the 1895 General Conference session, A. T. Jones explained (referring to God being reflected in Christ)

"He alone could reflect the Father in his fullness, because his goings forth have been from the days of eternity; and as it says in the eighth of Proverbs: "I was with him, as one brought up with him." He was one of God, equal with God; and his nature is the nature of God. Therefore, one grand necessity that he alone should come to the world and save man, was because the Father wanted to manifest himself fully to the sons of men; and none in the universe could manifest the Father in his fullness except the only begotten Son, who is in the image of the Father. No creature could do it, because he is not great enough. Only he whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity could do it; consequently he came, and God dwelt in him. How much?—"All the fullness of the Godhead bodily" is reflected in him. And this is not only to men on the earth; but it is that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one—in Christ — all things which are in heaven and which are on earth. In Christ, God is manifested to the angels and reflected to men in the world in a way in which they cannot see God otherwise." (*A. T. Jones, General Conference Daily Bulletin, February 27th 1895, The Third Angel's Message – No. 20*)

At the same General Conference session, A. T. Jones preached a sermon in which he said

"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 4th 1895, 'The Third Angel's Message – No. 23')

Needless to say (noting that this sermon was recorded in a General Conference bulletin), that this was then, in 1895, the standard faith amongst SDA's. As we shall see later, this was confirmed through the spirit of prophecy – although it must be said that Ellen White, regarding Christ's origins, never used the word "born". She usually employed the word *begotten* – as does Scripture. These remarks of Jones were mostly the words of Ellen White (see *Review and Herald*, July 5th 1887).

In the October of 1895, a very detailed article on the very same subject appeared in *The Present Truth*. The article was set out as a series of sections, some of which are quoted here. After quoting John 1:1-3, it was explained

"In the Beginning."—The Word, the only begotten Son of God, was "in the beginning." When was that? — It cannot be located. Let the mind run back to "the beginning" when God created the heavens and the earth, and there we see Him. Just before His crucifixion Jesus prayed, " And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." John xvii. 5. If we could find the beginning of all created things, " whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers," we should still see that " He is before all things." Col. i. 16, 17. Yes, He Himself is " the beginning of the creation of God." Rev. iii. 14. Finite minds can never span the space between "the beginning " when the Word was with God, and the present time; His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," even "from the days of eternity." Micah v. 2, and margin. He is "from everlasting to everlasting." (*The Present Truth*, October 24th 1895, 'The Word of God')

In the next section, the article explains that the verses of Proverbs 8:22-31 refer to Christ

"*The Word of Wisdom*. - Jesus Christ is the One " in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. ii. 2, 3. He is " the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 24. Therefore it is He who is the speaker in the eighth chapter of Proverbs. There we read: " The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old." Verse 22. The Hebrew word here rendered "possessed," is the same as that rendered "gotten" in Gen. iv. 1, where we read that Eve said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Christ is the only begotten Son of God. In Prov. viii. 22 there is no preposition in the original, so that a more proper rendering of the verse would be, " The Lord possessed Me, the beginning of His way, before His works of old." This is indicated in the margin of the Revised Version. Christ was not only in the beginning, but He "is the beginning," (Col. i. 18) even the beginning of the way of the Father. Without Him there was nothing." (*Ibid*)

In the following section it was explained why Christ is rightfully called God

"*The Word Was God*." - "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. i. 4. The Son must inherit the name and titles and estate of the Father. Whatever titles belong to God the Father belong equally to Christ. They are His by right. By birth He is "heir of all things." The Apostle Paul writes of the glorious appearing "of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus ii. 13. The Father Himself addresses the Son as God, saying to Him, " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Heb. i. 8." (*ibid*)

In a later section, the reader's thoughts are returned to Christ being the wisdom of God

"Creation by Wisdom. - The Father, addressing the Son, says, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." Heb. i. 10. God " made the worlds " by Him. Verse 2. We have already seen that Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Now read, "The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King; . . . He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom." Jer. x. 10-12 And then read again the words of wisdom, "When He gave to the sea its bound, that the waters should not transgress His commandment; when He marked out the foundations of the earth; then I was by Him as a Master Workman." Prov. viii. 29, 30, R.V. The common version has it, "as one brought up with Him," which is also the truth. "The same was in the beginning with God." He was "the beginning of His way." He was the Architect, the Master Workman, without whom nothing was made." (Ibid)

In 1896, again in *The Present Truth*, the editor, E. J. Waggoner, published an article called *The Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. As we have seen, the views of SDA's were often a point of contention with other denominations. Portions of his article are sections from his book *Christ and His Righteousness* (which we shall be taking a look at later) but the following is worth noting here. As the 1900's approached, it helps to show what SDA's believed and taught.

Under the sub-heading of *Christ is Creator*, also after quoting John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:1-4, Waggoner quotes Colossians 1:15-17. He then says of these verses (paragraphs not contiguous)

*"This wonderful text should be carefully studied and often contemplated. It leaves not a thing in the universe that Christ did not create. He made everything in heaven, and everything on earth; He made everything that can be seen, and everything that cannot be seen; the thrones and dominions, and the principalities and the powers in heaven, all derive their existence from Him. And as He is before all things, and their Creator, so by Him do all things consist, or bold together. This is equivalent to what is said in Heb. i. 3, that He upholds all things by the word of His power. It was His word that made the heavens; and that same word holds them in their place, and preserves them from destruction." (E. J. Waggoner, *The Present Truth*, January 9th 1896, 'The Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ')*

"One more statement concerning Christ as Creator must suffice. It is the testimony of the Father Himself. In the first chapter of Hebrews, we read that God has spoken to us by His Son; that He said of Him, "Let all the angels of God worship Him; "that of the angels He saith, "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire," but that He says to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom; " and God says further: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands." Heb. i. 8-10. Here we find the Father addressing the Son as God, and saying to Him, Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thine hands. When the Father Himself gives this honour to the Son, what is man, that He should withhold it?" (Ibid)

Notice that Waggoner points out that the Father calls Christ God. In SDA publications, this was continually noted. It should have left no doubt in people's minds as to SDA's believing in the full and complete divinity of Christ. He later wrote

“All things proceed ultimately from God, the Father; even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father; but it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and that He should be the direct, immediate Agent in every act of creation. Our object in this investigation is to set forth Christ’s rightful position of equality with the Father, in order that His power to redeem may be better appreciated.” (*Ibid*)

This was the standard belief of SDA’s. It remained the same throughout the entire time of Ellen White’s ministry. This article was republished in the *Oriental Watchman* (January 1898) and the *Caribbean Watchman* (March 1905)

On October 23rd 1895 at the Armadale Camp-meeting, W. W. Prescott preached a sermon in which he spoke of why sin originated in Heaven. After quoting Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-17 where we are told that Satan was “lifted up” because of his beauty, also where he had said in his heart “I will be like the most high”, Prescott said to his listeners

“Christ was begotten, not created; Satan was created, not begotten. As the only begotten Son, Christ could enter fully into the councils of God. Because he could not do this as Christ did, envy sprang up in the heart of Satan, and he began to determine, I will exalt myself. He began to stir up rebellion, to say, God is arbitrary, and he began also to get his sympathisers.” (*W. W. Prescott, The Bible Echo, February 17th 1896, ‘Armadale Camp-meeting Talk, “The Kingdom of God; or The Great Controversy Between Good and Evil”, 23rd October 1895’*)

He also said after quoting John 3:16 (paragraphs not contiguous)

“And by the gift of His Son God proved that there was love in His government, and that by love He desired to have His will done. In the love He had toward His created beings He gave His only begotten Son to make it possible that His will should be done on the earth. Christ came to this earth to work out this plan, that man might be loyal to God if he chose.” (*Ibid*)

“The curse of disobedience rested on the earth, but Christ came to redeem it, “being made a curse for us.” Satan had urged on the Jews till they took His life, and thus Satan became the murderer of the Son of God. By His gift to the world God showed that He did desire His will—the law of love and filial obedience—to be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and in order to make it possible He was willing to give His only begotten Son to die. Satan showed that he wanted his own way badly enough that he was willing to become the murderer of the Son of God.” (*Ibid*)

As a matter of passing interest, Ellen White was full of praise for Prescott and his sermons at those Armadale meetings. It would be far too much to quote here but the following are some snippets (please note the ellipses)

Letter 82 1895, to Edson White

“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....I know that since coming to this place he [Prescott] 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.” (*Ellen G. White, Letter 82 1895, to Edson White, November*

1895)

Letter 84 1895, To Edson White,

"The Lord has given Bro. Prescott a message for the people, which is highly appreciated. His mind is fruitful on the truth, and the power and the grace of God are upon him. We feel that we are highly favoured in having his services at this camp meeting." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 84 1895, To Edson White, October 1895*)

Letter 25 1895, to S. N. Haskell

"The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon Brother Prescott in great measure. ... 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....We have had the truth presented in clear lines. Brother Prescott has never had such power in preaching the truth as he has had since coming to this meeting. The unbelievers sit with their eyes riveted on him in amazement, as the truth comes forth from his lips, vitalized by the Spirit of God." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 25 1895, to S. N. Haskell, November 6th 1895*)

Letter 113, 1895 to Bro. and Sis. J. H. Kellogg

"The Word of God has been presented in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. The Lord has sent Professor Prescott to us not an empty vessel, but a vessel full of heavenly treasure that he can give to every man his portion of meat in due season.... We cannot doubt for one moment that the Lord has seen how much His people needed just such precious food as they are receiving....Brother Prescott has presented truth in clear and simple style, yet rich in nourishment." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 113 1895, to Bro. and Sis J. H. Kellogg, November 17th 1895*)

Letter 83 1895, to J. Edson White

"The Lord has visited Brother Prescott in a most remarkable manner and given to him the Holy Spirit to give to this people...We are sure that the Lord has endowed him with His Holy Spirit and the truth is being poured forth from his lips in rich currents. The truth has been listened to by preachers and by people not of our faith. After the meeting they beg of Brother Prescott to give them a copy of these discourses...Abundant evidence has been given that the Holy Spirit of God has spoken to men through human agencies." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 83 1895, to J. Edson White, 18th November 1895*)

In the *Review and Herald* of January 7th 1896, Ellen White wrote of the Armadale camp meeting

"The evening discourses, given by Elders Prescott, Corliss, and Daniells, all presented the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Hardly a discourse was given during the whole meeting that could be called a doctrinal sermon. In every sermon Christ was preached, and as the great and mysterious truths regarding his presence and work in the hearts of men were made clear and plain ...The Lord is working in power through his servants who are proclaiming the truth, and he has given brother Prescott a special message for the people. The truth comes from human lips in demonstration of the Spirit and power of God." {*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, January 7th 1895, 'The Australian Camp-Meeting'*}

It goes without saying that Ellen White regarded Prescott, in his discourses, as being led by

the Holy Spirit.

In the March of 1896, the following words of W. W. Prescott are found in the *Review and Herald*

“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, --the divine human family of which he is the head, - in order that we who have already been born of the flesh, may by his grace and the power of the same Spirit, be born of the Spirit, -- that is, every member of this divine-human family is twice born.” (W. W. Prescott, *Review and Herald*, March 17th 1896, ‘The Christ of Judea’)

Note the reference to Christ’s “double birth” – once in Heaven when He was begotten of God, then again when He was brought forth of Mary.

Four weeks later, W. W. Prescott wrote

“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,-- so we who have been born once already in the flesh, are to have the second birth, being born again of the Spirit, in order that our experience may be the same, -- the human and the divine being joined in a life union.” (W. W. Prescott, *Review and Herald*, April 14th 1896, ‘The Christ for to-day’)

This was in keeping with his “double birth” statement the month previous (see above).

The next month, also in the *Review and Herald*, S. N. Haskell explained

“Christ being above the law, was the only one in all the universe of God who was like God in nature, the only one who could redeem man, and the only one who was in the secret counsel of God.” (S. N. Haskell, *Review and Herald*, May 12th 1896, ‘The Original Council between the Father and the Son. No. 2’)

In the same month, in the same periodical, S. N. Haskell explained to its readers

“CHRIST had been invested with the authority to command all the heavenly host. He was especially to co-operate with the Father in the anticipated creation of the earth, and every living thing that should exist upon the earth.” (S. N. Haskell, *Review and Herald*, May 19th 1896, ‘The Original Council between the Father and the Son – No. 3’)

The next week, a question was sent to the *Review and Herald*. It concerned Christ and eternity. The answer to the question is really very interesting. It was 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 26th 1896, ‘To correspondents’)

The answer was returned (concerning these verses of Scripture)

"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." (*Ibid*)

It can be seen here that time was regarded as something different than eternity. The answer went on to explain that the verses in question do not depict Christ as a created being. The point was then made (as was believed at that time by SDA's) that

"It is elsewhere stated in the Scripture that Christ was "begotten" of God, and as such, was not a created being." (*Ibid*)

Later in the year (1896), E. J. Waggoner wrote

"THE first recorded words of Satan to Jesus were, "If thou be the Son of God." He would have Jesus doubt his Sonship. There is no way in which Satan causes more people to fall than by leading them to doubt their acceptance with God. And these temptations are the most likely to come, too, just after a great spiritual uplifting. Satan will seek to lead us to doubt our experience, or to think that God has forsaken us.

At such times it is a most blessed thing to know that we have the same assurance that Christ himself had. What was the evidence to him that he was the Son of God?—It was the word of God that came to him after his baptism, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (*E. J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, October 15th 1896, 'Assurance in Trial'*)

In a series of articles called *The Controversy of the Ages*, it was said under the sub-heading *The Son of God*

"PRE-EMINENTLY He who afterward became Jesus had been declared to be THE SON OF GOD before the world was. He was one with the Father, possessing glory with the Father (John 17:5), of "the very image of His [the Father's] substance" (Heb. 1:3, R. V.); but his claim to the eternal Sonship and equality in counsel and work and honor had been disputed by that being who stood next to the Son, the one above all others who in himself sealed up the sum of all created wisdom and beauty (Eze. 28:12). He not only disputed the right of the Word of God to his position, but he led others to do the same, and a third of heaven's spirits of light revolted. The universe became divided by the entrance of sin. But the doubts of Satan and his myrmidons did not affect the fact of the Sonship of the Word. He was the eternal Son of God still." (*Signs of the Times, October 29th 1896, 'The Controversy of the Ages – No. 4. The Son of God'*)

In the *Review and Herald* of December 23rd that same year (1896), a reader, only known by the initials, J. F. A., asked 2 questions, one of which was

"Does 1 Tim. 1:14-16 teach that God only by nature has immortality, and that Christ did not have it till it was bestowed upon him by the Father? J. F. A." (*J. F.A., Review and Herald, December 23rd 1896, 'The Question Chair'*)

Uriah Smith answered

"The expression that God "only hath immortality," in the sense of being originally the supreme fountain and source of all life, must be true in the very nature of the case if he antedates all other beings. Christ had a beginning. John 1:1. But that was not like the beginning of other intelligences in the universe, which are all creations of Christ himself. Col. 1:16. He was not a created being, but "proceeded forth and came from God." John 8:12. He is the only begotten Son of the Father. John 1: 14, 18. By nature, then, he is co-equal with God. From the beginning of his existence he must have been as essentially, immortal as God; and yet it all came from God.

So Christ says that "As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John 5:26. No others have immortality, except as God and Christ bestow it upon them." (*Ibid, Uriah Smith*)

In the *Review and Herald* in 1897, Uriah Smith wrote the following

"GOD alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be — a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity — appeared the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. This uncreated Word was the being who, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in such mysterious expressions as these: "His [God's] only begotten Son" (John 3: 16; 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, Review and Herald, March 16th 1897, 'The Mind of Christ'*)

This was in keeping where he had written in his book, *Daniel and the Revelation*

"Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things, but that the Son came into existence in a different manner, as he is called 'the only begotten' of the Father." (*Uriah Smith, Daniel and the Revelation 1897 edition, p. 400.*)

W. A. Alway, in the *Signs of the Times* in 1897, wrote in an article called *The Sovereignty of God*

"In all this mighty exercise of the divine mind and power in creating all things and in imparting to all "life, and breath, and all things," God associated with himself the person of his Son. Of the Son it is declared: "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." Prov. 8:22-30. And Christ declared, "I and my Father are one." John 10:30. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Chapter 5:26. And of him Paul says, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created, . . . and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Col. 1:15-17. Thus to the Son of God was imparted inherent self-existent power, the power of an endless life, which exalted him above every name as Creator and upholder of

the universe, and gave him the rightful supremacy over all. (W. A. Alway, *Signs of the Times*, September 9th 1897, 'The Divine Sovereignty of God')

Alway, as did other SDA leading writers, recognised that the wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8 refers to Christ. Important to note is that he says, "the Son of God was imparted inherent self-existent power, the power of an endless life".

In 1898, the same year as Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages* was published, Uriah Smith had a book published called *Looking unto Jesus*. This book was extremely well received by SDA's, also very highly promoted. In 1938 it was still being used in conjunction with the Sabbath School lessons. In his book, Smith had written

"God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be, -- a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity, -- appeared the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. This uncreated Word was the Being, who, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. 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*, Chapter 2, *Christ as Creator*, page 10, 1898)

This was as much the same as he had written in his March 16th 1897 article *The Mind of Christ* (see above). After a lengthy explanation about Christ creating all things, but making absolutely sure again that his readers did not conclude that Christ Himself was a created being, Uriah Smith said

"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)

Regarding the pre-existent Son of God, this statement, as the 1900's approached, concisely summarizes the faith of SDA's. As was said by Smith, "With the Son, the evolution of deity, as deity, ceased", also that all things were created by God through Christ with "the Father the antecedent cause". In fact Jerry Moon PhD, in the book *The Trinity*, which was published in 2002 in support of the SDA church accepting the trinity doctrine, wrote the following

"Uriah Smith's *Looking Unto Jesus* was the most comprehensive and carefully nuanced exposition of the non-trinitarian view among Adventists." (Jerry Moon, 'The Trinity', chapter 13 *Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history* page 196, 2002)

This says everything. As has been said, Smith's book was highly regarded by SDA's. For those who would like to see the promotion and accolades given to it, see pages 681-704 (chapter 39) at the following link

<https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/dethis/SDAtrinityhistory.pdf>

In an article published in the *Review and Herald* of May 17th 1898, R. A. Underwood wrote

“Is it a settled principle, laid down in the Bible, that when one in authority and power delegates to another a work, with power to execute the same, and the work is accomplished by the one entrusted with it, the work is accredited to the one directing and delegating such power?—Yes; this is a principle recognized by God, and accepted by all civilized nations.

Let us look at this principle. Christ was delegated with authority by the Father to represent the Father. Hence Christ says: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Why? —Because he was the authorized representative of the Father in creating and redeeming the world. Christ acted under the authority received from the Father; and the work committed to the Son, and accomplished by the Son, is accredited to the Father." (R. A. Underwood, *Review and Herald*, May 17th 1898, 'The Holy Spirit a Person')

At the 1899 General Conference session, A. T. Jones preached a sermon in which he said of Christ

“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'. But all in Christ's work goes by opposites for us: he, the sinless one, was made to be sin, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He, the living one, the prince and author of life, died that we might live. 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.

If Jesus Christ had never been born again, could you and I have ever been born again? — No. But he was born again, from the world of righteousness into the world of sin; that we might be born again, from the world of sin into the world of righteousness. He was born again, and was made partaker of the human nature, that we might be born again, and so made partakers of the divine nature. He was born again, unto earth, unto sin, and unto man, that we might be born again unto heaven, unto righteousness, and unto God." (A. T. Jones, *Sermon preached on March 6th 1899 at the General Conference Session in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, see Review and Herald, August 1st 1899, 'Christian perfection'*)

So as we have seen, SDA's, throughout their various publications, even through to the 1900's, maintained the belief that they had always held concerning Christ. This is that in eternity He was begotten of God therefore not only is He truly the Son of God but also truly God. As we shall see later, Ellen White approved of what these pioneers had been teaching. She said they were telling the truth concerning Christ's pre-existence. First though we need to look at Waggoner's book *Christ and His Righteousness* (1890), also a tract published by the SDA Church called *The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity* (1892).

E. J. Waggoner's 'Christ and His Righteousness' (1890)

In 1890, the year after Waggoner published his series of articles called *The Divinity of Christ* (see pages 32-37 above), he published a work called *Christ and His Righteousness*. This was now 2 years after the famous 1888 Minneapolis General Conference Session. It is said to represent Waggoner's message at that conference. It goes without saying that in it he wrote so much about Christ that it would be impossible to comment upon all of it here. I will though quote portions of it. It does show what was then believed, in the 1890's, by SDA's in general. It also agrees with everything else that we have seen was written during that time

period. Under the heading *How Shall We Consider Christ* he wrote

"To Christ is committed the highest prerogative, that of judging. He must receive the same honor that is due to God, **and for the reason that He is God.** The beloved disciple bears this witness; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" John 1:1. **That this Divine Word is none other than Jesus Christ is shown by verse 14:** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 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.** Just before His crucifixion He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." John 17:5. And more than seven hundred years before His first advent, His coming was thus foretold by the word of inspiration: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though 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 the days of eternity.**" Micah 5:2, margin." (*Ellet J. Waggoner, Christ and His Righteousness, How shall we consider Christ? pages 8-9*)

Although Waggoner quoted Micah 5:2 from the KJV, he did not quote the words "from everlasting" (as in the KJV) but instead used the margin notes ("**from the days of eternity**"). On occasions, Ellen White did the same (see *Desire of Ages*, pages 44 and 469, Letter 195, 1899 and *Prophets and Kings*, page 697). She also used the same phrase on a number of other occasions. Note though as Waggoner said, "It is not given to men to know when or how the Son was begotten". In conclusion Waggoner added

"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.**" (*Ibid*, page 9)

As we have seen, this too was an ongoing declaration of the faith of SDA's. Under the heading *Is Christ God?* We find Waggoner explaining

"**In many places in the Bible Christ is called God.**" (*Ibid*)

On page 11 Waggoner made these observations (paragraphs contiguous)

"In Ps 45:6 we read these words "Thy throne O God, is forever and ever; The scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter." The casual reader might take this to be simply the Psalmist's ascription of praise to God; but when we turn to the New Testament, we find that its much more. **We find that God the Father is the speaker, and that he is addressing the Son, calling Him God.** See Heb. 1:1-8.

This name [God] was not given to Christ in consequence of some great achievement but it is His by right of inheritance. Speaking of the power and greatness of Christ, the writer to the Hebrews says that He is made so much better than the angels, because "He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. 1:4. **A son always rightfully takes the name of the father; and Christ, as "the only begotten Son of God," has rightfully the same name.** A son, also, is, to a greater or less degree, a reproduction of the father; he has to some extent the features and personal characteristics of his father; not perfectly, because there is no perfect reproduction

among mankind. But there is no imperfection in God, or in any of His works, and so Christ is the “express image” of the Father’s person. Heb. 1:3. *As the Son of the self-existent God, He has by nature all the attributes of Deity.*

It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the “only begotten Son of God,” and therefore the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be. The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15), but Christ is the Son of God by birth. The writer to the Hebrews further shows that the position of the Son of God is not one to which Christ has been elevated but that it is one which He has by right” (Ibid, pages 11-12)

On page 13 he made clear

“Christ Himself taught in the most emphatic manner that He is God (Ibid page 13)

As one example, Waggoner cites Christ’s response to the young man who had called Him “good” (see Matthew 19:17). Waggoner gives the same reasoning as he did in his article *The Divinity of Christ* (see pages 34-35 above) so I will not give it again here.

After this explanation, also after once again saying that “Christ is God”, Waggoner wrote the following

*“It was this that He taught the disciples. When Philip said to Jesus, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” Jesus said to him: “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, Show us the Father?” John 14:8, 9. This is as emphatic as when He said, “I and My Father are one.” John 10:30. *So truly was Christ God, even when here among men, that when asked to exhibit the Father He could say, Behold Me.* And this brings to mind the statement that when the Father brought the First-begotten into the world, He said, “And let all the angels of God worship Him.” Heb. 1:6. It was not simply when Christ was sharing the glory of the Father before the world was that He was entitled to homage, but when He came a Babe in Bethlehem, even then all the angels of God were commanded to adore Him.*

*The Jews did not misunderstand Christ's teaching concerning Himself. When He declared that He was one with the Father, the Jews took up stones to stone Him; and when He asked them for which of His good works they sought to stone Him, they replied: “*For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God*” John 10:33. If He had been what they regarded Him, a mere man, His words would indeed have been blasphemy; *but He was God.*” (Ibid, pages 14-15)*

After quoting John 1:18 (“No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”), Waggoner made this observation

*“Note the expression, “the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.” *He has His abode there, and He is there as a part of the Godhead, as surely when on earth as when in heaven.* The use of the present tense implies continued existence. It presents the same idea that is contained in the statement of Jesus to the Jews (John 8:58), “Before Abraham was, I am.” *And this again shows His identity with the One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, who declared His name to be “I AM THAT**

I AM." (Ibid, page 15)

In the next section of his book (*Christ as Creator*), Waggoner concluded with this thought

"A word of caution may be necessary here. Let no one imagine that we would exalt Christ at the expense of the Father, or would ignore the Father. That cannot be, for their interests are one. We honor the Father in honoring the Son. We are mindful of Paul's words, that "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" (1 Cor. 8:6); just as we have already quoted, that it was by Him that God made the worlds. All things proceed ultimately from God, the Father; even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father; but it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and that He should be the direct, immediate Agent in every act of creation. Our object in this investigation is to set forth Christ's rightful position of equality with the Father, in order that His power to redeem may be the better appreciated." (Ibid page 19)

Notice that Waggoner said that "even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father". This was before anything was created.

It may appear to have been a strange thing for Waggoner to do at this stage in his book (seeing that he had made it so clear that the Scriptures depict Christ as God) but he devoted his next section to showing that Christ was not a created being. Under the heading *Is Christ a Created Being?* he explained

"Before passing to some of the practical lessons that are to be learned from these truths, we must dwell for a few moments upon an opinion that is honestly held by many who would not for any consideration willingly dishonor Christ, but who, through that opinion, do actually deny His Divinity. It is the idea that Christ is a created being, who, through the good pleasure of God, was elevated to His present lofty position. No one who holds this view can possibly have any just conception of the exalted position which Christ really occupies." (Ibid, page 21, *Is Christ a Created Being?*)

After a lengthy explanation, Waggoner had this to say

"The Scriptures declare that Christ is "the only begotten son of God." He is begotten, not created. As to when He was begotten, it is not for us to inquire, nor could our minds grasp it if we were told. The prophet Micah tells us all that we can know about it, in these words: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though 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 the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin. There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 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. He has by inheritance a more excellent Name than the angels; He is "a Son over His own house." Heb. 1:4; 3:6. And since He is the only-begotten Son of God, He is of the very substance and nature of God, and possesses by birth all the attributes of God; for the Father was pleased that His Son should be the express image of His Person, the brightness of His glory, and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead." (Ibid, pages 21-22)

In conclusion of this section (*Is Christ a Created Being?*), Waggoner leaves his readers with this thought (this was after explaining that a divine being did actually die at Calvary)

“Finally, we know the Divine unity of the Father and the Son from the fact that both have the same Spirit. Paul, after saying that they that are in the flesh cannot please God, continues: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Rom. 8:9. Here we find that the Holy Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Christ "is in the bosom of the Father;" being by nature of the very substance of God, and having life in Himself, He is properly called Jehovah, the self-existent 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.

Let no one, therefore, who honors Christ at all, give Him less honor than He gives the Father, for this would be to dishonor the Father by just so much; but let all, with the angels in heaven, worship the Son, having no fear that they are worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator.” (*Ibid*, page 23-24)

In itself, the title of the next section in Waggoner’s book is enough to explain its content. That title is *God Manifest in the Flesh*. Waggoner opens up this section with John 1:14 which says "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.". He then makes this comment

“No words could more plainly show that Christ was both God and man. “Originally only Divine, He took upon Himself human nature, and passed among men as only a common mortal, except at those times when His Divinity flashed through, as on the occasion of the cleansing of the temple, or when His burning words of simple truth forced even His enemies to confess that "never man spake like this man." (*Ibid*, page 24, ‘*God Manifest in the Flesh*’)

Waggoner later concluded in the same section

“It is impossible for us to understand how Christ could, as God, humble Himself to the death of the cross, and it is worse than useless for us to speculate about it. All we can do is to accept the facts as they are presented in the Bible. If the reader finds it difficult to harmonize some of the statements in the Bible concerning the nature of Christ, let him remember that it would be impossible to express it in terms that would enable finite minds to grasp it fully.” (*Ibid*, pages 25-26)

At the very beginning of the next section (*Important Practical Lessons*), Waggoner had this to say

“It is not merely as a beautiful theory, a mere dogma, that we should consider Christ as God and Creator. Every doctrine of the Bible is for our practical benefit, and should be studied for that purpose.” (*Ibid*, Page 31, ‘*Important Practical Lessons*’)

Far much more could be quoted from Waggoner’s book, but enough has been given to show what was in it was in keeping with what was then believed and taught within Seventh-day Adventism about Christ. This was that

- He was begotten of God in eternity
- He is God because He was begotten of God

- He is truly the Son of God because He was begotten of God
- He is fully and completely divine
- He was begotten not created
- He was begotten by a process not revealed
- He is our Creator and our Redeemer, also the lawgiver

This summarises Waggoner's thoughts concerning Christ. It also summarises what was then believed and taught by SDA's, in their various publications, whilst Ellen White was alive. This included our major periodicals and Sabbath School quarterlies. We have also seen that these beliefs concerning Christ had been the same from the beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism.

We now need to turn our attention to a tract that was published, by our denomination in 1892, showing what we believed about the Godhead – and very importantly, what we believed about Christ. This was 2 years after Waggoner's above work was published.

The Samuel Spear article

This was spoken of in Part 1 of this study with reference to the trinity doctrine, but I mention it again here, in brief, as evidence of the chronology, concerning Christ, of the beliefs of SDA's. My remarks in Part 1 can be read on pages 51-53 here

https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/History/Development_of_SDA_Trinity_Theology_1.pdf

In 1889, in a newspaper called the *New York Independent*, the Rev. Samuel Spear D.D. (1812-1891), published an article that carried the title of *The Subordination of Christ*. The title reveals the content, also the intent, of the article. Spear was not a Seventh-day Adventist. He was a Presbyterian minister. Two years later in 1891, because this article impressed the leadership of the SDA Church so much, it was published in 2 parts in the *Signs of the Times* of December 7th and 14th. The next year (1892), permission was requested, by the SDA church, to re-print it. Permission was granted. It was then published as a tract for the public showing what was believed by SDA's concerning the personages of the Godhead. As an eye-catching title it was re-named *The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity*. SDA's were not then a trinitarian denomination, but the title would have made a good impression on Christians of other denominations, who, in the main, would have been trinitarian.

This tract, as tract No. 90, was included in the *Bible Student's Library*. This was a series of tracts, prepared for the public in general, explaining what was believed by SDA's. This was in 1892. This was 4 years after the now famous Minneapolis General Conference (1888). This shows, in the years immediately following this conference, what was acceptable Godhead doctrine to SDA's. This was non-trinitarianism. It was the same faith that SDA's had always held.

Spear's entire article was given over to explaining what the *Bible alone* has to say concerning the personalities of the Godhead. This was particularly concerning Christ – as its original title revealed (*The Subordination of Christ*).

When this tract was first introduced to the *Bible Students' Library*, it was said of it in the

Signs of the Times

"No. 90 is entitled "The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity," by the late Samuel T. Spear, D.D., and is reprinted from the New York Independent." (*Signs of the Times*, April 4th 1892, Volume 18, No. 22, page 352)

It then added

"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." (*Ibid*)

This was just one of the many accolades given to Spear's article. SDA's were deeply impressed by its content.

Regarding Christ, I will now highlight some of the comments and observations made by Spear. These will show what was then believed, concerning Christ, in the 1890's, by SDA's. Spear opened his article with the following paragraphs. These are contiguous.

"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. The same Bible as clearly teaches that the adorable Person therein known as Jesus Christ, when considered in his *whole* nature, is truly divine and truly God in the most absolute sense. John 1:1-18; 1 John 5:20; Rom. 1:3, 4; 9:5; Titus 2:13.

There is, however, a sense in which the Christ of the Bible, while essentially divine, is, nevertheless, in some respects *distinct* from and *subordinate* to God the Father. He is spoken of, and frequently speaks of Himself, as the Son of God, as the only-begotten of the Father, as being sent by God the Father into this world, and as doing the will of the Father. He is never confounded with the Father, and never takes His place. "My Father" is a phrase that was often on his lips. He not only prayed to the Father, but He described Himself as always doing the things that please Him. John 8:29. He said to Mary Magdalene, after His resurrection, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17. He said to the disciples in the upper room, just before His death, "I go unto the Father; for My Father is greater than I." John 14:28. There is no difficulty in finding in His ministry abundant references to God the Father as in some respects *distinct* from and *superior* to Himself, and, hence, involving the idea of His own subordination.

The same fact appears in the writings of the apostles. Paul said to the Corinthians, "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:23. He also said to them, "And the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." 1 Cor. 11:3. He further said to this church: "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son [Christ] also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. 15:28. God is said to have "raised him [Christ] from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," to have "highly exalted Him," after His resurrection, and to have "given Him a name which is above every name." Eph. 1: 20; Phil. 2:9. These and the like passages do, beyond all question, make a distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ, and to the former do

assign some kind of superiority which implies subordination in the latter. No such superiority is ever assigned to Christ in respect to God the Father.” (Rev. Samuel T. Spear, D. D., *New York Independent*, November 14th 1889, ‘The Subordination of Christ’, also used as tract No. 90 of the SDA Bible Student’s Library in 1892)

Spear later made this interesting observation

“The subordination of Christ, as revealed in the Bible, is not adequately explained by referring it simply to His human nature. It is true that, in that nature, He was a created and dependent being, and in this respect like the race whose nature He assumed; and yet the Bible statement of His subordination extends to His *divine* as well as his human nature. ...Paul tells us that God “created all things by Jesus Christ,” and that He is the person, or agent,” by whom also He [God] made the worlds.” Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2. Neither of these statements can have any relation to the humanity of Christ, and yet in both God is represented as acting in and through Christ, and the latter represented as the medium of such action. So, also, God is described as sending forth His Son into this world, as giving “His only begotten Son” for human salvation, and as not sparing “His own Son” but delivering “him up for us all.” Gal 4: 4; John 3:16; Rom 8:32. These statements imply that this Son who is none other than Christ Himself, existed prior to his incarnation, and that, as thus existing, He was sent forth, given, not spared, but delivered up, by God the Father. The act assigned to God the Father in thus devoting “His own Son” to the work of human redemption, relates to Him as he was before He assumed our nature in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and supposes in the Father some kind of *primacy* in making this devotement.

We learn also from Paul that when this Son, having been incarnated on earth, and having been subsequently exalted in heaven, shall have had all things put under him, “then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” 1 Cor. 15:28. This implies subordination on the part of the Son to God the Father; and this subordination, whatever may be its exact nature, obviously relates to the higher nature of Christ, and not simply to His humanity. It was in this higher nature that He descended into the vale of humiliation, and it was in this nature that God “highly exalted Him.” Phil. 2:9.” (*Ibid*)

After quoting Matthew 28:18, Matthew 11:27 and John 3:35, also after saying that these texts show that the Father delegated authority to the Son, Spear wrote

“These scriptures, taken together, show that the subordination of Christ to God the Father, as stated in the Bible, is not limited simply to his human nature, but extends also in some sense to His higher nature.” (*Ibid*)

The conclusion drawn by Spear was

“The conclusion from all the Scriptures put together is that there is in the Godhead some *essential and imminent distinction as to the mode of subsistence and operation*, in virtue of which Christ is properly spoken of as *subordinate* to God the Father, and also spoken of as divine and equal to the Father in power and glory, and that this distinction, whatever it is, does not conflict with the doctrine of the divine unity as taught in the Bible. This fact in regard to 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 toward men. These titles and their special significance, as used in the

Bible, are not interchangeable. The term "Father" is never applied to the Son, and the term "Son" is never applied to the Father. Each title has its own permanent application, and its own use and sense." (*Ibid*)

Samuel Spear said much more concerning the subordination of Christ to the Father, but it would be far too much to quote in this study. All of it though can be read at the following link, as can the accolades given to Spear's article.

[https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles\(others\)/Speararticle.pdf](https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles(others)/Speararticle.pdf)

What we have noted above, as explained by Spear in his article, was that which then, in the 1890's, was believed and taught by SDA's. This all stemmed from the belief that in eternity, Christ was begotten of God therefore He is not only the Son of God but also God. This meant, to SDA's, that all that Christ is, and all that He has (His attributes etc), is His inheritance from His Father.

Ellen White endorses the beliefs of SDA's concerning Christ

During her time in Australia, Ellen White visited New Zealand. In 1893, she reported back to SDA's, via the *Review and Herald*, what it was like regarding the work there

"Here are places all about us that have never been entered, and cannot be worked unless we shall have houses of worship, even though of the humblest character. We cannot call out the people to hear the truth in tents as in America; for in many places, as in Wellington, New Zealand, the wind would strip them to ribbons." (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th December 1893, 'An Appeal for the Australasian Field'*)

After saying she had considered returning to America to appeal for funds to build places of worship in New Zealand, Ellen White then reported on how ministers of other denominations, where she was at that time, were misrepresenting the beliefs of SDA's.

"In this country, the denominational ministers tell the most unblushing falsehoods to their congregations in reference to our work and our people. Whatever false report has been started, is circulated by those who oppose the truth, and is repeated from church to church and from community to community. The circulators of these falsehoods take no pains to find out whether or not they are true, for many of those who repeat the reports, though not the framers of them, still love the false reports, and take delight in giving them a wide circulation. They do not, like honest, just men, come to those who are accused, and seek to find out what is the truth concerning what they have heard in regard to their faith; but without inquiry they spread false statements in order to prejudice the people against those who hold the truth." (*Ibid*)

This is the same as it is today. Some people, in order to safeguard and promote their own beliefs, will often misrepresent what others teach. This is what was happening, in New Zealand (and perhaps in Australia), at that time with our beliefs. Ellen White though had no doubt that the SDA church was teaching "the truth". Notice above how she emphasised this point. She then gave an example of how our denominational beliefs were being misrepresented

"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 school-teacher there opposed the truth, and declared to the people that Seventh-day Adventists did not

believe in the divinity of Christ.” (*Ibid*)

As we have seen from the above, this was an ongoing problem for SDA’s. Very often, what our church was teaching about Christ, was misunderstood and misrepresented.

The following is how Ellen White responded to this schoolteacher’s claims that SDA’s did not believe in the divinity of Christ.

“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 is categorical. Ellen White’s words are so clear that they cannot be misunderstood.

There can be no doubt that Ellen White knew exactly what SDA’s were teaching about Christ’s pre-existence. It would be ludicrous to reason otherwise. She had been with God’s people since 1844. This was now 1893. Throughout this time period (almost 50 years), as God’s special messenger to His remnant people, she had been at the forefront of what was being taught by SDA’s. We can be sure that if throughout all of this time SDA’s had been teaching error about Christ’s pre-existence, then God would have had her say so. After all, what is believed about Christ is considered to be, by most Christians, the most important teaching of the Scriptures. It would be nonsensical to believe that many thousands were being taught gross error by SDA’s – also going to their rest believing it – and at the same time God had His messenger in the church who did nothing except to tell them they were correct in what they were teaching.

So what were SDA’s teaching at that time?

As we have seen above, the SDA Church was teaching, in keeping with Scripture, that in eternity, Christ was begotten of God therefore He is not only truly the Son of God but also truly God. This had been the teaching of SDA’s from the very beginning of their denominational existence. Needless to say: neither God nor Ellen White saw any problem with it. In fact, as we can see here, Ellen White said it was “the truth of Christ’s pre-existence”. This could only have confirmed SDA’s in what they were teaching about Christ.

Two years later in 1895, Ellen White again confirmed SDA’s in what they were teaching about Christ.

“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, 30th May 1895, ‘Christ our complete salvation’*)

This was very much the same as that which Waggoner had written in his book *Christ and His Righteousness* (we noted this above)

“It is true that there are many sons of God, but Christ is the “only begotten Son of God,” and therefore the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be. The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by

creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15), but Christ is the Son of God by birth." (Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness, How shall we consider Christ?*, page 12)

Notice above that in accordance with Scripture, Ellen White said that Christ was "equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection". Christ therefore could not be the person with whom He was equal. In other words, God and Christ are two distinct personages.

Just 6 weeks after her previously quoted statement in the *Signs of the Times*, Ellen White, in the *Review and Herald*, made a complimentary statement. Again this was in keeping with what was then believed by SDA's.

"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* 9th July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People')

Here we can see that instead of using the word begotten to explain Christ's source of being (as a separate personality from God the Father), Ellen White says that He was "made in the express image" of His Father's person. Her previous statement had said "begotten in the express image of the Father's person". In her mind therefore, the word "begotten" must have been synonymous with "made", although we must remember, she did make it very clear, as did other SDA writers, that Christ was not a created being. This again was in keeping with what was then taught by SDA's. It would be impossible to draw the conclusion that Ellen White was referring to anything except for Christ's pre-existence. As she said some years later

"Before Christ came in the likeness of men, he existed in the express image of his Father". (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 20th December 1900 'Christ's humiliation')

Some have claimed that in her book *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White wrote in opposition to that which SDA's, for the previous 50 years, had been teaching, but there is no evidence to even suggest that this is true. Those who make such claims usually quote where she wrote in her book

"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, *Desire of Ages*, page 530, 'Lazarus Come Forth')

By quoting this, they try to put across the idea that this "life, original, unborrowed, underived" but Ellen White was saying no such thing. What they usually fail to point out is that earlier in the same book, Ellen White had written (this was in keeping with what was then believed and taught by SDA's)

"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)

Notice here just what it is that flows through the Son. It is "the Father's life". This is also the Son's life (life, original, unborrowed, underived), the source of which the Father. This is the same as SDA's were teaching up to then.

The “great Source of all” is not the Son but the Father. The Son is the recipient, also the mediator, of “the Father’s life”. Christ receives this “life” directly from “the great Source of all” (the Father). No wonder it is called “life, original, unborrowed, underived”. It is this life - “the Father’s life” (life, original, unborrowed, underived) – that comes to us through the Son. It is the one and the same life. As Ellen White also wrote in the *Desire of Ages*

“Through continual communion He [Christ] received life from God, that He might impart life to the world.” (*Ibid*, page 363, ‘Come rest awhile’)

This is the same as she had said on page 21 of her book (see above).

The statement that in Christ was “life original, unborrowed and underived”, was not first written by her in *Desire of Ages*. It had appeared the year previous in an article she had written that had been published in the *Signs of the Times*.

“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 lifegiver, 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.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, April 1st 1897, ‘Christ the Life Giver’*)

As Ellen White had said two months later (this was prior to the publication of *Desire of Ages*)

“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, 1st June 1897, ‘A call to the work’*)

Again we see it is the Father’s life (God’s own life) – through the Son – that is being communicated to fallen humanity. Note here again the primacy of the Father (“God has sent his Son” and “I live by the Father”). Again we can see Christ’s life bound up in the Father’s life yet the source of this life is the Father. She then added the words of the gospel writer John (John 1:18)

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,” (*Ibid*)

Some may say that Ellen White later changed her mind regarding this begotten concept but there is nothing in her writings to suggest such a thing. In fact in 1905, in a letter written to her granddaughter, she said

“I am now looking over my diaries and copies of letters written for several years back, commencing before I went to Europe, before you were born. I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have these things to revive past history, that they may see that there is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.” (*Ellen G. White, Letter to Mabel White, Letter 329a, 16th November 1905*)

In 1903, there was a crisis within Seventh-day Adventism. This concerned beliefs about the presence and personality of God. This came about because of what our chief physician, J. H. Kellogg, was teaching. This was particularly in his book *The Living Temple*, which Ellen White openly condemned. Kellogg had a tremendous influence over his fellow physicians. One such person was a Bro Nicola. Ellen White wrote to him saying

“My brother, it is vitally essential, for the eternal welfare of yourself and of your wife, that you understand that God has ordained that you shall be on guard, lest you be seduced by the deceptive influences at Battle Creek. In the name of the Lord I warn you. I dare not present before you all that is presented to me; for you are being influenced by a deceptive power to feel that it is safe to look to a greatly deceived man as your instructor and counselor.

Again I would say, In the name of the Lord I warn you. You have been drinking in a spirit that you do not understand and have had no experience in. Our erring brother's course is opened before me, and this is why I am instructed to lift up my voice decidedly, to tell you that the Lord has presented to me your dangers, and that He would have you heed the warnings He has given.

I should be an unfaithful watchman, were I to hold my peace, when I see the very foundations of our faith being torn away by those who have departed from the faith, and who are now adrift, without an anchor. In this time, when false doctrines are being taught, we are to teach the same truth that we have taught for the past half century. I have not changed my faith one jot or one tittle, and I am pleading with God that both of you shall be able to discern clearly the difference between loyalty and disloyalty. This God calls upon every physician and every minister to do.” (Ellen G. White, *Letter 150 1906, to Bro and Sis Nicola, May 15th 1906*)

In this latter paragraph, there are two very important things to notice. The first is that Ellen White told Nicola that “we”, meaning SDA's, “are to teach the same truth that we have taught for the past half century”. Secondly, she said that during that time she had not changed her own faith “one jot or one tittle”. This was now 8 years after the publication of *Desire of Ages*.

So as we can see, Ellen White fully approved of what SDA's believed and taught about Christ. This is why not once in her writings did she say that they were teaching error. Today though, as we shall see later, the SDA Church says that what these pioneers were teaching about Christ is not Biblical. In fact it is said to be heresy. This is exactly the opposite to what was said by Ellen White. She said it was the truth. We are therefore left to decide just who is speaking the truth.

Period 1900-1909

General publications:

As the years progressed into the 20th Century, SDA's, concerning Christ, had not changed their beliefs. In the *Signs of the Times* in the January of the year 1900, W. N. Glenn wrote

“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 1:1. 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. " In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Verse 4. By His new birth He stepped down to the " likeness of sinful flesh," that He might suffer death. He must be born again, coming down to our human nature, so that we could be born again and become partakers of His divine nature. He was born again to go down into death, "that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2: 14, 15." (W. N. Glenn, *Signs of the Times*, January 17th 1900, 'Necessity of Being "Born Again"')

As we noted above, this was exactly the same view as held by both W. W. Prescott and A. T. Jones (that Christ was born twice). Needless to say, the publication of the *Desire of Ages* had not changed this view.

In the same year (1900), a series of articles called *The Origin of Evil and the Changes of the Sabbath* was also published in the *Signs of the Times*. Its author was H. C. Giles. In part one of the series called *The Two Mystery's*, Giles went to great lengths to show the animosity of Satan towards Christ. Amongst a host of other things, he explained that it was God's eternal purpose to "create all things through Jesus Christ", also "to make Christ the Head of His redeemed church" (if sin should enter), and to prove to all his created beings that "He is what He claims to be,—a God whose name and every attribute is love" He also said it was to make Christ the "rightful Heir of all things, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence". He then explained (please note the ellipses)

"When Lucifer saw that Christ, who is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24), was from eternity appointed Chief (Prov. 8:23, Jewish translation), the Master Workman enjoying an intimacy with the Most High that was allowed to no other, his heart was fired with jealousy, which he soon fanned into open rebellion against the government of heaven. "Why," questioned Lucifer, "should Christ in all things have the pre-eminence? Why should He be preferred before me?" ...These honors conferred upon Christ and denied to himself, Lucifer regarded as an injustice and an arbitrary slight of his dignity and an invasion of his rights. ...He regarded God's dealings with himself as unfair and unjust, and the exaltation of Christ as altogether arbitrary and partial." (H. C. Giles, *The Signs of the Times*, April 18th 1900, 'The Origin of Evil: The Change of the Sabbath')

Giles then observed

"It may be permitted us to stop briefly to inquire why Lucifer was denied the honors conferred upon Christ, and which he so much coveted. The task is not difficult. The difference between Christ and Lucifer was an essential one of character and of nature, and not of mere outward environment. Christ was God, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He was the creative Word. John 1:1-3. He only was the effulgence of the Father's glory and the very image of His substance (Heb. 1:3), Creator and Upholder of all things (Col. 1:16). Lucifer, altho a being of brightness, was only an angel, the rightful minister of his Creator. Tho "anointed," he was still a cherub. Tho "morning star," he was created by Christ, and should have been content to render Him grateful homage, rather than to covet His superior glory." (*Ibid*)

After saying that "God's dealing with Lucifer, as with all His creatures, was not arbitrary, but that "true and righteous" are all His ways", also after saying that this "appears still more emphatic from the following. Of Christ it is declared, "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. 1:4.",

Giles wrote

"Christ, the Word, was God. John I: 3; Heb. 1:8. Christ was the Word of God (Rev. 19: 13), and was therefore incorruptible (I Peter 1: 23). Lucifer, as the event proved, was not incorruptible, for God declared of him, "Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom." Eze. 28:17. Therefore none but Christ could be safely trusted with the sacred responsibilities resting upon God's own Son. To do it would be to jeopardize the whole universe, and render insecure the whole government of God." (*Ibid*)

Christ is recognised here as "God's own Son" and "God".

In an article called *The Faith of Jesus* published in the *Review and Herald* of December 11th 1900, its author begins by saying

"The condescension of Christ, the position of Christ, and the nature of Christ, as He was in the flesh in the world, are given in the second chapter of Hebrews more fully than in any other one place in the Scriptures.

But the first chapter of Hebrews comes before the second chapter, and is, therefore, an essential precedent of the second chapter. The first chapter must be, followed, and must be understood, unto the second chapter, in order to be able to follow and understand the second chapter.

Yet in the first chapter of Hebrews, the exaltation, the position, and the nature of Christ, as He was in heaven before He came to the world, are more fully given than in any other single portion of the Scriptures.

Therefore it is perfectly plain that an understanding of the position and nature of Christ, as He was in heaven, is essential to a proper understanding of His position and nature as He was on earth." (*Review and Herald, December 11th 1900, 'The Faith of Jesus'*)

Then, after quoting the opening verses of the book of Hebrews, it says (paragraphs contiguous)

"This. tells us that, in heaven, the nature of Christ was the nature of God; that He, in His person, in His substance, is the very impress, the very character, of the substance of God. That is to say that, in heaven, as He was before He came to the world, the nature of Christ was in very substance the nature of God

Therefore it is further written of Him that He was "made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

This more excellent name is the name "God," which, in the eighth verse, is given by the Father to the Son. " Unto the Son He [God] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."

Thus, He is so much better than the angels as God is better than the angels. And it is because of this that He has that more excellent name; the name expressing only what He is, in His very nature.

And this name "He hath by inheritance." It is not a name that was bestowed, but a name that is inherited.

Now, it lies, in the nature of things, as an everlasting truth, that the only name any person can possibly inherit is his father's name. This name, then, of Christ's, which is more excellent than that of the angels; is the name of His Father; and His Father's name is God. The Son's name, therefore, which He has by inheritance, is God. And this name, which is more excellent than that of the angels, is His because He is "so much better than the angels." That name being God, he is so much better than the angels as God is better than the angels.

Next, His position and nature, as better than that of the angels, is dwelt upon: " For unto which of the angels saith He [the Father] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son ? " This holds the thought of the more excellent name spoken of in the previous verse. For He, being the Son of God,— God being His Father,— thus hath "by inheritance" the name of His Father, which is God; and which is so much more excellent than the name of the angels, as God is better than they.

But this is dwelt upon yet further: "And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Thus tie is so much better than the angels that He is worshiped by the angels; and this according to the will of God, because He is, in His nature, God." (*Ibid*)

All of the above, at that time (1900), was in keeping with the beliefs of SDA's. This was that in eternity, Christ was begotten of God therefore all that He is, and all that He has, is His inheritance from God. Much more explanation is given, suffice to say the writer concluded

"Thus, in the first chapter of Hebrews, Christ is revealed higher than the angels, as God; and as much higher than the angels as is God, because He is God. In the first chapter of Hebrews Christ is revealed as God, of the name of God, because He is of the nature of God. And so entirely is His nature of the nature of God, that it is the very impress of the substance of God." (*Ibid*)

In the *Bible Echo* of June 24th 1901, G. B. Starr wrote an article that began

"Jesus announced that He Himself was the beginning of the creative work of God. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Rev. 3:14.

Thus, before God made a single world; before He decked the hills and valleys; before He built the landscape; before He made the tinted flower, and fruit, and foliage; before suns, and stars, and systems, Jehovah brought forth a Person, a character—an image of Himself—to reveal to all others yet to be created, a correct standard of character. And " it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." God hid in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and placed Him before all things. Col. 1:17, 19. He made Him the upholder of all things (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2, 3), and the Creator of all intelligences in heaven and on earth. Col. 1:16." (*G. B. Starr, The Bible Echo, June 24th 1901, 'Character, Above and Before All'*)

This, in 1901, was still the standard faith of SDA's. It was that before anything was created, "Jehovah brought forth a Person, a character—an image of Himself". This was when Christ was begotten of God. In the next paragraph Starr wrote

“By producing a character before He made a world, God would teach us that He regards character most highly.” (*Ibid*)

In an article called *The Sanctuary Question*, also after quoting Hebrews 8:1, 2, S. N. Haskell noted

“Let us consider some of the leading thoughts in the preceding chapters. The first chapter presents Christ — His character and position. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the "express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." He is better and much more exalted than the angels, "as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent - name than they." He is the Son of God, and therefore has inherited every name which is applied to God, the Creator of 'the heavens and the earth. He also is the Creator, and is called God. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," Again, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." Here Christ is presented on an equality with the Father, not created as were the angels, but the creator of the angels — the great "I AM," (S. N. Haskell, *Review and Herald*, August 20th 1901, 'The Sanctuary Question')

The next week, in the *Review and Herald*, this was written by S. O. James

“Satan's character seems the more unlovely, and his ways detestable, as viewed in contrast with the character of God and His Son. What an example the Eternal Father had set! Though having all 'power to create the worlds; He was better pleased to confer this honor upon another. Jesus, in turn, has ever honored the Father. Both desired Lucifer's highest happiness, and were well able to give him all the desires of his heart had those desires been kept in the bounds of right; but by becoming selfish he lost all.” (S. O. James, *Review and Herald*, August 27th 1901, 'Self')

The following year, in an article telling of Lucifer's jealousy of Christ, this was explained

“From the description given of Lucifer, under the name of "the king of Tyrus," in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel, it is evident that he was created high in the scale of being. "Full of wisdom," "perfect in beauty," "perfect in thy ways," are the expressions used by the prophet. It is thus evident that he was created like God, but he was not God, and therefore he could not occupy the same position as the only begotten Son, who was one with the Father. For this reason envy filled the heart of Lucifer, because he could not be what he was not made to be.” (*Review and Herald*, April 8th 1902, 'Studies in the Gospel Message')

In the same year (1902), in the first quarter's *Adult Sabbath School* quarterly it said (paragraphs not contiguous)

“The controversy between Christ and Satan began in heaven (Rev. 12:7) in a face-to-face combat. Satan was not content with the position which he held as Lucifer (Isa. 14:12), or light-bearer, as the name signifies; but he indulged the ambition to "be like the Most High," and thus to be light itself (I John 1:5) and the source of light. Since light is only a manifestation of life (John 1:4), this was the demand of a created being (Eze. 28:55) to be a source or fountain of life, which could only be granted to the begotten Son (John 5:26), one with the Father, the real Fountain (Ps. 36:9).” (*Sabbath School Quarterly*, 2nd quarter 1902, page 13)

"This union of divinity with humanity is the foundation of Christianity. It is the heart and soul of all religious experience. Gal. 2:20. **This manifestation of God in the flesh in the person of His Son is the revelation of the secret of the ages** (Rom. 16:25, 26), and is "the mystery of godliness" (i Tim. 3:16)." (*Ibid*, page 14)

In the synopsis of the *Youth's Sabbath School Lesson* that week, it said in the *Youth's Instructor*

"Now God's light is our life (John 1:4); and therefore, in reality, Lucifer was demanding to be a source of life,—he was really trying to get life-giving power, that power which can create. **This creative power God had given to his only begotten Son** (John 1: 3), and it made Satan jealous."

"Satan is only a creature. He was created by God. Therefore, he could not himself create other things. **This power belongs to God and his Son.**" (*Youth's Instructor*, April 10th 1902, 'Sabbath School. The Youth's Lesson')

When commenting on the youth *Sabbath School lesson* for the second quarter of 1902, these comments were made

"Just as a little grain of wheat contains all the essence of life which is afterward found in the full-grown wheat stock, **so. Christ, the divine seed, contains all the elements of life, as found in the whole creation; and by the word of his mouth, all things have been spoken into existence.** Ps. 33: 6.

When, therefore, he was begotten, or born, the very essence of every living thing was born in him. In him was the creative, or life-giving, principle (John 5: 26), and the sustaining principle, by which all things consist, or hang together. Col. 1: 17. As the original seed of all things, Christ was all this; but the most wonderful part is that he, the divine seed, became human. In giving the Son of God to humanity, the wonderful thing is not that he should be a seed; for this he has been from the beginning. Prov. 8:23. But that he should become the seed of the woman, the germ of a new humanity, is, even in the eyes of heaven, an unparalleled exhibition of love. John 3:16.

This is a mystery,- the mystery of godliness Paul calls it. r Tim. 3: 16. It is God's unspeakable gift in the person of his Son. 2 Cor. 9: 15." (*Youth's Instructor*, April 24th 1902, *The Youth's Lesson*, 'God's Unspeakable Gift')

Notice that Christ was still referred to as being "begotten" or "born".

Edson White, the son of Ellen White, wrote the following in the *Gospel Herald*

"Christ is called " the Word of God." The apostle says: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. The helpless babe, born in a manger at Bethlehem, in reality was the one who created the world in the beginning. **He was the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, and had been with God before the world was.**" (*James Edson White, The Gospel Herald, May 19th 1902, 'The Creator'*)

The author later explained (paragraphs contiguous)

"In John 1:1 the Word (Christ) is called God. The title of God is given to Christ. The Father himself declares: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Heb. 1:8; Ps. 45:6.

In this text it will be seen that the Son is called God by the Father.

Isaiah, giving the names that apply to Christ, says: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isa. 9:6.

These names and many others the Bible gives to Christ, to show that he is the Word and Power of God. These titles, as applied to Christ, are very appropriate when we consider his exalted position, as stated by Paul: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Phil. 2:6. Standing equal with the Father in the realm of heaven and in all the created universe, we can plainly see that he should bear the titles of the Creator." (*Ibid*)

W. W. Prescott, in an article called *Our Place as Sons*, wrote the following (paragraphs not contiguous)

"Christ was not created the Son of God; He was the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father. The relationship of the human family, sonship by creation as in Adam, gives very high and exalted privileges. By being made the son of God, man was placed in a position where he could recognise and understand God. Of all the created beings on the earth, man was the only one who could recognise God as God. Yet Adam, the created son, had not the same relationship to the Father as Christ, the only begotten Son, who was born, or who simply was the Son of God in eternal times that no human mind can fix or comprehend."

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Note that the word His is in Italics and the margin has a son. The thought here is not so much who He was, as what He was; it is to emphasise the idea of the sonship." (*W. W. Prescott, The Review and Herald, September 23rd 1902, 'Our Place as Sons*)

Prescott was then the editor of the *Review and Herald*, also General Conference Vice-President. The above article had been published previously in the *Present Truth* (UK), December 20th 1900.

In the December of 1902, in an article called *The Gift of God*, P. T. Magan (then Dean of Emmanuel Missionary College) emphasised that Christ really is the Son of God – also that He was the only one of His kind in the universe - not that He became a son by reason of the incarnation. He opened his article by saying

"The plan of salvation originated in a gift.

God so loved the world, that He GAVE his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Without God's gift of His own dear Son to the human family, salvation for any man would be utterly impossible. Without Christ's gift of His own life to fallen men and women, there could be no hope of an endless life of joy beyond the grave" (*P. T. Magan, Review and Herald, December 11th 1902, 'The Gift of God'*)

Magan later wrote (paragraphs not contiguous)

“The world's Redeemer was not given to be the Son of God. He was given to become the Son of man. He was not only given to man: far greater was the sacrifice of God,— He was given to be man. He was given to be a man in order that He might redeem man. He was a "free gift " — not for three and thirty years; not for the short period of this world's history; but. forever, and for evermore.” (*Ibid*)

“God's gift of His own dear Son to fallen man was a real, not a make-believe, gift. God did really give away His only begotten Son. Christ was the only one of His kind in the universe. To be sure, the angels were all sons of God, but Christ was the only begotten Son of the Father. When God gave Him to the 'human family, God made a real sacrifice.” (*Ibid*)

“He is and ever will be divine: His divinity remains unchanged and unchangeable. But every human being who will know in his own life the blest experience of the gift of giving must first know and recognize that gift - as a divine reality in the very life and experience of God and of God's dear Son.” (*Ibid*)

Notice Magan said that “God did really give away His only begotten Son”, also that “Christ was the only one of His kind in the universe”. None other therefore, according to this reasoning, was the same “kind” as Christ. Not even the Father or the Holy Spirit.

In the same month, in an article called *The Eternal Purpose*, its author wrote

“In the eternity of unmeasured time, before the foundations of the earth were laid, it was determined in the divine plan of government that the only begotten Son, the second person of the Godhead, should be Head over all creation. The decision that he should be " Lord of lords, and King of kings," was not an arbitrary one. The decree that he should be King on the holy hill of Zion was based upon his sonship, as is shown by these words: " I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." And so the Son was " appointed heir of all things," because " all things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." (*Review and Herald*, 23rd December 1902, ‘*The Eternal Purpose*’)

The author then quotes Proverbs 8:22-31 as pertaining to Christ

“And he, the eternal personal Wisdom of God, in the following language sets forth his own relationship to the Father of all, and to the things that are made: — " The Lord possessed me, the beginning of his way, Before his works of old. I was anointed from everlasting, From the first, from the beginning of the earth. 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 first clods of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; When he set a canopy over the face of the deep: When he established the skies above: When the fountains of the deep waxed strong: When he gave to the sea its bounds, That the waters should not pass their border; When he appointed the foundations of the earth; Then I was by him, I the Builder; And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in his habitable earth; And my delights were with the sons of men." This is " the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (*Ibid*)

This is the first time in SDA literature where I can find that Christ is referred to as “the second person of the Godhead”. Perhaps there are other places but as yet I have not come across

them.

In 1903, in the *Editors Private Corner* (where reader's questions were answered") is found the following

"A correspondent has sent us, with a few introductory words, a series of fourteen questions, prefacing each with the inquiry, "Do you believe?" Before answering them in detail, we wish to say that what we or anybody else may or may not believe is a matter of no consequence to anybody except the individual believer himself; for nobody's belief of a thing makes it more worthy of credence, and unbelief by anybody in the world does not make the thing disbelieved less worthy of belief. In short, it is a waste of time either to inquire or to tell what this one or that one believes; for our faith must not be based upon some other person's faith, nor be in any way affected by it; but solely on the Word of God. So in answering these questions we shall make no reference to what we believe, but tell simply what we know from God's Word. Of course it will be understood that we do not write anything that we do not firmly believe; but the fact that it is so, and not that we believe it, is the reason for setting it forth. We shall answer the questions in order as they come: —

1. Do you believe that Christ was a God, and the Son of God, or that He was only a good man?"

What does the Bible say of Him? and what did He say of Himself? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." John i. 1, 14. He was in the form of God, and equality with God was His by right. Phil. ii. 5, 6. He is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. xvi. 16, 17. He frequently declared that God was His Father, saying on one occasion, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" John xiv. 9. The Jews charged Him with making Himself God, and He did not deny it, but defended the claim. John x 30-38. Finally read what God the Father Himself has called Him: Of the angels He saith, "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." But unto the Son He saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." And, "Thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands; they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fall." Heb. i. 7-12. These words God the Father addresses to Jesus Christ.

I believe all that; if anybody does not, I shall have to leave him to settle it with the Lord." (E. J. Waggoner, *Present Truth*, 23rd July 1903, 'The editor's private corner')

By early SDA's, Christ was indeed regarded as God and the Son of God. This is because He was begotten of God.

The same year (1903), an article called *The Humanity of Christ* was published in the *Review and Herald*. Its author, L. A. Smith, an associate editor of the paper, began by saying

"In order that fallen man might be identified with the Son of God, the Son of God identified himself with humanity. He who was the Son of God became the Son of man. He who was equal with God in the courts of heaven, who was a begotten Son and not a created being, left his station there, and identified himself with a totally different order

of beings.” (L. A. Smith, *Review and Herald*, October 15th 1903, ‘The Humanity of Christ’)

Again it is emphasised that Christ “was a begotten Son and not a created being”.

In the 1903 edition of Uriah Smith’s *Daniel and the Revelation* we find these words (this was the year Uriah Smith died)

“But while he [Christ] does not possess a co-eternity 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.” (Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 1903 edition, page 401)

“The Scriptures certainly clearly intimate that the existence of Christ had a beginning. (John 1:1), which was not so in the case of the Father. (See remarks on Rev. 3:14, where it is shown that Christ is not a created being.)” (*Ibid*)

Referring to Daniel 11:45 and 12:1

“Who is this Michael who shall stand up? Michael means, He who is like God. Who is it that is like God? Of Christ, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, says, “He is the express image, of His person.” Heb. 1:3. Or, as is conveyed by the literal meaning of the original, He is as much like the Father as the impression made in wax is like the seal which is used to make the impression.” (*Australian Signs of the Times*, January 4th 1904, ‘The End Approaching’)

Two months later, an article was published in the *Review and Herald* called *The Perfect Revelation*. It was explained

“CHRIST was the effulgence of his Father's glory, the outshining of his glory, because he stood in the relationship of a son to the Father. He could be to all things outside of the Father the outshining of the revelation of the glory of God. No created being could do that, but he could do it because he was the only begotten Son. So that the Son, not by arbitrary appointment, but because he was the only begotten Son of, the Father, could be the effulgence of his glory. Therefore, he could be the express image of his person, the very image of his substance,— the exact representation of his very being. What God the Father, the God over all, actually and really is, his Son actually and really is, and that because of the relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. The very character of God is revealed through his Son, so that he sets forth the glory of God, not in a general way, as it were, but he sets forth what he actually is — the very image and character of God, and that revelation could he made through no created being but the eternal Son, the only begotten. No other being could fill that place.” (*Editorial, Review and Herald*, March 17th 1904, ‘The Perfect Revelation’)

Again it is emphasised that Christ is not created but begotten.

The same year, the General Conference President, namely A. G. Daniells, wrote of the blessedness of giving

“As the Son of God, Christ occupied the second place in the universe. He was next to his Father. He had been the happy recipient of all that his Father could bestow upon him. In him were “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” He was his Father's

"Darling." O what honor, what glory, what vast treasures were his!" (A. G. Daniells, *Review and Herald*, November 10th 1904, 'The Blessedness of Giving')

G. I. Butler who had two tenures as General Conference President (1871-1874 and 1880-1888) wrote in the December of 1904

"The True Significance of 'Present Truth.' All truth is valuable. There is an immeasurable difference of value 'between truth and error. There are many truths that are eternal. God is the creator of all things: Christ is his only begotten Son. His word is ever true. These and other doctrines like them always have been true and always will be true.'" (G. I. Butler, *The Oriental Watchman*, December 1904, 'Present Truth')

The next year, the SDA Church published a book called *The Seer of Patmos*. On pages 93-94 its author, S. N. Haskell, wrote

"Back in the ages, which finite mind cannot fathom, the Father and Son were alone in the universe. Christ was the first begotten of the Father, and to Him Jehovah made known the divine plan of Creation.... The fall of Lucifer was foreseen; likewise the possibility of the introduction of sin, which would mar the perfection of the divine handiwork. It was then, in those early councils, that Christ's heart of love was touched; and the only begotten Son pledged His life to redeem man, should he yield and fall. Father and Son, surrounded by impenetrable glory, clasped hands. It was in appreciation of this offer, that upon Christ was bestowed creative power, and the everlasting covenant was made; and henceforth Father and Son, with one mind, worked together to complete the work of creation." (S. N. Haskell, *The Seer of Patmos*, pages 93-94, 'A Glimpse of Heaven', 1905)

Christ is said to be "the first begotten of the Father", also that upon Him "was bestowed creative power". Later, on page 98, we find these words

"Christ was the firstborn in heaven; He was likewise the firstborn of God upon earth, and heir to the Father's throne. Christ, the firstborn, though the Son of God, was clothed in humanity, and was made perfect through suffering." (*Ibid*, page 98)

In the March of the same year, R. A. Underwood (then President of the Northern Union Conference) wrote in the *Review and Herald*

"The fall of Lucifer himself came because he coveted the position and power bestowed upon Jesus Christ. He dared to question the right of the eternal God to bestow upon whomsoever he would his own free gifts." (R. A. Underwood, *Review and Herald*, March 23rd 1905, 'Apostasy and Reformation')

A few months later in the *Australian Signs of the Times*, E. Hilliard wrote that

"Christ, the lineal descendant of Abraham, was the only one of his seed who could pass through the grave, then turn upon its brink, and call forth the silent slumberers. An angel, as a ransom for fallen man, would not suffice. The angels are created beings, dependent upon God for existence. They have not inherited power, like the Son of God, to give back the forfeited life to man. Christ, the only begotten Son of God, inherited life from the Father. He laid aside His divinity, and tabernacled in humanity, winning through faith in His Father the lost world, and opening to man a way of escape from death." (E. Hilliard, *Australian Signs of the Times*, July 3rd 1905, 'The Lost

F. C. Gilbert, a converted Jew, wrote in the *Caribbean Watchman* in 1905

"Yes, there is but one mind, one thought, one purpose between the Father and the Son, for all wisdom, all knowledge, all power, all understanding, **the Father has given to the Son.**" (F. C. Gilbert, *The Caribbean Watchman*, March 1905, 'Christ, Law-Giver and Law-Keeper', see also *Signs of the Times*, November 16th 1904)

In the same issue it quoted from the *Present Truth* of January 9th 1896

"We are mindful of Paul's words, that "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 " Cor. 8:6); just as we have already quoted, that it was by Him that God made the worlds. **All things proceed ultimately from God, the Father; even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father; but it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and that He should be the direct, immediate Agent in every act of creation.** Our object in this investigation is to set forth Christ's rightful position of equality with the Father, in order that His power to redeem may be better appreciated." (*Caribbean Watchman*, March 1905, 'Christ the Creator')

In 1906, W. J. Stone assured the readers of the *Indiana Reporter* that

"**THERE is perfect order in heaven. God is the head and governor of the universe. He has committed to Christ his appointed work.** Christ, the head of all the heavenly hosts, directs their work. They go and come at his bidding. There is no dallying or delay, but when the command is given, as swift as lightning an angel speeds to accomplish his appointed work." (W. J. Stone, *Indiana Reporter*, March 28th 1906, 'Order and Cooperation')

In the *Signs of the Times* of November 14th 1906, an article was published called *The Great Salvation*. Its author, G. W. Leaser wrote

"This same Jesus, was not only born into our family, **but was "the Only-begotten of the Father," "the First-born of every creature,"** one of the morning stars whose voices made the arches of heaven ring with praises to God, long before the foundation of the world, even from "the days of eternity." He was the Creator of the heavens and the earth, **and in Him was vested the power to uphold all things.**" (G. W. Reaser, *Signs of the Times*, November 14th 1906, 'The Great Salvation')

Under the sub-heading of *Christ in God*, D. L. Wellman wrote in the 1906 Christmas issue of the *Caribbean Watchman* (this was under the sub-heading of *Christ in God*)

"**Christ is the only begotten Son of God consequently of right, his father's name is his by inheritance,** and so we read, "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." **As you bear the name of your earthly father so Jesus bears by right of inheritance the name of his Father.**

Thus it is that the Father addresses his son in Heb:8,9. **But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.** Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

In verse ten the Father calls his Son Lord and ascribes to him the work of the creation. He says, "And thou Lord, in the beginning hath laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands."

Thus has divinity definitely set forth the title that rightfully belongs to His Son as well as the high place he occupies in the universe. Christ is the Creator. (*D. E. Wellman, The Caribbean Watchman, December 1906, 'Our World Builder'*)

Repeatedly it was said, throughout the entire spectrum of SDA publications, that Christ is the Son of God, God and Creator.

In the *Signs of the Times* of February 20th 1907, a letter was published from a reader who asked (amongst other things)

"If those that believe on His name were begotten of God, then how is Jesus the "only-begotten of the Father"? (*Signs of the Times, February 20th 1907, 'Questions'*)

The answer was returned

"Christ was not begotten in just the way in which men are. He Himself declares. "I proceeded forth and came from God." John 8: 42. Just how this all is we do not know, but we do know this, that He was THE Son of God in a sense that no other was, because He was God; and yet just as truly are those who believe in Him begotten of God and become His children. 1 John 3: 1." (*Ibid*)

Here Christ is said to be "THE Son of God in a sense that no other was, because He was God". This is because He was begotten of God. Notice again it says we do not know how Christ was begotten.

In the *Michigan Herald* of July 17th 1907, there was published an article called *Synopsis of Faith of Seventh Day Adventists*. It was a sermon that had been preached by M. N. Campbell at the Battle Creek Tabernacle two months previously. Campbell became the President of a number of Conference, including Ohio, British Union, Eastern Canadian, and Canadian Union. He later became President of the North American Division. In his sermon, Campbell had said (paragraphs contiguous)

"In the first place we believe in a personal God who rules over the universe; whose beneficent will is the supreme law. We believe that God, as a personal being, occupies definite space; that He sits upon the throne of the universe, and that His orders are implicitly obeyed by the unfallen intelligences of other worlds.

We will take for our first scripture (and by the way this sermon this morning will be very largely composed of scripture reading) Cor. 8:6 "But 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." This text indicates that all things originated with the Father but were carried forward and completed by the Son. The throne of God is described in many texts of Scriptures." (*The Michigan Herald, July 17th 1907, Synopsis of Faith of Seventh Day Adventists., Sermon Delivered in the Tabernacle, May 18, 1907, by Elder M. N. Campbell.*)

Campbell later explained

"We believe also that the Lord Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, the Saviour of men, and under the Father the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Heb. 1;1-3

"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

In these texts Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God; the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He now sits upon the right hand of the throne of God. It is also made plain that He was made in the EXPRESS IMAGE Of his FATHER'S PERSON." (*Ibid*)

That last remark – that Christ was “made” in the express image of His Father’s person – is repeating what Ellen White wrote in 1895 (see page 66 above)

In an article called *Old-New Gospel*, its author wrote (paragraphs not contiguous)

“T H E relation which Christ, the eternal Son of God, sustains to the church as its, living Head was not established by arbitrary appointment, but is the outworking of the fundamental principles of the divine government. In the very nature of his being, as the only begotten of the Father, is found the reason for the place which he occupied in the universe, which was brought into existence through him.”

“So long as the position which belonged to the Son and which was inherent in the very nature of his being, was recognized, there was perfect harmony in the universe of God, and happiness reigned supreme.” (*Review and Herald, October 3rd 1907, ‘The Old-New Gospel’ ‘The Headship of Christ’*)

In 1908, in an article called *The First Place*, W. W. Prescott wrote the following

“THE place which the Son of God occupies in the administration of the divine government is thus stated: " He is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." This is not by arbitrary appointment. but the outgrowth of the very nature and being of the Son, and of his relationship to the eternal Father. As the Son was one with the Father, as he was the only begotten, and as he was thus able to enter into the counsels of his Father as no created being could possibly do, so he was necessarily the one through whom the Father made every revelation of himself. Christ was the beginning of his way, the mediator between the Father and all created things and all created beings. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." As it was in creation, so it was in revelation. " All things have been delivered unto me of my Father," said Jesus, " and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."" (*W. W. Prescott, Review and Herald, March 5th 1908, ‘The First Place’ see also The Present Truth March 26th 1908*)

Prescott said that Christ, because He was begotten of God, could enter into all the

counsels of God. Notice again the reference to Proverbs 8:22 (Christ was the beginning of God's way). This was an ongoing realisation amongst SDA's.

John Quinn, in the *Youth's Instructor*, explained to the SDA youth that

"The Creator, in infinite wisdom, in the eternal ages of the past, placed his only begotten Son at his right hand, declaring his equality with the Father. All created intelligences were to recognize this relationship, and honor one as they did the other. Harmony prevailed in the universe, until Lucifer, the anointed cherub, refused the Son the honor which the Father had bestowed on him. One third of the angels united with him, refusing to recognize the right of the Father and the Son. Disaster to Lucifer and his sympathizers was the result, and from that time to the present, the struggle has been over that great fundamental truth, the recognition of right, human and divine. When the Son was made flesh and tabernacled with us, had he announced himself as a prophet, little difficulty would have resulted, but when he demonstrated that he was the Son of God with power, God's equal, how quickly came the cry, "He has a devil." And why? Because they who made the awful charge were of their father the devil, who in the beginning had refused to grant to Jesus his right to sonship and equality with the Father. The controversy still rages over that same great truth." (John N. Quinn, *Youth's Instructor*, July 21st 1908, 'Truths of the Message Illustrated — No. 3 The Origin of Sin')

In the *Bible Training school*, I S. N. Haskell pointed out

"Lucifer indulged a desire for self-exaltation, and instead of seeking to enjoin upon all to give their affections and allegiance to their Creator, it was his endeavor to secure their loyalty to himself. He coveted the glory which the Infinite Father had invested in His Son. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation, and aspired to be equal with God. Only the Son of God was exalted above him, as one in power and authority with the Father. Christ shared His Father's counsels, while Lucifer did not thus enter into the purposes of God." (S. N. Haskell, *Bible Training School. October 1908, Battles of the Bible, Origin of Battles*)

In 1909 when referring to Lucifer, G. B. Thompson wrote

"He was the third from the head,—the Father and his Son alone being above him in position. But Lucifer, who is now the devil, did not like the idea of being the third from the top; he wanted to be first,—to be at the top, and because he was not first was clear evidence to his mind that there was a tyranny set up, and a despot on the throne of universal sovereignty. He pointed to the fact that God had placed his Son at the head of affairs in heaven as evidence that something was the matter. He did not believe in anybody's, being at the "head." Doubtless he might have viewed things differently, though, had he been placed at the head." (G. B. Thompson, *Columbia Union Visitor*, January 27th 1909, 'The Shibboleth Of Apostasy')

Take particular note here it is said that Lucifer was "third from the head", also that he "did not like the idea of being the third from the top". This shows it was not believed that the Holy Spirit was another person like the Father and the Son.

After quoting from *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 41, Thompson quoted Ellen White where she had written in the same book a few pages earlier

"The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor." (*Ibid*)

Thompson was then the Chairman of the Sabbath School Department. The same article was also published in the *Review and Herald* of May 18th 1916, also 3 months later in the *Northern Union Reaper* of August 29th. This was 18 years after *Desire of Ages* was published.

James Edson White, the son of Ellen and James White, published a book called *Past, Present, and Future*. This was also in 1909. On page 52 he wrote

"From a reading of John 1:1-3, 10, it will be seen that the world, with all it contains, was created by Christ (the Word), for "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." The angels, therefore, being created, are necessarily lower than Christ, their Creator. Christ is the only being begotten of the Father." (*James Edson White, Past, Present, and Future, page 52, Created beings', 1909*)

Later, after quoting Isaiah 14:13-14 (which tells us that Lucifer wanted to be like the Most High), James Edson White said

"Young's translation reads, "I am like the Most High."" (*Ibid*)

Edson then says,

"But Jehovah could not permit this. He Himself had established the order of heaven. No created being could be equal with God. The only begotten Son alone could occupy this position." (*Ibid*)

This is only the same as had always been taught by SDA's. As we noted above (see pages 64-68), Ellen White, Edson's mother, had only approval for this faith.

In the same year (1909), the readers of *The Present Truth* were urged to consider the true nature of Christ

"We cannot consider too earnestly and carefully the true nature of Christ. It seems so easy to most people to think of Him somewhat as we think of the angels, as beings of light and glory who have never fallen, whose home is in heaven, while our less fortunate lot is cast in a sinful world. Jesus is very much more than an angel; He is the Son of God, made like His Father, having power to create and sustain the universe. This infinitely powerful and divine Being has made purification of our sins; He is set down at the right hand of the throne, having become, as our Saviour and Advocate, so much better than the angels as His original inheritance was more than theirs. No angel can compare with the omnipotent One Who is our Representative and Advocate in the presence of God." (*The Present Truth, April 1st 1909, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews'*)

Here it is said that Christ was "made like His Father". This is in keeping where Ellen White had said that Christ was "made" in the express image of His Father's person (see page 66). This "original inheritance" was when He was begotten of God. After quoting Psalms 2:7, the author then writes

“The angels came into existence by an act of creation; Christ was begotten of His Father. We can, perhaps, appreciate something of the difference when we conceive of a man as making some object by the exercise of his strength and skill, and then of the same man begetting a son. The work of his hands may be made as he pleases; it may reveal more or less of his ability and character; it may be designed for honour or for some base purpose. But when a man begets a son he can only do it by imparting himself. He gives to his son all that he has to give, withholding nothing, and he greatly desires to impart to his son the fullest degree possible of vigour and health. And, when the son is born, he takes personal satisfaction and pleasure in equipping him in the highest degree for his career in life. No true father is content unless he has given to his son all that it is in his power to bestow upon him. So Christ, as the Son of God, received from His divine Father all that the Father's existence comprised. He was the express image of His Father's person, and Heir of all things that the Father possessed. All that a father could be to a son, that God was to His Son; all that a son could be to a father, that Christ was to Him. We cannot fix a time when the words: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee," first apply. When we go back to the very beginning of created things we find Christ endowed with infinite power and wisdom, able to lay the foundations of the universe and to speak worlds into existence at His will. Whether we think of the Father or of the Son, the words are equally true: "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Ps. xc. 2” (*Ibid*)

The entire emphasis here is on Christ, because He is a son, receiving everything that constitutes His Father (“when a man begets a son he can only do it by imparting himself”). Notice it says that Christ was “endowed with infinite power and wisdom”. This was now 11 years after the publication of *Desire of Ages*.

C. M. Snow, in an article where he describes death as a stranger in the universe, wrote about the fall of Lucifer

“Thus, to Lucifer, honored of heaven, standing by the very throne of God, there came the temptation to covet the honor bestowed upon the Son. He had allowed himself to dwell upon his own beauty and glory until that occupation had "corrupted" his wisdom. The fact that he was not called into the council was evidence to him of a biased judgment on the part of the Ruler of heaven.” (C. M. Snow, *Review and Herald*, April 8th 1909, ‘Our imperishable Inheritance’)

In that same year, Snow became Editor of the magazine *Liberty*. Later he was called to Australia as Editor of the *Australian Signs of the Times*, also *Life and Health*.

The next month, in the *Present Truth* (UK), an article spoke of the events of Bethlehem

“THE words of the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem tell a deep and wonderful truth: "Unto you is born" a Saviour. Luke ii. 11. Jesus is born of the human race. He is as much ours as any child that was ever born in all our history. God surrenders His only-begotten Son to us, and Heaven announces the finality of the gift. "Unto you," the angels tell us, is now born the One Who was the Father's only-begotten Son. He Who was God's is now ours. The prophet Isaiah had foretold this unspeakable gift: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Is. ix. 6. Yet, although Christ emptied Himself in order that He might become one with His human brethren, the Father sees to it that His gift is more than the mere external form and semblance of what had been His only-begotten Son. In giving Christ to us God makes Him the channel through

which flows to us all the fullness of the Godhead. " He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things 2 " Rom. viii. 32. So, by His union with His human brethren, Christ is not degraded, but they are exalted. As they become one with Him they are made partakers of the divine nature. So, through the giving up of His onlybegotten Son, the Father gains not only His own Son but an innumerable multitude of sons, all bearing the likeness of Christ." (*Present Truth (UK), May 20th 1909, 'Present Truth'*)

Two months later, in an article called *The Trinity*, it was explained

"IN the fourth and fifth centuries many absurd views were set forth respecting the Trinity—views that stood at variance with reason, logic, and Scripture. As these views were formulated into creeds, humanity had to shut its eyes and receive them as the dictates of God, though they were verily human and some of them even satanic. Mystery was heaped upon mystery, and the mind of man at last gave up the effort to reason out the dogmas of what claimed to be religion.

Satan was behind his work of mystification, just as he has been behind every other false idea of God. Where Satan cannot lead into absolute unbelief, he will endeavour to mystify so that the belief remaining may prove ineffectual." (*R. Hare, Union Conference Record, July 19th 1909, 'The Trinity'*)

Hare later commented

"This is indeed a divine trio, but the Christ of that Trinity was not a created being such as His angels—He was the "only begotten" of the Father, and He came to earth as the one with the Father from the " days of eternity." Micah 5:2 (margin)." (*Ibid*)

"Then let not the lips of man speak of Christ as a created being. He is one of the divine trio—the " only begotten Son " of the Father; and the doctrine that would make Him a created being is not of God." (*Ibid*)

In a sermon preached at the Fifth Biennial Session of the Atlantic Union Conference in 1909, W. W. Prescott is reported as saying

"Christ is the eternal Son. Why emphasize this? Because it is through the Son that eternal life is received. By fellowship with that Son, we have everlasting life. And so long as he exists, we exist. There is no self-existent life. It is through the sonship of Christ that " the gift of God" is bestowed. And from his sonship, ours is established. ...Deity. Christ is Deity. Heb. 1:1-8; John 1:1-14. He is not simply the Son of God, but he is God." (*W. W. Prescott, Sermon, North Atlantic Gleaner, November 26th 1909, Fifth Biennial Session of the Atlantic Union Conference*)

As we shall see later, Prescott had a leading role to play at a Bible Conference held at Takoma Park in 1919. This is where he gave a series of presentations on the person of Christ.

Period: 1910-1919

General publications:

In the March of 1910, H. C. Goodrich, then President of the West Caribbean Conference, spoke of how, in the beginning, God spoke this world into being. He began by saying

“THERE was a time when there was no earth. This world did not exist, and there were no stars. The sun did not shine, for there was none, neither was there any moon. The universe was only space, it was empty; and only God existed.

It is of this time that Moses wrote; and surely no one is better qualified than he, a man who had talked with God face to face, as a man talks with his friend; one whom the Lord called by name, when He talked with him. Ex. 33:11, 12. And this is what Moses said: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth or the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." Ps. 90: 2.

Then Christ was born, "The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1: 14. He is before all things. Col. 1: 17. John says "In Him was life." John. 1:4. And Jesus says of Himself, "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to' the Son to have life in Himself." John 5: 26. Therefore it is as plain as words can make it, that with God the Father the beginning of life, the source of all is existence and power.

It is also just as plain that the Father associated His Son with Him in the kingdom that was to be established, and made Him equal to Himself in that kingdom, "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom . . . And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands." Heb. 1: 8, 10" (*H. C. Goodrich, The Caribbean Watchman, March 1910, 'God the Creator'*)

Notice that Goodrich equates the word "begotten" with being "born".

A few months later, in an article called *The Pre-existence of Christ*, Mrs Sophia Parker explained that some people, even those of the Christian ministry, did not believe that Christ had a life prior to being born in heaven. She then wrote the following

"John 17:3, 4 places the existence of Jesus Christ before this world in such plain clear words that no room is left for doubt, while Prov. 8:22-30 positively substantiates what is said in John. More than that, Prov. 8:30 pictures the sweet companionship that exists between Christ and his Father before the worlds were." (*Mrs. Sophia V. Parker, The Southwestern Union Record, June 14th 1910, 'The Pre-existence of Christ'*)

Notice again that the "wisdom" of Proverbs chapter 8 is said to be referring to Christ. These verses are also said to substantiate (confirm) those things that John wrote in his Gospel. This was that Christ, in His pre-existence, is truly the Son of God. This belief concerning the wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8 referring to Christ was an ongoing belief within Seventh-day Adventism. Sophia Parker later wrote (paragraphs not contiguous)

"Jesus Christ never was a created being but was the Father's own Son. John 3:16. There were many created sons, but only one begotten Son, and that Son, in Matt. 1:18-25 was called Emmanuel, the interpretation of which is "God with us." (*Ibid*)

"And who knows how near the Father's heart was broken when the first lamb expired before the gates of Eden, for he saw in the death of that lamb the death of his lamb—his mighty Son, in whom his great heart of love took such ,delight. The sacrifice on the part of the Father was like emptying heaven itself to give up his own Son as an offering for a race of rebels." (*Ibid*)

In the *Columbia Union Visitor* in 1910, O. J. Gibson wrote about the harmony that once existed in the universe.

“But the time came when this heavenly harmony was broken. One who was honored high above the heavenly host was not content with his lot. Though recognized by God as one “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty,” he aspired to be like the Most High. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated, **for there was one, the Son of God, whose position was more exalted**, who had been one with the Father in the work of creation and had shared the Father's counsels. **And this exaltation of the Son** he looked at as an injustice, until he ventured to covet the honors of his Maker.” (O. J. Gibson, *Columbia Union Visitor*, October 5th 1910, ‘*The Origin of Sin and its Final Extermination*’)

Notice the reference to the “exaltation” of Christ. This too was an ongoing theme amongst SDA's.

In 1911, in the *Signs of the times*. R. A. Underwood wrote

“**To Christ was delegated, by the Father, almighty, creative, life-giving, lawmaking power and authority.** It is by Him and through Him that all things were created and are upheld.” (R. A. Underwood, *Signs of the Times*, January 10th 1911, ‘*Studies on the Sabbath*’)

In 1911, also in 1917, O. A. Johnson, an instructor in Bible History at Walla Walla College, issued revised versions of his much-appreciated book *Bible Doctrines*. In section 10, namely, *Divinity of Christ*, he wrote

“**1. Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father.** John 1: 14; 3:16, 18

2. 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.**

3. The Father calls his Son "God," and therefore he must be God. Heb. 1:8-10.” (O. A. Johnson, *Bible Doctrines*, page 27, Lesson 10, ‘*Divinity of Christ*’)

We can see from this that down through the years, regarding Christ, the beliefs of SDA's had not changed one iota.

In the January of 1911, J. S. James, as Associate Editor of the *Oriental Watchman*, also an officer of the Indian Union Mission and Superintendent of the South Indian mission, wrote of Christ's ‘natal day’

“The beloved disciple in writing his gospel, speaks of Christ as the word which was “in the beginning.” John 1:1. This takes our minds back to the time when the heavens and earth were brought into existence. But even there, we have not reached “the beginning” of which John speaks. **Standing at that point, the beginning of the material world, we may still go back in our imaginations to any length of time which we are capable of comprehending, and still we have not reached the natal day of God's Son, the Christ.**” (J. S. James, *The Oriental Watchman*, January 1911, ‘*What think Ye of Christ?*’)

This “natal day” would be referring to when Christ, in eternity, was begotten of God. Like other early SDA’s, he is saying that when Christ was begotten is impossible to ascertain.

After quoting Proverbs 8:22-31 and Psalm 90:2 as pertaining to Christ, the author then quotes Isaiah 9:6 and comments

“Here the name “God” is applied to the Son, and also the “everlasting Father.” The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Hebrews quoting from the forty-fifth Psalm, verse six, makes use of exactly the same expression.” (*Ibid*)

James then wrote under the sub-heading of *Old Testament Writers*

“It is in this light that. Christ is understood and portrayed by all the Old Testament writers, not a Christ of a coming age; but a Christ then present; not a Christ whose beginning dated from his birth in human form amid the humble surroundings of a Judean stable, but one who was everlasting, all-powerful, and co-existent with the Father; not a son merely of Joseph the carpenter, but the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (*Ibid*)

The next month, referring to Genesis chapter one, James made this interesting observation (this was under the sub-heading of *Active Agent*)

“In this chapter the word God occurs thirty-two times; but in only one instance, verse 26, does it have direct reference to God the Father. All have direct reference to the work of the active agent, and that agent as we shall see is Christ. We would not convey the impression that this work was performed independent of God the Father; both Father and Son work together in all things. A unity exists between them which defies all earthly comparison.” (*J. S. James, The Oriental Watchman, February 1911, ‘In all things ... The Pre-eminence’*)

James then explained (under the sub-heading *The Word Was Christ*)

“The first chapter of John's gospel is a divine commentary on the first chapter of Genesis. He tells us the “Word” was in the beginning with God, and then further says this “Word” bore the name of God. In the following verses he states the relation existing between this “Word” and all created things and tells us that finally “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.” John 1:14. We readily understand this to be Jesus Christ.” (*Ibid*)

The same author then explains why the Son bears the same name as the Father (God)

“A son bears the same name as his father. Jesus Christ is “the only begotten of the Father” and would therefore very naturally bear his Father's name. Being the “only begotten,” no other creature in all the universe save Jesus Christ can rightly be called by such a name. We get our names by inheritance. Jesus Christ came by the name of God in like manner, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Heb. 1:14. The angels were called by an inferior name because of their relation to the Father. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” Heb. 1: 8.” (*Ibid*)

As did many of the early SDA's, James says that Christ received His name "by inheritance". Continuing his thoughts on Genesis chapter one he wrote

"When we read the record of Genesis one, we read of the work of Jesus Christ. When we read the expression "And God said, let there be," etc., we know it to be the living word which John says was manifested in the flesh and dwelt among us. All Things Made by Him The work of Christ, the Word, is preeminent in the work of creation. To him alone was given the exalted privilege of executing all its details. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Col. 1:19." (*Ibid*)

This same article was published again 16 years later in *The Oriental Watchman* of July 1927. This was almost 30 years after the publication of *Desire of Ages*.

"From the time that He who afterward became Jesus of Nazareth left His position in the Godhead as the Creator of the heaven and earth, and for the sake of His fallen creatures risked all to save them, the universe had been in suspense. In the beginning He was one with the Father in supernal glory (John 17:5), "the very image of His [the Father's] substance" (Heb. 1:3); but His position of equality, His claim to eternal Sonship, had been disputed by that being who stood next to Him, the one created being above all others who in himself sealed up the sum of bestowed wisdom and beauty (Eze. 28:12), Lucifer, the son of the morning (Isa. 14:12). He not only disputed the position of the Word of God, but he led others to do the same." (*M. C. Wilcox, Signs of the Times, June 6th 1911, 'Revelation of Jesus Christ, xviii The Son of God'*)

Wilcox refers to the risk that was taken, in the plan of redemption, concerning Christ. This was another ongoing theme in early Seventh-day Adventism. Notice too the remarks concerning Christ's "eternal Sonship". Milton Wilcox was then editor of the *Signs of the Times*.

Referring to Christ's temptation in the wilderness, it said in an article in *The Present Truth* in 1911

"The Master never once shrunk from rendering obedience to the will of God in any point whatsoever, and because He thus fulfilled all righteousness the blessing of heaven was pronounced upon Him in those soul thrilling words: " This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." This divine declaration placed the seal of God's approval upon the ministry of his Son and acknowledged Him to be the promised Messiah." (*The Present Truth, August 24th 1911, 'Lessons from the Great Temptation'*)

The article later said

"If the devil can succeed in getting men to doubt the Word of God, he knows that sooner or later his victims will make complete shipwreck of faith. The doubt insinuated by the enemy as to the sonship of Christ was followed by the subtle challenge: " Command that these stones be made bread."

The fact that this challenge had a semblance of reason and wisdom only added to its deep cunning and subtlety. There was Christ, a Man of like nature with ourselves, on the verge of death by starvation, and yet at the same time, through His close touch with heaven, possessing the power to satisfy His hunger. But vital principles were at stake. For Christ to have used that power on such an occasion would have meant distrust in His Father's love, and entertaining the doubt cast upon His divine sonship."

(Ibid)

Again this refers to Satan's challenge to Christ's "divine sonship". Christ's Sonship to God was under constant attack from Satan. This was in Christ's pre-existence, and during the incarnation.

In an article called *The Preexistence of Christ*, H. Shultz explained that Christ was "the Lord, who led Israel through the wilderness". He also quoted Jesus as saying, "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8: 58). He then explained that Christ was Creator, also that all things had come into existence through Him.

"We may go still farther back in the history of the world and find the blessed Lord existing before the world was. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Heb.:I, 2. This statement of the apostle is in perfect harmony with the statement in Genesis in which the words of the Father are, " Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Gen. 1:26. This language the Father addressed to the Son, by whom also he made the worlds." Heb. 1: 2. At the creation of the world, Christ was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person; and it is he that upholds all things by the word of his power. Heb. I: 2, 3." (H. Schultz, *Review and Herald*, November 21st 1912, 'The Preexistence of Christ')

After showing from Scripture that all things exist through Christ, Schultz makes this comment

"Surely words could not make it more plain that Jesus Christ existed with the Father long before our little world was created, and that he had a glory with the Father before this world existed, which is so far beyond our human comprehension that he desires his faithful followers to see it. John 17: 5-24. This same Christ, the only begotten of the Father, the second person in the Godhead, who made all things, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, is to be honored even as we honor the Father. John 5:23. They who honor not the Son do not honor the Father; worship is due the Father and the Son alike. Therefore to worship the Father and not the Son is to disobey God, and hence is no worship at all; for we are commanded to worship the Lord, even the Son of God. Ps. 45: 6-is, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Ps. 95: 6. The Lord our Maker is Christ, the Son of God." (Ibid')

In the question and answer section of *The Present Truth* of January 23rd 1913, this very interesting question was asked

"Is it correct to use the term ' eternal Son ' of Christ, seeing that He was the first work of creation? " (*The Present Truth*, January 23rd 1913, 'The Eternal Son')

The answer was returned (I have quoted the entire answer here because it is very thought provoking)

"Jesus, the Son of God, cannot be spoken of as the first work of creation. He speaks of Himself as the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. iii. 14), but He is the beginning in the sense that by Him are all things. 1 Cor. viii. 6. "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Col. i. 17. All the existences that people the universe, whether

visible or invisible to us, even though they may be themselves high in rank and glory, were created by Christ. Col. i. 16. "All things were Made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." John i. 3, R.V.

It is impossible for our minds to take in the thought of eternity. We can understand that eternity of duration is necessarily the measure of God's existence, but one who has no beginning is quite beyond our thought or imagination. For eternity goes as far back into the past as it goes forward into the future. Its beginning is just as remote as its end. When we have thought our way back to the time when there was no creation, when God had not yet made the heaven to be His dwelling-place, there were then as many years of eternity already past as there are years to run in the ceaseless ages yet to be. And far back of any beginning that our minds can comprehend, Jesus was With His Father, the only-begotten Son. "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John i. 1.

Indeed, we may try to go back even farther. When we have thought of God and Christ as existing in solitary glory, ages before any work of creation was begun, and, thinking back into that darkness, have tried to imagine God without a Son, although we cannot possibly conceive the beginning of an eternity that had no beginning, we should yet find Christ at the very outset, one with His Father: "Jehovah possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning." Prov. viii. 22, 23. So when we go back to the beginning that never began, the beginning of the Father's career, we find Christ there. "Bethlehem . . . out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel: whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Micah v. 2.

We may call Christ the "eternal Son," or we may do better and confine ourselves to the language of the Scripture, but when we use the terms that Inspiration uses to name the divine attributes, we do not understand what we are saying. There are some mysteries which the most powerful mind must confess itself unable to grasp. Take the thought of infinity of space. We can see that space must be without limit, but we cannot conceive what infinite extension of the universe means. If there were as many solar systems as there are visible stars in the heavens, the explorer travelling with the speed of light would at length arrive at the boundary line that enclosed it all, but when he had travelled that inconceivable distance, he would be only at the beginning of infinite space. There would be far more of space in front of him than he had yet traversed.

As long as space and eternity baffle our minds, we cannot expect to understand the being of the Creator, to Whom space and eternity belong. We know that it is the good pleasure of the Father, of Whom are all things, that in His Son, by Whom are all things, should all fullness dwell, that in all things He might have the preeminence (Col. i. 18, 19), and, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father. John v. 23. It becomes us, therefore, to regard Christ as worthy, of all possible honour and praise and glory. It is only when we recognize the divine majesty of the Son of God that we Understand what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us in giving His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but become partaker of His own eternal life." (*Ibid*)

Eternity is something we cannot fully understand. In our publications, this was often emphasised. Notice that Christ is again recognised as the wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8.

In the *Question and Answer* section of *The Present Truth* in the March of 1913, the question

was asked

"The Lord Jesus came into this world born of a woman. Did He then lose His identity as Jesus Christ Who was the beginning of the creation of God; and now that He is in heaven, is He as He was before He came as a child? Kindly explain and I will thank you." (*Question and Bible Answers, The Present Truth, March 6th 1913, 'Human Yet Divine'*)

The answer was given (paragraphs not contiguous)

"No. Jesus did not lose His identity as the only-begotten of the Father. The Word became flesh (John i.14), but He Who was born in Bethlehem of Judea was the same whose goings forth were from the days of eternity. Micah v. 2. ...As a little babe on His mother's knee there was nothing to indicate that He was the One by Whom the worlds were made."

"The death on Calvary showed Him to be a man among men, made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but at the same time it demonstrated Him to be truly God. The identical Christ that had once visibly shared the glory of the Father had become visibly partaker of flesh and blood! Jesus was equally Son of God and Son of man... He, by virtue of His earthly victory, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made, although a man, just as much better than the angels as originally, by birthright, He had inherited "a more excellent name than they." Heb. i. 4. As we contemplate' by faith the one member of our human race Who has, on our behalf, entered as forerunner into the presence of God, we know Him to be the identical Son by Whom God made the worlds, Who also healed the sick and taught the ignorant on earth, and Who now ministers in the heavenly sanctuary as our Mediator, " the one Mediator between God and men, Himself man."

Jesus has passed through all the vicissitudes of humanity, through the experience of birth and death, and thus He Who was solely divine has become God and man in one; but through it all His personality remains the same." (*Ibid*)

Here it was said that the Son is higher than the angels "as originally, by birthright". This is once again referring to Christ being begotten of God.

In an article called *Thoughts on Peter* where Peter had referred to "damnable heresies" being taught (see. 2 Peter 1:7-3), the author explains the lengths that these "false teachers" will go to deceive people.

"And to what lengths do these false teachers go? Even to "denying the Lord that bought them;" or, in the words of the Apostle Jude, "turning the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." It is this denial of the divine sonship of Christ that is the climax of all heresy in the church. No longer does Christendom as a whole acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth, is the exalted Son of God....Thus it is that many are "giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils," and at the same time deceiving themselves into believing that their changed attitude towards the truth is but a correct restatement of its principles. And the who denounce this false teaching as "damnable heresies " are regarded as oldfashioned, narrow-minded, and bigoted. The judgment alone will reveal how deserving of " swift destruction" are these false teachers and their deluded followers." (*The Present Truth, March 13th 1913, 'Thoughts from Peter'*)

Notice what is said to be the “the climax of all heresy in the church”. It is the “denial of the divine sonship of Christ”.

John Quinn wrote in 1913

“The Jews had but little controversy with Christ **except on the question of His deity and His lordship over the Sabbath**, the seventh-day of the week. With them He blasphemed when He declared His equality with God. **His persistence in claiming [sic] divine Sonship caused His death.**” (John N. Quinn, *The Oriental Watchman*, May 1913, ‘*The Darkness of Millennial Dawn*’)

The latter is very true (see John 19:7). The Jews said that Jesus, because He claimed to be the Son of God (that God was His father), was a blasphemer (John 10:33, 36)

In the *Youth’s Instructor*, also in the adult *Sabbath School quarterly*, when commenting on the *Sabbath School* lesson study for October 4th 1913 (this was with reference to the words “declared to be” in Romans 1:4), it was 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. When on earth he was divinity incarnate in humanity, clothed with its weaknesses. To the unbeliever he was but a man. Selfish hearts could not read his motives; sin-blinded souls could not see his divinity of character.” (*Youth’s Instructor*, September 23rd 1913, ‘*The Sabbath School*’, see also adult *SS quarterly*, 4th Quarter 1913, page 6)

In 1914, in an article called *The All-Surviving Word*, the author spoke of how the Word of God brought the universe into existence. He followed this up by saying

“Christ, the Son of God, is the central figure of that Word. He is the one and only channel through which God communicates His thoughts and purposes to man. He alone is the depositary of heaven’s secrets regarding the creation and redemption of this earth, and its inhabitants. **What the rays are to the sun, so is Christ to His Father—the shining forth of His glory.**”

The divine sonship of Christ was demonstrated beyond all question during His life on this earth nearly two thousand years ago. His wisdom and His power were unanswerable. (*The Present Truth*, April 23rd 1914, ‘*The All-Surviving Word*’)

In the same year (1914), in an article called *Our Father* (this was under the sub-heading *In Him was the life*), J. O. Corliss, a contributing editor of the *Signs of the Times*, also a long-time serving evangelist and missionary, wrote the following (paragraphs not continuous)

“A single expression by the evangelist tells just how the Saviour’s person actually revealed the Father: “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” John 1:4. That tells the story. **The very life of God was in the Son**, and that life was the light from heaven shining through the Son to give the knowledge of the glory of God. Personal life was the light needed then as now, to penetrate moral darkness, and reveal the power of a Father’s love. Not only was a personal life necessary to reveal God, but the revelation of a loving Father could not be made **but through the life of an only-begotten Son.**”

“This fulness was proclaimed in that wondrous declaration to Nicodemus, “God so

loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What a depth of meaning is couched in this statement! Christ was God's "only-begotten." He possessed every element of God's nature to the highest possible degree, especially that of love. Coming to earth in the flesh, that essential point could not fail to shine with its wonted luster in the sight of fallen humanity. To believe in Him as the actual masterpiece of God's fatherhood is to receive from Him a knowledge of God, which is the passport to life eternal." (J. O. Corliss, *Signs of the Times*, June 23rd 1914, 'Our Father')

This was in 1914 when Ellen White was still alive. The pre-existent divine Sonship of Christ was still then the preponderant belief of SDA's.

In the October of the same year (1914), it was highlighted again that the primacy of Satan's attacks on Christ was concerning His Sonship to God

"His [Satan's] first attempt was to destroy the Child that was born. To accomplish this, he inaugurated a wholesale slaughter of innocent children. But the manner of his frustration is familiar to all who have read the simple and pitiful story.

Then the enemy sought to tempt the Son of God and lead Him into sin. Notice his artful and wicked tactics. More than once he insinuates a doubt as to our Lord's relationship to Him with whom He had been from eternal ages,—"If Thou be the Son of God." (F. M. Burg, *Signs of the Times*, October 6th 1914, 'The Kingdom of God Is Preached')

In a 1915 edition of *The Present Truth*, in the section *Questions & Bible Answers*, a reader asked

"Please reconcile these passages: God sent His only begotten Son into the world' (1 John iv. 9); and 'The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord' (Job i 6); also 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair.'" (*The Present Truth*, August 26th 1915, 'Questions & Bible Answers, 'The Sons of God')

The answer was given

"THE texts quoted show that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a unique sense. Human beings are sons of God first by creation, and then by adoption, but Jesus is the Son of God by birth, "having become by so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they." Heb. i. 4, R.V." (*Ibid*)

This was still the standard belief of SDA's at that time (1915 – the year that Ellen White died). It was that Christ had inherited all that He is, also all that He has, from God. This was His inheritance as Son. This is why He was rightly called God. It was later commented

"The angels are spoken of as sons of God. Job xxxviii. 7. Adam was made a son of God. Luke iii. 38. All Christians bear the same name. 1 John iii. 2. We can all look up to God and call Him "Our Father." Yet although angels and men are sons of God they have not inherited divinity: they rank not with their Creator, but are on a lower level as His creatures: they are not gods by nature. Jesus, on the contrary, shares all the attributes of Deity with His Father: " When He again bringeth in the firstborn into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. i. 6. No distinction is to be made between the Father and His Son Jesus Christ in respect of worship. All

are to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. John v. 23. So we conclude that Christ, as the only begotten Son of God, differs in no wise from the Father. One is to be worshipped and adored as much as the other.

Into the subject of the relation existing between God and His only-begotten Son it is impossible for created minds to enter. It is as easy for us to comprehend God as it would be for one of the lower animals to appreciate fully the nature of a human being." (*Ibid*)

In the *Youth's Instructor*, just 2 months after the death of Ellen White, Carlyle Haynes, then evangelist for the South Eastern Union, explained

"While Lucifer in heaven occupied a highly exalted station, there were beings who were far above him. These were the Father and the Son. The angels worshiped the Father as creator of all things, but the Son was coequal with the Father in creation, and the Father had said, " Let all the angels of God worship him " (Heb. 1: 6), and therefore the Son also received the worship of the heavenly host, and, with the rest, the worship of Lucifer. (Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Youth's Instructor*, September 14th 1915, 'The Great War')

Notice there is no mention of the Holy Spirit as being above Lucifer. This article was published again in the *Signs of the Times* June 18th 1918 (*The Apostasy of Satan*), see also *The Oriental Watchman* 1929 (*Other Worlds are Inhabited*).

The next month, this time in the *Review and Herald*, Satan's attacks on the Sonship of Christ was again highlighted

"LUCIFER questioned the Son's ability to rule the universe in the manner most beneficial to all his creatures. He claimed that he was better qualified than the Son to stand at the head of God's government, next to the Most High. He declared, that because he was his Son, God was partial toward Jesus, and was placing him in the position which rightfully belonged to Lucifer. Therefore he would not submit to the Son's government, but would speedily prove to God that he had made a mistake in making the Son ruler in place of Lucifer." (W. F. Caldwell, *Review and Herald*, October 7th 1915, 'God Is Not Partial; He Treats All Alike')

Caldwell later commented

"There are just two ruling powers, the Son of God, and Lucifer, who is also called that old serpent, the devil, and Satan. The Son is God's anointed. Lucifer is the rebel against his government." (*Ibid*)

"From being the bond-servant of the Adversary man was given the power to become the son of God, a mighty transition indeed. How could this be accomplished when the Word declares that Christ is the only begotten Son of God. It must be by adoption." (J. D. Montgomery, *Columbian Union Visitor*, April 29th 1916, 'The Science of Salvation – No. 4')

In an article called *Slipping back to Heathenism*, George Teasdale wrote in 1916

"Faith must be based upon the Word of God, and not upon miracles; but rather miracles come as the result of faith. Of Christ it is recorded that in His own city of

Nazareth, " He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." **The Hebrew Scriptures were His credentials that He was the Son of God**, and the evidential value of the miracles which He performed depended solely upon their relation to predictions contained in the Old Testament." (George Teasdale, *Signs of the Times*, May 1st 1916, 'Slipping back to Heathenism')

In an article previously published in 1909 (see page 82 above), G. B. Thompson said of Satan

"He pointed to the fact that God had placed his Son at the head of affairs in heaven as evidence that something was the matter." (G. B. Thompson, *Review and Herald*, May 18th 1916, 'The Shibboleth Of Apostasy')

Thompson also quoted Ellen White where she had written on page 37 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*

"The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor." (*Ibid*)

This article was also published in the *Northern Union Reaper* of August 29th of the same year. This was now 18 years after the publication of the *Desire of Ages*.

Speaking of Satan in Heaven, G. B. Thompson, as Associate Editor of the *Review and Herald*, explained in 1916

"He coveted the highest place in heaven. The Son of God having been assigned to this position by the Father, Lucifer instilled in the minds of the angels the idea that a tyranny had been enthroned, and in order to be free, they must contend for their rights, and oppose the organization of heaven.' Satan would have had no contention about leadership had he been placed at the head. (G. B. Thompson, *Review and Herald*, September 28th 1916, *Apostasy and Rebellion in the Church*)

This assigning of the Son of God is in keeping with the begotten concept.

In the *Signs of the Times* of November 27th 1916, an article was published called *The Deity of Christ*. It had also been written by George Teasdale. He began his article with these words

"When Christ was persecuted by the Jews because He said "that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God," He replied, "There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of Me is true." (George Teasdale, *Signs of the Times*, November 27th 1916, 'The Deity of Christ')

After referring to John the Baptist's testimony concerning Christ, also to Christ saying that He had a "greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me", he wrote

"John's testimony they would not receive; the Father's they could not receive. But the works of Christ were unimpeachable evidence. They could not be gainsaid, and the Jews were left without excuse." (*Ibid*)

Teasdale said later in his article

"The Scriptures were His credentials that He was the Son of God. If He is the Son of God, then He is absolutely divine, and also absolutely human; not, as some teach, half God and half man. With this agree also the words of the Father as recorded in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews:— "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." The divinity of the Son is here expressly stated." (*Ibid*)

The author went on to explain

"When the Father addresses His Son as God, all controversy on the point should be ended. That word would make Him God, even if He were not God before. Then in order that no mistake may be made concerning their relative positions, the Father in the following verse, says, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Also in another place the same principle is plainly stated: " When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." The Son, we are told, is " better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. He is the Father's begotten Son; they are not. "And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." The position of Christ can thus be summarily stated: In the universe He occupies the place next to the Father, with the title of God. He is subject to the Father, but above the angels, who are commanded to worship Him." (*Ibid*)

Again the reader's thoughts are returned to Christ's inheritance as the only-begotten of God.

In 1917, in *The Bible Training School*, which was a journal published to encourage and enhance home Bible studies, it said under the section *Bible Readers' Class*

"Heb. 1:3. Christ was made in the express image of the Father's person." (*Bible Training School, April 1917, 'The Word of God'*)

This, in 1917, was still the standard belief of SDA's.

In the next month's issue of the *Review and Herald*, an article was published called *Christ and the Sabbath*. Its author was William H. Branson. He later became the General Conference President. Branson began his article by explaining

"Christ Existed Before the World was Made

Christ was "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." Col. 1: 15. Paul declares that he was " the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Heb. 1:3. God bestowed upon his Son all the glory which 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 which should come to the Father through the things which he should create." (*W. H. Branson, Review and Herald, May 10th 1917, 'Christ and the Sabbath'*)

Again we see it said that "all the glory" that Christ possessed had been "bestowed" upon Him by the Father.

After explaining that Christ is the wisdom spoken of in Proverbs chapter 8 (verses 22-30 quoted), Branson went on to say (under the subtitle *Christ Created the World*)

“Not only was Christ with the Father when the worlds and the universe were created, but he was the Father's active agent in bringing all things into being” (*Ibid*)

Branson also went on to show from Scripture that Christ was God

"But unto the Son he [God] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Heb. 1: 8-12. "In the beginning was the Word [Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." John 1: 1-3.

“Thus we see that Christ, the Son of God, became the Creator of the heavens and the earth. " Without him was not anything made that was made.” (*Ibid*)

After explaining how Christ made our world, including the seventh-day Sabbath, Branson wrote

“God the Father appointed Christ as his agent, through whom he would bring about the redemption of the race. The work of carrying out the plan of redemption was intrusted to him. God the Father has never revealed himself to man at any time. He has always revealed himself through Christ his Son. " No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:18.” (*Ibid*)

Have you noticed how, in all the articles etc that we have read above, it is always the Father who has the pre-eminence? This is the same as in Scripture. Branson's article was also published in *The Present Truth* of December 25th 1919.

In the *Sabbath School* quarterly for the 3rd quarter of 1917, the comment was made

“We may allow our thoughts to go back to that revealed "beginning," when only the self-existent Father and His only-begotten Son were in existence.” (*SS lesson quarterly, 3rd quarter 1917, Topical Studies, page 4, lesson 1 for July 7th 1917, 'Foundation Principles of the Gospel'*)

Notice it says here not just 'beginning' but “revealed beginning”. In other words, the 'beginning' spoken of by John (John 1:1) was said not to be referring to a point when God began (God does not have a beginning), but from the point of the revelation of God (from when God expressed Himself). Note again there was no mention of the Holy Spirit.

In the Church Officer's Gazette of October the same year (1917), there was an article written about Christ that spoke of (a) the power endowed on Him, and (b) the risk that was taken concerning His eternal existence. In this article it said

"Lucifer denied God's right to withhold anything from him. In "The Great Controversy," page 494, we read: "Coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon his Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield." Lucifer stood next to Christ in glory and, power, but he failed to appreciate the great gifts he had received. He coveted the creative power bestowed upon Christ, and denied the right of the Father to withhold from him the one great gift!" (*The Church Officer's Gazette*, October 1917, 'The Principle Underlying the Tithing System')

Again and again, in SDA periodicals and books etc., it was said that Christ had all things bestowed on Him by His Father. This article later spoke of the risk that was taken

"At an infinite cost the Son of God redeemed man and his lost possession from the hand of the enemy. This not only took the life of Christ, but it imperiled his eternal interests. Had he failed, as was possible, he would have perished. At this cost he rescued what was lost, and it is now all his. Says Paul: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price." 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. And Peter tells us that the price was the precious blood of Christ, as, of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1: 18, 19." (*Ibid*)

As explained in Part 1 of this study (see pages 24-35), this risk belief concerning Christ, in trinitarianism, is impossible. It was something though, up to the 1950's, that was often spoken about in our various publications (see pages 44-49 of Part 1 of this study).

So what was *The Church Officer's Gazette*?

In its very first publication in 1914 it was explained

"THE General and North American Division Conference Committees have asked the Review and Herald Publishing Association to publish monthly a sixteen-page periodical, the size of the Youth's Instructor, to be known as the CHURCH OFFICERS' GAZETTE. The departments and officers of the North American Division will supply the reading matter.

The purpose in publishing the GAZETTE is to furnish a medium for communicating the plans, policies, and instruction of the North American Division Committee to the church officers; to publish to local officers the lessons and instruction of the secretaries of the Missionary Volunteer and the Home Missionary Departments; to place in the hands of local officers such data and special information as will be helpful to them in building up their work; and to afford a means of communicating with church officers otherwise than by circular letters.

At its late council, the North American Division Conference voted that a church officers' manual be prepared, containing instruction to all church officers covering their respective duties and responsibilities. It is thought that this instruction can also be published to better advantage in the GAZETTE than in book or pamphlet form." (*L. H. Evans, The Church Officer's Gazette, January 1st 1914, 'Forward'*)

In *The Lifeboat* magazine, in 1918, there was an article written by J. G. Lamson. He was the founder and first principal of Cedar Lake Academy (1898). In this article he said that Jesus was born twice.

“Jesus was born twice. He was the only begotten of the Father. Isn't that true? And then he came and was born on this earth. Isn't that true? Jesus was born twice and every soul that gets into the kingdom will have to be born twice. Isn't that so? Did not Jesus say it? "Verily, except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God." There must be the second birth before we can possibly be saved.” (J. G. Lamson, *The Lifeboat*, March 1918, ‘*The New Birth*’, a sermon preached by J. G. Lamson based upon John 1:14 at Hinsdale Sanitarium, December 27, 1917)

A. S. Maxwell (1896-1970), the Assistant Editor of the *Present Truth* (UK), later to become editor (a post he held for 16 years), wrote in this periodical in 1919

“In the heart of this beautiful creature sin began its terrible career. Here the first selfish thought of pride was cherished, the evil seed that has borne such a frightful harvest. That sinful thought led Lucifer on from one wickedness to another. He even became jealous of the power given by the Eternal Father to His only-begotten Son, and he said: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: . . . I will be like the Most High." Isa. xiv, 13, 14. He forgot that he was the creature and Christ the Creator.” (A. S. Maxwell, *Present Truth* (UK), February 6th 1919, ‘*Christ the Creator*’)

Here it is said that Lucifer was jealous of the power that God had given to Christ.

It would be far too much to write of Maxwell’s achievements working for the SDA Church, but many will remember “Uncle Arthur” for his *Bedtime Stories* and his 10-volume *The Bible Story*. He is said to have written 112 books.

M. C. Wilcox, as editor of the *Signs of the Times*, wrote the following in 1919

“In that universal dominion, there is one supreme Ruler, the living, eternal, self-existent Jehovah.

There is but one primal law, that which reflects His own character, the law of love, summarized in largely negative form for sinners in the Decalogue.

There is but one Mediator between throne and subjects, the Creator of all under God, His eternal Son.

There is but one power, one life, pervading the universe, making Father and Son everywhere present, the Holy Spirit.” (M. C. Wilcox, *Signs of the Times*, July 22nd 1919, ‘*Thy Kingdom Come*’)

The 1919 Bible Conference

At Takoma Park in the summer of 1919, which was four years after the death of Ellen White, the church held a Bible conference and a teacher’s meeting. At the teachers meeting, the writings of Ellen White were discussed.

This Bible conference could never be described as ordinary. In fact, it has been referred to as a secret Bible Council. One reason is because it was not open to everyone - not even to the majority of SDA ministers. This was a very exclusive meeting. Only those who had been invited were allowed to attend.

Another reason for calling this conference secret was that as it drew to its close, the delegates decided that their discussions, faithfully recorded by stenographers, should not

be made common knowledge, not even to the ministry in general. So it was that until Dr. Donald Yost discovered them in 1974, these records were confined to the dusty archives of the SDA Church. This was 55 years after the conference had taken place.

In the morning sessions, W. W. Prescott (1855-1944), a leading minister and administrator in the SDA Church, gave a presentation on *The Person of Christ* - which later in the day would be openly discussed amongst the delegates. These were very lively debates, with some saying that the view of Christ, held by us as a denomination throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry, was not Biblical. Others maintained it was Biblical. This division of thought remained the same throughout the conference.

Prescott's presentations caused a great deal of dispute amongst the delegates. This was even to the extent that at one point, because the discussions became so heated, he did not wish to continue with them. It is evident that there were some very strong feelings at this conference.

Prescott had held many positions of high authority. These were such as the presidencies of the Battle Creek School, as well as the Union and Walla Walla Colleges. In one particular year, he was president of all three whilst at another time he was vice-president of the General Conference, also editor of the *Review and Herald*. As we have seen from the above, he did at one time agree with his fellow SDA's as to what they were teaching about Christ.

It was Tuesday July 1st when the chairman, A. G. Daniells, opened the Bible conference. Much could be said here regarding his initial address but because space is limited, we will confine our remarks to those things he said that are relevant to our present study. Daniells opened his address by saying

"We have gathered for a Bible Conference to open the first day of July, and to continue until the 21st. This meeting was arranged by the General Conference Committee at its Spring Council. We had with us at that time several editors of our papers, and quite a number of the presidents of our Colleges. We had given this question a great deal of consideration. For some years there has been an earnest desire that we should have a special meeting for the study of various phases of our truth." (A. G. Daniells, *Notes of the 1919 Bible Conference held at Takoma Park, July 1st 1919, page 10*)

The conference was open to a very select group of invitees only. These were the leading men of our denomination. No others were permitted to attend. As Daniells explained

"I think I can state the action of the General Conference Committee with reference to the personnel of the Conference. 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." (*Ibid*)

Taken overall, this was a very influential group of people who, if they could be persuaded to think a certain way, were certainly in a position to encourage others to do the same. We can see therefore that assembled at this conference was a group of delegates that could, if they so wished, have a very persuasive influence on the future (1919 onwards) thinking and theology of SDA's.

Daniells went on to explain that "a great many people" had requested to attend, but they

had not been given permission. He then said to the delegates

“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.**” (*Ibid*)

Needless to say, this Bible conference was of a very high-profile nature. Daniells admitted though that with regards to its intent, there were many who were “**very much afraid**”. Such was the depth of feelings of those who realised that this conference was due to take place.

Please note that this 1919 Bible Conference took place

- 4 years after the death of Ellen White (1915)
- 21 years after the publication of *Desire of Ages* (1898)
- 75 years after our beginnings (1844)

Michael Campbell wrote of the Conference in his 2008 dissertation on the subject

“A total of sixty-five individuals are known to have attended the 1919 Bible Conference....There were three categories of attendees: teachers, editors, and church administrators. Of these, twenty-nine were educators who represented fourteen schools (44 percent), eleven were editors (17 percent), and twenty-five were church administrators, support staff, or were present by special invitation (39 percent). In addition, one named stenographer was present, although several other stenographers assisted him. Of the sixty-five conferees there were three women (5 percent) present; the average age of attendees was forty-five.

The conferees at the 1919 Bible Conference represented the best-trained group of Adventist leaders and educators ever officially convened to that time. Whereas prior gatherings of church leaders and/or educators certainly contained very intelligent and competent students of the Bible and history, this was the first time so many participants were familiar with biblical languages.” (*Michael Campbell, The 1919 Bible Conference and its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology (2008), Dissertations. 21*)

It was the morning of July 2nd that Prescott gave his first presentation on the person of Christ. This was followed by a presentation on Bible Prophecy. After an intermission, A. G. Daniells opened the afternoon session.

“The way is now open for any who wish to do so to ask Professor Prescott questions concerning the topic of the morning.” (*A. G. Daniells, Notes of the 1919 Bible Conference held at Takoma Park, July 2nd 1919, page 18*)

The first to respond was W. E. Howell.

“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, ibid*)

Prescott replied

“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*)

In turn Herbert Lacey replied

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

Prescott responded

“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?” (*Prescott, ibid*)

Instead of answering the question, C. M. Sorenson replied

“It is taught in the Bible.” (*C. M. Sorenson, ibid*)

This co-eternity of the personality of the Son with the Father was not then the standard denominational belief of SDA's. As we have seen above, it was believed that at a point in eternity, in a way not revealed in Scripture, Christ proceeded forth, and came out of the Father. In the understanding of these SDA's, this did not make Christ any less than God, neither did it, as we have seen, make Christ some sort of a demigod. These SDA's believed, because Christ was begotten of God, that He was God. W. W. Prescott responded concerning this co-eternity belief

“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*)

Here Prescott was refuting what SDA's in general then believed about Christ. He was saying that if Christ's personality were to be regarded as having a beginning, this would make Him finite (like a created being). Past SDA's did not reason this to be true. As we have seen, they believed that the Son, in His pre-existence, was begotten of God therefore He was God (albeit not the Father), meaning that in His pre-existence, He was immortal. Prescott's reasoning therefore was straw man reasoning. It was also an attack on the beliefs of some of those present at the conference. They believed what was then generally taught within Seventh-day Adventism

As we have seen above, our pioneers believed that the Son of God was God Himself manifest. There was never any question that they did not believe in His full and complete divinity - albeit their reasoning did not include the unwarranted and unnecessary speculations of the trinity doctrine. A person needs only to look at some of the things that our non-trinitarian pioneers wrote about Christ (as we have done so above) to know this to be true. Certainly our pioneers did not regard the pre-existent Christ as a finite being. Prescott was misrepresenting what they believed.

Note Prescott's remark concerning Arianism. Whilst it is not possible to speak of this at length here, history records that Arius did not believe that the pre-existent Christ was a finite being. As he said in a letter to Eusebius, the Bishop of Nicomedia

"But we say and believe, and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that He does not derive His subsistence from any matter; but that by His own will and counsel He has subsisted before time, and before ages, as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that before He was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, He was not. For He was not unbegotten." (*The ecclesiastical history of Theodoret, Book 1, Chapter 4, 'The letter of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia'*)

Prescott continued

"We have been circulating for 40 years a standard book which says that the Son is not co-eternal with the Father. That is teaching Arianism." (*W. W. Prescott, Notes on the discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference and Teachers Meeting held at Takoma Park, Washington D.C. July 2nd, page 18-19*)

The first part of Prescott's statement is correct. Even up to that time (1919), it was still the general belief of SDA's that the Son, as a separate personality from the Father, was not coeternal with the Father. This was how it was throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry. As we have seen (see pages 64-68), Ellen White endorsed this view of Christ.

Prescott's remark about Arianism is extremely misleading. This is because Arianism is often a terminology applied to those who believe that Christ was a created being. Prescott made it sound as if this is what the SDA Church had been teaching - which as we have seen above, was definitely not the case. It was never the stance of the SDA Church that Christ was a created being, therefore if this is what Prescott was saying, then what he was again doing was setting up a straw man and knocking it down.

Undoubtedly, this "standard book" that Prescott mentioned here was Uriah Smith's *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*. This is the book that in the 1940's, was re-written from cover to cover to bring it into harmony with the up and coming 'new theology' of trinitarianism. Smith's book was altered so much that Smith would not recognise it as his own work. All the theology of SDA's concerning Christ being the Son of God was removed. In his book, Uriah Smith had presented what had always been the denominational stance of the SDA Church. This of course was non-trinitarianism. Prescott was sowing seeds here that would later come to fruition. He then asks

"Do we want to go on teaching that?" (*Ibid, page 19*)

In the above remarks by Prescott, we can see the frank admittance that he did not wish to "go on" teaching that the Son was not co-eternal with the Father (that Christ was begotten at a point in eternity) – even though this was then the standard denominational belief of SDA's. Prescott wanted to change it. This was now 4 years after her death. No one answered Prescott.

Prescott was saying (in harmony with the trinity doctrine) that the begotten Christ was co-eternal with the Father. G. B. Thompson then asked

“All things were created by him.” Do you understand that to mean more than this earth?
(G. B. Thompson, *Ibid*)

Prescott replied

“Yes, whether they be thrones or principalities or powers or things visible or things invisible, all were created by him. That is, all existences of every kind depend upon His pre-existence and all present existences depend upon His present existence. Without Him there would be nothing in existence, and without Him that which is now in existence would fall out of existence.” (W. W. Prescott *Ibid*)

Here is a problem area.

As we have seen above, the belief of SDA's was that Christ, by becoming human, could have sinned, and would have therefore, if this had happened, gone out of existence. This though does not mean that the universe would have gone out of existence. This is because it would have been upheld by the power of the Father. It was *through* the Son that the universe and everything it was created and upheld. Christ did not create it independently from the Father. Prescott was presenting a trinitarian view of Christ.

During the ensuing discussions, Bollman, then associate editor of the magazine *Liberty*, objected to Prescott's use of the words *co-eternal* and *coeval* (of the same age). Bollman said

“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?” (Bollman, *Ibid*)

Prescott then replied by asking Bollman if he was asking whether dictionary terms should be accepted but Bollman said, no, this was not what he was asking. Prescott then asked Bollman to explain his question. Bollman answered

“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?” (*Ibid*, Bollman)

Bollman was making a valid point. The Bible goes no further than to say that Christ was begotten of God. There is no mention of Him being co-eternal with God the Father. This is bringing philosophy into the reasoning. Bollman realised what Prescott was doing so he objected to the use of non-biblical terminology. He was not very pleased either with Prescott's claim that the church had been teaching what he (Prescott) had labelled “Arianism” (the pre-existent Son a finite being). This is why he said to Prescott, that it would be better to use only scriptural terms.

It is important to remember here that our church has always accepted that Christ was fully divine. This had never been in question. This is even though Prescott's remarks made it look as though this was the issue. The pioneers expressed this divinity though in Biblical terms. They did not employ philosophy. Prescott therefore was once again setting up straw men and then knocking them down.

On a number of occasions, the delegates at the conference made clear to Prescott that it was taught by SDA's that Christ was divine. This was particularly so when Prescott stressed

that if Christ was not presented as being co-eternal with the Father, this would be to doubt His deity. There were strong objections to Prescott's reasoning.

In defence of his argument, also in explanation of it, Prescott replied to Bollman by saying that although in the Bible there were not expressions such as co-eternal etc, there were expressions that he believed were equivalent to it. Bollman asked for an example. Prescott replied

"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*)

Note Prescott's remark to what he terms Christ's "derived existence". Here he is admitting, just as was taught in Seventh-day Adventism, throughout the time period of Ellen White's ministry, that the Son has His source in the Father. This is the begotten concept. Prescott continued

"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." (*Ibid*)

Prescott was still maintaining that Christ is a begotten Son even though he said that Christ is co-eternal with the Father. This of course is the language and concept that dealt with the personality of Christ at the fourth century Council of Nicaea (AD 325). At this council it was agreed, by the majority, that Christ was eternally or everlastingly begotten of the Father. This is much the same as what Prescott was saying.

These views of Prescott were different than what was then, in 1919, generally believed by SDA's. He could now be taken as saying that Christ was eternally begotten of the Father (orthodox trinitarianism) and not begotten at a point in eternity. Prescott could not get away from the begotten belief held by SDA's since their beginnings.

All of this shows that it is very difficult to change from one viewpoint to another – especially where theology is concerned. It had been the historical belief of SDA's that at some point in eternity, too far back for the human mind to even imagine it, the Son came forth of (came out of) the Father. This meant, at least to SDA's, that the Father was before the Son. Prescott was attempting to get away from this idea. He knew that SDA's were not denying the divinity of Christ, but he did not care for the belief that as a separate personality from the Father, there was a time when the personality of Christ, as a son, did not have an existence. Hence he promoted the idea that the Son was coeternal with the Father. Prescott was in difficulty because he was attempting to mingle two thoughts: (a) Christ being truly the Son of God (begotten of God in eternity) and (b) Christ coeternal with the Father. He concluded

"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*)

If one person was finding this a difficult problem to get over, can you imagine what is needed to change the thinking of a denomination as a whole - especially a denomination that had been under the direct guidance of God's leading? This was in the form of His messenger to the remnant, meaning Ellen G. White. Never once had she said that the pioneers' beliefs regarding Christ were wrong. She had only supported them in their belief (see pages 64-68).

In reply to Prescott's remarks, C. P. Bollman replied

"I think we should hold to the Bible definitions." (*C. P. Bollman, ibid*)

To this remark, Prescott responded by saying amazingly (as do the trinitarians) that it was better to stay with non-Scriptural language. He said

"We take the expression co-eternal, and that is better." (*W. W. Prescott, ibid*)

The identity of the **"We"** is left to the imagination. Prescott obviously knew. Certainly it was not then the SDA Church as a whole.

Some at the conference reasoned the same way as Prescott. This is even though this language is not scriptural. Trinitarians say though that this is the best way to describe the person of Christ. As you continue through this study, bear Prescott's remarks in mind.

In replying to Prescott, Bollman said

"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 _____.**"** (*Bollman, ibid*)

The final word in the sentence was not transcribed by the stenographers, so we are left to guess at what it was. It could have been 'trinitarianism'. Prescott responded by saying

"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*)

This is not true. If God did apportion a part of Himself in becoming the Son, this would have been in infinity. Christ therefore would have been God in infinity but not in personality. This happening was prior to anything being created. It was in infinity (in eternity).

H. C. Lacey then decided to enter into the discussions. He began by saying

"May I say something on that point? Every year I am brought in touch with this from two points of view.--one in the Greek class, and the other in Bible Doctrines. Twice a year, and sometimes more frequently, I am brought face to face with this. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." The eternity of the Word is emphasized in that. When you come to the study of the deity of Christ, the fundamental attribute is eternity of existence. If Jesus is divine, He must have that essential attribute, and so I have

dared to say that Christ is absolutely co-eternal with the Father. You can not say that back in some point of duration the Son appeared, and prior to that He had not appeared. I take it that God has no beginning. The Greek does not read, "In the beginning," but "In beginning,"--any beginning, every beginning. There is no article to it. It means that Christ antedated all beginning. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit antedated all beginning." (*H. C. Lacey, Ibid*)

Lacey was now denying what the SDA Church, since its beginnings, had been teaching about Christ. He went on to say

"I am just stating what I teach. I want to know whether this is so. That is what this council is for. I say that God was always in existence. Just as the light is always with the sun; the light comes from the sun, and so Jesus was always with God, always reigning with Him." (*Lacey, Ibid, page 23*)

Lacey then went to say that Christ, in His pre-existence, was not truly the Son of God but that the words 'Son of God' were just human words to show how much love there was between what he termed the first and second persons of the deity. This is often said by the present-day SDA trinitarians. Lacey summed this up by saying

"To the first and only begotten Son was a specially tender feeling, and to indicate the wondrous love of the first person of the Deity to the second, this expression [the Son of God] is used. Never to indicate that the son came into existence after the Father." (*Lacey, Ibid*)

This is very much the reasoning of SDA trinitarians today. They say that the Father and Son concept is not ontological but metaphorical (more so to do with the love shown between the two). We shall see this later when we review what the SDA Church is teaching today. Lacey continued

"I think we ought not to teach that there was a time when He produced another being who is called the son." (*Lacey, Ibid, pages 23-24*)

Lacey was objecting to the faith that had been held by SDA's whilst Ellen White was alive, and remember, it was still then, in 1919, the faith of SDA's throughout the world. It was a faith though that would eventually be changed. Some of these leaders wanted to make sure that this would happen. Lacey later added

"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, Ibid, page 24*)

We need to do some reasoning here. If the persons of the Godhead are coeternal, and none of them were begotten of the other, then what would make one of them first in rank and the other second in rank etc?

So it was that just four years after the death of Ellen White, both Prescott and Lacey were alleging that through our denominational publications, our church, instead of teaching Biblical truth, was teaching error. They also both maintained that by this error, our church was denying the true divinity of the Son. This we know is untrue because as we have seen above, our pioneers, under the auspices of God's messenger to the remnant, namely Ellen

White, taught that the Son was brought forth of the Father, therefore He was truly son and truly God.

This type of accusation against the pioneers was something that with more and more frequency would happen as the decades passed – and as the records show, it was done with more and more resolve.

After responses by Prescott and Bollman, J. Anderson entered into the discussions. Here is how the conversation continued. The dialogue below is contiguous.

“J. Anderson: Did you state that He [Christ] 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.

Question: Simply a difference in what respect – that of rank with the Father?

W. W. Prescott: He himself says that the Father is greater than I. He also said *I and my Father are one." And both are true.

Question: (J. Anderson) If he is inferior in any respect to the Father how can he be God?

W. W. Prescott: I do not think that I used that term "inferior."

J. Anderson: But others may use that word in some instances -- that the Son was inferior to the Father, and my inquiry arises that if it were true that Jesus the Son was inferior in any respect -- in age, or in nature, or attributes; if that be so, how could he be God?

W. W. Prescott: I would not say that he was. I do not think I used that expression.

H. C. Lacy: Is it not that he is only inferior to the Father in rank -- he is second in rank with the Father, and in all other respects is equal?

W. W. Prescott: We must, of course, in our dealing with the question, take his own statement both ways. When he said, "The Father is greater than I," we deal with that, and when he said, "I and the Father are one, we deal with this. We must have a conception of each one that will allow his own statement, what he himself says, to be true." (*Ibid*, pages 27-29)

Here is what Prescott had previously said that led Anderson to believe he (Prescott) was saying that Christ "derived life from the Father" (see page 106)

“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. 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" (*Prescott, Ibid, page 20*)

The day's discussions on the person of Christ ended with these remarks (dialogue contiguous)

"R. C. Lacey: Is not the thought, second in rank, preferable to the term "inferior"?

W. W. Prescott: 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.

C. P. BOLLMAN: Subject to the Father -- is not that the meaning of the word?

W. W. PRESCOTT: We might speak of many things beyond our comprehension:" (*Ibid, pages 30-31*)

The only way that Christ could be considered "second in nature" or "second in rank", is if He had been begotten by God in the first place.

Sunday July 6th brought even more impassioned debate about Christ. Tension was mounting. Throughout his presentations, Prescott was still stressing that the Son was co-eternal with the Father.

Just after the afternoon session began, there was a lengthy discussion on the meaning of eternity. This is very relevant to our study, but it would be far too much to detail here, It can be read though beginning on page 51 at this link

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/1919BC/RBC19190706.pdf>

After these discussions, Herbert C. Lacey, one-time president of Newbold College (England), who was then teacher of Bible and Biblical languages at the Washington Missionary College (later Columbia Union College – now Washington Adventist University), still insisted the same view as he did a few days previous. He said

"There never was a time when the Son was not. If the word Son puzzles us, let us remember that that is God's own sacred word to present His love for that second person of the deity." (*H. C. Lacey, Ibid, July 6th 1919, page 56*)

We see here, as he did before, that Lacey is speaking of the Father and Son as not really being a father and son but that they were only role-playing these parts. He was saying that the Word of God only calls Christ the Son to show the love that He had for the "second person of the deity". This would make all references, in the Scriptures, of Christ being a son, to be metaphorical. It would also make metaphorical the term Father. As we have seen above, this was not what SDA's had been told through the spirit of prophecy. Ellen White had insisted on the literality of Christ being a pre-existent son (see pages 64-68).

Lacey went on to say

"Jesus is the revelation. He is the Son of God, not meaning that He proceedeth forth

and developed from him, nor is there another mother, -- I cannot help being precise, His existence spans eternity, and we cannot settle upon any point in eternity past when He began any more than we can settle upon any point in the future when He will not be." (*Ibid*)

Whilst it is true that SDA's then believed that the Son was begotten (sourced) of God, the precise time of this happening, to humanity, was said to be unknown. It was simply said to have been in eternity. The remark here concerning a mother is mocking the belief of a begotten Son, therefore no further comment will be made. Lacey concluded

"When we raise the question of the origin of the Son, we say there is no origin to Him. He is the second person of the Godhead." (*Ibid*)

Again we see Lacey denying what was then the faith of SDA's (the begotten faith).

We shall now briefly take note of the remarks of a minister by the name of Caviness. We mentioned this on page 58 of Part 1 of this study so we will not repeat all of what he said here. Suffice to note that he did say to the other delegates

"I missed a good deal of this discussion and I do not know whether the idea is that we are to accept the so-called Trinitarian doctrine or not." (*L. L. Caviness, Ibid, page 56*)

He later said concerning Christ

"I can not quite agree with it [the trinity doctrine], because I was reading in the Bible yesterday, in the book of John, which is the book that reveals to us the deity of Christ and I read as far as I could everything that Christ said concerning himself. Without contradicting what he said about himself, I cannot agree with the doctrine." (*Ibid, page 57*)

Caviness also commented

"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 than the Sonship." (*Ibid*)

This is very true. John's gospel, from beginning to end, reveals the relationship between God and Christ. In fact John said that the reason why he wrote his Gospel was to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (see John 20:31).

Note very importantly the emphasis of Caviness. He said that the deity of Jesus rested on His "Sonship". This is the view of the non-trinitarian SDA's. Caviness followed this by saying (with reference to John 5:26)

"There is another statement he [Christ] 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." (*Ibid*)

This again is the belief of the non-trinitarians. It was also the belief of SDA's in general at that time (1919). Caviness concluded

"I have to take Christ's word for it, that at sometime that was true, that the Father had

life in himself, and gave the Son to have life in himself.” (*Ibid*)

Caviness was repeating the stand taken by SDA's at that time. It is a Scriptural stand. In fact, as Caviness said, it was what Jesus Himself had said.

Caviness recognised that there was a push being made by some to accept the trinity doctrine, which, if accepted by the world-wide majority of SDA's, would have constituted a major change to their fundamental beliefs. He makes it very clear that he could not accept it. His constant reference for his beliefs was what Jesus had said about Himself.

After explaining that the scriptures say that the Father gave life to the Son, Leon Caviness then said

“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 some 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*)

Caviness again emphasises the importance of Christ literally being “the divine Son”.

Caviness was then the associate editor of the *Review and Herald*. Prior to this he had been a teacher of languages at Union College (1906-1913), also Professor of Greek at Washington Missionary Seminary (1913-1915). It is more than likely that he would also have known Ellen White personally although I have no documentation on that one. Interesting to note is that in 1913, Caviness went to Washington D.C. to work with W. W. Prescott on the *Protestant Magazine*, and later became its assistant editor. We can see then that this man well understood the teachings of the SDA Church. He must also have had a prolific knowledge of the scriptures. After the 1919 conference, Caviness held the positions of departmental Secretary for the Latin Union (1920-1924), director of the *Seminaire Adventiste du Saleve* (1921-1922), Sabbath School and Educational Secretary of the European Division (1924-1928) and of the Southern European division (1928-1932). He then, from 1932 until he retired in 1952, became professor of Biblical languages at Pacific Union College.

It was after the above remarks of Caviness about the Sonship of Christ (also his objection to the trinity doctrine) that some of the delegates became very uneasy. It even led to the chairman, A. G. Daniells, requesting the stenographers to cease from taking notes. The remarks of Caviness had obviously struck a chord.

As there is no record as to what it was that Daniells said to the delegates, we can only conjecture, suffice to say that following these unrecorded comments, the proceedings did continue, and the stenographers again began to take notes. The only remark regarding this incident that the stenographers did record was

“Elder Daniells here made some suggestions as to the delegates not becoming uneasy because we are studying a subject that we cannot comprehend. He asked that these be not transcribed.” (*A. G. Daniells, ibid, page 58*)

One is left to wonder exactly what Daniells had said to the delegates but because the stenographers were not allowed to record his words, we shall never know.

When the proceedings of the conference continued, Prescott addressed the delegates by making a reference to Ellen White saying that the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Godhead. He then said with regards to this suggestion

“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, page 58*)

Although Prescott denied attempting to establish a theory of trinitarianism (or any other ism), it is evident that certain of the delegates thought that this was his intention. Some probably came to the conclusion that this was the overall purpose of his presentations, and perhaps even the overall purpose of the conference itself, hence the objections and resistance to that which he was attempting to have them accept.

After Prescott had finished speaking, this dialogue took place (contiguous)

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.

WAKEHAM: Would you consider the denial of the co-eternity of the Father and Son was a denial of that deity?

PRESCOTT: That's the point I was going to raise. Can we believe in the deity of Christ without believing in the eternity of Christ?

BOLLMAN: I have done it for years.

PRESCOTT: That is my very point--that we have used terms in that accommodating sense that are not really in harmony with the Scriptural teaching. We believed a long time that Christ was a created being, inspite [sic] of what the Scripture says.

I say, this, that passing over the experience that I passed over myself in this matters--this accommodating use of terms which makes the Deity without eternity, is not my conception now of the gospel of Christ, I think it falls short of the whole idea expressed in the Scriptures, and leaves us not with the kind of a Saviour I believe in now, but a sort of human view -- a semi-human being. As I view it, the deity involves eternity. The very expression involves it. You cannot read the Scripture and have the idea of deity without eternity.

KNOX: I believe all the statements that were made this morning by Elder prescott [sic] concerning the promises that are given to us through Jesus Christ -- that is, the many Scriptures were read; and I believe they are made sure to us because they are bound up in the Deity of Jesus Christ. I think that we are all agreed in the deity of the Son of God (Amen)" (*Ibid, page 62*)

Note well the latter sentence. Knox later said

“From God's viewpoint Levi had existed in the loins of his forefathers from the very beginning of time, but he did not have a separate existence until he was born.

[A]nd so Christ, as with the Father, and of the Father---and the Father—from eternity; and there came a time --- in a way we cannot comprehend nor the time that we cannot

comprehend, when by God's mysterious operation, the Son sprung from the bosom of his Father and had a separate existence." (*Knox, Ibid, page 64*)

Prescott responded

"I would like to call Brother Knox's attention to this, and ask how on that basis he would deal with John 8:58 "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto them: before Abraham was born I am." What does "I am" as to our conception of time, mean?" (*Prescott, Ibid*)

Knox replied

"His personal existence. I believe in the eternity of Jesus Christ. I don't grasp the eternity of his separate and distinct existence." (*Knox, Ibid*)

Tait responded

"I feel we are discussing something we ought to wait sixty billion years before we start in on. Some of these scriptures do not mean to me what the brethren say they mean to them." (*Tait, Ibid, pages 64-65*)

Tait's conclusion was

"But now I think if we still get hold of Christ, and what he is to us now and what he will be to us who will reign with him in glory we will go a long ways. Now I am willing to wait to found out a lot of things I do not understand now, until I get on the other side." (*Ibid*)

Much more was said at this conference concerning Christ, but it is far too much to detail here. What I have detailed above though is enough to see the gist of the discussions, also the difference in views. For those who would like to read for themselves all that was said, they can do so by going here

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

Before we leave off from commenting on the 1919 Bible conference, it is also interesting to note that as we have seen, W. W. Prescott, whilst presenting Christ as a separate personality begotten from the Father, also said of Him, that He was co-eternal with the Father. This led one of the delegates, namely John Isaac, to sum up this bewildered situation by saying

"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, Ibid, page 68*)

John Isaac was told that time was not available at the Bible conference to discuss whether Christ was begotten or not but today, just as it was then, it is the most crucial of all questions.

Daniells replied to John Isaac by saying

“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 from what Daniells said to the delegates that he believed that a “five or ten minutes” discussion on the word begotten would be sufficient to determine its meaning. This was either a complete misunderstanding of the complexities involved in understanding this much-debated word or an attempt to play down its importance. Either that or it was a means of avoiding a discussion on it altogether. Whichever is true is left entirely to the imagination but certainly nothing would have been resolved by a “five or ten minutes” discussion on this word. To those who do know the issues and complexities involved in it, this much really is transparent.

As we noted in Part 1, immediately following this remark about the word begotten, A. G. Daniells said to the delegates

“Now we will go on. Now let’s not get a bit nervous or scared.” (*Ibid*)

So what was it that Daniells was telling the delegates not to get scared or nervous about? His next words reveal the answer. Realising that over this Sonship issue there was a mixture of feelings amongst the delegates, A. G. Daniells (remember here that at that time he was General Conference president) 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*)

We can see from what Daniells said that there were those who wanted change in respect to what we, as a denomination, then taught about Christ. At the same time though, there were others who resisted the change. They believed that what we had been teaching all the time of Ellen White’s ministry was Biblical (the truth).

It must be remembered here that all the time we were considered a non-trinitarian denomination, which included all the time of Ellen White’s ministry and beyond, the SDA Church, by the trinitarian denominations, was regarded as a cult. Obviously our once non-trinitarianism played a major role in their attitude towards us because as we have noted so many times previously, non-trinitarians are not generally regarded as being truly Christian. Regarding our non-trinitarian status, some at the conference were pushing for a change. Others decidedly resisted this move.

Period: 1920-1929

General publications:

In 1920, W. W. Prescott wrote a book called *‘The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for use in Colleges and Seminaries*. The title reveals Prescott’s purposes for writing it. This was the year following when he led out in the studies on the person of Christ at the 1919 Bible Conference. In his book he wrote

“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*)

He continued the next paragraph

“The Son is equal to the Father in everything except that which is conveyed by the terms Father and Son.” (*Ibid*)

Prescott differentiates between the ‘rank’ of Father and Son. He is saying they are not exactly the same. He explains his reasoning concerning Christ

“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*)

This was published the year following the 1919 Bible Conference. Prescott was still maintaining that the Son of God possesses His divine attributes as **“derived from the Father”** whereas the Father (he says) has these attributes inherently within Himself. Here again is the begotten concept. It is that Christ possesses all that He is (and has) by right of inheritance (as the Son) whilst the Father is the source of the Son.

According to Prescott, it was because Christ received all from the Father that in a **“real sense”** (and in this sense only) **“the Father is greater than the Son”**. In other words, apart from the fact that Christ is begotten of the Father, there is no difference between the Father and the Son. This was also the view of early Christianity.

This had also been the begotten ‘faith’ of SDA’s. It appears that what Prescott was endeavouring to change was that Christ did not come ‘out of the Father’ at a point in eternity – and then had God’s power and attributes bestowed upon Him - but was derived of the Father eternally. Prescott also explained

“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*)

The text Prescott is referring to is where Jesus said

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;” John 5:26

In the same year (1920), in an article called *A More Excellent Name* (this was under the sub-heading *The Only-Begotten*), Lucas A. Reed wrote

"The entire book of Hebrews, by various arguments, exalts Jesus as the Divine One. In the first chapter, Christ is compared with the mighty angels, and is they. shown to be in all things greater than Christ is greater than the angels because

1. **God never said to them, "Thou art My son."** Hebrews 1: 5.

2. **God did say to Christ, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son."** (L. A. Reed, *Review and Herald*, January 13th 1920, 'A More Excellent Name')

He later wrote the following

"A created being can never in the true sense be a Creator, and he cannot be God. The very nature given him by his Creator precludes this. It is not in the plan. Nothing can exist but that which God wills. His will is sovereign, but the reason and purpose of that will are forever firmly founded in the security of His goodness or love. **Christ was begotten, not created, on an equality with the Father, hence was associated with Him in the creative work and in His sovereignty on the throne.**" (*Ibid*)

Reed also said that Christ is:

"1. **The heir of all things is such because He is the Son of God. The Son is rightly the heir.** And the One to whom all things belong is the One who seeks to save that which is lost.

2. **The One through whom God made the worlds**, upholds the worlds. This is so because in the beginning, He laid the foundation, and the present heavens are the work of His hands.

3. **Being in reality the Son, He is therefore like His Father**, He reveals His glory.

4. **God being in reality His Father**, God's person, or image, is expressed in the Son." (*Ibid*)

He later emphasised that Christ really is the Son of God

"**All these things rest in the fact that Christ is the Son of God.** And this expression, "Son of God," as applied to Him, is not used in an accommodated sense. **He is not the Son by adoption; He is not the Son by creation; He is the only-begotten of the Father.**" (*Ibid*)

Under the sub-heading, *An Unfailing Christ*, the article continued (paragraphs not contiguous)

"**And being the only one who in this special sense is God's Son, He is in this special sense God's heir, possessing every attribute that God possesses. Thus it is that by inheritance He receives the more excellent name than the angels.** And since He has achieved our redemption, we are told that God has given Him a name greater than or above every other name, that at that name every knee shall bow." (*Ibid*)

"And Christ is this because He is the special representative of God. His is of the same nature and character and power with God. But while He is filled with all this "fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2: 9), **it was all given Him of God, for "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell"** (Colossians 1:19). The same immortal

fountain of lifegiving energy resides in Him that exists in God.” (*Ibid*)

This again was in keeping with what SDA’s had been teaching about Christ since their beginnings. The next month it was said in the *Review and Herald*

“Christ, the only Son of God, was in the world often before he was born of the Virgin Mary.... He left his home in heaven, took upon himself the garb of humanity, and for a period of more than thirty years was tabernacled among men. That thirty-three years has been termed by one writer "the time ministry of the Son of God in this world."" (*Asa T. Robinson, Review and Herald, February 12th 1920, 'The Necessity of Receiving the Holy Spirit'*)

Later in the year, William Henry Branson, who became the General Conference President, published an article called *Jesus Christ – Creator and Lawgiver*. He began his article by saying

“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 12th 1920, 'Jesus Christ – Creator and Lawgiver'*)

He then went on to say

“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*)

Here again we see the begotten concept (“God bestowed upon His Son”). This was still then, in 1920, the denominational faith of SDA’s.

After explaining that it was Christ who created all things, also that Christ was the wisdom of God as spoken of in Proverbs chapter 8, Branson went on to say (under the sub-heading Active Agent in Creation)

“And not only was Christ with the Father when the worlds and the universe were created, but He became the Father's active agent in bringing all things into being.” (*Ibid*)

Branson also went on to explain that Christ was God

"But unto the Son He [God the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Hebrews 1: 8-12. "In the beginning was the Word [Christ],

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1: 1-3.

Branson's conclusion was

"After the fall of man, God the Father appointed Christ as His agent, through whom He would bring about the redemption of the race. The entire work of carrying out the plan of redemption was turned over to Him. God the Father has always kept in the background. He has never revealed Himself to man at any time; for no man, while in sinful flesh, can see His face and live. He has always revealed Himself through Christ, His Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1: 18. Hence wherever we find any act attributed to God, we may know at once that it was accomplished through His Son, Jesus." (*Ibid*)

In the January of the next year (1921), in an article called *The Christian's Invisible Helpers*, Chester Kellogg wrote

"Thus the apostle declares that Christ created all things. This manifestly must include the angels; for John, in his Gospel, definitely states the same truth when he declares, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1: 3. Christ only is begotten of the Father. All others, animate and inanimate, worlds and the inhabitants thereof, are the creation of His word." (*Chester E. Kellogg, Signs of the Times, January 4th 1921, 'The Christian's Invisible Helpers'*)

The *Sabbath School quarterly* for the first quarter of 1921, set out to show that Christ really was the Son of God. As a synopsis it said

1. Everywhere the New Testament sets forth Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God. The announcement of His birth declared the fact. Luke 1:35. John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way before Him, bore testimony to the same effect. John 1:34. One of His earliest disciples was convinced of it. John 1:49. So were His other disciples on a later occasion. Matt. 14:33. Martha confessed her belief in Him as the Son of God. John 11:27. The wonderful works of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John were written to convince us of His divine sonship. John 20: 30, 31.

2. To the man whom He had healed of blindness, Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God. John 9: 35-37. To the Jews, Jesus claimed His oneness with the Father as His Son (John 10: 30, 36), to whom the same honor was due as to the Father (John 5: 23). Satan acknowledged His claim to be the Son of God. Matt. 4: 3, 6. This claim was mockingly repeated by the chief priests as He hung upon the cross. Matt. 27: 43. At the crucifixion, a Roman centurion was led to acknowledge that He was the Son of God. Matt. 27: 54. His resurrection proved the fact. Rom. 1: 4.

3. When Peter confessed his faith in Christ as the Son of God, Christ pronounced a blessing upon him as having received a divine revelation. Matt. 16: 17. Jesus Himself tacitly accepted the testimony of Nathanael that He was the Son of God. John 1: 49. 50. The accusation made before Pilate was that "He made Himself the Son of God." John 19: 7.

4. Paul, after his conversion, declared that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9: 20), and so he continued to preach (2 Cor. 1: 19). By a voice from heaven, God Himself bore testimony to the same fact. 2 Peter 1: 16, 17. Our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary is still declared to be "Jesus the Son of God." Heb. 4: 14.

5. God sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour (John 3: 17), and the future of every man depends upon his attitude toward this Son of God (John 3: 18). (*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, 1st quarter 1921, Our Personal Saviour Jesus Christ, page 17-18, lesson 6 for February 5th 1921, 'The Son of God'*)

In a nutshell the study concluded with a quotation from pages 25-27 of the *Expositor's Bible*

"Christ is Son of God, not in the sense in which angels, as a class of beings, are designated by this name, but as He who has taken His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. 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. Which of the angels was ever so addressed? To speak of the angels as sons and yet say that not one of them individually is a son may be self-contradictory in words, but the thought is consistent and true. . . " (*Ibid, page 19*)

The emphasis here is that Christ did not attain to the position of Sonship because of what He personally achieved but was His by right of inheritance. In other words, His Sonship was His inheritance.

In the *Youth's Instructor* for January 25th 1921, under the heading *The Sabbath School*, there was a similar synopsis as in the adult lesson, but this one was made more simpler.

"1. In all the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth is set forth as the Son of God. The announcement of His birth declared the fact (Luke 1: 35), and later His disciples worshiped Him as the Son of God (Matt. 14: 33). The wonderful works of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John were written to convince us of His divine sonship. John 20: 30, 31.

2. To the Jews, Jesus claimed His oneness with the Father as His Son. John 10:30, 36. Satan acknowledged His claim to be the Son of God (Matt. 4: 3, 6), and His resurrection from the dead gave final proof to that fact (Rom. 1: 4).

3. When Peter confessed his faith in Christ as the Son of God, Christ pronounced a blessing on him as having received a divine revelation. Matt. 16: 17.

4. Paul, after his conversion, declared that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9: 20), and so he continued to preach during his ministry (2 Cor. 1: 19). By a voice from heaven, God himself bore testimony to the same fact. 2 Peter 1: 16, 17.

5. God sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour (John 3: 17), and the future of every man depends upon his attitude toward this Son of God (John 3: 18)." (*The Youth's Instructor, January 25th 1921, 'The Sabbath School'*)

Again the intent was to show that Christ really is the divine, pre-existent, Son of God

In the next quarterly it said (making reference to Hebrews 5: 5, Luke 1: 32, Heb. 2: 16-17

and Acts 13: 33)

“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, 2nd Quarter 1921, lesson 7 for May 14th 1921, ‘Christ Our Priest — After the Work of Melchizedek’)

Here again is clearly seen the ‘begotten faith’ of SDA’s. This is where the lesson notes refer to Christ as being “the only begotten Son, arising from His inherent nature”. His ‘uniqueness’ is the fact that He is God’s one and only Son. He is of the very nature of God.

A. J. Clark wrote in *The Lifeboat* magazine in 1922

“But Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of our Father in heaven so loved the children that God intended to adopt into His family, that He said He was willing to come into this world and reveal to them by His own life the character and love that our heavenly Father has for us. (John 3:16).” (A. J. Clark, *The Lifeboat*, December 1922, ‘A Real Father’)

In the *Sabbath School* lesson study of the 3rd of May 1924, was quoted a statement made by Ellen White. This was in her book *The Great Controversy*

"Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God, and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. . . Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer's endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And, coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield."—"The Great Controversy," pp. 493, 494" (*Sabbath School Quarterly May 3rd 1924, 'The Heart Deceitful and Covetous'*)

In the same year (1924), A. S. Maxwell wrote in an article in *The Present Truth* (Maxwell was then editor)

“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 Present Truth*, July 17th 1924, ‘Certainties of the gospel’, see also *Australian Signs of the times*, September 15th 1924 and *The Canadian Watchman*, April 1925,)

The following year (1925), Harold Clark, in the *Signs of the Times*, published an extensive article that set out to show that God was not an abstraction as present by many philosophers (that resulted in a pantheistic view of God) but was a personal being.

“Here, then, we have the key to the Bible statements regarding God. He is not a universal principle in the abstract, a "supreme abstraction" as Plato's god might be called; He is a very real personality, made known to the world in the person of Jesus Christ, and living in the hearts and minds of those who accept His personal salvation.” (Harold W. Clark, *Signs of the Times*, September 1st 1925, ‘God a Personal Being’)

After quoting 2 Peter 1:16, Clark went on to say

“The transfiguration here referred to showed to Peter the glory of Christ with His Father, this same glory which He came to reveal to man,—the glory of a personal God, a personal Son, a personal salvation of personal human beings.” (*Ibid*)

Clark then commented on John, the Gospel writer, having a very close relationship with Christ.

“After all those years of personal contact with the life of the Saviour, the lesson was indelibly impressed on his mind that Jesus was the personal representative of the Father.” (*Ibid*)

Clark also quoted that much disputed text of scripture 1 John 5:7 saying

“And so we have in the passage quoted from 1 John 5: 7, the whole truth in a few words. There is the Father, the divine Intelligence, from whom proceeds all things. There is the Logos, the revelation of the Father, made in His express image, and showing to the world His character. And there is the Spirit, the medium of communication and activity. These are three, yet they are one.” (*Ibid*)

Notice here that it was still being said, in our major publications, that the Logos (the pre-existent Christ), was “made” in the “express image” of the Father. It was also said that from the Father “proceeds all things”. This had been taught since the beginning of Seventh-day Adventism. This was now 10 years after the death of Ellen White, also 27 years after the publication of the *Desire of Ages*. By then, concerning Christ, this book had not changed the beliefs of SDA's.

W. H. James wrote in the Australian *Signs of the Times* in 1926

“After the statement that Adam was created “in the likeness of God” we read: “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.” Gen. 5: 3. All subsequent children of man consequently are children of flesh; they carry the fallen nature. Christ as the “Son of God,” the begotten of the Highest, bore the perfect divine nature, but as the son of Mary, the Son of man, He inherited the human and fallen nature.” (*W. Howard James, M.B., B.S., Australian Signs of the Times, September 13th 1926, ‘The Scientific Aspect of the Plan of Salvation’*)

In 1926, the SDA Church published a book called *The Return of Jesus*. In this book, its author, Carlyle B. Haynes, wrote

“THERE are those who say they accept the teachings of Jesus,— His great moral teachings, His wonderful ethics,— and who look upon Him as a great moral leader, yet who do not accept His deity. But one of the chief teachings of Jesus was His divine Sonship. All His other teachings have value only as they are viewed in the light of His authority as “the only begotten Son of God.”

Jesus came as God, He did the works of God, He spoke the words of God, He lived the life of God, He claimed to be God. Is His claim true?

Certainly the claims of Jesus are not those of a mere human teacher. He said, “I and

My Father are one." John 10:30. He said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John 16:28. **This certainly implies pre-existence and eternity of being.**" (Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Return of Jesus*, page 57, 'The God-man', 1926)

Haynes later wrote (paragraphs not contiguous)

"Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. When Peter said to Him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus admitted the accuracy of the statement, accepted it as referring to Himself, and declared that on this truth He would build His church. Matt. 16:13-18. **It is upon this rock of the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ that the church is built,** and it is because of this fact that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (*Ibid*, page 62)

"Now to sum it all up, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah; that He came from God, who sent Him; **that He was the Son of the living God, "the only begotten of the Father;** "that He was not only God's messenger, to speak God's word, **but that He Himself was of the Godhead,** having as such preexistence, omnipresence, creative power, exclusive knowledge of God, power to have and to give eternal life, power to forgive sins, power to judge the world." (*Ibid*, page 63)

"Jesus was both God and man. He was the God-man. His divinity was a true divinity, **"very God of very God,"** not a seeming divinity." (*Ibid*, page 64)

The same thoughts were published in *The Present Truth* of March 18th 1926, the Australian *Signs of the Times* of December 1st 1924, and November 1st 1926. From 1922-1926, Haynes was President of the Greater New York Conference.

In 1927, in *The Oriental Watchman*, there was an article that had been previously published in 1911 (we noted it above).

"The first chapter of John's gospel is a divine commentary on the first chapter of Genesis. He tells us the "Word" was in the beginning with God, and then further says this "Word" bore the name of God. In the following verses he states the relation existing between this "Word" and all created things and tells us that finally "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." John 1:14. We readily understand this to be Jesus Christ. **A son bears the same name as his father. Jesus Christ is "the only begotten of the Father" and would therefore naturally bear His Father's name. Being the "only begotten," no other creature in all the universe save Jesus Christ can rightly be called by such a name. We get our names by inheritance Jesus Christ came by the name of God in like manner, being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.** Heb. 1:14. The angels were called by an inferior name because of their relation to the Father. "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." Heb. 1:8" (J. S. James, *The Oriental Watchman and Herald of Health*, July 1927, 'In All Things...The Pre-Eminence')

Under the sub-heading of *The Divine Creator*, Lyle Shepard wrote in *The Canadian Watchman* in 1927

"In Rev. 3:14 Christ is styled the "beginning of the creation of God." This can not mean that He was a created being as angels and men are **because we are told repeatedly in scripture that He was the only begotten of the Father and dwelt in His Father's bosom and was thus coexistent with God, the Father.** (See John 1:14, 18; 3: 16, 18; 1 John 4: 9) Thus it must be that He was the "beginning of the creation of God" in the sense that created things came into being by His power and through His agency. Weymouth in his translation of the New Testament brings out that thought in the verse under consideration, "The beginning and Lord of God's creation." (*Lyle C. Shepard, The Canadian Watchman, September 1927, Christ--A Divine or A Human Saviour?*)

After saying that "the unseen leader of Israel was none other than the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead", also after quoting Exodus 23:20, 21, C. P. Bollman, as Associate Editor of the *Review and Herald*, wrote

"The Son is the only being aside from the Father who is entitled to be called God; indeed, to Him are given all the titles borne by the Father. (See Isa. 9: 6; John 1:1-3, 14; and Heb. 1:6-13.)" (*C. P. Bollman, Review and Herald, September 8th 1927, 'Studies in the Book of Daniel, The Standing up of Michael'*)

Again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit.

In *The Ministry* magazine (now *Ministry*), W. W. Prescott, in a section called *Delving Into the Word, Studies on Fundamentals of the Message*, said this in 1928

"Proposition Four.— As the Son of God, Jesus Christ was the mediator in the original creation. Heb. 1: 1, 2; John 1: 1-3; 1 Cor. 8: 6.

NOTE.— **The fact that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God (John 8:58; Heb. 13:8), and the mediator or cooperating agent in the creation of all material things, furnishes a sure foundation for our confidence in Him as the mediator in the new creation, the mediator of eternal life.**

Proposition Five.—Not only was the Son of God the mediator in the creation of all material things, but "in Him" all invisible powers and relations find their origin, "through Him" they have come into existence, and "in Him" they "hold together." Col. 1:16, 17, A. R. V.

NOTE.— **Christ, the Son of God, "is the perfect image, the visible representation, of the unseen God. He is the firstborn, the absolute heir of the Father, begotten before the ages; the Lord of the universe by virtue of primogeniture, and by virtue also of creative agency. ...In Him is no before or after. He is preexistent and self-existent before all the worlds."** (*W. W. Prescott, The Ministry, February 1928, The Hour of His Judgment'*)

Prescott is still saying, 9 years after the 1919 Bible Conference (where he led out in the presentations on the Person of Christ), that Christ, "before the ages", was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. This was still then, in 1928, the preponderant faith of SDA's. Prescott is saying that this belief is one of the fundamental beliefs of the message of the SDA Church. He refers to it as "a sure foundation".

Under the sub-heading of *The Son of God as Creator*, D. H. Kress wrote in an article called *What is the Earth's Oldest Memorial* (this was published in 1923 and 1928)

"In His creative work God the Father had an associate. He said, "Let Us make man in Our image and after our likeness." Gen. 1: 26. The being thus addressed was none other than the Son of God, **for He alone was the express image of His Father.** (Heb. 1: 3.)

In referring to Christ as the Creator of all things Paul says, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." Heb. 1: 1, 2. **By inheritance, as the only begotten Son of God, He obtained the name of His Father.** "Being made so much better than the angels He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. 1: 4. "Of the angels He saith, who maketh His angels ministering spirits but unto the son He saith, Thy throne O God, is forever and ever." Heb. 1: 7, 8. **This explains the familiar scripture "In the beginning was the Word."** John 1: 1." (D. H. Kress M. D, *The Canadian Watchman*, May 1928, 'What Is the Earth's Oldest Memorial?')

If Christ alone is the express image of God's person, then this would eliminate the Holy Spirit as being such. This article was first published in the *Australian Signs of the Times* of February 5th 1923.

In 1928, H. L. Wood wrote

"Satan, who was called Lucifer (Day Star), was the annointed cherub " Standing nearest to God of any of the created intelligences. **Only Christ "the Only Begotten of the Father" was nearer to God the Father than was this exalted angel.**" (H. L. Wood, *Western Canadian Tidings*, May 29th 1928, 'The Origin of Sin')

Notice here it is said that only Christ is nearer to God than Satan. Again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit.

In the November of the same year, G. W. Rader, in an article concerning evolution, wrote about Satan's temptation to convince Christ that He was not really the Son of God.

"After the baptism of Christ while in the wilderness Satan approached the Saviour with these words. "If Thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." Matt. 4: 3. The Son of God has creative power. Now if Thou be the Son of God exert Thy creative power and relieve Thy hunger. **Here Satan questioned the creative power of Jesus, also His profession as the Son of God.**

After the Saviour met the temptation with the words "It is written," Satan changed his point of attack **but still questioned the authority of Jesus to claim the Sonship.** "If Thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down." But here he met with the same result.

In his third attack Jesus said "Get thee hence Satan." So seeing that he was detected he left Him for a season but resumed his work through others.

In Matthew 27:39-40, we hear the chief priests and the scribes mockingly exclaim, **"If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."** In verse 43, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: **for He said, I am the Son of God.**" One

of the malefactors also railed on Him saying, "If thou be the Christ save Thyself and us." (G. W. Rader, *The Canadian Watchman*, November 1928, 'The Why of Evolution')

He later wrote

"Satan is still the adversary of the plan of salvation and the enemy of the Saviour and so in these last days in order to draw the eyes of men from Jesus and to hide the glory which belongs to Him as the Creator, he brings in the theory of evolution and tries to establish it in the place of creation. If this can be done it will deny the Redeemer of humanity the power and Sonship of Jehovah." (*Ibid*)

As we have seen, this attack by Lucifer on Christ's Sonship with God, was often spoken of in SDA literature.

In 1929, W. W. Prescott wrote a series of articles called *The Priest Upon the Throne*. In the second of these articles he made this observation

"When He was here, Jesus very rarely referred to Himself as the Son of God. His favorite expression was, "The Son of man." During His ministry He appealed to His words and His works as evidence that He came forth from God and was the Son of God. At His baptism, and on the mount of transfiguration the Father testified to His sonship in an audible voice, and yet He was rejected by His own people, and charged with blasphemy because He admitted that He was the Son of God when the high priest demanded a reply under oath." (W. W. Prescott, *Signs of the Times*, January 8th 1929, 'The Priest Upon the Throne')

It is true that Jesus did not use the exact phrase "the Son of God" very often, but He continually referred to God as His father, also to Himself as God's son. John's Gospel is replete with such phrases. Surely this would be the equivalent of Jesus calling Himself the Son of God. These instances would be far too many to quote here.

It was very well understood by those who had heard of Jesus that He believed Himself to be the Son of God. The Jews said that because He claimed God as His father, He was making Himself equal with God (John 5:18). Jesus said to the Jews, "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36). The Jews said of Christ "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." (John 19:7). They also mocked Him at the cross saying "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matthew 27:40). They also said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." (Matthew 27:43). As we shall see later, numerous people from all walks of life referred to Jesus as the Son of God. Even the Father referred to Christ as His "beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). The Gospel writers recorded that the demons recognised Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 8:29, Mark 3:11, Luke 4:41). In fact John says he wrote his Gospel to show that Christ was the Son of God (John 20:31). So as we can see, it was very well known that Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of God.

Prescott later wrote these words

"He who in His absolute deity was the Son of God by eternal generation became flesh as the Son of man, and as the God-man was designated to be the Son of God by the resurrection. We, then, have this' blessed assurance that the man, Jesus of Nazareth,

who made purification of sins, was also more than a man, **that He was the eternal Son of God.** As the absolute Son, He, who in the beginning was with God and was God," **was begotten before times eternal;** as the Son who was the God-man, He was begotten by the resurrection from the dead." (*Ibid*)

Here Prescott is combining two beliefs. These are that (a) Christ existence was eternal, and (b) that Christ was begotten of God therefore He is truly the Son of God (an "**eternal generation**"). This was the same belief as was decided upon at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. It is in fact an integral part of the orthodox trinity doctrine as held across much of Christianity.

Later that year (1929) when setting out Christ as Creator, also after saying that "Jehovah God made earth and heaven", George Shone wrote in an article called *The Christ of the Bible*

"The name "Jehovah " means the "covenant" God, the "Deliverer;" also means the " self-existing " God (a prerogative which Christ claims for Himself, see John 5: 26). **The name " Jehovah" is 'applied to the Son of God, as His distinguishing title.'**" (George W. Shone, *Review and Herald*, May 23rd 1929 '*The Christ of the Bible*')

Shone later wrote

"The thought that "in Him were all things created " **indicates that when the Son was begotten of the Father, in the days of eternity, all the power of creation was in Him;** and when the time came, in the divine purpose for its accomplishment, He simply spoke all things into being. So we read: " By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." " For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33: 6, 9. A careful reading of the first chapter of Hebrews reveals the fact that **the Father Himself attributes to the Son the work of creation, and calls Him " God," a name which is His by inheritance from His Father.**" (*Ibid*)

Note Shone wrote "when the Son was begotten of the Father".

Referring to Jehovah appearing to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-5), he also made this comment (note the ellipses)

"Here, evidently, "the Angel of Jehovah," "Jehovah," and "God " are used interchangeably, and refer to one and the same Person, whose presence made the ground holy, **and who was none other than the Son of God.... Turning to the New Testament, we find that Christ claims to be the " I AM," the Jehovah God who spoke to Moses. (See John 8: 58.)**" (*Ibid*)

Period: 1930-1939

General publications:

At the very beginning of an article called *The Offering He Made*, G. G. Stewart made this observation

"No fact is more clearly revealed in Scripture than that Christ, prior to His incarnation, was on an equality with His Father. In the opening verses of Hebrews He is referred to as Creator of the worlds, and upholder and heir of all things. Further, in Phil. 2:6 the

writer states, "He thought it not a prize which must not slip from His grasp to be equal with God." (Lightfoot's translation.) "From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father." Although on an equality He did not hesitate, nor was He reluctant to take a lower place." (G. G. Stewart, *Australian Signs of the Times*, January 27th 1930, 'The Offering He Made')

Under the sub-heading of *The Terrible Ordeal* he later wrote

"It was man who had sinned and by man he must be redeemed. **The Son of God, a member of the heavenly family by virtue of His being begotten of the Father**, must descend to the level of humanity in order to pay the penalty for the human race;" (*Ibid*)

Again this is speaking of the Son of God as being begotten of God.

In the section of the *Review and Herald* called *Bible Questions Answered*, it asked "Who were the 'sons of God' referred to in Job 1:6?" C.P Bollman answered

"It is believed by many, and that not without reason, that the sons of God of Job 1 6 were the " Adams " of other worlds. Of course all believers are sons and daughters of God, but Adam was pre-eminently a son of God by direct creation. (See Luke 3: 38.) **In a still higher sense Christ is the Son of God, not created, but begotten, and " the only begotten."** (See John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9.) As Adam was the son of God by direct creation, so the first moral being in each of the other worlds must be a son of God by direct creation. The scene described in Job seems to have been a coming together of the Adams of all the various worlds, except the sphere upon which we live. The Adam of this world had fallen, and had lost his dominion to Satan." (C. P Bollman, *Review and Herald*, January 30th 1930, 'The Sons of God')

Two months later, T. E. Bowen wrote in an article called *The Joy of Self-forgetful Ministry*

"No, it was not to be like the Most High that Lucifer wanted. It was only the honor, the glory, the worship rendered God because of His blessed goodness and loving power, that he coveted, Lucifer assuming that he possessed attributes of God which he had not, nor ever could have fully attained." (T. E. Bowen, *Review and Herald*, March 6th 1930, 'The Joy of Self-forgetful Ministry')

He then went on to say (under the sub-heading *A Mighty Contrast*)

"How different was Jesus' life! **Really possessing the Father's attributes, being His only begotten Son**, Jesus laid aside all this glory, His high position,— that which Lucifer coveted but possessed not,— and made Himself of no reputation, to become a servant, after taking His place among us — a sinful race — as a man. And His blessed life was spent from childhood to the cross in humble ministry for others. He went about doing good." (*Ibid*)

Bowen later quoted Ellen White where she had said in Testimonies Vol. 5 page 310-12

"What will be the gratitude of souls that will meet us in the heavenly courts, as they understand the sympathetic, loving interest which has been taken in their salvation! . . . ' I was a sinner,' it will be said, without God and without hope in the world, and you came to me, and drew my attention to the precious Saviour as my only hope. And I believed in Him. I repented of my sins, and was made to sit-together with His saints in

heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Others will say: I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home, and came to teach me how to find Jesus, and believe in Him as the only true God..." (*Ibid*)

A few weeks later, in the *Signs of the Times*, one of its co-editors, O. A. Tait, spoke of Christ becoming a man, therefore by His own experience, He knows what we are experiencing.

"When it comes to explaining our experiences to others, it is always easier to make the man understand who has passed through an experience similar to our own. Hence Jesus Christ Himself, though the infinite Son of God, did not trust Himself to mere theories, but took upon Himself the form of humanity, so that as a man He might enter into the experiences of men and thus teach men in this intimate, companionable way the great plan of salvation. ... The astonishment created by His teaching, the authority with which His words were uttered, were all based upon a living experience. Although He was the literal Son of God, although He was "from everlasting," yet by the mightiest miracle of the infinite Father He became also the Son of man." (O. A. Tait, *Signs of the Times*, April 8th 1930, 'This Man')

With reference to Jesus saying "Before Abraham I was", A. M. Fraser wrote in the *Australian Signs of the Times*

The Jews perceived that by these words Jesus wished to intimate that He was Jehovah, the I AM, who had appeared to Abraham, to Moses, and other Old Testament characters. Therefore they took up stones to cast at Him. Verse 59. A little later they said to Him, "For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." John 10: 33. These scriptures identify the Angel of the Lord with the pre-incarnate Son of God who "in the beginning" not only "was with God," but "was God." See John 1: 1, 2. Ex. 23: 20-23.

In Ex. 13:21 we are told that the Lord went before the children of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; but in Ex. 14: 19 it is said that "the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel," was in the pillar; and in verse 24 it is stated that the Lord looked forth through the pillar of fire and of cloud.

Although in a multitude of places it is definitely stated that the Lord was the leader of the children of Israel and the One who brought them into the promised land, yet in Ex. 23: 20-23 and in other passages the Angel of God is described as doing this work. The passage in Exodus 23 is important, for here a clear distinction is made between the Lord and His Angel, and yet the latter is so described as to indicate that He was no ordinary angel, but a divine being of the same nature as Jehovah. So we read: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to bring thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him." The name of God stands for the character, the glory, of God (compare Ex. 33: 18, 19; 20:5-7), and this, He says, He will not give to another. See Isa. 42:8; 48:11. Thus "the name of God can dwell in Him only, who is originally of the same nature with God." (A. M. Fraser, *Australian Signs of the Times*, May 5th 1930, 'The Angel of the Lord')

In the Question Corner of the *Signs of the Times* for August 5th 1930, It says under the heading of *Christ and God*

“A Bible student in Washington asks about the eternity of Christ the Son of God.”
(William G. Wirth, *Signs of the Times*, August 5th 1930, ‘The “Signs” Question Corner’)

W. G. Wirth who was one of the delegates at the 1919 Bible Conference replied

“All attempts to prove that our Lord is "coexistent with the Father" or "that there was a time when Jesus was not"—are utterly profitless, and but the vain play and byplay of human speculation. This whole question of the origin of the three Persons of the Trinity is shrouded in the inscrutable mind, will, and purpose of God. For us to understand it would be to make us as God Himself. Let us not as poor human worms of the dust try to crawl over the forbidding battlements of the comprehension of the great God.”
(*Ibid*)

Wirth said in the same paragraph

“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*)

Later he explained (paragraphs not contiguous)

“Any idea that the Son is part of the creation itself is utterly foreign to Paul's conception. See Colossians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:6-8. 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 because His Father is God.” (*Ibid*)

“To sum up, "in the beginning" Christ was "with"—or, better, according to the literal Greek, toward—the Father as Creator, and not from God as creature. In the light of this great, stupendous truth, all endeavors to place the Son in time, to apprehend His divine inception, must dissolve. He is, indeed, the "Alpha and the Omega," "the first and the last," "the beginning and the end.” (*Ibid*)

In 1930, as can be seen, this same begotten faith (that Christ was the literal pre-existent Son of God) was still the denominational faith of SDA's. This can also be seen in the fourth quarter's lesson studies for that year. In answer to the question “What was He [Christ] declared to be?” (the first part of Romans 1:4 cited) the lesson study said

“NOTE.—"Declared to be." 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. When on earth He was Divinity incarnate, clothed in human flesh with all its weaknesses.” (SS Lesson Study, 4th quarter 1930, *The Epistle to the Romans*, page 5, lesson 1 for October 4, 1930 ‘Servants of the Son’)

This is very plainly stated. In fact, it is said in a way that cannot be misunderstood.

The same year (1930), the editor of *The Present Truth* wrote (this was in a Christmas issue – hence the title of the article (God with Us)

“Jesus did not appear like a mighty angel, full-grown, in flaming armour, to fight a brief duel with the enemy of mankind, and then return in triumph to His place in glory. He entered the arena, as all men had to enter, in utter weakness. Like us, He was born a little babe. He grew to man's stature and strength as all children grow. **Although He never ceased to be the Son of God**, yet He was in every sense the Son of man.” (W. T. Bartlett, *Present Truth* (UK), December 4th 1930, ‘God With Us’)

After explaining that the ‘lot’ of Jesus was the same as the ‘lot’ of fallen humanity, Bartlett wrote of Christ (paragraphs not contiguous)

“Jesus is still our Kinsman, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet there is nothing in His risen humanity that limits or irks His divinity. He is to-day, in His human nature, as much higher than the angels **as He was originally their superior by virtue of His birthright as the only-begotten Son**. (Heb. 1: 4.) The resources of heaven are just as subject to His will as they ever were.” (*Ibid*)

“It is still as true as it was in the beginning of the Gospel, that to as many as receive Him, He gives whatever may be necessary to make them also sons of God, **after the pattern and order of His own Sonship**. (John 1:12.)” (*Ibid*)

Note the reference to Christ’s “**birthright**” as a son. During the 1930’s, this begotten faith was still prominent in major SDA publications.

In an article dealing with the state of the dead (this was after quoting Jesus as saying to the Jews “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning”, T. E. Bowen wrote

“This father of lies—Lucifer, Satan—began his evil course beside the throne of God in heaven. It was there in his exalted position of commander, under Christ, of the heavenly angelic host, that Lucifer departed from the truth and became the father of lies. **He began by insinuating among the angels that God was an unjust Ruler because He denied this wise and beautiful angel — referring to himself — equal authority with Christ, God's only begotten Son, whom the Father had set forth as One to receive the homage and worship of the angels equally with Himself.** Here the contest opened between good and evil—sin originated— when the first lie was put into circulation. Read about it in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. (T. E. Bowen, *Signs of the Times*, February 16th 1931, ‘Do People Live on After Death without their material bodies’)

This is saying that the controversy in Heaven began by Lucifer disputing Christ’s Sonship to God.

In 1931, there was another article that applied Proverbs 8:22-31 to Christ. It also said that God bestowed power upon His Son.

“Christ existed before this world was made. His Father possessed Him in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. Prov. 8: 22, 23. Christ said He was by His Father's side when the foundations of the earth were laid. Prov. 8: 29, 30. **How plain it was made to her that God the Father so loved His Son that He bestowed upon Him power to create all the planets and to fashion upon each the first pair, who should be the progenitors of their races.** John 1: 3. Nothing was created, but by the hand of Jesus Christ. Eph. 3: 9; Col. 1:16; Hebrews 1:2.” (M W. Locke, *The Canadian Watchman*, June 1931, ‘Marie’s conversion’)

In the same year, in an article called *Christ's Testimony Concerning Himself*, it was written in the Australian *Signs of the Times* (this was under the sub-heading *The Son of God*)

"Time and time again Jesus spoke of God as "My Father," and He used that expression in a very special and, indeed, unique sense. He intended it to be understood that He was the Son of God—not merely a son of God as Adam was by creation, or as Christians are by redemption and adoption, but the Son of God, the only being to whom that title could be applied in its unique sense." (A. M. Fraser, *Australian Signs of the Times*, August 24th 1931, 'Christ's Testimony Concerning Himself')

This is more or less the same as said by Ellen White and Ellet Waggoner (see pages 65-66). Fraser continued

"When Jesus was brought before the Jewish council the night before His crucifixion, the high priest addressed these words to Him: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Matt. 26: 63. Jesus was thus put upon His oath, and He calmly replied: "Thou hast said," i.e., He affirmed that He was the Christ, the Son of God." (*Ibid*)

Notice Fraser says that Christ is the only One who could have the title Son of God applied to Him "in its unique sense". Fraser later commented (this was after quoting where Jesus had said "Before Abraham I was" – see John 8:58)

"In other words, "He claims for Himself the timeless present of eternity as His mode of existence." His use of the words directs our attention back to the passage in Exodus 3, where we are told God appeared to Moses and declared: "I AM THAT I AM." Moses was to say to the children of Israel, "I AM hath sent me unto you." See verse 14. Christ thus claimed to be Jehovah, the great God who had delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and had wrought the other mighty works recorded in the Old Testament." (*Ibid*)

The evidence is overwhelming. Even into the 1930's, in our official publications such as the Sabbath School lesson studies and '*Signs of the Times*' etc, we were still teaching that Christ, in His pre-existence, is truly the Son of God – begotten of God in eternity

In the *Signs of the Times* of April 19th 1932, (this was under the title *The Origin of Christ*), a question was published that was sent in by a reader.

"Was Christ born of God in heaven before He was born of the Virgin Mary on earth? is asked by H. G. Thompson of California." (William G. Wirth, *Signs of the Times*, April 19th 1932, *The Signs Question Corner*, 'The Origin of Christ')

Here is the answer that was given (paragraphs not contiguous)

"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. Let us not as poor human worms of the dust try to crawl over the forbidding battlements of the comprehension of the Great God." (*Ibid*)

"Some have thought that Paul's description of Christ as "the first-born of all creation" (Colossians 1:15), and that of the psalmist, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalm 2:7), establish the fact that Christ had a beginning in the same sense that a creature has a beginning. But this is not so." (*Ibid*)

"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*)

In an article called *God Becomes Man*, G. G. Lowry, speaking of the lives of famous people before the time of Christ, wrote

"Their lives were exemplary and their teachings were lofty. But the world listened not to them. They were human, but Christ was God in human flesh. He was man—human in every detail, and at the same time He was God—divine in every way. He was God taking on Himself our human nature, and becoming man. He had existed as God from eternity before coming as a man to this world two thousand years ago." (G. G. Lowry, *The Oriental Watchman*, August 1933, 'God Becomes Man')

The same year, a lengthy article was published called *Whence came Satan? Did God create a devil?* Its author, H. M. Kelly, opens his article by referring to the "issue between Christ and Satan" in Heaven. He then says (note the ellipses)

"The real question involved in this controversy is that of the Sonship of Christ. Is He God's only begotten Son? The answer to this question is the answer to every other spiritual and moral question that can possibly arise. The question was first raised by Lucifer, the first of all the angels. The question involves principles that are eternal and strikes at the root of a fundamental law of heaven." (H. M. Kelly, *The Canadian Watchman*, October 1st 1933, 'Whence came Satan')

Kelly later explained (paragraphs contiguous)

"The curtains are lifted as it were, and for a moment we are privileged to read from the statute books of heaven. Here is the record:

"I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Ps. 2:7.

The apostle Paul, in Acts 13: 33, applies this text to the resurrection of Christ when He was brought again from the dead; but before the resurrection, even before He came to earth, Christ was God's only begotten Son. When God gave Christ in the beginning, He gave His "only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Paul meant to convey the thought that just as surely as Christ was begotten in the first place, just in the same sense was He begotten when He was raised from the dead.

The resurrection did not make Christ God's only begotten Son. If it did, the same could be said of Moses and others who have been raised from the dead. Back in eternity somewhere, in some way unknown to us, Christ was begotten; and on the day of this wonderful event, a decree was issued by the Father declaring this eternal fact which was incorporated in the laws of heaven. This was before any other creature had been created, for we are told plainly that the creative power was manifested through Christ, and "without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16." (*Ibid*)

Then, under the sub-heading *What is Sin*, the writer continues (paragraphs not contiguous)

"The Bible declares that, "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. When Lucifer, the first angel, was created, the law concerning the birthright was effective. It was by virtue of His being God's only begotten Son that Christ was possessed with the power of creation. This law of His Sonship and this prerogative of God were written into the warp and woof of everything that was created. Everything and every created being in the universe owes his existence to Christ and to this fundamental law, for Christ created everything, even the angels. Were it not for Him and for his law that declares Him to be God's only begotten Son they would have no existence."

"The condition upon which life is offered to the sons of men is that they acquaint themselves with God and come to know Christ as His only begotten Son. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." John 17:3. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5: 11, 12." (*Ibid*)

Under the heading *Eternal Life through Faith*, the same author explained (paragraphs not contiguous)

"The knowledge of the Son of God that is essential to eternal life comes through faith. All who believe on Christ as the only begotten Son of God will not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16. To doubt and cavil here is dangerous beyond expression, and by so doing, one will surely forfeit eternal life. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3: 18. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." 1 John 5: 10" (*Ibid*)

"There is One, and only One, who knows God, and that is His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. He says: "I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Prov. 8:30" (*Ibid*)

"Nothing was withheld from Christ. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Col. 1: 19. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." John 3: 34." (*Ibid*)

In a sermon preached at the Autumn Council on October 14, 1933 (that was related in the *Review and Herald* in the January of 1934), W. H. Branson, the Vice president of the General Conference, said

"Now, of course, the rejection of God the Father has necessarily led the church to the rejection of Christ the Son, for if there is no personal God, then there could be no

personal, literal Son of God. And in this way the whole Bible teaching of the atonement is swept aside, and man is left in the world without a Saviour." (W. H. Branson, *Review and Herald*, January 25th 1934, Sermon preached at the Autumn Council October 14th 1933, 'The Faith of Jesus')

In the *Eastern Tidings* in 1934, there is found a very interesting article written by its editor G. F. Enoch. It was called *This Day have I begotten thee*. It was part of a continuing study on the book of Hebrews. Referring to Hebrews 1:5-6 he wrote

"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: 3),"thus separating Him from all the created intelligences by an infinite gulf." (G. F. Enoch, *Eastern Tidings*, June 1st 1934, 'This day have I begotten thee')

The editor continues to explain about Christ's "unique mode of derivation from the Father"

"There is light for us in the description here given of the mode of the Son's derivation. The earthly relationship of father and son, so familiar to the human family is the symbol taken to illuminate this profound truth....Every human son derives his life from his father. This familiar fact is taken to illustrate the relationship of our Lord to His Father, God." (*Ibid*)

We can see from this that Enoch, in keeping with what SDA's were still teaching then, believed that Christ was truly the Son of God (derived from the Father). He continued

"But the idea of older and younger does not enter into this conception of God, Father and Son. In eternity we find revealed the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son. There can be no knowledge without someone to know; there can be no lover without someone to love. An eternity in which the Father alone existed is therefore irrational. Christians for this reason count as wrong that doctrine which would affirm that somewhere in eternity, they know not when, the Son of God had a beginning.

There is no place for a "beginning" when we lift our ideas into the realm of eternity. Of Jesus it is said. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin. The Bible reveals the Son as the eternal Stream flowing from the eternal Fountain. We can better understand the figure by taking our sun. It is the same with the rays of the sun. These rays pour continually from the sun, but there was never a time when the sun existed apart from its rays. Therefore the "this day" of eternity is the eternal "now."

The quotation from the second Psalm (Heb. 1:5) is thought by some to state that even our Lord had a beginning. It seems to us that when we finite creatures begin to think of "eternity" that the idea of a beginning is necessarily precluded and should not be stated. 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 concensus 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." (*Ibid*)

Whilst the article agrees that Christ is begotten of God, therefore He is truly a son, this derivation is said to be eternal (an eternal generation); thus the writer denies that the derivation ever had a beginning. This is in keeping with the orthodox trinity doctrine. The editor concludes

"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." John 14:28. See also 1 Cor. 3:23; 11:3; 15:28! This subordination is directly traced to the derivation of His life from the Father. John 5:26; 6:57.

And yet the Son shares with the Father all those attributes that distinguish God, the Creator, from man, the creature. John 1:1-4. We therefore feel constrained to conclude that He is the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father." (Ibid)

In 1934 therefore, in SDA literature, the belief that the Son derived his life from the Father was still prevalent. This is even though it is said to be an eternal derivation (an eternal generation). Notice the subordination of Christ is attributed to Him being begotten of God.

Shortly afterwards, Enoch quotes from an article written by W. W. Prescott that was published in the *Signs of the Times* of January 8th 1929 (we noted this above). He quotes Prescott as saying (as quoted by Enoch in his article)

"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. We then have this blessed assurance, that the man Jesus of Nazareth, 'who made purification of sins' was also more than a man, that he was the eternal Son of God, As the absolute Son, He, who 'in the beginning was with God, and was God,' was begotten before times eternal; as the Son, who was the God-man, He was begotten by the resurrection from the dead. So shall we be 'sons of God, being sons, of the resurrection.' Luke 20:26." (Ibid)

In this reasoning is the attempt to get away from the idea that Christ's existence had a beginning. It is coupled though with the long-standing belief of SDA's that Christ, because He was begotten of God, was truly the Son of God. This results of course in the belief of an eternal generation from the Father.

N. J. Waldorf wrote in the Ministry magazine of July 1934

"The expression "woman" is a figure of speech, or a symbol, and as such means the church, according to accepted prophetic interpretation. But it could not mean the Christian church, for that did not yet exist. Therefore, it must mean the Jewish church. The "man child" born could not be any other than the Lord Jesus Christ, for He alone shares the throne of God. He was born of the virgin Mary, and was the "only begotten" Son of God from the days of eternity." (N. J. Waldorf, Ministry, July 1934, 'Studies in Church History')

Later that year (1934) in the *Signs of the Times*, its co-editor, A. L. Baker, wrote of the weakening of morals, even within Christianity (this was written under the sub-heading of *A Revival of Paganism*)

"The morals and ethics of Christianity are what they are because of the theological basis upon which they rest.

Liberals talk very persuasively about the love of God; but the great fact of the love of God rests upon the gift to this world of His only-begotten Son. If we deny the deity of Christ, we deny that God gave us His only Son; and if we deny that, what about the greatest demonstration of His to humankind?

With tears in their eyes, liberals talk about the love of Christ. But that love was made manifest in the risking of His life as an atonement for sin and the shedding of His blood on Calvary's tree. If the atonement of Christ is denied, if His blood was not shed vicariously, then where is His love?

Liberals write much about the brotherhood of man. But the brotherhood of man is dependent upon the Sonship of Christ and the Fatherhood of God. If we deny that Christ was the very Son of God and that God was in truth the very Father of Christ, then what does all the talk about the brotherhood of man amount to? (A. L. Baker, *Signs of the Times*, October 23rd 1934, 'Gleams and Glints of Prophetic Light')

The answer to Baker's question is "nothing". If God did not have a son to send, then He did not have a son to give, so His son could not have made the atonement. To deny the divine Sonship of Christ is to deny the Gospel (see John 3:16). As Baker wrote "the brotherhood of man is dependent upon the Sonship of Christ and the Fatherhood of God".

Baker highlighted the risk belief concerning Christ. In Part 1 of this study we saw that it was still prevalent in the 1940's (see Part 1 pages 44-49).

"THE neighborhood children had gathered at the home of Ezekiel Daniells for the afternoon. After a time they wearied of their games and some one suggested that farmer Daniells might tell them a story. In a little while they were all seated in a circle and were listening breathlessly to his tale.

"The hero of this story was a king's son. His father had placed him on his own throne. He was the adored of all his subjects; his slightest wish was carried out, all the realm sang his praise, for he was a just and wise prince and loved his subjects very deeply.

"Now there was one of his father's generals who secretly desired the kingdom for himself, and gaining the confidence of some of the soldiers of the realm, he instituted a rebellion against the king. But the king's son led the loyal soldiers against this general, and drove him from the kingdom."

"What a wonderful story!" exclaimed the children. "But, of course, it is only a story and never happened." "No," said Mr. Daniells, "the most beautiful part about this story is that it is true. Indeed, by piecing it all together one can read it in the Bible very plainly. Let me explain it to you. The great king is God, Christ is His son and Lucifer, the most beautiful angel of heaven who afterward became Satan, is the enemy. This world is the prison house and the chains represent sin. The lighted way back to God is the one in which Jesus would have us walk." (H. A. Lukens, *The Canadian Watchman*, December 1934, 'Ezekiel Daniells talks about Two Roads')

In the *Signs of the Times* of 25th March 1935, Raymond Bullas wrote

"All our testimonies, instructions, exhortations, derive their first origin and continuous power from the fact that the Father has given to the Son, the Son has given to His servants, the words of truth and life." (Raymond Bullas, *Signs of the Times*, 25th March

1935, 'The Authority of Apostolic Teaching')

Here it is said that we possess these things because "the Father has given to the Son". He later observed

"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.**" (*Ibid*)

After saying that Christ claimed deity, Bullas wrote (under the sub-heading *His Sonship*)

"As the Son of God He claimed equality with the Father. See John 10: 29, 30" (*Ibid*)

Under the next sub-heading (His Equality) we find these words (with a quotation from Prescott's book *The Doctrine of Christ*)

"THE terms "Son of God" and "God the Son" are equivalent expressions in the mind of Jesus. 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:—

"We may conceive the Father existing from eternity and possessing infinite powers, simply because He wills 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 powers, **but these received from the Father, existing because the Father wills Him to exist, eternal and infinite and derived. . . . 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 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.'**" —"Doctrine of Christ," page 20." (*Ibid*)

This quotation was taken from a 1920 Bible study book written by W. W. Prescott. We noted this on pages 115-116. We can see therefore that by 1935, it was still believed and taught by SDA's that Christ derived His attributes from the Father (when He was begotten by God in eternity).

In the *Signs of the Times* in 1936, there was an article called *Who is the Devil?* Its author made mention of the 4th century controversy over Christ, after which he wrote (paragraphs not contiguous)

"Arius' teaching was severely and vehemently opposed by the Western church, who from a Biblical standpoint, in contradistinction to the pagan origin of Arianism, maintained that the Son is of the same essence as the Father, having been begotten of the Father as an only son.... A correct understanding of the nature of Christ is essential to a correct understanding of the problem of evil.

When Christ came to earth, **John says that He possessed "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."** John 1:14. The character of God is made known to man by

"the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." Verse 18. Again John repeats this thought in that very familiar text, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. In the Greek "only begotten" is one word, *monogenes*, which means "only born," "only child." This expression, applied to Christ, clearly implies that Christ is the only-born Son of God, and by the very fact of being *born* of God, He of necessity partakes of the nature and essence of God, just as a human son partakes of the nature and essence of his human father. Then Christ is God.

John was not slow to comprehend this truth, which is the basis of all his writings. "In the beginning was the Word [Christ; see verse 14], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1."

"In association with God, Christ holds the most exalted position in the universe. "He [Christ] is a likeness of the unseen God, born before any creature, for it was through Him that everything was created in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen, angelic thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. He existed before all things and He sustains and embraces them all." Colossians 1:15-17, Goodspeed's translation."

"It was Satan's scheme to become equal with Christ; but this could never be, for Christ was the only begotten of the Father. the same essence as God, and hence God the Son. Lucifer, although created next to Christ in position, was nevertheless a created being. and did not and could not partake of the essence of the Godhead." (G. T. Smisor, *Signs of the times*, July 14th 1936, 'Who Is the Devil?')

As will be seen later, this was in complete agreement with what was said to be, by the General Conference that year (1936), the official belief of SDA's (see pages 142-152). Smisor also explained (this was under the sub-heading *Christ our Creator*)

"Christ is therefore the author of the moral law given to man, and He is the one who reiterated it from Sinai and wrote it with His own finger on two tables of stone. Exodus 31:18." (*Ibid*)

As we know, the Bible says that it was God who spoke and wrote the moral law of the Ten Commandments, therefore Smisor is saying that Christ is God.

In 1937, in an article called *The Sonship and Deity of Christ* (which was the second part in a series of studies on the Book of Hebrews), the author, T. M. French, says (paragraphs not contiguous)

"Having introduced the Son, the apostle immediately sets Him forth in His exalted position with the Father from the days of eternity. Paul declares the Son to be the "heir of all things, by whom also He [God] made the worlds."

"Continuing his discourse concerning the Son, Paul says of Him: "Who being the brightness of His [God's] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Verse 3. It would seem that the apostle is endeavoring to show that Christ was indeed the very Son of God in every respect. He bore the likeness of His Father, even "the express image of His person." Man was created "in the image of God," after His "likeness" (Gen. 1:26, 27); but the Son,

begotten of the Father, bore the "express image of His person."

"The establishing of Christ's sonship likewise proves His deity. The Son possesses all the powers of the Father. Since the Father is God, the Son also is God. The Son not only "by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they [the angels]," but He possesses the very nature of His Father. He is the second person of the heavenly trinity." (T. M. French. *Review and Herald*, May 20th 1937, 'The Sonship and Deity of Christ')

French then goes on to explain the Sonship and Deity of Christ

"Concerning the sonship of Christ, the apostle Paul quotes from Psalms 2:7, 8: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." (Compare with Heb. 1:5.)

But the apostle goes further, and cites a psalm in which the Son is called "God." He 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." Verse 8. The psalm quoted reads: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter." Ps. 45:6 And it continues: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Verse 7." (*Ibid*)

Under the sub-heading *The Son Compared With the Angels*, the author continues

"The Son "by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than" the angels. They are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1:14. But the Son, as God, sits on the throne and receives worship. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten! Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? And when He bringeth again [margin] the first begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.' Verses 5, 6. It will be observed by these texts that: the Son receives worship, whereas the angels worship Him." (*Ibid*)

French was a very well-known administrator, evangelist and missionary. In 1937 he was Associate Editor of the *Review and Herald*.

In the *Watchman Magazine* in 1938, an article was published called *Are You Intellectually Honest?* Its author, Margaret Locke, wrote

"The Bible says, 'God is love.' That means, of course, that love is one of the strongest attributes of His character. God's love for His Son was so great that He bestowed upon Him all power and wisdom. We read that God possessed His Son 'in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.' [Proverbs 8: 22.] Speaking of Himself through His inspired servant Solomon, Christ continues: 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was,' and in the 30th verse: 'I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.' We all know the much quoted and loved verse, John 3: 16: 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' He `so loved that He gave.' One must first possess in order to give.

Ephesians 3: 9 says: God 'created all things by Jesus Christ.' Colossians 1:15 says the Son is the image of His Father, and verse 16 says: 'By Him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible: . . . all things were created by Him, and for Him.

Christ, having been endowed with creative power, brought into existence the angels of heaven." (M. Locke, *The Watchman Magazine*, March 1938, 'Are you Intellectually Honest?')

Once again, this time in 1938, it is said that God "endowed" Christ with "creative power". Locke also said that "God's love for His Son was so great that He bestowed upon Him all power and wisdom". As we have seen, this was an ongoing statement made by past SDA's.

In the *Church Officers' Gazette* for June 1938, there was an article called *The Position Decreed by the Father for the Son*. It began by quoting Hebrews 1:5, 6 which says

"UNTO which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the First Begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:5, 6." (*Church Officers' Gazette*, June 1938, 'The Position Decreed by the Father for the Son')

Its author, T. E. Bowen, the Editor of the Gazette, wrote

"This is a wonderful revelation setting forth the everlasting relationship existing between the Father and the Son, and between the Son and the angels and all other created beings. This relationship existed in the beginning, before sin entered the Father's universe, and will still exist when sin, with all its opposing assumed authority, shall be destroyed from the Father's realm." (*Ibid*)

After quoting from *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 36 where Ellen White had said "The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son, and show the relation He sustained to all created beings", also that "Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven, the King declared that none but Christ, the only begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will", Bowen wrote

"What a wonderful statement outlining the relationship of the Father to His Son, and of the Son to all created intelligences) Likewise couched in this statement is the foreword, the prophecy, concerning the Son's loyalty down through the centuries in executing "the mighty counsels" of His "Father's will," The whole Bible is required for recording the outworking of the Father's will concerning the earth." (*Ibid*)

Bowen later commented

"And after accomplishing this mighty task of redeeming not only the earth, but all who should believe on Him, did this Son continue to maintain the position assigned Him in the beginning, by not exalting Himself contrary to His Father's will—loyally maintaining His position of Son, still subject to His Father's will." (*Ibid*)

In *The Church Officers' Gazette*, in an article called *The Ideal Mother*, it was said

“The Father's plan of salvation included the sending of His only Son down to earth, away from the glory and comforts of heaven; away from those who knew and loved Him. God the Father placed His only-begotten Son, His most treasured possession, in the bosom of a mother's love. He knew that next to His love for His Son was 'the love of an ideal mother. The holy Being left heaven to nestle beneath a mother's heart only as love prepared her for the task.” (*The Church Officers' Gazette, May 1939, 'The Ideal Mother'*)

The official 1936 Godhead beliefs of SDA's

As we have seen above, shortly following the death of Ellen White (1915), a Bible Conference was convened. This took place in 1919 at Takoma Park (see pages 100-115). It had been authorised by the General Conference. At that time, just as it had been throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry, the majority belief was that Christ really is the divine Son of God - begotten of God, at a point in eternity. At this conference, this belief was challenged. The challenge came from our church leadership. Nevertheless, even W. W. Prescott (who could be described as one of the 'leaders' of those at the 1919 conference who wanted change) could not deny that Christ was begotten.

This dispute appears to have been ongoing. It is possible therefore that this was one of the reasons why the General Conference Committee decided in 1934 that a series of Sabbath School lesson studies should be produced detailing the official beliefs of the SDA Church. It could also have been because some were disputing the still 'fairly new' 1931 statement of beliefs that had been put into our Yearbook - also into the newly produced church manual in 1932. If this were true, it would mean that there was controversy and division at 'high level' over what we, as a denomination, taught about God and Christ.

Whatever the underlying reasons for these Sabbath School studies, they were designed, as we shall now see, to make absolutely 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 that minority may have been some of our 'very persuasive', also what we could term 'progressive', church leadership. These beliefs therefore, set out in these Bible studies, were the 'official doctrines' of the SDA Church (as opposed to the personal views of some).

In the General Conference Committee meeting notes of November 8th 1934 it is recorded

“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 8th 1934, page 1401*)

One of these “ways and means” was to produce a set of Sabbath School lessons detailing the official beliefs of SDA's. 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 6th, 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 produce these studies. Remember, the Sabbath School had been requested for them to be provided “at an early date” so why now, over one year later, were they asking for “special help”? The minutes do not say, but what we do know 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 this help to those compiling the studies. These people together would know for sure what SDA’s 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 who had been nominated to formulate the 1931 statement of beliefs.

The above GC committee notes reveal how important these Sabbath School studies were to the General Conference. It appears that our church leadership did not wish these beliefs to contain even the smallest of errors. As we shall now see, these studies were intended to ‘tell the world’ what was officially believed by SDA’s. They were to commence from the 4th quarter 1936. They were to continue for seven consecutive quarters (one and three-quarter years). The final quarter of these studies therefore was the 2nd quarter of 1938.

It is very important to understand how the SDA Church regarded these lesson studies, therefore, before I begin to show what was in the studies themselves, I will share with you the promotion they received.

Just four months prior to the first of the above lesson studies being published (October 1936) they were 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 8th 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 18th 1936).

In the afternoon session, the future Sabbath School Lessons on *Bible Doctrines* came up for discussion. In the 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 18th 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 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 SDA Church. Remember, this was 1936. Haynes was then the President of the Michigan Conference.

Four weeks later in the *Review and Herald* there was a report of the recent councils of the secretaries of the Home Missionary Department. It said

“A great deal of time was required for the consideration of a topic of unusual interest,— how to make the most effective missionary use of the Sabbath school lessons on Bible doctrines which the Sabbath School Department has provided to be used beginning with the fourth quarter of 1936 and covering a period of seven consecutive quarters. The chairman explained that these lessons are prepared in a form which provides a simple outline for a Bible reading on each doctrinal subject. He said:

“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 16th 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. They were believed to have 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 explained

“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*)

The report added

“It was also recommended that our publishing houses provide a suitable loose-leaf

notebook binder for preserving this special series of doctrinal Sabbath School Lesson Quarterlies, to serve as a permanent textbook of Bible studies for the special benefit of lay members" (*Ibid*)

In the *Review and Herald* of December 17th 1936 (this was when the first quarter's lessons on *Bible Doctrines* were actually in the process of being studied), G. A. Roberts spoke of the Sabbath School work. 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. he said

"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 17th 1936, 'The Sabbath School Lesson')

There was no mistaking what Roberts was saying. These studies had been "fully authenticated by the lesson committee of the General Conference Sabbath School Department". As he says, what is being taught in them is "is correct.". It was that which SDA's then officially believed.

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. It should go without saying that the beliefs contained in these studies were regarded as of prime importance. Baptismal candidates were to be taught them as being the beliefs of the church they were seeking to join. This is why these beliefs had to be so detailed and so accurate. No mistake could be made.

In other of our publications, the report of the San Francisco Conference promoting these studies was repeated but there is no value in repeating it here. I will though share with you other comments. Here are some I found. .

In the *Columbian Union Visitor* when promoting these studies, George Butler began by saying

“For at least twenty-one months, beginning Sunday, September 27, the entire church will be studying Bible doctrines.- Seven volumes of the Sabbath School quarterly will outline these lessons clearly as an aid to every member in giving Bible studies.”
(George Butler, *Columbian Union Visitor*, October 1st 1936, ‘Special to every Ohio member’)

He also made this particular observation

“A very interesting and valuable additional feature will be the weekly appearance in the *Signs of the Times* of an able articles and outline synchronizing with the weekly Sabbath School lesson. How convenient it will be to be able to place a copy of the Signs in the hands of your Bible readers, giving them in print the subject you have studied this evening” (*Ibid*)

I will return to this point about the *Signs* articles later. Butler concluded

“Never since we came on the stage of action was there a step taken along the lines of educating the laity so great a scale as is happening in the form of these lessons and Signs articles. Truly, every intelligent member (all members are) should avail himself of these valuable aids and endeavor to prepare that he may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, with meekness and efficiency. The opportunity lies before us. What shall Ohio members do with it? (*Ibid*)

Two weeks later the following remarks are found in the same paper

“We have now entered upon the last quarter of the year 1936 and it was with pleasure that we turned to the new series of Sabbath school lessons planned by the General Conference for the coming twenty-one months.... While we all have a keen knowledge of the message, a course in Bible Doctrines will prepare us for the great work of the closing scenes of this world's history. So, as never before, the Sabbath school will be the "The Church at Study.

The beauty of these lessons will be found in its form, for while they are brief, each one is complete in itself, and those who are faithful in study will be prepared to present these truths in a way that will bring light to those not familiar with the Bible.” (Eloise F. Williams, *Columbian Union Visitor*, October 15th 1936, ‘The Soul-Winning Sabbath School’)

Under the sub-heading *The Branch Sabbath School*, the following was in *The Jamaican Visitor* of October 1936

“The wonderful lessons on the Life of Christ have come to a close and now a set of lessons on Bible Doctrines has been started. What a wonderful opportunity is given our members to present our doctrines through these Sabbath school lessons to those in their communities! At the recent General Conference recommendations were

passed to urge our members to go out and start branch schools and in this way increase the membership of the schools and make them the soul-winning agency they are designed to be. I am passing these resolutions on to you and I trust each school in the conference will follow the suggestions and organize branch schools among their neighbours and friends. God will bless your efforts.” (Mrs C. E. Andross, *The Jamaican Visitor*, October 1936, ‘Sabbath School Dept.’)

A few months later (January 1937) there was an advertisement in the *Review and Herald* for a binder in which to keep these lessons on *Bible Doctrines*. It said

“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 14th 1937, ‘Preserve your Lesson Quarterlies on Bible Doctrines’)

So as we can see, 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 preservation of these studies. They were said to be “invaluable for continuous reference”.

After reading the above, we can see that by the General Conference in the late 1930’s/early 1940’s, these 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 set of studies contained the “essential doctrines” of the faith of the SDA 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. Those coming into the church during the late 1930’s and 1940’s etc. would have been taught these beliefs. It would have taken decades for all of these people to die off.

It is only reasonable to conclude that what was in these lesson studies were the beliefs (doctrines) that were then held by the majority of SDA’s living throughout the world. It could not have been the minority view of just ‘some’. These studies were said to be the official faith of SDA’s. It would not have been the official faith if it was only the beliefs of a minority. In reality, what was in these studies was only the same as what was believed during the time of Ellen White’s ministry.

So what did these lesson studies actually say concerning the Godhead? We shall now take a look at this, but because space is limited, our remarks will be confined to what was said concerning only the Father and the Son. The lesson study in its entirety for the 4th quarter 1936 can be viewed here

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

On page 10 of the study, the question is asked

“How does the Father address the Son? Heb. 1:8.

As Hebrews 1:8 is cited, the answer must be that the Father addressed His Son as God.

The study then moved on to referring to Christ. It asked (this was under the heading *Unity of the Godhead*)

“How is the place of the Son in the Godhead emphasized? (*Ibid*, 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*)

This 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 both Ephesians 3:17 and 1 John 4:15 are cited, it can be seen that this oneness (unity) has nothing to do with trinity oneness (for an explanation of trinity oneness see Part 1 of this study pages 10-13). It had everything to do with the believer's spiritual experience in Christ. We noted in Part 1 of this study that in 1931, this was F. M. Wilcox's understanding of the unity in the Godhead (see Part 1 pages 70-76). 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.

The next week's study (lesson No. 4) was called *Deity and Pre-existence of Christ*. It began with the memory verse

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: . . . and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Col.1:15, 17.” (*Ibid*, Lesson 4, page 12)

Then, under the sub-heading *Deity of Christ*, the first question of the study was

“Of whom was Christ begotten? (*Ibid*)

This shows that the ‘begotten faith’, held by SDA's 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), and 38 years after the publication of her book *Desire of Ages* (1898). This is the book that our church today uses to promote the trinity doctrine, also to deny the belief that Christ is begotten. However, it is quite apparent that in 1936, this was not then the reasoning of our church.

Remember, these were the official beliefs of SDA's. They were not just the personal views of a certain minority – albeit the minority may have been some of the church leadership. Some of this minority (who would disagree with these beliefs) would 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 SDA's but also to non-members. 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 SDA Church. This ‘begotten faith’ therefore, in 1936, was still the worldwide faith of SDA's. It was this belief that the newcomers to the church were to be taught.

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 therefore He is God. Today, by the SDA Church, this begotten belief is deemed to be false doctrine (heresy).

We have seen that the General Conference endorsed these studies. We have also seen that these studies were deemed by the conference to explain the *official* denominational faith of SDA's. This means that in the 1940's – also the 1950's - this faith must still have been our official faith. This is because 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 SDA's for many more years to come.

On page 12 the study asked

“What did the Father call His Son? (*Ibid*, page 12)

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 – meaning when He was 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 what was then the ‘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 SDA's 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 overall emphasis of this 1936 Sabbath School lesson study. It is that because Christ is begotten of God He is "really God". Repeatedly throughout this study this same belief is stressed. From this we can see that the remarks some have made recently saying that the begotten concept denigrates Christ is totally misrepresentative of what is really believed by those who hold to this belief.

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 SDA's in 1936 believed and taught. 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, SDA's still maintained - just as they had done so during Ellen White's ministry - that Christ literally "came out of the Father" – meaning "He truly was "begotten of the Father". This was also an affirmation of deity. The fact that Christ came out of the Father shows that He is God. 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.

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." (*Ibid, 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. 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.” (*Ibid*)

This would be the same ‘life’ that in the *Desire of Ages*, Ellen White described as “life, original, unborrowed, underived” (page 530). In the 1936 Godhead studies on *Bible Doctrines* (4th Quarter 1936), this statement from *Desire of Ages* was not used. In fact I cannot find this statement anywhere in the entire 7 quarter's lesson studies.

The next question in the lesson study asks

“When does the prophet say the life of the Son began? Micah 5:2. margin.” (*Ibid*, 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. 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*)

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 the same on a number of occasions (see note on page 57). The margin note is nearer to the meaning of the original Hebrew. 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.” He was therefore no part of creation, but was “begotten of the Father” in the days of eternity, and was very God Himself.” (*Ibid*)

Repeatedly this 1936 lesson study conveyed the belief that Christ was truly begotten of the Father therefore He was truly the Son of God - also as this lesson stated, “very God Himself”. Note it makes clear that Christ was “no part of creation”.

Some may like to express the view (insist even) that because Christ is begotten of God, then there was a time when He did not exist. It is here that I would like to offer a word of caution.

I do not believe that what we have in Scripture is a complete revelation of God. I believe though that what God has revealed of Himself is enough to take us through the 6000-year emergency situation that we are still in today.

The Bible is very clear, as is the spirit of prophecy, that Christ is God's only begotten Son, but this is as far 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.

From this 1936 Sabbath School Lesson study, it can be very clearly seen that at that time, the SDA Church was not a trinitarian denomination. In other words, it did not have the trinity doctrine as one of its fundamental beliefs. It is also reasonably obvious that our church, well over 40 years after the publication of the book *the Desire of Ages*, had not abandoned the begotten concept.

One more thing before I move on. I did say previously that I would come back to where George Butler wrote concerning the studies

“A very interesting and valuable additional feature will be the weekly appearance in the *Signs of the Times* of an able articles and outline synchronizing with the weekly Sabbath School lesson.” (George Butler, *Columbian Union Visitor*, October 1st 1936, ‘Special to every Ohio member’)

It is important to remember that it was not the articles in the *Signs of the Times* that depicted the official faith of SDA’s but the studies in the Sabbath School lessons. The articles in the *Signs* did not, as did the studies, have General Conference approval.

If the article in the *Signs* that corresponded to lesson 3 is read, it will be seen that there is a decided leaning towards the trinity doctrine: whereas in the lesson study there was not. This possibly reveals the tension between those who were in a position to get their thoughts into print, and the church at large. It did ask though in the lesson outline

“How does Jesus teach the unity of the Godhead, while declaring His eternal Sonship with the Father? ” (*Signs of the Times*, October 7th 1936, ‘Unity and Trinity’)

In the second article there is no mention of Christ being begotten of God whereas in the lesson study, it is strongly emphasised. The only mention of the word 'begotten' is where John 1:14 and 3:16 is quoted although it does ask in the lesson outline

“How may we know that Jesus' existence began before His birth into this world” (*Signs of the Times*, October 14th 1936, ‘The Deity of Christ’)

These *Signs* articles are found here

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/ST/ST19361006-V63-39.pdf>

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/ST/ST19361013-V63-40.pdf>

Period:1940-1949

General publications

T. E. Bowen, in the Church Officers’ Gazette in the February of 1941, quoted Hebrews 1:4-5 then wrote (this was 5 years after Sabbath School studies we have just seen)

“How simple the language! How precious the thought of such exalted relationship's existing between the infinite Father, of whom are all things, and His glorious Son by whom and for whom all things in heaven and in earth were brought into existence! Jesus, the Son, while here among us as the Son of man, made known this relationship in these words:

"All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Luke 10:22." (T. E. Bowen, *The Church Officers' Gazette*, February 1941, 'That More Excellent Name Received by Inheritance')

Then, under the sub-heading *Contesting Christ's Supremacy* he commented

"Before the great contest between good and evil opened in heaven, before our earth had been created, as the prince of angels was about to seek to impeach the wisdom of God the Father, in committing unto His onlybegotten Son the position He was to sustain to all His created beings, the Father proclaimed the supremacy of the Son, high above every name named in heaven or in earth." (*Ibid*)

The next month, Bowen wrote in the same paper (quoting Ellen White)

"Wondrous combination of man and God! He might have helped His human nature to withstand the inroads of disease by pouring from His divine nature [which He had obtained by inheritance as the only-begotten Son of God] vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. But He humbled Himself to man's nature. . . . What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination cannot take it in." (T. E. Bowen, *The Church Officer's Gazette*, March 1941, 'When Christ Stepped Down From His Father's Throne')

Bowen was quoting here from an article that had been written by Ellen White. This article had been published in the *Review and Herald* on two occasions (July 5th 1887, and September 4th 1900). Notice the part highlighted in red. These were Bowen's own words. He was taking great care to show that Christ received His divine nature as an inheritance from His Father.

In the *Review and Herald* of August 23rd 1941, there was an editorial called *Christ's claims concerning Himself*. It was the second in a series called *The faith of Jesus*. The series was written by Frederick Lee, associate editor of the *Review and Herald*. It began

"Christ made stupendous claims concerning Himself. This should be clear to anyone who has read the four Gospel records of His life. The Christian religion must stand or fall on the claims of Christ. All men must decide personally whether or not they believe that Christ, though being the son of man in fact, is likewise the Son of God in reality. Christ believed Himself to be the Son of God, and declared it on many occasions either directly or by inference, and allowed others to address Him in this manner. This is a chief tenet in the faith of Jesus that one must assent to in mind and accept in spirit in order to receive the marvelous benefits which Christ offers to men. (F. Lee, *Review and Herald*, August 21st 1941, 'Christ's claims concerning Himself')

A truer statement has never been made. The belief that Christ is the Son of God is the very foundation of the Christian faith. Note Lee says that Christ was "the Son of God in reality". This Sonship faith, in 1941, was still the preponderant faith of SDA's. The author of the article later added

"Strange it is that, after studying the claims of Christ and then noting the influence of His life through two thousand years of history, men should still hesitate to declare as did Peter in that early day, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God:" Matt. 16:16....Those who hesitate to acknowledge Him as the true Son of God apparently

have no reluctance in acclaiming Him to be the world's perfect man, seemingly not realizing that by so doing they are quite inconsistent and are proclaiming a paradox. How could Christ, with all He claimed to be, be untrue in those claims and still be perfect? Either Christ is what He claims to be or He is the world's worst impostor.” (Ibid)

Note the remark – “the true Son of God” – also that Christ’s claim to divinity is integrally linked to His Sonship. In other words, if Christ is the Son of God then He must be divine. He must be God.

Referring to the baptism of Jesus and the words of the Father saying "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee - I am well pleased" (see Luke 3:22), Lee later commented

“These words no doubt awakened within the soul of Christ a conviction that was ever present with Him, that He was indeed the Son of God come into the world to fulfill those prophecies which foretold the coming of Him who was with God before the foundations of the earth were laid and who should come to redeem men from the thralldom of sin and death. Following this awakening, the first challenge He had to meet was concerning His Sonship, for the devil, who met Him in the wilderness, hurled at Him not once, but twice, the insinuating words. "Thou be the Son of God." Matt. 4:3, 6.” (Ibid)

Lee concluded

“Let us hasten to suggest that Christ looked upon God as His Father in verity and not merely in the spiritual sense in which we speak of God as our Father today. No one can read Christ's words without being certain of this.” (Ibid)

Notice here the emphasis that Lee is placing upon saying that Christ is “indeed the Son of God” – also that Christ “in verity” (in truth) looked upon God as His father. As Lee says, this is not as we call God our Father (“the spiritual sense”). As he said, the very first challenge Jesus met as His ministry began “was concerning His Sonship” (“if you are the Son of God” said Satan).

The article later said (this was after detailing some of the numerous times that Jesus is called the Son of God – also that He claimed this title for Himself)

“In the Gospel of John it is recorded that Christ referred to Himself as "the Son" or "the Son of God" more than twenty times.” (Ibid)

There can be no dispute regarding the point that Lee was making. He also said

“Christ was rejected of His people and condemned to die because He claimed to be the Son of God.” (Ibid)

The reason why the Jews said that Christ was worthy of death was because He claimed to be the Son of God (John 19:7). They said that by making this claim, He was making Himself equal to God (see John 5:18). They knew exactly what He was claiming.

Lee’s emphasis in his article was that Christ truly was the Son of God.

There is recorded, in the *Australian Record* of October 27th 1941, an address given, at a

recent conference session, by Pastor J. B. Conley. He was Bible teacher at Avondale College. After quoting from Ellen White's *Patriarchs and Prophets*, where she had written of Satan "coveting the glory with which the Infinite Father had invested His Son" (see *Patriarchs and Prophets* pages 35-36), he wrote that

"Apparently a rivalry with Christ, who was made in the "express image of the Father," was the basis of the ambition of this Lucifer who aspired "to be like the Most High." (J. B. Conley, *Australasian Record*, October 27th 1941, 'The Triumph of the Remnant')

Again we see it said that Christ "was made in the "express image of the Father". This is concerning Christ's pre-existence (see Hebrews 1:1-3). Note that this was now 43 years after the publication of the *Desire of Ages*. This was in keeping with where Ellen White had written in 1895

"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* 9th July 1895 'The Duty of the Minister and the People')

Over the years, this statement, and the testimony in which it found, has been published on numerous occasions in SDA literature.

As 1941 drew to a close, A. R. Ogden explained

"By leaving heaven and coming to earth to dwell with man, living in and with humanity, Jesus revealed God to men. He was in reality the word of God— God's thought made visible and audible. He was "Immanuel . . . God with us." Matthew 1:23. Being made in the very image of His Father from the days of eternity, He could declare perfectly the love and character of the Father." (A. R. Ogden, *Signs of the Times*, December 16th 1941, *God Revealed to Men*)

Here we see it said again, in keeping with what we have been told by Ellen White (see pages 64-68 of this study) that in eternity, that Christ was "made in the very image of His Father".

Roy Cottrell wrote in an article in 1942

"As his birthright legacy, a son inherits the family name from his earthly father, so Christ inherited from His Father "a more excellent name" than any of the angels; and the above quotation states the remarkable fact that the Father Himself conferred upon His "only-begotten Son" the name and title of God." (Roy. F. Cottrell, *Signs of the Times*, August 18th 1942, 'Christ in All the Bible')

This is the same faith, as we have seen above, that had been held by SDA's since their very beginnings. It is that Christ inherited His name from His father,

In the Australian *Signs of the Times* of January 4th 1943, there was a study of the Godhead. This is what is said about Christ

"1. Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father. John 1: 14; 3: 16, 18.

2. 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.

3. The Father calls His Son "God," and therefore He must be God. Heb. 1: 8-10." (*Australian Signs of the Times*, January 4th 1943, *A Bible Study*, No. 9"

Notice it says that Christ must be "of the same substance as the Father", also possess "the same divine attributes that God has" because He is "begotten of the Father".

Number 10 said

"Although Christ is the Son of God, yet He says His Father is greater than Himself. John 14: 28." (*Ibid*)

Here again we see a continuation of the beliefs held by SDA since we began as a denomination. This was written in 1943, in a study of the Godhead.

The next month, in an article called *He must have been God* (sub-heading – *Twenty-Two Claims to Deity*), J. C. Stevens wrote (this was after saying that some people say that Christ was only a good man and not divine)

"But if He were not divine, if He were not the Son of God as He so often claimed to be, then it would put a strain on one's faith to believe that He was a good man, or a saint, because His claims would have been untrue, misleading, and deceptive—claims that could be made only by an impostor." (*J. C. Stevens, Signs of the Times*, 2nd February 1943, 'He must have been God')

Christ was no deceiver or impostor. This is why, when He said He was the Son of God, He meant it. In reality, there is no reason to believe otherwise. Note again the link between Him being the Son of God and Him being divine. Each time the two go hand in hand.

Stevens then goes on to list 22 claims that Christ made (concluding Christ to be deity) – number 5 of which said

"He claimed to be the Son of God, not denying that He was also the Son of man. Of the blind man whom He had healed, He asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God ? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." John 9:35-37. He" (*Ibid*)

After listing the 22 claims of Christ also in conclusion of his study (as opposed to what is believed by trinitarians), Stevens said

"Now after all these claims, there is but one choice: we must either believe He was what He claimed to be, or that He was a mad blasphemer; but He was exactly what He claimed to be. He was the Son of God. He was divine. And when He died on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sins of the world, His was not a human sacrifice, but a divine one. He was the Son of God in human form. What a wonderful Saviour! He is able to save to the uttermost! (*Ibid*)

Note the words "His was not a human sacrifice, but a divine one". This is a denial of the trinity doctrine. Trinitarians say that at Calvary only the human nature of Christ died, not a

divine person. Thus trinitarians say we only have – and only need for atonement – a sacrifice which is human. Note here again the emphasis on Christ being the Son of God. It is unmistakable. It is this that makes him divine.

In the same issue of the *Signs of the Times*, in the Bible School section, there was a Bible study called *Christ's pre-existence and Deity*. This shows what was taught in 1943 by SDA's (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, 2nd 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 the belief that Christ is truly the Son of God (begotten of God in eternity) was still, in 1943, being taught in our periodicals. This was in the form of a Bible study. Notice again it is said that Christ's claim to divinity is integral to Him claiming to be the Son of God.

After quoting John 10:30 and 33, Youngs went on to say (this was in answer to question 13 - ‘Why did the Jews persecute and put to death the Lord Jesus?’)

NOTE.—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*)

Again we can see that this begotten concept makes Christ equal to God – not inferior to Him. The article says that the Jews recognised Christ's claims but would not accept them.

“Lucifer, whose name signifies “Light-bearer,” occupied the exalted position of covering cherub by the throne of God, and was the leader of the angelic host. He became lifted up with pride and aspired to be equal with God. Only Christ, the begotten Son of God, had this equality, and Lucifer became jealous of Christ. Clear information on this subject is given in Isaiah 14 12-15, and Ezekiel 28:12-19.” (*L. A. Smith, Watchman, September 1943, 'The Need of Divine Revelation'*)

In 1944, Carlyle B Haynes spoke of those of the religious educational authority who were claiming that Christ is not God, and who therefore denied the deity of Christ (paragraphs contiguous).

“It is ridiculous to claim to believe in the teachings of Christ, and accept His morality, and refuse to believe in His deity. He said that He was God. Either He told the truth or He was an imposter. And no one can believe in the morality of an imposter.

There is no neutral ground that can be taken here; either Jesus was what He claimed to be,—God,—or He lied when He claimed to be what He was not. It is ridiculous to take the position that Jesus was a good man and then refuse to believe what He says. A good man does not lie.

These ecclesiastics who claim to accept the teachings of Jesus, His great moral teachings, His wonderful ethics, and who look upon Him as a great moral leader, but do not accept His deity, are self-deceived. One of the chief teachings of Jesus was that He was the divine Son of God. All His other teachings have value only as they are viewed in the light of His divine authority.

Jesus came as God. He did the works of God. He spoke the words of God. He lived the life of God. He claimed to be God. Is His claim true?

Certainly the claims of Jesus are not those of a mere human teacher. He said: "I and My Father are one." John 10:30. Again, He said: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John 16:28. This certainly implies pre-existence and eternity of being." (Carlyle B. Haynes, *Signs of the Times*, July 4th 1944, 'Christian Leaders Reject Christ')

The SDA Encyclopedia describes Carlyle Haynes as "one of the better-known Seventh-day Adventist writers on Bible doctrines for lay readers" (SDA Encyclopedia Volume 10 page 674).

In the November issue of the *Canadian Signs of the Times* in 1944, it advertised the next month's issue by saying

"The December issue grasps the opportunity afforded by the Christmas season to make plain the true and the false with reference to the birth of Christ, in "Ring Out, Bells of Heaven"..." (*Canadian Signs of the Times*, November 1944, 'Signs of the Times')

So what was this "true and false with reference to the birth of Christ"? In a small article called *Ring out, Bells of Heaven*, the December issue said (paragraphs not contiguous)

"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. In some mysterious way Jesus changed into a new existence when He was born of His human mother, Mary. He began to live the second time; yet He had lived before." (*Canadian Signs of the Times*, December 1944, 'Ring out, Bells of Heaven!')

"The transcending truth that He was born again to bring reconciliation between God and men, is the fact to be emphasized. And the vital thing for men to-day is that we may be born again by virtue of His being born again.

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*)

Note - this was in 1944. This is exactly the same faith as was held by SDA's whilst Ellen White was alive. At this time it was still highly prominent in SDA literature. It was said that at Bethlehem, Christ was "born again" – the first time being in eternity.

In the *Review and Herald* of August 16th 1945, there was published a testimony that had been written by Ellen White. Under the heading of *General Articles* it quoted her as saying

"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 God loved mankind. He is willing to do more, more than we can "ask or think." (*Review and Herald, August 16th 1945, The Duty of the Minister and the People*)

As we have seen, throughout the time of her ministry, also for decades after her death, this was the consistent belief of SDA's. I cannot find this statement published again until it was quoted in the *Lake Union Herald* of 2011.

In 1945, in an article about angels, W. L. Emmerson wrote

"The distance which separates the angels from man is infinitesimal compared with the gulf which separates the angels from the Son of God. The Son of God, we are told in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, is "much better" than the angels and has "a more excellent name than they." Verse 4. They are created beings; He is the "begotten" of the Father. (Verse 5.) To the Son He said, "Sit on My right hand." Verse 13. But on none of the angels did He confer this signal honour. Concerning the Son, God commanded the angels: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Verse 6. But the angels are entitled to no such adoration. Elsewhere, in fact, we find the worshipping of angels expressly forbidden. (Col. 2: 18.)" (*W. L. Emmerson, Present Truth, October 11th 1945, 'Angels and their Ministry - Who are the Angels?'*)

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 (again this reveals the denominational faith of SDA's at that time)

"In what particular is the Father superior to all?" (*Dallas Youngs, Signs of the Times, January 1st 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*)

As we have seen above, during the time of Ellen White's ministry, this was the continuing faith of SDA's.

Under the heading 'Son of God', the study asks

"Who is the First-born of every creature? In whose image is the Son?" (*Ibid*)

The answer is returned that Christ is “the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature.” Colossians 1:15.” (*Ibid*)

The study then asks a very important question – also one which is very significant as far as our study is concerned. This is

“When was the Son brought forth?” (*Ibid*)

This shows that in 1946, in one of our major publications (the *Signs of the Times*), the begotten concept concerning Christ was still being officially taught. This is further endorsed by the answer given which is that Christ is the wisdom of God brought forth as spoken of in Proverbs chapter 8 (Proverbs 8:22-30 quoted). After quoting these verses, Youngs added

“Before any other creature was given life, God brought forth His Son, His onlybegotten Son, made of His own divine substance and in His express image. Christ was “first-born.” The Son was given selfexistent life. He was made immortal; that is, He was given perpetual life within Himself.” (*Ibid*)

This again is the begotten concept. It is that in eternity God brought forth a Son of “His own divine substance” and in “His express image”. This was the “first-born” of heaven. This saying that as a separate personality from the Father, Christ received His immortality by virtue of His inheritance (because He was brought forth – begotten - of the Father – very God of very God. The study then asked

“With what attitude did the Son regard the Father?” (*Ibid*)

The answer was given in the words of Jesus to His disciples

“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.” John 14:28 (*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.

In the *Sabbath School* lesson study for the 2nd Quarter of 1948 (this was a study on the Book of Hebrews) it said on page 6 with reference to Christ

“How did He obtain this more excellent name? Heb. 1:4.” (*Sabbath School Quarterly, 2nd Quarter 1948, page 6*)

As Hebrews 1:4 is cited, the answer must be that Christ received it as an inheritance from His Father. The study then quoted the following from the writings of Ellen White

“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, or Son by adoption as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In Him dwelleth the fullness of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895.” (*Ibid*)

When Arthur Maxwell was editor of the *Signs of times* in 1949, an article was published

called *Heaven's First Family*. This was in the *Seekers after Truth* section. Its author Dallas Youngs wrote (in conversational style)

"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*, 15th 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.

With reference to Daniel 7:9 and its author referring to the Father as the *Ancient of Days* the article said

"Here Daniel calls God the Father the Ancient of Days. This would seem to indicate priority, in point of time, over any other being in the universe. He is the source of all life, light, and power. He is without beginning and without end. He possesses life within Himself. He enjoys absolute, unconditional immortality. He has life unborrowed and underived. That is to say, He is dependent upon no other for His continuance of life." (Ibid)

The Bible is very clear that the Son of God is equal to the Father (Philippians 2:6, John 1:1) so what is meant by "priority" here is that the Father is the "First Cause" – or it could be said - the first amongst equals.

The next week, again in the *Seekers After Truth* section, an article was published called *The Beginning and End of Satan*. Its author wrote in one place

"Satan was once a loyal angel in heaven itself. At that time he was pure and holy, and he enjoyed much honor and glory. At that time he was obedient to the law of God and found pleasure in doing God's will. However, the time came when he became dissatisfied with his position and began to exalt himself. He became proud and coveted the position and honor that were bestowed upon Christ." (Dallas Youngs, *Signs of the Times*, February 22nd 1949, 'The Beginning and End of Satan')

Notice it says that Satan coveted "the position and honor that were bestowed upon Christ". Again this is the begotten concept.

Charles Longacre's 'Deity of Christ' paper (1947)

Charles S. Longacre was a stalwart figure in Seventh-day Adventism. He is often remembered for the stand he took, also the work he did, regarding religious liberty, but he also held strong beliefs concerning the Sonship of Christ - meaning he believed that because Christ was begotten of the Father, He was truly the Son of God.

Longacre understood the dangers of the trinity doctrine – particularly its concept of the indivisibility and immutability of the three personalities. In a paper he wrote for the Bible Research Fellowship (the paper was called *The Deity of Christ*) he did, on a number of occasions, return to the thought that these trinity concepts deny that Christ, in the plan of redemption, could have lost His eternal existence. He repeatedly emphasises that this risk, taken by both God and Christ, shows the love they have for fallen humanity. In summary of his reasoning he said

"If it were impossible for the Son of God to make a mistake or commit a sin, then His coming into this world and subjecting Himself to temptations were all a farce and mere mockery. If it were possible for Him to yield to temptation and fall into sin, then He must have risked heaven and His very existence, and even all eternity. That is exactly what the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy say Christ, the Son of God did do when He came to work out for us a plan of salvation from the curse of sin." (*Charles S. Longacre, 'The Deity of Christ', paper presented to the Bible Research Fellowship Angwin, California January 1947*)

After quoting a number of Ellen White quotations showing that Christ could have lost His eternal existence, he said

"If Christ 'risked all,' even His eternal existence in heaven, then there was a possibility of His being overcome by sin, and if overcome by sin, He would have gone into Joseph's tomb and neither that tomb nor any other tomb would ever have been opened. All would have been lost and He would have suffered 'eternal loss,' the loss of all He ever possessed - His divinity and His humanity and heaven itself would have been 'lost - eternally lost.'" (*Ibid*)

Longacre noted in the next paragraph

"If He had failed, His immutability as well as His eternity would have been forfeited and eternally lost." (*Ibid*)

His conclusion was

"It was possible for one of the God-head to be lost, and eternally lost - and if that had happened, and it was possible to happen, God, the Father, would still have remained as the One and only absolute and living God, reigning supreme over all the unfallen worlds, but with all the human race blotted out of existence on this earth." (*Ibid*)

"Since His spirit did not go to heaven, but the Father committed Christ's spirit to the tomb and it slept with His body in the tomb, and 'all that comprised the life and the intelligence of Jesus remained with His body in the sepulchre,' we must conclude that if Christ had sinned all that ever belonged to Christ would have forever remained in the tomb and Christ would have suffered the 'loss' of His eternal existence. Then God would have taken back to Himself what He gave to His son, namely, the same life He gave His only Begotten Son when He proceeded from the bosom of the Father in the beginning when He became 'the First-born before all creation,' as Paul puts it." (*Ibid*)

There was no doubt in Longacre's mind that the trinity doctrine eclipsed (darkened/obscured) the love that God has for humanity. It is unfortunate that not very many Seventh-day Adventists today see it this way. We noted though, in Part 1 of this study, that this 'risk belief' was often spoken of by earlier SDA's – even those in prominent positions.

Longacre, in his study, spoke much of the Sonship of Christ. It would far too much to quote and comment upon here. I will though, without comment, quote some of his observations. He began his paper by speaking about the beliefs of certain groups. He wrote (please note these paragraphs are not necessarily contiguous)

"We now come to the third group which hold that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, the Father, and that He was such from the days of eternity and was the only one

who proceeded directly from God, being begotten by the Father before all creation, before anything was created in an empty universe. This group hold that the Son of God is equal to the Father, is the express image of the Father, possesses the same substance as the Father, the same life as the Father, the same power and authority as the Father, but that all these attributes were given to the Son of God by the Father, when He was begotten by the Father." (*Ibid*)

"This group believe that the Son of God existed "in the bosom of the Father" from all eternity, just as Levi existed in the "loins of Abraham," as the apostle Paul said; "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him." Heb. 7:9, 10." (*Ibid*)

"Of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it is said in the Scriptures, "He is the only Begotten of the Father." The Son of God was not created like other creatures are brought into existence. He is not a created but a Begotten Being, enjoying all the attributes of His Father. Christ Himself explains His own relationship to the Father as follows: "As the Father had life in Himself," unborrowed, underived, original, independent, and immortal, "so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. John 5:26" (*Ibid*)

"God "only hath immortality." He alone is the only self-existent God. But He gave His Son when He was Begotten the same life he had in Himself, therefore when Christ offered His life as a ransom for the sins of the world, He and He only could make an atonement for all the sins of all the world, because he made "infinite sacrifice," and it required an Infinite sacrifice" to atone for all the sins of mankind and angels who had sinned, in order to satisfy the demands of the law of God and infinite justice." (*Ibid*, page 7)

"Christ had unconditional immortality bestowed upon Him when He was Begotten of the Father. Angels had conditional immortality bestowed upon them when they were created by Christ in the beginning. Angels are immortal but their immortality is conditional. Therefore angels do not die but live on after they sin just as Satan or Lucifer lives on in sin. But since Lucifer and the fallen angels only enjoy conditional immortality, God ultimately will destroy them and take from them the gift of immortality which Christ bestowed on them when He created them. Whatever God bestows he can take away whenever He sees fit." (*Ibid*)

"But Christ, the only Begotten of the Father, made in the "express image" of the Father in person. God not only appointed [Him] to be the Saviour of men, but He appointed Him "heir of all things," "being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He (God) at any time, Thou art My son, This day have I begotten thee?" Heb. 1:2-5. Here we are told that the expression "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee," refers only to Christ and not to any of the angels. Then there must have been a time, a day, when the Son of God was begotten by the Father. On that day, the Father saith unto His only Begotten Son: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever ... therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands." Heb. 1:8-10." (*Ibid*)

"The Spirit of Prophecy says that there was and still is a difference in rank between God - the Father, and God's Son. We read in Vol. 1 of the old Spirit of Prophecy [p.17] thus: "Satan in Heaven, before his rebellion, was a high and exalted angel, next in

honor to God's dear Son." The implication is that God stands first in honor, His only begotten Son comes next, and Lucifer was next to the Son of God. If God and His Son were co-eternal, co-equal, and co-existent so that there was no difference between them then we should not say Lucifer was next to the Son of God but next to God as well" (*Ibid*, page 9)

"Again we read: "Jesus, God's dear Son, had the pre-eminence over all the angelic hosts. He was one with the Father before the angels were created. Satan was envious of Christ, and gradually assumed command which devolved on Christ alone." Why on Christ alone? Why not on God? Because Satan knew that the Son of God had come forth from the Father and was His Son, and he felt he should share equal honors with the Son." (*Ibid*)

He also added later (this is with respect to Ellen White's remark in *Desire of Ages* that in Christ is "life original, unborrowed, underived")

"What kind of life did the Father have in Himself? In God "is life original, unborrowed, underived," "immortal," "independent." "He is the source of life." Christ says, "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given" - the same life, original, unborrowed, underived life to the Son. It was "given" to Him by His Father. Christ was made the source of life just as the Father was the source of life. Christ had the same life the Father had in Himself in His own right. He did not have to derive or borrow it, it was now original with Christ just as it was with the Father. Christ's life was independent of the Father, hence not dependent, derived, or borrowed. He could bestow and give life and create just as the Father could, but the Father gave this life to His Son." (*Ibid*, page 10)

"When this same life the Father had in Himself was given by the Father to His Son so He too had it "in Himself," we are not told. Nor does it make any difference how long it was before anything was created, the fact remains that the Son of God proceeded from the Father, that He was in the bosom of the Father, that His life, "underived, unborrowed" and "given" to Him by the Father, that the Father "ordained" His Son "should be equal with Himself;" that the Father "invested" His Son "with authority," and that the Son does "nothing of Himself alone." (*Ibid* pages 10-11)

Longacre also said that the trinity doctrine undermines the atonement made by Christ at Calvary. Again this is too much to quote here suffice to say he reasoned much the same way as the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism. He said

"Christ always existed in the bosom of the Father, even before He was Begotten as the Son of God, and God and His prophets counted "things which are not," as though they were even before they were manifested. Thus we read that Christ was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and that "Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot... was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times." So Christ existed in the bosom of the Father from all eternity but was manifested when He was begotten by the Father as His Son, as the apostle Paul says, "before all creation." (*Ibid*, page 19)

There was so much more that Longacre said with respect to his objections to the trinity doctrine, but it is far too voluminous to quote here. If you would like to read his paper in its entirety, please go here

Period: 1950 onwards

General publications:

Even into the 1950's, although other views were being presented, it was still taught within Seventh-day Adventism that Christ, prior to coming to earth, was a literal son.

In 1950, Caviness (who was a prominent voice at the 1919 Bible Conference), 5 years before he died, was still referring to Christ as the divine Son of God. He was also making reference to His Sonship. In an article where he refuted that Peter was the first pope (as claimed by Roman Catholics) he said

"Peter had acknowledged the deity of Christ, and it is upon that deity that the church is built. **God had revealed to Peter the great truth of the divine Sonship of the Messiah.**" (L. L. Caviness, *Review and Herald*, August 10th 1950, 'Is Peter the rock or a rock')

As he neared the end of his article, Caviness wrote

"We prefer to be members of a church built on the divine Son of God rather than on a man who denied his Saviour and to whom Christ said that when he was converted he should strengthen the brethren. (Luke 22:32.)." (*Ibid*)

In 1950, Caviness was professor of biblical languages at Pacific Union College.

In 1951, in the section *Bible Answers*, a reader of the *Canadian Signs of the Times* asked

"Dear Bible Answerman: I read in the Bible that some of the leading Jews found fault with Christ for claiming power to forgive sin. Does Christ have power to forgive sin the same as the Father?" (*Canadian Signs of the Times*, January 1951, 'Bible Answers')

The answer given was

"When Christ was upon earth He affirmed His power to forgive sin. "The Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins." Luke 5:24. Christ set this forth as one of the evidences of His divinity. The Pharisees and other leading Jews of the time, not recognizing His divinity, naturally denied His power to forgive sin. They maintained that only God was able to do that. **The point wherein the Pharisees failed was that they did not see Jesus as the Divine Son of God.** They saw Him only as another man such as they themselves.

It was very true that, as the Pharisees said, only God could forgive sin. **But Christ was God. He was as divine as His Father in heaven. He was of the same substance and essence as His Father. He was a member of the divine Family, and as fully God, and as fully possessed of the divine nature, as was the Father. This does not seem too hard to comprehend.** We have children that are born of our flesh. They possess our human natures in the identical degree that we do. An infant a day old is a human being and is as fully possessed of human nature as his father, who may be a man of thirty or forty. **Human fathers have the ability to transmit their natures to their offspring. Is it unthinkable, then, that the divine Father would not have the ability to transmit His "divine" nature to His Son?**

The power of God should not be so abridged. Some texts may prove helpful. "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5:26" (*Ibid*)

The conclusion was

"God had a Son—one only-begotten Son—upon whom He conferred His own divine nature and all power— all divine power. And prominent among these divine prerogatives was the power to forgive sins." (*Ibid*)

Notice it says that it was unthinkable that "the divine Father would not have the ability to transmit His "divine" nature to His Son", also that God has a Son "upon whom He conferred His own divine nature and all power". The latter was Christ's inheritance from being begotten of God.

In 1952. Arthur Maxwell, as editor of the *Signs of the Times*, wrote

"Coveting the honor which the Father had bestowed upon His Son, Lucifer aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield." (*Arthur S. Maxwell, Signs of the Times, August 5th 1952, 'Christ Warns of Trouble Ahead'*)

In the Oriental Watchman in 1954, under the sub-heading of *His Nature*, Alma McKibbin explained in the section called *Half-hours with the Bible*

"John 3:16. The Son is the Only Begotten of God.

John 5:26. He has life in Himself.

Proverbs 8:22-30. He is eternal. Micah 5:2 (margin). He existed in the days of eternity.

The Son is the second person of the Godhead. The Father recognises Him as His Son and calls Him God. The first chapter of the book of Hebrews sets forth the wonderful majesty, glory, and power of the Son as equal with the Father and superior to all created beings." (*Alma E. McKibbin, The Oriental Watchman and Herald of Health, March 1954, 'God the Son'*)

McKibbin later made these comments

"Jesus as the Son of God said, as we should expect a son to say: "My Father is greater than I." The Son has "life in Himself." So also has the Father. But it is said of the life of the Son that it was given to Him by the Father." (*Ibid*)

"Micah 5:2 (margin) reads, "from the days of eternity." The Son has an eternal existence. Proverbs 8:22-30 shows that He existed before any of the created works of God." (*Ibid*)

"Since in the Son is all the "fullness of the Godhead," He must possess all the attributes that pertain to the Father, all the attributes of Deity." (*Ibid*)

"The Son is superior to every other being by inheritance. He is God, and all others are the creatures, or creations, of God. Not even an angel, though as highly exalted as Lucifer, could ever become equal to the Son of God." (*Ibid*)

This study was first published in the *Signs of the Times* of January 16th 1945.

In 1954, in the *Canadian Signs of the Times*, it was recorded that a reader had enquired

“How is it that Christ has power to forgive sins the same as does the Father?
(Dallas Youngs, *The Canadian Signs of the Times*, June 1954, ‘Bible Answers’)

The editor replied

“It is true that Christ has power to Forgive sins. He affirmed that fact when He was upon earth. "The Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins." Luke 5:24. 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. From Revelation we read:

"Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Revelation 3:14.

Christ can forgive sins the same as the Father because He is divine and so possessed of all the prerogatives of divinity." (*Ibid*)

Once again this is the begotten belief. It is said that Christ “was given existence in the divine way” – and that in doing so “partook of the same divine powers” as His Father.

In the *Ministry* magazine of December 1956, Roland Loasby, who at that time was Professor of New Testament Greek, SDA Theological Seminary, wrote about Peter’s confession that Christ was the Son of the living God (see Matthew 16:16). Under the sub-heading of *Application to Matthew 16:18*, he quoted the reply of Jesus to Peter.

“"Moreover, I also say to thee that thou art Peter [Petros], and upon this rock [petra] I shall build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower her" (Matt. 16:18, literal translation)." (R. E. Loasby, *Ministry*, December 1956, ‘Old Testament Usage of the Hebrew Word Sur, "Rock"’)

He then explained

"In the preceding verses Peter had just made the tremendous statement in respect to Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," thus publicly testifying of His divinity, His godhead. Now Jesus in turn makes a statement that acknowledges Peter, for the apostle's statement emphasizes that he was controlled by the Holy Spirit when he revealed the truth of the Messiahship and Sonship of Christ.

The church of God rests upon the petra, the rock symbolizing the deity and sonship of Jesus Christ, a truth that hell cannot overpower, and not upon Petros, a Grecized masculine form applicable only to men, and never applied to Divinity." (*Ibid*)

Note the emphasis placed upon Christ's "Sonship". This was His divine Sonship. As it says here, Peter's confession that Christ was the Son of God was "publicly testifying of His divinity, His godhead". In other words, if Christ was truly the Son of God, then He must be divine.

In 1959, in an article called *Was Christ divine?*, Robert H. Pierson, later to be the General Conference President (1966-1979) wrote

"Some Christian writers may not teach that Jesus was God, but certainly the inspired writers of the New Testament taught that He was, is, and ever will be the eternal Son of God." (*Robert H. Pierson, Australian Signs of the Times, April 1959, 'Was Christ divine?'*)

Pierson later said

"To whom was God the Father speaking on this sixth day of creation week? The New Testament writer John makes it clear it was Jesus, the Word, the Son of God, who was "with God" in the beginning and without whom "was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3, 14.) Furthermore the inspired writer declares that He was very God Himself. (Verse 1)" (*Ibid*)

The conclusion was

"Yes, Jesus knew from whence He, as the divine Son of God, came, and He likewise knew that, as God's only Son, He was destined to return to His Father." (*Ibid*)

Two months later in the Australasian Record of June 15th 1959, Harry Lowe wrote

"'Trinity' is not a Bible word, nor is any theological definition of it given in Scripture." (*Harry W. Lowe, Australasian Record, June 15th 1959, Sabbath School lesson help, 'God's transcendent and mysterious nature'*)

How very true indeed. He then adds

"Nevertheless, the doctrine is clearly set forth. The incarnation, the virgin birth, the divine Sonship, were fundamental to Christian teaching on the Trinity. The apostles, following the example of Jesus in His baptismal." (*Ibid*)

Harry Lowe (1893-1990) was then the Associate Secretary, General Conference Sabbath School Department. He had moved to the United States in 1947. This was after being the South England Conference President (1933-1935), also British Union Conference President (1937-1946).

In 1962, R. T. Knight wrote in the '*Signs of the Times*' (this was under the sub-heading of *A True God*)

"The unqualified deity of Christ is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Church, for which we must stand with true loyalty. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, was God manifest in the flesh; no mere manifestation of God, but God Himself. To the true Christian, Jesus Christ is not just a representative of God. He has not merely the value of God, **HE IS GOD.**" (Robert T. Knight, *Australian Signs of the Times*, November 1st 1962, 'Jesus Christ')

Later he explained

"Jesus Christ was God from all eternity. The wise man speaking of Christ said: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." Proverbs 8:23.

Someone has said: "God is one, but He is not solitary. Since God is love, it follows that the Godhead is a society. The love of God must have had an object before the creation of man. The eternal object of the eternal love of the eternal Father was the eternal Son. God was Father from all eternity, therefore Christ was Son from all eternity. Eternal Fatherhood involves eternal Sonship." (*Ibid*)

Robert Knight, as did many others before him, applies the wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8 to Christ. Here again we see the "eternal Sonship" idea but the important thing to note is that Christ is still considered truly the Son of God. Note well the latter sentence in the quote. Knight also made this interesting observation

"When speaking of His origin, Jesus Himself declared: "I proceeded forth and came from God." (John 8:42.) In a word, Christ is the link between the finite and the Infinite, between man and God. Although finite in His human nature, He is infinite in His divine, and one in the unity of His person. Only the divine-human Redeemer could bridge the gulf between a holy God and sinful man. He is the link between God and man." (*Ibid*)

Notice the reference to "origin".

In the *Australian Signs of the Times* in 1970, J. D. Byers had an article published called *How many Gods in the Godhead?* In his article, Byers said that the Unitarians accuse trinitarians of forming a belief based upon "a three-headed idol" of the Babylonians. He then says that seeing that Satan was "the ruler of Babylon", he could have invented it based upon what he knew was the truth about God – which is very reasonable thinking. He then says

"Because of this, I prefer to avoid the term "Trinity," which does not appear in the Bible, using instead the Scriptural word "Godhead," which is derived from the Greek Theotais, and means literally "the state of being God," or "divinity". Speaking of the Saviour, the Bible says, "It is in Him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily." Colossians 2:9. **Could He be otherwise than divine, if He possesses the maximum of divinity in Himself?**" (J. D. Beyers, *Australian Signs of the Times*, January 1970, 'How many Gods in the Godhead?')

After a lengthy explanation showing from Scripture that Christ was truly God, he then answers the question "Was Christ created?" In his reply Beyers says

“He was with God the Father in the beginning. (John 1:1.) If Christ had a beginning, and the Father created Him, then prior to that, His Father existed entirely alone. Now the Scripture says that "God is Love." 1 John 4:8. But love itself cannot exist unless there is someone or something to love.” (*Ibid*)

This is a very common reasoning amongst the trinitarians, but it is only human logic. He later says (this is what makes his article very interesting)

“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.” (*Ibid*)

This is in keeping with the orthodox trinity doctrine – not the version held today by the SDA Church. It says that Christ is *everlastingly begotten* of the Father (never having a beginning). It is also in keeping with where the creeds say that ‘Christ is God from God, true God from true God’.

Apart from anything else, this shows that the begotten concept was still being taught, in 1970, in our periodicals. Near the end of His article Beyers wrote

“All of the above Scripture readings would be meaningless unless we admit that there is a mysterious unity in the Godhead that transcends any human relationship. At our earthly level, perhaps the closest we can come to any comprehension of this unity, is in the marriage tie. Man and wife, though "one flesh" are yet two separate individuals. The Father and the Son are not one being, nor one divine person, but they, with the Holy Spirit, are one God.” (*Ibid*)

Again very interestingly he says in his follow up article the next month (this mainly concerned the Holy Spirit)

“In our article last month, we discussed the status of the Son of God, showing that as the only-begotten of the Father, He, too, is a divine being—a separate personality—yet having a mysterious oneness with His Father, which includes the sharing of such titles as ‘Alpha and Omega,’ the "I AM," and "Jehovah.” (*J. D. Beyers, Australian Signs of the Times, February 1970, ‘... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’*)

Continue to Section B: Current (2020) SDA theology concerning the Father and the Son

Section B: Current (2020) SDA theology concerning the Father and the Son

The underlying problem:

In 1993, George Knight, a leading historian of the SDA Church, wrote in the *Ministry* magazine

“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*’)

As we shall see though, it is not only the trinity doctrine itself that would stop early SDA's from joining our church today. It is far much more.

In the book *The Trinity*, which, as previously explained in Section A, was published by the SDA Church in 2002 to explain the stand it has taken on the trinity doctrine, Jerry Moon Ph.D., one its co-authors (the others were Woodrow Whidden Ph.D. and John Reeve Ph.D.), wrote the following (this was on the very first page of the chapter dealing with the trinity doctrine and anti-trinitarianism in SDA history)

“**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.” (Jerry Moon Ph.D., ‘*The Trinity*’, page 190, ‘*Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history*’)

Amongst other positions he holds, Jerry Moon, Ph.D., is presently Associate Professor of Church History at Andrews University. Here he is saying it is now common knowledge (“**accepted Adventist history**”) that the majority “**of the leading SDA pioneers**” were non-trinitarian.

As we have seen in Part 1 of this study though, the reality of our history is that it was not “**most**” of our early leading pioneers who were non-trinitarian but all of them. In fact it is true to say that our entire denomination – the preponderant, and the official view - was once non-trinitarianism. This was not only for a brief period of time but for the duration of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915). It even remained the same for decades after her death. This was not simply because we rejected the idea of the 'one God' as being a trinity of divine persons (as depicted in the trinity doctrine) but because our beliefs concerning God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit would not have fitted into a trinitarian concept of God. This meant that before the trinity doctrine could be officially accepted by our denomination (it was first voted in as part of our fundamental beliefs at a General Conference session in 1980), the beliefs of SDA's around the world, concerning the individual personalities of the Godhead, would need to be changed. This could not of course, and did not, happen overnight. It took many years to be accomplished.

Jerry Moon continued

“More recently, a further question has arisen with increasing urgency: was the pioneers' belief about the Godhead right or wrong? (*Ibid*)

Along with the rest of our present-day leadership, Jerry Moon is aware that concerning the three personalities of the Godhead, the 'official beliefs' we hold today are far different than those generally held by SDA's between 1844 and the 1940's/1950's. He also realises that our current beliefs are not a modification of our 'old beliefs' but a replacement for them. In other words, he fully realises that the 'old beliefs' (those generally held by SDA's during Ellen White's ministry, also for decades beyond) have been discarded, and the 'new beliefs' (our present theology), have taken their place – which, in itself, is a denial that the 'discarded beliefs' are the truth. This is because truth never changes. If our 'ditched' Godhead beliefs had been true (when we held them), they would still be true today. Further revelation from God does not invalidate truth. It only makes it that much clearer.

According to our current church leadership therefore, the non-trinitarian beliefs – as generally held by us for the first 100 years or so of our existence (1844 -1950's) - are false doctrine (heresy). This is the reasoning that today's SDA's are being urged to accept – which, quite understandably, some are finding difficulty in doing. This is because it would mean that concerning God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we were, for the first 100 years of our existence as God's remnant people, teaching very serious error - which as I am sure you will agree, is very difficult to believe. This is especially when it is realised that for the first 71 years of this time period we had God's messenger amongst us, namely Ellen White, who supported these early SDA's in their beliefs. This is why today there is controversy amongst us. Church members are understandably asking, as Jerry Moon put it, were the Godhead beliefs, of early SDA's, "right or wrong?"

This is obviously a very important question – and one that needs very serious consideration. As Moon followed on by saying (and this really is the key issue)

"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 really does sum it up. Both sets of beliefs, meaning the 'old beliefs' (discarded by our denomination), and the 'new beliefs' (our current published Godhead beliefs), cannot be correct. This is because they are diametrically opposed to each other. One set of beliefs is non-trinitarian whilst the other is trinitarian. Certainly the 'new theology' is not a modification of the 'old'. The differences can never be harmonised. They depict two entirely different concepts.

It can only be concluded therefore that if our current published Godhead beliefs are biblical, then our early non-trinitarian beliefs are not biblical. Alternatively, if our once non-trinitarian beliefs are biblical, then it can only be concluded, as Jerry Moon freely admits, **"the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth"**.

In our present Godhead controversy, this is 'the underlying problem' (the bottom line of the argument) – and Jerry Moon recognises the seriousness of it. So too should every Seventh-day Adventist. This is why each one of us, as members of the SDA Church, should regard this Godhead debate as being very important. We need to understand who, in this controversy, is right, and who is wrong.

In 1994, in an article called *Present Truth – Walking in God's Light*, William Johnsson, the long-time editor of the *Review and Herald* (1982-2006), made the following observation

“Some Adventists today think, that our beliefs have remained unchanged over the years, or they seek to turn back the clock to some point we had everything just right. But all attempts to recover such “historic Adventism” fail in view of the facts of our heritage.

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’)

Take particular note of those final two sentences. They are crucial to understanding the present Godhead controversy within Seventh-day Adventism. William Johnsson further explained

“Many of the pioneers, including James White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner held to an Arian or semi-Arian view - that is, the Son at some point in time, before the Creation of our world, was generated by the Father.” (*Ibid*)

Johnsson is referring to the Sonship (begotten) belief of early SDA’s. This is the belief that Christ, in eternity, was begotten of God, therefore He is truly the Son of God. As we have seen in Section A above, this was the standard belief, held by SDA’s, for around 100 years, 71 years of which was the time period of Ellen White’s ministry. These SDA’s also reasoned, in keeping with Scripture, that because Christ is the Son of God, He is truly God (John 1:1). William Johnsson then said of this begotten (Sonship) belief

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

William Johnsson refers to the Sonship (begotten) belief of SDA’s as “false doctrine”, yet as we have seen, it was taught in our publications for over 100 years. We have also seen that Ellen White fully endorsed this view – even in the *Desire of Ages* (see pages 64-68). We have also seen that in 1936, this same belief was declared to be, by the General Conference, the official belief of the SDA Church (see pages 141-152). This was almost 40 years after the publication of the *Desire of Ages*. This book therefore, during those 4 decades, had not changed the Sonship belief of SDA’s. William Johnsson continued

“Likewise, the trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists. Even today, a few do not subscribe to it.” (*Ibid*)

The first part of this statement is very true. This can be seen by reading part 1 of this study (see link below), although I would say that the present-day non-trinitarians do number more than just “a few” – and their numbers are steadily growing. Johnsson’s remarks though do show that over the years there has been a radical change to the Godhead beliefs of SDA’s. This is especially concerning Christ. Here is the link to Part 1 of this study.

https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/History/Development_of_SDA_Trinity_Theology_1.pdf

So if the SDA Church today is not teaching that Christ really is the divine Son of God, then what are they teaching? In other words, what is this “startling” change spoken of by William

Johnsson? This is something we shall now discover.

A role-playing trio

In 1981, in one of our denominational publications, a question was addressed that had been sent in by a reader. This was the year after the trinity doctrine, for the very first time in our denominational history, had been voted into our fundamental beliefs (1980). The reader said

“I am a fledgling Christian and am mystified by the doctrine of the Trinity.” (*These Times*, June 1st 1981, ‘Frank answers’)

It is more than likely that many Christians, even those who are experienced in matters of a spiritual nature, could make this same confession, but what was it about this teaching that mystified this particular person? The reader asked

“To whom should I address my prayers?” (*Ibid*)

In replying to this question, Pastor Holbrook (a contributing editor of *These Times*) wrote

“It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, **They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan.**” (*Ibid*)

The reason why Holbrook was compelled to use the word “inferred” is because nowhere in Scripture does it say such a thing. His reasoning could also be interpreted as saying that the persons of the Godhead are only ‘acting out’ their various parts.

In the *Week of Prayer* readings for 1996, SDA’s, throughout the world, were encouraged to believe that in eternity

“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.**” (*Gordon Jenson, Adventist Review, October 31, 1996, p.12 Week of Prayer readings, ‘Jesus the Heavenly Intercessor’*)

Jenson added

“**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.” (*Ibid*)

It appears that Jenson could not bring himself to say that the third person of the Godhead is only role-playing the part of a holy spirit (acting out the part of a holy spirit) but what alternative conclusion can be drawn? In this role-playing idea, the reality of the Holy Spirit, actually being a holy spirit, is lost. Jenson later had this to say

“As sin progressively developed in heaven and later, on earth, so the plan to deal with it was progressively revealed—the **divine Beings entered into the roles they had agreed upon before the foundations of the world were laid** (see 1 Peter 1:20).” (*Ibid*)

This is saying that prior to the development of the sin problem, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, were not really a father, or a son, or a holy spirit. Jenson does not say when this role-playing was supposed to have begun.

A matter of weeks later, an objection was made to Gordon Jenson's role-playing reasoning. It was made via email by Herman J. Smit. He was then the President of the Greek Mission. We know of his objection because his remarks were published in the *Review and Herald* of December 26th 1996. Referring to Jenson's remarks (about a role-playing Godhead), Smit commented

"That's like writing a dramatic theater play, for which some persons take on specific roles and then, after the performance, change clothes and look as they did before entering the dressing rooms." (Herman J. Smit, President Greek Mission, Review and Herald, Adventist Review, December 26th 1996)

Smit continued

"Of course, the Holy Scriptures are a precipitation of God's involvement with this planet and its inhabitants; many things are said in a human way. But do we honestly believe that it was like this when our salvation was thoroughly planned and set into motion? Distributing roles?" (Ibid)

It appears that Smit was not enamoured with Jenson's role-playing reasoning. He commented

"How does this relate to John 3:16? In loving us, God gave His only-begotten Son. He didn't need to take on a role. Do the unfallen worlds not need a father? Is God only our Father? If God the Son does not need to act as a Saviour on behalf of the unfallen worlds, isn't He still their Creator, God the Son, or is He a nameless one of the Three?" (Ibid)

If to us, here on earth, Christ is only role-playing the part of a son, then who or what is He to the unfallen worlds and angels? It could also be asked: If the three persons are only role-playing their various parts, then who and what were they before they started their role-playing? Did they have names? Did they have personal identities? Notice that Smit said that when God gave us His Son, He did not need to take on a role. He concluded

"Please, let us be careful in wording the Trinity's initiative in regard to the redemption of humankind. I would still like to cling to the old Nicene Creed—certainly with my Orthodox fellow Christians in mind." (Ibid)

This is the creed that was born out of the Councils of Nicaea in AD 325 and Constantinople in AD 381. In this creed it does say that Christ is not created but begotten of God. In the 4th century, this was the basic belief of Christianity.

The role-playing idea also came to the fore in a Sabbath School less study in 2008. In this study it 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). 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.” (*Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Quarterly*, page 19, Thursday April 10th 2008, ‘*The Mystery of His Deity*’)

Here we see the reasoning that the roles could have been switched. Again this is saying that there is no real Father, no real Son and no real Holy Spirit. This was much the same as said by J. R Spangler, who, as associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, wrote (referring here to Matthew 28:19)

“The gospel commission commands surrendered souls to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” (*J. R. Spangler, Review and Herald*, Oct. 21, 1971, ‘*I believe in the Triune God*’, see also *Australasian Record* 6th December 1971)

Spangler then says with respect to 2 Corinthians 13:14 (which says “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”)

“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 signifies the interchangeableness of the members of the Godhead since they are one in action and purpose.” (*Ibid*)

If, as Spangler is suggesting, the persons of the Godhead could have swapped places, then they could not be, in reality, a father, son and holy spirit.

In the 2002 book *The Trinity*, Woodrow Whidden, in keeping with this role-playing idea, had this to say

“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*’)

According to Whidden, this role-playing began prior to “the Godhead’s work of creation”. This would mean that if the created intelligences of our universe were not told about this, they would not know that these divine beings were role-playing.

In the 2001 SDA publication *Understanding the Trinity*, which was a book written by Max Hatton, a retired minister living in Australia, we find the following

“Because the Bible requires us to believe that God is a Trinity we can accept that, for the purposes of the plan of redemption, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit decided in the Councils of the Godhead, to accept various positions in conducting the plan. The Father accepted what we might call the position of ‘Managing Architect’. Jesus accepted the position of ‘Mediator Redeemer’ and the Holy Spirit accepted the position of ‘Comforter Sanctifier”’ (*Max Hatton, Understanding the Trinity*, pages 76-77, 2001)

As we can see from the above, this role-playing (play-acting) idea now is now part and parcel of the official teachings of the SDA Church. We know this because regarding the two above-mentioned books *Understanding the Trinity* (Hatton 2001), and *The Trinity* (co-

authored by Whidden, Moon and Reeves 2002), Gerhard Pfandl, as Associate Director of the SDA Biblical Research Institute, had this to say

“Because of a resurgence of anti-Trinitarian views within the church, two books on the Trinity have been published in recent years: Max Hatton’s book *Understanding the Trinity* (Grantham: Autumn House, 2001) does not address the Adventist situation, but focuses on the biblical material and responds to attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity. W. W. Whidden, J. Moon, and J. W. Reeve’s book *The Trinity* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2002) has two chapters by Jerry Moon dealing with anti-Trinitarianism in Adventism.” (Gerhard Pfandl, *The Doctrine of the Trinity amongst Adventists, Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17/1 (Spring 2006): 160–179), page 160)

In the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, published in 1988 - which again was published by the SDA Church in support of our official beliefs - it is said that

“The Father seems to act as source, the Son as mediator, and the Spirit as actualizer or applier.” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, page 24, 1988, ‘The Godhead’)

There is something not quite definite about this statement (“seems to act”).

As we have already seen (in Section A above), this role-playing idea was not believed by early SDA’s. To the contrary, they believed that God the Father really was a father, that the Son of God really was a son, and that the Holy Spirit really was a holy spirit. They believed therefore, in consequence, that the Son, because He was a son, was naturally, also respectfully, subordinate to the Father. The Holy Spirit was considered to be the spiritual presence of both the Father and the Son.

Christ not begotten (not a true son)

So why has the present SDA church taken to saying that the persons of the Godhead are only role-playing their various parts? It is because they now reject as error what the early SDA’s believed and taught about Christ. This is that in eternity, in a way not revealed in Scripture, He was begotten (brought forth) of God therefore He is truly the Son of God. If this Sonship belief is not accepted as being true, then those who reject it must believe that the Father is not really a father, and that the Son is not really a son – which is what the SDA Church is teaching today. This leads to the conclusion, because these two divine persons depict themselves in Scripture as a father and a son, that they are only role-playing these parts. No other conclusion can be drawn. Now can be seen what William Johnsson meant when he said that over the years, concerning Christ, there has been a “startling” change to the beliefs of SDA’s (see page 173 above). Whereas Christ was once spoken of by SDA’s as a true Son, He is now depicted as role-playing the part of a son.

In 1977, in an article called *The Only Begotten* (that carried the sub-heading of *How does this term apply to Christ*), Austen G. Fletcher went to great lengths to show that Christ is not truly the Son of God. After a very lengthy explanation of what he believes to be the true meaning of the Greek word *monogenes* (translated in all places in the KJV as ‘only begotten’) he had this to say

“The Person who is our Saviour has always and forever sustained a unique and special relationship with the Father. This relationship existed before He came to this earth, as both He and the Father existed before that time, and as long as they both were. He was NOT begotten, for it is a mistranslation to translate *monogenes* as “only begotten.” He is forever, one with the Father, and He is forever God. The fact that He

is forever with the Father (which no other being was), **speaks of a relationship with the Father that is unknown by any other being.** He is "the only Son, Deity Himself, who lies upon His Father's breast" (John 1:18, Williams)." (*Austen G. Fletcher, Ministry, April 1977, 'The Only Begotten'*)

It follows therefore that if Christ is not begotten of God (which is what Fletcher is saying), then He cannot be a son in any sense that can be termed literal (true). It also follows that if Christ is not a real son, then seeing He claimed to be the Son of God, it must be that he is only role-playing (acting out) the part of a son. Note that Fletcher says that Christ has "**a relationship with the Father that is unknown by any other being**", also that Christ is the only "**being**" that has forever been with the Father. What does this say about the Holy Spirit? One is left to wonder.

If the persons of the Godhead are only role-playing their various parts, it also makes one wonder why it should be said that the "**only Son...lies upon His Father's breast**".

For those who would like to further their understanding of *monogenes*, they can do so by reading pages 10-31 at the following link. It is given extensive coverage. It is far too much to quote in this article.

https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Godhead/Is_Christ_God.pdf

Another excellent article can be found here

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/lets-go-back-to-only-begotten/>

Regardless of what is understood by the word *monogenes*, it still must be asked – if Christ is not begotten of God - why God refers to Christ as His son, also why Christ refers to God as His Father. These questions are of prime importance.

Max Hatton wrote in the SDA publication *Understanding the Trinity*

"Jesus was not begotten, neither was he created. Many who say Jesus was a literal Son of God make claims for one or more of these ways He is said to have come into being. If people want to follow this line of literalness they should explain how it is possible to be absolutely literal when there was no mother. The terms Father and Son, when related to Jesus, can hardly be literal really." (*Max Hatton, Understanding the Trinity, page 97, 2001*)

In the *Handbook of SDA Theology*, which is said to explain the official beliefs of SDA's, Fernando Canale had this to say about the belief that Christ is begotten of God

"The preeminence of God the Father over God the Son suggested by the analogy to the human father-son relationship seems to be sustained by some passages that appear to teach that the Son is generated by the Father, and that the Son is subordinated to the Father." (*Fernando Canale, Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, page 125, 'The doctrine of God'*)

Notice first that the father-son relationship is said to be only an analogy. On the other hand, Canale says, some passages of Scripture suggest the pre-eminence of the Father, whilst they also **"appear to teach that the Son is generated by the Father"**, which in turn, so he says, makes it appear He is subordinate to the Father. This of course, if accepted as true,

would lead to the conclusion that the Father has the pre-eminence, also that in this sense (and this sense only), the only-begotten of God (the Son of God) was subordinate to the Father. Canale continues

“The generation of the Son from the Father cannot be analogically deduced from the process of human generation. Such a deduction would produce a speculative theory without any ground in revelation. However, some biblical expressions seem to suggest some kind of generation; for instance, when God the son is called the “first-born” (*prototokos*), Col. 1:15; Romans 8:20; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:5) and “only-begotten” (*monogenes*), John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, 1 John 4:9 [KJV]). However, *prototokos* is also used in a metaphorical sense (LXX of Ex. 4:22; Ps 89:27 and when applied to Christ expresses superiority and pre-eminence.” (*Ibid*)

It would be grossly misrepresentative to say that early SDA's claimed that Christ was begotten (brought forth) of God like a human baby is born (brought forth) of its mother. As we have seen from the writings of these SDA's (see Section A above), they maintained that God had not revealed the process of how it was achieved. Notice that Canale does admit that “some biblical expressions seem to suggest some kind of generation”. If these are accepted as true, it would not be speculation. Rather, it would be taking God at His word. Canale continues

“In a similar vein, *monogenes* does not contain the idea of begetting but rather of uniqueness and, when applied to Christ, emphasizes His unique relationship with the Father. On the other hand, Hebrews 1:5 gives no idea of physical or spiritual generation.” (*Ibid*)

Canale's conclusions regarding *monogenes* appear, at least to me, to be a long way out of keeping with the facts. From my understanding of this word, the idea of begetting is a prominent feature of it. See the two links above. I will return to Canale's remarks about Hebrews 1:5 later.

In the section called *The nature of the Son's Subordination*, Canale lists a number of texts that show the Son to be subordinate to the Father. He says of them

“These statements clearly testify to the existence of a relation of subordination between God the Son and God the Father.” (*Ibid*)

The conclusion is (according to Canale)

“The subordination expressed in these texts must not be understood in an ontological sense, as if the reality of God the Son were dependent on the reality of God the Father. The Biblical idea of the subordination of God the Son to God the Father belongs, not to the inner structure of divine reality, but rather to the sphere of the accomplishment of the plan of salvation.” (*Ibid*)

Here again we return to the role-playing idea. In other words, according the Handbook of SDA Theology, these ‘subordination’ texts must not be taken as though they are saying that the Son is begotten of God's substance. Rather, so Canale says, they should only be understood as Christ's sonship-role He played in the plan of redemption. Canale therefore concludes

“There is, therefore, no ground within the biblical understanding of the Godhead for the idea of a generation of the Son from the Father.” (*Ibid*)

This is saying that there is no Biblical evidence for believing that Christ is begotten (brought forth) of God, therefore there is no evidence of Him really being the Son of God. This of course is saying exactly the opposite to what was believed by us, as a church, for over 100 years – 71 of which was when Ellen White was alive.

Immediately this begotten belief concerning Christ is denied, there is no other alternative than to believe that the Father and the Son are only role-playing their parts. They either are a father and a son, or they are not. It must be one way or the other. This is why understanding William Johnsson's remarks about our change in beliefs concerning Christ (see page 172), is crucial to understanding our present Godhead controversy. Canale's ultimate conclusion is

“In the Bible, therefore, no ground is found for the idea that there is an ontological subordination of the Son to the Father or that the divine reality of the Father has in any way a primacy of origin over the divine reality of the Son”. (*Ibid*)

Again this is denying the begotten concept. It is also denying what was believed and taught by early SDA's.

Having said that, it must be remembered that Canale did admit that (a) “some biblical expressions seem to suggest some kind of generation”, also (b) that some passages of Scripture “appear to teach that the Son is generated by the Father” and (c), some statements of Scripture “clearly testify to the existence of a relation of subordination between God the Son and God the Father”. All of this though, according to the Handbook of SDA Theology, is not literal but metaphorical. In other words, so it is suggested, we must not take any of these things that are said in the Bible to be literal. This adequately summarises the current official position of the SDA Church.

For many years, Gerhard Pfandl was Associate Director of the SDA Biblical Research Institute (BRI). In an article called *The Doctrine of the Trinity Amongst Adventists* he wrote the following (this was after quoting a number of statements from Ellen White)

“These statements 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*)

According to Pfandl, what the early SDA's believed and taught was not in keeping with what God has revealed through Ellen White. If this were true, it would be very strange. This is because as we have seen, she said that what the early SDA's were teaching about Christ's pre-existence was the truth (see pages 64-68). Why should she say it was the truth, and then write against it? Does this make any sense?

Pfandl's remark “up to that time” refers to when *Desire of Ages* was published (1898). He is saying that up to then, “most Adventists” believed that Christ derived His existence from the Father. As we have seen though, this begotten concept did not die out following the publication of this book. It was still taught, in our publications, for decades afterwards although by the 1970's, it was almost phased out. This phasing out had been happening since the 1940's and 1950's. Those who had held this belief were dying off whilst those who

had accepted the 'new theology' were taking their place. This was particularly so in positions of authority.

The bottom line is that Gerhard Pfandl, like William Johnsson and Fernando Canale, is saying that what was being taught by SDA's about Christ, during the time of Ellen White's ministry, also for decades afterwards, is error (false doctrine). These are very serious claims. 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*)

The "truth" referred to here is the belief, as portrayed in the SDA trinity doctrine (the new theology), that Christ is not a true son. The term "many years" is quite ambiguous. It could mean any length of time. As we noted in Part 1 though, it took decades, after the death of Ellen White, for trinitarianism to become established within Seventh-day Adventism. Pfandl continued

"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*)

We know from Section A above that this "many" was the denomination as an official body. It certainly was not a minority.

Notice that Pfandl presents the idea that the belief that "Christ came forth from the Father" makes Him "inferior" to the Father. This was definitely not in keeping with the beliefs of early SDA's. They regarded Christ as God. He was said to be, as revealed in Scripture, equal to the Father. Early SDA's, as well as Ellen White, spoke of Christ in this way many times. We can see therefore that Pfandl was setting up a straw man and knocking it down. He also said in his document

"By about 1880 the idea of Christ as a created being began to fade away, and the concept of Christ as the "begotten" Son of God became more prominent. 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, pages 165-166*)

Where Pfandl obtained the information from that early (prior to 1880) SDA's believed that Christ is a created being, I cannot discover. We have seen from the above that they consistently repudiated this idea. They maintained that He was begotten of God – not created. The only two people I have found that used the expression "created being", with respect to Christ, were Uriah Smith and J. M. Stephenson. Smith's remark was in his 1865 edition of *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation*. In later editions, along with SDA's in general, he maintained that Christ was begotten of God – not created. We noted too that 13 years earlier in 1852, he did say that Christ was divine (see page 3 above). Stephenson also wrote that Christ was a created being, but we noted that he meant this as Christ begotten of the Father's divine nature. (see pages 4-8).

Officially today, SDA's deny any type of Sonship within the Godhead. They say that the terminologies of *Father* and *Son* are only metaphors. We shall see this now. Remember too, as Ellen White wrote, Christ was "made" in the express image of God's person (see

page 66 above).

A metaphorical Father and Son

In an article called *A question of Sonship*, which was published in the *Adventist World* in 2015, its author, Angel Rodriguez, who was once the Director of the SDA Biblical Institute (now retired), asks this question

“What does the Bible mean when it refers to Jesus as “the Son of God”? (Angel Rodriguez, *Adventist World*, November 2015, ‘A Question of Sonship’)

In answering this question, Rodriguez explained

“Metaphorical Significance: In our humanity the image of a child conveys some obvious ideas. *First*, it indicates that a child is of the same nature as that of the parents; they are human beings. When Christ is called “Son of God,” we are being told that He, like the Father, is a divine being (John 5:18). *Second*, a child is distinguishable from their parents. **The metaphor of sonship** means that although Christ and the Father have the same nature, they are different persons, implying a plurality of persons within the Godhead. *Third*, the relationship between parents and children is unique. Their union is practically indissoluble. **The metaphor is therefore a good symbol for the deep unity that exists within the members of the Godhead** (John 17:5). *Fourth*, a human child comes from its parents through natural birth. In the case of the Godhead, however, the Son proceeded from the Father, not as a divine emanation or through natural birth, but to perform a work of creation and redemption (John 8:42; 16:28). **There is no biblical support for the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. The Son came from God but was not generated by Him.** *Fifth*, the father-son image cannot be literally applied to the divine Father-Son relationship within the Godhead. **The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father.** A natural child has a beginning, while within the Godhead the Son is eternal. **The term “Son” is used metaphorically when applied to the Godhead.** It conveys the ideas of distinction of persons within the Godhead and the equality of nature in the context of an eternal, loving relationship.

Ellen White wrote: “The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father.” **This statement summarizes the main purpose of the metaphor.**” (*Ibid*)

Again we can see how SDA’s throughout the world today are being led to believe that Christ is not really the Son of God, also that God is not really the father of Christ. The designation, “Son of God”, as well as *the Father* when applied to God, is said to be **“metaphorical”**. The above article can be found here on the SDA Biblical Research website

<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/godgodhead-jesus-christ/question-sonship>

In the year 2002, in the book *The Trinity* (which we mentioned above), Woodrow Whidden commented

“Is it not quite apparent that the problem texts become problems only when one assumes an exclusively literalistic interpretation of such expressions as “Father,” “Son,” “Firstborn,” “Only Begotten,” “Begotten,” and so forth? (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, ‘Biblical objections to the trinity’ page 106, 2002)

In other words, says Whidden, if the designations *Father* and *Son*, also the word *begotten*, are taken literally, it only causes problems. The question must be asked though, why shouldn't these words be taken literally? What reason could we offer – and why should taking them literally cause problems? Whidden continues

“Does not such literalism go against the mainly figurative or metaphorical meaning that the Bible writers use when referring to the persons of the Godhead? (*Ibid*)

This reasoning is very seriously flawed. This is because very often, especially in the Gospels, the expressions *Father* and *Son* (relating to God and Christ) were not the words chosen by the Bible writers but instead were the *actual words* that others, including God and Christ, had spoken. These were faithfully recorded by the Bible writers. I will return to this point later. It is very important. Whidden concluded

“Furthermore, what proves to be quite ironic is that some of the most compelling evidence for the equality of the Father and the Son occurs in contexts **that employ the very metaphors of “Father” and “Son”** (especially John 5:16-23).” (*Ibid*, page 106 and 107)

Here again the terminologies “Father” and “Son” are said to be only “metaphors”. When reasoned through, if the Father is not really a father, and if the Son is not really a son, then these words (Father and Son) could only be metaphors. What else could they be? This is in keeping with the role-playing idea.

Notice here that Whidden cites, as he puts it, “**especially John 5:16-23**” as an example of the terms “Father” and “Son” being used metaphorically. Yet verse 18 tells us about Jesus

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, **but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**” John 5:18

The Jews reasoned, because of Christ's claim to be God's Son (that God was His father), that He was “**making Himself equal with God**”. It appears therefore that they understood Him to be speaking literally. Why should they have reasoned He was being metaphorical?

Earlier in the same book, Woodrow Whidden also made these comments (paragraphs not contiguous)

“Another important consideration involves how we interpret the Bible. **Here the issue pertains to whether we should interpret some passages literally or whether we may treat them more figuratively.** Maybe we could illustrate it this way. While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, do we really want to take such expressions in a totally literal way? Or would it be more appropriate to interpret them in a more metaphorical way that draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood?” (*Ibid*, page 94)

“As noted above, the gist of the anti-Trinitarian interpretation of this text claims that God the Father has literally generated, or “begat,” a divine being (the Son) sometime in the ages of eternity past **as some sort of semidivine person**. The Arians teach that it was an act of direct creation. The semi-Arians suggest that Jesus sort of split off from the nature of the Father to form a separate divine person. **Thus both groups**

consider Jesus, the Son, to be an inferior “god,” not a true and eternally preexisting being such as the Father”” (*Ibid*, pages 94-95, *Biblical Objections to the Trinity*)

“Far from suggesting that the Father generated or begat the Son as some sort of derived or created semigod, the imagery of Father and Son points to the eternal and profound intimacy that has always existed between the first and second persons of the Godhead as divine “equals” through all eternity (past, present, and future)” (*Ibid*, page 97)

It can only be said that if the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are only meant to convey to humanity the intimacy that exists between two divine role-playing individuals, then this has been the cause of a tremendous amount of unnecessary confusion. Why use metaphors and imagery? Why not simply say who and what these divine beings are in reality – also how much the role-playing Father and the role-playing Son love each other? Why confuse the issue by saying things that are not true? Is God the author of confusion?

In Whidden’s statements we again see a straw man scenario.

Whidden is saying that if Christ is said to be begotten of God, then this makes Him “some sort of derived or created semigod”, also “some sort of semidivine person”, also “an inferior “god,””. As we have seen so far in this study, this is far from being true. The early SDA’s who believed that Christ was begotten of God, did actually believe, because He was begotten, that He is truly and fully God. Whidden is grossly misrepresenting the beliefs and teachings of these early SDA’s. He is attempting to convince people that if Christ is said to be a true son, then this is degrading him (making Him less than God). As we have just noted, the Jews did not see it this way. It is apparent that they took Christ’s words literally. Jesus did not say to them that they were making a mistake – and that He only meant His claims of Sonship with God to be metaphorical. On the other hand, if the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are only “imagery” for showing the intimacy that has always existed “between the first and second persons of the Godhead” (as Whidden says), then why is the Holy Spirit called a holy spirit? What is this terminology meant to convey?

In other places in the same book, the beliefs and teachings of early SDA’s were again misrepresented. Take for example the following

“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.” (*Ibid*, page 59, *The full and eternal deity of Christ – part II*)

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* 101)

Here we see the repeated setting up of straw men. This is because the early SDA’s who believed that Christ was begotten of God, did believe He was God. In Section A above we have seen this over and over again. Certainly they did not believe Christ to be “a “god” of

lesser deity and dignity than the eternal Father”, nor “some sort of semi – or demigod”. These are unwarranted misrepresentations of the beliefs and teachings of the early non-trinitarian SDA’s. It also misrepresents the beliefs of those SDA’s today, who, like the early SDA’s, believe that Christ is begotten of God.

The Bible clearly says that Christ is begotten of God (John 1:14, 1:18, 3:16, 3:18, 1 John 4:9. The Bible also says that Christ is God (John 1:1, Hebrews 1:8). This is why the early SDA’s believed it. They took God at His word.

Whidden also says

“It is obvious that “begotten” in Hebrews 1:5 refers to Christ’s appointment by the Father to the office of high priest of the heavenly sanctuary. Once more the context strongly suggests that Scripture is not using “begotten” in any sense of the Father God generating a Son who is a lesser God, but with the connotation of Christ being made the divine/human high priest.” (*Ibid page 102*)

There is nothing obvious about Whidden’s conclusion. Early SDA’s did not see this text (Hebrews 1:5) this way. They did not regard God saying, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” and, “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” as Christ being appointed by the Father to the “office of high priest”. How can this application of the verse be “obvious”?

I find here something that is very interesting. If there is no hierarchy in the Godhead (no one having greater authority than the other because none is begotten of the other), then why was it necessary for the Father to appoint Christ to His office? Remember, the Father and the Son are only supposed to be role-playing their parts. Is this ‘appointing’ to the office of high priest also part of the role-playing? On the next page the comment is made

“In other words, Scripture terms Jesus as “begotten Son” in the sense of His incarnate humanity and His intimate, dependant relationship to His Father during this period of His human vulnerability.” (*Ibid page 103*)

Here it is said that the events of Bethlehem (the incarnation and the virgin birth etc) are the reason why Christ is said to be a “begotten Son”. The Word of God tells us that God gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16, Galatians 4:4), also that at Bethlehem, God brought His firstbegotten into the world (Hebrews 1:6). This alone shows that Christ, prior to the incarnation, was a begotten Son.

Someone else who said that Christ is only called the Son of God because of the incarnation is Max Hatton. He is the author of the book, *Understanding the Trinity*. On page 34 he says (after quoting Matthew 11:27)

“Jesus became the Son of God at His human birth as mentioned under the first point above.” (*Max Hatton, Understanding the Trinity, page 34, ‘The Father and the Son are God’, 2001*)

Another person who said the same was J. R. Hoffman. He was a very well-known American evangelist. He wrote in the *Ministry* magazine of June 1982 (this was two years after the trinity doctrine was first officially voted into our fundamental beliefs at a General Conference Session)

“The Father, Son relationship in the New Testament, must always be understood in the light of the event of Bethlehem. The only child born into this world with a divine rather than a human father is Jesus. The title ‘son’ refers to His entry into time and does not deny at all His eternal origins. There are references in the Old Testament to ‘Sonship’ but these are always in anticipation of the incarnation” (J. R. Hoffman, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister, Ministry Magazine* article ‘Is Jesus Jehovah God?’ June 1982 page 24)

If it were true, that Christ is a son only because of His birth at Bethlehem, then John, when writing his Gospel, made a very serious mistake. He said that the very reason why he wrote it was to show that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:31). Interestingly though, he did not even mention the virgin birth of Jesus, nor any of the events of Bethlehem. The only thing in this respect he did say was that the Word was made flesh (John 1:14). This must be the briefest of references to Christ’s incarnation that it is possible to make. If John had wanted to show that the only reason why Christ was called the Son of God was because of His birth in Bethlehem, then surely at the very least he would mentioned where the angel Gabriel visited Mary saying that the child she was going to bear would be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). As it was, he did not even mention it. The prime reason therefore for Christ being called the Son of God cannot be His birth at Bethlehem. There must be another reason.

All the “signs” that John gave (see John 20:31) were signs of Christ’s divinity. When the events in each chapter of his Gospel are read, this becomes abundantly clear. Every event of the life of Christ that was highlighted by John, points to the Saviour’s deity. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John was led to show that Christ was the pre-existent *divine* Son of God. This can clearly be seen in his opening words:

**“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
John 1:1**

In order to fulfil the purpose in writing his Gospel (that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God), the very first thing that the Holy Spirit led John to write was that Christ, in His pre-existence (in the beginning), **“was God”**. This had nothing to do with Christ’s birth at Bethlehem or the resurrection. These words were intended by John (and the Holy Spirit) to lead people to believe that Christ is the *divine* Son of God.

From the outset, John was saying that Christ was divine. He was also making clear that there are two divine personages who are both rightly termed God (*Gr. Theos*). This was the opening thrust of his Gospel. John then proceeded to reinforce his words by saying that all things were made by the Word and without him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3). Christ therefore, says John, is our Creator. This is the highest possible claim to divinity. Only divinity is not created.

We have seen above how various authors have misrepresented the beliefs of the early non-trinitarian SDA’s. Alden Thompson, in 1982, did the same. With respect to our denominational changeover from non-trinitarianism to trinitarianism, he had this to say

“How did the change come about? The SDA Encyclopedia (revised ed.) states: “It was largely through the writings of Ellen G. White that the Trinitarian view finally prevailed.”—Page 287 (article on “Christology”). Note also the indication of Ellen White’s growing experience in the same article: “She repeatedly asserted Christ’s equality with God, as early as 1869, and increasingly in the 1870’s and 1880’s.”—Ibid.

Why "increasingly"? Because the Lord gently but firmly was leading His people through Ellen White. During that process, the prophet cannot be more than a step or two ahead of the people, or they will not be able to follow." (Alden Thompson, *Review and Herald*, July 1st 1982, 'The Prodigal Son Revisited')

Thompson then went on to lead the readers of the *Review* to believe

"Many of the early Adventists believed that Christ was a created being. The list includes such notables as James White, Joseph Bates, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott (*ibid.*, pp. 286,287)." (*Ibid*)

This is a very serious misrepresentation of the beliefs and teachings of early SDA's. They believed that Christ was begotten of God, not created. It is common practise though for trinitarians to say that anyone who does not believe in the divinity of Christ, as expressed in the trinity doctrine, believes He is a created being. This though is an unfair and unjustifiable conclusion. As we have seen, our non-trinitarian pioneers consistently said that Christ was God.

Alden Thompson, for what he was leading the readers of the *Review* to believe (that those such as James White and W. W. Prescott etc believed that Christ was a created being) is citing pages 286 and 287 of the SDA Encyclopedia but this encyclopedia says no such thing. Speaking of the early SDA's such as James White and Joseph Bates it says (paragraphs not contiguous)

"These people did not deny that Christ was divine, the Creator of heaven and earth, Son of God, Lord, and Saviour; they mostly argued that the terms "Son" and "Father" indicated that the Son had a beginning, even though in the inconceivably remote past."

"The two leading anti-Trinitarians, James White and Uriah Smith, changed their opinions considerably. James White, for instance, had at first rejected the "old trinitarian" idea "that Jesus Christ is the very and Eternal God" (*Review and Herald*, 3:52, August 5, 1852), though he believed in Christ's divinity (*ibid.*, 4:66, September 8, 1853); he later wrote that SDA's "hold the divinity of Christ so nearly with the trinitarian" position that very little real difference existed (*ibid.*, 48:116, Oct 12, 1876), and that the Son "was equal with the Father in creation, in the institution of law, and in the government of created intelligences" (*ibid.*, 56:56 July 15, 1880)." (SDA Encyclopedia, pages 286-287, Christology)

So as we can see, the SDA Encyclopedia does not say that those such as "James White, Joseph Bates, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott" believed that Christ was a created being (as Alden Thompson stated). It says that they believed Christ was divine. As we have also noted so many times above in Section A, the early SDA's believed Christ to be begotten of God therefore believing He is the Son of God, and fully divine.

There is another problem. The Encyclopedia could give the impression that James White eventually accepted the trinity doctrine, but this is not true. Just months before he died, he wrote in the *Review and Herald*

"In his exaltation, before he humbled himself to the work of redeeming lost sinners, Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, because, in the work of creation and the institution of law to govern created intelligences, he was equal with the Father.

The Father was greater than the Son in that he was first. The Son was equal with the Father in that he had received all things from the Father.” (James White, *Review and Herald*, 4th January 1881, ‘*The Mind of Christ*’)

A trinitarian would not make such a confession. It was though, exactly the same belief that James White had always held – which was in fact, the same belief as held by his fellow SDA's.

As we have seen above, all of these early SDA's believed that Christ was God although not as depicted in the trinity doctrine. Trinitarians will say though that if Christ's divinity is not expressed in trinitarian terms, it is not expressed correctly. This was not the view of Ellen White. She said clearly that the pioneers, in their beliefs, had expressed Christ's divinity correctly. She also said that those who were misrepresenting the beliefs of the pioneers were those who opposed the truth (see pages 64-68)

Metaphors or not metaphors?

I did mention earlier that I would return to where Whidden had said in the book *The Trinity*

“Is it not quite apparent that the problem texts become problems only when one assumes an exclusively literalistic interpretation of such expressions as “Father,” “Son,” “Firstborn,” “Only Begotten,” “Begotten,” and so forth? Does not such literalism go against the mainly figurative or metaphorical meaning that the Bible writers use when referring to the persons of the Godhead? (Woodrow Whidden, *The Trinity*, ‘*Biblical objections to the trinity*’ page 106, 2002)

Whidden is saying that when we take such words as *Father*, *Son* and *begotten* etc as literal, then this becomes a problem. Along with present-day SDA theology, he says that when applied to the Godhead, these words are only “figurative or metaphorical”. From a personal perspective, I believe that these words become more of a problem if they are taken as metaphorical. I will explain what I mean.

Whidden says that these words are those “that the Bible writers use when referring to the persons of the Godhead”. This is very misleading because very often, as we shall now see, the designations of *Father* and *Son* were not words chosen by the Bible writers but were those *actually* spoken by others when referring to God and Christ. We will also see that they were the *actual words* spoken by God and Christ. Are we to conclude therefore, in keeping with Whidden's reasoning, that on each occasion that confessions were made (that Christ was the Son of God, also that God was the Father of Christ), that those who said these things were using metaphors? Let's make the application and see where it leads.

Undoubtedly Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of God. One of these occasions was when He restored the sight of a man who had been born blind (see John chapter 9). After hearing that the Jews had cast this man out from the temple, Jesus found him again and said to him

“Dost thou believe on the Son of God? John 9:35

The man answered by asking Jesus “Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? (see John 9:36). Jesus said to him

“... Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.” John 9:37

This is very pointed. Jesus led this man to believe that He, Jesus, was the Son of God. Was Jesus being metaphorical? Did He mean this man to believe He was only being metaphorical?

John records that the man believed the words of Jesus, also that he then worshipped Jesus (John 9:38). He must have therefore understood the words of Jesus (that He was the Son of God) as meaning that He was worthy of worship. As a Jew though, this once blind man knew that his worship of Jesus was worthy of death. The unbelieving Jews would have regarded his actions as a violation of the first commandment (Exodus 20:3). They believed God alone should be worshipped. This is why they regarded the claims of Jesus (to be the Son of God) as blasphemous and therefore worthy of death. They realised He was claiming equality with God (John 5:18, 19:7).

We will now look at just some of the other occasions when Jesus referred to Himself as a son, also as “the Son of God”. There are far too many to list all of them. We will then ask the same question. Was He being metaphorical?

When Jesus heard of Lazarus being sick, He told His disciples

“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” John 11:4

Jesus also said to those within His hearing

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. John 5:25-26

When praying to God, Jesus said

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: John 17:1

In the same manner, Jesus had said previously to the Jews

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” John 5:19-23

Jesus consistently spoke of Himself as God’s son, also of God as His father. The words “my Father” were often on His lips (e. g., Matthew 7:21, 10:32-33, 12:50, 16:17, Luke 2:49, 10:22, John 2:16, 5:17, 6:32, 8:38 etc., etc). Was He, on each of these occasions, being metaphorical?

It should go without saying that the words Jesus had heard God speak at His baptism were very precious to Him. This was when the Saviour heard an audible voice from Heaven saying

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Mathew 3:17

Not only at the baptism of Jesus was the voice of God heard, but also at the transfiguration. The Father said

“... This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Matthew 17:5

Was God the Father being metaphorical? Was He using imagery (figurative language)? How did Jesus take God’s words? Was it literally or metaphorically?

John the Baptist, in making his confession of Christ, said

“And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” John 1:33

Peter, when Jesus asked him who he (Peter) believed Him to be, professed

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

Jesus responded by telling Peter that “flesh and blood” had not revealed this to him, but His Father which was in Heaven (see Matthew 16:17). In other words, according to Jesus, what Peter had said was a divine revelation. In fact Jesus went on to say that His church would be built upon the confession of Peter (that Jesus was the Son of God – see verse 18). Was God the Father and Jesus both leading Peter and the other disciples to believe something that was only metaphorical? Did Jesus say He was going to build His church on a metaphor?

In the book of Acts, Luke recorded

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Acts 8:36-38

This is the confession that Jesus said would be the foundation of His church (see Matthew 16:18). This was a condition of baptism.

Even the demons professed Christ to be the Son of God

“What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” Matthew 8:29

“And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.” Mark 3:11

“What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.” Mark 5:7

“Thou art Christ the Son of God.” Luke 4:41

If the terminology “Son of God” is only a metaphor, then it must be concluded that these demons were using figurative language. Would they have realised that were using a metaphor?

The Jews knew that Jesus confessed to be the Son of God. This is why they considered Him guilty of death. Consider the following

“We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, **because he made himself the Son of God.**” (John 19:7)

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, **but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**” John 5:18

“Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. **If thou be the Son of God,** come down from the cross.” Matthew 27:40

“He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: **for he said, I am the Son of God.**” Matthew 27:43

The Jews therefore, because they regarded Christ as making Himself equal with God (because He claimed to be the Son of God), could not have drawn the conclusion that He was only being metaphorical. As Jesus Himself said

“Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, **Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?**” John 10:36

Without a doubt, Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, but was He, unknown to those who heard Him make these claims, simply using a metaphor?

Even the Roman centurion at the foot of the cross confessed Christ to be the Son of God.

“Truly this was **the Son of God.**” Matthew 27:54

Mary said to Jesus

“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, **the Son of God,** which should come into the world.” John 11:27

The disciples said to Jesus

“Of a truth **thou art the Son of God.**” Matthew 14:33

So, as we can see, it was not, as Whidden purports (see above), the Bible writers who chose to use the words *Father* and *Son*. Instead, the Bible writers were faithfully recording the *actual* words that both God and Christ, also others, had spoken.

John explained the purpose of his Gospel by saying

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, **that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;** and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John 20:31

Did the Holy Spirit lead John to ‘prove’ to his readers something that was only metaphorical? Certainly John was not trying to prove that the Father had appointed Jesus to the office of high priest (see Whidden’s remarks on page 185).

So the question remains. When Jesus said that He was the Son of God, was He being metaphorical? How about the Father when He said that Christ was His Son? Was He being metaphorical? How about the demons, the Jews, and the disciples etc, were they only using figurative language when they confessed Christ to be the Son of God, or did they believe He really was the Son of God? Today, SDA's are being asked to believe that this terminology is only meant by God to be metaphorical. The question is, what do you believe?

As we noted above (see Peter's confession), the belief that Jesus is the divine Son of God is the foundation of the Christian faith (see Matthew 16:18). This is why John the Gospel writer wrote

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." 1 John 5:10

According to John, the following is the faith that overcomes.

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:5

The "Son of God" – a metaphor or not a metaphor? You decide.

Conclusions and closing comments

From the above, we have seen that early SDA's took the Bible as it reads. This is particularly so where it says that God is the Father of Christ, also that Christ is the Son of God. We have noted too that in opposition to this reasoning, the present SDA Church says that the Father and Son are two divine beings (otherwise unnamed), who are merely role-playing the parts of a father and a son. These two concepts are incompatible.

So the question that must be asked is this: Does it make any difference as to which of these two concepts is believed? In answer to this, I would suggest we consider the following.

The Scriptures tell us

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

If God did not have son, then He did not have a son to give. This much should be reasonably apparent. We have also seen in Part 1 of this study that according to trinitarianism, the divine person we know as the Son of God, did not die at Calvary. What affect therefore do these two concepts (that God does not have a son, and a divine person did not die at Calvary) have on the above text of Scripture? Surely together they destroy its literal meaning. It must also be reasoned that in the role-playing idea, because the two persons are said to be co-equal in every respect, also co-eternal, neither of them would have had the right to give the other. This is because in this role-playing idea, there is no hierarchy of persons. The concept, therefore, of one person being able to give another person, is completely lost. Certainly the concept of a father giving his son is lost.

The apostle Paul wrote

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:"

Romans 8:3

The above is another Scripture which, in the role-playing idea, completely loses its meaning. How could God, if He did not have a son, have sent him?

There is another aspect of this role-playing idea that does not usually come to the fore.

From the way that various people such as the disciples addressed Christ, also the way that the Jews addressed Him (as we have seen above), it is plain to see that all of them knew He claimed to be the Son of God. The Jews even said that His claim was the very reason why He was worthy of death. They said He was being blasphemous. It is also true to say that for the last two thousand years, multitudes, perhaps millions, have acknowledged Christ to be the Son of God. It follows therefore that if God and Christ are not really a father and a son, then all these people have been led to believe something which is not true. As we have seen above, tens of thousands of SDA's have also gone to their rest believing that God and Christ really are a father and a son. We have also seen that the present SDA Church is saying that all these SDA's were wrong in this belief. In consequence therefore, the present SDA Church must also believe that anyone who has believed this in the past, regardless of the denomination to which they belonged, is also wrong.

So if the SDA Church today is correct (that God and Christ are not really a father and a son), who would be responsible for misleading all of these people? It can only be reasoned that it was God and Christ themselves. This is because they are the Ones who claimed to have this father-son relationship. Who else can be held responsible? If it is true that God and Christ are only role-playing, then these divine personages are also responsible for this present controversy within the SDA Church. Those who have read the Scriptures, and have believed what God has told them, cannot be blamed. They are simply taking God at His word. How would they know that these two divine personages were only role-playing?

It would also be true to say (if God and Christ are only role-playing) that throughout the entire time of Ellen White's ministry, also for decades afterwards, God's remnant church (the SDA Church), was leading people to believe error. Is this reasonable to believe? We really do need to think on these things. Someone is not telling the truth.

This leads me to my final comments.

In the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White refers to where Jesus spoke of oath-taking. She explained

“Jesus proceeded to lay down a principle that would make oath taking needless. He teaches that the exact truth should be the law of speech. “Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.” R.V.

These words condemn all those meaningless phrases and expletives that border on profanity. They condemn the deceptive compliments, the evasion of truth, the flattering phrases, the exaggerations, the misrepresentations in trade, that are current in society and in the business world. They teach that no one who tries to appear what he is not, or whose words do not convey the real sentiment of his heart, can be called truthful.” (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pages 67-68)

She later wrote (paragraphs contiguous)

“A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood. Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And “whatsoever is more than” truth, “is of the evil one.”

Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one.” (*Ibid*)

If God and Christ were not really a Father and a Son, could it be said of them that they were telling “the exact truth”? We must also ask: By referring to themselves as a father and a son, were God and Christ leading people to believe something that is not true?

As I have said previously, multitudes over the centuries have gone to their deaths believing that God and Christ were who they said they were – a father and a son. In fact some have been tortured and put to death for believing it. History records that in the 16th century, Michael Servetus, a Spanish scholar and theologian, was burnt at the stake for believing that Christ was the Son of God. As we have seen above, countless numbers of past SDA's have gone to their death believing it. The present-day non-trinitarian SDA's such as myself believe it. Our reason for believing it, as was the reason of those who went before us, is that God and Christ said it. This is our unwavering testimony. It is our assurance of who God and Christ are in reality. Who can blame us or condemn us for our faith?

In 1894, Ellen White wrote in an article that was published in the *Review and Herald*

“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, 20th March 1894, 'Christ the center of the message'*)

In the next part of this study (Part 3) we shall be taking a closer look at what Ellen White wrote about the Father and the Son.

God continue to bless you as seek for the truth.

Terry Hill

terry_sda@blueyonder.co.uk