

It is important for us to note that the Catholic Church considers the doctrine of the Trinity to be the “central doctrine” of their faith: “The mystery of the trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the church.” (Handbook for Today's Catholic. Pg. 16). So how did the “central doctrine” of the Catholic Church make its way into, and end up as a central doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist faith? It may come as a surprise to many that LeRoy Froom (perhaps our Church’s most prominent historian) was primarily responsible for introducing the Trinitarian doctrine to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and very purposefully set about to promote its acceptance and institute it into the beliefs of the Church. In his book “Movement of Destiny”, which was published in 1971, he tells us how he came to write about the Holy Spirit and how he came to believe in the “Trinity.” His brief account of this is very enlightening in terms of both his history and his method. Here is what he has to say concerning this:

“May I here make a frank, personal confession? When back between 1926 and 1928 I was asked by our leaders to give a series of studies on “The Holy Spirit”... I found that aside from priceless leads found in the Spirit of Prophecy, there was practically nothing in our literature setting forth a sound, Biblical exposition in this tremendous field of study. There were no previous pathfinding books on the question in our literature.”

“I was compelled to search out a score of valuable books written by men outside of our Faith....for initial clues and suggestions, and to open up beckoning vistas to intensive personal study. Having these, I went on from there. But they were decided early helps. And scores, if not hundreds, could confirm the same sobering conviction that some of these other men frequently had a deeper insight into the spiritual things of God than many of our own men had on the Holy Spirit and the triumphant life. It was still a largely obscure theme....”

“It was then that I again saw the peerless pre-eminence of the Spirit of Prophecy portrayals that not only supported but greatly enhanced the choicest gems of truth glimpsed in part by these other writers....”

Mr. Froom then exuberantly exclaims: “Thank God, that time of reticence and misunderstanding has passed....This is the supreme hour....Thank God, that final awakening is definitely underway: (Movement of Destiny, p. 322: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1971; used by permission; Emphasis Mine).

Froom goes on to state that the “Truth of the Trinity” was an inevitable evolution in our theology stemming from the 1888 Conference and message: “When once the sublime truth of the complete Deity of Christ...was affirmed by a growing number at and after the Minneapolis session, emphasis on certain inseparably related truths followed inevitably.” “Thus the Truth of the Trinity was set forth in Tract form by the Pacific Press...in February, 1892....It was not written by one of our own men, but by “the late Dr. Samuel Spear.”.... This sound and helpful tract by Spear.... was simple, but adequate, as the first step in recognition and declaration. It was the logical aftermath of 1888.” Mr. Froom concludes his brief account by claiming that the book “The Desire of Ages” presented an “inspired depiction” of the trinity doctrine and because of this it has become our denominations’ “accepted position.”

Froom also boasts that the “Desire of Ages” was even publicized in a prominent Catholic journal (as if this adds credibility to the book). Here it is in his own words:

“...The Desire of Ages, of course, presented an inspired depiction, and was consequently destined to become the denominationally accepted position.... The Desire of Ages.... is one of the most highly esteemed books of the Denomination—a recognized classic, even publicized in such a Catholic journal as the “Universal Fatima News” for September 1965.” (Movement of Destiny; pp. 323,324; used by permission).

I must admit that the reason for Mr. Froom’s obvious pride in its endorsement and publicity in a “Catholic Journal” puzzles me. One can hardly conclude that this inclusion adds anything to the credibility of the book, or proves that The Desire of Ages supports the doctrine of the Trinity!

The very first thing I would like to note about LeRoy Froom’s account of how he came to believe in the Trinity is the method he obviously employed in arriving at his conclusions. Mr. Froom did not start his study with the Bible and then move on to the writings of Ellen White before turning to “outside” sources. Indeed, Mr. Froom did his study in the exact opposite order! He began with the writings and theologies of “men outside our faith” and worked his way back to the writings of Ellen White in order to find support for his conclusions. Even if Ellen White had been alive and had agreed with his conclusions, I believe that she would NOT have approved of his method in arriving at his position. Our denomination would most certainly never have been brought into existence if we had begun our study of such topics as the Sabbath, the State of the Dead, the Sanctuary, and others if we had conducted our study of these subjects in the manner that Mr. Froom employed! And when it comes to the Trinity doctrine the fact is that Ellen White never used the term “Trinity” in any of her writings, and as we will see, she did not actually support this doctrine. Trinity is only found in the book Evangelism which Froom compiled E.G. materials and added the word Trinity.

The REASON LeRoy Froom could not find anything he considered "Path-finding" written by any of our Pioneers – or by men within our faith on the subject of the Holy Spirit; is NOT because there had been nothing written on the subject but because NONE of our pioneers were "Trinitarians" and therefore did not agree with Elder Froom's conclusions or opinions! Mr. Froom states that even the Spirit of Prophecy had only "priceless leads" to offer him as he began his study. Yet he later declares that the Desire of Ages set forth an "inspired depiction" of the Trinity. If the Desire of Ages truly sets forth an inspired depiction of the "Trinity" and was the "Denominationally accepted position" of the Trinity, why didn't Mr. Froom acknowledge this to start with as he began his study of this subject in 1926? And if Mrs. White had truly set forth an inspired depiction of the Trinity as far back as 1898, why couldn't He find much more material to support his position within the rest of the pages of the Spirit of Prophecy? If Mrs. White truly believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, why is it that she NEVER used the term "Trinity" to describe the Godhead in any of her writings? The fact is that LeRoy Froom "discovered" what he believed was the "truth of the Trinity" and the Holy Spirit from writers "not of our faith", and then set out to support it with statements from the Spirit of Prophecy.

LeRoy Froom wrote a book called, "The Coming of the Comforter" as a result of, and shortly following his study during 1926-1928. Mr. Froom, talking about the publication of his book in a letter to Dr. Otto H. Christiansen on October 27, 1960; stated that:

"May I state that my book, The Coming of The Comforter, was the result of a series of studies that I gave in 1927 - 28, to Ministerial institutes throughout North America. You cannot imagine how I was pummeled by some of the old-timers..." and speaking of his Trinitarian views he states: "Some men denied that...still deny it, but the book has come to be generally accepted as standard."

It should be noted that this book is still widely used and is available in our ABC bookstores. In 1969, Russel Holt, in a term paper entitled "The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: Its Rejection and Acceptance" (Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary), divides our denominational history on the subject of the Trinity into three periods: During the first period, which he delineates as 1844-1890, he says: "the field was dominated by those who saw the trinity as illogical, unscriptural, pagan and subversive of the atonement. anti-trinitarianism is the evident denominational stance." He next refers to the time period of 1890-1900, saying: "Roughly within this period, the course of the denomination on the trinity was decided by statements from Ellen G. White." (Ibid. Emphasis Mine). Finally, He states of the period between 1900-1930: "This period saw the death of most of those pioneers who had championed and held the anti-Trinitarian position. Their places were being taken by men who were changing their thinking, or had never opposed the doctrine...." (see--<http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/trinity/moon/moon-trinity1.htm>, all Emphasis Mine). Russell Holt, commenting on Froom's publication of "The Coming of the Comforter (and the subsequent writing of other's) states that: "The trinity began to be published, until by 1931 it had triumphed, and had become the standard denominational position. Isolated stalwarts remained who refused to yield, but the outcome had been decided." (Emphasis Mine).

[Andrews University Seminary Studies: Trinity Debate Part 1](http://www.sdanet.org)
www.sdanet.org

In 1931, F.M. Wilcox included the term "trinity" in the S.D.A. Yearbook's 22-point "Statement of Beliefs" and this was the first time that this term was seen in any Adventist Statement of Beliefs. Immediately following, in 1932, this pro-Trinitarian Statement of Beliefs was added to the first "Church Manual" and all succeeding "Adventist Yearbooks" and began to appear in nearly all the Church books. It had not been voted on by the Church at large, by the General Conference, nor even by a representative body of the leaders of the S.D.A. Church. The 1931 Statement of Beliefs read as follows:

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

Holt comments on this change in our fundamental beliefs by noting:

"A comparison of statements of faith issued at various times by the denomination shows a marked change in the opinion of the church concerning the trinity...." He observes that: "... Separate statements appeared in 1874, 1889, 1894 and 1931. The first three of these are, for all practical purposes, identical in the articles dealing with the deity. A comparison of the statements of 1874 and 1931 shows the change."

Please note that there was no change in the Statement of Beliefs in regard to the “Trinitarian” viewpoint while Ellen White was alive. J.S. Washburn (1863-1955; a retired Adventist minister and contemporary of Ellen White -- He was converted by J. N. Andrews at 11, baptized by James White at 12 and began preaching Adventism at 21), opposed this change in the strongest possible terms writing:

"The doctrine of the trinity is a cruel, heathen monstrosity, removing Jesus from His true position of Divine Saviour and mediator....This monstrous doctrine transplanted from heathenism into the Roman, papal church is seeking to intrude its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel's Message." Washburn goes on to say: "If we should go back to the immortality of the soul, purgatory, eternal torment and the Sunday Sabbath, would that be anything less than apostasy? If however we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central, root doctrine of Romanism, the trinity, and teach that the Son of God did not die, even though our words seemed to be spiritual, is this anything else and anything less than apostasy and the very omega of apostasy?" (See Judson Washburn, "The Trinity," 1939. Emphasis mine). "

Benjamin Wilkinson, the man who wrote the book entitled "Truth Triumphant", wrote a letter to Dr. T.S. Teters in 1936, saying:

"Replying to your letter of October 13 regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, I will say that Seventh Day Adventists do not, and never have accepted the dark, mysterious, Catholic doctrine of the Trinity."

In 1941, the Baptismal Vow was revised to include the trinitarian statement (Mr. Froom was involved in this action as well); so that, NOW, in order to become a Seventh-day Adventist, you have to agree to belief in the trinity.

In a letter written to Roy Allan Anderson, J.L. Schuler, Denton Reebok, A.W. Peterson, W.G. Turner and J.E. Weaver; November 22, 1966; LeRoy Froom says:

"I am writing to you brethren as a group for you are the only living members of the original committee of 13, appointed in 1931 to frame a uniform baptismal covenant. Elder Branson was the chairman and I was Secretary. The task of this committee was to formulate a uniform baptismal covenant and vow based on the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs statement in the yearbook and Manual...to point up a bit more sharply, the first, second and third persons of the Godhead." (Emphasis mine)"

In 1945, all the standard Adventist books were edited, and all the anti-Trinitarian statements taken from them. In his book Movement of Destiny, LeRoy Froom states:

"The next logical and inevitable step in the implementing of our unified fundamental beliefs, involved revision of certain standard works, so as to eliminate statements that taught, and thus perpetuated erroneous views on the Godhead. Such sentiments were now sharply at variance with the accepted fundamental beliefs set forth in the Church Manual." (Movement of Destiny, page 422 Emphasis Mine)"

The “official” acceptance of the “Trinity” into our fundamental beliefs did not come until 1946. According to Dr. Jerry A. Moon (in “Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol. 41, No. 1, 113-129”):

"When the statement had gained general acceptance, the General Conference session of 1946 made it official, voting that "no revision of this Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, as it now appears in the [Church] Manual, shall be made at any time except at a General Conference session." [see Fifteenth Meeting, General Conference Report No. 8, Review and Herald, June 14, 1946] (Emphasis mine)"

In 1946 the book Evangelism was compiled from the writings of Ellen White. LeRoy Froom (along with others) was instrumental in the choice and compilation of statements from Ellen White's writings, which seemed to support the Trinitarian viewpoint. This book contains the quotes most often used now (from the writings of Ellen White), to support the Trinitarian doctrine within our denomination. Here's what Froom had to say about this in a letter he wrote to Roy Allan Anderson on January 18, 1966:

"I am sure that we are agreed, in evaluating the book Evangelism, as one of the great contributions in which the Ministerial Association had a part back in those days. You know what it did with men in the Columbia Union who came face-to-face with the clear, unequivocal statements of the Spirit of Prophecy on the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the trinity and the like." "They either had to lay down their arms and accept those statements, or else they had to reject the Spirit of Prophecy. I know that you and Miss Cluser and I had considerable

to do with the selection of those things under the encouragement of men like Elder Branson, who felt that the earlier concept of the White Estate brethren on this book on evangelism was not adequate."

I fear that this is still the attitude of our Denomination and that it is based largely on the Ellen White quotes that were chosen to be included in the book *Evangelism*. This short history will seriously challenge the assumptions that have been made because of the narrow and carefully selected use of Ellen's writings on this subject. In 1955 there were meetings of the leaders of the Adventist Church with Dr. Walter Martin and Dr. Barnhouse, two evangelical theologians who felt that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a cult, and as a result of these meetings the book "Questions on Doctrine" (a book in which LeRoy Froom played a leading role) was produced in 1957 in an attempt to show that SDA's were NOT a cult and that we were quite "mainstream" in our beliefs – including the doctrine of the Trinity. [This book, unfortunately, also contained statements that we do not believe the atonement is taking place in Heaven right now, that Christ came with an "unfallen" human nature, and other untrue and misleading statements regarding Seventh-day Adventist beliefs].

In 1980, the General Conference voted on a new set of "27 Fundamental Beliefs" in which the Trinity doctrine was upheld. Fundamental belief number 2 now read:

"2. The Trinity[.] There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons." (Emphasis mine)."

The concept delineated here, that there are "three co-eternal Persons", is in complete harmony with the Catholic Church's teaching regarding the "Trinity" and, as we shall see, is incorrect. In 1988 the book "Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Beliefs" was published and included the doctrine of the Trinity. This book was highly promoted for use as an evangelistic tool to explain to non-Adventists what we believe our core doctrines to be. It seems clear to me that as I review the history of the "Trinity" doctrine and its acceptance into the Seventh-day Adventist Church that something has gone seriously amiss within our denomination. We have not considered the "Truth" (or non-Truth) of this doctrine in light of the Great Controversy, and we have certainly not considered the serious implication this doctrine has on the sacrifice, mediation, and ministry of Jesus Christ! Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity – with its focus on the Holy Spirit as a "third co-eternal person" of the Godhead – has successfully caused us to lose our focus on Christ, His Sacrifice, and His ministry in the lives of all believers since the Cross. It effectively limits Christ's ministry to that of "Justification" only, while leaving the work of "Sanctification" to the "Third" person of the Godhead—the Holy Spirit. This is, frankly, unbiblical – and is why we must earnestly examine this subject. I pray that you will find, as a result of your prayerful consideration of this history, that your focus is returned the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that your understanding of His great sacrifice in the plan of redemption will be broadened and enriched beyond words.

[ELLEN WHITE ON THE TRINITY Did E.G. White believe in the Trinity? Not ONE o. SDA TRINITARIANS REWRITING HISTORY](#)

[THIS POST WAS CONTRIBUTED BY JASON SMITH ON HIS RESEARCH INTO THE HISTORY OF THE TRINITY DOCTRINE WITHIN THE SDA CHURCH.](#)
[December 26, 2015](#)

[SDA TRINITARIANS REWRITING HISTORY](#)

Edited by Nancy Mattley

As I am continuing to research for my paper to be turned in at Southern Adventist University regarding the historical development of the doctrine of the trinity in Seventh-day Adventism I am finding numerous evidences of the obscuring and/or alteration of our history on this matter. The following example is taken from the book "*The Trinity: Understanding God's love, His plan of salvation, and Christian relationships*" by W. Whidden, J. Moon and J. Reeve.

In the chapter about the trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history under the heading of "*Anti-Trinitarian Dominance, 1846-1888*" we read the following claim.

"All the leading writers were anti-Trinitarian, although we find scattered references to members who held Trinitarian views" [pg 191]

Notice the plural phrase "scattered references" and plural word "members" in the quote above. This chapter continues on to present 3 evidences which supposedly prove that there were SDA members (plural) who were Trinitarians during the period of 1846-1888.

Here's their first evidence:

"Ambrose C. Spicer, the father of General Conference president William Ambrose Spicer, had been a Seventh Day Baptist minister before his conversion to Adventism in 1874 (Anderson, pp. 11-13). He evidently remained Trinitarian, because W.A. Spicer recounted to A.W. Spalding that his father "grew so offended at the anti-Trinitarian atmosphere in Battle Creek and he ceased preaching" (Burt, p. 3) [pg 191]

Now this first evidence actually comes from Merlin Burt's thesis. He was quoting, presumably, a letter from A.W. Spalding to H.C. Lacey on June 2, 1947. In this letter Spicer tells Lacey that Spalding told him that his father was offended at the anti-Trinitarian preaching. This is the first evidence presented in this book that "members" (plural) of the SDA church were Trinitarian.

Now let's give the benefit of the doubt and assume that this chain of hearsay (Ambrose Spicer [father] to W.A. Spicer [his son], from W.A. Spicer to A.W. Spalding and then from A.W. Spalding to Lacey) is true. There are a lot of links in that chain, but I see no reason why we should doubt it. So we've got one convert in 1874 who remained a Trinitarian but remember we are looking for "members" (plural). And this one example is really all that they have as we will now demonstrate.

Here's their next line of evidence:

"R.F. Cottrell, on the other hand, wrote in the Review that while he disbelieved in the Trinity, he had never "preached against it" or previously written about it (Cottrell)." [pg 192]

Just here let me issue a complaint. Whidden, Moon and Reeve do not give the actual reference to Cottrell's quote in the *Review*. Friends, let me tell you something. **When you see people give summarizations without giving the actual reference I urge you to look for the quotes yourself because very often they make mistakes and sometimes they are being intentionally dishonest.** I pray that isn't the case with brother Moon here.

The relevant point is that Whidden, Moon and Reeve try to use Cottrell as an argument to prove that there were SDA "members" (plural) during the period of 1846-1888 who were Trinitarian. **The great irony is that the man they are trying to use to prove that "disbelieved the trinity."** And they try to use the fact that up until 1869 (a point they left off by failing to give the reference) he did not preach against the trinity as a proof that there were Trinitarians in the church. **This is an argument from silence and really not a very good one.** A more reasonable view is that in all likelihood brother Cottrell didn't need to speak out against the trinity because there were already a plethora of voices in Adventism who were!

For thoroughness' sake let's give a bit of history here. Roswell F. Cottrell is the son of John Cottrell. They were Seventh-day Baptists but Cottrell joined with the Sabbatarian Adventists in 1851. R.F. Cottrell wrote about this in the *Review and Herald*

"DEAR Bro. WHITE : There is a little company in this place who are trying to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Our hearts were refreshed and encouraged by Bro. Rhodes, who called on us, and held a meeting a week ago. I thank God for the consolation and encouragement I have received from this interview, and hope we may be favored with another visit from him, or some other of the traveling brethren. My early education was such, that I have believed in the personal appearing of Christ, according to the Scriptures, from my youth. In 1843 and 1844, I heard the solemn cry, "The hour of his judgment is come," and though I felt no disposition to oppose it, and thought I loved his righteous appearing, yet I was not disappointed when the time passed by. I saw the proclaimers of the Advent in darkness in regard to the commandments of God, and bowing to an institution of Papacy; and perhaps this was the reason I did not believe. But since, I have heard the message of the third angel, which was since the commencement of the Review and Herald, I have reviewed carefully the whole movement, and the solemn inquiry in my mind has been. Was it from Heaven or of men? After some nine months careful and cautious examination, I have just arrived at the decision. I believe with all my heart, it was from Heaven. I cannot believe that God would suffer Satan to get up so exact a fulfillment of the prophecies to deceive the lovers of Jesus Christ—those who wait, and look for his appearing. If any one inquire how I can believe all this, since Christ did not appear according to the expectation of his children, I answer: We are instructed [Rev. xiv.] that an angel should fly through the midst of heaven, saying, "Fear God, for the hour of his judgment is come," and yet there is time for two other messages to follow in succession, before the Son of man is seen on the white cloud. I greatly rejoice that when the temple of God was opened in heaven, his children on earth saw, by faith, the ark of his testament. Yours in the blessed hope, ROSWELL F. COTTRELL. Mill Grove, N.Y., Oct. 19, 1851 (Review and Herald, November 25, 1851)

Now James White wrote of John Cottrell, the father, the following in 1853:

“Bro. Cottrell is nearly eighty years of age, remembers the dark day of 1780, and has been a Sabbath-keeper more than thirty years. He was formerly united with the Seventh-Day Baptists, but on some points of doctrine has differed from that body. He rejected the doctrine of the trinity, also the doctrine of man’s consciousness between death and the resurrection, and the punishment of the wicked in eternal consciousness. He believed that the wicked would be destroyed. Bro. Cottrell buried his wife not long since, who, it is said, was one of the excellent of the earth. Not long since, this aged pilgrim received a letter from friends in Wisconsin, purporting to be from M. Cottrell, his wife, who sleeps in Jesus. But he, believing that the dead know not anything, was prepared to reject at once the heresy that the spirits of the dead, knowing everything, come back and converse with the living. Thus truth is a staff in his old age. He has three sons in Mill Grove, who, with their families are Sabbath-keepers.” (James White, June 9, 1853, Review & Herald, vol. 4, no. 2, page 12, par. 16)

What we are seeing here is that R.F. Cottrell’s father was also a non-Trinitarian. **Now let’s examine the claim that “he had never ‘preached against it’ or previously written about it”** [*The Trinity* pg 192]

Moon, Whidden and Reeve are quoting from RH June 1st, 1869. Sadly they have taken three words out from this article and attempted to use them to say that Trinitarians (plural) were the norm in the pioneer days. Let’s discover the facts here.

The first is the R.F. Cottrell himself actually missed or forgot his first reference to the Trinity. It was written in 1857. He was speaking about a false teacher:

*“He proceeded to affirm that “man is a triune being,” consisting of body, soul and spirit. **I never heard a Disciple confess faith in the doctrine of the trinity;** but why not, if man consists of three persons in one person? especially, since man was made in the image of God? But the image he said, was a moral likeness. So man may be a triune being without proving that God is. But does he mean that one man is three men? **I might say that a tree consists of body, bark and leaves, and no one perhaps would dispute it. But if I should affirm that each tree consists of three trees, the assertion would possibly be doubted by some. But if all admitted that one tree is three trees, I might then affirm that there were ninety trees in my orchard, when no one could count but thirty.** I might then proceed and say, I have ninety trees in my orchard, and as each tree consists of three trees, I have two hundred and seventy. So if one man is three men, you may multiply him by three as often as you please. But if it takes body, soul and spirit to make one perfect, living man; then separate these, and the man is unmade.” (R.F. Cottrell, November 19, 1857, Review & Herald, vol. 11, no. 2, page 13, par. 13)*

Now brother Cottrell is really attacking the trichotomist position of man's nature here **but we note his quick reference that he “never heard a Disciple confess faith in the doctrine of the Trinity.” In other words he is on record as being against the Trinity back in 1857.** However it is probable that since this was such a quick passing reference that brother Cottrell forgot about it or didn't count it.

This brings us to our next reference which I believe Moon, Whidden and Reeve have abused. Now our authors are trying to use this quote as a proof that Trinitarians (plural) were a part of the SDA church during the years of 1844 to 1888 **but they completely obscure the fact that Cottrell is writing a very serious polemic AGAINST the Trinity in 1869!** Anyone reading this article can see why they took only 3 words out of it.

“This has been a popular doctrine and regarded as orthodox ever since the bishop of Rome was elevated to the popedom on the strength of it. It is accounted dangerous heresy to reject it; but each person is permitted to explain the doctrine in his own way. All seem to think they must hold it, but each has perfect liberty to take his own way to reconcile its contradictory propositions; and hence a multitude of views are held concerning it by its friends, all of them orthodox, I suppose, as long as they nominally assent to the doctrine.

“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 on the Lord Jesus Christ as those who call themselves Trinitarians. This is the first time I have ever taken the pen to say anything concerning the doctrine.

“My reasons for not adopting and defending it, are 1. Its name is unscriptural -- the Trinity, or the triune God, is unknown to the Bible; and I have entertained the idea that doctrines which require words coined in the human mind to express them, are coined doctrines. 2. I have never felt called upon to adopt and explain that which is contrary to all the sense and reason that God has given me. All my attempts at an explanation of such a subject would make it no clearer to my friends.

"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. If the testimony says he is the beginning of the creation of God, I believe it. If he is said to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, I believe it. And when Jesus says, "I and my Father are one," I believe it; and when he says, "My Father is greater than I," I believe that too; it is the word of the Son of God, and besides this it is perfectly reasonable and seemingly self-evident.

"If I be asked how I believe the Father and Son are one I reply, They are one in a sense not contrary to sense. If the "and" in the sentence means anything, the Father and the Son are two beings. They are one in the same sense in which Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one. He asked his Father that his disciples might be one. His language is, "that they may be one, even as we are one."

"It may be objected, If the Father and the Son are two distinct beings, do you not, in worshiping the Son and calling him God, break the first commandment of the Decalogue?

"No; it is the Father's will "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." We cannot break the commandment and dishonor God by obeying him. 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 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. 1. 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.

R.F. COTTRELL. (RH June 1st, 1869)

Finally we will quote, in part, from brother Cottrell's article entitled "The Trinity" in the RH July, 6th, 1869 edition. In it he replied to a criticism of his former article by The Baptist Tidings

"It is said in Prov. xvii, 14: "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water ; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with." Had I thought of this text, perhaps I should not have written my first article on the subject of the trinity. I never believed the doctrine, nor even professed to believe it. But I do not think it the most dangerous heresy in the world. This is the reason I have never before said anything publicly about it. I think that false views of man's nature are more dangerous in these days of spiritualistic infidelity; and false views of God's commandments, which lead men to break them and teach men so, more dangerous still. This imperils the soul, according to the most solemn warning of our Saviour. But to hold the doctrine of the trinity is not so much an evidence of evil intention as of intoxication from that wine of which all the nations have drunk. The fact that this was one of the leading doctrines, if not the 'to the popedom, does not say much in its favor. This should cause men to investigate it for themselves; as when the spirits of devils working miracles undertake the advocacy of the immortality of the soul. **Had I never doubted it before,** I would now probe it to the bottom, by that word which modern Spiritualism sets at nought.

Men have gone to opposite extremes in the discussion of the doctrine of the trinity. Some have made Christ a mere man, commencing his existence at his birth in Bethlehem; others have not been satisfied with holding him to be what the Scriptures so clearly reveal him, **the pre-existing Son of God,** but have made him the " God and Father " of himself. I do not purpose to add much to the barrels of ink that have been wasted on both sides of this question. I would simply advise all that love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to believe all that the Bible says of him, and no more. Then you will have the truth, and not occupy either of these extremes. (RH July 6th, 1869)

So with these things being so we can repudiate the claim in the book the Trinity. Their second line of evidence for Trinitarian “members” (plural) of the SDA church between 1844 and 1888 is unsubstantiated. The very minister whom they quote to try to prove this was very clearly anti-Trinitarian as seen by his writings in 1857 and 1869. **He views this doctrine as an “intoxication from” the wine of fallen Babylon.**

Now, having refuted their second line, let’s examine the third line of evidence.

“A third bit of evidence that not all were agreed on anti-Trinitarianism was the remark of Daniel T. Bourdeau in 1890: “Although we claim to be believers in, and worshipers of, only one God, I have thought that there are as many gods among us as there are conceptions of the Deity (Bourdeau)” [pg 192]

There are several comments to be made here.

The first is that we are again missing the reference. As we stated above this is a dangerous thing. We will quote this statement in its more complete literary context here shortly.

Secondly, the timing of this quote is outside of the parameters set for 1844 to 1888. Notice reader that it is from 1890. In fact later on in the same book Dr. Moon argues that this quote from Bourdeau reveals the impact of the full equality of the Son of God which was a part doctrine of righteousness by faith as presented in 1888!

Now sadly Dr. Moon has obscured the fact that the SDA pioneers already believed in the full equality of the Son with the Father, but I am inclined to be generous to him here. He likely cannot see this due to his Trinitarian bias. He is seeking to find justification and historical proof for the entry of this doctrine into Adventism and so that is causing him to read something into the Bourdeau quote that isn’t really there.

“Thus, the dynamic of righteousness by faith and its consequences for the doctrine of God provides the historical context for the provocative comment of D.T. Bourdeau that “although we claim to be believers in, and worshipers of, only one God, I have thought that there are as many gods among us as there are conceptions of the Deity.” Such a comment from a highly respected evangelist and missionary seems to indicate that the collective confidence in the anti-Trinitarian paradigm was showing some cracks. [pg 195]

I find it ironic here is that Dr. Moon presented this very same quote as an evidence that there were SDA Trinitarians (plural) back in the time range of 1844-1888. Now he is using it to say that its historical context is the 1888 message and it shows the collective confidence in anti-Trinitarians was showing some cracks. Which is it? If there were SDA Trinitarians (plural) back in the fold before 1888 then why would there be a “collective confidence” in anti-Trinitarianism in 1888? **The reality of the situation, as we have shown above, is that there is no evidence of Trinitarians (plural) in Adventism back then.**

No wit behooves us to examine the Bourdeau quote because a lot of weight is resting upon it. Whether it is used as proof that there were Trinitarian members back in 1844-1888 or whether it is used to say that as a consequence of the 1888 message the collective confidence in the anti-Trinitarian paradigm the result is the same. So let’s look at it. If we do so it can be seen that he was actually speaking about conceptions of God’s character and not a Trinitarian conception of His nature. Here’s the quote in context.

*“Although we claim to be believers in, and worshipers of, only one God, I have thought that there are as many gods among us as there are conceptions of the Deity. And how many there are of these, and how limited are most of them! Rather, how limited are **all of them!** We do not half study the character of God the Father and of God the Son, and the result is that we make God and Christ such beings as ourselves. In approving sin in ourselves, we sometimes make God a sinner”. (RH Nov 18, 1890 emphasis in the original)*

It makes no sense that brother Bourdeau would be calling a Trinitarian conception of Deity a limitation! Is there any Trinitarian who articulates this doctrine as a limitation of God? If anything it is the exact opposite making God into a most incomprehensible tri-personal Being. **The literary context of Bourdeau’s quote indicates that he was speaking about character conceptions of the Deity.** He continued on to rebuke as a deception the idea that God tempts to evil. Reading this entire article in its literary context we discover that it offers no support for the idea of trinitarianism being in Adventism before 1888 or even being introduced into Adventism as a result of the 1888 meetings.

The long and short of this article is that our SDA Trinitarians are rewriting Adventist history in a similar way to what we have seen pro-women’s ordination as overseer advocates do in Adventism.

I hope that this article has helped you to see the light on this matter. We have not touched upon the theology (which is the weightier issue) but at the same time I believe it is important that we understand our history correctly.

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.--Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, p. 196 (1902)