

CONTRASTING VIEWS ABOUT THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE TRINITY IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY

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Abstract

In the early church, the divinity of Christ's understanding was significant to accepting the doctrine of the Trinity. How were the Seventh-day Adventists? This work surveys the impact of the divinity of Christ's idea on the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist theology. Of five views on the divinity of Christ, two ideas reflect the acceptance of the Trinity. These two ideas argue that if Jesus is God, he has a distinct personality from the Father, and he has the nature, substance, and attributes of God; this understanding will lead to the acceptance of the personality of the Holy Spirit, then, finally to the inclusion of the Trinity. This article maintains that a correct biblical understanding of the divinity of Christ helps to the acceptance of the personality of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity.

Keywords: Divinity of Christ, Trinity, Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Godhead

1. Introduction

The divinity of Christ was a major topic of discussion during the Early

Church. The issue triggered the first and second ecumenical councils' decisions regarding the Trinity, including a discussion of Christ's divinity. Paul Tillich states that the "Trinitarian decision in Nicaea preceded the definitely Christological decision of Chalcedon. . . . but in terms of motivation the sequence is reversed; the Christological problem gives rise to the Trinitarian problem."¹ The Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD) confirmed the Trinity and divinity of Christ. Thus, Christianity since this formative period closely connected the divinity of Christ to the acceptance of the Trinity.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, even though there are some works done on the Trinity,² there has scarcely been done work on the divinity of Christ and the acceptance of the Doctrine of the Trinity. This study identifies different views about the divinity of Christ, and how they impacted the acceptance of the personality of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity doctrine in Seventh-day Adventist theology. The following sections identify five different ideas on the divinity of Christ among Adventists and how these diverse perspectives are connected to the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. Jesus Christ as a Divine but Created Being

Some of the early Adventist pioneers believed that Jesus Christ was the

¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1967), 285.

² Erwin Roy Gane, "The Arian or Anti-trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen G. White Answer" (MA thesis, Andrews University, 1963); Hans Varmer, "Analysis of the Seventh-day Adventist Pioneer Anti-Trinitarian Position" (term paper, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, 1972); Merlin D. Burt, "Demise of Semi-Arianism and Anti-Trinitarianism in Adventist Theology, 1888–1957" (term paper, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, 1996); Merlin D. Burt, "History of the Adventist View on the Trinity," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17.1 (Spring 2006): 125–39; Russell Holt, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: Its Rejection and Acceptance" (term paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1969); Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002); Woodrow W. Whidden, "Salvation Pilgrimage: The Adventist Journey into Justification by Faith and Trinitarianism," *Ministry*, April 1998, 5–7; Gerhard Pfandl, "The Doctrine of the Trinity among Seventh-day Adventists," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17.1 (Spring 2006): 160–179; Jerry Moon, "The Adventist Trinity Debate Part 1: Historical Overview," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41.1 (2003): 113–29; Jerry Moon, "The Adventist Trinity Debate Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White," *AUSS* 41.2, (2003): 275–92; and Denis Fortin, "God, Trinity and Adventism: An Old Controversy over the Nature of God Surfaces again," *Perspective Digest* 15.4, (2010): 1.

Lord, but that He was created by God. Since He was a created being, His substance was different from the Father. Even though Jesus was created, they still believed that Jesus Christ was truly a divine being.

J. M. Stephenson wrote in 1854 that Jesus Christ was a divine being. He recognized that "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." In spite of Jesus Christ being "immortal," and "in his original nature, . . . deathless,"³ nevertheless, He was not seen to be as immortal as the Father. He continued:

that there are none good except the Father, it cannot be understood that none others are good in a relative sense; for Christ and angels, are good, yea perfect, in their respective sphere; but that the Father alone is supremely, or absolutely, good; and that he alone is immortal in an absolute sense; that he alone is self-existent; and, that, consequently, every other being, however high or low, is absolutely dependent upon him for life; for being.⁴

From this fact, Stevenson did not just say that Jesus Christ was not as immortal as the Father, but that in his "sphere" it was an obvious difference as well. Stephenson called Jesus Christ the "only begotten" or, using the borrowed biblical term, he called Him "The first born of every creature." He stated that the "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 he emphasized that the "Divine nature" of the Son was not "the same" as that of the Father.⁵ The difference between "sphere" and "a created being" from the Father, therefore, made Jesus into a lower, but yet still a divine being.

More than a decade later, Uriah Smith wrote *Thoughts on Revelation* (1865).⁶ He recognized the divinity of Christ that He "is seated with his Father upon the throne of universal dominion, . . . and ranks equally with him in the overruling and disposition of the nations and affairs of earth." Indeed, he stated that Christ is the "Lord" and "Son of God." However,

³ J. M. Stephenson, "The Atonement," *Review and Herald* [RH], November 14, 1854, 105.

⁴ Stephenson, "The Atonement," 106.

⁵ Stephenson, "The Atonement," 106.

⁶ This book was written in 1865, but it was not published until 1867. See [Editor], "Now Ready," *RH*, May 14, 1867, 276; [Editor], "Our Book List," *RH*, June 18, 1867, 15.

Smith denied that Jesus Christ was God and equal from eternity with the Father. He claimed that “the complete eternity, past and future, can be applicable only to God, the Father. This language, we believe, is never applied to Christ.”⁷ Regarding a phrase applied to Jesus Christ in Rev 3:14, he wrote that Christ was “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.” Regarding the title “Alpha and Omega,” as applied to Jesus Christ, he explained that “the expression must be taken in a more limited sense than when applied to the Father.”⁸ Uriah Smith believed that Jesus Christ was a Lord who was a created being, while still yet being divine, though being made by the Father.

Since this idea denied Jesus Christ as God, the supporters of this view believed that He was only a created being who had a lower divine nature with a different “sphere” and substance than that of the Father. They refused to clearly say that Jesus Christ was truly part of the Godhead. They believed that only the Father was truly God, and Jesus Christ was the Lord and Son of God. This thought refused to see Jesus Christ as fully God. They similarly also denied that the Holy Spirit was fully a personal part of the Godhead or Trinity.⁹ Uriah Smith identified the Holy Spirit as “it” or as a “power,” and not as a person.¹⁰

3. Jesus Christ as a Lord, but Not a God

A second idea on Christ’s deity believed that Jesus Christ was a divine being, but that he was begotten and therefore not created by God. In a similar way to the previous idea, they considered that the word “God” was a term used only for the Father. The term “Lord” was reserved for Christ. They also understood the term “Lord God” as exclusively reserved for the Father, even though one individual from this group believed that Jesus Christ was in fact “equal with God.” Nevertheless, he still called Him “Lord” but not

⁷ Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam press of the Seventh-day Adventist, 1865), 14, 16, 26, 54.

⁸ Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation*, 323.

⁹ For the second generation of Seventh-day Adventists, they preferred to use the term “Godhead” instead of “Trinity,” since the latter “still remained essentially a no-no in church usage---probably because it was a nonbiblical word and was associated with the creeds.” Gilbert M. Valentine, *W.W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism’s Second Generation*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 278. See also LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 273.

¹⁰ Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation*, 14, 325.

God. Individuals from this group believed that the substance or nature of Jesus was different from that of the Father.

An example of one early Seventh-day Adventist pioneer who held this position was Joseph Bates. In 1846, he referred to Jesus as "the first born of every creature" who was "equal with God" (Phil 2: 5, 6) as well as the term "image of God" (Gen 1:27), advocating what was essentially a Unitarian understanding.¹¹ In response to the accusation that he was Unitarian, he replied, "so then was Paul, or I have not quoted him right."¹² He rejected the Trinity because he understood that the "Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, was also the Almighty God, the Father, one and the same being."¹³ He believed that "God and his Son to be two persons in heaven." He stated: "I think here is sufficient proof from the Scriptures to justify the true believer to be still looking for a personal Saviour, and that God the Father is a person, and looks like Jesus and we like him."¹⁴ He denied the Trinity, in part, due to his misunderstanding about what was the orthodox view on the Trinity, but it was also due to his Unitarian understanding, which placed Jesus as a lower divine entity than the Father.

James White, another co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held a similar position to that of Joseph Bates. On January 8, 1845, he wrote an article that used the title "Lord God" four times, exclusively referring to the Father and "Lord" in reference to Jesus Christ. He refuted the idea that "Jesus is the eternal God" because "he is the Son of the eternal God."¹⁵ He thought that only God is eternal. He had difficulty with the concept of the Trinity since he assumed that the Trinity, he believed, did not distinguish between the persons of the Father and the Son except by spiritualizing them. He stated, "Here we might mention the Trinity, which does away with the

¹¹ Unitarianism was wide spreading in New England, especially in the Christian Connection since early 19th century and the growing supporters were at Harvard. They believe that "Christ was God's special son, 'divine' in a relative sense yet not equal with the Father." Thomas H. Olbricht, "Unitarians," *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, ed. Douglas A. Foster et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 749; see also D. A. Currie, "Unitarianism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 1231–32.

¹² Joseph Bates, *The Opening Heavens: Or A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets and Apostles, Concerning the Opening Heavens, Compared with Astronomical Observations, and of the Present and Future Location of the New Jerusalem, the Paradise of God* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), 18.

¹³ Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1970), 205.

¹⁴ Bates, *Opening Heavens*, 18–19.

¹⁵ J[ames] W[hite], "Letter from Bro. White," *The Day-Star*, January 24, 1846, 25.

personality of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ He claimed that the “trinity” was a made-up (fictional) doctrine from Roman Catholicism that the Protestant Reformers, unfortunately, retained as an erroneous belief.¹⁷ He called Jesus the “divine Lord”¹⁸ but not as God.

J. N. Andrews was another pioneer within this group. He expressed the idea that Jesus Christ was inferior to God “for he had God for his Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have beginning of days.” He contrasted this with “God the Father, who is without father, or mother, or descent, or beginning of days, or end of life.”¹⁹ Andrews placed Jesus inferior to God because he contended that only the Father was eternal God in the absolute sense and not with the Son. Subsequently, a few years later, he wrote, based upon 1 Tim 6:16, that “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.” It meant that Jesus Christ derived immortality from the Father, even though “our Lord Jesus Christ is the source of this life to us.”²⁰ Andrews believed that the nature of God and the Lord Jesus were different since God the Father was eternal, self-existent, and contained the source of immortality whereby Jesus Christ did “have beginning of days,” was not self-existent and his immortality was derived from the Father. That was why Andrews argued that the Father and the Son were different in “nature.”

Another significant individual was Uriah Smith, whose understanding about the divinity of Christ developed over time. In 1872, he published *Fundamental Principles*, which omitted the phrase “created being” in reference to Jesus Christ. He simply mentioned the “Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist.”²¹ The two main Seventh-day Adventist periodicals, *The Review and Herald* and *Signs of the Times*, published this statement in 1874. In these *Fundamental Principles*, allegedly reflected “so far as we know, entire unanimity throughout the body.”²² But it was not “a system of faith, but is a

¹⁶ J[ames] W[hite], “Preach the Word,” *RH*, December 11, 1855, 85.

¹⁷ J[ames] W[hite], “The Word,” *RH*, February 7, 1856, 149.

¹⁸ J[ames] W[hite], “The Faith of Jesus,” *RH*, August 5, 1852, 52.

¹⁹ J[ohn] N. Andrews, “Melchisedec,” *RH*, September 7, 1869, 84.

²⁰ J[ohn] N. A[ndrews], “Immortality through Christ,” *RH*, January 27, 1874, 52.

²¹ Uriah Smith, *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventist* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1872).

²² U[riah] S[mith], “A Brief Sketch of their Origin, Progress, and Principles,” *RH*, November 24, 1874, 171.

brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them [Seventh-day Adventists]."²³ In this statement, we see the understanding of Jesus as Lord with the terms "God" and "eternal" reserved for the Father as a dominant idea held by early Seventh-day Adventists during this formative period. In 1881, Smith revised his phraseology about Jesus Christ in Rev 3:14 when he replaced the term "created" with "begotten."²⁴ Uriah Smith later refined his understanding of the divinity of Christ, which is further discussed later on.

Another influential, early Seventh-day Adventist minister who held this viewpoint was Roswell F. Cottrell. He noted "that the term trinity means the union of three persons, not offices, in one God" and concluded "that one person is three persons, and that three persons are only one person, is the doctrine which we claim is contrary to reason and common sense." He did not believe that Jesus was "merely man." Neither did he hold the view that the Son was the same person as the Father. He assumed that the Father and Son were "in perfect harmony, of one mind and purpose, one in design and one in action; they were one in creating the world, and one in redeeming it." He maintained that the Son was inferior to the Father when he referenced to what Jesus said-- that "My Father is greater than I." He claimed that "you will not make him contradict himself." He called Jesus "Lord" or the "divine Son of God" while retaining the title "God" as strictly referring to the Father.²⁵

In 1883, the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched its first *Year Book*. The faith statements of the church emerged in the 1889 *Year Book* under the title "Fundamental Principles of the Seventh-day Adventists." These convictions reflect those of Uriah Smith, who referred to the Father by stating that "there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal." The second article states that "there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom he created all things."²⁶ While this statement may be "interpreted favorably by

²³ [Editor], "Fundamental Principles," *Signs of the Times*, June 4, 1874, 3. Words in bracket are added.

²⁴ Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and practical, on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist, 1881), 74.

²⁵ R. F. Cottrell, "The Trinity," *RH*, July 6, 1869, 10–11.

²⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book of Statistics for 1889: Comprising the Classified Business Proceedings of the General Conference, the International Tract Society, the International Sabbath-school Association, the American Health and Temperance Association, Denominational Publishing Houses, Colleges, Etc., Supplemented with a Department of General Information, Interspersed with Practical Comments*

either Semi-Arian or Trinitarians,”²⁷ nevertheless, it reflects the view of Uriah Smith that the word “Lord” should only be used for Jesus Christ, and the words “God” and “eternal” should refer only to the Father.

This group maintained that Jesus was a lower divine being and therefore different in nature when compared with the Father. They believed that He did not deserve the title “God.” This caused them to deny Jesus Christ as part of the Godhead as well as the Holy Spirit, since they recognized that such a title was only befitting as applied to the Father. Generally, they described the Holy Spirit as an energy or medium and used the words “its” or “itself,” as was indicated in the *Year Book*.²⁸

4. Jesus Christ as a Fully Subordinate God

A third group believed that Jesus Christ is God, but He is, in a sense, inferior to the Father. His subordination is everlasting, even before the incarnation. As a result, the power that He had before his first coming was derived from the Father and prevails forever. Supporters of this view see the word “begotten” as meaning fully subordinate.

D. W. Hull expressed this belief in 1859 by stating that Jesus Christ is a fully subordinate God, with a distinct person, but who is not included in the Godhead. He comments on John 1:14: “this is undoubtedly the same Word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God.” He then asked: “why was the Word called God?” In reference to John 1:3, he says that “as Christ has always been known to cooperate with the Father, there is no doubt that through his agency the worlds were formed.” Hull believed that Christ is God, but this function is as an agent of the Father, since “his power is only delegated.” He commented (referencing John 10:34) that “Christ does not in the above passage deny that he is God; and we have found heretofore that he has been called God.” However, Hull assumed there is a different quality between the two. He thought that “there is here a clear distinction made between the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. The distinguishing qualities are, that whilst one is called the Son, the other is known as God the Father.”²⁹ Hull’s objection to the Trinitarian understanding was

on the Proposed Religious Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1889), 147.

²⁷ Whidden, Moon, Reeve, *The Trinity*, 203.

²⁸ General Conference, *1889 Year Book*, 150.

²⁹ D. W. Hull, “Bible Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ,” *RH*, November 10, 1859, 193–94.

based upon the idea that Jesus and the Father are one person, so that, if Jesus died on the cross it meant that God “could not have raised Jesus from the dead.”³⁰ He believed the Son and the Father are distinct persons. Regarding the substance, he thought that the Son was an inferior “God” to the Father. Hull confirmed this view of subordination by referencing Matt. 28:18: “The very fact that he informs his disciples that all power had been given him, implies that hitherto (although he had great power) he had not possessed all power.”³¹ Altogether, Hull believed that Jesus did not fully share in the Godhead, but instead, only the Father was counted as fully divine in the Godhead.³²

James White, toward the end of his life, developed a much more nuanced idea about the divinity of Christ. In 1876 he called Jesus Christ the “divine Son.” He also stated: “Adventists hold the divinity of Christ so nearly with the trinitarian, that we apprehend no trial here.”³³ He further explained (1877) that Jesus Christ before his incarnation was “in the form of God” and “equal with God. . . . The reason why it is not robbery for the Son to be equal with the Father is the fact that he is equal.”³⁴ However, as far as equality is concerned, it seems that this would only have limited things since he stated that “The Son . . . was equal with the Father in creation, in the institution of law, and in the government of created intelligences.”³⁵ His view about the divinity of Christ is that He was not fully equal with the Father. He thought that the idea of the trinity was “bad enough.”³⁶ He maintained the subordination of the Son, that the word “eternal” only referred to the Father.³⁷ One scholar observes that James White “contended with the Trinitarians who gave Christ the Father’s divinity.”³⁸

Uriah Smith, similar to James White, developed his understanding of the divinity of Christ. He referenced Phil 2:5-8 when he stated that Jesus Christ was “the only being save God” that was “equal with the Father, and sharing equally in the glory.” He referred to him as “deity.” However, the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, based upon John 1:14 and John 8:42, was “begotten.” It

³⁰ D. W. Hull, “Bible Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ,” *RH*, November 17, 1859, 201.

³¹ Hull, *RH*, November 10, 1859, 195. Words in parentheses are original.

³² Hull, *RH*, November 17, 1859, 201; Hull, *RH*, November 10, 1859, 194.

³³ J[ames] W[hite], “The Two Bodies,” *RH*, October 12, 1876, 116.

³⁴ J[ames] W[hite], “Christ Equal with God,” *RH*, November 29, 1877, 172.

³⁵ J[ames] W[hite], “The Son represents the Father,” *RH*, July 15, 1880, 56.

³⁶ W[hite], *RH*, November 29, 1877, 172.

³⁷ J[ames] W[hite], “The Time of the End,” *RH*, July 15, 1880, 56.

³⁸ Varmer, “Analysis of the Seventh-day Adventist Pioneer,” 16.

means that the beginning of the Son was “by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared.” He affirmed the superiority of the Father over the Son by stating that “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.” The subordination of Jesus Christ was not just in His existence, but also in terms of the power of creation. He stated: “the Father” was “the antecedent cause, the Son” was “the acting agent through whom all has been wrought.”³⁹ Smith believed, like D. W. Hull, that in the creation Jesus Christ was an agent and source of power derived from the Father. He had no power of his own. Thus, he affirmed the full subordination of Jesus Christ to the Father.

D. M. Canright stridently battled against a kind of Trinitarian concept that God is not a person, but only a spirit.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, his concept of God was based upon the idea that only the Father was the true God and the Son was derived from him. He used John 1:1 to state that “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.” He also referenced Heb 1: 8, 9, in which the Father called the Son of God as God. He stated, “We see that the Father has given the name of God to his Son.” Canright called Jesus Christ as God, but the name was derived from the Father, since “he was the first being that was ever born into the universe.” He was “begotten of the Father’s own substance” and therefore “the Son is subordinate to the Father.” He argued that the Son was inferior to the Father, since “Christ disclaims all power or authority in and of himself and says that he gets it all from his Father; that the Son is entirely dependent upon the Father.”⁴¹ Canright wrote that it was not just in power and name that Jesus Christ owed His deity to the Father, but also “his existence and his life from the Father.”⁴² He concluded, “Christ, being the Son of God, has inherited the name, the nature, and the glory of

³⁹ Uriah Smith, *Looking unto Jesus: Christ in Type and Antitype* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1898), 11, 13, 10, 13. Uriah Smith also mentioned that Jesus Christ was an agent in the creation in his 1899 publication entitled, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1944), 391.

⁴⁰ D. M. Canright, “The Personality of God,” *RH*, August 29, 1878, 73–74; September 5, 1878, 81–82; September 12, 1878, 89–90; September 19, 1878, 97–98.

⁴¹ D. M. Canright, “Jesus Christ the Son of God,” *RH*, June 18, 1867, 2, 1, 2. Canright claimed that for Adventists the name “very and eternal God” only referred to the Father exclusively. See Canright, “Answer to ‘Inquirer,’” *RH*, Nov 1, 1877, 144.

⁴² Canright, *RH*, August 29, 1878, 73.

God his Father. Hence, he is by inheritance placed far above all other things."⁴³ In this concept, Jesus does not have power, but all things are derived from the Father and subordinate to Him. This full subordination is everlasting because of his being "entirely dependent upon the Father." Therefore, he called the Father the "true and living God. He is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent."⁴⁴ He was "greater than the Son, but Christ is truly his Son; hence a divine Being."⁴⁵ Canright avoided calling Jesus God in the same sense as the Father since he was fully subordinate to the Father. This prevented the Son from being a part of the Godhead.

J. H. Waggoner recognized the "pre-existent divinity" of Jesus Christ. This was based on John 1:1. "[T]he Word *was* God, and also the Word was *with* God." He distinguished between the person of the Son and the Father: "the word *as* God, was not *the* God whom he was *with*." He suggested that Jesus Christ was an inferior God to the Father. He stated, "there is but 'one God,' the term must be used in reference to the Word in a subordinate sense." The true God was the Father. The Son received the title, as Waggoner explained because "the title of God is applied to the Son, and *his* God anointed him. This is the highest title he can bear, and it is evidently used here in a sense subordinate to its application to his Father."⁴⁶ Waggoner believed that even though, technically, Jesus could be referred to as God, such a title was subordinate to the Father.

Altogether, a survey of the early pioneers on this thought indicates that many viewed the Son as an inferior God to the Father and thus to be effectively fully subordinate. They hesitated to use the term "God" about the Son as with the Father, even though they recognized that Christ was God. The Father was truly God, Jesus was a subordinate God. He was subordinate, both in terms of origin and power. The Son was an "agent" in the work of creation. They did not accept Jesus Christ as a part of the Godhead and thus regarded His position as fully subordinate to the Father. This refutation included Jesus as not part of the Godhead and significantly impacted their view of the Holy Spirit whom they assumed to be an "it,"⁴⁷ "medium,"⁴⁸

⁴³ Canright, *RH*, June 18, 1867, 2.

⁴⁴ Canright, *RH*, August 29, 1878, 73.

⁴⁵ Canright, *RH*, Nov 1, 1877, 144.

⁴⁶ J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement: An Examination of a Remedial System in the Light of Nature and Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1872), 87–88. Italics are in the original.

⁴⁷ James White, *Life Incidents, in Connection with the Great Advent Movement, as Illustrated by the Three Angels of Revelation xiv* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1868), 290.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Looking unto Jesus*, 10.

“mighty energy,”⁴⁹ or “power.”⁵⁰ Thus, quite evidently for these thinkers, Jesus was not fully a part of the Godhead.

5. Jesus Christ as A Partially Subordinate God

Another idea maintained was that Jesus Christ was God in a sense that He had the same attributes as the Father. They deliberately described the Son as being God. However, their major concern with this idea was the pre-existence of the Son whom they saw as not co-eternal with the Father. Over time, at a distant point in the past Jesus Christ was derived from the Father.

Ellet J. Waggoner, in his earliest descriptions of the divinity of Christ (1884), described the Father as One who “gave His only begotten Son, — the one by whom all things were made, whom angels worship with the reference equal to that which they yield to God, — that man might have eternal life.”⁵¹ He recognized the Son as the creator and worthy of the same worship given to the Father. Waggoner wrote more extensively about the divinity of Christ (1890) in comments on Mark 10:17–18 that “Christ cannot deny Himself, . . . He is and was absolutely good, the perfection of goodness. And since there is none good but God, and Christ is good, it follows that Christ is God.” Waggoner frequently referred to Christ as God in his later writings. He noted in connection with John 10:30 that “truly was Christ God, even when here among men, that when asked to exhibit the Father He could say, Behold Me.” The Son, according to Waggoner based on Col 2:9 “possesses by nature all the attributes of Divinity.” He also has “the very substance and nature of God, and possesses by birth all the attributes of God.” Thus “He has ‘life in Himself;’ He possesses immortality in His own right, and can confer immortality upon others.” In this sense, his life was not dependent on the Father. For this reason, Waggoner said that the Son “having life in Himself,” should be “properly called Jehovah, the self-existent One.” This particular description, “self-existent,” as a way to refer to the Son is notable

⁴⁹ Uriah Smith, *Synopsis of the Present Truth: A Brief Exposition of the Views of S. D. Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884), 247.

⁵⁰ Regarding the personality of the Holy Spirit, Waggoner was not certain. He said that the “prevailing ideas of *person* are very diverse, often crude, and the word is differently understood.” He defined the Holy Spirit that the “Spirit of God is that awful and mysterious power which proceeds from the throne of universe, and which is the efficient actor in the work of creation and of redemption.” See J. H. Waggoner, *The Spirit of God: Its Offices and Manifestations, to the end of the Christian Age* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1877), 8–9.

⁵¹ E. J. Waggoner, “Eternal Life,” *Sign of the Times*, August 28, 1884, 522.

because "He has by nature all the attributes of Deity." Waggoner is one of the earliest Seventh-day Adventists who wrote that Jesus Christ was in fact self-existent. Since he believed that the Son and the Father have the same nature, attributes, and substance meant that Jesus Christ was not just to be seen as a part of the Godhead but was also "filled with all the fullness of the Godhead." He regarded the term "begotten" to mean that "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."⁵² In reality, this meant that he believed in Jesus's derived existence, although his writings helped to set a new Christological direction in Adventist theology.

A. T. Jones, another leading protagonist at the 1888 General Conference Session, believed that Jesus Christ was God. He called the Son the "divine One" and explicitly mentioned Him as God. On the incarnation of the Son of God, Jones said that "he not only humbled himself as God" but also "He emptied himself as God, and became man."⁵³ With regard to the nature of the Son and his equality to the Father, Jones stated: "He was one of God, equal with God; and his nature is the nature of God." For Jones, since the Father abided in Jesus Christ, the Son was described as follows: "'All the fullness of the Godhead Bodily' is reflected in him."⁵⁴ For this reason, Jones believed that Jesus could partake of the Godhead. He formulated, in 1899, that "God is *one*. Jesus Christ is *one*. The Holy Spirit is *one*. And these *three* are *one*: there is no dissent nor division among them."⁵⁵ At first glance, this statement appears to support a fully Trinitarian viewpoint; however, he saw that there was a difference in the span of eternity between the Father and the Son. He wrote that the Son is "eternal,"⁵⁶ even though he believed there was a time when He proceeded out from the Father. This argument (based on Proverbs 8:30) stated: "He alone could reflect the Father in his fullness, because his goings forth have been from the days of eternity." With regard to the work of salvation for humanity, he wrote: "only he whose goings

⁵² E[lliott] J[oseph] Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1972), 12, 14–16, 21–23.

⁵³ A. T. Jones, "The Third Angels's Message—no. 17," *General Conference Bulletin*, February 25, 1895, 330, 332. This sermon used the quotations of Ellen G. White freely that were taken from *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1887.

⁵⁴ A. T. Jones, "The Third Angels's Message—no. 20," *General Conference Bulletin*, February 27, 1895, 378.

⁵⁵ [A. T. Jones], [editorial], *RH*, January 10, 1899, 24. Italics are in the original document.

⁵⁶ Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 25, 1895, 332.

forth have been from the days of eternity could do it.”⁵⁷ The term “goings forth” expressed a moving out from the Father and it happened in “the days of eternity.” Jones stated that “God is one” and therefore the three persons in the Godhead were an advanced step to the full acceptance of the Trinity, even though his understanding of Jesus’s eternity was closer to that of Waggoner.⁵⁸ Waggoner and Jones avoided the word “Trinity” since the term was an effort to explain God who was beyond human comprehension.⁵⁹ However, both believed in the existence of three divine persons in the Godhead.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 27, 1895, 378.

⁵⁸ Jones wrote that the sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of sinners is for “all eternity.” Nevertheless, his understanding of the expression “all eternity” was not meant in its full sense. He stated, “for how long a time was it? That’s the question. And the answer is that it was for all eternity. The Father gave up his Son to us, and Christ gave up himself to us, for all eternity. Never again will he be in all respects as he was before.” Thus, for Jones the words “all eternity” are not full in past time but fully for the present and future. See Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 27, 1895, 382.

⁵⁹ Waggoner reasoned why he rejected the term Trinity, because there was no such word in the Bible. He said, “In teaching and preaching the Gospel we always confine ourselves strictly to Scripture terms and language.... It is attest not to presume to define what the Bible has not defined, nor to attempt to explain infinity.” See [E. J. Waggoner], “Do You Believe?” *The Present Truth*, July 30, 1903, 483. Jones also avoided defining God in a formula or term because “no man’s conception of God can ever be fixed as the true conception of God. God will still be infinitely beyond the broadest comprehension that the mind of man can measure.” See A. T. Jones, “How the Catholic Creed Was Made,” *The Bible Echo*, September 13, 1897, 292. They believed that the term “Trinity” could not define God properly.

⁶⁰ Waggoner at least two times mentioned his recognition of the three persons in a Godhead. He wrote, “We believe in God; we believe in Jesus Christ as the Word is God, and who was made flesh; and we believe in the Holy Spirit as the Divine revealer of both the Father and the Son, a Being so wonderfully sacred as not to admit of description even by Inspiration.” E. J. Waggoner, “The Papacy and the Schools,” *The Present Truth* [PT], February 15, 1894, 102. In 1902, as he stated to avoid the term Trinity, he accepted the three persons in a Godhead. He said, “As to the Being of God, the Godhead, Divinity as revealed in the Father, the Word (the Son), and the Holy Spirit, we believe and teach just what the Bible says, and nothing else.” See E. J. Waggoner, “The Editor’s Private Corner,” *PT*, February 6, 1902, 83. Woodrow W. Whidden observes that “by 1892 Waggoner’s views on the Trinity and the full deity of Christ were quite well formed.” He also says that “when it came to the doctrine of the Trinity, he came close to full truth, but still remained a son of the semi Arian Seventh-day Adventist pioneers.” Woodrow W. Whidden, *E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to Agent of Division* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 263, 265. Thus, his trinitarian idea was not in the fullest sense because his begotten idea indicated that Jesus was not co-eternal with the Father. A. T. Jones’ statement, as previously mentioned above, in 1899, recognizes the three persons in a Godhead. This statement, according

W. W. Prescott, another influential leader and scholar, expressed the idea that Jesus Christ was God.⁶¹ He stated that "He has life originally in Himself; His essence is life."⁶² At the 1919 Bible Conference, he combined the eternity of Jesus Christ and his derivation from the Father.⁶³ He believed that Jesus Christ was not just eternal, but co-eternal with the Father. He said "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." However, in an inferior sense, Prescott thought about the relationship of the Son to the Father. 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." He plainly said, "the Son is co-eternal with the Father." Nevertheless, he stated that Jesus Christ was "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."⁶⁴ With these statements, Prescott did not mean that the "co-eternal" was co-equal, thus his idea of "co-eternal" still implied inferiority. He avoided the term "inferior," but instead, "second in nature" meant "second in rank."⁶⁵ The concept that Christ was born in eternity past was conceived by Prescott as early as 1896

to Merlin Burt is a "nearly Trinitarian statement." Merlin D. Burt, "History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17.1 (Spring 2006): 129. And George R. Knight comments this 1899 statement as "Jones certainly approached making a Trinitarian statement." See George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 115. It seems that Jones and Waggoner share a similar idea that Jesus is not co-eternal with the Father even though they believe in a Godhead there are three divine persons.

⁶¹ W. W. Prescott, "Gospel by John Chapter 1 to 6:14," *International Sabbath School Quarterly*, third quarter (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 6.

⁶² W. W. Prescott, "Gospel by John Chapter 10:1 to 14:31," *International Sabbath School Quarterly*, first quarter (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 16.

⁶³ A more specific treatment of the Trinity issue in the 1919 Bible Conference could be read in the works of Burt, "History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity," 132; and Michael W. Campbell, 1919: *The Untold Story of Adventism's Struggle with Fundamentalism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2019), 73–78.

⁶⁴ "Report of Bible Conference, Held in Takoma Park, D.C., July 1–19, 1919 (RBC)," (July 2, 1919), 20, 27.

⁶⁵ "RBC, July 1–19, 1919, 30. Valentine noticed that H. C. Lacey supported Prescott's idea that Jesus Christ was "second in rank" in the Godhead. Valentine, W. W. Prescott, 278. Lacey also believed in the Trinity. Even though he believed the Holy Spirit was a person but He did not have "any definite 'form' whatever, as of course we do image the Son and the Father to have." See H. C. Lacey to W. C. White, July 27, 1936; cf. W. C. White to H. C. Lacey, July 30, 1936.

when he wrote that “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.”⁶⁶ He still retained a partial subordination of Christ in 1920 when he stated “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.” He emphasized the derivation of Jesus, as he wrote that “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.”⁶⁷ Altogether, the efforts by Prescott, to combine the eternal Son as being a part of his derivation from the Father, were indicating Jesus was not co-existent with the Father. Still, he made a significant contribution by suggesting that Christ was eternal, even though this did not mean for all eternity in the fullest sense.

O. A. Johnson, an educator like Prescott, believed that Jesus Christ had all the nature of God, to the point that He was worthy to be called God. He wrote that “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.” He continued by saying that the Son deserves to have the title, that is, since “the Father calls his Son ‘God,’ and therefore he must be God.” However, the word “begotten” as the Son of God, made the Father the “greatest” among the Godhead and “greater than” the Son.⁶⁸ He did not just confirm the divinity of Christ, but also the Godhead or the Trinity. He stated, “there are three persons in the Godhead; viz., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” He believed that the Holy Spirit is a person and the “third name in the trinity” since he “proceeds from the Father.”⁶⁹ Johnson contributed to the development of Adventist beliefs when he explicitly stated that the Holy Spirit was a person and belonged to the “Godhead” or the “Trinity.” However, he retained an

⁶⁶ W. W. Prescott, “The Christ for Today,” *RH*, April 14, 1896, 232.

⁶⁷ W. W. Prescott, *Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1920), 20.

⁶⁸ O. A. Johnson, *Bible Doctrines: Containing 150 lessons on Creation, Government of God, Rebellion in Heaven, Fall of Man, Redemption, Prophecies, Millennium, End of Sinners, and Satan, Paradise restored, etc., etc.* (Collage Place, WA: n. p., 1911), 26–27.

⁶⁹ O. A. Johnson, *Bible Doctrines: Containing 150 lessons on Creation, Government of God, Rebellion in Heaven, Fall of Man, Redemption, Prophecies, Millennium, End of Sinners, and Satan, Paradise restored, etc., etc.* 4th rev. ed. (Collage Place, WA: n. p., 1917), 34, 37.

understanding of the subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit, where both came out of the Father in an ontological sense.

The 1931 statement of faith was not an official statement of beliefs since it was not voted in the General Conference session.⁷⁰ This statement of faith appeared for many years in the *Year Book* and the *Church Manual*. The statement on the Godhead simply stated, “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, . . . the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead.” This explicitly expressed that only the Father is “Eternal” and that Jesus Christ is merely the “Son of the Eternal Father.” The subsequent statement follows with the same phrase that referred only to the Father as eternal. It indicated “that Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father.”⁷¹ It designated the words “very God” when it emphasized that the Son of God was of “the same nature and essence” with the Father, but it still did not answer the question about the eternity of the Son. Thus, the telling expression “left room for interpretation.”⁷² However, this statement of fundamental beliefs expressed the acceptance of the Holy Spirit as a person, including His part in the Trinity. It left “room” regarding the meaning of the full eternity of the Son, which was then effectively left for later statements of faith to explore in much greater depth.

The 1936 Sabbath School quarterly reflected some of this discussion about the Son’s eternity and the Godhead.⁷³ T. M. French wrote that “we

⁷⁰ Gilbert Valentine, “The Stop-Start Journey on the Road to A Church Manual,” *Ministry*, June, 1999, 22. Even though it was not voted on the General Conference Session, the 1931 statement of faith was indicated in the 1931 yearbook. H. E. Rogers, *1931 Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1931), 377–80. It had a dynamic background of the Trinity issue in 1919 and 1920. For further reading of this issue see Michael W. Campbell, *1922: The Rise of Adventist Fundamentalism* (Nampa, ID: Review and Herald, 2022), 45–54.

⁷¹ *1931 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, prepared by H. E. Rogers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1931), 377.

⁷² Burt, “Demise of Semi-Arianism and Anti-Trinitarianism,” 37.

⁷³ T. M. French explicitly stated his belief in the Trinity since 1934 “that the three Persons of the Godhead the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—were actively present at the creation of this earth, and that they created man in their image.” He also noted that the “Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is in the plural . . . allowing of three in the Godhead, while the singular form of the verb used with God conveys the idea of the unity of the Godhead.” See T. M. French, “They Replenished from the East,” *RH*, August 9, 1934, 4. In 1937, he confirmed his conviction on the Trinity. He wrote that Jesus Christ, the Son of God “is the second person of the heavenly trinity.” See T. M.

learn that the name God is used of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit—a kind of heavenly family name. These three constitute the Godhead.”⁷⁴ The recognition of three persons in the Godhead was followed up with another explanation that Jesus Christ, as the “begotten” Son, was existing “in the days of eternity, and was very God Himself.” Does this mean that Christ belonged, in the full sense of the term, to have existed within the full span of eternity? The author explained that “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.’” Nevertheless, when French invoked the title “God” for Jesus Christ he attempted to clarify its meaning: “A son is the natural heir, and when God made Christ His heir, He recognized His sonship. This is why the Son bore the same name as His Father.” He argued that the title “God” was chosen because the Son inherited it from the Father (Heb. 1:4).⁷⁵ The “inherited” idea implies the derivation sense. Thus while the words “very God” in the 1931 Fundamental beliefs referred to a Son might be understood as “equally self-existent and eternal” Son to the Father,⁷⁶ French understood this in a different way. He believed that the words “eternal” or “eternity” (that is, of the Father) could not be used in the same sense as when they referred to Jesus Christ. He thought that there was a derivation of Christ in His pre-existence from the Father. That was why he said, “Christ was indeed the very Son of God in every aspect.”⁷⁷

After the 1931 fundamental beliefs were circulated, some Seventh-day Adventists struggled to define the term “eternal” in relation to Jesus Christ. This is especially obvious in reviewing the statements between 1932 and 1942 in the *Church Manual*.⁷⁸ The earliest edition of the *Church Manual* (1932) consisted of a formulation of beliefs with the purpose of providing a means for the “examination of candidates for baptism and church membership.” The list contained twenty-one inquiries for the baptismal candidates. The

F[rench], “The Sonship and Deity of Christ,” *RH*, May 20, 1937, 3.

⁷⁴ T. M. French is the brother of W. R. French, who was an anti-trinitarian. “The Journey’s End,” *RH*, October 30, 1941, 27. See also Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” 137.

⁷⁵ [T. M. French], “Bible Doctrines: Number One,” *Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, October 17–24, 1936, 10, 12–13.

⁷⁶ Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” 136.

⁷⁷ F[rench], “The Sonship and Deity of Christ,” 3.

⁷⁸ In both Church Manuals the 1931 fundamental beliefs were included. These statements of faith were inclusive for many years in the *Church Manual*.

first question was about the Father as "God" and a person. Then, it continued with the second about "the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son of God, and as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind."⁷⁹ Together these statements implied that only the Father was the true God, and the Son derived his divinity from him. However, a "summary of fundamental beliefs" in the 1942 *Church Manual* mentions a similar idea. It described the Father as "the true and living God, the first person of the Godhead" and regarded the Son "Jesus Christ" to be "the second person of the Godhead, and the eternal Son of God."⁸⁰ A more progressive understanding of the Son appears in the 1932 and 1942 *Church Manual* in which Jesus Christ is described as "eternal." However, they do not define whether this means He existed from all eternity or some point in eternity past. 1942 *Church Manual* does specify that the Father is the "true and living God" which implies that Son's life is derived from Him. This expression, as used by some Adventists earlier, indicates that only the Father possessed original life.⁸¹ The Son simply derived his existence from Him.

A major problem within this group was the question of how to accept the fact that Jesus Christ and the Father were co-eternal and co-existent. The word "begotten" Son of the Father was a stumbling block for those who held onto the idea that the Father and Son were equal from all eternity. This group still maintained the idea of the derivation of Christ from the Father even though they believed in three persons in a Godhead. However, this group generally accepted the personality of the Holy Spirit,⁸² and that He came out from the Father in a derived pre-existence sense.⁸³ Since they accepted Christ's divine personality, they also accepted the Holy Spirit as the

⁷⁹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual* (Washington, DC: The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1932), 75.

⁸⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual* (Washington, DC: The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1942), 81.

⁸¹ For example, Canright, *RH*, August 29, 1878, 73; R. F. Cottrell, "Sealing of the Servants of God," *RH*, April 29, 1875, 137; John G. Matteson, "Tylstrup, Denmark," *RH*, March 28, 1878, 100; J. P. Henderson, "Worship God," *RH*, June 19, 1883, 387.

⁸² Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 23, 67, 80, 84; E. J. Waggoner, "The Everlasting Gospel: God's Saving Power in the Things That Are Made," *PT*, July 21, 1898, 452. See also Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 25, 1895, 329; Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 27, 1895, 379; [French], *Sabbath School Lesson*, 10; [T. M. French], "Heart to heart Talks with Our Readers," *RH*, October 15, 1936, 2. General Conference, *Church Manual* [1932], 76; General Conference, *Church Manual* [1942], 81.

⁸³ Johnson, *Bible Doctrines* [1911], 28; Johnson, *Bible Doctrines* [1917], 37; [French], *Sabbath School Lesson*, 11.

third person within the Godhead. This idea led to the acceptance of the Godhead or the Trinity (even though within this group the level of acceptance may have differed from one theologian to another, such as Waggoner and Jones who believed in three persons in a Godhead while rejected the term Trinity and French together with Prescott who believed in the term Trinity), but the Son and the Holy Spirit were subordinate to the Father within this framework of derivation.

6. Jesus Christ Fully God

Another group within Adventism has contended that Jesus Christ had the same divine substance and nature and that He was underived and co-eternal with the Father. Jesus Christ was truly eternal in the fullest sense. He was self-existent. The Father was not “older” than him. There was no time in eternity past when the Father existed ahead of the Son.

Even though Ellen G. White statements before the 1890s did not precisely indicate what position she had,⁸⁴ from the 1890s onward she played a confirming and clarifying role in referring the Seventh-day Adventist Church to study the Bible and to see the more biblical idea of Christ’s full divinity.⁸⁵ Denis Fortin notes that “White’s influence was beneficial in helping the denomination at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to adopt an orthodox view of the divinity of Christ and personhood

⁸⁴ George R. Knight observes that Ellen White’s statements before the 1890s did not indicate whether they were against the Trinity concept or for it. “Her early statements were vague enough to be interpreted either way” (Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 115).

⁸⁵ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 115. See Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” 129. M. L. Andreasen was astonished to see the explicit statement of Ellen White on the full divinity of Christ that was “very revolutionary” at his time. M. L. Andreasen, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” A Chapel talk at Loma Linda, California, November 30, 1948, 3–4, Center of Adventist Research. One argues that, according to H. C. Lacey, Prescott influenced the idea of Ellen White on Christ’s full divinity. Gilbert Valentine, “Learning and Unlearning: A Context for Important Developments in the Seventh-day Adventists Understanding of the Trinity, 1888–1898,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 55.2 (2017): 227–28. Even though there might be an influence to a certain degree, however, the idea of Prescott, even after the death of Ellen White, still indicated the derivation of Jesus’s divinity to the Father as shown in the fifth section of this article. Burt observes that Prescott, in the 1919 Bible Conference, still retained an idea that Christ “derived his existence from the Father” (Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” 132), something that Ellen White did not endorse. Thus, the idea of Prescott’s influence on Ellen White’s full divinity of Christ is hard to maintain.

of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁶ George R. Knight correctly says that Ellen White did not write significant writings on “the Trinity, full equality of Christ with the Father, and the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Her writings merely assumed them to be truths. In time Adventists investigated those assumptions. During the first four decades of the twentieth century they went to the Bible to study topics related to the Godhead.”⁸⁷

Ellen White had a Methodist background which believed that the persons of the Godhead had no “body or parts.”⁸⁸ However, as early as 1850 she claimed that “I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a *person*. I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, ‘I am in the express *image* of My Father’s *person*.’”⁸⁹ She accepted that God did not have an impersonal form, but rather, she viewed Jesus Christ as a divine being. She stated, in 1869, that “this Saviour was the brightness of His Father’s glory and the express image of His person. He possessed divine majesty, perfection, and excellence. He was equal with God.”⁹⁰ She repeated this idea in 1872 that He was a “divine Son of God” and that He “was in the form of God, and he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”⁹¹ While many contemporary Adventist writers hesitated to use the word “eternal” in describing the Son, during the 1870s, she penned that Jesus Christ was indeed “the eternal Son of God.”⁹² Several years later, she stated that Jesus Christ was “the eternal word” and therefore “God became man.”⁹³ With regard to the oneness of the Son with the Father, she claimed that He is “one with the eternal Father, — one in nature, in character, and in purpose.”⁹⁴ The substance of the Son was indeed “one” with the Father. She stated, “the words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same

⁸⁶ Denis Fortin, “Ellen G. White’s Influence in the Development of Adventist Beliefs and Practices,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Seventh-day Adventism*, eds. Michael W. Campbell et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 101.

⁸⁷ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 115.

⁸⁸ Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 3:807.

⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1906), 77. Italics are in the original document.

⁹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 2:200.

⁹¹ Ellen G. White, “The First Advent of Christ,” *RH*, December 17, 1872, 2.

⁹² Ellen G. White, “An Appeal to the Ministers,” *RH*, August 8, 1878, 1.

⁹³ Ellen G. White, “Christ Man’s Example,” *RH*, July 5, 1887, 1.

⁹⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1888), 493.

attributes.”⁹⁵ After the 1888 General Conference Session, she emphasized that Jesus Christ was eternal, self-existent, and equal to the Father in the fullest sense. She noted that “the Son of God shared the Father’s throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both.” She said Jesus Christ was “Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One.”⁹⁶ She reiterated this idea in 1897 that the Son was “infinite and omnipotent. . . . He is the eternal, self-existent Son.”⁹⁷ Up to 1897, Ellen G. White shared with her contemporaries who believed in the deity of Christ such as His self-existent, eternity, and that He took part in the Godhead. Indeed, by 1898 she went further to clarify the meaning of the “eternity” between the Son and the Father. She expanded the idea as to how the Son of God “announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, ‘whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.’” She was emphatic that “in Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.”⁹⁸ Even the term “eternity” used to describe the Son was defined as “speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.”⁹⁹ She reinforced the pre-existence of the Son as “He was with God from all eternity.”¹⁰⁰ His “glory which He had with the Father from all eternity.”¹⁰¹ The statement about “the days of eternity” was the stumbling block for many Adventist leaders at that time who refused to believe that the Son was co-eternal with the Father. However, she stated, “from the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father.”¹⁰² Altogether White contributed by guiding and directing to the biblical idea of accepting that “all eternity” applied to Jesus and His relationship with the Father.

Le Roy E. Froom expounded upon this concept of the Trinity within the Godhead. He stated in 1931 that “our God is one God (Deut. 6:4); but there

⁹⁵ Ellen G. White, “The True Sheep Respond to the Voice of the Shepherd,” *Sign of the Times* November 27, 1893, 54.

⁹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets, The Story of, or The Great Conflict Between Good and Evil as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 36, 305.

⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, “The True High Priest,” September 26, 1897, Manuscript 101, 1897.

⁹⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 470, 530.

⁹⁹ Ellen G. White, “Resistance to Light no. 3,” *Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ellen G. White, “The Word Made Flesh,” *RH*, April 5, 1906, 8.

¹⁰¹ Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain view, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 39.

¹⁰² White, *Desire of Ages*, 19.

are three persons in the one Godhead." He explained the Trinity is like "a triangle . . . it has three sides. So the Godhead, being one, is manifested as Father, Son and Holy Spirit." So that the attributes of God, according to Froom, such as "omnipotence (Luke 1:35), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10), and eternal life (Heb. 9:14)" referred to the Holy Spirit as well as to the Father and the Son.¹⁰³ Froom clarified the persons within the Godhead or Trinity because each possessed the same level in nature, eternity, and attributes. Later in 1971, Froom defined that the term "begotten Son of God" was "the concept that Christ was 'begotten,' or 'born,' of the Father at some time back in eternity is altogether alien to Scripture." He explained that "the term or title 'Son of God' denotes a special relation between God and Jesus Christ. But the idea of filiation is excluded." Even the pre-existence of "Christ is and always has been, very God of very God, one with the Father, of the same substance or essence, the eternal Second Person of the eternal Godhead – God in the highest and fullest sense, 'all the fullness of the Godhead.'" Finally, he concluded that "Christ was and is eternally divine – consubstantial and coeternal with the Father, and therefore self-existent and coexistent."¹⁰⁴ Froom understood the term "very God" as used in the 1931 Fundamental Belief as indicating that the Son was co-eternal and co-existent with the Father.

Another prominent scholar, after the death of Ellen White, was Milian L. Andreasen. He believed that the divinity of Christ indicated that He was co-eternal with the Father. He commented on Jesus Christ in Heb. 1:3 that the Word "being" in this verse "is an expression of eternal, timeless existence and has the same sense as 'was' in John 1:1." He continued the Son "did not come into existence in the beginning. In the beginning He *was*. He did not *become* the brightness of the Father's glory. He always was. This constitutes the essential and eternal ground of His personality." Andreasen connected the nature of the Father and the Son: "The Father, so is the Son—one in substance, one in character, one in mind and purpose."¹⁰⁵ He wrote in 1948 about the Son in Heb. 1:2 stating that "the Son of God, Christ is Himself God." In relation to Jesus Christ toward the Trinity, he wrote that "Christ is Creator indicates a division of activity among the members of the God-

¹⁰³ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1931), 49–50.

¹⁰⁴ Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 311–12.

¹⁰⁵ M. L. Andreasen, "Christ, the Express Image of God," *RH*, October 17, 1946, 8–9. Italics are in the original document.

head.” With regard to Jesus Christ’s pre-existence, he believed “in His pre-incarnate state” that “Christ was equal with God. He was with God and was God.” Thus, he affirmed the eternity of Jesus Christ¹⁰⁶ that “Christ is the eternal Son of God.”¹⁰⁷ Since he believed in the “timeless existence” of the Son, He was always together with the Father. Froom and Andreasen represent a significant shift in accepting the full and complete eternal existence of Jesus Christ.

Even what is arguably the most controversial book in Adventist history, *Questions on Doctrine*, a book that Andreasen was strongly against, advocated the full and complete divinity of Jesus Christ. It appears that the full and complete divinity of Christ was largely accepted by the 1950s, even if there were occasional pockets of resistance. This work stated, it is to “set forth our basic beliefs in terminology currently used in theological circles.” The publication was faithful to “the framework of the official statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists which appears in our *Church Manual*,” including the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs, which was quoted in their entirety. The author described the Trinity as the “Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who are united not only in the Godhead but in the provisions of redemption.” With regard to the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, it simply stated, “that Christ is one with the Eternal Father—one in nature, equal in power and authority, God in the highest sense, eternal and self-existent, with life original, unborrowed, underived.” Even the term “eternity,” used with regard to the Son and His nature, the writers explained, “that Christ existed from all eternity, distinct from, but united with, the Father, possessing the same glory, and all the divine attributes.”¹⁰⁸ Thus this work represents the first publication from the General Conference which explained the position of the church about the full divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity.

¹⁰⁶ There is an article of Samuel T. Spears that M. L. Andreasen took as additional notes in his chapter “The Humanity of Jesus.” This document discusses the doctrine of the Trinity with the subordination sense of the Son to the Father. Samuel T. Spears, “The Bible Doctrine of the Trinity,” in M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 115–24. However, in this book, I cannot find Andreasen’s thoughts about the subordination of the Son to the Father as Spear suggested.

¹⁰⁷ M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 46–47, 63, 65.

¹⁰⁸ Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 8, 11–18, 36.

Another notable book, which was prepared by the General Conference department of education in 1959, written by T. H. Jemison, also confirmed the co-eternal status of the Son with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jemison described the Godhead as “referring to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in their unity.” The term Godhead or Trinity “is used as the equivalent of ‘the Deity’ in the sense of including the quality, condition, and dignity of being God.” Regarding the Son, he understood that “He is God in the full and unqualified meaning of that expression. He is God in nature, in power, in authority.” He also mentioned the attributes of Jesus Christ, who “in addition to being eternal, He is said to possess the characteristics we call omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and immutability.” The pre-existence of the Son, he believed, indicated that He was co-eternal with the Father.¹⁰⁹

Among the leading theologians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the 1970s and 1980s was Raoul Dederen. He expounded the concept of the Trinity as the equality of the persons in Godhead. In 1970 he stated that the Godhead consists of “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” and “that there is but one God.” Why are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each described as persons? Dederen argued as follows: “because they are described as doing that which only intelligent agents or persons can do.” He continued that “the three divine persons” are “at the same time distinct and yet one.” He not only described Jesus Christ as “God,” but “fully God.” He discussed the same attributes and nature of the persons within the Godhead, but each had a unique purpose for labor. He stated that “the triune God has really only one work to accomplish, just as he himself is one true God. That is his eternally all-embracing, life-creating and life-saving work. In this one work all three persons are actively engaged, drawing us away from sin, the devil and destruction.” He believed that the Father and the Son are co-eternal, and that this oneness included the Holy Spirit. As for what might appear to be a manifestation of subordination within the Godhead, he explained:

The willing subordination of the Son to the Father-and of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son-relates not to their essential life with the Trinity. Nor is it in any way inconsistent with true equality. It is a demonstration of the unity of purpose existing among the members of the Deity. Here the activities of one are seen to be but the carrying out of the united will.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ T. H. Jemison, *Christian Beliefs* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1959), 71, 84–86.

¹¹⁰ Raoul Dederen, “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *AUSS* 8.1 (January 1970),

In this way subordination was not based upon the nature or connected with the “essential life,” but it was rather described as “the unity of purpose” and “the united will” to accomplish their work. Dederen confirmed the “true equality” of the persons in the Trinity. It was this sharing of activity that he called the “divine economy.”¹¹¹ In this way, he believed in the full deity of Jesus Christ.¹¹²

The 27 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventist, first voted in 1980 and later expanded in 2005 (as *28 Fundamental Beliefs*) and revised in 2015, provided a much clearer statement about Adventist beliefs than the semi-official 1931 statement that was gradually developed, voted, and adopted afterward.¹¹³ The changes needed in this new statement demonstrated how the topic was “increasingly debated within Adventism.” In principle “none of the [original] 27 beliefs were new,” however, the earlier 1931 statement contained “glaring omissions.” The new statement of beliefs included specific fundamental beliefs about the divinity of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity.¹¹⁴ The 1980 *Fundamental Beliefs* explicitly stated that “there is one

4, 15–18, 20.

¹¹¹ Dederen, “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” 19.

¹¹² Matthew L. Tinkham Jr. identifies the hierarchical concept of the Trinity in Raoul Dederen’s article. Based upon few findings of Dederen’s statements such as “we may conclude with some that the Father has metaphysical priority, or with others that he has a primacy of order” and “Christ, here, is set in the order of Deity” (Dederen, “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” 18) Tinkham observes that “one could argue that he [Dederen] made a more unqualified argument” on the deity of Christ. See Matthew L. Tinkham Jr., “Neo-Subordinationism: The Alien Argumentation in the Gender Debate,” *AUSS* 55.2 (2017): 250n42. However, these apparent subordination statements of the Son, Dederen argues “relates not to their essential life with the Trinity. Nor is it in any way inconsistent with true equality. It is a demonstration of the unity of purpose existing among the members of the Deity. Here the activities of one are seen to be but the carrying out of the united will” (Dederen, “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” 18). He also states that “the NT writers have not worked out the problem with subtle refinement, but they all agree that the Father has priority and that both Father and Son are God. And they consider such a statement consistent” (Dederen, “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” 18–19). Whatever he meant by these statements, it seems, Dederen understands the apparent hierarchical concept of Trinity relates to the “willing subordination” among the Godhead to accomplish “unity of purpose” and “united will” without any relation with “their essential life” (Dederen, “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” 18).

¹¹³ The first vote happened in 1946 when the General Conference Session voted the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs which appeared in the *Church Manual*. “Proceedings of the General Conference,” *RH*, June 14, 1946, 197.

¹¹⁴ Word in bracket is added. Lawrence T. Geray, “A New Statement of Fundamental

God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of the three co-eternal persons." The statement indicated that there is only one God who is "co-eternal." The persons of the Trinity were each three distinct persons. Each existed from eternity past, including not only the Son but also the Holy Spirit. "God the eternal Father is the creator, source, sustainer, and sovereign of all creation." Regarding Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, it stated that "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ" and "God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption."¹¹⁵ Thus, the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs statement provided much greater clarity after decades of debate about the pre-existence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, especially on this matter of what the term "eternity" meant.

The 28 fundamental beliefs of this denomination retain the "co-eternal" divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Father in its statement of faith in 2005¹¹⁶ and 2015.¹¹⁷ Indeed, in the 2015 edition, the addition "God, who is love" was added to emphasize that the co-eternal trinity has equal quality of love.¹¹⁸ In this latest statement of beliefs, the church added a statement on the Holy Spirit that "He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son."¹¹⁹ By inserting this new sentence, eliminating the idea that the Holy Spirit has a nuanced personality from the Father and the Son.¹²⁰

What was up until then a rather ambiguous and debated topic about the Son's "eternity" was clearly explained in the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs from 1980 to 2015. Ellen G. White earlier contributed in referring back to the biblical idea that Jesus was with the Father in "all eternity" in Seventh-day Adventist theology. Her writings played a pivotal role in guiding the church to understand the Bible regarding the full divinity of Christ.¹²¹ She believed

Beliefs," *Spectrum*, 11.1 (1980): 3, 2, 3. Comparing the two Fundamental Beliefs one said that the 1980 one was "similar but more comprehensive." General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), iv.

¹¹⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 5.

¹¹⁶ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook 2006* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 5.

¹¹⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook 2016* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016), 6.

¹¹⁸ *Yearbook 2016*, 6.

¹¹⁹ *Yearbook 2016*, 6.

¹²⁰ See footnotes 65.

¹²¹ Ellen G. White, since 1898, clarified the meaning of "eternity" as eternity in the past, present, and future for the Son that seemed revolutionary for most Adventists at that

that the Son was co-eternal, in all complete eternity, with the Father. Even though she does not mention the term “co-eternal,” however, her expressions such as “dateless ages,” “all eternity,” “original,” “unborrowed,” “un-derived,” and “days of eternity” help the Adventist theologians to understand the biblical term “eternal” as it applies to the Son. This recognition led to the acceptance of the Holy Spirit as a person, co-eternal, and of the same substance as the Father in the fullest sense. This paved the way for later theologians and statements that indicated the full acceptance of the Holy Spirit within the Godhead.¹²²

7. Summary and Conclusion

A survey of each idea shows the importance of the concept of Jesus Christ to the acceptance of the Trinity or Godhead among the Seventh-day Adventists. The first group who believed that Jesus Christ was a created being, even though He was divine but had a different substance to the Father, could not see Jesus Christ as being equal with the Father and He did not fit into the Godhead. Their teaching described the Holy Spirit as only power or energy.

The second group accepted Jesus Christ as not created but “begotten” and still saw Him as an inferior divine person in relation to the Father. They understood the Son to possess a lower substance than that of the Father. They believed Jesus Christ did not fit into the Godhead, where there was only a place for the Father. This view was in line with their teaching on the Holy Spirit, that they still accepted Him as a medium and not a person.

The third group modified the idea that Jesus Christ was a fully subordinate God. They assumed that the Father was superior to the Son. The adherents of this group freely called the Son, Lord, rather than God, even though they recognized Jesus as God but He was fully subordinate to the Father. Jesus Christ was subordinate, not just in the idea of His pre-existence—He was not just self-existent, but also His divinity was diminished in the concept of His alleged power to give life. He was viewed as fully dependent on

time. Thus, she enriched this denomination’s understanding of the full divinity of Jesus Christ. See Andreasen, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” 3–4. Campbell asserts, “If there was any doubt that Adventism was moving away from Arian positions, Ellen White made her position crystal clear when she wrote *The Desire of Ages* (1898)” (Campbell, 1919, 77).

¹²² Cf. White, *Evangelism*, 615–17; Froom, *Coming of the Comforter*, 49; Andreasen, *Book of Hebrews*, 115–124; General Conference, *Questions on Doctrine*, 36; Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, 90–94; Dederen, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 7–9; General Conference, *Yearbook* [1981], 5; *Yearbook* 2006, 5; *Yearbook* 2016, 6.

the Father, even from His pre-incarnation. This understanding made Jesus Christ to be effectively excluded from the Godhead. This concept was related to the precept of the Holy Spirit that He was seen as an impersonal power of God.

The fourth group had a developing concept of the divinity of Christ. The supporters of this idea believed that Jesus Christ was God. He had the same substance as the Father and had life and power in Himself. The only subordination was in His pre-existence. They believed that Jesus Christ was “eternal” and even “co-eternal” with the Father but not co-equal and co-existent in a sense of all eternity as the Father did. However, as they came to see Jesus Christ as being God and that He had the same substance as that of the Father, they were led to accept Jesus Christ as part of the Godhead, as well as the Father and the Son being closely associated with the Holy Spirit. This group accepted the Holy Spirit as a person and He was understood to be a divine being, even though He was subordinate to the Father in the word of “eternity” as well as the Son.

The fifth group acknowledged Jesus Christ as fully God, co-eternal, co-equal, and co-existent and possessing the same substance and nature as the Father. There was no time when the Son was not with the Father. This final position recognizes the Son as being on the same level as the Father. This equality also extends to the Holy Spirit. These three persons were equal and none were subordinate in nature.

This study demonstrates that the development of the divinity of Christ’s understanding among Adventist theologians was parallel to the acceptance of the personality of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus Christ is regarded as God, distinct personality from the Father, and has the same substance and attributes as the Father, it directs to the acceptance of the Holy Spirit as the third person in the Godhead. This extended application leads to the acceptance of the Trinity. This observation can be seen in the fourth and fifth ideas (fifth and sixth section of this article) on the divinity of Christ.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the nearer the concept of the divinity of Christ to the concept of the nature, substance, and attributes of the Father, the greater the possibility for the acceptance of the Holy Spirit as a personal, divine being. All of this then led to the greater possibility for the acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, the concept of the divinity of Christ has had a significant impact on the acceptance of the personality of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity doctrines into Seventh-day Adventist theology.