Five days after Paul had been sent to Felix at Caesarea he was accused by the Jewish orator Tertullus as being “a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” (Acts 24:5) The Greek word for “sect” is χαρέσις (hairesis) and is translated in verse 14 as “heresy.” Tertullus had accused Paul of being a member of a “sect” or cult. The apostle’s teaching was considered to be heresy! Yet, in Paul’s reply to Tertullus he stated, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.” (Acts 24:14) Paul declared that no matter what names people attached to his faith, he was worshipping the God of his fathers according to the law and the prophets. What was Paul teaching that was called “heresy”? Luke records the first thing Paul preached after his conversion: “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:20) This became the theme of Paul’s message:

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:3, 4)

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:8-10)

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)
Paul recognized that the Old Testament prophecies pointed to Jesus as being the Son of the Living God who would empty Himself and come to this rebellious planet to die for the sins of His creatures who had transgressed the divine law. Judaism failed in Paul’s day because it refused to worship God “according to the law and the prophets.” The revelations concerning the Messiah were either ignored or misapplied by most of the Jews. Paul understood that Judaism would either stand or fall based on its concept of God and His Christ. The new emerging “sect of the Nazarenes” realized that Jesus was the Christ, the literal Son of the Living God, who came to die for man’s sins. To reject that great light would be equivalent to a rejection of God and His salvation. Even though it was considered “heresy” to believe the real gospel, and even though it labeled them as being a cult, the early Christians boldly proclaimed their faith and belief in God; and Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The ultimate success of Christendom and the failure of Judaism would rest on their concepts of God.

The early Christians knew that God was leading their movement and regardless of what the Jews or Gentiles called them, their love for Christ constrained them to witness to the truth even though it would bring persecution, and in many cases death!

The early advent movement parallels the early Christian Church in many respects. Recovering the biblical truths about God, the nature of man, the Sabbath, the law of God, etc., brought animosity from the world and the fallen churches. Their antagonism toward the Advent people was exhibited in name calling and persecution. History details the trials the Advent people suffered. Yet their faith could not be shaken because they firmly believed that God had brought the movement into existence as a fulfillment of prophecy and that He was leading them step by step. This confidence was bolstered by the endowment of the spirit of prophecy among the people.

Ellen White repeatedly stated that God brought the advent movement into existence and that He divinely led out in the development of the doctrines that were taught by the pioneers of the movement. The following statements provide clear evidence of her position.

“The truths given us after the passing of the time in 1844 are just as certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us in answer to our urgent prayers. The visions that the Lord has given me are so remarkable that we know that what we have accepted is the truth. This was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. Light, precious light from God, established the main points of our faith as we hold them today. (1 MR, p. 53 - Letter 50, 1906, emphasis supplied.)

We can confidently say, The truth that has come to us through the Holy Spirit’s working is not a lie. The evidences given for the last half century bear the evidence of the Spirit’s power. (The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters, p. 257, June 23, 1905 letter to G. I. Butler)

Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience until the present time. (The Upward Look, p. 352, Dec. 4, 1905)

The evidence is clear that Sister White taught that God was directly involved in helping the early pioneers to have a correct understanding of the major points of our faith. “The
leading points of our faith as we hold them today were firmly established. Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony.” (3 MR, p. 413 - MS 135, 1903.) She further stated:

I know and understand that we are to be established in the faith, in the light of the truth given us in our early experience. At that time [after the 1844 disappointment] one error after another pressed in upon us; ministers and doctors brought in new doctrines. We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance. Companies of devoted men and women assembled for this purpose. The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error. (8 MR, p. 319, Letter 50, 1906)

**Important Implications**

If the teaching of the pioneers was heresy as some today claim, then Ellen White was either a liar or greatly deceived because she boldly declared that when false doctrines were presented, they were rejected. As noted earlier in her letter to Elder Butler, she declared in 1905 that the truths they had held for the “last half century bear the evidence of the Spirit’s power.” Concerning the doctrine of God, the evidence clearly demonstrates that the Adventist pioneers were all anti-Trinitarians.

If one believes that the Trinity doctrine is true, then it must logically follow that not only was Ellen White either a falsifier or greatly deceived, but God was not in the Advent movement, because if the Trinity is true, then the early Advent movement helped Satan promote hideous lies about the Godhead!

It is extremely important to understand that the Adventist pioneers were correct in teaching that the Trinity doctrine was unscriptural. If they were correct about the unscriptural Trinity, then they were also correct in preaching the second angel’s message concerning the fall of Babylon which accepted the Trinity. Since the Trinity is Babylon’s central pillar upon which all her teachings rest, (See Handbook for Today’s Catholic, p. 11) the Advent movement would of necessity preach against this wine or false teaching. The fact that contemporary Adventism has adopted the beast’s central pillar reveals that it has abandoned both its mission and message!

**Implications Concerning the Three Angels Messages**

- The first angel’s message carries “the everlasting gospel.” False concepts of God and Christ do not constitute the “everlasting gospel.” If the Trinity is true, then the Advent pioneers presented what Paul called “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6) and must surely be disqualified as the remnant. The remnant must preach “the everlasting gospel”, not “another gospel.”
The first angel’s message instructs us to “fear God and give glory to Him.” How can we fear God and give Him glory if we really do not know Him?

The first angel’s message instructs us to “worship Him that made.” How can we do this if we are worshipping a god or gods that don’t exist?

2 The second angel’s message states that “Babylon is fallen.” As noted earlier, if our pioneers understood God correctly, then they were correct in pronouncing Catholicism and apostate Protestantism as fallen. If not, then they were working against God. Seventh-day Adventism is either justified or rejected on the truth about God.

3 The third angel’s message begins with the warning against worshipping “the beast and his image.” This worship is inevitable if we pay homage to Catholicism’s and apostate Protestantism’s main teaching.

The third angel’s message says that the saints “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” We break not only the first commandment, but according to James 2:10 the whole decalogue, worshipping a false god. Further, how can the remnant have the faith of Jesus if they have an improper understanding of Him? Again, Adventism is either justified or rejected based on the truth about God.

In order to gain acceptance with the world and to remove themselves from the status of culthood, Adventist leaders have, over this last century, seriously compromised “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) The compromises on the incarnation and atonement in heaven that were made in the 1950’s with the Evangelicals, through the Barnhouse and Martin contacts, could never have been made if the brethren had not earlier adopted the doctrine of the Trinity. Concerning questions on the Trinity addressed to the brethren by the evangelicals, Roy Allan Anderson, one of the Adventists involved in the evangelical contacts, wrote: “Our answer concerning the Godhead and Trinity was crucial, for in some of the books they had read that Adventists were classed as Arians...” (Adventist Review, September 8, 1983)

During the Adventist - Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956, Walter Martin “produced at least twelve feet of Adventist publications stacked up and marked for [LeRoy] Froom’s perusal” that documented that the Adventist pioneers, including Ellen White, did not believe in the Trinity. (Taped interview with Walter Martin at Loma Linda, January 26, 1989) After looking the materials over, Martin said that Froom claimed that “They do not reflect orthodox Adventist theology, and we reject it.” (Ibid.) Today’s “orthodox Adventist theology” has undergone such a radical change from the beliefs of the Advent pioneers that George Knight, a professor of history at Andrews University, could write:

Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination’s Fundamental Beliefs.
More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity. For Joseph Bates the Trinity was an unscriptural doctrine, for James White it was that “old Trinitarian absurdity,” and for M. E. Cornell it was a fruit of the great apostasy, along with such false doctrines as Sundaykeeping and the immortality of the soul. (Ministry, October 1993, p. 10)

The early pioneers, such as James White, Joseph Bates, and others, were decried as belonging to a “sect” or cult. Uriah Smith noted the following in a reply to attacks made by D. M. Canright:

Other papers of other denominations all along the line are greedy to show a dislike to the Adventists by occasionally serving up a nice tidbit, if it only hits them hard enough. Articles are copied from these papers and sent to Europe, and are translated into various languages, and published there. And reverend doctors of divinity with great glee congratulate themselves that now they have found something with which to check the onward progress of this deluded sect. (Replies to Elder Canright’s Attacks on Seventh-day Adventists, p. 10)

The evidence appears that they would still be called members of a “deluded sect” today. Yet, these pioneers were brave to withstand the scorn of the world because they received a holy boldness to witness for Christ and the truth. They believed as Paul taught:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

Paul told Felix, “that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.” (Acts 24:14) The way of the Adventist pioneers was called heresy by Babylon. With the continued moral fall of Babylon since 1844, we should not be surprised to hear that it is still calling the truth heresy today.
Succession of the Faith

On June 2, 1947, A. W. Spalding wrote a two–page letter to H. Camden Lacey. The letter began:

Will you extend your helping hand to me once more? I am in Washington making the last revision of my manuscript for the first volume of *An Episodic History of Seventh-day Adventists*. Two or three large questions confront me.

One of these is the history of the trinitarian and antitrinitarian doctrines among us. I understand that some of our leading men in the beginning were opposed to the doctrine of the trinity, at least as expressed by certain trinitarians. (Letter of A. W. Spalding to H. Camden Lacey, June 2, 1947)

After making certain observations in relation to the subject, Spalding wrote:

Now I should be grateful for any light you have to throw upon the subject. D. E. Robinson says that you are the first one he knows of to teach the straight doctrine of the trinity, in Australia. Perhaps you were Jashobeam the Hackmonite, but I am supposing there were also other Twenty-nine of the Mighties. There is to me a twilight zone in this history which I wish to have lighted. Did all the fathers sin? And if so, did they repent? How prove the unity of the faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and we are Athanasians? (*Ibid.*)

Lacey replied in a three–page letter dated June 5, 1947. The reply read in part:

I will attempt now to answer some of the queries you propound in your recent letter of the 2nd.

Most assuredly our people were anti–trinitarians, when we (the Lacey family) accepted the ‘Truth’ in 1888. At least, that is how it appeared to us at that time.

Now your questions: ‘Did all the fathers sin?’ Well, ‘sin’ is perhaps too strong a word. But they certainly ‘all’ held inadequate views on both the ‘Eternity of the Son’ (and therefore His essential Deity) and the ‘personality of the Holy Ghost.’ (And why do we not more generally speak of Him in that way, as does our authorized translation, and the Early Writings of Sr. White, until she came under the influence of her husband and other of the pioneers?)

‘And if so, did they repent?’ Not so as you could notice it, I fear. The attitude of some of those pioneers to the preaching of ‘Righteousness by Faith’ in 1888, illustrates pretty well their reactions to any ‘new light’ that might come to them: Nevertheless they were wonderfully used of God in laying the foundations of our message.

‘How prove the unity of the faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and we are Athanasians?’ Well now, the answer is obvious - to you, as well as to the rest of us; so: let us leave it there! (Letter of Camden H. Lacey to A. W. Spalding, June 5, 1947)

Lacey’s last statement should be given careful thought. The basis for succession of the faith is unity in the truth. Few on either side of the issue (Trinitarian or non-Trinitarian) question the importance of a proper understanding of the doctrine of God. Lacey is saying
very plainly that as a Trinitarian he cannot claim unity of the faith with the pioneers. Yet truth is the basis for succession of the faith. The implications should be as clear to us as they were clear to Lacey. If there is not succession of the faith between the pioneers of the movement and today, then we must admit that either we or the pioneers were in error. If they were in error on this vital subject, then how can we claim that God raised up this movement? No wonder Lacey said, “... let us leave it there!” However, this need not be. We do not have to repudiate the teachings that were established in truth! What we must do is quit desiring the favor of the world over the favor of God.

When Walter Martin and Dr. Donald Barnhouse met with R. A. Anderson and LeRoy Froom, the first thing that had to be established was whether Adventists believed the Trinitarian doctrine or not. While these Evangelicals hated the Sabbath, did not agree with the mortality of the soul, and made fun of the sanctuary doctrine, they could accept Adventists as long as they accepted the doctrine of the Trinity. While compromises had to be made on the incarnation and the atonement, these concessions would never have been made if the doctrine of the Trinity had not been conceded earlier.


2. Barnhouse stated: “I hate Saturday as a Sabbath religious day. I hate it because Christ hates it.” (Taped telephone conversation between Barnhouse and A. L. Hudson, May 16, 1958 - printed in *The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956*.) Martin wrote concerning the state of the dead: “As far as this writer is concerned, although he is in definite disagreement with the doctrine [“Soul Sleep”], it does not constitute a bar to our having fellowship with them, ...” (*Eternity*, Jan. 1957) Barnhouse wrote concerning the investigative judgment: “It is to my mind, therefore, nothing more than a human, face-saving idea! .... We personally do not believe that there is even a suspicion of a verse in Scripture to sustain such a peculiar position, and we further believe that any effort to establish it is stale, flat, and unprofitable!” (*Eternity*, September 1956 - Emphasis in original.)
“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)