

The Most Abused Egw Quote in Adventism: Part 2

There is one last point to make here. Hopefully you have seen, in part 1, how Egw's quote is being wrested. Yet when it comes to trying to justify this, many SDA trinitarians will refer to two statements from M.L. Andreasen. Let me give you an example of this from one of my pastor friends that I went to school with.

Pastor L wrote: *Out of curiosity, how do you deal with Andreasen's testimony from his 1909 visit? And post-visit shift in views* [End Quote]

Now for those who may not know Milian Lauritz Andreasen was born in 1876 in Denmark. He was baptized in 1894 as a Seventh-day Adventist and attended Battle Creek School in 1899 to begin preparing for ministry. In 1902, at the age of 26, he was ordained as a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist church. He was one of the leading theological voices in Adventism many decades ago. According to his testimony, Andreasen visited Ellen White in 1909 to see for himself if she had written certain quotes he had questions about. This information comes from a chapel talk he gave in 1948 and from a chapter entitled "Visiting in Ellen White's Home" in a 1979 biography entitled "Without Fear or Favor" by Virginian Steinweg. This biography was based off of Andreasen's notes. Here are the relevant quotes:

Chapel Talk from 1948:

*"I remember how astonished we were when *Desire of Ages* was first published, for it contained some things that we considered unbelievable, among others the doctrine of the Trinity which was not then generally accepted by the Adventists. Some of the quotations concerned theology, others I had selected for their beauty of expression. I wanted to see how these quotations looked before they were corrected by the proof readers." Andreasen continued on: "***I was particularly interested in the statement in *Desire of Ages* which at one time caused great concern to the denomination theologically; "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived."*** p. 530. ***That statement may not seem very revolutionary to you, but to us it was. We could hardly believe it, but of course we could not preach contrary to it. I was sure Sister White had never written, "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived."*** But now I found it in her own handwriting just as it had been published. It was so with other statements. As I checked up, I found that they were Sister White's own expressions (M.L. Andreasen chapel talk Nov 30th, 1948)*

Biography from 1979 book:

*"Especially was I struck with the now-familiar quotation in *The Desire of Ages*, page 530: "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived." **This statement at that time was revolutionary and compelled a complete revision of my former view—and that of the denomination—on the deity of Christ...** (Without Fear or Favor pg 74-76)*

In the quotes above Andreasen claims that the SDA leaders in 1898 were astonished by the *Desire of Ages*. He claims that DA 530 statement "caused great concern to the denomination

theologically” and that it was “*very revolutionary*” to them. It was hardly believable but “*we could not preach against it*” and that it “*compelled a complete revision*” of his view and that of “*the denomination on the deity of Christ.*”

Based upon Andreasen’s testimony it appears that my pastor friend believes Egw’s 1898 quote in the Desire of Ages pg 530 compelled a complete revision of the denomination’s view on Christ. He questioned:

Pastor L wrote: *What was that revision he speaks of, if not relation to those three terms?* [End Quote]

What pastor L is speaking about are the terms “*original, unborrowed, underived*” from the DA 530 quote. Like most Seventh-day Adventists today he appears to understand that language like how Froom did. **Modern day SDA trinitarians think their interpretation of Mrs. White’s quote as teaching the doctrine of unbegottenism is correct and they use Andreasen’s testimony as the historical proof of it. They believe this was the impact he describes the quote as having on the Seventh-day Adventist Christology.**

Yet is this what history actually demonstrates? I believe the answer is a resounding no!

You see if that is what really happened then we should expect to see some signs of serious concern – theologically speaking – in Adventism from 1898 onward. After all Andreasen said there was great concern didn’t he? And we should also expect to see nothing being preached or taught contrary to the idea of unbegottenism because, as Andreasen says “*we [plural] could not preach contrary to it.*”

Now my pastor friend is really no slouch. Based on my experience with him he is actually one of the brothers that seems to genuinely care about honesty in all things and who only wants to put forward the unadulterated truth before the people. So he has done some homework on this subject and appears to be thinking about it within the larger framework of Adventist history. This can be seen by his follow up question.

Pastor L wrote: *So when QoD comes out with its view on the trinity, why isn’t Andreasen up in arms over that? if begotten theology is still mainstream* [End Quote]

That was a good question about the book Questions on Doctrines yet what this question appears to reveal is my friend’s presupposition that the pre-1980 trinity doctrine of Seventh-day Adventist was contrary to begotten theology just like how the current one is today. That is why he is asking, if begotten theology was still mainstream then why wasn’t Andreasen up in arms about the trinity doctrine as promoted in the book Questions on Doctrine?

In order to deal with this matter we need to know our history. A bit more background information is in order here. As I mentioned previously M.L. Andreasen is a big name in Seventh-day Adventist history. He was actually one of the denomination’s leading theological voices during the 1930s and 40s. And the reason why he is so well known in Adventism, even till

this day, is because of his opposition to the 1957 book “Questions on Doctrine” that was basically the re-wording and re-defining of Seventh-day Adventist theology to make it palatable for evangelicals. Andreasen, who was an elderly man of about 80 by this time, felt that this book was undermining the faith of Adventism regarding the sanctuary, the atonement and the nature of Christ and, with a vigor you might expect from a man half that age, he stood against it, eventually writing against it publicly. This battle became so heated that men in power in the conference actually revoked Andreasen’s ministerial credentials and retirement pension. Eventually Andreasen was obliged to apply to the government for financial assistance and because of this the U.S. government in turn let the SDA church know that they would have a serious problem unless they gave him his just due. The church was obliged to restore his pension. Unfortunately, the church did not restore his ministerial credentials during his lifetime (that actually happened after his death) and so he died without ever reconciling with the corporate body. It is a sad tale within Adventism.

The salient point for our discussion here is that Andreasen was no slouch and he was willing to suffer rather than compromise his beliefs. And amidst his vigorous protest about the book Questions on Doctrine, he issued no complaint about its promotion of the doctrine of the trinity. That’s what my pastor friend is bringing up. Yet, again, the problem here though is that my friend seems to think that the trinity doctrine back then was exactly the same as the trinity doctrine of Adventist today – that is with the traditional view of unbegottenism. As I wrote in response to his question.

Jason wrote: *Because their trinity theology back then was begotten theology* [End Quote]

Yet this answer prompted another follow up question from my pastor friend.

Pastor L wrote: *that’s the claim, but what exactly did Andreasen have to reform then?* [End Quote]

This is another great question! As I continued on to explain to my pastor friend the revision that took place back then was not the eradication of begotten theology but rather a change to a flexible position terms of when His begetting occurred.

You see the first problem with the way that modern day SDA trinitarians interpret the Andreasen quote is that there does not appear to be a trace of anyone reacting to Egw’s statement with great concern. If this did happen it is something that stayed hidden. **Yet this concern does not appear to be over a shift from begotten to unbegotten. We know that because language of her statement was perfectly compatible with begotten theology as part 1 demonstrated.**

The second problem is that there is no shift in the periodicals of that time that can be found in terms of a change in view of a begotten Son to an unbegotten one. This is the key point!

And thirdly, contrary to how modern day SDAs interpret Andreasen’s claim about not being able to preach contrary to unbegotten theology, there are many published references to the pre-incarnate Son of God as begotten going all the way up into the 1930s and beyond. This is another key point!

These are the problems with how modern day SDA trinitarians use Andreasen's claim to justify interpreting DA 530 as teaching the doctrine of unbegottenism. Their view doesn't have the backing of the historical quotes. There is an incredibly heavy reliance upon this memory statement of one man but the historical data doesn't match the way SDAs today interpret it. I've got quote after quote that show a continued teaching of a pre-incarnate begotten Son even up into the 1930s.

The only revision that appears to have occurred, in terms of Christology, is that some started to view the timing of His pre-incarnate begetting differently with some even ascribing to eternal generation. Among those was Andreasen himself and he was quite concerned that the entire denomination needed to do so too.

You see contrary to the claims of certain of my vocal critics the SDA church was not unified on a trinitarian doctrine in 1900 and, even as far as the 1940s, there was still no unity. Andreasen himself noted:

"The field is divided on the subject of the Trinity" (M.L. Andreason [General Conference Field Secretary] to Elder J.L. McElhany and Elder W.H. Branson, December 25th, 1942 pg 5)

There was no unity on the doctrine of the trinity back then and while brother Andreasen clearly believed in 3 persons of a trinity (Father, Son and holy Spirit) I have not seen evidence to indicate that he ever believed in an unbegotten Son.

There is evidence, however, that he was concerned with repudiating Waggoner who believed that the Son of God had been begotten at some distant point in time past. This information comes from A.W. Spalding who wrote the following to H.C. Lacey:

*"D.E. Robinson says that you are the first one he knows of to teach the straight doctrine of the trinity, in Australia.....There is to me a twilight zone in this history which I wish to have lighted. Did all the fathers sin? [he means the original pioneers] And if so, did they repent? How prove the unity of the faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and WE ARE ATHANSIANS? **ANDREASEN IS VERY POSITIVE THAT WAGGONER MUST BE REPUDIATED,** WHICH I UNDERSTAND MEANS "CONDEMNED". I am slow to censure any of the fathers, but I am ready to make situations as clear as they appear to me. In the beginning of my writing I did not realize that the question of the trinity among us was of so serious a nature.....Let me know, if you please, what your part in this movement was, where you got your view and inspiration, who else was instrumental in presenting it, what the actual views of the pioneers were, what relation to the question Sister White had through the years. (A.W. Spalding to H.C. Lacey, June 2, 1947)*

You see during this time in the history of Adventism there was a serious effort by certain leaders to repudiate the original pioneer view in order to confirm the church's orthodox standing and unify the body on the doctrine of the trinity. Some of these leaders were orthodox trinitarians (i.e. Spalding says "we are Athansians") and that appears to include Andreasen.

Sadly, the efforts during this time included a falsification of the history, placing an emphasis on certain EGW quotes to the neglect of others, and writing pro-trinitarian articles in the periodicals. Now, as a disclaimer, all of these efforts were not all negative or reactionary theology. I think these brethren really thought they were doing the right thing but some of them clearly went too far. It appears that Andreasen played a part of this too. And let me say this, I have not found any evidence of intentional deceit on Andreasen's part like I have for others like Froom or Spalding. I am quoting Andreasen now:

*“TRUE CONCEPT OF GODHEAD.—Belief in the Godhead is the most vital factor in any religion. By the Godhead is here meant Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have not had from the beginning a perfectly developed conception of all that we now believe. We have not always observed the Sabbath from sunset to sunset. We have not always taught and practiced tithing. We have not always made health reform a vital part of the message. All these were a matter of increased light. So with the Godhead. We have not always had a developed doctrine of the Trinity. **We have not always given the Son His place as God. It was only in the nineties that this doctrine came into prominence. It was the new book, "The Desire of Ages," that saved the day. That definitely taught the doctrine of the Trinity.***

*“There are countries in which Jews are not wanted, and some countries in which they are persecuted. It is not a far cry from a Jew to a Seventh-day Adventist. We keep the Sabbath as do they. We abstain from pork as they do. We reverence the Old Testament as they do. By many we are called Jews. **We may yet find that the doctrine of the Trinity will stand us in good stead in the days to come. It might be well if our papers had this in mind, so that once in a while references would appear that would make our stand clear in this respect. Such references are altogether too few. The world should be made aware that we are Trinitarians. This does not appear from a perusal of some of our journals. By this is not meant that we should begin to argue the theological side of this doctrine. It is better to leave this alone. But there should be left no doubt in the mind of the public that we are Trinitarians, and thus Christians. And this should be done not merely as a defensive measure for a possible future situation. It should be done because we in very truth are Trinitarians and are giving the Saviour of mankind His true status as God.*** (M.L. Andreason Ministry Magazine Vol 12, No. 11 November 1939)

Here we see quite clearly that Andreasen was a trinitarian. This fits the claim from Spalding that Andreasen was concerned about repudiating E.J. Waggoner. It also suggests that he was comprehended in the plural pronoun “we.” Apparently Andreasen felt that the former conception held by Waggoner was a denial of the true status of the Son as God.

Now there is much that could be said here but suffice it to say that the theology of a begotten Son who is God because He was begotten of Him is not a denial of Jesus' absolute Deity but rather giving the Savior of mankind His true status as God and revealing the explanation why He has such a status.

It appears that Andreasen, along with others, worked hard to present a view of a Son of God begotten apart from (or outside of) time. This was a part of his trinitarian conception. He was one of theologians who viewed God's relationship with time differently than how the original pioneers did and how most modern day SDAs do today. I am quoting him now:

“THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT GOD DID NOT CREATE TIME, BUT THAT IN SOME WAY HE FOUND IT ALREADY EXISTING. BUT THIS CANNOT BE. Time and space are not self-existent entities, operating apart from God and independent of Him. If that were true, they would be equal with God, or even His superior; for that which is coeval with God or exists prior to God must at least be equal with Him; and that which is not created by God is self-existent and is God. The Christian believes that “without Him was not anything made that was made,” and that TIME AND SPACE ARE CREATED BY GOD as verily as anything else He has made. John 1:3. (M. L. Andreasen, The Sabbath, pp. 54)

So we see quite clearly that Andreasen believed that God created time. So then how did he apply that to his Christology? Let's read him again:

"The third verse [of Hebrews 1] presents Christ as "being the brightness of his [God's] glory." The participle "being" is an expression of ETERNAL, TIMELESS EXISTENCE, and has the same sense as "was" in John 1: 1, "In the beginning was the Word." The Word is Christ. (Verse 14) He did not come into existence in the beginning. In the beginning He was. When He came to this world He became flesh. He had not previously been flesh. By way of contrast He did not become the brightness of the Father's glory. He always was. This constitutes the essential and eternal ground of His personality.

"Brightness" is variously translated outshining, out raying, reflection. IT HAS THE SAME RELATION TO GOD'S GLORY AS THE RAYS OF THE SUN HAVE TO THE SUN. THE RAYS CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE SUN, NOR THE SUN FROM ITS RAYS. THE TWO ARE INSEPARABLE. SO WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON." (M.L. Andreasen, The Book of Hebrews pg 28)

It would appear that Andreasen was Athanasian indeed! For those who do not know the Athanasian creed makes the following assertion about Christ:

“...how our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man. God begotten of the substance of the Father before the ages: and man is born of the substance of the mother in the ages.” (Athanasian Creed partial quote)

This is why he spoke of the Son having an eternal, timeless existence and used an analogy of the rays of the sun to the sun itself to illustrate the relation of the Son and the Father. Thus it would appear that he made the the Father and Son into One inseparable God Being (which is standard teaching for the doctrine of the trinity).

So let us bring this to a conclusion. When modern day SDA trinitarians, who hold to unbegottenism, try to justify their interpretation of DA 530 based on Andreasen's quote they are wresting the history. They are taking a quote from a man who interpreted that quote as teaching eternal generation within the framework of Athanasian trinitarian. It is therefore inappropriate to use his testimony to justify their doctrine of unbegottenism. That is not the type of change that Andreasen was speaking about as the historical evidence indicates.

