

History

Theophilus: first to use the term 'Trinity' (*Refut. of Autolytus*, AD 168).
Tertullian (AD 197): used the term *trinitas*, but not as 3=1.

Nicene Creed (AD 325): "We believe in one God...and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, God from God...begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father." **Council of Constantinople** (AD 381): "The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son, of the same substance and also of the same nature...With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified." **Athanasian Creed** (AD 400): "We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity. We distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance...Nevertheless, there are not three eternal beings, but one eternal being."

Chalcedonian Creed (AD 451): "of one substance (*homoousious*)...begotten of the Father before the ages."

The Catholic Connection: "The mystery of the trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the church" (*Hbk for Today's Catholic*, p. 11). **Catechism** (2003): p. 233f.: "There is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son, and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity." "The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity...The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life." p. 251: "To articulate the dogma of the Trinity, the Church had to develop its own terminology with the help of certain notions of philosophical origin." p. 253: "We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons...but each of them is God whole and entire." p. 262f.: "in the Father and with the Father, the Son is one and the same God...the Spirit is one and the same God." p. 82: "The Church...does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."

p. 266: "Now this is the Catholic faith:
We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity."

The Ecumenical Connection: "The theological foundations of ecumenism derives from faith in the persons of the Trinity" (C. Hill, "The Ec. Mvmt., *Zndvn Hbk Hist. of Christian*. 2006, p. 435)! "We have far more in common than what divides us" since "we believe in the Trinity" (Rick Warren, *CNS Nov.* 2014). **Historically, "Seventh-day Adventists do not, and never have accepted the dark, mysterious, Catholic doctrine of the Trinity"** (B. Wilkinson, 1936). "No single Scripture passage states the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact...only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity" (*AR Vol 158*, No. 31, p. 4). Protestantism has "accepted...the Trinity, for which there is no such precise authority in the Gospels" (*Assumption of Mary, Life*, Oct. 30, 1950, p. 51). "No doctrine is more fundamental or more emphasized in Freemasonry than that of the Trinity" (*Masonicworld.com*). (!)

"The Reformers stopped reforming..." Had they "left the last vestige of Papacy behind, such as natural immortality, sprinkling, the trinity, and Sunday-keeping, the church would now be free from her unscriptural errors" (J. White, *RH Feb. 7, 1856*).

The Adventist pioneers: "We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work...Let that which these men have written...be reproduced" (1MR 63; 2MR 440; Lt 229, 1903; RH May 25, 1905).

Ellen White used 'trinity' only once (not as 3=1) and warned of "great changes" (Ms1 Feb. 24, 1915): "Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced" (1SM 204). "We have been warned that heresy of every kind will be brought in among the people of God in these last days" (MS 75, 1905).

Kellogg "had come to believe in the trinity...he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost," the latter filling "all space, and every living thing...[his] teaching was so utterly contrary to the gospel" (Daniells to W. C. White, Oct. 29, 1903, pp. 1-2).

Caution: truth prompts persecution (→ Lombards, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals)

Frequently Asked Questions

• **Is this new light?!** No, but the trinity is, introduced to our Fundamental Beliefs not until 1931 and not voted until the 1980 GC, with the number 27 motivated by the Trinity: 3x3x3=27: "I was compelled to search out...books written by men outside of our faith...Having these, I went on from there" (L. Froom, *Movement*, p. 322).

• **Is this Arianism?** No. Jesus was begotten, not created: "For 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,' -not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten [verb1] in the express image of the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (5T May 30, 1895, par. 3). "Christ is the perfect revelation of God" (LS 94.3).

• **Do you believe in the divinity of Christ?** Yes, absolutely.

• **Is the Holy Spirit just an 'impersonal force'?** No; few think so.

• **Does God really have a Son?** Some claim "the Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father...Son' is used metaphorically...with the Godhead" (A. Rodriguez, *AW Nov.* 2015, p. 42). But "God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father" (8T 268)-before the incarnation! → Read *Steps to Christ*, chapters 1-3!

• **Does it really matter? It's not a salvation issue, is it?**

"This fact the angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God" (Lt 42-1910.3). "Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer . . . got up a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth" (Ms 86, Aug. 21, 1910). "Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father" (RH March 3, 1874).

This is the Gospel and the Great Controversy!

• **What about the "three great personal Dignitaries of heaven"** (MS 92, 1901)? Not tritheism ("three individual centers of intelligence and action"^{SDABC12:150}). "The Spirit, being God" (=divinity; Lt11b, 1892) like to the "spirit of man" (1 Cor 2:11), not a separate being. "Jesus is present in the person of His representative" (12MR 145.2 1898), "the third person of the Godhead" (DA 67.1).

• **But scholars say...** Jesus "passed by...the renowned seats of learning" (DA 68). "People should be educated to search the Scriptures for themselves, to dare to think for themselves, taking the Bible as their guidebook, their standard of faith" (CTr 332.5). The Bible "was not written for the scholar alone...it was designed for the common people...We should not take the testimony of any man, but should study the words of God for ourselves" (SC 89f.; 5T 388; Prov 8:8-9; 18:33; 30:5-6; Lk 24:45).

• **We can't really understand God...** Yes, but a misrepresentation of God displeases Him: "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" (Job 42:7).

• **Mission is more important...** The 3 Angels Message – our prophetic call! - is actually non-trinitarian (Rev 14:6-7). If we took "the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished...that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands" (GC 598)! Before the Second Coming, "we must give up errors and traditions received from men and turn wholly to God and His Word" (EW 243).

• **Let's focus on church unity...** "Truth is God's basis for the unity of his people" (GW92 391). "We cannot purchase peace and unity at the cost of truth. The conflict may be long and painful, but at any cost we must hold fast to the Word of God" (HS 197).

• **Now what?!** → Mt 10:32; 16:25; Mk 7:7; Jn 12:42-43; Heb 12:15!; EW 242; GC 372. "God calls for men...who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have" (PK 142).

The Truth About The Trinity

What is the Issue?

SDA Version A humble appeal to the church-an earnest plea with God's people Ingo Sorke, Ph.D.

My Journey... In 2014, a top-tier scholar categorically exclaimed on a committee: "God doesn't have a Son!" Stunned, I proceeded to read the New Testament cover to cover and had to reconsider the doctrine of the Trinity - at the risk of temporal loss... My conclusion:



God the Father has a literal, divine Son. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united but not as one God ("Trinity"). Scripture uses the terms *Son of God* and *Spirit of God*, never *God the Son* or *God the Spirit*. John 17:3; 1 Cor 8:6; 11:3; Eph 4:5; 1 Tim 2:5

The Issue: Compare our Fundamental Beliefs...

1872 (non-trinitarian): "IN presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them.

I. That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139:7.
II. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father"

2015 Preamble: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed...Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session" = *subject to change!*

2015 Fundamental Beliefs (trinitarian): #2 "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons."
#4 "God the eternal Son" **#5** "God the eternal Spirit" **#14** Unity "has its source in the oneness of the triune God."

This introduces non-biblical wording to our fundamental beliefs!

Historical Perspective: "no other creed than the Word of God"

(J. White, *AR&SH 4 Aug. 11, 1853*, p. 52)

"It is not how many years have I believed that makes it the truth. You must bring your creed to the Bible and let the light of the Bible define your creed and show where it comes short and where the difficulty is" (FW 77).

• "That most of the leading SDA pioneers were non-Trinitarian" is "accepted Adventist history...either the pioneers were wrong and the present church is right, or the pioneers were right and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth" (J. Moon, *The Trinity*, p. 190).

• "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...the doctrine of the Trinity" (G. Knight, *Ministry*, Oct. 1993, p. 10).

• "Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of 'present truth'. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ...The Trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists. Even today a few do not subscribe to it" (W. Johnson, *AR Jan.* 6, 1994, p. 10). "The omega will be of a most startling nature" (1SM 197).

Scholars admit:

• The trinity "cannot be clearly detected within the confines of the canon" (*Oxford Companion to the Bible* 1993, p. 782).
• "In the New Testament there is no explicit statement of the doctrine" of the trinity (Bromily, BEDT, p. 1112).
• "The concept of Trinity...that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed" (F. Canale, *SDABC 12:138*).
• "No text of Scripture specifically says that God is three Persons" (K. Donkor, *Theology*, p. 20).

The Old Testament

One God: Ex 20:3; Deut 4:35, 39; 6:4; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Chron 17:20; Ps 86:10; Isa 43:10. "The God of the Bible is one and not many...one divine reality and not a plurality of divine beings" (F. Canale, SDBC 12:121). **Gen 1:1** The plural *Elohim* is not trinitarian: "created" is singular, as is *theos* [God] in the Septuagint. In Ex 7:1 Moses is *elohim* = 1 only. **Gen 1:2** "the Spirit of God", not "God the Spirit". We don't say "Nebuchadnezzar the spirit" (Dan 2:1). **The OT "does not explicitly imply that the Spirit was understood as one of three divine persons"** (D. Bediako, *God in 3 Persons*, p. 16).

Gen 1:26 "Let us make man": God speaking to His Son (1SP 24, 25; ST Jan. 9, 1879). *No evidence of a trinity (3=1)! Mk 12:32!*

Gen 2:24 "one flesh" = the marriage bond (Mt 19:6). Adam and Eve remained 2 distinct human beings (Gen 29:14; Jdg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12-13). Paul compares this "one flesh" to Christ and the church! **Gen 5:1-2** "God created man [adam]...Male + female created he them...and called *their* name Adam." Adam=Adam in person + nature. Eve=Adam in nature BUT NOT IN PERSON! So Jesus = God in nature but not in person: "The Lord Jesus Christ...is truly God in infinity [=nature: divinity], but not in personality" (Ms 116-1905.19). Thus "Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense" (RH April 5, 1906; 1SM 247)-as Eve was human in the highest sense. "In 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" (ST Aug. 29, 1900)-as Eve in relation to Adam: younger, but from her origin always with Adam.

Ex 3:14 "Jesus is the I AM" (DA 24): God's name is in him (Ex 23:21). "Jehovah is the name given to Christ" (ST May 3, 1899). Jesus = Yehoshua=Yahweh saves. God dealt with the ancients "through Christ" (ST Aug. 5, 1889, par. 5). "Man was so dear to the Creator of the world that he spoke to him through Jesus Christ" (ST Oct. 15, 1896).

Deut 6:4 "The LORD our God is one LORD": strict monotheism. *Achad* means 'one' more so than 'unity' (Mal 2:10!). "Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One...is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship" (PP 305). Worship through Jesus is possible: "The Father and the Son alone are to be exalted" (YI July 7, 1898; Zech 6:13). **Ps 45:6-7** → the Son is called God "by inheritance" (Heb 1:4).

Prov 8:22 "The Lord possessed [הוּוּ] me in the beginning of his way"; Septuagint: κτίζω=create. V24-25: "I was brought forth" [יָלִיד] =birth (Ps 51:5!). "The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity" (RH April 5, 1906): "His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation. The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured in figures" (ST May 3, 1899). "How long He [our Creator=Christ] has had existence" permits a beginning (7BC 919; Ms 13 1888,16). 'Forever' is a relative term (Jude 7) and can include a beginning. 'Co-eternal' eliminates the reality of a true Father-Son relationship; Jesus was "as one brought up with Him" (PP 34).

Isa 6:3 "Holy, holy, holy": not trinitarian (→Rev 4:8 = to the Father).

Isa 9:6 Jesus is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father" = affirming His divinity, not role-playing. "Jesus is...our 'everlasting Father'" (DA 483) but not God the Father: "the man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty" (5BC 1129). "...my (the Father's) name is in him (the Son)" (Ex 23:21). → John 17:3; AA 262!

Limits & Limitations "No human mind can comprehend God. None are to indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion" (MH 429, 438; →AA 52). Nonetheless, "We must know Him as He reveals Himself...all depend upon a right knowledge of God. This is the knowledge that is essential preparation both for this life and for the life to come"... "A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service" (MH 409). "It is essential to have an intelligent knowledge of the truth" (RH July 1, 1884). "If asked to explain certain statements, they can only answer: 'It is so presented in the Scriptures'" (ST 700).

The New Testament: Divinity, not Trinity

"And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (In 17:3)
"One God, the Father...and one Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 8:6).

The Baptism: Though Father, Son, and Spirit are present, 3=1! "The Father himself will minister to his Son. Direct from the throne proceeded the light of the glory of God. The heavens were opened, and beams of light and glory proceeded therefrom and assumed the form of a dove...The dove-like form was emblematical of the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (YI March 1, 1874, par. 4).

"In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived" (DA 530):

"This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ... it is given him as a free gift" (ST April 8, 1897 par. 2). Original: J. Cumming, *Sabbath Ev. Readings on the NT*. St. John. 1856. Ellen White omits his trinitarian comments, and Cumming skips John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." This life humans may have: "Jesus 'asserted His right and power to give eternal life'" (DA 530). "Christ is invested with power to give life to all creatures" (RH April 5, 1906). Through Jesus, "the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns" (DA 21).

Jn 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God [the Father], and the Word was God [=divine]." "The Eternal Father...gave his only begotten Son, tore from his bosom Him who was made in the express image of his person, and sent him down to earth" (RH July 9, 1895). "Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father, -one in nature, in character, and in purpose, -the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God" (GC 493; PP 34). "Lucifer in heaven, before his rebellion, was a high and exalted angel, next in honor to God's dear Son" (SR 13) **who was the Son of God before the incarnation:** "This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God" (Lt 42, 1910). The other angels "clearly set forth that Christ was the Son of God, existing with Him before the angels were created" (SR 15). "In His incarnation He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God" (1SM 226). "The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ,...The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one" (MH 424; John 17:22). This is neither a oneness of being nor 3=1! The Father ordained "that Christ should be equal with himself; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was as his own presence...His word was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host...endowing him with such unlimited power and command" (ST Jan. 9, 1879). "He was the Son of the living God" (Lt 77 Aug 3, 1894). "Though He was the Son of God, yet He had taken human nature upon Him (DA 533). → Read the Book of Acts!

Mt 28:19 "in the name of" = the name of Jesus in the book of Acts. "Three powers of the Godhead" (AUCR Oct. 7, 1907) or "three living persons [original: personalities] of the heavenly trio" (Ms 21, 1906). = *The Father, the Son, and their Spirit = their personal representation*

Jn 3:16 "only begotten": monogenes occurs 9x in the NT, always involving parents/birth: Lk 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Heb 11:17; 1 Jn 4:9. Jesus was not the only "son of God" (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). "Only begotten" doesn't mean "one and only" but "begotten of the Father", "the first-born of heaven" (DA 51).

Jn 10:30 "I and My Father are one" "in nature, will, and purpose" (RH March 5, 1901; GC 493); "in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one" (ST 269), "two in individuality, yet one in spirit, heart, and character" (YI Oct. 16, 1897).

The Apostles clearly and consistently differentiate between God and Jesus: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (2 Cor 1:1). **1 Cor 11:3 "the head of Christ is God"** (! Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; 4:4-6; Phil 1:2; Col 3:1; 1 Thess 1:1-10; 2 Thess 1:1-2; 1 Tim 1:1-2; 2 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1; Phlm 3; Heb 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:1-2; 2 Jn 3; Jude 4; Rev 1:1-2, 4-5;

7:10, 17; 14:4; 21:22-23; 22:1, 3). "For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*" (1 Tim 2:5). "Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ" (1SM 344)=one Mediator.

1 Tim 1:17 "the only wise God": the Father (Jd 1:25 → Rom 16:27). **Heb 1:8** "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God" = Christ's divinity is by "appointment" (v2) and "inheritance" (v4).

Heb 7:3 "like" Melchizedek: a comparison, not a definition.

1 Jn 5:20 "This is the true God"=the Father, based on antecedents (v19); 2 Chron 15:3; Jer 10:10; Jn 17:3; 1 Thess 1:9. → J. Waggoner, *The Atonement*, p. 168.

Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha..."=Jesus | "saith the Lord..."=the Father
Rev 3:12 Jesus refers to the Father as "my God" 4x in one verse!

"We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ" (Lt 66, April 10, 1894)

Jn 14:16 "another comforter": "I will come to you" (v18) = Jesus (1 Jn 2:1!). The disciples didn't grasp "that they could have the presence of Christ with them, and yet He be unseen by the world" (SW Aug. 13, 1898). "The divine Spirit... the world's Redeemer promised to send is the presence and power of God" (ST Nov. 23, 1891). "Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end" (AA 49). "Christ is represented by the Holy Spirit" (ST Dec. 1, 1898). "The Lord Jesus acts through the Holy Spirit; for it is his representative" (RH Aug. 25, 1896). "With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin" (RH May 19, 1904). "Jesus comes to you as the Spirit of truth" (2MR 337). "Christ breathed His Spirit upon them" (DA 805; Jn 20:22). "Jesus will be with you; He will go before you by His Holy Spirit" (LS 493; →Eph 3:16-17!).

"They have one God and one Saviour; and one Spirit-the Spirit of Christ" (ST 189).

"By the Spirit the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with you" (ECho Jan. 15, 1893 par.8). God "is an unseen presence in the person of the Holy Spirit" (Lt 124, 1897). **"The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ"** (DA 805). Thus grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30) is like grieving a person's spirit, not a 3rd being: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit" (Dan 7:15; 2:3).

Jn 20:22 "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" "The Father gave His Spirit without measure to His Son, and we also may partake of its fullness" (GC 477). "Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life" (DA 827). Satan copies this, breathing "upon them an unholy influence" (EW 56) = his spirit, not a separate being from Satan. "By His Spirit He [God] is everywhere present" (Ed 132).

Acts 5:3-4 lying to the Holy Spirit=lying to God→Holy Spirit=God? Mt 25:40 "As ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Brethren≠Jesus! Acts 9:4 "Why persecutes thou me?" Christ=Christians. 1 Cor 8:12 "When ye sin so against the brethren...ye sin against Christ." Brethren≠Christ.

Heb 9:24 "eternal Spirit" = everything of God is eternal.

1 John 5:7 I consider genuine but not Trinitarian. → MH 421!

Rev 5:6 Interestingly, the seven Spirits are part of Jesus.

What about Evangelism, pp. 613-617? *Evangelism* adds trinitarian subtitles, cites out of context, and alters punctuation. Original: "The Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds, unseen by human eyes; that the Lord God is our Keeper and Helper. He hears every word we utter and knows every thought of the mind" (S&T Vol. 2, 136-137, 1899). "Christ walks unseen through our streets" (MH 107).

"God will have a people on the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines...The opinions of learned men...the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils..." none are "evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support" (GC 595). "No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation" (RH Oct. 10, 1892). **"One sentence of Scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man's ideas or arguments"** (7T 71).