

Chewelah Seventh-day Adventist Church Business Meeting

February 27, 2022

The Bible Our Only Creed

To begin with, we want to assure the church that we fully believe in the Heavenly Trio—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that the eternal Son of God is God in the highest sense and is without beginning. We also affirm the truth that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead.

We believe nothing new or different from what our denomination held during the days of Ellen White.

The charge against us, according to the letter that was distributed to the church, is: “Val and Eiji feel that several of the Fundamental Beliefs (FB) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are problematic, and one is teaching error.”

Here is what this charge is referencing. We believe that if a few words were modified, it would help to bring Fundamental Beliefs #2, #4, and #5 more in line with FB #1 that requires all beliefs to be supported by the Bible. Let’s look at these changes:

2. ~~The Trinity~~ (The Godhead)

There is one ~~God~~ (Godhead): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. ~~God is~~ (The Godhead are) immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. ~~He is~~ (They are) infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through ~~His~~ (Their) self-revelation. ~~God, who is~~ (The Godhead who are) love, ~~is~~ (are) forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.)

3. God the Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

4. ~~God the Son~~ (Son of God)

~~God the eternal Son~~ (The eternal Son of God) became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged....

5. ~~God the Holy Spirit~~ (The Holy Spirit of God)

~~God the eternal Spirit~~ (The eternal Spirit of God) was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son....

As you can see, we would suggest switching around a couple of words in FB #s 4 and 5 and, in FB #2, changing the focus to the Godhead. These changes would make our Fundamental Beliefs more easily defensible from the Scriptures. We believe that the current wording of FB #2 is

faulty because none of the associated Bible verses plainly teach that the *one God* is a unity of three Persons. The only verse out of the 9 verses that uses the phrase *one God*, and identifies this *one God*, is Ephesians 4:4-6.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) **One God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:4-6

Based on this verse, a student who was participating in a fill-in-the-blank Bible study would answer a question about who is the one God of the Bible with the correct answer—the one God is the Father. Not one of the proof texts associated with FB #2 would lead a student to answer that the one God is a unity of three Persons. All of our teachings should be plainly and clearly supported by scripture.

“In all the **sermons** and in all the **Bible studies**, let the people see that **on every point a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’** is given for the faith and doctrines which we advocate.” {6T 68.3}

According to the first Fundamental Belief in our church’s voted 28 Fundamental Beliefs document, the doctrines of our church are all to be founded upon a plain “Thus saith the Lord.”

The first Fundamental Belief says:

“The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, **the definitive revealer of doctrines**, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”

Every Fundamental Belief that follows this first belief must be based upon a plain “Thus saith the Lord” rather than any human **assumptions**.

What is the difference between an **assumption** and a plain “Thus saith the Lord?”

Revelation 1:10 says: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...”

To declare that the Lord’s Day is Sunday, would be an **assumption** because there is not a clear Bible text that explicitly states that the Lord’s Day is Sunday.

But it is **not an assumption** to declare that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord because there is a clear Bible text that declares this to be true.

“But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God...” Exodus 20:10

The church board voted to recommend to the church that we, Val and Eiji, both be put under censure for one year because we will not affirm the wording of FB #2 that says, “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.”

This declaration that the *one God* is three persons is an **assumption** because, like the **assumption** of the Lord’s Day being Sunday, there is no plain “Thus saith the Lord” that three persons make up one God. This concept is called the Trinity.

“Adventists believe a Trinity of three persons--the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit--**make up one God.**” Chewelah SDA Church Website

“The Christian religion is not a belief in three separate gods; rather, it is a belief in **one God who is manifested in three Persons** working in perfect harmony with one another.” Sabbath School Quarterly - 2nd Quarter 2006

“God has revealed his nature as a Trinity, that is, three coeternal persons, who, though distinct, constitute **The one Divine Trinitarian being.**” Reflections - BRI Newsletter July 2008

We are not alone in declaring that this idea that three persons make up one God is simply an **assumption.**

Here is what our own Seventh-day Adventist scholars say:

“The concept of the Trinity, namely **the idea that the three are one [God], is not explicitly stated but only assumed.**” — Fernando L. Canale, *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Volume 12, p. 138, Doctrine of God.

“While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, **it is assumed** as a fact by Bible writers.... Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.” — *Adventist Review*, 7-30-1981, Special Issue on Bible Doctrines, p. 4.

Here is what non-Adventist scholars say:

“It is fair to say that the Bible does not clearly teach the doctrine of the Trinity.... In fact, **there is not even one proof text.**” Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 1999, p. 89.

“No responsible New Testament scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus or preached by the earliest Christians or consciously held by any writer in the NT.” Anthony T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, London, 1982, p. 87.

The Roman Catholic Church agrees with these Protestant scholars:

“Scholars generally agree that there is **no doctrine of the Trinity as such in either the Old Testament or the New Testament.**” *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard McBrien, general editor, 1995, “God,” p. 564.

It should be abundantly clear to everyone that this Trinity concept—that three persons make up one God—is indeed an **assumption**; there is no plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. If we were members of a credal denomination, then we could be disciplined if we did not affirm this **assumption**. Here is what the Protestant Christian world says in an article entitled, “God in Three Persons: A Doctrine We Barely Understand.”

“All Christians believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. If you do not believe this—that is, **if you have come to a settled conclusion that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true—you**

are not a Christian at all. You are in fact a heretic. Those words may sound harsh, but they represent the judgment of the Christian church across the centuries. What is the Trinity? Christians in every land unite in proclaiming that our **God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Those who deny that truth place themselves outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy.** Having said that, I admit that no one fully understands it. It is a mystery and a paradox. Yet I believe it is true.”

<https://www.christianity.com/god/trinity/god-in-three-persons-a-doctrine-we-barely-understand-11634405.html>

A creedal denomination gives their creedal statement the same weight of authority as the inspired Word of God even if the creedal statement contains human assumptions.

Fortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is **not** a creedal denomination. Therefore, no member is required to affirm the **assumption** that is found in FB #2. In the Forward to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, voted upon by the World Church in 1980, it states:

“Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their *only* creed ...”

From the Forward of the Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

This is in full agreement with the Spirit of Prophecy:

“The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony.” {1SM 416}

The simple reason that we, Val and Eiji, cannot affirm the definition of the *one God* found in FB #2 is that there is not a **plain** “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. To do otherwise would be to completely disregard the inspired counsel that we have been given.

“Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a **plain** ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.” {GC 595.1}

It is not safe to base our doctrines on human assumptions.

“In this age of the world there is **no safety** in departing from a **plain** ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ however wise and correct the **human assumption** may appear. . . . Of those who place their sophistry above a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ God says, ‘I will make their wisdom foolishness.’” {Lt138-1899.8}

“They are to accept no **human assertion** which is not supported by a **plain** statement of the Word of God.” {Lt55-1900.20}

“It is not His plan that His people shall present something which **they have to suppose,** which is not taught in the Word.” Selected Messages, Book One, p. 174.

“However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and **he ought not to guess at anything.**” {GC 598}

In the online Merriam Webster dictionary, the first listing of synonyms for the verb *guess* is the word **assume**. If we were to affirm FB #2 we would have to accept the **assumption** that it presents and we are told not to do this. **Human assertion, suppositions, assumptions, guessing**—all are forbidden when it comes to what we believe the Word of God is teaching.

Here is the baptismal vow that we took when we joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

1. Do you believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit?

There are no **assumptions** in this baptismal vow. We still affirm the wording of this vow. We took a vow to believe in the three Persons of the Heavenly Trio.

The Trinity teaching was not a part of the vows that we took. The difference between the terms *Trinity* and *Heavenly Trio* is that the term *Trinity* is associated with the **assumption** that one God is three Persons, which is not explicitly stated in the Inspired Writings. In contrast, the term *Heavenly Trio* simply refers to the three Persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The church board voted to recommend to the church that we, Val and Eiji, both be put under censure for one year because we will not affirm the **assumption** of the Trinity.

If the church board had respect to the religious liberty and freedom of conscience of the members of our church, they would never have voted to call for this business meeting to censure members regarding their conceptions of God. Each church member has the liberty to read the scriptures and to then form their own conception of God from His inspired Word.

“Let the Scriptures be read in simple faith, **and let each one form his conceptions of God from His inspired Word.**” {Lt214-1903.9}

Here are the questions that should be answered before you vote your conscience:

1. Because our conscience forbids us from affirming the **assumption** that three Persons make up one God, is it morally right for the church to censure us?

2. Would ratifying the church board’s decision to discipline us place the Chewelah SDA Church at odds with the World Church which has voted to accept no creed other than the Bible?

“We accept not the **authority of men’s councils**; but we go further back, even to the councils of heaven. “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” [Psalm 119:89.] **We take a “Thus saith the Lord.” Here we stand.** A doctrine that has not a “Thus saith the Lord” may be accepted by the whole world, but that does not make it truth. We want truth, and **we refuse to run any risk in accepting anything else.**” {Ms39-1893.13}

Pillars of Our Faith

The Church Manual states: The reasons for which members shall be subject to discipline are: and then it lists 14 different reasons for which a member can be disciplined. #1 on the list of these items is:

1. Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the fundamental beliefs of the Church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.

Some have interpreted the Church Manual's first reason for discipline to mean that a member must, as a test of fellowship, affirm the precise wording of the official Fundamental Beliefs statement. If that were the case, the document itself, rather than the Bible, would become the standard, the creed, by which one's beliefs must be judged. When it comes to Fundamental Belief #2, nearly everyone acknowledges that that formulation is not presented in the Bible as such. It is merely a human attempt to synthesize what is believed to be the teaching of scripture. This brings us to our question as to the appropriateness of requiring doctrinal conclusions that are not stated in the Bible. The question is, Is it proper to impose our synthesis on our members, and discipline those who do not agree with our reasoning, even though those members may accept everything the Bible actually says? Which should be the test, the Bible itself or the theologians' ideas of what the Bible means?

A church member must not be required to affirm an **assumption**, **assertion** or a **supposition**. We, Val and Eiji, have no problem affirming the biblical 1872 Fundamental Principles on the doctrine of God that our church held for many years which were confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy.

- 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. Psalm 139:7.

- II - That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist...

But that was written way back in 1872! Isn't truth progressive? Don't we need to move beyond the 19th century in our understanding of God? Yes, we agree that truth is progressive but not a pin of the foundational principles which have been testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord are to be removed.

"We are God's commandment-keeping people. For the last fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to tear down the **foundation principles** of our faith. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists to take the place of the truth which point by point has been **testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord**. But **the waymarks which have made us what we are are to be preserved**, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and the testimony of His Spirit. From the great system of truth as it has been presented by God's messengers, **not a pin is to be removed.**" {Lt232-1903.42}

We, Val and Eiji, are in harmony with what our church believed about the Heavenly Trio for the first 136 years of its history. In light of the admonishment not to remove a pin of our foundational principles, why should a Seventh-day Adventist member who subscribes to the teachings that were held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church prior to 1980 now be considered a heretic? And yet, Inspiration warns of a time when:

“The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error.” {SpTB02 54.3}

“Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the **pillars of our faith** concerning the **sanctuary**, or concerning the **personality of God or of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor.” {Ms62-1905.14}

Notice that the truth about the personality of God is said to be as much a pillar of our faith as the truth of the sanctuary. The word personality in this quote is being used to denote the idea that God is a person. In other words, the truth about the personality of God - that God is a person - should be considered so foundational that an introduction of any theory that would contradict this pillar is analogous to removing an anchoring truth from God’s people and setting them adrift. This would be a great mistake.

“We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that **contradicts** the special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of Scripture and pile it as proof around their asserted theories. This has been done over and over again during the past fifty years. And while the Scriptures are God’s Word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves **one pillar of the foundation** that God has sustained these fifty years, is **a great mistake**. He who makes such an application knows not the wonderful demonstration of the Holy Spirit that gave power and force to the past messages that have come to the people of God.” {Lt329-1905.19}

These clear statements warn us against making any change which alters the meaning of the pillars of our faith such as was done in the wording of FB #2.

When Kellogg tried to promote his ideas that did away with the personality of God, Ellen White wrote:

“You are not definitely clear on the **personality of God**, which is everything to us as a people. You have virtually destroyed the Lord God Himself.” {Lt300-1903.7}

Does the current teaching concerning the personality of God harmonize with the pillars of our faith that God gave this church as our only true foundation? Do we think that here, on the borders of the heavenly Canaan, we can lay a new, stronger foundation than has been laid and attested to by God Himself?

“**No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are is to be weakened.** We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.” {6T 17.2}

Where are the faithful watchmen that will stand firmly in defense of our principles? “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” May it not be said of us as it was said of Israel of old “But they said, **We will not walk therein.** Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, **We will not hearken.**” Jeremiah 6:16-17.

Where are the watchmen that will maintain the Bible as our **only** standard of doctrines?

“But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and **the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines** and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as 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 595.1}

Neither the opinions of learned men nor the voice of the majority is to be considered as evidence that FB #2 is true and yet the very charge against us is that we, Val and Eiji, will not affirm the current voted doctrine of the church. The question is why aren't all of us demanding a plain “Thus saith the Lord” before affirming this doctrine? Show us a plainly worded statement from the inspired sources alone that clearly states that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make up the one God and we will gladly recant our position.

It was a plain “Thus saith the Lord” that gave us the foundational doctrines of our church on the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the personality of God, and “when the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. **No after-suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained.**” {Lt329-1905.17}

“**A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me**, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.” {RH, May 25, 1905 par. 24}

“That which I have written is what the Lord has bidden me write. I have not been instructed to change that which I have sent out. I stand firm in the Adventist faith; for I have been warned in regard to the seducing sophistries that will seek for entrance among us as a people.... I present before our people the danger of being led astray as were the angels in the heavenly courts. **The straight line of truth presented to me when I was but a girl is just as clearly presented to me now.**” {RH, January 26, 1905 par. 19}

May God help us to be able return to the old paths that God intended His remnant church to walk in – the line of truth that extends to the time when we shall enter the city of God.

An Appeal to the Church Board:

We are here today because the majority on the church board voted to recommend to the church body that we, Val and Eiji, be censured for one year because we cannot conscientiously affirm a human assumption contained in Fundamental Belief #2.

Our appeal is to this majority who voted to censure us. We believe that you so voted because you want to protect our church from heresy. This is a worthy motive. But the path you are on may not lead to a place you wish to go.

Let me explain: We have been told by God's messenger that the majority of Seventh-day Adventist members will forsake the truth when the testing time comes.

“To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the **majority forsake** us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.” 5T 136

These members who forsake the truth will become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren:

“As the storm approaches, **a large class** who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.... **They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren.** When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.” {GC 608.2}

There is not one of us here today who believes that we would ever apostatize to this degree. And yet, the majority of us will do just that. What are the steps that could lead us to such a destiny? One of our pioneers, J. N. Loughborough, identified five steps that church members can take that will lead to apostasy:

The Five Steps of Apostasy by J. N. Loughborough

1. Forming a creed, **expressing their faith in man-made phrases** instead of adhering to the word of the Lord. {COOD 76.2}

The Chewelah Church Board has expressed their faith in the man-made phrase of FB#2.

2. Making that man-made creed a test of fellowship, and denouncing all as heretics who would not assent to the **exact wording** of their creeds. {COOD 76.3}

The Chewelah Church Board required Val and Eiji to assent to the exact wording of FB#2.

3. **Making the creed a rule by which all heretics must be tried.** Many were thus declared sinners whose faith was more in harmony with the direct statements of the Bible than that of those who decreed against them. {COOD 76.4}

The Chewelah Church Board is treating the 28 Fundamental Beliefs as a creed and is making this creed a rule by which Val and Eiji must be tried for heresy.

4. **Constituting themselves a tribunal for the trial of heretics,** and excluding from their fellowship all who would not assent to their creeds. Not content to debar such from church privileges in this world, they declared them subjects for the lake of fire. {COOD 76.5}

The Chewelah Church Board has called upon the Chewelah SDA Church to constitute themselves into a tribunal for the trial of the two heretics, Val and Eiji.

5. Having thus kindled a hatred in their own hearts against **all who did not conform to their creeds**, they next invoked and obtained the aid of the civil power to torture, and kill with sword, with hunger, with flame, and with beasts of the earth, those whom they had declared unfit to remain in the world. {COOD 77.1} also {ARSH January 15, 1861, p. 69.15-17 where it shows how taking these five steps creates an image to the beast}

This fifth step is what Ellen White was describing in GC 608: “They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren.”

The Chewelah Church Board, by voting to recommend that we be put on trial and disciplined because we disagree with the present wording of FB#2, has already taken four of the five steps that J. N. Loughborough identified that a non-creedal denomination can take that will lead them down the road into apostasy.

The Church Board is defining as heresy our refusal to believe men’s assumption that “one God” is a being that consists of three persons. For this heresy, you have sought to punish us by recommending that we be placed under censure. Your actions are described by Ellen White as **“one of the most deeply rooted of papal errors.”**

“The doctrine that God has committed to the church the right to control the conscience, and to define and punish heresy, is **one of the most deeply rooted of papal errors.**” {GC 292}

Our appeal to you today is for you to retrace these four steps that you have taken before it is too late and you end up taking that fifth step.

bit.ly/1027meeting (Presentations)

Val Ramos and Eiji Minami MD
Elders of the Chewelah SDA Church

The Chewelah SDA Church Business meeting lasted 6 ½ hours. The vote was 37 Yes votes to censure Val and Eiji and **42 No votes to not censure Val and Eiji.** Praise the Lord!