



"Help! One of my church members is doubting the Trinity!" by Joe Kidder and Timothy Baze

*with constructive annotations by Ingo Sorke, identified in **bold print only for clarity and ease of reading.***

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2023/12/Help-One-of-my-church-members-is-doubting-the-Trinity>

Baze: In one of my (Timmy's) previous churches, some members questioned the doctrine of the Trinity. The more videos they watched, the more convinced they became that Seventh-day Adventists' understanding of the Trinity was severely flawed. They especially questioned our belief in the personhood of the Holy Spirit. I (Joe) have received several calls from people advocating an anti-Trinitarianism position. With great zeal, they asserted that the doctrine of the Trinity came from the Catholic Church rather than from the Bible.¹ We went back to Scripture, and below are some of the lessons we have learned. We share them in the hope that they will be useful to pastors and church leaders seeking to guide church members regarding the Trinity doctrine.

Ingo: Brief background - After studying this issue, wrestling with the texts and quotes, and a turning-point experience on a GC committee where the literal Sonship of Christ was categorically denied I had to resign (within 24 hours!) over this issue - after 25 years of denominational labor.

The title depiction - the ancient trifacta - looks like a confused/confusing maze indeed! Fitting graphic for a doctrine that articulates God as 3 but as 1 but as 3.

I would welcome church members questioning committee-produced formulations, especially of God - and which are subject to change! Interestingly, I have not encountered anti-trinitarians who question the personhood of the Holy Spirit. What is being questioned is the identity of the Holy Spirit - a separate being, or, as Ellen White formulates it, "the impartation of the life of Christ" (DA 805), "the life of His own life" (DA 827). See below for further quotes.

THE DILEMMA OF THE TRINITY

To properly deal with this topic in your local church, it will be helpful to know how your church members may have come to question this doctrine. This is best learned by listening to them and asking questions. Most will be very happy to share their journey with you. We found that many people who doubt the Trinity fit into one of the following groups.

Ingo: Thank you for listening; a rare luxury in the context of this topic.

First are those who are genuinely searching for truth. They may have questions about things they have read in the Bible, Ellen White's writings, or other literature. Their questions about the Trinity are not antagonistic in nature. Instead, they are simply seeking answers to their questions. People in this category are not likely to leave the church but they are in need of solid, biblical answers.

Second, and probably the majority, are those who found videos or articles about the Trinity online that left them with more questions. For this group, two factors are integral to whether they will remain in the church. First, they need someone who is nonabrasive, honest, and patient to sit down with them and study what Scripture teaches about this subject. Second, they must have solid friendships with people in the church. If neither of these things take place, they are likely to either leave the church or, in some cases, leave the Christian faith altogether.²

Ingo: Again, it is rare that pastors, administrators or church leaders will patiently sit down with us "and study what Scripture teaches about this subject." Sadly, friendships are quickly damaged.

The third group are those who were already drawn to sensationalism before they found anti-Trinitarian information. Some of them may have come into the Adventist faith attracted by new and startling truths. While searching for truth is undoubtedly positive, many in this group have "itching ears"³ for new and sensational knowledge. Rather than experiencing the satisfaction of a new relationship with Jesus each day, they are unsatisfied with the light they have received so far and are looking for more. Sucked into the never-ending wormhole of anti-Trinitarian information online, dialogue with this group becomes most difficult. Some are antagonistic, undermine the church, and attempt to influence visitors and newly baptized members.

Among those we have worked with, we found individuals who had previously experienced conflict with people in the church. These members found in anti-Trinitarianism a way to escape from this emotional trauma. Situations like this are difficult because the presenting problem, anti-Trinitarianism, is only a symptom of a deeper root—emotional pain. Focusing on correcting their theology may be temporarily effective. However, until the wounds of the past are healed, the person will not be truly healthy. Instead, working on healing the wounds of the past may be more effective. Once conflict is resolved and healing takes place, dealing with doctrinal issues becomes easier.

The journey of each person in your church who has questions about the Trinity will be different. You will need to sit down and listen carefully to understand exactly what they believe about the Trinity. Some may believe that the Holy Spirit is a force and not a person or that Christ is less divine than the Father. Others may simply not understand a metaphor used to describe the Trinity.

If the questions and curiosities of the people in the above groups are ignored, if they think they are right and the church is wrong, or if they are fully converted to anti-Trinitarianism, they are very difficult to persuade otherwise. Instead, you will find them excitedly (and militantly) trying to convert others away from your church and into their "new light."

Ingo: It should be pointed out that our Adventist history - quantitatively and qualitatively - renders "anti-Trinitarian information" not new light but old truth. The formulation of the Trinity is new light, not officially voted by a General Conference in session until 1980. 1980!

My experience has been different. The majority of anti-trinitarians, myself included, arrived at their conclusion not via sensationalism or religio-emotional trauma but through simple, thorough study of the Scriptures, the Spirit of Prophecy and a consideration of Adventist history.

"You will need to sit down and listen carefully to understand exactly what they believe about the Trinity." **Again, few are willing to do just that. Misunderstanding and misrepresentations abound. As a denominational employee for 25 years the number of people who sought me out**

to hear my story and perspective (let alone check how I was doing) could barely be counted on both hands.

"Others may simply not understand a metaphor used to describe the Trinity."

What do the authors mean by this phrase? Symbolism is used much in the Bible, but we are also counseled against comparisons with nature when it comes to God:

"I am instructed to say, The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted. Such representations as the following are made: "The Father is as the light invisible: the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad." "The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life." Another representation: "The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power." {Ev 614.1} All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made. These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. The Father cannot be described by the things of earth. The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight." {Ev 614.2}

Yet such comparisons are exactly used in Adventism to this day.

HOW DO THEY GET THEIR INFORMATION?

The current debate in Adventism over the Trinity has intensified since the church voted its fundamental belief about the Trinity in 1980⁴ and has increased rapidly with the rise of the internet. The internet's virtual environments often function as echo chambers. Online content creators are skilled at making videos with what seems like new and relevant information.

Ingo: Non-trinitarianism is not new; it's old Advent truth. The videos like Nader Mansour's clear up misunderstood and misquoted Ellen White quotes, and emphasize the transparency of plainly stated Bible texts ("as it reads", as Elder Wilson liked to quote at Annual Council). It is not new information, but highly relevant.

Internet search engine algorithms push this content such that the viewer "lives" in a world where everyone is anti-Trinitarian, and the person sees anyone with opposing beliefs as ignorant or even apostate. Among such viewers, videos and social media posts are more popular, although a few blogs and articles are also available.⁵

WHAT IS SO ATTRACTIVE ABOUT ANTI-TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE?

Anti-Trinitarianism is attractive for several reasons. For many, knowing the truth is a fundamental need. When presented with a new idea, the natural human response is to find out whether the idea is true. One thing that makes anti-Trinitarianism attractive is that it raises big questions of truth and trust. When confronted with these new ideas, people may begin to ask existential questions such as has my church/pastor been lying to me? If the doctrine of the Trinity is false, what other church doctrines are false?

Ingo: a fundamental need - and responsibility?! Is this not the process of inquiry and necessary for ascertaining truth? We would have no Reformation, no Advent movement without this process!

Sometimes, the shock of hearing that the doctrine of the Trinity may be unbiblical⁶ is enough to draw some people into anti-Trinitarianism. An additional jolt comes when they hear claims that the doctrine came from the Catholic Church rather than Scripture. Extremely bothered, they watch more and more videos to determine whether this is the truth, and the more they watch, the more convinced they will become. If the person is already prone to sensationalism or conspiracy theories, they are even more likely to become hooked.

Still others are convinced that the way the Adventist pioneers believed is the only accurate understanding of Scripture. When presented with evidence that some pioneers did not believe in the Trinity or did not use the word favorably, the questioner may begin to believe that today's mainline Adventist Church has strayed from its roots.

While it is important to maintain a strong connection with our roots, we also cannot forget that the pioneers' concept of "present truth" was strongly tied to "progressive revelation." This means that they believed God was gradually leading His people into a brighter and fuller understanding of truth. Anti-Trinitarianism is not one of the "old landmarks" of Adventism.⁷

Ingo: This is incorrect; my own baptismal certificate from 1986 (!) makes no mention of the Trinity. Neither did our pioneer statements ("Fundamental Principles") from 1872 and 1889. To be precise, the Advent movement didn't have to be anti-trinitarian because we were non-trinitarian.

Adventist pioneers came from various denominational backgrounds and had different concepts of what the Godhead was. But over time, they came to better understand the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸ As a result of their study of Scripture, this doctrine is one of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today.⁹

Ingo: Yes, we "came to better understand the doctrine of the Trinity" and for over 100 years did not adopt it in our belief system. Some pioneers used the term (Haskell, Wilcox), but not in the sense of our current formulation. Ellen White managed to support the nascent Advent movement without ever using the term doctrinal - ever! We should think . . . faithful members and workers are now being disfellowshipped and terminated over terminology not present in Scripture or Spirit of Prophecy!

PREVENTATIVE CARE: A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

After I (Timmy) realized that a few church leaders and a newly baptized couple in my church had become fully converted to anti-Trinitarianism, we began to study the concept of the Trinity, and specifically the divinity of the Holy Spirit, each Sabbath afternoon and continued that study for the next two years.

In this small church of about 30 attendees, the original 5 who questioned the Trinity decided to leave and start a home church. However, the people who were on the fence about the issue saw from Scripture that what our church teaches about the Trinity is biblical, and this prevented them from leaving the church. The rest of the church members, including myself, became more confident in the validity of Trinity doctrine and, more importantly, have a much deeper understanding of the work of the Trinity in our lives!

Ingo: I do not think that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is the actual core issue. The real issue is the wording of Fundamental Belief #2. Interestingly, thus far the authors have not defined the term "Trinity". I would propose that all Trinitarian literature and efforts define "Trinity" as a basis of conversation and argument.

CONCLUSION

Anti-Trinitarian teachings have been popular among some groups of Adventists often because of a desire to search for the truth or sometimes because of a bent toward sensationalism. While these small groups see the doctrine of the Trinity as unbiblical, the Adventist Church has derived this doctrine by studying what Scripture says about salvation and how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are working together to save lost humanity.

It is important to ensure that our church members see this biblical picture of the Trinity in our sermons and Bible studies. It is equally important that those who are questioning this doctrine find us as pastors and leaders to be understanding and patient listeners.

Ingo: Unfortunately, this is rarely the case.

We should be informed and ready to respond to their objections in a loving and respectful way that affirms their quest for truth. When we see people the way God sees them, we will be able to truly love the people who disagree with us. We will be inspired to pray for them and with them. Our prayer is that they may not only understand and believe the doctrine of the Trinity but also be able to experience the love of the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

Ingo: Interestingly, in the above verse (2 Cor 13:14), only one is identified as God - the Father. Having said that, I must emphasize that we do not question the divinity of Christ or the Holy Spirit.

WHY THE TRINITY IS SO IMPORTANT

Scripture does not go to great lengths to explain precisely what the nature of God is or the details of the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Ingo: A couple of important observations here . . . if this is the case as stated above, why does the Adventist church disfellowship members over something that is not precisely defined? At the same time I would argue that the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are actually articulated in detail throughout the New Testament, and also in the first chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and *The Story of Redemption*.

If the above statement by the authors is correct, why has the church formulated a doctrine of the Trinity?!

Instead, the Bible writers focus on one overarching theme—the plan of salvation. Scripture tells the story of how God was so committed to saving us from eternal death and restoring His image in us that He sent Jesus to die for us, and **Jesus now dwells in us in the person of the Holy Spirit**. As we study the story of salvation from Scripture, details begin to emerge about who God is. **But these details that have become the doctrine of the Trinity are not the thrust of Scripture.**

Ingo: See my comment above - we disfellowship on something that is "not the thrust of Scripture"?! The Adventist church terminates pastors and academics over this (contrary to the promise by Elder Neal Wilson at the 1980 GC, and the counsel by the NAD in its *Issues*, p. 50 - see below).

Salvation and its impact on our lives is the theme of Scripture and are the reason we have the doctrine of the Trinity.

Ingo: This is incongruous. First "Scripture does not go to great lengths to explain precisely what the nature of God is or the details of the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," "the details . . . Trinity are not the thrust of Scripture" but now "the reason for the doctrine of the Trinity" is "salvation"?!"

Similarly, Ellen White did not spend much time attempting to clarify the nature of the Godhead. Although she didn't use the word *Trinity*¹⁰, she clearly talked about each of the members of the Trinity and described them together using titles such as "the heavenly trio,"¹¹ "the three great Worthies,"¹² "the three great powers,"¹³ and "the three holiest beings in heaven."¹⁴

Ingo: Yes, but Trinity ≠ Godhead, Trio, etc. Let's be clear and fair with our terminology. Three is vastly different from defining "one God" as three (Fundamental Belief #2).

However, the context of these references shows that she was much more concerned with how the Godhead was working for the salvation of souls, helping people to overcome sin, and giving comfort and encouragement to the faithful. For example, she refers to "the heavenly trio" to explain that "these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ."¹⁵

Ingo: Exactly - then why define God in non-biblical terms and language?!

The way inspired authors treat these great questions should inform the way we lead our church members through questions about the Trinity. While understanding what is revealed about the Godhead is important, it is essential for us to trust "these three great powers of heaven [who have] pledged themselves to work in our behalf, not only to begin, but to finish our faith."¹⁶

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WORKING WITH ANTI-TRINITARIANS¹⁷

Affirm their desire to search for the truth. Questioning what we believe is healthy if we keep our minds and hearts open to the Holy Spirit's leadership in guiding us into all truth. Asking questions helps us to sharpen what we believe and know it both experientially and intellectually.

Ingo: Ironically, the article begins with "some members questioned the doctrine of the Trinity."

Try to keep the conversation focused. They may want to jump from one verse to the next. We have found that setting a rule at the beginning of the conversation is helpful. **Perhaps agree that you will thoroughly study one passage before you move on to the next one.**

Ingo: Amen and Amen! I have found the opposite to be the case - scholars in particular will jump from one text to another, without patiently considering the import of one text. I have had several academics refusing to even comment on John 17:3, for example. This sword cuts both ways.

Admit that you don't have all the answers. God is infinitely bigger than we are, and while He has revealed much about Himself to us, we will never fully comprehend everything about Him. In fact, even in heaven and the new earth, we will continue to learn. Commit to studying the topic further and letting them know what you discover.

Ingo: Exactly. Why then insist on a human (committee) definition of God, a formulation that is subject to change at every and any General Conference in session?!

Don't be combative. Remember, these are souls to win to Christ, not arguments to win. A heated discussion will not win people over to your side; it will only alienate them further. So even if they are angry, remain calm. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you. And listen to try to understand exactly where they are coming from.

Ingo: Good counsel for anti-trinitarians as well.

Highlight texts about the Trinity in your preaching. For example, when preaching on the book of Revelation, remind your congregation that Jesus Christ is the first and the last and that this is the same title given to the Lord (Yahweh) multiple times in the book of Isaiah (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:17, 18; 2:8; 21:6).

Ingo: This is an incorrect reading of Isa. 41:4, which says nothing about God (or Christ, for that matter), being the first and the last: "Who has performed and done *it*, Calling the generations from the beginning? "I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I *am* He." Note that the Lord is *with the last*. The last refers to a group of people here, not to God.

In any case, yes, of course, Jesus is His Father's representative and can carry the full characteristics and names of His Father. He is the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). By curious coincidence, COL 115 states, "Christ Himself is the pearl of great price. In Him is gathered all the glory of the Father, the fullness of the Godhead. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. The glory of the attributes of God is expressed in His character."

When preaching on baptism or the Great Commission, take the time to highlight the significance of being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Continuous education on this subject is essential to the theological health of the church members!

Ingo: Amen! We believe everything Scripture and Spirit of Prophecy say about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 does not establish a Trinity; there is no mention of God = one being composed of 3 persons.

Be aware that the word Trinity is not in Scripture. Though the word *Trinity* is not used in Scripture, the concept is fully supported by Scripture.

Ingo: Where in Scripture? Where in Scripture is God defined as a composite of three beings? Our own scholars disagree with the notion that the concept of the Trinity is "fully supported by Scripture":

- “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*, 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...most would not be able to agree to belief number 2” (the Trinity) (G. Knight, *Ministry*, 10/93, 10).
- “Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the truth 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 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* 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).
- **“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* 158:31 4).

According to Ellen White, “Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support” (GC 595). Apparently we cannot claim this with the doctrine of the Trinity.

We use other words not explicitly found in Scripture to describe biblical concepts, such as the great controversy, **the millennium**, and the investigative judgment. These words are not in the Bible, but the concepts are supported by Scripture.

Ingo: Technically, “millennium” could be mentioned in a Latin Bible as it simply means 1,000 years.

Avoid using Ellen G. White quotes from compilations. Find the original sources (often manuscripts and letters). **Many anti-Trinitarians are taught that individuals like L. E. Froom fabricated quotes that are found in compilations and were not in the originals. While these claims are false, using the quotes in their original context will both deepen our understanding and avoid misunderstanding.**

Ingo: Actually, the compilation *Evangelism* does truncate original quotes. One example:

Original quote: “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” (Ms66 1899). → “Christ walks unseen through our streets” (MH 107).

But *Evangelism* p. 616.5 places a period where the original puts a comma: “We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds.”

The trinitarian subtitles are not original to Ellen White, thus misleading the reader.

I am not sure what the listing of the texts below tries to prove, as non-trinitarians do not dispute the divinity of Christ.

TEXTS THAT SUPPORT **THE DEITY OF CHRIST** (emphases added)

1. *Isaiah 9:6*: For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, *Mighty God*, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

Ingo: *Isaiah 9:6* deserves careful analysis. It certainly does not promote modalism. The NET Bible translation note states: “This title must not be taken in an anachronistic Trinitarian sense. (To do so would be theologically problematic, for the “Son” is the messianic king and is distinct in his person from God the “Father.”) The *Andrews Bible Commentary* points out that “The reference to the messianic “son” as also being the “eternal Father” is not a confusion of the persons of the Trinity” (Accordance Electronic Version). Similarly the *New American Commentary* (Accordance): “By itself, this name does not automatically mean that this son is a divine person, because many names include the name of God in them.”

Reaching farther back in our history, JH Waggoner’s comment is insightful: "Much stress is laid on Isa. 9:6, as proving a trinity, which we have before quoted, as referring to our High Priest who shed his blood for us. The advocates of that theory will say that it refers to a trinity because Christ is called the everlasting Father. But for this reason, with others, we affirm that it can have no reference to a trinity. Is Christ the Father in the trinity? if so, how is he the Son? or if he is both Father and Son, how can there be a trinity? for a trinity is three persons. To recognize a trinity, the distinction between the Father and Son must be preserved. Christ is called "the second person in the trinity;" but if this text proves a trinity, or refers to it at all, it proves that he is not the second, but the first. And if he is the first, who is the second? It is very plain that this text has no reference to such a doctrine" (*The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*. 1884. 167-169).

Finally, Ellen White clarifies (the use of the term “God” should be carefully noted): “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” *Isaiah 9:6*. In the Teacher sent from God, heaven gave to men its best and greatest. He who had stood in the councils of the Most High, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, was the One chosen to reveal in person to humanity the knowledge of God” (Ed 73.2).

"Jesus Christ is our heavenly Father. Jesus Christ is the Father with us. God is the Father, and there is the link of the chain brought right down to bind His children in connection with the Father" (Ms 141, 1908, par. 11).

"Jesus represents us as his children. He declares that he is our Father, and that we are to come to him as children come to an earthly parent" (YI September 13, 1894, par. 6).

“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).

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:14).

2. *Isaiah 44:6*: Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “*I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God*”. This same title is claimed by Jesus in Revelation 2:8— “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘*These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life*’”. See also Isaiah 41:4; 48:12; Revelation 1:17, 18; 21:6.

Ingo: Yes. The name of the Father is in His Son: “Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him.”

3. *Matthew 28:9*: “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and *held Him by the feet and worshiped Him*” . Jesus freely receives worship, in sharp contrast to Revelation 19:10, where an angel rejects John’s worship.

Ingo: Jesus represents His Father and may receive worship for Him. There is no contest here.

4. **John 1:1**: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, *and the Word was God*”.

Greek grammar clarifies John’s intent beautifully; it is a terse and concise statement about the divinity of the Word without violating the notion of monotheism. The point of John 1:1 is divinity, not trinity; quality, not quantity:

the Word was with God [the Father = Quantity] and God [the Son = Divine Quality] was the

ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, [article!] καὶ Θεὸς [no article!] ἦν ὁ λόγος

NET Note: anarthrous [article-less] predicate noun [God] before verb [was] = a qualitative nuance (Wallace, *ExSyn* 266-69). "The translation “what God was the Word was” is perhaps the most nuanced rendering, conveying that everything God was in essence, the Word was too. This points to unity of essence between the Father and the Son without equating the persons. ... The previous phrase, “the Word was with God,” shows that the *Logos* is distinct in person from God the Father."

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity [Quality], but not in personality” [Quantity] (Ms116-1905.19). “There is a personal God, the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son” (SDABC 6:1068; RH Nov 8, 1898).

5. *John 20:28*: And Thomas answered and said to Him [Jesus], “*My Lord and my God!*” Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed”

Ingo: From Isa 40:3 I perceive this text to affirm the messianic claims of Christ as the Father’s representative, rather than a trinitarian formulation (by a 1st century monotheistic Jew!):

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Note the sequence of “Lord” and “God”.

6. *Philippians 2:10, 11*: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father”. In the phrase “Jesus Christ is Lord,” the Greek word translated “Lord” is *kurios*, which is the word the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament used by the apostle Paul, used to translate *Yahweh*. This passage affirms that Christ is the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament.

Ingo: Yes, at times, but not always. The distinction of Christ and God is actually upheld in Phil 2:10,11. In Rev 21:22 the Lord God Almighty is not Jesus. In Acts 3:13, the *Elohim* of the Old Testament is not the Son: “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go.”

Ellen White did not think that every occurrence of *Yahweh* (she only uses *Jehovah*) was a reference to Christ: “The great *Jehovah* has proclaimed from His throne, “This is My beloved Son.” Matthew 3:17” (DA 579.4).

The overlap stems from this precise dynamic; Ellen White, again, articulates it well and accurately:

“Christ is the One through whom God has at all times revealed Himself to man. “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6. “This is he [Moses], that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.” Acts 7:38. This Angel was the Angel of God’s presence (Isaiah 63:9), the Angel in whom was the name of the great *Jehovah* (Exodus 23:20-23). The expression can refer to no other than the Son of God.” {PP 761.4}

Here, *Jehovah* ≠ Jesus

“Holy angels have been displeased and disgusted with the irreverent manner in which many have used the name of God, the great *Jehovah*. Angels mention that sacred name with the greatest awe, ever veiling their faces when they speak the name of God; and the name of Christ is so sacred to them that they speak it with the greatest reverence. But how opposite the spirit and influence attending the 1854 time movement. Some who are still under the same influence speak of God as they would of a horse or of any other commonplace thing. In their prayers they use the words God Almighty in a very common and irreverent manner. Those who do this have no sense of the exalted character of God, of Christ, or of heavenly things. {1T 410.1}

7. *Colossians 2:9*: “For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”.

Ingo: Not a verse I would consider compatible with the doctrine of the Trinity!

8. *Titus 2:13*: “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of *our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*”.

Ingo: the text can also be translated without Colwell’s rule, especially since the 1st person plural pronoun appears to be in reference to “Savior”: “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”.

9. *Hebrews 1:8*: “But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom’”. This is best read in the context of Hebrews 1:6–13, where Jesus is affirmed as One to be worshiped, as God, and as Yahweh

Ingo: Note: the sonship of Christ is maintained, and in context (Heb 1:9) the Son has a God - His Father (cf. 1 Cor 11:3: “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.”)

10. *1 John 5:20*: “And we know that *the Son of God* has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God and eternal life*”. This text affirms that the Son of God is the true God. In Greek, the antecedent to “the true God” is “*the Son of God*” since the nouns agree in number, case, and gender.

Ingo: This is not always the case; scholarship is divided over the antecedent of “This”.

Commentaries on 1 John 5:20 actually admit to the difficulty in the verse, and even lean towards God the Father in the last part of v20 - including our own SDA Bible Commentary!

NET BIBLE 53 sn The pronoun **This one** (οὗτος, houtos) refers to a person, but it is far from clear whether it should be understood as a reference (1) to God the Father or (2) to Jesus Christ. R. E. Brown (Epistles of John [AB], 625) comments, “1 John, which began with an example of stunning grammatical obscurity in the prologue, continues to the end to offer us examples of unclear grammar.” The nearest previous antecedent is Jesus Christ, immediately preceding, but on some occasions when this has been true the pronoun still refers to God (see 1 John 2:3). The first predicate which follows **This one** in 5:20, the true God, is a description of God the Father used by Jesus in John 17:3, and was used in the preceding clause of the present verse to refer to God the Father (him who is true). Yet the second predicate of **This one** in 5:20, eternal life, appears to refer to Jesus, because although the Father possesses “life” (John 5:26; 6:57) just as Jesus does (John 1:4; 6:57, 1 John 5:11), “life” is never predicated of the Father elsewhere, while it is predicated of Jesus in John 11:25 and 14:6 (a self-predication by Jesus). If **This one** in 5:20 is understood as referring to Jesus, it forms an inclusion with the prologue, which introduced the reader to “the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” Thus it appears best to understand the pronoun **This one** in 5:20 as a reference to Jesus Christ. The christological affirmation which results is striking, but certainly not beyond the capabilities of the author (see John 1:1 and 20:28): **This One [Jesus Christ] is the true God and eternal life.** See also D. B. Wallace, Granville Sharp’s

Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance, Studies in Biblical Greek 14, ed. D. A. Carson (Bern/New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 273-77.

SDA Bible Commentary 1 John 5:20: "It is possible to apply these words to Jesus Christ, but their most probable application is to the Father, since it is He of whom John has been immediately speaking in the preceding phrases. But as elsewhere, so here, there is no need to distinguish sharply between the Father and the Son, since they are one in nature, character, and purpose." Eternal life. See on John 5:26"

Pulpit Commentary: "This is the true God, and eternal life. Does "this" refer to God or to Christ? We must be content to leave the question open; both interpretations make excellent sense, and none of the arguments in favor of either are decisive. The question is not important. "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," who was with the Father from all eternity, is the very foundation of St. John's teaching in the Gospel and Epistles; and it is not of much moment whether this particular text contains the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ or not. But if, with St. Athanasius, we interpret "this" of Christ, the conclusion of the letter is brought into striking harmony with the opening of it, in which (1 John 1:2) Christ is spoken of as "the Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us." Moreover, we obtain a striking contrast with what follows. "This Man, Jesus Christ, is the true God: it is no idolatry to worship him. Whoever says that he is not God makes us idolaters. But idolatry is to us an abomination." 1 John 5:20"

Vincent Word Studies: "This God the Father. Many, however, refer it to the Son."

The Bible contains phrases at times that need a bit of explanation and consideration. For example, out of context, Jesus "baptized more disciples than John." The Bible says it! But . . . John is quick to explain that actually, to be clear, Jesus wasn't the one baptizing, "but His disciples".

John 4:1-2 "Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 4:2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples)"

Finally: Context of the quote . . . the immediate paragraph after 16MR 265 maintains God as the Father, and Christ. Not trinitarian language:

"Others will express their gratitude to those who fed the hungry, who clothed the naked. "When despair bound my soul in unbelief, the Lord sent you to me to speak words of faith and hope and comfort. You brought me food for my physical necessities, and you opened to me the Word of God, awakening me to my spiritual necessities. You treated me as a brother. You sympathized with me in my sorrows, and restored my bruised and wounded soul that I could grasp the hand of Christ that was reached out to save me. You taught me patiently in my ignorance that I had a heavenly Father who cared for me. You read to me the precious promises of God's Word. You inspired in me faith that He would save me. My heart was softened, subdued, broken as I contemplated [that] Christ gave His life for me. I became hungry for the Word of life, and the truth was precious to my soul; and I am here, saved,

eternally saved to ever live in the presence of Him, and to praise Him who gave His life for me” (Ms25-1896).

11. *Revelation 5:13, 14*: “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever”.

Ingo: Not a trinitarian statement; no articulation of one God as a composite of three. The One who sits on the throne and the Lamb are two separate entities.

TEXTS THAT SUPPORT THE DEITY AND PERSONHOOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. *Isaiah 48:12–16*: “Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, *I am the First, I am also the Last*. . . . “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now *the Lord God and His Spirit Have sent Me*”. The Father and the Spirit are involved in sending the Son, all three in one Old Testament text! Or, in a textual variant, the Father sends the Son and the Spirit.

Ingo: How is this trinitarian?!

2. *Isaiah 63:10*: But they rebelled and *grieved His Holy Spirit*; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, And He fought against them.
3. *Matthew 28:19*: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”. The Greek word translated “name” is singular, implying that all three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, share the same name.

Ingo: the Son represents the Father; the Spirit represents Christ. Baptism takes place under the authority of all three. I do not see a formulation along the lines of Fundamental Belief #2 though. I cannot say it better than Ellen White:

“baptizing them in the name of the Father [a personal God], and of the Son [a personal Prince and Saviour], and of the Holy Ghost [sent from heaven to represent Christ]” (RH 10/26 1897).

4. *Luke 3:21, 22*: “When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that *Jesus* also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the *Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove* upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased’”.

Ingo: see quote from RH 10/26 1897 above.

5. *Acts 5:3, 4*: “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart *to lie to the Holy Spirit* and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? *You have not lied to men but to God*’”.

Parallels . . . Mt 25:40: “As you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me.” But Brethren ≠ Jesus! Acts 9:4: “Why do you persecute me? But Christ ≠

Christians. 1 Cor 8:12: “When you sin against the brethren...you sin against Christ.” But Brethren ≠ Christ. So also Luke 10:16.

6. *Acts 15:28*: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things”. In the minds of the apostles, the Holy Spirit was an individual with the ability to think.

Ingo: I don't think any non-trinitarians take issue with this. I would venture to say that the common trinitarian notion of “anti-trinitarians think the Holy Spirit is ‘just a force’” is a myth. False claim.

7. *Acts 21:11*: “When he had come to us, he [Agabus] took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” ’ ” . The Holy Spirit is an authoritative speaker here. See also *Acts 20:23*, *1 Timothy 4:1*, and *Hebrews 3:7*.
8. *Romans 8:26, 27*: “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but *the Spirit Himself makes intercession* for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what *the mind of the Spirit* is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” . The Holy Spirit intercedes for us and has His own mind.
9. *Second Corinthians 13:14*: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen”.

Ingo: Note Who is identified as God in this verse - though quoted much, I don't see a Trinity here. Three entities, yes, but not a Trinity. 🙄

10. *Revelation 22:17*: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” . The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in Revelation, calling people to accept the invitation of God's salvation. See also *Revelation 2:7*; *14:13*.

QUOTES FROM THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE THAT SUPPORT THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Ingo: None of these quotes establish a doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in Fundamental Beliefs #2.

1. *Three living persons of the heavenly trio. God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made.* These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. The Father cannot be described by the things of earth. *The Father is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* and is invisible to mortal sight. *The Son is all the fulness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be ‘the express image of His person.’* . . . *The Comforter* that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, *is the Spirit in all the fulness of the Godhead*, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. *There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ [emphasis added].*

Ingo: “God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made.”

Absolutely. Then why did www.adventist.org contain an egg illustration to explain the Trinity?! Why are natural comparisons still beings used to explain God?!

“I am instructed to say, The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted. Such representations as the following are made: “The Father is as the light invisible: the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad.” “The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life.” Another representation: “The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power.” All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made. These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man. The Father cannot be described by the things of earth. The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight” (Ev 614.2).

2. *The Self-Existent One.*

With solemn dignity Jesus answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.” Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had 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” [emphasis added].

1. *The life Christ gives us is His own.* “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.” ‘He that hath the Son hath life.’ 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life”.

Ingo: DA 530 . . . What a beautiful quote and context. It is unfortunately one of the most misunderstood quotes in the trinitarian debate. A few brief observations:

- the precise language of DA 530 indicates that it was “life, original, unborrowed, underived” that was “in Christ”. This is the Father’s life that the Son had as a gift, which He received to extend to humans as eternal life. Note that the immediate context before and after the particular phrase is about the eternal life of the believer. This is not a trinitarian statement, but an affirmation of the Gospel, in which Christ has the authority and capability to give eternal life to believers.

- Ellen White had previously published this quote, indicating that this specific life is God’s: ““In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from him. “I lay it down of myself,” he said. In him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee,

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” This is the open fountain of life for the world” (ST April 8, 1897, par. 2). *Note the quote of John 17:3!*

She utilized this language again in 1905: “In Jesus is our life derived. In Him is life, that is original, unborrowed, underived life. In us there is a streamlet from the fountain of life. In Him is the fountain of life. Our life is something that we receive, something that the Giver takes back again to Himself” (Letter 309, 1905; also in *Medical Ministry*, p. 7.3).

- We can trace this quote a couple of steps further though; it’s a borrowed (!) quote! Though ML Andreasen confirmed the authenticity of the DA 530 quote (*Without Fear or Favor*, p. 76), two scholars employed similar wording prior to Ellen White’s usage of it:

“In him was life,’-that is, original, unborrowed, underived. In us there is a streamlet from the Fountain of Life; in him was the Fountain of Life. Our life is something we receive, something that the Giver takes back again to himself, - over which we have no control, and for which we must give God the account and praise. But in Jesus was life underived, unborrowed” (John Cumming, *Sabbath Evening Readings on the New Testament - St. John*, John P. Jewett Co. of Cleveland, OH, 1856, p. 5).

According to *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White’s Private and Office Libraries* by Warren H. Jones, Tim Poirier, and Ron Graybill, Ellen White would have had access to this volume.

But the first to articulate this wording was William E. Channing in *The Works of William E. Channing*, 1882, p. 371 (possibly published as early as 1819 in “Unitarian Christianity”, Baltimore MD): “We earnestly maintain...that our Father in heaven is originally, essentially, and eternally placable, and disposed to forgive; and that his unborrowed, underived, and unchangeable love is the only fountain of what flows to us through his Son.”

One should not fail to note the Unitarian origin of this quote! It was originally (!) not conceived as trinitarian data at all!

In her own words, “In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life” (DA 21).

2. *Third Person of the Godhead.*

“The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. *Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.* It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. **Christ has given His Spirit** as a divine power to

overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church [emphasis added].

1. *The Holy Spirit is a distinct personality.* “The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ’s name. *He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.* We may have the Holy Spirit if we ask for it and make it a habit to turn to and trust in God rather than in any finite human agent who may make mistakes” .
2. *Praying to the three great Worthies.* “When I feel oppressed and hardly know how to relate myself toward the work that God has given me to do, *I just call upon the three great Worthies,* and say: You know I cannot do this work in my own strength. You must work in me, and by me, and through me, sanctifying my tongue, sanctifying my spirit, sanctifying my words, and bringing me into a position where my spirit shall be susceptible to the movings of the Holy Spirit of God upon my mind and character” .
3. *The Son is equal with the Father.* “The exaltation of the Son of God *as equal with the Father* was represented as an act of injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. . . . *There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ.* Lucifer’s envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but *this had been the same from the beginning*” .

The Holy Spirit

Ingo: “Christ has given His Spirit” - Amen! I am just not sure how these quotes prove a Trinity?

Here some of my favorite quotes on the Spirit:

“Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He [Christ] should leave them, go to His [Christ's] Father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His [Christ's] successor on earth. The Holy Spirit is Himself [Christ] divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He [Christ] would represent Himself [Christ] as present in all places by His [Christ's] Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent” (14MR 23).

“...the holy Spirit is the comforter, as the personal presence of Christ to the soul” (RH Nov 29, 1892, par. 3).

“In His instruction to His disciples Christ dwelt upon the great gift of the Spirit, declaring that nothing was too great to be expected from the coming of the divine Spirit. He longed to quicken and enlarge the conception of His disciples by communicating to them His own complete appreciation of God's love, that they might be able to comprehend the value of the gift of all gifts, given by God with the giving of His beloved Son,-the gift of the Holy Spirit. On all who love and serve God this gift has been bestowed. Christ has made provision for all to receive His Spirit; for He desires to see human nature released from the bondage of sin, and, by the power which God gives, renewed, restored, raised to a holy rivalry with the angels” (BEcho August 5, 1901, par. 2).

“Jesus is seeking to impress upon them the thought that in giving His Holy Spirit He is given to them the glory which the Father has given Him, that he and his people may be one in God” (ST October 3, 1892, par. 4).

“Christ is the source from which His workers are to receive the oil of grace that is to enable them to carry forward His work. He emptied Himself of His glory that He might fill His believing ones with His Spirit, which would give them power and efficiency” (Lt 67, 1902, par. 44).

“Yes; in giving the Holy Spirit, it was impossible for God to give more. To this gift nothing could be added. By it all needs are supplied. The Holy Spirit is the vital presence of God, and if appreciated will call forth praise and thanksgiving, and will ever be springing up unto everlasting life. The restoration of the Spirit is the covenant of grace. Yet how few appreciate this great gift, so costly, yet so free to all who will accept it! When faith takes hold of the blessing, there comes rich, spiritual good. But too often the blessing is not appreciated. We need an enlarged conception in order to comprehend its value” (BEcho August 5, 1901, par. 4).

“As the divine endowment—the power of the Holy Spirit—was given to the disciples, so it will today be given to all who seek aright. This power alone is able to make us wise unto salvation and to fit us for the courts above. Christ wants to give us a blessing that will make us holy. “These things have I spoken unto you,” He says, “that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” John 15:11. Joy in the Holy Spirit is health-giving, life-giving joy. In giving us His Spirit, God give us Himself, making Himself a fountain of divine influence to give health and life to the world” (7T 273.1).

“Through the merits of Christ we have access to the throne of Infinite Power. ‘He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?’ Romans 8:32. The Father gave His Spirit without measure to His Son, and we also may partake of its fullness” (GC 477.1).

“The source of all divine agencies gives an energy to souls by His Holy Spirit, whereby He works in the children of disobedience, causing the dead in trespasses and sins to become transformed, to put away their sins and live to Christ” (Ms 129, 1901, par. 9).

“How shall I bear impressively the commission Christ has given to His people—the privilege of being workers with the Spirit of all truth manifest in the flesh—the divine Son of God, clothed with humanity, a channel devised and prepared to be continually receiving and imparting the heavenly current? Himself the overflowing fountain, he receives to communicate to all those who will accept the gift” (Ms 125, 1906, par. 13).

“This morning I am pleading with God that His Holy Spirit will rest upon me today, as I shall attempt to speak at the sanitarium to the large number that shall be gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord” (Ms 126, 1906, par. 1).

“The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only begotten Son of God, binds the human agent, body, soul, and spirit, to the perfect, divine-human nature of Christ. This union is represented by the union of the vine and the branches. Finite man is united to the manhood of Christ.

Through faith human nature is assimilated with Christ's nature. We are made one with God in Christ" (RH April 5, 1906, par. 16).

"Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace" (EW 55). [Note how Satan breathes his unholy influence on people: "Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence" (EW 56).

"They have one God and one Saviour; and one Spirit-the Spirit of Christ-is to bring unity into their ranks" (9T 189).

"When God's people take the position that they are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Christ Himself abiding within, they will so clearly reveal Him in spirit, words, and actions, that there will be an unmistakable distinction between them and Satan's followers" (3SM 211.2).

"In giving us His Spirit, God gives us Himself, making Himself a fountain of divine influences, to give health and life to the world" (7T 273.1).

"Jesus is waiting to breathe upon all his disciples, and give them the inspiration of his sanctifying Spirit, and transfuse the vital influence from himself to his people" (ST October 3, 1892).

"After His ascension He was to be absent in person, but through the Comforter He would still be with them" (DA 277.4).

"The Saviour is our Comforter. This I have proved Him to be" (Ms 20, 1892, par. 6).

"The divine Spirit that the world's Redeemer promised to send, is the presence and power of God" (ST November 23, 1891, par. 1).

"But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the General of the armies of heaven. He made full provision for the prosecution of their work and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that My presence will be with you even there. Labor in faith and confidence; for the time will never come when I will forsake you. I will be with you always, helping you to perform your duty, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, sustaining you, giving you success in speaking words that shall draw the attention of others to heaven" (AA 29.1).

"The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul. We do not see Christ and speak to Him, but His Holy Spirit is just as near us in one place as in another. It works in and through every one who receives Christ" (12MR 261.1; Ms 41, 1897).

“The morning cometh, and also the night.” Christ has left His Holy Spirit to be His representative in the world, to give celestial aid to every hungering, thirsting soul” (Lt84-1895, October 22, 1895, par. 19).

“The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ” (DA 805.3).

“It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal” (DA 388.1).

“. . . the holy Spirit is the comforter, as the personal presence of Christ to the soul” (RH, Nov 29, 1892, par. 3.)

“But no distance, no circumstances can separate us from 'the Comforter.' Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is there, always a presence, a person connected with heaven, One given us in Christ's place, to act in His stead” (2MR 32.1; Letter 89b, 1987).

“The Holy Spirit is the vital presence of God, and if appreciated will call forth praise and thanksgiving, and will ever be springing up unto everlasting life” (ST August 7, 1901, par. 4).

“Christ gives them the life of His life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in mind and heart” (RH January 5, 1911, par. 6.).

“Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind” (DA 827.3).

“This Comforter is the Holy Spirit-the soul of His life, the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. With His Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin” (RH May 19, 1904, par. 1).

“May the Lord breathe upon us His Holy Spirit, and may we grow up into Christ, our living Head” (Ms35-1891.63).

“Not the leaven of malice; not the leaven of jealousy; not the leaven of evil surmisings, but it is the leaven of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which is sent down from heaven, called the Holy Ghost, and that Spirit affects the heart and the character” (Ms 36, 1891, par. 42).

“That Christ should manifest Himself to them, and yet be invisible to the world, was a mystery to the disciples. They could not understand the words of Christ in their spiritual sense. They were thinking of the outward, visible manifestation. They could not take in the fact that they could have the presence of Christ with them, and yet He be unseen by the world. They did not understand the meaning of a spiritual manifestation” (SW, September 13, 1898, par. 2).

“Christ is withdrawn only from the eye of sense, but He is as truly present by His Spirit as when He was visibly present on earth” (ST April 7, 1890, par. 6).

“O my brethren, will you grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause it to depart? Will you shut out the blessed Saviour, because you are unprepared for His presence? Will you leave souls to perish without the knowledge of the truth, because you love your ease too well to bear the burden that Jesus bore for you? Let us awake out of sleep. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8) (RH March 22, 1887; 1SM 126.4).

“We are to make supplication according to the will of God, relying on the precious word, and believing that Christ not only gave himself for but to his disciples. The record declares, “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Jesus is waiting to breathe upon all his disciples, and give them the inspiration of his sanctifying spirit, and transfuse the vital influence from himself to his people. He would have them understand that henceforth they cannot serve two masters. Their lives cannot be divided. Christ is to live in his human agents, and work through their faculties, and act through their capabilities. Their will must be submitted to his will, they must act with his spirit, that it may be no more they that live, but Christ that liveth in them. Jesus is seeking to impress upon them the thought that in giving his Holy Spirit he is giving to them the glory which the Father has given him, that he and his people may be one in God. Our way and will must be in submission to God's will, knowing that it is holy, just, and good” (ST October 3 1892.3-4).

“The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness” (DA 324).

Having furnished all these quotes I have to wonder if a precise (creedal?!) confession pertaining to the Holy Spirit is really required of Christ's followers in the New Testament? A test of fellowship? We believe everything Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy say about the Holy Spirit, but we find no trinitarian declaration or definition within the pages of Holy Writ. Ironically, we are often reminded that “silence is golden” yet the church appears anything but silent on this issue.

We would like to say less about God and His Spirit, not more, and with more biblical phraseology. That's really all.

SIDEBAR #4: RESOURCES ABOUT THE TRINITY - Useful articles on the Trinity:

Burt, Merlin. “The Trinity in Seventh-day Adventist History.” [Silver Spring, MD:] Biblical Research Institute, 2008. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Trinity-in-SDA-History.pdf>.

Dederen, Raoul. “Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity.” Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1970. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Doctrine-of-the-Trinity.pdf>.

Kaiser, Denis. “Understanding the Trinity.” *Adventist Review*, July 1, 2018. <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/understanding-the-trinity/>.

Mueller, Ekkehardt. “Did Jesus Emanate From the Father?” [Silver Spring, MD:] Biblical Research Institute, 2012. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Did-Jesus-Emanate-from-the-Father.pdf>.

Pfandl, Gerhard. “The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Adventists.” Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1999. https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/trinitydoc-among-sda_0.pdf.

Pfandl, Gerhard. "The Trinity in Scripture." Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1999. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/trinscript.pdf>.

Pröbstle, Martin, Luise Schneeweiss, and Benedikt Grau. "Core Tenets of the Trinity." Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2021. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/trinity-posters/>.

Ingo: A most problematic poster, with false statements, contradictions and confusing depictions. According to the poster, God is one and three at the same time, but the poster speaks against tritheism while at the same time depicting God as three distinct dots! (!) It claims that in anti-trinitarianism the Son is subordinate to the Father by nature - this is incorrect.

Useful Books on the Trinity:

Bediako, Daniel. *God in 3 Persons—in the Old Testament*. Biblical Research Institute Release—10, May 2015. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Bediako290915.pdf>.

Donkor, Kwabena. *God in 3 Persons—in Theology*. Biblical Research Institute Release—10, May 2015. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Donkor290915.pdf>.

Ingo: ““No text of Scripture specifically says that God is three Persons” - K. Donkor, Theology, p. 20. !!

Petersen, Paul. *God in 3 Persons—in the New Testament*. Biblical Research Institute Release—11, May 2015. https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Release_11_Petersen-6-16-15.pdf.

Whidden, Woodrow, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve. *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2002.

1. Long before the Catholic Church existed, the Trinity doctrine was described by Clement of Rome in the late first century AD. In the second century, both Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr wrote about the concept of the Trinity. The word *Trinity* was first used by Theophilus of Antioch and was later used by Tertullian, both in the latter half of the second century. The First Council of Nicaea in 325 made the Trinity doctrine official for the early church, and it was further modified to include details about the Holy Spirit at the First Council of Constantinople in 381. For further details on the history of the development of the Trinity doctrine, see Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002).[^]
2. This is based on the experiences of many pastors who have dealt with people leaving the church over doctrinal issues.[^]
3. See 2 Timothy 4:3. Unless otherwise specified, Scripture Is from the New King James Version.[^]
4. Jerry Moon, "The Adventist Trinity Debate Part 1: Historical Overview," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 113–139.[^]
5. For example, *As It Reads* is a blog with a more moderate understanding of the Trinity compared to many YouTube videos. While they disagree with the Adventist understanding of the Trinity, they do not identify as anti-Trinitarian. See "About Us," *As It Reads* (blog), <https://asitreads.com/about/>; and "Trinity in Adventism," *As It Reads* (blog), <https://asitreads.com/sda-trinity>.[^]
6. Although the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible, the concept of the Trinity certainly is there. See Gerald Pfandl, "The Trinity in Scripture" (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1999), <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/trinscript.pdf>.[^]
7. For early lists of the fundamental principles of Adventism, see [Uriah Smith], "The Rise and Progress of Adventism," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 15, 1856, 34; and [Uriah

Smith], “The Original Advent Faith,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 27, 1859, 182. For a full development of Adventist fundamental beliefs in history, see S. Joseph Kidder and Katelyn Campbell Weakley, “Creeds,” *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=8FRF>.[^]

8. For a history of the Adventist Church’s development of the Trinity doctrine, see Merlin Burt, “The Trinity in Seventh-day Adventist History.” *Ministry*, Feb 2009, 5-8.[^]
9. See “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” Seventh-day Adventist Church, <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>, s.v. “2. Trinity.”[^]
10. Ellen White does use the word *trinity* once, but not in the context of the Godhead. She wrote, “Beware of that which the old writers called the world’s trinity—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” Ellen G. White to W. C. Gage, May 19, 1898, in *Letters and Manuscripts, Volume 13 (1898)*, Ellen G. White, Letter 43, 1898, [https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14063.4806022\(14063.4806031\)&index=0](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14063.4806022(14063.4806031)&index=0).[^]
11. Ellen G. White, “Come Out and Be Separate,” Ms. 21, 1906, in *Letters and Manuscripts, Volume 21 (1906)*, [https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14071.9754002\(14071.9754018\)&index=0](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14071.9754002(14071.9754018)&index=0).[^]
12. Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Lessons From the Fifteenth of Romans,” Ms. 95, 1906, in *Letters and Manuscripts, Volume 21 (1906)*, [https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14071.8199008\(14071.8872019\)&index=0](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14071.8199008(14071.8872019)&index=0).[^]
13. Ellen G. White, “Lessons From the Second Chapter Philippians,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 15, 1905, 9; Ellen G. White, “The Need of Home Religion,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 22, 1905, 8.[^]
14. White, “Fifteenth of Romans.” This is not an exhaustive list of appellations Ellen White gave to the Godhead.[^]
15. White, “Come Out and Be Separate.”[^]
16. Ellen G. White, “Remarks by Mrs. E. G. White,” *General Conference Bulletin* 4, no.1, ex.10 (April 14, 1901): 214.[^]
17. While this article focuses on the Trinity doctrine, some of the information in this section will be helpful for dealing with other doctrinal disagreements as well.[^]

Ministry reserves the right to approve, disapprove, and delete comments at our discretion and will not be able to respond to inquiries about these comments. Please ensure that your words are respectful, courteous, and relevant.

Ingo: In closing, I would urge the church - and Ministry Magazine - to carefully consider the following statements and quotes:

Neal Wilson, 1980 GC: “There are others who think they know why this is being done. They believe it is being prepared as a club to batter someone over the head, to try to get people into a narrow concept of theology, not leaving any opportunity for individual interpretation of prophecy, or any individual views with respect to theology or certain areas of doctrine. This also is unfortunate, because this never has been and is not the intention of any study that has been given to the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs. Some academicians, theologians, and others have expressed the fear that this statement was being developed so that the church could confront them with a checklist to determine whether they should be disqualified from teaching in one of our institutions of higher education. It is very, very tragic when these kinds of rumors begin to develop.” (<https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19800423-V157-20.pdf>)

Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries (NAD 1977), p. 50 ⚠️

“If Adventism is to meet the needs of all people around the world, the landmarks must remain simple and straightforward. The Bible will be our only creed. Complex theological definitions, the Trinity, for example, may serve the church well in general but cannot be imposed as a test for all Adventists everywhere. Adventism can expect fresh insights into truth, 'present truth' that will enhance the appreciation of old landmarks. Such an expectation has always been a part of historic Adventism and is reaffirmed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted in 1980. When 'present truth' is of a complex nature, however, it may be more helpful for some in the church than for others. In such a case it cannot be imposed on the church as a whole. Remembering our non-Trinitarian past as well as the simplicity of our landmarks should encourage a certain humility in the church and lead us to resist any attempt by one segment of the church to impose its views on the rest.”

👉 **“I feel my spirit stirred within me. I feel to the depth of my being that the truth must be borne to other countries and nations and to all classes. Let the missionaries of the cross proclaim that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, who is Jesus Christ the Son of the Infinite God. This needs to be proclaimed throughout every church in our land”**

(Ms40-1891.78; Ellen White 1888 Materials) 886.3).

Regretfully, and ironically, I am unable to fulfill this quote since I believe in it.

“Let the Scriptures be read in simple faith, and let each one form his conceptions of God from His inspired Word”

(Letter 214, 1903, Oct. 9, to P. T. Magan and E. A. Sutherland).

If your path ever crosses mine I would be glad to host you for a veggie burger, in a spirit of Christian kindness and collegiality.

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Blessings and kind regards,

Ingo

Ingo Sorke, PhD
Remnant Research

“Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (2 John 3).

“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: . . . 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:14, 16).