# THE TRINITY · IS GOD A PLURALITY?

**A Response to 7 Trinitarian Claims**

APPEAL TO THE REMNANT · BY INGO SORKE, PHD

"This I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 16 This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:14,16).

## CLAIM 1: GOD IS A PLURALITY

**… BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE**

**Trinitarian Quotes**
- "God is a plural singularity;" "a solitary self cannot be or experience love"; therefore "God is a social unit."
- "God is an irreducible complexity of three relational dynamics: 1. Giving 2. Receiving 3. Deferring"
- "From Human nature we deduce God"; "God is a relational dynamic, not a static self."

**My Response:** "God is love" is not a philosophical construct of a composite plurality but is best understood in its biblical context: 1 John 4:9 - "In this the **love** of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is **love**, not that we **loved** God, but that He **loved** us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so **loved** us, we also ought to **love** one another. ... 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the **love** that God has for us. **God is love**, and he who abides in **love** abides in God, and God in him." *God = God the Father. Simple.*

## CLAIM 2: ELOHIM IS PLURAL

**"IN THE BEGINNING *ELOHIM* CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH" · GENESIS 1:1**

**My Response:** Yes, *elohim* is grammatically plural. However, in Gen 1:1 the corresponding verb is singular (בָּרָא "he created"), as are the subsequent pronouns (he, his, him). Septuagint: *elohim* = *theos* - singular!

**Exodus 7:1:** *elohim* = Moses - a singular person! "I have made you *as* God [elohim] to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet."

**Hebrew Grammar:** "The common designation אֱלֹהִים [*elohim*] (God) is a plural form with singular meaning that implies the fullness, majesty and transcendence of deity" (Pratico/Van Pelt, *BBH* 3rd ed. p. 273). Kohlenberger/Mounce: "God (plural of majesty: plural in form but singular in meaning, with a focus on great power)". OT Word Study Dictionary: *Elohim* "is frequently used as if it were singular—that is, with a singular verb (Gen. 1:1–31; Ex. 2:24)." HALOT: "אֱלֹהִים [*elohim*] becomes singular (Brockelmann *Heb. Syn.* §19b"). TDOT: "The form *ʾelohim* occurs 2570 times in all, with both the plural ("gods") and the singular ("a god," "God") meaning. As a rule, verbs and adjectives used with *ʾelohim* are either singular or plural in conformity with the meaning ... Perhaps the plural ... originally designated [Vol. 1, p. 273] not a plurality, but an intensification; then *ʾelohim* would mean the "great," "highest," and finally "only" God, i.e., God in general."

## CLAIM 3: THE IMAGE OF GOD IS PLURAL

**"LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE" (GENESIS 1:26)**

**My Response:** Gen 1:26 doesn't define the speaker, audience or specific quantity (2, 3, 4 ...) of creation participants and is therefore not explicitly trinitarian. Instead, God the Father created the world with His Son (Jn 1:1-3; Eph 3:9; Rev 14:7; Acts 14:15):

**1SG 17:** "And I saw that when God said to his Son, 'Let us make man in our image', Satan was jealous of Jesus" (EW 145).

**3SG 33** (1SP 24; ST Jan. 9, 1879, Art. B, par. 13): "After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out their purpose, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. And now God says to his Son, "Let us make man in our image."

**PP 45:** "Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is "the express image" (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God." *Scholars contradict these quotes!*

**3SM 133:** "In the councils of heaven God said, "Let us make man in our image ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Gen 1:26, 27). The Lord created man's moral faculties and his physical powers. All was a sinless transcript of Himself. ... Sin alone could ruin the beings created by the hand of the Almighty" (YI July 20, 1899) = God the Father: "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev 21:22). "The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker ... The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings" (PP 34). "The Father consulted His Son in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth. ... The Father and the Son engaged in the mighty, wondrous work they had contemplated—of creating the world" (SR 19-20).

## CLAIM 4: "AND THE WORD WAS GOD" (JOHN 1:1) = TRINITY!

**DIVINITY, NOT TRINITY!**

**My Response:** Greek Grammar!

| **the Word was with God** [the Father = Quantity] | | | | **and God** [the Son = Divine Quality] | | **was the Word"** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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).

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).

## CLAIM 5: *ECHAD* IS A COMPOUND UNION — "THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE" (DEUT 6:4)

*Trinitarian Quotes: "God is both self and other" · "God is oneness" · "God is a communitarian being" · "God is union" · "God is togetherness"*

**My Response:** Actually, *echad* is the Hebrew number 1; the majority of its 976 uses define a single subject/object, not a compound unity. Even Adam and Eve becoming "one [*echad*] flesh" remain two individual humans. But the doctrine of the Trinity turns a composite of 3 divine beings into one God: "We believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit".

*Echad* אֶחָד*:* Gen 2:21 one rib; Gen 4:19 one woman; Gen 11:1 one language (exactly the point of the story!); Gen 27:38 one blessing (and one only!); Gen 42:11 one man; Gen 42:16 one brother → Strongs H259.

*Yachid* יָחִיד: the word means "alone, only, solitary, single" (Gen 22:2,12,16; Jer 6:26; Am 8:10; Zech 12:10 "only son"; Jdg 11:34 "only child"). Psalm 22:20 and 35:17: one's *only* soul; Ps 25:16: "solitary, lonely, desolate". Ironically, the related root יַחְדָּו yaḥdāw carries a compound meaning: "Abraham and Isaac walked *together*" (Gen 22:6; see Doukhan, HfT, pp. 99, 103; cf. Jer 46:12).

**John 10:30 "I and My Father are one":** The Greek ἕν *hen* ("one") is *neuter*, indicating that the Father and the Son are "one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one" (MH 422). ~~*trinitarian*~~

## CLAIM 6: "SON" IS A COVENANT TITLE — CONCRETE HEBREW VS ABSTRACT GREEK?

*Premise: the Bible knows nothing of a Greek ontological, metaphysical articulation of what Jesus was - only who He is.*

**My Response:** Ironically, non-trinitarians are the ones who believe in a concrete, literal Sonship of Christ, not an abstract philosophical construct: "When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission by assuming the likeness of a man, when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God" (Lt 303, 1903) → *literal Sonship of Christ in Heaven prior to Bethlehem!* "Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer, that glorious angel, got up a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth" (Ms 86, Aug. 21, 1910). "Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father" (RH March 3, 1874). "This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God" (Lt 42, 1910). The other angels "clearly set forth that Christ was the Son of God, existing with Him before the angels were created" (SR 15). 👉 "The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, gave his only begotten Son, tore from his bosom Him who was made in the express image of His person, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind" (RH, July 9, 1895 par. 13). 👈 *A Son was sent because a Son He was!*

**DA 530:** "**In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived"** … Jesus "asserted His right and power to give eternal life" … "The Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns" (DA 21). "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). "Christ is invested with power to give life to all creatures" (RH April 1, 1906 par 12). But "men who have no experimental knowledge of Jesus, will yet assume an appearance of great wisdom, as though their judgment were beyond question, and boldly declare that the Son of God had no existence prior to his first advent to this world. This position directly contradicts the plainest statements of our Saviour concerning himself; yet it is received with favor by a large class who claim to believe the Scriptures. With such persons it is folly to argue. No argument, however conclusive, will convince those who reject the direct testimony of the Son of God. … Those who persistently cling to such errors, give evidence of their own ignorance of God and of his Son" (4SP 347.3).

**The Role Play Hypothesis:** Here the alluded *hypothesis* where the Father remains the Father; the point is not death but congruent character: "Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, veiling His glory, humbling Himself, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed in unfolding its record of His own condescending grace. In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. But language seems to be so feeble! I refrain, and with John exclaim, "Behold what manner of love hath the Father bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not" (Lt83-1895.25)! → JR Spangler, 1971 - https://asitreads.com/sda-trinity/

## CLAIM 7: "ON THE EDGE OF ADVENTISM" — DOES CREATED MATTER BECOME DIVINE → PANTHEISM!?

**My Response:** Non-trinitarians do NOT believe that Jesus was created, nor that created matter becomes divine. It was a trinitarian who introduced pantheism to Adventism: Kellogg "had come to believe in the trinity .... He told me that he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; ..." **Jesus** Himself was "not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (ST May 30, 1895, par. 3).

**We are Seventh-day Adventists** in the *heart and center* of both Scripture and Adventism: "That the name, Seventh-day Adventists, is truly representative of our faith and practice, cannot be denied. That it is modest and humble, and points to both the Father and Son, is also beyond question. Why then should it not be heartily adopted by every lover of present truth?" (ARSH, Nov. 19 1861, 197.12).

**From Letter 326-1905:** God calls upon us to hold firmly to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority · We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominated faith · Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience until the present time · If we needed the manifest proof of the Holy Spirit's power to confirm truth in the beginning, after the passing of the time, we need today all the evidence in the confirmation of the truth, when souls are departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (!) · We are not to stop at the first experience, but while we bear the same message to the people, this message is to be strengthened and enlarged. We are to see and realize the importance of the message made certain by its divine origin · We may be strengthened and confirmed in the past experience that holds us to the essential points of truth which have made us what we are—Seventh-day Adventists" (from Letter 326-1905.2).

**"His Church must be kept free from all false doctrine" (Ms 46, 1905 par. 6)**