

Why Anti-Trinitarianism is Not a Spirit-Led Movement

Every heresy within not only Adventism, but also Christianity generally, is directly linked to one's view of the Godhead. Christ Himself underscored the close connection between a correct conception of God and salvation (John 17:3). The non-Trinitarian view of God in which the Father is a greater God and Christ a lesser God misrepresents the character of God and the foundation of the plan of salvation. Grieving the Holy Spirit by denying His existence as a separate person distinct from the Father and Son is the most prominent among a Babel of heresies that God will allow to test the faith of the church and shake it.

The messenger of the Lord has warned the church as to how Satan is going about to try to prevent God's people from receiving the outpouring of God's blessing:

"If Satan sees that the Lord is blessing His people and preparing them to discern his delusions, he will work with his master power to bring in fanaticism on the one hand and cold formalism on the other, that he may gather in a harvest of souls." - *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, pg. 19.4 (emphasis supplied)

The following are among the many reasons why anti-Trinitarianism must be rejected as a movement that is not being led by the Spirit of God.

1. "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10)

The worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church is united on the belief of a Heavenly Trio of distinct Persons who are co-equal and co-eternal. But there is no unity even among anti-Trinitarians regarding what they believe.

- a. Some say Jesus is not God, and assert that worshiping Jesus is the worship of a created being and is tantamount to idolatry. Others say Jesus is God but He is not co-equal and co-eternal (i.e. He is a "lesser God" having had a beginning at some point in ages past and having attributes of divinity conferred upon Him by the Father).
- b. Some say there are three persons or personalities but only two beings (i.e. the Holy Spirit is not a distinct and separate being). Some camps believe that the Holy Spirit is the power or divine influence of the Father and the Son. Others say that the Holy Spirit is the shared spirit of the Father and the Son. Others have suggested that the Holy Spirit is the ministry of the angels.
- c. The words of Scripture such as: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped..." and "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word

was God," (Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:6; John 1:1) are made of no effect. But inspiration testifies that Christ is indeed God and on an equality with the Father. He is the eternal Word. As long as there has been timeless truth and virtue, from eternity Christ has been the embodiment of it. Speaking of Christ Ellen White affirms: "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived...The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 530). The testimony of Christ Himself is that He is the self-existent One, the I AM. The good news which is witnessed by the Father and the Spirit is that Christ has life within Himself. This is central and essential to our salvation.

- d. Anti-Trinitarians unwittingly adopt the Catholic view on the Trinity that involves the Son coming out of the Father sometime in the distant past ("eternal generation") and the Holy Spirit having no separate personality or existence from the Father and Son ("passive spiration"). But we can be thankful to God for Scriptures that assure us of the *personal* ministry of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ and the Father as their personal representative, the Comforter of the church.

- 2. "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." (Proverbs 4:18)

Anti-Trinitarians largely base their appeals to the early SDA pioneer beliefs on the Godhead. But the measure of truth is not the Adventist pioneers, but Scripture, always and finally Scripture.

- a. While it is true that many SDA pioneers were non-Trinitarian, it's important to understand what teaching on the Godhead they were reacting against. They were reacting against the mystical, unscriptural Papal doctrine on the trinity that God is one essence and the Father, Son, and Spirit are differing manifestations of that essence (i.e. *modalism*). These teachings bear no resemblance to the modern SDA doctrine of the Triune Godhead (see "[Is the Trinity a Papal Doctrine?](https://theheavenlytrio.com/docs/papal.pdf)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/docs/papal.pdf>).
- b. It is asserted that non-Trinitarianism was an immovable pillar of the original Adventist faith, but this assertion is simply not historically accurate (see "[Old Landmarks](https://theheavenlytrio.com/docs/oldlandmarks.pdf)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/docs/oldlandmarks.pdf>).
- c. The SDA pioneers came from many different churches, for example the Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Christian Connection churches. They brought with them some of the theological leanings of the churches from which they came. There were some pioneers who were Trinitarian and others who were non-Trinitarian, but none made the Godhead the focal point of their work in presenting the Second Advent message.
- d. This view ignores or denies the Scriptural principle that truth is progressive (see Proverbs 4:18; Hosea 6:3; John 16:12,13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 3:18). Truth was not frozen nor

the revelation of it halted in 1872 or at any other time since the days of the SDA pioneers. Truth is not static but rather is a journey that progresses and unfolds over time. The acquisition of truth is a continuous process that requires an open and receptive heart and mind.

- e. There was only one pioneer who was inspired, and her name is Ellen G. White. She did more to direct the church towards Trinitarianism than anyone (see "[The Development of Ellen White's Understanding of the Godhead](#)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/egw>).

- 3. "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11)

Anti-Trinitarianism is based on bad hermeneutics: it is not based on the preponderance of evidence from the Scriptures or from the Spirit of Prophecy, but takes ambiguous or less clear passages and attempts to explain away the clearer passages.

- a. Bible truth is very clear and plain, but those who promote error make plain statements complicated and strain the simple meaning of the text to lay claims to biblical support for their unique beliefs.
- b. The pattern is to ignore the obvious to grasp at relatively minor points in the text to justify their view. This approach to the text diminishes biblical authority, leaving the impression that one can play games with the text to make it say what one wishes. At some point in that process, human interpreters supersede Scripture in authority. We need to be very careful to see what is in the text and let the text calibrate our perceptions and desires, instead of reading our desires and perceptions into the text.
- c. Anti-Trinitarians hold as the doctrine of Christ that He was begotten in the sense that at some early point in eternity He mysteriously emerged from the Father by an act of the Father. In holding to this they deny the original divinity of Christ. The Scripture refers to Christ as begotten, but Acts 13:30-34, the first seven chapters of Hebrews, and other Scriptures indicate that the begotten nature of Christ refers not to the beginning of His existence but to His glorification as mediator of the New Covenant. Christ was "begotten" to the priesthood and this heritage was granted Him by virtue of His infinitely pure human life and agonizing sacrifice for our sins, and through His eternal divine nature (see "[The Meaning of 'Begotten'](#)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/docs/begotten.pdf> and "[The Meaning of 'Son of God'](#)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/docs/sonofgod.pdf>).

4. Anti-Trinitarianism is an attempt to define and demystify the Godhead in a way that violates the second commandment.
 - a. The second commandment calls us to receive God as self-defined, in spite of the mysteries that do not make sense to our finite minds, and without imposing further definitions onto God. God has a right to be mysterious—beyond our ability to comprehend and analyze.
 - b. Anti-Trinitarianism attempts to demystify God through speculation and philosophical reasoning and by venturing into the hypothetical. The Bible is not a speculative philosophy about the ancient origins of Jesus. Attempts to demystify God in order to make the concept comprehensible from a human point of view narrows God down to a finite representation of Him, in essence creating our own god, carved from speculation and philosophy.
 - c. Anti-Trinitarianism, like the error of Dr. Kellogg's pantheism, is the outgrowth of the same sin - speculation on the nature and personality of the members of the Godhead beyond what the scriptures reveal. Spiritualism as first manifested in the Garden of Eden took the plain inspired statements of God and subtly contradicted them. The anti-Trinitarian view of the Godhead contradicts what has been made plain about the eternal self-existence and divinity of Christ, and mystifies and spiritualizes the role of the Holy Spirit. It borrows a page from the Catholic trinity doctrine making the Spirit of God a spiritualistic manifestation of a dualist godhead rather than who He is - a divine, distinct member of the Deity.
 - d. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the trinity teaches that the members of the Godhead are mystically one and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations of the Divine essence which is the one and only God. Anti-Trinitarianism also mystifies what has been made plain - the distinct individuality of all three members of the Godhead who do not merge their personal identity anywhere in Scripture. This merging/manifesting doctrine is rooted in spiritualism and is akin to the cosmic universal unity taught by eastern mystic religions.

5. The anti-Trinitarian view of God is out of harmony with His character of selfless love.
 - a. Anti-Trinitarianism is based on *subordinationism*, which is the idea of ontological non-equality. In other words, the Son is subordinate to the Father because He is inherently inferior. In this view Christ's submission to the Father is not voluntary but rather is required due their respective degrees of deity (i.e. Christ is a lesser, derived god), and thus there is a hierarchical ranking in the Godhead based on ontological nature. This view is very pagan and presents an unbalanced view of God by emphasizing the authoritarian aspects of God over the loving and personal dimensions (see "[The Source of Godhead Confusion](https://theheavenlytrio.com/confusion)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/confusion> and "[Does the Triune Godhead Come From Paganism?](https://theheavenlytrio.com/paganism)", <https://theheavenlytrio.com/paganism>).

- b. By contrast, the SDA understanding of the Triune Godhead is based on *complementarianism*, which is ontological equivalence with different (complementary) functional roles. In this view there is voluntary submission to authority conditioned on inherent free will. Authority and voluntary submission is a fundamental principle of God's government, not only within the Godhead but also among the angels and all created intelligent beings. In contrast to anti-Trinitarian subordinationism, the SDA doctrine of the Triune Godhead shows each member specializing in revealing specific aspects of who God is, promoting a balanced view of God.
- c. Anti-Trinitarian teachings change the sublime, harmonious relationship between the members of the Godhead revealed in Scripture which is the model for universal, unselfish love among created beings. The greatness and majesty of all three members of the Godhead is diminished, particularly the majesty of the Father who, when viewed through this filter, takes on authoritarian attributes, and the divine plan to redeem humanity from the grasp of sin is undermined.

6. Anti-Trinitarianism is incompatible with righteousness by faith.

- a. "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.**" - *The Desire of Ages*, pg. 530
- b. No one can come to the Father except through the inherent divinity of Christ (John 14:6). The divinity of Christ connects us with the divinity of the Father. The anti-Trinitarian view precludes this connection and access to the Father.
- c. Those who hold to the anti-Trinitarian doctrine (a subordinate god) are left without an Anchor for their salvation and in a subtle way may fall into a salvation by works program. Judaism, Islam, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and early non-Trinitarian Adventism all have tended to lack a clear doctrine of justifying grace based solely on the merits of God's divine righteousness. It was only when Seventh-day Adventism began to emerge out of its non-Trinitarian understandings of Christ's divinity that it began to find clarity on justification by grace through faith alone. In fact, it seems to be a law of sacred history that until believers gain greater insight to the full deity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith alone does not fare too well.
- d. "If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the divinity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them. [1 Corinthians 2:14 quoted.] **None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption.**" - *The Great Controversy* [1888], pg. 524.2

7. No non-Trinitarian has yet offered a compelling case, from either Scripture or the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, as to the doctrinal, spiritual, or moral advantage to be gained by departing from the worldwide Adventist consensus on this issue. At a time when so many other challenges to the doctrinal and moral integrity of our Adventist faith are accelerating all around us, additional theological confusion and divisiveness is certainly not needed.
 - a. Those who are presently challenging the SDA Fundamental Beliefs regarding the Godhead (#'s 2-5) not only place themselves at odds with the inspired evidence, they also place themselves in opposition to the authority of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist body, which has publicly endorsed the Bible/Spirit of Prophecy doctrine of a Godhead consisting of three co-eternal Persons.
 - b. Early in her ministry, and then toward the end, Ellen White affirmed the authority of the General Conference in worldwide session.

This statement was made in 1875:

"I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered." - *Testimonies*, vol, 3, pg. 492

And this statement was made in 1909:

"I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any other one man. Never should the mind of one mind or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work, and to say what plans should be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body." - *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pg. 260

8. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies [divisions, factions], envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

The fruits of anti-Trinitarian agitations sow discord, disunity, and strife in the churches where they are urged, in many cases causing churches to split. Many converts to anti-Trinitarianism join offshoot movements and some leave the faith altogether.

Strife always follows heresy; they go hand in hand. And note the seriousness of heresy: it leads to a loss of eternal life.

- a. Prominent leaders of the anti-Trinitarian movement, such as Nader Monsour and others, are spreading the call for separation from the Seventh-day Adventist church, claiming that the church has apostatized into what Ellen White termed the "Omega of apostasy" and a "deadly error", descriptors that in actuality fit the anti-Trinitarian movement alarmingly well. Some are still hesitant about separating from the church and labeling God's remnant movement Babylon. But those who have taken this step are following their beliefs to their logical conclusion.
- b. "When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track." - *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, pg. 18
- c. The anti-Trinitarian message is most widely received by conservative, health-reforming Adventists. The "final deception" for Adventism according to Ellen White is to make of no effect the Testimonies of the Spirit (see 1SM 48.3). What better way to do this than to introduce a form of religion that purports great reverence for inspiration but in actuality mystifies the plain teachings of the Word? Like the "alpha of deadly heresies" (see 1SM 200.1), the "omega" may very well attempt to divide the ministerial and medical branches once again by subverting the group of individuals within the denomination whom Satan fears most - those who practice health reform and believe in the power of Christ to overcome sin.
- d. According to Christ grieving the Holy Spirit is a spiritual Omega, the final sin that can't be forgiven an individual. "Wherefore I say to you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. And whoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matthew 12:31,32) If speaking against our Saviour is forgivable but speaking against the Spirit is not, Christ and the Spirit are not the same Beings. Yet many in this movement are deceived to the point that they will wrest this solemn warning of the Saviour to their own undoing: They will speak against the very existence of the Holy Spirit and like the ancient Jews attribute the doctrines of the original divinity of Christ and the Spirit to the deceptions of Satan.