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Biblical Doctrines

➤ God of the Bible [↵]

God's self-revelation. Although God can be “perceived through the things that are made” (Romans 1:20), our knowledge of him is most plainly revealed to us by his word, the Bible. The Christian Bible—composed of Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible, the *Tanakh*) and New Testament (the Christian biblical canon of 27 books, originally written in Koine Greek)—tells us that God is the Creator, Savior, Lawgiver and ultimate Judge of humanity.

God as Yehovah

God's name. The tetragrammaton יהוה—transliterated as YHVH—occurs **6,828 times** in the *Tanakh* (1,820 times in the Pentateuch, 3,523 times in the Prophets, and 1,485 times in the Writings), and is the most common name for God in the Old Testament.

God's name pronunciation. The pronunciation of the tetragrammaton is closer to “Yehovah” than any other form. See the following references that support this view:

- <https://www.nehemiaswall.com/nehemia-gordon-name-god>. Catalog of Nehemia Gordon's videos on the name of God.
- <https://tinyurl.com/32reh265>. “God's Name is NOT Yahweh.” Duration 13:46.
- <https://tinyurl.com/55xv6xzw>. “God's name is not Yahweh – Proof from Jewish Rabbis.” Duration 55:43.
- <http://tinyurl.com/ypee29ks>. “The Historical Origins of Yahweh.” Duration 13:21. It has Samaritan, pagan origins.
- <https://www.nehemiaswall.com/historical-pronunciation-vav>. Nehemia Gordon explains how we know the letter “vav” was historically pronounced as “vav”, not “waw”.

The first occurrence of Yehovah is found in Genesis 2:4. Another important reference is Exodus 3:14 which explains its meaning.

Exodus 3:14 (paraphrased): Then God said to Moses, “I Am Who I Am” [These Hebrew words are related to the name Yehovah, usually translated “LORD,” and suggests that God eternally lives and is always with his people]. When you go to the people of Israel, tell them, ‘I Am sent me to you.’”

The tetragrammaton is believed to be an abbreviated form of, “he who was [*Hayah*]; he who is [*Hoveh*]; and he who will be [*Yihyeh*].” When the phrase is read in reverse order (or *Yihyeh-Hoveh-Hayah*), the highlighted letters yield: **Yi-Hov-ah**. Interestingly, the same meaning is found in the New Testament reference to God found in Revelation 4:8 which says,

“Lord God, the Almighty, **who was and who is and who is to come**” (cf. Rev. 1:4).

Importance of the name. As with all the names by which God has revealed himself, the tetragrammaton offers a particular emphasis on the overarching greatness of God in his covenant relationship with Israel. Our uncertainty of how the tetragrammaton was originally pronounced in no way diminishes our ability to *know* the divine name; that is, to *know* God as he has revealed himself in his name.

God is one. The God of the Bible is monotheistic—“one God”—not polytheistic (“many gods”). A practicing Jew continually proclaims the oneness of God in the Jewish prayer, called the Shema, that serves as the centerpiece for his morning and evening prayers. The Shema is found in Moses’ final instructions to the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 6:4: Hear, O Israel: Yehovah our God, Yehovah is one.

The term “one” is *echad* in the Hebrew language which is the numerical one. Jesus affirmed this singularity of God in his dialogue with the scribe in Mark 12:28-32. In it, Jesus recites the Shema and agrees with the scribe's understanding of it when the scribe responded, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that **he is one, and there is no other besides him**” (Mark 12:32). The scribe did not say “*they* are one” and “there is no other besides *them*,” but he said, “**he** is one” and “there is no other besides **him**.”

Yehovah was unmistakably understood to be one God by both the Jewish people and Jesus himself. Other references that support the “one God” concept in the Bible are the following texts:

- *Malachi 2:10:* Have we not all **one Father**? Has not **one God** created us?
- *1 Corinthians 8:6:* yet for us there is **one God, the Father**, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.
- *Ephesians 4:6:* **one God and Father of us all**, who is above all and through all and in all.
- *1 Timothy 2:5:* For there is **one God**, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

God the Father. This is a common title given to God, particularly in the NT. This term is not a proper name for God as is Yehovah in the Old Testament. However, the concept of Yehovah being “Father” is found in a few places in the Old Testament. For example:

- *Psalms 68:5:* Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.

- *Isaiah 63:16*: For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; **you, O Yehovah, are our Father**, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

In the New Testament, “God the Father” is a common term. Jesus used it repeatedly and wanted his followers to address God in like manner. It is found in the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:9, “Pray like this: Our Father in heaven”); and when the resurrected Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene at the tomb site and told her, “go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (John 20:17).

God as Creator. Both the Old and New Testaments declare that Yehovah (or “God”) created the world. Yet the agent of Creation was His Son, as the NT reveals (Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:15-17).

- *Isaiah 45:18*: For **Yehovah who created the heavens, the God who formed the earth and made it**, who established it and didn’t create it a waste, who formed it to be inhabited says: “I am Yehovah. There is no other.
- *Revelation 4:11*: Worthy are you, **our Lord and God**, the Holy One, to receive the glory, the honor, and the power, **for you created all things**, and because of your desire they existed, and were created!

God as Savior. There is no savior apart from Yehovah. This is what the Old Testament teaches.

- *Isaiah 43:11*: I myself am **Yehovah**, and **apart from me there is no savior**.
- *Hosea 13:4*: Yet I am **Yehovah** your God from the land of Egypt; and you shall acknowledge no god but me, and **besides me there is no savior**.

Yet the Old Testament also tells us that Yehovah sent human “saviors” to the people of Israel.

- *Nehemiah 9:27*: Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies **you gave them saviors** who saved them from the hand of their enemies.
- *Obadiah 1:21*: **Saviors shall go up** to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.

The ultimate savior the Father would send was his Son as fully revealed to us in the New Testament.

- *1 John 4:14*: And we have seen and testify that the **Father has sent his Son** to be the **Savior of the world**.

- *Acts 5:30-31*: The God of our fathers **raised Jesus**, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and **Savior**, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- *Acts 13:23*: Of this man's offspring **God has brought** to Israel a **Savior, Jesus**, as he promised.

This does not in any way diminish the role of the Son in the plan of salvation given that the Son did so willingly.

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the **Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

God as *Elohim* [ע]

The Hebrew word *Elohim* is generally translated as either “God” or “gods” and is the generic name of God. It is in the plural form because of the “-im” ending. But, it is regarded as “uniplural” because it functions as either *singular* or *plural* depending on the qualifiers—such as the verbs, adjectives or pronouns—that relate to it. (English also has uniplural words: for example, “deer” and “fish”.)

There are some Hebrew words that are plural in form yet singular in meaning. For example, the word “face” (*panim*) is plural in form but singular in meaning. Also, while English plurals only identify *quantity*, as in more than one, the Hebrew plural can identify *quality* as well as quantity—for example, “blindness” (*sanverim*).

Singular usage. Two important examples of singular usage for the word *Elohim* are found in the first chapter of the Bible and read as follows:

- *Genesis 1:1*: In the beginning God created (Hebrew: *bereshit bara Elohim*) the heavens and the earth.
- *Genesis 1:26*: And God said (Hebrew: *Elohim vayomer*), let us make man in our image...

Commentary on Genesis 1:1. In Genesis 1:1, “*bereshit bara Elohim*,” directly translates to “In-the-beginning created God.” The verb “*bara*” is inflected in the perfect third person singular. This verb controls the meaning of the subject which is *Elohim*. If *Elohim* were intended to denote a plural meaning (“gods”) then the plural verb “*bar’u*” would have been used instead of “*bara*.” When it comes to this verse, all Bible translations (correctly) translate *Elohim* as singular (“God”).

Commentary on Genesis 1:26. In Genesis 1:26, *Elohim* is the subject of the *singular* verb *vayomer*; therefore, *Elohim* in this verse is understood to be *singular*. And he (*Elohim*) said, “let us make man.” The question then naturally arises, who is the “us” in the phrase “let **us** make man”? Who is *Elohim* addressing? Unfortunately, the verse itself does not clarify.

The “us” could have been His divine council which includes angels, as some Jewish commentators suggest. Others posit a trinity of gods, which Jewish thought would reject outright, given their monotheistic stance. Ellen G. White believed that the “us” was the Father speaking to His Son (cf. SR 20.2, “And now God said to His Son...”) which harmonizes with the New Testament concept of God creating the worlds through his Son (Hebrews 1:2). It also fits well with the narrative of Adam and Eve being created in their (the Father and Son’s) image—i.e. the creation of *two* beings in their likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). Had the creation of man been in the image of *three* beings (i.e. the Trinity), then *three* beings would have been created, not two.

Elijah on Mount Carmel. Another illustrative example of the usage of *Elohim* is found in the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel when the people repeatedly cried out, “Yehovah **hu** ha-Elohim” or “Yehovah **he** is God” (1 Kings 18:39). The “**hu**” means *Elohim* is understood to be *singular*. If the plural was intended, it would read, “Yehovah **hem** ha-Elohim” or “Yehovah *they* are God.”

The God. The word *Elohim* is often accompanied by the article “*ha-*” (as in *ha-Elohim*) which means “the God” and sometimes with a further identifier such as “the *living* God” (*Elohim hayyim*, e.g. Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10). While the singular meaning most often refers to the God of Israel, it can also refer to other *singular* deities such as Dagon (the Philistine god; Judges 16:23), Chemosh (the Moabite god), Astarte (the Sidonian god), Molek (the Ammonite god) and Baal. In the case of Baal, the word Baal (*ba'alim*) is also plural in form but likewise takes a *singular* verb.

God as a “compound unity”. A “compound unity” (*aka*, “collective one” or “unified one”) is the idea that the term *Elohim* (“God”) is a *semantic* plural God while remaining a *grammatically* singular God. In other words, while the Hebrew word, *Elohim*, might literally be referring to a single deity, the semantic meaning is that it should be understood as a plurality. The Hebrew text may be saying “one” (*echad*) in a numerical sense, yet the (semantic) meaning is “many”. The example most often cited is of “one flesh” (*echad basar*) in marriage (Genesis 2:24). It is evident that “one flesh” is made up of two individuals, male and female. Thus, in this case, “one” really means “two,” hence compound unity. Other examples include:

- *Genesis 11:6*: Yehovah said, “Behold, they are **one people**, and they all have **one language**...”
- *Exodus 24:3*: ...and all the people answered with **one voice**, and said, “All the words which Yehovah has spoken will we do.”
- *Numbers 13:23*: ...**one cluster** of grapes...
- *Judges 20:1*: Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was assembled as **one man**.

In these examples (and many more), the Hebrew word *echad* (“one”) refers to many, therefore there can be compound unity in oneness. Of course, there can be “absolute oneness” with the use of the word *echad* as well. Meaning, when it says “one” it really means numerical “one.”

So, how does one determine when “one” should be understood as “many” and when it should be understood as “one”? The answer is simple: **It has nothing to do with the word “one” (*echad*). It has everything to do with the noun that the “one” modifies.** How we know when we are dealing with a collective one is by evaluating the collective noun. If the collective noun implies plurality, then it has plural meaning.

Back to the “one flesh” example of marriage. In the course of time, a married couple will have children. This collective of parents and their children can be called “one family.” As this “one family” integrates itself into society with other families they become “one community.” And so on: communities become “one nation,” which become “one kingdom of nations,” which become “one world” of “one galaxy” of “one universe.” By looking at the collective noun (i.e. marriage, family, community, etc.) we know whether we are dealing with a singularity or plurality.

Logical flaw with “compound unity”. Do you see where the logical flaw is in this “compound unity” idea? The flaw is in placing the focus on the modifier “one” rather than the noun that the “one” modifies. We know when a phrase is compound because of the compound noun, not because of the word “one.” We know that “one family” means a collection of individuals (parents and their children) because the word “family” implies *plurality*. And so does community, nation, kingdom and so on. Others may not be so simple to determine, such as “one flesh”. In these cases, we evaluate the context. If the context suggests *plurality*, then it is compound. Again, the word “one” on its own carries no sense of *plurality*. And when the collective noun itself is ambiguous, then the context will give the sense.

And so, when the Shema (Deut. 6:4) says, “Yehovah our Elohim, Yehovah is one,” the context determines the meaning of the “one” Yehovah. In the Hebrew Bible, and to the Jewish mind itself, there is no other meaning than this, that Yehovah is a *singularity*. This is very much the meaning of Yehovah in the Book of Deuteronomy:

- *Deuteronomy 4:35*: It was shown to you so that you might know that Yehovah is God. **There is no one else besides him.**
- *Deuteronomy 4:39*: Know therefore today, and take it to heart, that **Yehovah himself is God** in heaven above and on the earth beneath. **There is no one else.**
- *Deuteronomy 5:7*: You shall have **no other gods** before me.
- *Deuteronomy 10:17*: For Yehovah your God, **he is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God**, the mighty, and the awesome, who doesn’t respect persons or take bribes.

Elohim as “multiplicity”. There is a small but significant class of nouns which are plural in form, singular in concept and usage, but in truth express *multiplicity*. They include the following:

- *mayim* (#4325, מים) - water
- *shamayim* (#8064, שמים) - sky (or heaven)
- *panim* (#6440, פנים) - face
- *hayyim* (#2425b, חיים) - life (literally “the living”)

Each of these words are firmly singular (water, sky, face and life), yet the Hebrew form possesses a plural ending (-im). Why are these words plural when the concept is singular? What connects them? Some suggest that it is because they express *plurality*. But more than plurality, they are in truth expressing *multiplicity*. Water is always flowing, moving, changing. The Sky is constantly changing—clouds moving, shapes forming, changing colors at sunrise and sunset. The human face is ever expressive, constant movement of the eyes, lips, etc. Life itself is constantly changing. Thus, we cannot capture their semantic meaning in anything but the plural.

Elohim is understood in the same way. God appears to us as ever changing or adapting to human circumstance. Like with water, sky, face and life, we are unable to capture (or conceive of) God entirely in a singular sense. God is not fixed, but involved in human history, whenever and wherever he chooses to be.

Elohim as “duality”. While *multiplicity* is the dominant quality of the above words (*mayim*, *shamayim*, *panim* and *hayyim*), yet *duality* is also a notable characteristic. This is particularly evident in the Creation Story. On the second day of Creation, the *mayim* (“waters”) were parted into the *mayim* above the expanse and the *mayim* below the expanse (Genesis 1:6-7). God then called the expanse *shamayim* (“sky”) which on the fourth day included evening and morning *shamayim* objects: the Sun to rule the Day and the Moon (and Stars) to rule the Night. The life created on earth on the fifth and sixth days were of male and female types. The *panim* (“faces”) of these creatures were created with duality features—i.e. two eyes, two ears, etc. Even many of the internal “organs” of these living creatures manifest duality—i.e. two lungs, two kidneys, etc.

The Hebrew language also has a way to express duality with the suffix “-ayim” which can be thought of as a plural of two. So you have the body parts ears, eyes, hands and feet all using the “-ayim” suffix.

- **Ear** - *ozen* (#241, singular), *oznayim* (“ears”, plural).
- **Eye** - *ayin* (#5869, singular), *enayim* (“eyes”, plural).
- **Hand** - *yad* (#3027, singular), *yadayim* (“hands”, plural).
- **Foot** - *regel* (#7272, singular), *raglayim* (“feet”, plural).

Even some forms of the name, Jerusalem, have an “-ayim” suffix—i.e. *Yerushalayim* as opposed to *Yerushalaym*, without the yod, which is the most common in the *Tanakh*. The *Yerushalayim* variant could

represent the two Jerusalems, one on earth and the other in heaven, or the two hills it contains: Mount Zion and Mount Moriah.

With respect to *Elohim*, the sense of *duality* can be seen in God's purpose to "image" himself in the creation of man. Jesus, himself, being the "express image" of God (Hebrews 1:3). This duality is first and foremost revealed to us in the relationship between the Father and the Son, followed by the Father and the human race (i.e. his adopted "sons of God"). But, it is also seen in much of God's creation in the sense of complementary, of synergistic, of greater-lesser, of source-recipient, and outer-inner physical relationships.

God as *Theos* [\[↗\]](#)

The Greek word *theos* is the generic term for "god" and occurs 1,315 times in the New Testament. To avoid confusing the true God from the Greek gods, the writers of the NT called him *ho theos*, "the God," to stress that he alone is the true God.

The God. The God of the NT, *ho theos*, always refers to a single member of the deity, never to a plurality of Persons. In all instances, it is speaking of the Father. Arguably, there are a handful of instances, seven in total (i.e. John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; and 2 Peter 1:1), where it could refer to the Son. However, my analysis of these verses, as detailed in the "Notes" section of the corresponding texts, gives sufficient evidence to prove that this is not the case. Thus, the testimony of the NT is the same as the OT, that God ("*the* God") is a single Person, not a plurality, not a trinity.

➤ Christology [\[↩\]](#)

Christology, “the study of Christ,” is a branch of theology that concerns Jesus. It is a study or analysis of the nature or being of Jesus (ontological Christology), the analysis of the works of Jesus (functional Christology) and the analysis of the “salvific” standpoints of Jesus (soteriological Christology).

The nature of Jesus (ontological Christology)

From the second to fifth centuries, the human and divine nature of Christ (ontological Christology) was a major focus of debates in the early church and at the first seven ecumenical councils. Most major Christian denominations adopted the Chalcedonian position formulated in those councils, which is the hypostatic union of the *two* natures of Christ, one human and one divine, “united with neither confusion nor division”. The other position taken by many branches of the Oriental Orthodox Churches was that of *miaphysitism*, that holds Jesus is fully divine and fully human, in *one* “nature” (*physis*). Opposed to these two views is *adoptionism* which teaches that Jesus was a mere man, who was “adopted” by God either at his baptism, his resurrection, or his ascension. It denies Jesus’ preexistence as God’s only begotten Son. *Adoptionism* is a minority view with little to no biblical support and so we give it no consideration. Neither do we hold to the Chalcedonian position nor *miaphysitism* for reasons stated below.

Nature of sin. It would be helpful to define some terms:

- **Sinful.** This is the *sinful* human nature of “the flesh” often mentioned in the Bible. It is a *tendency* toward sin. It does not refer to the act of sinning itself. So, while a person may have a *tendency* toward sin, it does not mean he has yielded to it. The temptation to sin is not the act itself. Once cherished in the heart and acted upon, then it is sin. To the Jewish mind, sinning was the act. To Jesus, sinning begins in the heart.
- **Sinless.** A “fearless” person is incapable of feeling fear. In the same way, a *sinless* person is incapable of sinning. Certainly God fits this description. He does not sin and cannot sin. Adam had a *sinless* nature in that he had no *propensity* to sin.
- **Sinfulness.** The term “-ness” defines a *state of being*. This is far beyond a *tendency* toward; it must involve the actual practice of sinning.
- **Sinlessness.** Again, “-ness” defines a *state of being*. It is one who is in a state of not committing sin, whether he has a *sinful* nature or not.

Given the above terms, we will now define the life Jesus lived on earth. The position taken here is that he was born with a *sinful* human nature. Yet he never sinned, and so he was ever in a state of *sinlessness*.

That is to say, his *sinful* (“fleshly”) human nature allowed him to be tempted, but he never yielded to it. This is how EGW describes it:

[1SM 256.1](#): **In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin.** He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:17). He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was **in all points tempted like as we are**. And yet **He knew no sin**. He was the Lamb “without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). . . . We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect **sinlessness** of the human nature of Christ.

When you read through EGW’s writings, you will note that she is careful in the use of the above terms. She consistently applies the term *sinlessness* to the human nature of Christ, but not the term *sinless*.

In the case of man, he is both born *sinful* and is in a state of *sinfulness*, but he can attain a state of *sinlessness* through God’s help. This is how EGW describes man’s potential:

[ST July 23, 1902, par. 14](#): Those who believe on Christ and obey His commandments are not under bondage to God's law; for to those who believe and obey, His law is not a law of bondage, but of liberty. Everyone who believes on Christ, everyone who relies on the keeping power of a risen Savior that has suffered the penalty pronounced upon the transgressor, everyone who resists temptation and in the midst of evil copies the pattern given in the Christ-life, will through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ **become a partaker of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Everyone who by faith obeys God's commandments, will reach the **condition of sinlessness** in which Adam lived before his transgression.

Virgin birth. The virgin birth was possible because God created a woman to be able to carry a baby to term that is not her own (i.e. a surrogate mother). In the case of Mary, the mother of Jesus, she was “found to be with child by holy spirit” (Matthew 1:18). Even though Mary was betrothed to Joseph, they had not yet come together physically. (The Jewish custom was that there was a waiting period before the actual marriage and consummation.) This made Mary’s pregnancy a unique, surrogate, supernatural creation event.

Jesus’ *sinful sinlessness*. Jesus was born with a *sinful* (“fleshly”) human nature which could be tempted, but he was ever in a state of *sinlessness*—i.e. never committing sin or choosing to sin. Miraculously, Jesus had no disposition, or inclination, or *propensity* to sin. Meaning that he was not “under the power of sin,” and so was not driven to sin.

However, this is not the case with fallen man. The Bible states that every man is “under sin”.

Romans 3:9-10: For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are **under sin**, ¹⁰ as it is written, “None are righteous, no not one;”

In other Bible versions the term “under sin” is variously translated as “controlled by sin,” “under the power of sin,” or “under the dominion of sin.” But Jesus was not “under the power of sin”. How is that possible when we just stated that Jesus had a *sinful* human nature? How can he both have a *sinful* human nature, and yet not be “under the power of sin”? Is such a state possible? Answer: Yes, absolutely! It is called being “born again”.

Neither pre- nor post-Adamic nature. Jesus had neither a pre-Adamic (*sinless* nature) nor a post-Adamic (“under the power of sin”) nature, but a “born again” nature. That is, Jesus was given a nature like the one we can have when we are “born again” (or, “born from above”). It is called a “divine nature”. Jesus, like all Christian believers, was a “partaker of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4)—*from the very beginning*. This makes sense, since Jesus was to be our example in all things, why not in this critical area?

Then, Jesus’ life was *not* a battle with his *sinful* nature, but a battle to *maintain* his “born again” or divine nature. If this was the case, then his life *could* be an example to those of us who are born again. He lived a life we can live, if we become believers and receive this new birth—this divine nature—from above (John 3:7, NRSV). Here’s a relevant quote from EGW:

[1SM 226.2](#): In His humanity **He was a partaker of the divine nature**. In His incarnation He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God. Said the angel to Mary, 'The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). **While the Son of a human being, He became the Son of God in a new sense**. Thus He stood in our world—the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.

Although Jesus was born from an imperfect (surrogate) mother, in truth he was a special creation, just as Adam was a special creation. In the case of Adam and Eve, they had no propensity to sin. They were perfect, innocent “babes”. They knew no sin and had no inclination to practice sin. They were not tempted to lie, steal or kill, because that was not their nature. To do so would have been abhorrent to them. Until Adam and Eve chose to disobey, and then everything changed.

In the case of Jesus, however, temptations to sin were real. He had the **capacity** to sin, because he was born “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). But he also had the **capacity** to say “No” because he had a divine nature (John 3:5-6; Romans 8:14; 2 Peter 1:3). Jesus’

temptations to sin were as real to him as they are to us, but just as real was his capacity to resist them. He did not resist these temptations through reasoning with the devil, but through declarations from the word of God, which were abiding truths in his heart. In other words, Jesus was anchored in the truths of the Bible and his faith in his Father and this is how he repelled temptations to sin.

Everything Jesus did was with the same power and ability available to us. His righteous, victorious life required Jesus to be dependent on his Father's word and will throughout his life. In truth, Jesus' greatest temptations were to distrust His Father's word and purpose for his life. To the very end, Jesus remained loyal to his Father, even unto death. That is, Jesus manifested the greatest form of faith in God that any person can experience—to face eternal extinction, if need be, in order to remain loyal to his Father's will for his life—as he stated in Gethsemane, “nevertheless not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42).

The test given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was whether they would choose to remain loyal to God's will or suffer death through disobedience (Gen. 2:17, “in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die”). The same test was given to Jesus—not to forbid him from eating the fruit of a tree, but to be willing to suffer and then die on a cross so that mankind could be saved. Obviously, Jesus' test of faith in God was far greater than Adam's, but it was the same in type. This same test (in type) is given to every member of the human family.

[ST June 17, 1897, par. 8](#): Had he not been fully human, Christ could not have been our substitute. He could not have worked out in humanity that perfection of character which it is the privilege of all to reach. He was the light and the life of the world. He came to this earth to work in behalf of men, that they might no longer be under the control of Satanic agencies. But while bearing human nature, he was dependent upon the Omnipotent for his life. **In his humanity, he laid hold of the divinity of God; and this every member of the human family has the privilege of doing. Christ did nothing that human nature may not do if it partakes of the divine nature.**

100% God; 100% man. It makes no rational sense to declare someone to be 100% of one thing and 100% of something else. Does that make him a 200% man? The idea is just silly. Yet this is what many theologians declare Jesus to be: 100% God while at the same time being 100% man. Besides being illogical, it is not Biblical. Nowhere in the Bible is Jesus said to be fully God and fully man or any similar wording. This vocabulary is also not found in EGW's writings. She never used the term “fully divine” or “100% divine” of Jesus or anyone else. That Jesus had a human nature and a divine nature: Yes, and so do we, if we are born again. We too can retain a human nature while at the same time be “born again” with a divine nature. Effectively, Christians have two natures, as Jesus had two natures. The difference with Jesus is that he never let his human nature override or overrule his divine nature. When it comes to two natures, think

in terms of heavenly minded vs. earthly minded; or spiritual vs. fleshly; or wisdom vs. foolishness, etc. There is no mystery with regard to Jesus having two natures, because that is our condition as well, if we are “born again”. This state (and battle) we have with two natures does not continue in the resurrection of the body, because in the resurrection the sinful nature of the first Adam will *not* be restored to us, but only the divine nature of the second Adam (Christ). That is, **in the resurrection, only the divine nature given to us and divine character developed by us will continue.**

Salvific perspective (soteriological Christology)

In Christianity, soteriology is the study of salvation. It is closely linked with Christology, which focuses on the significance of Christ as Savior. Salvation (also called deliverance or redemption) is the saving of human beings from sin and its consequences, which include death and separation from God.

Salvation is freely offered to us by God's grace through Jesus Christ, whom God set forth as a **propitiation** (Greek, *hilasterion*) for our sins (Romans 3:25). "Propitiation" is a Biblical term whose meaning we need to explore to better understand the plan of salvation.

Propitiation (*hilasterion*) word usage. *Hilasterion* is used twice in the New Testament (Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5), but is one of four closely related words found in the New Testament:

1. *hilaskomai* [G2433] propitiate, conciliate, make gracious, be gracious in Luke 18:13 and Hebrews 2:17. (2x NT)
2. *hileos* [G2436] gracious, merciful Matthew 16:22 and Hebrews 8:12. (2x NT)
3. *hilasmos* [G2434] propitiation, propitiatory sacrifice in 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10. (2x NT)
4. *hilasterion* [G2435] that which propitiates, means of propitiation, mercy-seat in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5. (2x NT)

In Romans 3:25, *hilasterion* is often translated as "propitiation," "atonement," or "sacrifice [of atonement]". The other occurrence of the term is in Hebrews 9:5 where it is generally translated as "mercy seat" or "atonement cover," which is the clear meaning of the word. *Hilasterion* literally means *propitiation*. It does not literally mean "mercy seat" but was adopted in the Greek as a means to describe the mercy seat.

In Greek thought, *hilasterion* is specifically related to the cycle of wrath and appeasement between the deities and humans.

The meaning of "expiation" and "propitiation". Together, *expiation* and *propitiation* constitute an act of placation —*def.* to make (someone) less angry or hostile. *Expiation* has to do with the **act** of placating and *propitiation* has to do with the **object** of the *expiation*. *Expiation* and *propitiation* are not antithetical but are describing two sides of the same coin. In Biblical terms, *expiation* is taking away the guilt through a payment or offering and *propitiation* is the change in attitude of the one being placated.

God at work. The context of Romans 3:25 is telling us that **God and not Jesus makes propitiation**. This paraphrase of Romans 3:25 may help to clarify:

Romans 3:25-26 (ERV): **God gave Jesus** as a way to forgive people's sins through their faith in him. **God can forgive** them because the blood sacrifice of Jesus pays for their sins. God gave

Jesus to show that he always does what is right and fair. He was right in the past when he was patient and did not punish people for their sins. And in our own time he still does what is right. **God worked all this out** in a way that allows him to judge people fairly and still make right any person who has faith in Jesus.

Understand that **God is obligated to judge the wicked**, since the wicked have violated his principles of life as codified in his law. God declared that **disobedience to his law of life results in death**, and God will not change his edict because God will not change his principles of life, liberty and freedom. The wicked are destined to face the “wrath of God” because of their entrenched disobedience to his principles. God will by no means clear the guilty. See Exodus 34:7; Romans 1:18; 12:19; Hebrews 10:30-31. When speaking of “law” it is not just the moral laws declared in the Books of Moses and expounded upon by Jesus himself, but also includes the laws of nature that God instituted at Creation.

The issue is not with the judgment of the wicked, but the issue is with God forgiving the repentant. That is, how can a God of justice also be a God of mercy and forgiveness? It is **Satan** who declares that justice is inconsistent with mercy and that a God of justice cannot also be a God of mercy and forgiveness.

[DA 761.4](#): In the opening of the great controversy, **Satan had declared** that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, **should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned.** Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; **man could not be forgiven.** Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. **God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.**

Yet God is *both* just and merciful. This could only be made possible through Christ. Christ is the means by which God can forgive sins. Christ is the means by which God can make *propitiation*. **It is not Jesus who forgives sin but God.** God forgives freely on the basis of faith, not sacrifice or good works. The death of Jesus was to justify God for doing so. It is God who is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9), because it was made possible through Christ.

Typology of the mercy seat. The sacrificial system detailed in the Old Testament describes how sin is dealt with by God and how the sinner is ultimately released from the condemnation of the law. It had to do with the services on the Day of Atonement in which full atonement was made for sins.

- [PP 357.5](#): **The blood of Christ**, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, **was not to cancel the sin**; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but **it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement**.
- [PP 355.5](#): Important truths concerning the atonement were taught the people by this yearly service. In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; but **the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin. It had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary**. By the offering of blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law. **On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering for the congregation, went into the most holy place with the blood and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, above the tables of the law**. Thus the claims of the law, which demanded the life of the sinner, were satisfied. Then in his character of mediator the priest took the sins upon himself, and, leaving the sanctuary, he bore with him the burden of Israel's guilt. At the door of the tabernacle he laid his hands upon the head of the scapegoat and confessed over him "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat." And as the goat bearing these sins was sent away, they were, with him, regarded as forever separated from the people. Such was the service performed "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Hebrews 8:5.

Throughout the year, the sins of the people were *transferred* by the offering of blood sacrifices to the sanctuary. Then, on the Day of Atonement the sanctuary was "cleansed" by a service that again *transferred* the sins of the people to the high priest and then to a "scapegoat" which was then released into the wilderness to die. This symbolism will meet its fulfillment at the end of time with the destruction of Satan. That is, Satan is the scapegoat represented in this service. It is upon Satan that the guilt is ultimately placed and it is Satan who will ultimately pay the penalty for the sins of the saved.

[PP 358.2](#) : Since Satan is the originator of sin, the direct instigator of all the sins that caused the death of the Son of God, justice demands that Satan shall suffer the final punishment. Christ's work for the redemption of men and the purification of the universe from sin will be closed **by the removal of sin from the heavenly sanctuary and the placing of these sins upon Satan, who will bear the final penalty**. So in the typical service, the yearly round of ministration

closed with the purification of the sanctuary, and the confessing of the sins on the head of the scapegoat.

This transference of guilt or “the placing of these sins upon Satan” will occur at the end of Christ’s ministration in Heaven as our High Priest. It is at the end of this symbolic service (of the Day of Atonement) that Christ will take off his priestly robes and put on the robes of King of kings and Lord of lords and come to the Earth for the second time and take his people home.

Robe of righteousness. The mercy seat (Hebrew, *kapporeth*; the cover of the ark) represented two kinds of cover. The first cover is to extend mercy in a probationary sense. That is, man is given time to repent and his sinfulness is not immediately judged.

[GC 36.1](#): It is **the restraining power of God** that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for **God’s mercy and long-suffering** in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed.

The second cover is described as a robe of righteousness.

[COL 311.3](#): Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God’s presence. **This covering, the robe of His own righteousness**, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. “I counsel thee,” He says, “to buy of Me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” Revelation 3:18.

The problem with the sinfulness of man is his inability to change himself. Only God can change a man’s heart if the sinner allows Him to. (See Psalm 51:10; Acts 15:8-9; Heb. 10:16; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:16-19.) God is able to change a man’s heart through His Son and because of His Son. God is then “appeased” (i.e. *propitiated*) when man accepts His Son into his heart and mind and is enabled by God to live his life (i.e. the life of His Son). See Galatians 2:20.

➤ Atonement [e]

Etymology. The word “atonement” comes from the Hebrew words *kippur* (singular) and *kippurim* (plural). It is also transliterated as *kaphar* or *kopher*. Its most literal meaning is “to cover”. First used in the story of Noah and the Flood, Genesis 6:14, “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it [*w-kaphar'ta*] inside and out with pitch.” Covering the ark with pitch meant the boat could repel water and not sink. Atonement is understood to be a covering, a ransom, a payment of wrongs committed so as not to (sink and) perish. Besides atonement, the Hebrew word is also translated as pacify, make propitiation, or expiation. In English, the word “atonement” originally meant “at-one-ment”, that is, being “at one”, in harmony, with someone.

Covering typology

Covering typology is found throughout the Bible. Here are several examples.

Covering garments of light. As per EGW, Adam and Eve were originally clothed with garments of light. The covering was from God and symbolized their innocence.

- [8Lts, Ms 9, 1893, par. 22](#): But Adam and Eve fell, and the garment of light no longer covered them...
- [RH November 15, 1898, par. 10](#): Adam and Eve both ate of the fruit, and obtained a knowledge which, had they obeyed God, they would never have had,—an experience in disobedience and disloyalty to God,—the knowledge that they were naked. The garment of innocence, a covering from God, which surrounded them, departed; and they supplied the place of this heavenly garment by sewing together fig-leaves for aprons.

Covering of skins. After the Fall, Adam and Eve were ashamed and hid from the presence of God. They sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness. The recognition of their nakedness represented their need for atonement. After confronting them, God made for them garments of skins. “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

Many assume that this was the first animal sacrifice performed by God himself in order to provide for Adam and Eve’s garments of skin. However, as per EGW, this was not the case. It was Adam who carried out the first death *from his own hand*.

[PP 68.1](#): To Adam, the offering of the **first sacrifice** was a most painful ceremony. **His hand must be raised to take life**, which only God could give. **It was the first time he had ever witnessed death**, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. **As he slew the innocent victim**, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the

spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate.

This fits the pattern of the sanctuary services in which the participant, the sinner, was required to perform the deed. When a sinner brought a sacrificial animal to the door of the courtyard of the sanctuary, a priest handed him a knife and a basin. The sinner laid his hands on the animal's head, confessed his sins and then slew the animal by cutting its throat. The priest would then perform the steps that followed. All this prefigured the death of Christ which happened, not by the hand of God, but by the hand of man. We caused the death of Christ (Acts 2:36).

Covering of righteousness. The coverings God made for the first couple was symbolic of Christ one day providing the robe of his own righteousness.

- *Isaiah 61:10*: I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; **For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness**, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- [12LtMs, Ms 145, 1897, par. 5](#): The Lord Jesus Christ had prepared a covering, **the robe of His own righteousness**, that He will put on every repenting, believing soul who by faith will receive it. Said John, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." [John 1:29.] Sin is the transgression of the law. Christ died to make it possible for every man to have his sins taken away.

Covering of gold over the mercy seat. The mercy seat (Hebrew: *hakarpořet*) was the gold lid over the Ark of the Covenant. This was connected with the ritual service performed on the Day of Atonement (Hebrew: *Yom Kippur*). The Septuagint translates the mercy seat as *hilasterion* ("thing that atones").

Coverings of the high priest. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest wore two sets of garments—golden and (white) linen. During the service, on the occasions when he entered the Most Holy Place, the high priest changed into his linen garments, and then changed back to his golden garments upon exiting. The linen garments consisted of white trousers (akin to boxer shorts), white coat, white sash (akin to a belt) and a white turban.

Leviticus 16:4: He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

Covering of the veil. The veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle was also used as a covering for the Ark of the

Covenant whenever it was to be moved. It was before the veil that the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled. Upon the veil were embroidered angelic figures. It was before the veil that the golden altar stood on which incense was burned. The Old Testament referred to this veil as “the veil of the covering” or “the covering veil” (Exodus 35:12; 39:34; 40:21; and Numbers 4:5).

Christ coming in the flesh is often described as Christ's divinity being “veiled” in humanity. Thus, the inner veil of the Tabernacle represented Christ's flesh (or humanity). It was Christ's humanity, his life and death, that became our covering. After Jesus' death on the cross, “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). This symbolized the discontinuance of the sacrificial system because a better offering had been made with better promises (Heb. 8:6; 10:12).

Covering of the cloud of incense. On the Day of Atonement, when the high priest went beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place, a cloud of incense was burned and served as a veil over the presence of God (i.e. the Shekinah Glory).

Dual Atonement

The daily sacrifice. The daily sacrifice has to do with two lambs that were sacrificed in the Sanctuary on a daily basis throughout the year (Numbers 28:1-8). They were sacrificed “between the evenings,” one at around 9:00 A.M and the other at around 3:00 P.M. The daily sacrifice foreshadowed how Jesus would be nailed to the cross in the morning and die in the afternoon, at about the same time the lambs were slain.

The yearly sacrifice. Or, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). This was a sacrificial service performed once a year on the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar (Lev. 23:27-28). It was the culmination of the daily sacrifices (or atonements) made throughout the year. The Day of Atonement represented the **final atonement** (or final judgment) after which the sanctuary, the priesthood and the people were cleansed (Lev, 16:30, 33). In the Hebrew, the Day of Atonement is really the Day of “Atonements” (*kippurim*, plural). This is noted and explained in detail in John Calvin's Commentary on Lev. 23:27 (see StudyLight.org).

According to Jewish tradition, on the first day of Tishri (*Rosh Hashanah*), God condemns the wicked to death. Then, during the 10 days of Awe (between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*) God inscribes the names of the righteous in the Book of Life. People who fall between the two categories have until *Yom Kippur* to perform “*teshuvah*,” or repentance. The Day of Atonement is the most sacred day of the year. It is sometimes referred to as the “Sabbath of Sabbaths.” Even non-observant Jews participate in religious services on *Yom Kippur*, causing synagogue attendance to soar. Any Jew who performed work or failed to fast on that day was cut off from the people (Lev. 23:28-29).

Dual atonement. In the sacrificial system there were two *necessary* atonements. The first is the *daily* or continual sacrifice typified in the Passover festival observed in the spring. The second is the *yearly* Day of Atonement festival observed in the fall. In the letter to the Hebrews, Hebrews 8:3 speaks to the first and Hebrews 9:23 speaks to the second, as follows:

- *Hebrews 8:3:* For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is **necessary** for this priest also to have something to offer.
- *Hebrews 9:23:* Thus it was **necessary** for the copies of the heavenly things to be **purified** with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The first was *necessary* for forgiveness (Leviticus 4) and the second was *necessary* for cleansing (Leviticus 16). The cleansing was that of the sanctuary, the priesthood and the people. The cleansing of the sanctuary itself involved the cleansing of the Most Holy and Holy Places and the cleansing of the Altar of the Court.

Receiving the atonement of reconciliation (Leviticus 4) was not complete without the cleansing work of Leviticus 16. As 1 John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [*first atonement*] our sins and to cleanse us [*second atonement*] from all unrighteousness.” As Leviticus 16 tells us, yet a second act of atonement was required. Again, the first was not complete without the second.

- *Leviticus 16:16:* Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, **because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins.** And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.
- *Leviticus 16:30:* For on this day **shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before Yehovah from all your sins.**

EGW expressed this dual atonement concept in the following quotes. She describes this second atonement as the “final atonement” for sin.

- [PP 357.5](#): The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, **was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement;** so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.
- [GC 489.1](#): The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary **above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross.** By His death He began that

work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven.

- [25LtMs, Ms 69, 1912, par. 47](#): When Christ, the mediator, burst the bands of the tomb, and ascended on high to minister for man, He first entered the holy place, where, by virtue of His own sacrifice, He made an offering for the sins of men. With intercession and pleadings He presented before God the prayers and repentance and faith of His people, purified by the incense of His own merits. **He next entered the most holy place to make an atonement for the sins of the people and cleanse the sanctuary. His work as high priest completes the divine plan of redemption by making the final atonement for sin.**

Another way to look at it is using the theological terms “justification” for the first (daily) and “sanctification” for the second (yearly). One is forgiveness of sin, the other is total eradication of sin and blotting out the record in heaven. The “blotting out of sin” in the heavenly sanctuary through the final atonement will occur prior to the second coming while the righteous living are still on earth, yet unglorified. The 144,000 (Rev. 7:4; 14:1, 3) represent the group which will be without a mediator for a short period of time prior to Christ's second coming. “Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand” ([RH March 9, 1905, par. 4](#)).

Single atonement

Defined. Single atonement is the belief that Jesus died on the cross and that is all the atonement I will ever need. Thus, what Jesus is doing in heaven as our high priest (Heb. 2:17) is applying what he already did on the cross. It denies Christ performing a second or “final” atonement in heaven.

For roughly the first 100 years of the Church's existence, Seventh-day Adventists held to a dual atonement belief. Since the mid-1950s, however, as stated in Questions on Doctrine, Adventists now hold to a single atonement belief. The statements found in the SDA's Fundamental Beliefs #9 and #24 (2020 edition) also support this view. Thus, today's SDA Church is squarely in the *evangelical*, “true-gospel” fraternity and has completely abandoned the dual atonement concept of the pioneer SDA Church, Ellen G. White included. Of course, this changes Adventist eschatology, particularly with the teaching of the Investigative Judgment and 1844, as detailed in the article, “[How the Investigative Judgment and 1844 Became Artifacts of the Past](#),” Adventist Today, September 22, 2020.

➤ Spirit as Essence [4]

The difficulty Trinitarians have with the Father, Son and Spirit is in not making a distinction between Person and Essence.

Spirit not a Person. The Trinity doctrine defines the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the triune God. Yet, it is admitted by the Catholic Church, which is as Trinitarian as it gets, that this cannot be proven by the Old Testament at all and only partially by the New.

- **“The Old Testament clearly does not envisage God’s spirit as a person...**God’s spirit is simply God’s power. If it is sometimes represented as being distinct from God, it is because the breath of Yahweh acts exteriorly...The majority of New Testament texts reveal God’s spirit as something, not someone; this is especially seen in the parallelism between the spirit and the power of God” —*“God’s Spirit Not Presented as a Person,”* New Catholic Encyclopedia, Second Edition, 2003, Vol. 13, pp. 426, 429.
- **“On the whole the New Testament, like the Old, speaks of the spirit as a divine energy or power”** —W.E. Addis and Thomas Arnold, *A Catholic Dictionary*, 1960, p. 810.

Thus, if you believe the Holy Spirit to be a Person, you are taking an unprovable position if you intend to use the Bible as your proof. The Old Testament will not help you at all, and there is very little in the New Testament to arguably support it. Rather, as stated, the spirit is best understood as God’s power, divine energy or essence.

Persons have names. The Father and Son are “persons”. They have names—Yehovah in the case of the Father (in the OT) and Jesus in the case of the Son (in the NT). Moreover, Yehovah has other secondary names in the OT while Jesus has other secondary names in the NT.

However, the Spirit has no “name” other than Spirit or Holy Spirit. Rather than the spirit being a “person,” the Bible identifies it as an “essence” with titles and attributes largely *derived* from the Father and Son. In the NT, when the spirit is referenced, it is simply the “holy spirit” or “God’s spirit” or the “spirit of God” or the “spirit of Christ”.

Persons have bodies. The definition of a “person” should include that he “has a body”. Whoever has, or ever has had a body is a person. God the Father is a person and the Son of God is a person, therefore they have bodies. Of course, not earthly bodies of earthly substance, but heavenly bodies of immortal substance. Does the Bible support this idea? Yes, it does. Consider:

God’s body parts	Scriptures
Head & hair	Dan. 7:9
Eyes	Prov. 15:3; Deut. 11:12; Ps. 34:15

Eyelids	Ps. 11:4
Ears (hear)	Ps. 17:6; 34:15; 5:3
Nose (smell)	Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21; Phil. 4:18
Nostrils	Ex. 15:8; Job 4:9; Ps. 18:8, 15
Mouth	Deut. 8:3
Tongue	Isa. 30:27
Lips	Job 11:5; 23:12; Isa. 30:27
Breath	Ps. 33:6
Voice	Gen. 3:8; Deut. 4:12; Isa. 6:8; 30:30
Face / countenance	Ex. 33:20; Ps. 13:1; Num. 6:26; Ps. 4:6
Arm	Deut. 33:27; Isa. 51:5
Hands	Gen. 49:24; Ex. 15:17; Isa. 5:12
Finger	Ex. 8:19; 31:18; Luke 11:20; Ps. 8:3
Back	Ex. 33:23
Feet	Ex. 24:10; 2 Sam. 22:10; Isa. 60:13; Nah. 1:3
Bodily form or “image”	Num. 12:8; James 3:9; Rev. 4:3; Gen. 1:26-27 with 5:3
Heart	Gen. 6:6; 8:1; Hos. 11:8
Spirit	Gen. 1:2; 1 Cor. 2:11
Soul	Isa. 1:14; 42:1; Jer. 5:9, 29

God also rides, walks, sits, stands, feels and thinks. Yes, we are made in God’s likeness or *image*, not just in soul and spirit but also in body!

Again, the Father is a person and the Son is a person because they have bodies. However, the spirit of God has no body; therefore it is *nobody*. It is God’s life. Man was created in the image of God, and we can see from our own makeup that our spirit is not another person either. Our spirit is our life, and God’s spirit is God’s life. God’s life is in his body, just as our life is in our body. So, the spirit of God is the life that is in the Father, which he gave to the Son (cp. John 5:26), and which the Son was ordained by God to give to others (John 17:2). Jesus was always very aware of his dependency on his Father for his life (cp. John 6:57), as we should maintain such an awareness and a gratitude to Jesus for ours.

Moreover, “*the body without the spirit is dead*” (James 2:26). This means that the spirit of man is the life that is in man’s body. No man is alive whose spirit has departed from his body. When Paul wrote, “the spirit is life” (Rom. 8:10), he was telling us that God’s eternal spirit is real life. This is why the Scriptures teach that no man has eternal life in him until he receives God’s life-giving spirit. When Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life” (John 10:10), he was speaking of the life of God—the spirit that was poured out on the day of Pentecost. As Acts 2:33 tells us, “Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God and having

received from the Father the promise of the holy spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out this that you now see and hear.” This is why Jesus came: to enable man to be made partakers of the spirit of God, the holy spirit.

“Spirit” or “spirit.” Capitalization was not a part of the original languages of the Bible, given that the Old Testament languages (Hebrew and Aramaic) did not have upper and lower case letters, while the New Testament Greek manuscripts were all written in uppercase (i.e. “uncial” or “majuscule” script). Thus, wherever you see “Spirit” (vs. “spirit”) and “Holy Spirit” (vs. “holy spirit”) in your English Bibles, you are reading the translator’s interpretation (or translation bias) for the given word when the term is capitalized.

Wrong gender. The word “spirit” in Hebrew is *feminine*, while in the Greek it is *neuter* (i.e. neither *masculine* nor *feminine*). Yet, in Trinitarian thinking, the Holy Spirit is always understood as a “He” not a “She” or an “It”. In the New Testament the word “spirit” (*pneuma*) and surrounding context should be understood and translated as *neuter*—“it” not “he” or “she”. But, alas, that is not the case. Most Bible translations slant the meaning to the masculine without grammatical justification. For further discussion on the term *pneuma*, see the Article entry: [Translation of pneuma](#).

Derivative attributes. Carefully studied, it becomes evident that all of the titles and definitions applied to the Holy Spirit describe characteristics that stem from the Father and the Son and do not necessitate an additional personality.

- “The Spirit of God” (Matthew 3:16)
- “The Spirit of Christ” (1 Peter 1:11)
- “The Spirit of Holiness” (Romans 1:4)
- “The Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17)
- “The Spirit of a Sound Mind” (2 Timothy 1:7)
- “The Holy Spirit of Promise” (Ephesians 1:13)
- “The Spirit of Meekness” (Galatians 6:1)
- “The Spirit of Understanding” (Isaiah 11:2)
- “The Spirit of Wisdom” (Ephesians 1:17)
- “The Spirit of Glory” (1 Peter 4:14)
- “The Spirit of Counsel” (Isaiah 11:2)
- “The Spirit of Grace” (Hebrews 10:29)
- “The Spirit of Adoption” (Romans 8:15)
- “The Spirit of Prophecy” (Revelation 19:10)

Also, many of the Spirit’s attributes can be shown to originate in the Father or the Son. For example, the Spirit is named “Comforter” in John 14:26 (KJV), yet the Father is called “the God of all comfort” in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. Other examples include making intercession: Romans 8:26; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25; and enabling spiritual understanding: 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 John 5:20.

Attributes of the spirit of man. If the spirit of God were a person, then what would the spirit of man be? Would it not also be a person? From the Bible, we learn that man's spirit can be:

- “troubled” (Gen. 41:8)
- “revived” (Gen 45:27; Isa. 57:15)
- “stirred up” (1 Chr. 5:26; 2 Chr. 36:22; Ezra 1:1)
- “wounded” (Prov. 18:14)
- “overwhelmed” (Ps. 77:3)
- “refreshed” (1 Cor. 16:18)

Further, the spirit of man is said to:

- Be willing to do something (Ex. 35:21)
- Restrain one from an action (Job 32:18)
- Searches things out (Ps. 77:6; Prov. 20:27; Isa. 26:9; Ezek. 13:3; Matt. 22:43)
- Sometimes fails (Ps. 143:7)
- Sustains a man (Prov. 18:14)
- “Rejoice” (Luke 1:47)
- Serve God (Rom. 1:9)
- “bear witness” (Rom. 8:16)
- “confess” (1 John 4:2)
- Knows things (1 Cor. 2:10-11)
- It can pray (1 Cor. 14:14)
- It can work (Eph. 2:2)
- It needs rest (2 Cor. 2:13)
- It travels (Eccl. 3:21; 12:7; Luke 8:55, cp. 1 Cor. 5:3-4)
- It can go places and return (Judges 15:19)
- It can stand up and do work (Eccl. 10:4; Eph. 2:2)

Again, does the above attributes of the spirit of man, make that spirit another person or entity? Certainly, not. When a man's spirit prays, the man is praying. When a man's spirit knows something, the man knows something. Your spirit is you. And God's spirit is God. None of the activities of man's spirit means that man's spirit is a person, and yet Trinitarians use the same or similar attributes of God's spirit as evidence that it is a Third Person.

We were created in God's image, and the fact that the Bible mentions things done by the spirit of God is only to be expected, since our spirits do the same kind of things. It is altogether proper to speak of the holy spirit as living, feeling, performing deeds, and knowing, because God does those things. And he does them by the same means we do them: by the spirit that dwells in him. God's spirit is his life, just as our spirit is our life (James 2:26).

Non-familial relationship. God is our Father and Christ is our Elder Brother (Rom. 8:29). But, the Spirit is none of those—he (or “it”) is neither Father, Mother, or Brother, but a totally non-familial relationship to us.

Jesus desired that the Father and Son be one with us (John 17:21-23), as a kind of **family**, without ever mentioning the Spirit. How could Jesus forget about the Spirit in this equation? It is because the Spirit is not in the family as a Person but as an Essence.

The apostle John said that our “fellowship is *with* the Father and *with* his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3) but failed to mention the Spirit. Are we not to have fellowship with the Spirit also? There is a reference to “the fellowship *of* the Holy Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 13:14 but note that it is “*of* the Holy Spirit” not “*with* the Holy Spirit”. Again, Essence not Person.

Distinguished by omissions. There are many omissions of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament narrative. For example,

- **The Lord's Prayer.** Jesus' model prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) does not include the Holy Spirit.
- **Father and Son are one (*John 10:30*).** The Spirit is not mentioned.
- **Eternal life.** Jesus declares eternal life to be a knowledge of the Father and Son (John 17:3)—but not the Spirit.
- **The Throne.** The Father and Son are on thrones or on a throne (Matthew 19:28; Hebrews 12:2; Revelation 3:21; 22:1, 3)—but not the Spirit.
- **Salutations (greetings).** Nearly all the salutations in the New Testament include the Father and Son—but not the Spirit. The two exceptions are 1 Peter 1:2 and Revelation 1:4, 5 which are discussed in detail under their respective “Notes” sections. Suffice to say, they are not referring to a Third Entity.
- **The Temple.** The temple in the New Jerusalem will be “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Revelation 21:22)—no mention of the Spirit.
- **The Light.** The light in the New Jerusalem will be the glory of God and the Lamb (Revelation 21:23)—no mention of the Spirit.
- **Glory and honor.** The apostles give praise, glory, and honor to the Father and Son without mentioning the Spirit (1 Timothy 1:16-17; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2 Peter 1:16-17; Revelation 5:13; and so on). If the Spirit were part of the Trinity, this would be a grave omission.

Christ was given and imparts the Holy Spirit. Christ was given the Holy Spirit by God to impart to all who will receive him as Savior.

- *Acts 2:33:* Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God and **having received** from the Father the promise of **the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this** that you now see and hear.
- *2 Peter 1:4:* **His divine power** has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these

He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become **partakers of the divine nature**.

- *Hebrews 6:4*: For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made **partakers of the Holy Spirit**.
- *Ephesians 3:19*: and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**.
- *Colossians 2:9-10*: [For this we have been given Christ in which] **the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily**,¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Paul speaks of a veil that covers the hearts of unbelievers, but to the believer, the veil is removed:

- *2 Corinthians 3:16-18*: when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. **Now the Lord is the spirit**, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord [*who is*] the spirit. [[“who is” is not in the Greek, but was inserted by the translators.]]

The Spirit is the Power of God. The kingdom of God has come in power. That power is the power of the spirit of God.

- *Acts 1:8*: But you will receive **power** when the holy spirit has come upon you.
- *Romans 15:19*: by the power of signs and wonders, **by the power of the spirit of God**—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;
- *Ephesians 3:16*: that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be **strengthened with power through his spirit** in your inner being,
- *2 Timothy 1:7*: for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of **power** and love and self-control.

Spirit power is not human power. It is not human influence, prestige, hierarchy or authority. The church might communicate much knowledge and offer the community very good and worthy services. But, if it does not have the life of Christ and does not manifest **the power of the spirit**, then it is all in vain. The work and counsel of man comes to naught (*Acts 5:38*). The power is in the being, not the doing. And the work we do is not of human devising, but God gives the plan and the leading. The planning is of God.

Holiness made possible. The kingdom is God's doing. It is God working in the life of a believer, creating in him a character of holiness, the likeness of His Son. It is a transformed life, a miracle, the working of God.

If and when you see hypocrisy and pretenders in the church, it is because they have lost the reality of the kingdom of God which is a *transformed life*. They have a form of godliness **but no power** (2 Timothy 3:5). What many in the church lack is a complete commitment and willing desire to receive the life of Christ in the soul. It is the willingness to have God work in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.

God is a person; the spirit is an essence. Ellen G. White differentiated between God being a “person” and the Holy Spirit being an “essence”. Moreover, she warned *against* the idea (or theory) that God is an essence.

- [8LtMs, Ms 93, 1893, par. 6](#): Every church member will be vigorous and fruitful in proportion as he honors **the Father, who is not to be regarded as an essence but as a personal God who made man in His own image and likeness**.
- [CCh 322.6](#): The theory **that God is an essence** pervading all nature **is one of Satan's most subtle devices**. It misrepresents God and is a dishonor to His greatness and majesty.
- [FLB 40.5](#): The theory **that God is an essence** pervading all nature is received by many who profess to believe the Scriptures; but, however beautifully clothed, **this theory is a most dangerous deception....**
- [19LtMs, Ms 153, 1904, par. 25](#): Oh, the wonderful sophistry that is coming in, the masterly sophistry—**that God is an essence. We have got a God, a personal God and a personal Saviour.**

However, EGW clearly stated that the Holy Spirit **is** an essence.

- [7LtMs, Ms 8c, 1891, par.12](#): The believers in all ages are to be one, and **the Holy Spirit is the living essence** that cements, animates, and pervades the whole body of Christ's followers.
- [8T 326.1](#): Fathers and mothers, teach your children of the **wonder-working power of God. His power is manifest** in every plant, in every tree that bears fruit. Take the children into the garden and explain to them how He causes the seed to grow. The farmer plows his land and sows the seed, but he cannot make the seed grow. He must depend upon God to do that which no human power can do. **The Lord puts His own Spirit into the seed, causing it to spring into life.** Under His care the germ breaks through the case enclosing it and springs up to develop and bear fruit.

Also consider these statements from EGW:

- [MH 417.2](#): The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through

➤ Plan of Salvation [\[↶\]](#)

Salvation plan. Christianity defines salvation as the good news of saving (or delivering or redeeming) mankind from sin and death. This was made possible and freely given by the Father through his Son (*Jesus Christ*) to all who will accept it by *faith* in his Son. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Salvation is the “gift of God” (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8). This gift is not a *what* but a *who*. It is the gift of God’s Son to mankind. The Bible reveals to us this plan of salvation in symbolic language. Beginning in Genesis with a coming Messiah (the “seed of the woman” Gen. 3:15) and ending in Revelation with a conquering Messiah (the “Christ of God” Rev. 11:15; 12:10). Jesus fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) in the New Testament.

In the plan of salvation, it was necessary for Jesus Christ to live a victorious life (perfect *righteousness*), die a cruel death (his *crucifixion*) and rise from the dead (the *resurrection*) with an immortal body. All this so that God could be just in putting an end to sin and death, and bring to nothing the one who has the power of death, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

Salvation will not be complete until “apostasy comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3). This “coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the working of Satan, with all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and with every kind of wicked deception among those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (2 Thess. 2:9-10). Thus, the plan of salvation is not only about saving those who accept Christ, but also about condemning those who reject him (2 Thess. 2:12).

Salvation will be completed in two resurrections. The first resurrection will be for the righteous at the second coming of Christ when he raises them from the dead and takes them to heaven (1 Thess. 4:16-17). The second resurrection will be for the wicked after the millennium in which they are judged and destroyed with Satan and his angels in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:5-15).

Acceptance of salvation. In order to receive the gift of salvation a person must accept it. It is conditioned on believing (*faith*) and receiving. When truly received, the person’s faith is *made manifest* in a changed life and behavior. This is more fully detailed in the Article, “*Steps to Salvation*.”

Salvation summary.

- A. Sons of God
 - .. B. Creation, Fall and Curse
 - ... C. Christ
 - a. The Promised Seed
 - b. The Life of Christ

- x. The Death of Christ
- b'. The Resurrection of Christ
- a'. The Promised Spirit
- C'. **Antichrist**
- 1. The Rise of Babylon
- 2. The Fall of Babylon
- ... B'. **Re-Creation**
- 1. Second Coming
- 2. Final Judgment
- 3. New Creation
- A'. **Sons of God**

A. Sons of God

“Sons of God.” God creates the “worlds” through his Son (Heb. 1:2). This includes the creation of the angels in Heaven, who are called “sons of God” (Job 1:6).

Rebellion in Heaven. Sin begins in the Eden of Heaven, the “Garden of God” (Ezek. 28:13). It originates with the angel, Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-19), called the Devil and Satan, followed by “his angels” (Rev. 12:9). The Book of Revelation refers to the Devil and Satan as “the old serpent” and “the great dragon” which are allusions to Genesis 3 (the serpent) and Job 41 (Leviathan). Satan and his angels are cast out of Heaven (Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 28:16-17; Rev. 12:7-9).

B. Creation, Fall and Curse

The Creation. God creates our world in six literal days, followed by the seventh, rest day, called the Sabbath (Genesis 1-2). His completed creation was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). The original animals and Man (Adam and Eve) ate only plants (Gen. 1:29-30). Life was perfect.

Rebellion on Earth. God gives Man a test of loyalty in the Eden of Earth, the “Garden of Eden” (Gen. 2:15), by commanding Man not to eat of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” which is in “the midst of the garden” (Gen 2:9, 16-17). Man fails the test and subsequently receives the Curse—the consequence of his disobedience—and is cast out of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3). All of Adam’s descendants are under the Curse.

C. Christ

a. The Promised Seed. God promises to give Man a second chance with the promise of a coming “seed” (Gen 3:15). The term “seed” is a recurring theme in the Bible. It refers to the seed of plants, but also to the seed of man. Metaphorically, it refers to: progeny, offspring, children, descendants, race, and generation. The terms, “the seed of the woman,” “the seed of Abraham,” and “the seed of David,” all refer to the promise of the coming Messiah. The term “seed” is also used figuratively to mean “the word of God” (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23).

b. The Life of Christ. Jesus comes as the Messiah (“the Christ”). He is born a man from a virgin and lives a holy, righteous life to become the “Son of Man,” the Second Adam, our Perfect Example (Luke 24:7; 1 Cor. 15:45; Heb. 12:1-3).

x. The Death of Christ. God is able to forgive man’s sins through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)—through faith in him (Rom. 3:25-26). Note that it says “the *sin* of the world,” not “the *sins* of the world.” What Jesus accomplished is to break the bondage to sin, to break the power of sin in our lives.

b’. The Resurrection of Christ. As the first-fruits, the resurrection of Christ gives evidence to the reality of God’s promise of Eternal Life for all who accept salvation through Christ. Jesus becomes the means by which God can offer Eternal Life (John 3:16). Satan is excluded from the heavenly courts as man’s representative and Jesus takes his place as the second Adam (Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:10; 1 Cor. 15:45).

a’. The Promised Spirit. Man is gifted with the spirit of God, poured out at Pentecost by Christ after his Ascension and Glorification (Acts 1-2). This spirit enables Man to live the Life of Christ. Christ becomes “the Resurrection and the Life” to all who accept him by faith (John 11:25).

C’. Antichrist

The Rise of Babylon. A period of time must pass to fully reveal the character of Satan and his followers. The rise of the “Man of Sin” (2 Thess. 2:3-10) is accomplished through a counterfeit (antichrist) religious system called Babylon. It is given power for a period of 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6), or “a time, and times, and half a time” (Rev. 12:14), or 42 months (Rev. 13:5). All of these add up to the same number which is interpreted prophetically to mean 1,260 years (a day representing a year). Seventh-day Adventists believe it to be the Papal dominance evident in the period from 538 AD to 1798 AD. Some also interpret this prophecy to represent a future fulfillment of a literal 3-½ year period of Papal reemergence and worldwide dominance prior to the Second Coming (Rev. 13).

The Fall of Babylon. The final struggle between good and evil culminates in the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16) in which Babylon is destroyed (Rev. 17-18).

B'. Re-Creation

Second Coming. Jesus completes his mediatory work in Heaven as our High Priest and returns to Earth, resurrects the righteous (“the first resurrection,” Rev. 20:5), and takes them to Heaven for a period of 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-6).

Final Judgment. After the 1,000 years are ended, Jesus returns to Earth, and the New Jerusalem also descends and settles on the Earth. The wicked are then raised and surround the New Jerusalem, where they are judged and finally annihilated together with Satan and his angels in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:7-15).

New Creation. The fire that destroys the wicked will also cleanse the Earth. God then makes a New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21:1). The holy city, New Jerusalem, is the place where God dwells with Man forever (Rev. 21:3). It becomes the New Eden on Earth.

➤ Steps to Salvation [\[↩\]](#)

The following is an adaptation and summation of the book, *Steps to Christ*, by Ellen G. White, and portions of the seven basic life principles as taught by Bill Gothard (BasicSeminar.com).

Executive summary. The outline to the steps to salvation are as follows:

1. **New Identity.** A true knowledge of God is important, but not enough. A change of “spirit” is required.
2. **Repentance.**

New Identity

Knowledge of God. Salvation (i.e. Biblical “atonement”) begins with a true knowledge and trusting relationship with God. According to the Old Testament, the beginning of wisdom and understanding is to know God (Prov. 9:10). To know God is “eternal life” according to Jesus (John 17:3). A knowledge of God is not a mere intellectual ascent, but a change of heart (Col. 3:10). It is a “born again” or “born from above” experience (John 3:5-7). The apostle John describes it as being in “fellowship” with him (1 John 1:3), of having an “abiding” presence with him (1 John 2:24).

God’s goodness. Both the natural world and *revelation* alike testify of God’s love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator’s hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God’s law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God’s love is revealed. It is written that God cursed the ground for man’s sake. Genesis 3:17. The thorn and the thistle—the difficulties and trials that make his life one of toil and care—were appointed for his good as a part of the training needful in God’s plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses.

The problem of evil and the purpose of God

The problem of evil. Christians fully recognize, experience and question the presence of evil in this world. How then does one reconcile the goodness of God with the presence of evil? The answer comes by way of a theological *theodicy*. A theodicy is an argument that attempts to vindicate God’s goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil. The challenge is then to provide a well-reasoned and life-satisfying answer to the problem of evil. In its most basic form, the problem of evil involves the following assumptions:

1. That God is all good, all powerful and, therefore, all knowing.

2. That our world was made by God and exists in a contingent (i.e. dependent) relationship to him.
3. That evil is our present reality. Why?

If God is good and powerful and evil is bad and ever present, then God should want to eliminate evil, given his goodness and power. But he has not done so, which logically means that,

- God is all good *but not all powerful*, in which case he does not have the ability to intervene.
- Or, God is all powerful and all-knowing *but not all good*, in which case he has a mean streak.
- Or, God *is indifferent and uninvolved* in our lives. It's as if he started the clock and then walked away.

But, this is not the God described in the Bible. According to the Scriptures, he is truly all good, all powerful, all knowing and personally involved in our lives. Then why do we still experience evil?

Is God *justified* in permitting evil? The crux of the problem is our assumption that, "There is *no reason* that would justify God to permit evil." Christians have come up with various arguments or models in response. Only two are explored below. Before we start, however, it should be understood that God *will* ultimately settle the problem of evil. In the end, in the Final Judgment, God will put an end to evil and establish an eternal reign of righteous.

The "free will" model. The "free will" model states that love is not love without the freedom to choose. You cannot *make* someone love you. When God gave man the power to choose, he also gave him the ability to not love him. You are free to love God, and you are also free not to love him. But what does it mean to not love God? It means to refuse what he offers. Since God is the source of light, life, and all that is good; it means to reject the source of light, life and goodness. By rejecting God, one embraces evil. As cold is the absence of heat, so darkness is the absence of light; death is the absence of life; and hate is the absence of love. Thus, evil continues in this world because man has chosen and continue to choose to reject God and embrace evil. God cannot be blamed for the consequences of our choosing, when we continually choose to reject him.

Powerless under sin. But the "free will" argument is criticized for the fact that ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, man has lost much of his power to choose. Man is born in a fallen state with a weakened will. As the Scriptures tell us, we are wretched slaves to the will of Satan (2 Tim. 2:26; Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Cor. 4:4). How can man be blamed for evil when he is incapable of doing good? It would seem that the responsibility for evil ultimately lies with God, who allowed man to choose to fall into sin. This was Adam's excuse to God: It was the wife *you gave me*, who caused me to sin. And Eve accused the serpent. And the serpent had nothing to say.

It is not enough to “know” God. It is evident then that it is not enough to “know” the goodness of God. Such knowledge is not enough. “For we *know* that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave to sin” (Rom. 7:14). The Apostle Paul longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was *powerless* to attain, and cried out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24).

The power that comes through Christ. The answer for us today, is that God has not abandoned mankind. Through the merits of Christ, we can be restored to God’s original plan. Man can be given a new heart and a new spirit. Jesus referred to it as being born again, or being born from above. God can work through man, if man allows him to. “For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). If we are willing to be made willing, God will act on our behalf. This work of salvation, this power from above, God has made possible through his Son.

To Jacob was revealed the way by which he, a sinner, could be restored to communion with God. “He dreamed and saw a stairway set upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12). This mystic ladder of his dream represented Jesus, the only means of communication between God and man. Jesus affirmed this interpretation in his conversation with Nathanael when he said, “you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51). Through Christ, earth is again linked with heaven. By his own merits, Christ has bridged the gulf which sin had made, so that the ministering angels can hold communion with man. Christ connects fallen man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power. Through Christ, man can be restored to communion with God.

The “soul making” model. There is then the “soul making” model. In this model, a person has the ability to actively and constructively respond to evil. Effectively, sin and suffering is viewed as a means to some good that God has ordained. For, “we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28). Nothing forces a person to confront his true self like suffering. Suffering causes our focus to turn inward, to face those parts of ourselves we might otherwise ignore. God can use suffering then to develop us into better people and be equipped to fulfill a higher purpose.

The primary argument against this model is that it seems like a “leap of faith” that no matter what happens, God has good intentions for the individual. Yet, the Bible gives many examples where this is the case. The chief example, of course, is the life of Christ. His suffering in this life ultimately made it possible for God to use him as the means of salvation for all of mankind. There are many examples in the Bible of individuals who had lesser but similar experiences, such as,

1. **Joseph.** As a teenager, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, which was as good as being sentenced to death

(Genesis chapter 37). Yet God allowed this to happen so that one day Joseph could become second to Pharaoh and save many from a multi-year famine. Years later, Joseph told his brothers, “you meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Gen. 50:20).

2. **Moses.** Taken from his parents as a child, to be raised in Pharaoh’s house the first 40 years of his life, then exiled as a shepherd in the land of Midian for another 40 years. All this was training ground for Moses to become the deliverer of Israel from Egypt.
3. **Esther.** She lost her parents and was adopted by her cousin, Mordecai, to eventually become Queen Esther and was able to save her people from extinction in the land of Persia.
4. **Daniel.** As a teenager, Daniel was taken into Babylonian captivity, made a eunuch, to eventually become the great prophet Daniel, who gave us time prophecies which included the coming of the Messiah.
5. **Blind man.** In Jesus day, there was a blind man from birth. “His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’³ Jesus answered, ‘Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but it happened so that the works of God might be revealed in him’” (John 9:2-3). Jesus subsequently healed the blind man, who later testified about Jesus and gave glory to God before the Pharisees.

To be clear, suffering never becomes good. Suffering remains evil. But God can use it in a constructive and purposeful way to his glory.

God’s higher purpose. The *causes* of true happiness are internal. They are matters of the heart. Jesus taught true happiness in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-10): Happy are the humble, the mourner, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted. God’s higher goal then is the development of inward beauty. His universal inward ideal is the character of his Son. Those who suffer greater conflict, always have something to say to those with less conflict. We all get richer when we recognize our poverty. We all get stronger when we boast of our weakness.

Prescribed from birth. It is evident from Scripture that God is not only responsible for what happens to us during our lifetime, but he is also takes responsibility for how we were made.

- *Psalms 139:16:* Your eyes saw my body. In your book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there were none of them.
- *Isaiah 45:9-10:* Woe to him who strives with his Maker—a clay pot among the clay pots of the earth! Shall the clay ask him who fashions it, “What are you making?” or your work, “He has no hands?”¹⁰ Woe to him who says to a father, “What have you

become the father of?” or to a mother, “What have you given birth to?”

- *Exodus 4:11*: Jehovah said to him: Who made man’s mouth? Or who makes one mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Isn’t it I, Jehovah?

Ten “unchangeables.” We face at least ten “unchangeables” that God allows and can use to his glory. They include:

1. Parents. Born with the wrong parents (e.g. alcoholics), or raised with a single parent, or no parents.
2. Time in history. Born in time of conflict and war.
3. Nationality (country). Born in a country with limited freedom and opportunities.
4. People groups. Born to a discriminated “race”.
5. Gender (male/female)
6. Birth order (1st, 2nd, 3rd born)
7. Number of brothers and sisters
8. Physical features (e.g. height, hair color, bone structure)
9. Mental abilities (capacity)
10. Aging and death

A person, particularly a teenager, may logically reason:

1. God created *everyone*. (God is all powerful.)
2. God loves *everyone*. (God is love.)
3. God created and loves *me*.
4. Conclusion: If what I see in the mirror is a reflection of God’s love and power, then why should I dedicate myself to him? If he messed me up the first time when he had a chance, what will he do to me if I dedicate myself to him now? My situation could get even worse!

God’s purpose in the “unchangeables.” As mentioned earlier, in the case of parents, or lack thereof, God may have a special purpose for your lives as evidenced by the stories in the Bible of Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Esther and Daniel. Indeed, if the loss of parents *is* your situation, then thank God that he has called you to a special purpose and humbly go about fulfilling it. The psalmist’s sentiment concerning God is true, “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation” (Psalm 68:5).

God’s work in your life has just begun. Think in terms of the potter (God) and the clay (you). Or, think in terms of a painting that the painter (God) has just begun to paint (you). God is not finished with you yet. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Physical suffering. In the case of physical defects or infirmities, first understand that outward appearance is not related to inward happiness. The greatest example, of course, is Christ himself, “For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2).

Inward beauty developed through conflict. As strange as it may sound, God may even sacrifice outward beauty to develop inward character. “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). He allows inherited weakness. “The sins of the fathers are visited on the children.” Why? Because God wants us to live by His strength and power and not ours.

The great apostle Paul had an infirmity. Many believe it was an eye problem. And he prayed about it. Three times. But God said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I [Paul] will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9). To Paul, his infirmity, his defect, became a thing of glory to him. Because, when he was weak, then he was strong.

Thus, it’s not the defect that matters, but the meaning behind it. “Scars” were things of glory in Europe many years ago. Back then when sword fighting was popular, a man with scars on his face was looked up to. Women would admire such a man. Why? Because it meant that he had survived a sword fight. He was a skilled sword fighter. The other guy lost. It’s not the “scar” it’s what it means.

A little girl once came home from school and told her mother, “Mommy, I want braces.” Her mother said, “Why do you want braces? You have a wonderful set of teeth.” She said, “Because all the popular kids in school have braces.” Again, it’s not what it is, it’s what it means.

What to do with your “scar”.

1. **Fix it.** If your hair is in your face, get a haircut. If your face is dirty, wash it. If there is something medically that can be done to fix your problem then do it.
2. **Exercise the prayer of faith.** “Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone of good cheer? He should sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:13-15). The illness could be one of three:
 - a. *Sickness to death.* “The days of our years are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty years” (Psalm 90:10).

- b. *Sickness to chastisement (i.e. punishment)*. Judged of God. (e.g. not caring for your body). The best one can ask for is for God to extend mercy which he may or may not grant.
 - c. *Sickness to the glory of God*. Two types of glory. One is an outward miracle, the other is inward. Examples include: the blind man in John 9:2-3 (outward) and Paul's infirmity in 2 Cor. 12:9 (inward).
3. **Glory in the unchangeable**. Attach new meaning to your "scars". They are:
- a. *Marks of ownership*. "For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" 1 Cor. 6:20).
 - b. *Motivators to develop inward qualities*. For example, developing beatitudes.
 - c. *Motivator to have a servant spirit (i.e. Mark 10:44)*.

Prayer of acceptance. "Thank you Lord for the way you made me, especially for (fill in the blank). I put myself back in your hands—you are the Master Potter—to mold me into your image, to develop in me the qualities of Christ, to become a living message of your truth and your love."

Repentance

Awakened conscience and renunciation of sin. How can a man be made right with God? How can he come to Christ and obtain the gift of eternal life? The same question was asked by the multitude in the Day of Pentecost, when, convicted of sin, they cried out, "Brothers, what should we do?" (Acts 2:37). The first word of Peter's answer was, "Repent." At another time, shortly after, he said, "Repent, . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We will not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness. Until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.

The Biblical sense of repentance is not the forced confession of a guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a fearful looking forward to judgment—lamenting being caught and fearful of the suffering to follow, more than the sin itself. Rather, conviction takes hold of the mind and heart. He senses the righteousness of God and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity, and he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven. Psalm 51 is a worthy chapter to read in this context. This prayer of David, after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened. David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon

only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness—to be restored to harmony and communion with God.

A repentance such as this, is beyond the reach of our own power to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ. Just here is a point on which many may err, and hence they fail of receiving the help that Christ desires to give them. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent, and that repentance prepares for the forgiveness of their sins.

The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, “Come to me, all of you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, “God exalted him by his right hand as Leader and Savior to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.” (Acts 5:31). We can no more repent without the spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ. Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that his spirit is moving upon our hearts.

Rationalizations not to repent. (1) My sin was so small; trivializing sin. (2) I’m not good enough. (3) Flattering yourself that you are a good person. (4) Waiting to become better. (5) God is too merciful not to save sinners. (6) I am as good as those who profess Christianity. (7) Procrastination; I can change when I choose; numbing the conscience. (8) Pseudo-Christian; an intellectual religion, a form of godliness, but the heart is not cleansed. (9) Overwhelmed with guilt and fear of God’s rejection.

Confession

Confession, not concealment. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to expiate our transgression. “He who conceals his sins will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find mercy “ (Prov. 28:13).

True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty. They are to be limited to the offended parties—always God, and only to those persons you’ve offended. The purpose is not to broadcast sin, but to confess *and* forsake it.

Avoid balancing guilt with blame. Guilt is a function of our spirit. Heavy guilt throws our mind out of balance—i.e. mental breakdown, futile attempts at *coping* with guilt, etc. A guilty person will often try to balance guilt with blame. For example,

- “*It’s not your fault but your parents fault.*” You feel guilty for hurting your mother, but you shouldn’t feel guilty since she didn’t show love to you when you were young.
- “*You stole but it’s not your fault since you live in a deprived society.*” Or, the Robin Hood mentality—stealing from the rich and giving to the poor.

The problem with blame is that it leads to bitterness, then the guilt becomes greater. One must get rid of both poisons: guilt and blame.

Steps in gaining a clear conscience.

1. List their offenses. Such as, broken promises, false accusations, favoritism, inconsistency, anger in discipline.
2. List your offenses. Such as, resisting authority, ungratefulness – difficult to live with, disloyalty – be there to help in need, irresponsibility, laziness, disorderliness, deception – giving part of the truth, pride, resentment.
3. Purpose to ask forgiveness.
 - a. *Become desperate for a clear conscience.* To avoid shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19). To avert failure (Prov. 28:13). To leave immaturity (Heb. 5:14). To escape discrediting (1 Peter 3:15-16).
 - b. *Better not to hear than not to apply.* “For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Peter 2:21).
4. Identify the basic offense. Was it your attitudes, actions, words, or negligence (i.e. failure to do what is right)?
5. Work out the right wording. Template wording, “God has convicted me of how wrong I was in (*name the basic offense*). I don’t deserve your forgiveness, but would you forgive me?” Then wait for a response. In naming the basic offense, there is no need to go into details, since they already know what happened and will not want to relive the painful experience.
 - a. *No blame.* Not, “I was wrong and you were wrong.”
 - b. *No justification.* Not, “I was tired.”
 - c. *No pride.* Not, “If I was wrong”
 - d. *No presumption.* Not, “I want you to forgive me.” Rather, I don’t deserve your forgiveness. An attitude much like that of the prodigal son in Luke 15:18.
6. Use the appropriate method. The purpose is to erase the past, not document it.

- a. Personal visit or phone call.
 - b. *No* text messages, *no* emails, *no* letters—all of which can lead to misuse or no response.
7. *Understand refusal to forgive, if it comes.*
- a. They also have a balance of guilt and blame.
 - b. They might not see a genuine spirit of repentance in you.
 - c. Is restitution needed? “Where is the money you stole?”
 - d. They might want to see a change in behavior
 - e. They may need time for healing
8. *Beware of misplaced conviction.* Genuine conviction starts with God, then deals with the major offenses first, followed by the small offenses.

Consecration

God’s promise is, “You shall seek me, and find me, when you search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never happen in us by which we are to be restored to his likeness. The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.

It is not blind submission, an unreasoning control. The “will” is not subverted and the “mind” is not controlled. It is not as a demon-possessed unbeliever—owned and controlled by Satan—but a consenting relationship, much like a loving marriage. Indeed, that is the typology the Bible uses. God does not force the will of his creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind and character; it would make man a mere robot. Such is not the purpose of the Creator.

God desires that man, the crowning work of his creative power, should reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which he desires to bring us through his grace. He invites us to give ourselves to him, that he may work his will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from him. Hence the Savior says, “So then, any one of you who does not give up all his possessions cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). Whatever draws away the heart from God must be given up. Mammon is the idol of many. The love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan. Reputation and worldly honor are worshiped by another class. The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. But these slavish bands

must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. We are not God's children unless we are such entirely.

There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will [p. 45] be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action. Those who feel the constraining love of God, do not ask how little may be given to meet the requirements of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer. With earnest desire they yield all and manifest an interest proportionate to the value of the object which they seek. A profession of Christ without this deep love is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery.

God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves.

Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. **What you need to understand is the true force of the will.** This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve him. You can give him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon him, your thoughts will be in harmony with him.

Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians. Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. **By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers.** You will have strength from

above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.

Faith and acceptance

You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him, and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart. Then believe that He does this **because He has promised**. This is the lesson which Jesus taught while He was on earth, that the gift which God promises us, we must believe we do receive, and it is ours. Jesus healed the people of their diseases when they had faith in His power; He helped them in the things which they could see, thus inspiring them with confidence in Him concerning things which they could not see—leading them to believe in His power to forgive sins.

From the simple Bible account of how Jesus healed the sick, we may learn something about how to believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Let us turn to the story of the paralytic at Bethesda. The poor sufferer was helpless; he had not used his limbs for thirty-eight years. Yet Jesus bade him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The sick man might have said, "Lord, if you make me whole, I will obey your word." But, no, he believed Christ's word, believed that he was made whole, and he made the effort at once; he *willed* to walk, and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole.

In like manner you are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You *will* to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise,—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed,—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It *is* so if you believe it. Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, "I believe it; it *is* so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised."

Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you are receiving it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24). There is a condition to this promise—that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them. It is our privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before the law without shame or remorse. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Henceforth you are not your own; you are bought with a price. "For you know that you were not redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your fathers with perishable things, like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but

with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Through this simple act of believing God, the holy spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as he loves his Son.

Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from him, but day by day say, "I am Christ's; I have given myself to him;" and ask him to give you his spirit and keep you by his grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing him, that you become his child, so you are to live in him. The apostle says, "Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him" (Colossians 2:6).

With the rich promises of the Bible before you, can you give place to doubt? Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! Nothing can hurt your own soul more than to entertain such a conception of our heavenly Father. He hates sin, but He loves the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. What stronger or more tender language could have been employed than He has chosen in which to express His love toward us? He declares, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, these may forget, yet I will not forget you!" (Isaiah 49:15).

Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. Thank God for the gift of his dear Son and pray that he may not have died for you in vain. The spirit invites you today. Come with your whole heart to Jesus, and you may claim his blessing.

The Test of Discipleship

Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruits of the spirit, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in his steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as he is pure. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure. The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. Christians will seek not the "outward adorning," rather, "let your adornment be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. If he restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, confess his sins, and love God and his fellow men, the sinner may be

sure that he has passed from death unto life. When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, love springs up in the heart. Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness.

There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first, already dwelt upon, is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.

The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, "I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds" (Heb. 10:16). And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). "Whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.

We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Savior, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to him; and so long as you do this, he will work in you to will and to do according to his good pleasure. So you may

say, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). So Jesus said to his disciples, "For it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your Father who speaks through you" (Matt. 10:20). Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works — works of righteousness, obedience.

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to his perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the spirit of God is arousing you.

Growing up into Christ

The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible spoken of as birth. Again, it is compared to the germination of the good seed sown by the husbandman. In like manner those who are just converted to Christ are, "as new-born babes," to "grow up" to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 4:15. Or like the good seed sown in the field, they are to grow up and bring forth fruit. Isaiah says that they will "be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he might be glorified." Isaiah 61:3. So from natural life, illustrations are drawn, to help us better to understand the mysterious truths of spiritual life.

Not all the wisdom and skill of man can produce life in the smallest object in nature. It is only through the life which God himself has imparted, that either plant or animal can live. So it is only through the life from God that spiritual life is begotten in the hearts of men. Unless a man is "born from above," (John 3:3) he cannot become a partaker of the life which Christ came to give.

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ.

Jesus teaches the same thing when He says, "Abide in me, and I will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you *bear fruit* unless you abide in me. . . . because apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in him, you may flourish. Drawing your life

from him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly yours. I lay all my plans at your feet. Use me today in your service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in you." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.

The Work and the Life

God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Like rays of light from the sun, like the streams of water bursting from a living spring, blessings flow out from him to all his creatures. And wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing.

Our Savior's joy was in the uplifting and redemption of fallen men. For this he counted not his life dear unto himself, but endured the cross, despising the shame. So angels are ever engaged in working for the happiness of others. This is their joy. That which selfish hearts would regard as humiliating service, ministering to those who are wretched and in every way inferior in character and rank, is the work of sinless angels. The spirit of Christ's self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the very essence of its bliss. This is the spirit that Christ's followers will possess, the work that they will do.

When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life. Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care.

The effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator.

Many have excused themselves from rendering their gifts to the service of Christ because others were possessed of superior endowments and advantages. The opinion has prevailed that only those who are especially talented are required to consecrate their abilities to the service of God. It has come to be understood by many that talents are given to only a certain favored class to the exclusion of others who of

course are not called upon to share in the toils or the rewards. But it is not so represented in the parable. When the master of the house called his servants, he gave to every man *his* work.

A Knowledge of God

In nature. The poet and the naturalist have many things to say about nature, but it is the Christian who enjoys the beauty of the earth with the highest appreciation, because he recognizes his Father's handiwork and perceives his love in flower and shrub and tree. No one can fully appreciate the significance of hill and vale, river and sea, who does not look upon them as an expression of God's love to man.

In providence. God speaks to us through his providential workings and through the influence of his spirit upon the heart. In our circumstances and surroundings, in the changes daily taking place around us, we may find precious lessons if our hearts are but open to discern them. The psalmist, tracing the work of God's providence, says, "The earth is full of the goodness of Yehovah" (Psalm 33:5). "Whoever is wise will pay attention to these things. They will consider the loving-kindness of Yehovah" (107:43).

In his word. God speaks to us in his word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of his character, of his dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men "subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:17). We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptation as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God; and, beholding, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a flame of holy emulation in our hearts and a desire to be like them in character—like them to walk with God.

Fill the whole heart with the words of God. They are the living water, quenching your burning thirst. They are the living bread from heaven. Jesus declares, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." And He explains himself by saying, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:53, 63). Our bodies are built up from what we eat and drink; and as in the natural economy, so in the spiritual economy: it is what we meditate upon that will give tone and strength to our spiritual nature.

The Privilege of Prayer

Through nature and revelation, through his providence, and by the influence of his spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to him. In order to have spiritual life and

energy, we must have actual communion with our heavenly Father. Our minds may be drawn out toward him; we may meditate upon his works, his mercies, his blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to him concerning our actual life.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to him.

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught his disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon him. And the assurance he gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.

There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers. One of the first of these is that we feel our need of help from him. He has promised, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground" (Isaiah 44:3). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who long after God, may be sure that they will be filled. The heart must be open to the spirit's influence, or God's blessing cannot be received.

If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions. Our own merit will never commend us to the favor of God; it is the worthiness of Jesus that will save us, his blood that will cleanse us; yet we have a work to do in complying with the conditions of acceptance.

Another element of prevailing prayer is faith. "For anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said to His disciples, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you are receiving it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24). Do we take him at his word?

The assurance is broad and unlimited, and He is faithful who has promised. When we do not receive the very things we asked for, at the time we ask, we are still to believe that the Lord hears and that he will answer our prayers. We are so erring and short-sighted that we sometimes ask for things that would not be a blessing to us, and our heavenly Father in love answers our prayers by giving us that which will be for our highest good—that which we ourselves would desire if with vision divinely enlightened we could see all things as they really are. When our prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive the blessing we need most. But to claim that prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire, is presumption. God is too wise to err, and too good to withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. Then do not fear to trust him, even

though you do not see the immediate answer to your prayers. Rely upon his sure promise, "Ask, and it will be given you."

Perseverance in prayer has been made a condition of receiving. We must pray always if we would grow in faith and experience. We are to be "instant in prayer," to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2. Peter exhorts believers to be "sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Peter 4:7. Paul directs, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Philippians 4:6. "But ye, beloved," says Jude, "praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God." Jude 20, 21. [p. 98] Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God.

There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. There is nothing that can prevent us from lifting up our hearts in the spirit of earnest prayer. In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance, as did Nehemiah when he made his request before King Artaxerxes. A closet of communion may be found wherever we are. We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul.

Praise God. We need to praise God more "Let them praise Yehovah for his loving kindness, for his wonderful deeds to the children of men! " (Psalm 107:8). Our devotional exercises should not consist wholly in asking and receiving. Let us not be always thinking of our wants and never of the benefits we receive. We do not pray any too much, but we are too sparing of giving thanks. We are the constant recipients of God's mercies, and yet how little gratitude we express, how little we praise him for what he has done for us.

The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise. God is worshiped with song and music in the courts above, and as we express our gratitude we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts. "Whoever offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies" God (Psalm 50:23). Let us with reverent joy come before our Creator, with "thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3).

What to do with Doubt

Many, especially those who are young in the Christian life, are at times troubled with the suggestions of skepticism. There are in the Bible many things which they cannot explain, or even understand, and Satan employs these to shake their faith in the Scriptures as a revelation from God. They ask, "How will I know the right way? If the Bible is indeed the word of God, how can I be freed from these doubts and perplexities?"

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, his character, the truthfulness of

his word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration.** Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.

To acknowledge that we cannot fully comprehend the great truths of the Bible is only to admit that the finite mind is inadequate to grasp the infinite; that man, with his limited, human knowledge, cannot understand the purposes of Omniscience. Because they cannot fathom all its mysteries, the skeptic and the infidel reject God's word; and not all who profess to believe the Bible are free from danger on this point. The apostle says, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). It is right to study closely the teachings of the Bible and to search into "the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10) so far as they are revealed in Scripture. While "the secret things belong to Yehovah our God," those "things that are revealed belong to us" (Deut. 29:29). But it is Satan's work to pervert the investigative powers of the mind. A certain pride is mingled with the consideration of Bible truth, so that men feel impatient and defeated if they cannot explain every portion of Scripture to their satisfaction. . . . It is true that many theories and doctrines popularly supposed to be derived from the Bible have no foundation in its teaching, and indeed are contrary to the whole tenor of inspiration. These things have been a cause of doubt and perplexity to many minds. They are not, however, chargeable to God's word, but to man's perversion of it.

If it were possible for created beings to attain to a full understanding of God and his works, then, having reached this point, there would be for them no further discovery of truth, no growth in knowledge, no further development of mind or heart. God would no longer be supreme; and man, having reached the limit of knowledge and attainment, would cease to advance. Let us thank God that it is not so. God is infinite; in him are "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). And to all eternity men may be ever searching, ever learning, and yet never exhaust the treasures of his wisdom, his goodness, and his power.

God intends that even in this life the truths of His word shall be ever unfolding to His people. There is only one way in which this knowledge can be obtained. We can attain to an understanding of God's word only through the illumination of that spirit by which the word was given. "No one knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God;" "for the spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:11, 10). And the Savior's promise to His followers was, "But when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . for he will receive from me what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-14).

Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. The teachings and restrictions of God's word are not welcome to the proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority. In order

to arrive at truth, we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it. And all who come in this spirit to the study of the Bible will find abundant evidence that it is God's word, and they may gain an understanding of its truths that will make them wise unto salvation.

Christ has said, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17). Instead of questioning and caviling concerning that which you do not understand, give heed to the light that already shines upon you, and you will receive greater light. By the grace of Christ, perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding, and you will be enabled to understand and perform those of which you are now in doubt.

Rejoicing in the Lord

In every one of his children, Jesus sends a letter to the world. If you are Christ's follower, he sends in you a letter to the family, the village, the street, where you live. Jesus, dwelling in you, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with him. Perhaps they do not read the Bible, or do not hear the voice that speaks to them in its pages; they do not see the love of God through his works. But if you are a true representative of Jesus, it may be that through you they will be led to understand something of his goodness and be won to love and serve him.

Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their life and character should be such that through them others will get a right conception of Christ and of his service.

If we do represent Christ, we shall make his service appear attractive, as it really is. Christians who gather up gloom and sadness to their souls, and murmur and complain, are giving to others a false representation of God and the Christian life. They give the impression that God is not pleased to have his children happy, and in this they bear false witness against our heavenly Father.

It is not wise to gather together all the unpleasant recollections of a past life,—its iniquities and disappointments,—to talk over them and mourn over them until we are overwhelmed with discouragement. A discouraged soul is filled with darkness, shutting out the light of God from his own soul and casting a shadow upon the pathway of others.

All have trials; griefs hard to bear, temptations hard to resist. Do not tell your troubles to your fellow mortals, but carry everything to God in prayer. Make it a rule never to utter one word of doubt or discouragement. You can do much to brighten the life of others and strengthen their efforts, by words of hope and holy cheer. There is many a brave soul sorely pressed by temptation, almost ready to faint in the conflict with self and with the powers of evil. Do not discourage such a one in his hard struggle. Cheer him with brave, hopeful words that shall urge him on his way. Thus the light of Christ may shine from you. "None of us lives to himself" (Rom.

14:7). By our unconscious influence others may be encouraged and strengthened, or they may be discouraged, and repelled from Christ and the truth.

It is not the will of God that his people should be weighed down with care. But our Lord does not deceive us. He does not say to us, "Do not fear; there are no dangers in your path." He knows there are trials and dangers, and He deals with us plainly. He does not propose to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. His prayer for His disciples was, "I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil." "In the world," He says, "you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 17:15, 16:33.

We cannot but look forward to new perplexities in the coming conflict, but we may look on what is past as well as on what is to come, and say, "Thus far has the Lord helped us." "As your days, so your strength will be" (Deut. 33:25). The trial will not exceed the strength that will be given us to bear it. Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial will be given.

And by and by the gates of heaven will be thrown open to admit God's children, and from the lips of the King of glory the benediction will fall on their ears like richest music, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

➤ God-centric Beliefs [↩]

The following are my religious beliefs, which I can demonstrate to be true from the Bible and reason.

Creedalism. These beliefs are not intended to be used in a “creedal” sense, but are written down to be examined and critiqued by Scripture and reason. That is, I hereby tell you what I believe and you tell me why I’m wrong, using the Bible and reason alone.

What is creedalism? Creedalism is the act of placing extrabiblical statements of belief on the same level as Scripture, making them authoritative and beyond doubt. The establishment of a creed is commonly used by church authority to enforce theological uniformity on its members, and the means by which a dissenting member is disciplined and/or disfellowshipped. Although church authorities may not admit to it *explicitly*, they nevertheless do so *functionally* (i.e. in practice).

A dispute over a belief should not be over what the “creed” says, but over what the Bible says. The best example of the enforcement of a creedal belief above the Bible is the teaching of the Trinity. Although it is well known that it is not an explicit biblical teaching (see the article, “[Trinity doctrine examined](#)” for details), yet it is nevertheless used as the principal test of faith and fellowship across most church denominations.

A creedal belief is “dogma” when it can be demonstrated to be true through biblical proof and reason. However, it is not dogma when some ecumenical council or church body declares it to be so. One is not to have “blind faith” in a creed, but “evidence-based faith” fully supported by Scripture and reason. That is, it is based on the “testimony” of Scripture and not the testimony of human tradition.

Bible-based. The Bible alone (*sola scriptura*) is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. *Sola scriptura* was the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation which opposed the overriding Catholic doctrines derived from Church Tradition and the overbearing authority of the Magisterium (its pope and bishops). That is to say, the Church itself—its Teachings and Authority—is not equal to, nor above the Bible and reason.

The standard of truth is not what the Church *declares* to be true, but what the Church *demonstrates* to be true from the plain teaching of the Bible and rational thought.

Bible composition. The accepted composition of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the following:

- **Old Testament.** The Hebrew Bible, the *Tanakh*, preserved in the Masoretic text.
- **New Testament.** The Christian biblical canon made up of the 27 books, originally written in Koine Greek. Of the two principal Greek manuscript families, the *Majority Text* (MT) is accepted as the authentic copy, over and against the Alexandrian (or Critical) Text.

The Septuagint is rejected as authoritative and so are the Apocryphal books which are found in the Septuagint.

Bible translations. All translations of the Bible (in languages other than the original) are subject to errors as a result of factors such as: interpretation issues, theological biases, a desire to promote certain cherished ideas, paraphrasing, etc. Therefore, all Bible translations can and should be scrutinized for errors, including this one. A diligent student of the Bible will consult resources that provide assistance in understanding the original languages when in doubt. My two favorite online resources have been blueletterbible.org and biblehub.com.

God-centric. The authoritative teachings of the Bible are grouped into the following categories:

1. God's nature
2. God's creation
3. God's law
4. God's rest
5. God's grace
6. God's justice
7. God's mercy

1. God's nature

One God. Literally, *one* personal God, not a plurality of gods—neither Trinitarian (three separate gods) nor a Trinity (three gods in one), but a singularity. God's most common name in the Old Testament is "Yehovah" (the *tetragrammaton*) and in the New Testament he is given the title, "*the* God" (*ho theos*) to distinguish him from the Greek gods. The God of the Bible is a divine Person, not a Substance or Essence. Jesus addressed God as his Father and encouraged us to do the same. This belief is explained further in the Article entry, "*God of the Bible.*"

One Lord. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father (John 1:18), the one through whom God created all things, and through whom we exist (1 Cor. 8:6). That he took on himself the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that he dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our Example, died our Sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to the right hand of the Father in heaven, to be our only Mediator, where through the merits of his shed blood, he secures the pardon and forgiveness of the sins of all those who persistently come to him; and, as the closing portion of his work as our High Priest, before he takes his throne as King, he will make the great and final Atonement for the sins of all such, and their sins will then be blotted out (Acts 3:19) and borne away from the sanctuary, as patterned in the service of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in heaven.

One Spirit. The spirit is not a divine Person, but an Essence. This is explained in detail in the Article entry, “*Spirit as Essence*”.

Materiality. God (the Father), his Son, and the redeemed are all persons and material—not essence, not immaterial. The “everlasting inheritance” that the saints will possess to all eternity will also have substance and materiality. The spirit, however, is not a person, but essence and, therefore, immaterial. The Father has a spirit, it is “God’s spirit” or “the spirit of God”; the Son has a spirit, it is “Christ’s spirit” (Rom. 8:9); and we have a spirit, it is “man’s spirit”. But the spirit does not have a spirit, that would be redundant and irrational.

2. God’s creation

The account of origins found in the Book of Genesis chapters 1-11 is not allegorical, but a factual presentation of actual events. Therefore, it provides a reliable framework for scientific inquiry.

The Creation. The creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3 consisted of six consecutive, “evening and morning,” *literal* days of creation, starting in Genesis 1:1 and ending in Genesis 2:3 on the seventh day, which was a rest day. In contrast, the numerous views that try to fit evolution or millions of years into this creation account are rejected as unbiblical. The most common of these fallacious theories include: the gap theory, progressive creation, day-age, framework hypothesis, theistic evolution, functionality-cosmic temple, analogical days, and day-gap-day.

Creation kinds. The original life forms (Genesis “kinds”), including mankind, were made by direct, creative acts of God (“he spoke and it came to be”). They were not created by natural, physical processes over millions of years. The living descendants of any of the original kinds (apart from man) may represent more than one species today, reflecting the genetic potential within each original kind. One kind does not change over time into a different kind, even given the limited biological changes (including mutational deterioration) that have occurred naturally since creation.

The Flood. The Genesis account of the great flood (Genesis 6-9) was an actual historic event, worldwide (global) in its extent and catastrophic in its effects. This flood was a significant geological event, and most worldwide sedimentary deposits, much of which contains buried animal and plant matter, were deposited at that time. The creation of coal, petroleum, and natural gas found in these sedimentary layers is largely a result of this deposition during the flood and subsequent application of pressure and heat in the centuries that followed. A detailed explanation of this process is explained in the answersingenesis.org article, “[The Origin of Oil](#)”.

Mankind. Man (Hebrew, *Adam*; Gen. 1:26-27), consisting of male and female (two genders), was created in the image of God (“let us make man

in our image”). The Bible does not explain or define the “us” in this narrative, but is interpreted to mean the Father speaking to his Son, which is consistent with the New Testament concept that God created the worlds through his Son (Hebrews 1:2). Adam and Eve were the first two humans. Thus, the human race is Adam’s race.

In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature.

Education 20.2: Created to be “the image and glory of God” (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, **they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker**. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator’s glory. . . .

But, while sin nearly obliterated the divine image, Christ came to restore that which was lost. Today we may reflect the image of God in character, but it is at the Second Coming of Christ when he will change our vile bodies, and fashion them in the likeness of his glorious body. For, “we know that when he appears, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). “For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53).

The pre-Flood *Nephilim*, mentioned in Genesis 6:4, are believed to have been the line of Seth intermarrying with the line of Cain, producing notable, rebellious children. The idea that fallen angels bred with human women to produce the Nephilim is rejected as unbiblical and fanciful. There is no Biblical evidence that angels have the ability to procreate.

All human life is sacred and begins at conception (defined as the moment of fertilization). Each unborn child is a unique, living human being, created in the image of God, and must be respected and protected both before and after birth. The abortion of an unborn child or the active, intentional taking of human life through euthanasia or assisted suicide constitutes a violation of the sanctity of human life and is a crime against God and man.

Mortality (temporal life). God alone is immortal (1 Timothy 6:16) by virtue of being uncreated and eternal. Yet God offers immortality to man. This he will do through Christ at the Second Coming, where this mortal body is to put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

Marriage. Based on the creation story, the only legitimate marriage sanctioned by God is the joining of a biological man and woman in a single, exclusive union as delineated in Scripture. Numerous laws, statutes, ordinances, and even apostolic opinion (e.g. 1 Cor. 7) are found in the Bible to help regulate and protect the marriage covenant.

The fallacy of evolution. There is no observable evidence of the following four evolutionary postulates:

1. **No proof of life forming from non-life.** Of the countless laboratory experiments performed over the years, not one of these has ever shown life randomly forming out of non-life. For these experiments to have even a chance of success, a genetic code (i.e. DNA) and organic components is always in the mix.
2. **No proof of single-cell life evolving into multi-cell life.** There are no 2-cell, 3-cell, or even 5-cell organisms, but only complex, multi-cell organisms. The “evolutionary” leap from single-cell (e.g. bacteria) to multi-cell organisms is an unproven evolutionary idea.
3. **No proof of micro-evolution leading to macro-evolution.** This was Charles Darwin’s big idea: That minor variations within a species can lead to macro changes and ultimately the formation of new species. However, this has not been observed. All minor variations (micro-evolution) in organisms remain within the variability of the genetic code of that species. No new genetic information is ever produced.
4. **No proof that time and chance favor evolution.** The probability of random processes forming even the simplest of proteins—the basic building blocks of cells—is extraordinarily small. Bear in mind that proteins are not mere fragments of organic material, but consist of chains in the range of 1,000-10,000 amino acid sequences. (The largest known protein in humans is Titin which contains 34,350 amino acids.) But the (highly improbable) chance of forming a single protein is only the tip of the iceberg. Take, for example, the single-cell, baker’s yeast organism which contains 4,399 distinct proteins^a, with over 40 million proteins total in the cell^b. What are the odds for this number of distinct proteins (4,399) to have randomly occurred by chance? And then, what are the odds that over 40 million of them would have been randomly produced to make up this one cell? But it gets worse. There is then the problem of all these proteins coming together to form working subunits (called “organelles”) to make up the one complete cell. And then, where does the cell get its energy and how it is able to reproduce? From a probabilistic perspective, there is not enough time and chance available in the known universe, or even multiple universes, for this to have realistically occurred by chance. In other words, the evolution of a single cell is not just mathematically improbable, it is beyond

^a *Nature Online*, September 29th, 2008 and *Molecular Cell*, September 5th, 2008

^b “Simple Cell Contains 42 Million Protein Molecules, Biologists Say”
<https://www.sci.news/biology/cell-protein-molecules-05618.html>

“rational belief” (*def.* a belief that is logical, non-extreme, and empirically verifiable).

Evolution is incompatible with the God of the Bible. The Bible teaches us that God created a good and perfect world in six days and rested the seventh. According to the Bible, the world began good, perfect and complete.

Evolution, on the other hand, teaches us that the world was initially not good, not perfect and incomplete. It was incomplete, because it needed to evolve over millions of years. It was not perfect, because it would take literally billions of mutations, most of which were imperfect and failed, to eventually arrive at man. It was not good, because the driving mechanism of evolution is “survival of the fittest” which involves pain, suffering and death, all of which are forms of evil.

3. God’s law

God’s law is not merely the Ten Commandments which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:2-17). Nor is it the Law of Moses (aka, the Mosaic Code) which contains over 600 laws, found in the Pentateuch. But, it is inclusive of all laws and principles found throughout Scripture (both Old and New Testaments) *and* in God’s Creation (i.e. the laws of nature). That is, God’s law encompasses the laws and principles as revealed to us in Scripture *and* the laws and principles which God established in his Creation.

Jesus brought out the deeper meaning of the law (as understood by the Jewish people) in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). It was not merely an external compliance, but an internal way of life (of purity in thoughts, motives, and actions). Jesus neatly summed up obedience to the law as love to God and love to man (Matt. 22:36-40; cf. Rom. 13:8-10).

The laws of Creation include all aspects of physical laws inherent in our Creation, including health (of mind and body), environmental, etc.

The saints at the end of time will be characterized as those who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). That is, a saint is one who aligns himself with (i.e. believes in heart and mind, and practices in daily life) all aspects of God’s law and principles and Christ’s example of trust and obedience.

Wrath. There are consequences to disobedience. Not because God exacts punishment for disobedience, but because a violation of God’s established laws of reality, laws of life, laws of moral behavior, laws of health, etc., have natural outcomes. If one jumps off a tall building, or falls off a steep cliff, the “law of gravity” and related physical laws dictate that the natural outcome will result in injury and possible death. As is true with the law of gravity, so is it true with the myriad of other laws established by God. Whether one violates them intentionally or out of ignorance, does

not change the outcome. Unless, of course, there is intervention, which is the subject of God’s grace and mercy.

God’s wrath vs. Satan’s wrath. The Bible speaks of the wrath of God and the wrath of Satan.

- *Romans 1:18:* For the **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness.
- *Revelation 12:12b:* For **the devil** has come down to you in **great wrath**, because he knows that his time is short.

Both God’s wrath and Satan’s wrath have similar outcomes. That is, they are both bad, not good. However, while the *result* of experiencing wrath is the same, the *method or operation* of wrath is different, indeed, opposite. While Satan’s wrath is the use of power to cause us harm, God’s wrath is evident when he *stops using power to protect us* from harm.

Breaking God’s laws directly and inevitably will cause us harm, and God, in harmony with His character of love, expends his power, his energy, his resources, to hold at bay the harm that results from breaking his established laws of reality and to impart healing solutions. While Satan uses his power to injure, God uses his power to heal, restore, recreate, renew, and rebuild.

God’s wrath occurs when God *respects* the choices made by the rebellious. He gives them what they insist on—freedom to disobey God’s design-based order and freedom to reject his healing power and presence. In rejecting God’s order and establishing our own, we cause our own disintegration.

The Scriptural basis for this understanding is found in Romans 1:18-32, where God’s wrath is manifest with the expression, “God gave them up” or “God gave them over,” which occurs three times in this passage (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). God’s wrath is ultimately understood as God’s punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves. The inevitable outcome of rejecting his laws and principles of life is separation from his life-giving power. The final outcome is death.

Satan’s lie regarding law. Satan’s big lie is: That God’s law functions like human law—with made-up, arbitrary, and imposed rules that require external legal enforcement. In Satan’s system of governance, laws are enforced through coercion and fear, and he is more than willing to inflict pain, suffering, and torment on those who disobey him. This is how Satan would like for us to see God. That God rules in the same tyrannical way as he does. The following table shows the difference.

<i>Subject</i>	God’s reign	Satan’s rule
Laws	God’s created order includes laws of nature and reality, and of life	“Special-interest,” man-made rules; arbitrary; contrary to nature

Sin	Causes harm by its very nature, because it violates how God made us.	It is God who has a problem with sin. There is nothing wrong with sin itself.
Punishment	Sin brings its own punishment. It is a natural result of law-breaking.	Enforcement through coercion and fear, even pain, suffering and torment
Justice	By faith. Because of Christ's merits, it is just for God to forgive and grant his grace (i.e. power) to the penitent.	By works. Justice demands the punishment of the transgressor. Forgiveness is only possible thru works.
Final Judgment	We determine our own fate. In the end, we will judge ourselves by the revealed truth (Jn. 12:48)	Satan rejects Christ's atoning sacrifice for mankind and impugns God as the ultimate cause.

4. God's rest

God has ordained cycles of work-and-rest, work-and-rest in all of human activity. The Bible delineates at least seven cycles.

The seventh day Sabbath is a celebration of when God rested from both His creation and salvation which were both brought out by His Son.

5. God's grace

Christ not only justifies (forgives) he also sanctifies (cleanses and purifies). It is not just a "legal" cleansing (justification), but a soul cleansing (sanctification)--the renewal of mind, the transforming of character--that Christ performs in a believer's life. See 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

6. God's justice

My eschatology is premillennial (Christ comes before the 1,000 years in heaven) and annihilationist (the unsaved are destroyed and cease to exist).

7. God's mercy

The sanctuary system of types in the Old Testament best explains God's plan of salvation and fulfillment in and through Jesus Christ.

Review:

http://timeandbeing.com/Application/GodsNature/SDA/pdf/SDA_YB1914_Fundamental_Principles.pdf

summary of doctrine or dogmas. The term "dogma" is often viewed as a belief arrogantly asserted.

It is "dogma" in the broad sense of being an official statement of the fundamental principles or doctrines of my faith. It is *not* "dogma" in the pejorative sense of an unwillingness to discuss them rationally (and peaceably) with those of dissenting views. Also, it is not with the intent of enforcing my beliefs on others.

It is “dogma” in the sense that it can be demonstrated to be true through Biblical proof and reason. It is not dogma by virtue of some ecumenical council or church body declaring it to be so.

Pagan Beliefs

➤ Teachings of the Antichrist [\[↩\]](#)

The wine of Babylon, as is mentioned in Revelation 14:8, is understood to represent the false teachings introduced during the early centuries and later dogma during the Dark Ages of the Christian era. The list of false teachings is quite long and no effort is made here to present the complete list, but only to highlight some of the major ones. These teachings can be thought of as “anti” teachings or “anti” dogma.

Biblical “anti.” The Greek term *anti* (G473) can mean **against** or opposite to, but can also mean **in place of** (something)—i.e. a replacement of.

Catholic anti-dogma. Interestingly, both definitions of the term “anti” fitly describe the vast portion of Catholic dogma. That is, Catholic teaching can be viewed as being *both against* and a **replacement** of Biblical teaching. Effectively, as discussed in the following, Catholic teaching is **anti-Christ**, because it replaces the three fundamental roles of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. They are then (I) *anti-Prophet*, (II) *anti-Priest*, and (III) *anti-King*.

Executive summary. The major topics covered in this article include:

- **I. anti-Prophet (or anti-Biblical):**
 - anti-Scripture
 - anti-Teachings
 - anti-Revelation
 - anti-Interpreter
- **II. anti-Priest (or anti-Salvific):**
 - anti-Salvation
 - anti-Baptism
 - anti-Communion
 - anti-Sabbath
 - anti-Cross
 - anti-Death
- **III. anti-King (or anti-Lordship):**
 - anti-God
 - anti-Father
 - anti-Christ
 - anti-Mediator
 - anti-Head
 - anti-Apostles
- **Teachings not covered**
- **Denial of Christ**

(In the following, the CCC abbreviation refers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.)

I. anti-Prophet (or anti-Biblical)

In the category of anti-Prophet, Catholic teaching is: (a) anti-Scripture, (b) anti-Teachings, (c) anti-Revelation, and (d) anti-Interpreter.

I (a). anti-Scripture. To a Catholic “Scripture” or the “Word of God” is not just the Bible, but it must include **Sacred Tradition**. Those who believe in *sola scriptura* say that the Bible is the only infallible Word of God and source of faith. But Catholics teach that the Word of God is contained in the Bible **and in Sacred Tradition**, and that the **Magisterium** (i.e. the Pope and the Catholic bishops) have the authority and final say as to what is infallible truth [CCC #100]. Pope Francis is quite explicit on this teaching.

“Scripture remains only a portion of the Word of God, because under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **Sacred Tradition**, instead, transmits the Word of God in its entirety.” —Pope Francis: “*The Word of God Precedes the Bible and Surpasses It.*” Learn Religions, Aug. 25, 2020.

However, the Protestant Reformation was against this teaching. As Martin Luther, when on trial at the Imperial Diet of Worms (1521), declared, “Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have frequently erred and contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other: May God help me. Amen.”

I (b). anti-Teachings. Catholics believe that it is what the Catholic Church proposes for belief that is to be accepted and believed. It is not faith in the teachings of the Bible itself, but faith in what the Church promotes. In their own words: “**Believing**” is an **ecclesial act**. The Church’s faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. “No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother” [CCC #181]. We believe all “that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, **and which the Church proposes for belief** as divinely revealed” [CCC #182].

I (c). anti-Revelation. What constitutes revelation and how it should be understood is in the hands of the leadership of the Church (Magisterium). Catholics believe that two sources of revelation constitute a single “Deposit of Faith” (CCC: #82, #84, #85), meaning that the entirety of divine revelation and the Deposit of Faith is transmitted to successive generations in Scripture *and* Sacred Tradition **through the teaching authority and interpretation of the Church’s Magisterium** (CCC #88).

I (d). anti-Interpreter. Catholics believe the interpreter and, effectively, final arbiter of Biblical truth is the leadership of the Church (Magisterium). **“The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him”** (CCC #100). In contrast, Protestants believe that the Bible interprets itself. That there is no need for a man or a committee of men to interpret it for others.

II. anti-Priest (or anti-Salvific)

In the category of anti-Priest, Catholic teaching is: (a) anti-Salvation, (b) anti-Baptism, (c) anti-Communion, (d) anti-Sabbath, (e) anti-Cross, and anti-Death.

II (a). anti-Salvation. Salvation in the Catholic Church is a tedious, works based system. Catholics teach that a person must have faith, participate in the sacraments, take the Eucharist, keep the commandments, perform penance, and do indulgences in order to attain, maintain, and regain his salvation as well as reduce the punishment due to him for the sins of which he has already been forgiven. A Catholic has no assurance of salvation, but must constantly dependent upon the Church and the services of the priest. Effectively, it is a merit-based system and a process.

II (b). anti-Baptism. Protestants view baptism as a symbol that doesn't actually *do* anything, whereas Catholics view baptism as the first sacrament **necessary for salvation** that gives access to the other sacraments (CCC #1257). One is **“Justified by faith in Baptism”** (CCC #1271). It is the gateway to the Church and to Heaven. It is the act that forgives sins, grants spiritual rebirth, and the means by which one receives the Holy Spirit (CCC #1213). **“By Baptism all sins are forgiven**, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin” (CCC #1263). Catholic baptism is **“a journey and initiation** in several stages.” Required are “proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion” (CCC #1229). Catholics also practice infant baptism (CCC #1250, #1282).

The Protestant counterpoints on the Catholic view of baptism are:

- Baptism is not what *gives us* salvation. Salvation is the gift of God—by mercy and grace, and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
- One is *justified* by the faith of Christ, not by (the work of) baptism (Galatians 2:16).
- Baptism does not *forgive* anything. It is a symbol.
- Baptism *follows* a person's faith; it is not a prerequisite or condition of faith.
- Infant baptism is not taught in the Bible.

II (c). anti-Communion. The Communion service is also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. Catholics will typically celebrate the Eucharist in a liturgical service called a Mass. To Catholics the Eucharist is a *sacrifice*, not a service in remembrance of Christ's Last Supper. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states it this way,

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: 'The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.' 'And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, **the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.**” [CCC #1367]

Eucharist bread. Also called Sacramental bread, Communion bread (or wafer), the Lamb or simply the host. This bread is used in the Eucharist. Catholics teach that this bread substance is changed into the Body of Christ (transubstantiation) when the priest prays over it, otherwise it is not salvific.

II (d) anti-Sabbath. The change of worship from the 7th day (Saturday) to the first day (Sunday) occurred centuries after the apostolic era. “During the first three hundred years of the Common Era Christian worship did take place on Sunday, but there is no evidence that Sunday was seen as a Sabbath or a day of rest. As far as the process of officially transforming Sunday into a day of rest, the first evidence is found in Constantine’s decree of 321 AD.” —Edward Allen, “*How did the Jewish Sabbath become the Christian Sunday?*” Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol. 53, No. 2, 337-353.

II (e) anti-Cross. Or, crucifix worship. Catholics see the crucifix as a fulfillment of the brazen serpent created by Moses in Numbers 21:8-9, called the Nehushtan. And, as the Nehushtan became an object of worship—later destroyed by King Hezekiah's reforms (2 Kings 18:4) for this very reason—so the crucifix has become an object of worship. The crucifix can be found inside churches where prayers are done in front of it. There are altar crosses and processional crosses. Church services in the Catholic Church (Roman Rite) require a crucifix to be on the altar or near it. A crucifix is considered one of the most effective means of averting or opposing demons and for protection from evil, which is why many wear crucifix necklaces.

II (f) anti-Death. Catholics believe in the natural immortality of the soul and eternal torment of the wicked in hell. A string of other Catholic teachings follow from this one foundational teaching. They include:

1. **Purgatory.**
2. **Indulgences.**
3. **Prayer, alms, and Masses for the dead.**
4. **Eternal torment in hell.**

5. Human intermediaries in Heaven.

Bible teachings rendered superfluous. This teaching makes the following Biblical teachings superfluous given that all souls are already either in Heaven, Purgatory or Hell.

- **Second Coming (*parousia*).**
- **Resurrection.** The two resurrections—the righteous at the 2nd Coming and the wicked at the 3rd Coming—have little to no meaning in Catholic eschatology.
- **Judgment at the end of time.**

III. anti-King (or anti-Lordship)

In the category of anti-King, Catholic teaching is: (a) anti-God, (b) anti-Father, (c) anti-Christ, (d) anti-Mediator, (e) anti-Head, and (f) anti-Apostles.

III (a). anti-God. Catholics believe that the Trinity doctrine is the most fundamental of their faith. On it everything else depends and from it everything else derives. However, the Trinity doctrine is anti-God because it replaces the definition of the one true God. The Trinity doctrine is examined in detail in the Article entry, "[Trinity doctrine examined](#)."

III (b). anti-Father. The Pope (Latin: *papa*; "father") is the bishop of Rome, head of the Catholic Church (CCC #882, #936). There are other titles for the Pope, the most important in this discussion is "Holy Father" (or typically "Most Blessed Father" in Spanish and Italian). If the Pope enters a room, you are supposed to stand and applaud. If he approaches you, you are to genuflect (i.e. bend at the knee). If he offers his hand, you kiss his ring. The ring is a mark of the Papacy and kissing it is a sign of respect and affection.

Jesus taught differently. We are to call no one "Father" or "Holy Father" but God the Father only.

- *Matthew 23:9*: And call no man your father on earth, for you have **one Father, who is in heaven.**
- *John 17:11b*: Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.
- *Romans 8:15*: For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

III (c). anti-Christ. The Pope is also called the "Vicar of Christ" (*vicarius Christi*) (CCC #882, #936). "Vicar" in the broadest sense means someone who is authorized to act as a substitute or agent for a superior. The words inscribed in the Pope's official miter are "Vicarius Filii Dei," Latin for "Vicar of the Son of God." As the "Vicar of Christ", the Pope is acting as both the agent of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit was sent to be Christ's representative on earth (John 14:16, 26). The Pope can truly be

called the antichrist as defined in 1 John 2:22, since he “denies” (effectively, *substitutes for*) the work of (and worship to) the Father and the Son. “This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22b).

Hierarchy of power. The pyramid of power that constitutes the Pope's office as the “Vicar of Christ” consists of cardinals, patriarchs, major archbishops, metropolitans, coadjutor archbishops, diocesan bishops, coadjutor bishops, episcopal vicar, eparches, apostolic vicars, apostolic prefects, apostolic administrators and vicars general.

III (d). anti-Mediator. Rather than a single Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5) and the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), the Catholic Church has a long list of human mediators beginning with the Virgin Mary (*Mediatrix*) followed by a communion of saints in Heaven, while the priesthood is reserved to the *ministerial* priesthood (holy orders) of the Pope, bishops and priests.

III (e). anti-Head. The Catholic Church teaches that the Pope is the head of the Church and is infallible (CCC #891). Infallibility means the Pope is *incapable* of error in pronouncing dogma. In contrast, the Bible tells us that Christ is the head of the Church.

- *Ephesians 1:22*: And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,
- *Ephesians 5:23*: For the husband is the head of the wife **even as Christ is the head of the church**, his body, and is himself its Savior.
- *Colossians 1:18a*: And he is the head of the body, the church.

III (f). anti-Apostles. “The Bishops, established by the Holy Spirit, succeed the apostles” (CCC #938, #892, #896). As a general rule, bishops are to be celibate (CCC #1579, #1580). In contrast, the Bible speaks against “teachings of demons . . . who forbid marriage” (1 Timothy 4:1-3). The Bible also requires monogamy for a bishop (1 Timothy 3:2).

Teachings not covered

Other Catholic teachings not covered are listed below. Again, this list is not exhaustive.

- Religious holy days: Easter, Christmas, Valentines, St Patrick's, Halloween, Palm Sunday, Ash Wednesday, All Saints Day, Candlemas Day
- The Virgin Mary as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix.
- Veneration of angels
- Holy water, holy oil, holy palms, medals and charms, the ring in marriage
- Fasting on Fridays and during the 40 days of Lent

- The Rosary, novenas
- The Inquisition, which declared death to heretics and those who disagree with the doctrines of the Papacy
- More than 100 “anathemas” (or curses) pronounced on those who differ with Catholic teaching, established in the Council of Trent (1545-1563)
- Monks, nuns, monasteries, convents

Denial of Christ

The Catholic Church denies the all sufficiency of Christ in the following ways:

- To Christ's finished work on the cross they add the Mass (continual Victim).
- To Christ's word they add Tradition.
- To Christ's headship they add a Pope.
- To Christ's role as the Advocate and Mediator, they add Mary.
- To Christ's high priestly office they add the Catholic priesthood and confessional box.
- To Christ's merits they add their own (human works).
- To Christ's forgiveness they add Purgatory.
- To Christ's righteousness they add their own (filthy rags).

➤ Trinity doctrine examined [\[↩\]](#)

The Trinity doctrine is rejected as a false teaching on the basis that it has no *biblical* support, is *logically* irrational, and *historically* rests on Church Tradition and Authority, and not biblical proof.

Executive summary. The major topics covered in this article include:

- Central teaching
- Trinity defined
- No “proof texts”
- Trinity origins
- Self-contradictory and irrational
- The “Shield of the Trinity” is incoherent
- Imperial influence
- Prophetic significance
- SDA: Nine “proof texts” examined
- BRI: Twelve points of Biblical evidence examined

Central teaching. The nature of God is the most fundamental teaching of the Bible—on it everything else depends and from it everything else derives. According to Catholics and most Protestants, it is the Trinity doctrine that best describes the nature of God. (Protestant movements that do not accept the Trinity doctrine include Unitarianism and Oneness Pentecostalism.) The importance of the Trinity doctrine in Catholic dogma is stated as follows:

- CCC #234: The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is **the central mystery** of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the “hierarchy of the truths of faith”.
- CCC #261: The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is **the central mystery** of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Trinity defined. Although the following quote uses the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s definition of the Trinity (Belief #2 in their, “28 Fundamental Beliefs,” 2020 edition), it should be understood that nearly all church denominations use the same “template” wording. They take a copy-and-paste approach when defining the Trinity. The Trinity is defined by the SDA Church as follows:

Trinity. There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.

The above statement makes four assertions (at minimum) which need proof from Scripture:

1. **Three-in-one.** That “there is *one God...a unity of three Persons.*”
2. **Coeternal.** That these three Persons are *coeternal.*
3. **One *ousia* (substance).** That these three Persons are *immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present.*
4. **Incomprehensible.** That these three Persons are *infinite and beyond human comprehension.*

No “proof texts”

It is readily admitted by fair-minded theologians that the Trinity doctrine is not a copy of any Biblical text, not even a sum of any number of texts. Its very concept is not found in any single text or multiple texts of the Bible. In the words of Charles Ryrie, an *evangelical* scholar of systematic theology:

Basic Theology by Charles Ryrie, 1999, p. 89-90: Many doctrines are accepted by evangelicals as being clearly taught in the Scripture for which there are **no proof texts**. The doctrine of the Trinity furnishes the best example of this. It is fair to say that the Bible does not clearly teach the doctrine of the Trinity. **In fact, there is not even one proof text**, if by proof text we mean a verse or passage that “clearly” states that there is one God who exists in three persons.

The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church makes the same admission:

Biblical Research Institute Release-9, May, 2015, p. 20: No text of Scripture specifically says that God is three Persons: but theological reasoning on the basis of biblical principles leads to that conclusion.

Thus, according to the BRI, only “theological reasoning” can be used to arrive at this doctrine. The BRI then offers twelve points of evidence to get there. This “evidence” is discussed in detail below (at the end of this article).

Trinity origins

Based on Church Tradition. The Trinity doctrine is *not* an explicit teaching of the Bible, but came by way of numerous post-apostolic ecumenical councils to debate and ultimately agree on the doctrine. Here is the church history (all in AD [year]):

1. [325] [Nicea I](#): Is the Son eternal?
2. [381] [Constantinople I](#): Is the Holy Spirit the Third Person?
3. [431] [Ephesus](#): Was Mary the bearer of Christ's divine nature (*theotokos*)?
4. [451] [Chalcedon](#): Did Christ have one or two natures? How?
5. [553] [Constantinople II](#): How can we interpret the dual natures without dividing Christ into two?
6. [681] [Constantinople III](#): Did Christ have one or two wills? (*monothelism* versus *dyothelism* controversy)
7. [787] [Nicea II](#): Can icons of Christ be worshiped? How?

In every one of the above controversies, the “loser” got kicked out of the church. Thus, debate over the Trinity was (and is) inherently divisive. So, we have a conundrum here:

- If Trinitarian primacy is true—that it always existed and was understood and taught since the time of the apostles—then why was there over four centuries of controversies and attempts at resolution?
- Why does this historical record look like the Trinity went through a slow evolution spanning centuries?

Lack of controversy by converted Jews in the first century. Moreover, there is no record of Jews who converted to Christianity ever challenging the Trinity doctrine in the first century. It should be understood that the Jewish belief in monotheism was paramount, so a switch to a multi-God (whether Tri-theist or Trinitarian) would have raised major concerns to a faithful Jew who was being proselytized. But, alas, none is recorded in the New Testament. The only possible explanation for this silence is that the Trinity doctrine did not exist and was not taught by the apostles.

Self-contradictory and irrational

Self-contradictory. The claim that God is one in three persons is self-contradictory given that a being cannot be *both* three and one at the same time. Trinitarians claim that the doctrine is not self-contradictory by virtue of the following two statements:

- *What.* God is *one in essence*—i.e. God is **one what** or one in being
- *Who.* God is *three in person*—i.e. God is **three whos** – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The “one Divine Essence, three Divine Persons” is the usual answer to the self-contradictory objection to the Trinity. However, this forces Trinitarians to make God a **what**, not a **who**; technically an “it” rather than a “He”. If you take this to mean that God is not a person, you are correct. As the early Christian author and apologist Tertullian said: “God is the name for the substance” (see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p.114).

Unexplainable mystery and irrational. Trinitarians further claim that the Trinity doctrine is a “mystery” that should be believed by faith, but that it cannot be proven by natural reason. In other words, the doctrine is *unexplainable and irrational*, humanly speaking.

“The doctrine of the Trinity is, in its last analysis, a deep mystery **that cannot be fathomed by the finite mind**. That it is taught in the Scripture, however, there can be no reasonable doubt. **It is a doctrine to be believed even though it cannot be thoroughly understood.**” —William Evans, *The Great Doctrines Of The Bible*, “4. *The Doctrine of the Trinity: (vs. Unitarianism)*,” p. 27.

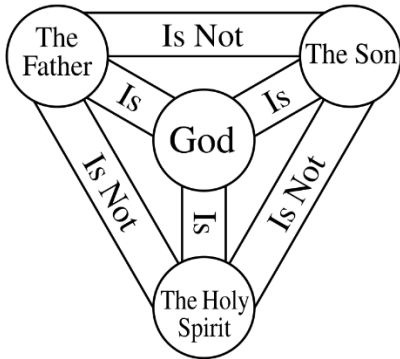
Unintelligible and unteachable. A “doctrine” is a teaching that is *taught*. However, a doctrine that is unintelligible cannot be taught. Imagine a teacher teaching a subject he does not understand nor expects his students to understand. Then why is he teaching it in the first place? Yet this is what Trinitarian teachers expect of their students: to believe and not understand. This is what the Jewish teachers (the “blind guides”) in Jesus’ day practiced:

[CE 142.2](#): Those Jewish teachers spoke in monotonous tones, and the plainest and most precious scriptures were made uninteresting and **unintelligible**, buried under such a mass of tradition and learned lore that **after the Rabbis had spoken, the people knew less of the meaning of the Scriptures than before they listened**.

The “Shield of the Trinity” is incoherent

Incoherent illustration. The “Shield of the Trinity” or in Latin, *Scutum Fidei* (“shield of faith”), is a diagram used to explain the teaching that God is a Trinity. Although the precise history of the “Shield of the Trinity” is

unknown, it is quite old, going back to at least the 12th century. The English version of the diagram is as follows:



In this diagram, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “*whos*” while God is a “*what*”. The label “God” in the center of the diagram is not the Triune God; rather, it is the divine nature or the adjective “divine”. Each of the three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—share the one divine nature. The divine nature is the “*what*”. The Father is God (divine by nature), the Son is God (divine by nature), and the Holy Spirit is God (divine by nature). The fifth term is the “Triune God” (not shown in the diagram). This term refers to the entire collection. Thus, the Shield of the Trinity depicts five “Gods”:

1. “God” the Father
2. “God” the Son
3. “God” the Holy Spirit
4. “God” the Divine Nature – the one *what*
5. “God” the Triune Being – the three *whos*

Further, the diagram tells us that “God” #1 (the Father) is not “God” #2 (the Son) is not “God” #3 (the Holy Spirit). But, “God” #4 (the divine nature) *is* “God” numbers 1, 2, and 3.

This then is the incoherent aspect to this diagram. It is self-evident that things which are identical to the same thing (i.e. “God”) must also be identical to one another. That is, if the Father *is* God and the Son *is* God and the Holy Spirit *is* God, then the Father is identical to the Son and the Holy Spirit. Which means: if each Person is God, that collapses the Persons into one and the same thing. Or viewed the other way around: If the three Persons are *distinct*, then it cannot be that all three are identical. This diagram asserts contradictory claims: for each of the Persons, that Person *is*, and *is not*, identical to each of the other Persons.

Moreover, the diagram does not tell the whole story, because God #2 (the Son) has *two* natures. He is both fully “God” and fully “Man”. Also, redeemed humanity are called “sons of God” (or “children of God” or “children of the Father”) which is in reference to God #1 (the Father). However, the “God” of the “children of God” is not God #1 (the Father)

but God #5 (the Triune Being). In addition, God #2 (the Son) has a “God” which is God #1 (the Father)—as Jesus said in John 20:17, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” We can therefore say that God’s God (or God #2’s God) is God #1. However, the God of the children of God is the Triune God which is God #5. So, in reality, there are five Gods—God, God, God, God, God—and then there is God’s God, and then the God of the children of God which is the fifth God. This is what the diagram truly teaches.

However, for “God” to be one (singularity) as monotheism teaches, God must be a “Who,” “I,” “Me,” “He,” and “Him,” not a “*what*” or an “it”. But Trinitarians insist this is the case, not because God is one Person but because God is one Being. The term “being” in the Trinity doctrine is a synonym for “substance” or “*ousia*” or “nature,” not for Person. And so they insist that God is one “I” because God is one “Being” not one “Person”. So this is a fourth “I” in addition to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Again, this fourth “I” is not a “*who*” but a “*what*” or an “it”. But the whole collective (“Triune God” or God #5) can be either a “He” or a “them” depending on how a Trinitarian chooses to use the term.

Thus, when a Trinitarian refers to God, he could be speaking of any one of the five Gods in his pantheon of deities. They are all separate and all one, all at the same time. They can be 1+1+1 or 1*1*1 depending on the occasion. All completely incoherent, irrational, unintelligible, unteachable, and un-Biblical. This is the most fundamental teaching of the Christian faith—both Catholic and most Protestants—and it *must* be believed. To not believe this *absurdity*^a makes one a heretic or a participant of a cult and is grounds for excommunication.

From its first formulation (in the days of Athanasius, c. 325 AD) until now all discussion about the Trinity has been an attempt to define the undefinable and incomprehensible. Untold thousands have been put to death for not professing belief in a formula which even its professors cannot comprehend, nor state in terms that anyone else can comprehend.

Imperial influence

Emperor Constantine. The significance of Emperor Constantine in establishing various forms of religious practice and dogma in the Catholic tradition cannot be overstated. They include:

1. **Pagan Worship.** Constantine was responsible for initiating a pagan form of Temple worship through Christian basilicas. He began this construction program in 313 AD. This pagan practice is discussed in detail in the Article, “[Pagan Worship](#)”.
2. **Pagan Sabbath.** Sunday worship was made legal and universal by Constantine’s decree of 321 AD.

^a *absurdity*:—*def.* extremely silly, unreasonable, or incongruous

3. **Pagan God.** It was Constantine who ordered and paid the expenses to the First Council of Nicaea (325 AD) where the Trinity doctrine was first formulated.
4. **Arian purge.** Through Constantine's edict (c. 333 AD), Arianism was purged across the Roman Empire and ultimately eradicated centuries later in 538 AD. (Arianism did not accept that Jesus was Co-Eternal with the Father, teaching instead that he was begotten of God at some unknown point in eternity past.)

Arian purge. It should be noted that reconstructing the life and non-Trinitarian doctrine of Arius has proven to be a difficult task, as none of his original writings survive. **Emperor Constantine** ordered their burning while Arius was still living, and any that survived this purge were later destroyed by his Orthodox opponents. Those works which have survived are quoted in the works of churchmen who denounced him as a heretic. This leads some—but not all—scholars to question their reliability. As is so often the case, “History is written by the conqueror, not those that are conquered” (Michael Holding). **Emperor Constantine's edict** (c. 333 AD) on this purge of Arianism reads in part:

“In addition, if any writing composed by Arius should be found, it should be handed over to the flames, so that not only will the wickedness of his teaching be obliterated, but nothing will be left even to remind anyone of him. And I hereby make a public order, that if someone should be discovered to have hidden a writing composed by Arius, and not to have immediately brought it forward and destroyed it by fire, his penalty shall be death. As soon as he is discovered in this offense, he shall be submitted for capital punishment.”
—Wisconsin Lutheran College, “*Part of an edict against Arius and his followers,*” Ref. nos. Urk 33, Doc 28, CPG 2041.

Prophetic significance

Historically speaking, those who opposed the Trinity doctrine in its early years of adoption became mortal enemies of the established church and were persecuted, exiled and slain. As described by Robert H. Pierson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1966-1979:

The Message, January 1948, ‘God the Father’: Perhaps no other truth in all of Holy Scripture comes to us so marked with the blood of controversy as does the Bible doctrine of the Trinity. History records that ancient nations staked their very existence upon their conception of the Godhead. . . . Three kingdoms, the **Heruli**, the **Vandals**, and the **Ostrogoths**, were blotted from existence during the latter part of the fifth and the early part of the sixth centuries because they refused to accept the orthodox teaching of the ruling [*Catholic*] church concerning this dogma. Clergymen have been

persecuted, exiled, and slain as the tide of favor regarding certain aspects of this subject ebbed and flowed in the early church.

The **Heruli**, **Vandals** and **Ostrogoths** were of Arian persuasion. The period between 493 AD and 538 AD is when these three Christian nations were uprooted and destroyed.

“When the Arian Ostrogoths under Theodoric took over Rome in 493 AD they significantly limited the power of the Pope. But the Catholic Emperors of the Eastern Empire managed to help the Pope by eliminating three of the Arian tribes. The Emperor Zeno arranged a treaty with the Ostrogoths in 487 AD which led to the eradication of the Heruli in 493 AD. Later Justinian destroyed the Vandals in 534 AD and crippled the power of the Ostrogoths in **538 AD** thereby eliminating all the powers that had limited the power and influence of the Pope.” —Lineage, [The Roman Empire From 313-538 AD](#), “*The Destruction of the Three Tribes.*”

The date 538 AD is significant in Seventh-day Adventist eschatology because it represents the beginning of the 1,260 year prophecy (of Daniel 7:24-26, et. al) which ended in 1798 AD with the rise of Napoleon, and the exile into captivity of the pope by French general Berthier. Thus, the controversy over the nature of God—i.e. Trinity vs. Arianism—is closely linked to this prophecy of the “little horn” Papal supremacy.

Another significant date of Papal supremacy is 508 AD, when Clovis, the king of the Franks in the region of Gaul (now France), was named honorary consul by a decree of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I, making him the most important Western ally of the Byzantine emperor. Clovis had converted to Catholicism (from Nordic mythology) in 496 AD, and by 508 AD had fully established in all his regions the Catholic religion as the state-sponsored church. The *Pactus Legis Salicae* (Law of the Salian Franks), a written code combining customary law, Roman written law, Roman Catholic ideals, and royal edicts, is believed to have originated with him. As per the New Catholic Encyclopedia:

“Beyond encouraging individual bishops to play a vital role in his kingdom, Clovis sought to use their collective presence as a force to shape a ‘National’ church that would serve under royal direction to institute a common religious life throughout the realm. His entire religious policy played an important role in bringing the [[*Catholic*]] Christian establishment into support for the new regime. At the same time Clovis played a significant role in establishing a political and religious order which provided a framework in which the Germanic [[*10 horns*]] and Roman [[*Catholic*]] worlds [[*little horn*]] could join hands in shaping a new civilization in Western Europe.” —*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 809. (bracketed portions were supplied.)

The eschatological significance of 508 AD. Early Adventists believed that the 1,290-year prophecy of Daniel 12:11 began in 508 AD and

concluded in 1798 AD, together with the 1,260-year prophecy mentioned earlier. It was also believed to be the date that fulfilled the prophetic, “taking away of the daily” of Daniel 8:11, in which Pagan (or Imperial) Rome transitioned to Papal Rome (i.e. Roman Catholic supremacy).

SDA: Nine “proof texts” examined

Belief #2 in the “28 Fundamental Beliefs” (2020 edition) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church provides nine (9) “proof texts” in support of the Trinity doctrine. They include: Genesis 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 13:14; Ephesus 4:4-6; and 1 Peter 1:2.

Four assertions. The intent, of course, is to give Biblical evidence to the four assertions made by the doctrine itself. These four assertions are:

1. **Three-in-one.** That “there is *one God...a unity of three Persons.*”
2. **Coeternal.** That these three Persons are *coeternal.*
3. **One *ousia* (substance).** That these three Persons are *immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present.*
4. **Incomprehensible.** That these three Persons are *infinite and beyond human comprehension.*

Proof texts examined. The nine verses are quoted below from the ESV, except for John 3:16 which is quoted from the NKJV. Our commentary on each of these verses follows.

1. Genesis 1:26: Then God said, “**Let us make man in our image**, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Commentary on Genesis 1:26: Nothing in this verse implies a three-Person, coeternal God. The plural pronoun “us” which occurs only four times in the Old Testament gives no hint of who the “us” includes. The “us” could have been his divine council which included angels, as some Jewish commentators suggest. EGW believed that the “us” was the Father speaking to His Son (cf. SR 20.2, “And now God said to His Son...”). This understanding is in harmony with the New Testament concept of God creating the worlds through his Son (Hebrews 1:2).

The four instances of “us” in the Old Testament are Genesis 1:25; 3:22; 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8. None provide support for a triune God. In contrast, the Hebrew word, Yehovah (the most common name for God in the OT), occurs over 6,800 times, all in the singular—that is, they all refer to a single Being.

2. Deuteronomy 6:4: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Commentary on Deuteronomy 6:4: The term “LORD” is in the original Hebrew, *Yehovah*. Therefore, it literally reads, “Hear, O Israel: Yehovah

our God, Yehovah is one.” Trinitarians regard the term “one” (Hebrew, *echad*) to be a compound unity—i.e. that “one” is a *semantic* plural while being *grammatically* singular. This misunderstanding of “compound unity” is discussed in detail in the Article entry, “[God of the Bible](#)” under the heading: God as a “compound unity”. Suffice to say, the “one” this verse is referring to is Yehovah, who is unmistakably understood to be one divine Being, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Even Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4 in Mark 12:29 and affirms the scribe’s and the Jewish audience’s understanding of the verse. If this verse meant a plurality, Jesus had the perfect opportunity to clarify its meaning, but he didn’t. He only reaffirmed the Jewish understanding of the verse. In truth, Jesus believed what the Jews believed, that there is only one God (John 17:3, “the only true God”).

3. *Isaiah 6:8*: And I heard the voice of the Lord [Hebrew, *Adonay*] saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

Commentary on *Isaiah 6:8*: This is one of the four Old Testament references to “us” as discussed in the above notes on Genesis 1:26. The same commentary applies to this verse.

4. *Matthew 28:19*: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Commentary on *Matthew 28:19*: This verse is discussed in detail in the “*Notes on Matthew*” section. There is abundant evidence against the traditional wording of this verse. Its authenticity is questioned on the grounds of textual, literary and historical criticism. Christian scholars suspect that it is an interpolation. Rather than reading, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” the evidence strongly supports the belief that the original reading was, “baptizing them in *my* name,” which refers to Jesus only. All baptisms in the Book of Acts were done in the name of Jesus (e.g. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16). None used the threefold name.

5. *John 3:16* (NKJV): For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Commentary on *John 3:16*: Only two divine Persons are listed here. This is not a triune God proof text.

6. *2 Corinthians 1:21-22*: And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Commentary on *2 Corinthians 1:21-22*: In the above verse there is *one* God. He (God) “establishes us with you in Christ.” This one God has also “anointed us” and “put his seal on us and given us his Spirit.” We are

sealed by God with the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) which God (the Father) poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:18, 33). As the apostle Peter said,

Acts 2:32-33: This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, **and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out this** that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Again, this verse is speaking of only one God, not a triune God. The spirit is *his spirit* which God poured out through Jesus at Pentecost.

7. 2 Corinthians 13:14: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Commentary on 2 Corinthians 13:14: In this verse, three powers are mentioned; but notice, only one of them is called God. One is the Lord, and the other is the Holy Spirit through which we have communion or fellowship with God and Jesus. The verse does not say fellowship “with” the spirit, but fellowship “of” the spirit. It is the fellowship that comes of or by the spirit such that we can have fellowship **with** the Father and **with** the Son and **with** each other. The spirit is the means by which we have fellowship with others.

1 John 1:3: that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so **that you too may have fellowship with us**; and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ**.

The problem Trinitarians have is not making a distinction between Persons and Essence. This is what this verse is dealing with. The topic of Persons vs. Essence is covered in detail in the Article entry, “[Spirit as Essence](#)”.

8. Ephesians 4:4-6: There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

Commentary on Ephesians 4:4-6: This verse clearly states that there is “one God and Father of all.” He is not a committee of three Persons. Also, this one God is “over all and through all and in all.” He is not coequal with anyone. Not a Trinitarian proof text at all.

9. 1 Peter 1:2: according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Commentary on 1 Peter 1:2: This verse mentions only one God, the Father, not a committee of three Persons. Also, it is not the sanctification “with” the spirit, but sanctification “of” or “by” the spirit. As the spirit is the

means by which we have fellowship with others, the spirit is the means by which we gain sanctification.

Concluding thoughts. The Trinity statement found in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "28 Fundamental Beliefs" (2020 edition) provides nine Biblical proof texts to support this belief. The statement itself makes a minimum of four assertions (already listed at the beginning). What remains to be answered is the question: Have these four assertions been reasonably and satisfactorily validated from Scripture? The answer is: No, not at all. In fact, by any measure, nothing was validated:

- Not the three-in-one God assertion;
- Not the coeternal assertion;
- Not the same substance (*ousia*) assertion;
- Not the incomprehensible assertion.

A complete lack of Biblical support for any of these assertions. This is surprising, given the scholarship the Seventh-day Adventist Church is known for. One would expect that the best evidence possible would be given. Yet none was provided. One can only conclude that the reason none was provided is that none is available. Again, NO PROOF texts were given in support of the Trinity by a Christian denomination possessing superb Biblical scholarship.

BRI: Twelve points of Biblical evidence examined

Below are the twelve (12) points of Biblical evidence (containing over 60 Bible verses) proposed by the BRI in support of the Trinity by the use of "theological reasoning". (Reference: *Biblical Research Institute (BRI) Release-9*, May, 2015, p. 21.)

1. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are **eternal**.
2. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit **created all things**.
3. The Three are each **omnipresent**.
4. The Three are each **omniscient**.
5. The Three are each **true and good**.
6. They each have a **self-regulating will**.
7. They are each the **fountain of life**.
8. They each **sanctify us**.
9. Each fills our souls with **divine love**.
10. Each gives **divine law**.
11. Each **dwells in believers' hearts**.
12. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are, **each by Himself, the supreme Jehovah and God**: (a) "I am Jehovah thy God"; (b) "Jehovah our God" and "the Highest"; (c) "Jehovah God" and "the Highest". Yet God is one.

The Biblical evidence on these twelve (12) points is examined below. The "*Scripture references*" were supplied by the BRI.

1. **ETERNAL** (*Scripture references*: Rom. 16:26; John 8:58; Mic. 5:2; Heb. 9:14; Deut. 33:27).

Commentary: Certainly God the Father is eternal; there is ample Biblical evidence for this. The Son is never declared, nor ever declares himself to be, eternal. The proof text often used is John 8:58. However, translation *bias* on John 8:58 is quite evident (see “*Notes on John*” on this verse). The other one of interest is Hebrews 9:14,

Hebrews 9:14: how much rather shall the blood of Christ, who, through *the* eternal spirit offers himself flawless to God.

Note that in the Greek text, the article “*the*” is missing from the phrase “*the* eternal spirit”. This verse could easily be referring to God's spirit, not a Third Entity. A reasonable understanding of this verse is that the “eternal spirit” **of God** was active in Jesus' life as Jesus offered himself “flawless to God”. Also see the footnote on Hebrews 9:14.

2. **CREATED ALL THINGS** (*Scripture references*: 1 Cor. 8:6; Ps. 100:3; Col. 1:16; Job 33:4).

Commentary: Yes, the Father created all things *through* the Son. God the Father is the Creator and Jesus was His agent in Creation (1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:15-17). Of interest is Job 33:4,

Job 33:4: The spirit [Hebrew: *ruach*; “spirit” or “breath”] of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life

This verse is not speaking of a Third Person, but is in fact speaking of God's *ruach* (or *breath*). This idea is repeated in the second clause of this verse (“the *breath* of the Almighty gives me life”). It was God's *breath* which gave life to Man (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 33:6; Ps. 104:29-30).

3. **OMNIPRESENT** (*Scripture references*: Jer. 23:24; Matt. 28:20; Ps. 139:7; Acts 17:28, 29).

Commentary: In the *Scripture references* used, only the Father is omnipresent through his spirit (Psalm 139:7, “Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?”). That is, the Father is omnipresent by means of his spirit.

With respect to the Son, it is evident that he is *only* omnipresent by way of the Spirit. After the Resurrection, Jesus went to Heaven (in the Ascension) and came back to the disciples in Spirit. Otherwise, why would he send the Spirit to speak in his place (John 14:16; 15:26)? That is, if Jesus is omnipresent, he would not need a Third Entity to speak for him at all. His presence and the Spirit's presence (to speak for Jesus) would be redundant.

4. **OMNISCIENT** (*Scripture references*: Acts 15:18; John 21:17; 1 Cor. 2:10; Heb. 4:13).

Commentary: We will consider two of these *Scripture references* (John 21:17 and 1 Corinthians 2:10). John 21:17 reads:

John 21:17: Lord, you know all things.

In this verse, Peter is responding to Jesus' query, for the third time, of whether he loved him or not. It should be obvious from the context that Peter was not making a universal declaration, but simply giving a personal viewpoint. Peter knew that Jesus knew everything about *him*, not everything about *everything*. In other words, it was not an absolute statement, but a relative one in his relationship to Jesus.

Moreover, we know in fact that Jesus did NOT know everything about *everything* because he grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52) and did not know the hour of his return (Mark 13:32). If Jesus did not know even one thing, which is true, then he is not omniscient.

In addition, the term "all" in the Bible does not always mean "everything in existence". A simple word search of "all" and you will find many examples where "all" does not mean "everything in existence" (e.g. Eph. 6:21; 1 John 2:20, 27; John 14:26; 2 Sam. 16:22; Psalm 22:7; Psalm 118:10; Hosea 7:4; Matthew 3:5; John 10:8). Students of the Bible are well aware of this type of overreach when dealing with other terms such as "eternal" as in "eternal fire". If "eternal" means "forever and ever" then Sodom and Gomorrah would still be burning (Jude 1:7). The fact of the matter is that there is contextual scope for the word "eternal" just as there is contextual scope for the word "all".

On 1 Corinthians 2:10. The other verse to consider is 1 Corinthians 2:10, "For the Spirit searches all things." Again, understanding the contextual scope is important here. So let's read this verse in context:

1 Corinthians 2:9-11 (NKJV): But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." ¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches **all things**, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows **the things of a man** except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows **the things of God** except the Spirit of God.

There is parallel phrasing here. There are "the things of a man" and "the things of God." The things that man knows he knows by his spirit, and the things God knows is by His spirit (v.11). Then, the things of God that are revealed to man are revealed to men *through* God's spirit ("But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit"). "God" in this verse is "*ho theos*" (literally "the God") which is understood to mean God the Father. It is the spirit of God the Father communicating to us the things of God. Therefore, contextually, the "Spirit" this verse is referring to is the Father's spirit. And if God the Father is omniscient, so is His spirit. This verse does not prove the Spirit to be a separate entity with separate omniscience.

5. **TRUE AND GOOD** (*Scripture references*: John 7:28; 17:17; Ps. 34:8; John 10:11; 14:6; 1 John 5:6).

Commentary: Yes, the Father and Son are true and good. However, the only reference supporting the idea that the Spirit is true and good is 1 John 5:6 (“the spirit is the truth”). Understand that Christ referred to himself as “the way, **the truth**, and the life” (John 14:6) and he declared the Spirit which the Father would send to be the “spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17). The question is *not* whether the spirit is true, but whether the spirit is a separate entity or whether it is the spirit of the Father and/or the Son. This one verse does not address the identity of the spirit at all.

6. **SELF-REGULATING WILL** (*Scripture references*: Eph. 1:11; Matt. 11:27; John 17:24; 1 Cor. 12:11).

Commentary: No question that the Father has a self-regulating will. It is the Father's will we pray for (Matthew 6:10, “Thy will be done”). And that Jesus has a will. On 1 Corinthians 12:11,

1 Corinthians 12:11: But the one and the same spirit **energizes** all of these, distributing to each one separately as he wills.

It says in this verse that the spirit “energizes” [G1754, *energeō*] all of these (gifts, services, and activities), yet in v.6 it says that it is God the Father who does this (“but it is the same God [*ho theos*] who **energizes** all of them in all people”). So who is doing the energizing? Is it God the Father or is it the Spirit? The simple answer is that it is God the Father through his spirit.

7. **FOUNTAIN OF LIFE** (*Scripture references*: Deut. 30:20; Ps 36:9; John 3:8; 5:21; Deut. 30:20).

Commentary: Yes, the Father is the fountain of life. And, yes, the Son gives life to whom he wills and is also spoken of as “the fountain of life” in the EGW writings. Yet, the Father has life in himself, while the Son has been *given this life* that he has in himself (John 5:26). Here is how EGW puts it:

DA 21.2: But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. “I do nothing of Myself,” said Christ; “the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.” “I seek not Mine own glory,” but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. 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.**

Thus, the fountain of life originates with the Father, the Father's life then "flows out to all" *through* the Son. The Father is the Source; the Son is the agent or channel.

On John 3:8: John 3:8 reads, "So is everyone who is born of the spirit." This verse does not specify "the spirit" to be a Third Entity. It could very well read, "the spirit" **of God**. After all, God the Father has a spirit and it is through God's spirit that life flows out to all.

8. **SANCTIFY US** (*Scripture references:* Phil. 4:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 1).

Commentary: It is plain that the Father sanctifies us (1 Thess. 5:23) through his Son (Rom. 8:29-30). It is also plain that the Son sets us free (John 8:36) to do works of righteousness. It is also true that we are sanctified in our spirit, *through* the spirit. The question is not the *work* of the spirit, but *who* the spirit is. None of the verses referenced in this declaration answer this question. As Romans 8:9 tells us, it could very well be the spirit of God or the spirit of Christ that is at work in us to sanctify us.

9. **DIVINE LOVE** (*Scripture references:* 1 John 5:1; 2:15; 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 15:30; Col. 1:8; Jude 21).

Commentary: Yes, the Father and Son manifest divine love; plenty of Bible references speak to this. On Romans 15:30,

Romans 15:30: Now I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

The phrase "by the love of the spirit" can be understood to be inclusive of the love shared with the saints of Rome. Meaning that they are together in one spirit and in one love. After all, Paul is desiring for them "to strive together with" him "in your prayers to God" for him. If they have a shared spirit and love for one another, then they "strive together". Rather than this verse speaking of a Third Entity, it is speaking of the spirit of love shared by the believers. Several commentators on this verse have this same view. Here is one:

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary on Romans 15:30: "and by the love of the Spirit"—not the love which the Spirit bears to us, but that love which He kindles in the hearts of believers towards each other; that is "By that Saviour whose name is alike dear to all of us and whose unsearchable riches I live only to proclaim, and by that love one to another which the blessed Spirit diffuses through all the brotherhood, making the labors of Christ's servants a matter of common interest to all—I beseech you."

10. **EACH GIVES DIVINE LAW** (*Scripture references:* Neh. 8:8; Ps. 19:7; Acts 13:2; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:16).

Commentary: This is an ambiguous statement and the Bible verses referenced do not help to clarify. So, let's just list them and give a brief comment on each, and leave it at that.

- **Nehemiah 8:8:** And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.
- **On Nehemiah 8:8:** “The book, the law of God” was understood to mean the Torah—the five books of Moses.
- **Psalms 19:7:** Yehovah’s law is perfect, restoring the soul. Yehovah’s covenant is sure, making wise the simple.
- **Acts 13:2:** As they were serving the Lord and fasting, the holy spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”
- **On Acts 13:2:** No reference to divine law in this verse. The three places in Acts where the phrase “the holy spirit said/says” occur in Acts 4:8; 13:2 and 21:11. In Acts chapter 13, “Lord” appears 8 times (Acts 13:2, 10-12, 44, 47-49). Out of these, only v.2 seems ambiguous. The others clearly point toward “Lord” being “God”. Therefore, in light of the contextual evidence, the “holy spirit” in v.2 refers to the Lord God giving this revelation to the believers at Antioch by way of his spirit. See “Notes on Acts” on Acts 16:6 for further discussion on the “holy spirit”.
- **Romans 8:2:** For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.
- **On Romans 8:2:** Understand that “law” (*nomos* in the Greek) has a very wide semantic range. It could include the Mosaic Law; the entire Old Testament; a law, rule, regulation, principle, precept, or injunction; anything that is established in the culture; and, the moral instruction given by Christ. What it means here is a matter of interpretation. How then are we to understand this “law of the spirit of life”? We have the answer a few verses later. In v.9 it tells us that it is the “spirit of God” and the “spirit of Christ” which is the spirit of life, because the “spirit *is* life” (v.10).
- **Galatians 6:2:** Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- **On Galatians 6:2:** The “law of Christ” is most likely referring to loving one another (John 13:34; cf. Gal. 5:14), as the context seems to suggest.
- **Colossians 3:16:** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.
- **On Colossians 3:16:** No reference to divine law in this verse.

11. **DWELLS IN THE BELIEVERS' HEARTS** (*Scripture references:* Eph. 3:17; John 14:17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Col. 1:27; Isa. 57:15).

Commentary: Yes, the Father and Son dwell in believers’ hearts. That the *parakletos* (John 14:17) also dwells in believers’ hearts is also true.

However, the identity of the *parakletos* is what is up for debate. Trinitarians believe the *parakletos* is the Third Person of the Trinity, while non-Trinitarians use 1 John 2:1 to prove that it's Jesus Christ ("we have an Advocate [Greek: *parakletos*] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous").

12. EACH BY HIMSELF, THE SUPREME JEHOVAH AND GOD

(*Scripture references*: Ex. 20:2; Isa. 40:3; cf. Matt. 3:3; Luke 1:76; Matt. 10:11; Ezek. 8:1, 3; Luke 1:35; Deut. 6:4).

Commentary: The reference to Luke 1:35 is discussed separately under "Notes on Luke". Also, the reference to Deut. 6:4 (the *Shema*) is discussed separately in the Article entry, "God of the Bible".

On *Isaiah 40:3*, "**Prepare the way of Yehovah in the wilderness! Make a level highway in the desert for our God.**" This verse is quoted in Matthew 3:3 and it is here suggested that the coming of the Messiah and "Yehovah" are equivalent. However, no religious Jew would have thought such a thing. It was the coming of the *Messiah*—Yehovah's representative—that the people in Jesus' day were waiting for. They were not expecting Yehovah *himself* to be coming down the highway. Jesus was not God, but he was God's *Messiah* (Revelation 11:15). Also, it was customary to attribute the work of a prophet to the work of God. For example, Luke 7:16 says, "and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited his people!'" Effectively, the people proclaimed that God had "visited" them by sending a great prophet.

On *Luke 1:76*, "**And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him.**" The child here is Zechariah's son, John the Baptist. He would be a prophet of the Most High. The Most High is God the Father (Luke 1:32). He would "go before the Lord to prepare the way for him." Whether the phrase "the Lord" is referring to Yehovah or the Messiah, there is nothing here that suggests Yehovah and the Messiah to be equivalent.

On *Ezekiel 8:3*, "**and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem.**" First of all, this was a vision Ezekiel had that lasted from Ezekiel 8:3 to 11:24, which all happened while Ezekiel was right in the middle of meeting with the elders of Judah that had been taken captive to Babylon. Whether it should be understood that the spirit is Yehovah or it is Yehovah's spirit which transported Ezekiel into vision is a matter of interpretation. However, nothing about this verse suggests that the spirit was a Third Entity who also was called Yehovah.

Concluding thoughts. It is difficult to imagine anyone being able to put together a doctrine of the Trinity using the Bible references BRI provided. There is no clear, unifying Trinitarian thread running through any of it.

➤ Pagan Worship [٤]

The Early Church. From the Apostolic era up through the early part of the 4th century, the Early Church would not describe their meetings as “worship” or as a religious “service”. Rather, they saw their meetings as **gatherings**, not as formal ceremonial events. That is to say, Christian gatherings did not involve acts of ritual **prostration** and the need to offer **sacrifices**, since the Levitical system was fulfilled in Christ and ritual **prostration** and **sacrifice** were no longer needed. Moreover, after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, there was not even a Temple to go to and worship at.

Christian meetings (or gatherings) were primarily, horizontally-focused for **edification** instead of vertically focused (ceremonial worship and sacrifice). It was for the *work* of “building up” one another. If there was prostration of any form, it was when kneeling in prayer. Yet there was nothing ceremonial or ritualistic in kneeling—i.e. there was no requirement or merit in doing so. All this changed with the introduction of Christian basilicas by Emperor Constantine in the early part of the 4th century and the style of worship that followed.

Christian basilicas. Emperor Constantine was responsible for initiating the pagan form of temple worship through Christian basilicas. Previous to this, Christians congregated in “house” churches. Constantine began his construction program in 313 AD, building monumental basilicas in the city of Rome including the Church of St. Peter. He also built churches in the Holy Land, most notably the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and he built churches in his newly-constructed capital of Constantinople. All of these, 58 churches and baptisteries and two monasteries, were all constructed at government expense.

Temple worship (elements). Worship in the ancient world, both Jewish and pagan, meant having the following four main elements:

1. **Temple building**
2. **Priesthood**
3. **Altar**
4. **Sacrifice**

Temple building

The Jewish Temple became synonymous with the Christian term, “house of the Lord” and “house of prayer”. The church building then became equivalent to the Jewish Temple, a Holy Place. As there is a Temple in Heaven, so there is a Temple on earth, the church building. Those who enter the church building are entering into a Sacred Place; a Holy Place.

Therefore, anyone who enters therein is asked to maintain a level of “reverence” and silent prayer.



The 4th-century Basilica of Constantine at Trier (photo by Thomas Johannes)

Temple terminology. House of God; Sanctuary; House of worship; Worship service. It is not New Testament Church terminology in terms of Christian gatherings, but Old Testament Jewish Temple terminology. The question then becomes: Is this a valid way to look at our church buildings?

Purpose of the Temple. (1) The dwelling place of God on earth. (2) The place of sacrifice for sin. It was customary to begin with prostration and prayer when you entered the Temple grounds. It was typically done at the entrance or gate of the Temple. Songs were then viewed as “sacrifices of praise” into the house of the Lord. The term “holy place” became synonymous with the main meeting place or church auditorium. Hymns that speak to this: “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.” It is Old Testament symbolism, when Yehovah’s glory filled the Temple.

Priesthood

Priests. Temple buildings must have those who “minister” in the temple. In the Old Testament, they were called priests, who were authorized to perform the sacred rituals of the sacrificial system in the Jewish Temple. This was also true of pagan priests. They were authorized to perform the sacred rituals of their religion, especially as a mediatory agent between

humans and one or more of their deities. This was all done in their respective temples.

Few Protestant denominations give the title of “priest” to their temple ministers (or clergy). Rather, they go for other (functional) descriptors such as: preacher, pastor, elder, or the more generic “minister”.

Priesthood duties. Besides ministering in the temple services, “priests” are also expected to perform a multitude of other tasks, including: evangelist, preacher, teacher, shepherd (of the flock), counselor, financial manager, administrator, organizer, parliamentarian, building superintendent and more. To say his duties are overextended, is an understatement.

Altar and Sacrifice

Central to a temple’s sacrificial system is the Altar (or altars). The Jewish Temple had a Bronze Altar where it performed its ritual sacrifices.

Sacrifice

asdf

Odd religion. Christians had an odd religion in the eyes of Pagans in that they did not have a **Temple**, or an **Altar**, they did not offer animal or food **Sacrifices**, and they did not have a **Priesthood**.

Key thought: Thus, the end of the Temple meant the end of worship. No prostration, no animal sacrifices, no priesthood, no liturgy.

Early Christian “worship”

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Transition back to temple worship.

“Worship” usage in the Bible

The Bible uses five words that are translated or relate to the concept of “worship”. In Greek, these five words are:

1. **Proskuneo** – To prostrate to
2. **Latreia** or **latreuo** – To serve with sacrifice
3. **Leitourgia** (G3009) – To perform a priestly duty in the Temple. The term “liturgy” comes from this word.
4. **Sebomai** (G4576) – To revere, i.e. adore
5. **Threskeia** (G2356) – Religious observance or ceremonies

The first word, *proskuneo*, is the one most commonly used for “worship” (over 70% of the time), followed by the word, *latreia*. We will only focus on these two words in this study.

1. **Proskuneo** (G4352). To do homage or make obeisance by kneeling or prostration. It is generally translated as “worship” in the NT. In the Hebrew OT, it is the word *šāḥā* (H7812). Some variant contextual forms of prostration (or “worship”) include:

- “Fall down and prostrate” (21x OT; 12x NT).
- “Fall on his knees and prostrate” (Mark 15:19; 17x OT)
- “Fall on his face and prostrate” (29x OT; 3x NT)
- “Fall on the ground and prostrate” (33x)
- “Fall at his feet, prostrating” (5x OT; 5x NT)
- “Come and prostrate” (43x OT)
- “Prostrate before” (8x)

Here are a couple of examples,

- *Genesis 42:6*: Joseph’s brothers came and **prostrated** themselves before him on the ground.
- *Matthew 2:11*: And after they came into the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary; and they fell down and worshipped [*lit.* **prostrated to**] him.

The actual meaning of *proskuneo* is that it is a physical act, not an emotion. It is also a type of greeting.

Proskuneo as a greeting. In ancient culture, when two equals greeted one another, they kissed each other on the lips. If there was a slight difference in rank, then the cheek was kissed. But if the difference in rank was great, then the person of lower status falls down and prostrates (from Herodotus, c. 430 BC). In the case of “greeting” God, one prostrates himself.

2. **Latρεία (G2999) and latreuō (G3000)**. To perform the service of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law. It means to serve deity with **sacrifice**. In Hebrew, it is the word *ʿăḇōdâ* (H5656).

Dual religious obligations. The Jews had **two** fundamental religious obligations: (1) They were to appear *before* Yehovah three times a year (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) and (2) they were *not* to appear empty-handed—i.e. they were to bring an offering or sacrifice. This is reflected in the second of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:5, “You shall not **prostrate** to or serve **sacrifices** to other gods”). Jesus himself gave this sense in the Temptation in the wilderness. In Matthew 4:10, Jesus responded to Satan’s temptation, saying (*paraphrased*), “You shall **prostrate** to Yehovah your God and to him alone you shall **sacrifice**.” It is also seen with the Magi who visited baby Jesus. When they saw the child with his mother Mary; they fell down and **prostrated to him**. Then they opened their treasures and **presented to him gifts** of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). The same can be said for Christian (metaphorical) worship as in Romans 12:1 which reads: Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy **sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual *latρεία* (i.e. **prostration** or “worship”).

Lord’s supper

The service of the Lord’s supper has become a ritual which Jesus never intended. It was the eating of Unleavened Bread which Jesus used when he spoke of this. Jesus’ intent was to remember him on a regular basis, “as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine.” The eating of unleavened bread was quite a regular occurrence. Think of it as quickly-made bread. It was bread that did not go through the leavening process.

Literal flesh and blood. The Catholics teach that in the Lord’s Supper service, the literal flesh and blood of Christ are eaten.

House church is Biblical. In Acts, etc.

	Apostolic	Today
Building	House-church; home setting	Auditorium-church; seats facing a platform/altar
Worship style	Spontaneous	Formulaic—liturgical, ritualistic
Priesthood	Priesthood of believers	Trained and paid priests/pastors
Participation	By gifts of the spirit, all contribute	Performers and audience format

End.

➤ **Apostate Adventism** [\[↩\]](#)

An “apostate” is one who has renounced or abandoned his previously held religious views. “Apostate Adventism” is a system of beliefs that no longer agree with the fundamental principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as were established in its first 50 years of existence. What Ellen G. White feared would come true, has come true.

[20LtMs, Ms 62, 1905, par. 14](#): Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the **pillars of our faith** concerning the **sanctuary**, or concerning the **personality of God** or **of Christ**, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor.

Executive summary. The major topics covered here are the following:

1. Questions on the Trinity
2. Questions on the Nature of Christ
3. Questions on the Atonement
4. Question on the Spirit of Prophecy
5. Questions on Revisionist History
6. Questions on Authentic Adventism
7. Questions on the Three Angels' Messages

1. Questions on the Trinity

Start of a journey. Back in 2003, when I was teaching the Adult Sabbath School Lesson at my church, a question came up on the nature of the Holy Spirit. And, as I often do, I asked the members of the class to offer their opinion. To my surprise, the opinions varied widely, and the subject became contentious and confusing, so I tabled the discussion and went on with the lesson itself. Afterward, I expressed my frustration with a brother in the church, who I regarded as a deep student of the Bible. I told him: How is it that the Holy Spirit is so poorly understood, and how is it that there are such varying opinions as to his nature? He sympathized with my frustration and offered me a bit of information that I had not known before and suggested that I look into it. It was this: That the Adventist Pioneers, our founding fathers, did not believe in the Trinity; and that, in particular, they did not believe the Holy Spirit to be a divine person—like the Father and the Son. I was taken aback. I had never heard this before. How could it be? And, if true, I quickly understood that it had alarming implications. I decided to investigate *immediately*.

Stages of investigation. First, I inquired on the statement that the Adventist Pioneers did not believe in the Trinity doctrine. That statement turned out to be true. Not only did the Adventist Pioneers not believe in the Trinity, but they were adamant anti-Trinitarians. They wrote about it in their publications. They explained in detail why this was the case. They regarded the Trinity doctrine to be one of the major false teachings of the Catholic church that should be summarily rejected. It is a verifiable fact

that the Adventist Pioneers denounced the Trinity doctrine. This fact is unquestioned by Adventist historians.

“That most of the leading SDA pioneers were antitrinitarian in their theology has become accepted Adventist history.” —Dr. Jerry Moon, 2003, (*Associate Professor and Chair, Church History Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Andrews University*).

Second, I began a long study on the “proof texts” of the Trinity doctrine. A 20-year study. My conclusion: There are no proof texts. This conclusion agrees with both Catholic and Adventist scholars. The reader should appreciate what I just said: **There are no proof texts.** If you believe the Bible to be the sole source of your faith, then you have a problem. You cannot “prove” the Trinity doctrine from Scripture. My analysis of the many Bible verses people use to try and prove the Trinity is covered in the Article entry, “*Trinity doctrine examined*”.

Third, this led me into a long study on the history of the Trinity doctrine. When was the Trinity doctrine first formulated in Christendom and when was the Trinity doctrine accepted by the Adventist Church? My 20-year study led me to the conclusion that: (1) the Trinity doctrine came about by Church Tradition over some four centuries of debate, which started (in earnest) two centuries after the New Testament Apostles. (2) The Trinity doctrine was accepted by the Adventist Church through a multi-decade transition period all in the 1900’s, culminating in the declaration and acceptance of the doctrine in 1980 and detailed in its 1988 publication, “*Seventh-day Adventist Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*.” One more doctrine was officially added in 2005 to make it the present-day, “28 Fundamental Beliefs” (as of 2020).

Fundamental implications. The implications of this fundamental change in Adventist theology are profound. They suggest the following:

1. *Early Adventist interpretation of Scripture was flawed.* Not that the Pioneer Adventists overlooked something in their rejection of the Trinity, but that they committed gross error in their analysis and ultimate understanding of the Scriptures on this doctrine. And, if this is true for the Trinity, what other doctrines were they also mistaken on?
2. *Ellen G. White was a false prophet.* Given that EGW was and is believed to be a prophet of God, but held to a false understanding of the nature of God—that is, non-Trinitarian—then her status as a true prophet ought to be questioned.
3. *Modern Adventism has apostatized.* But, if the Pioneer Adventists and EGW had the correct understanding of the Trinity—that it was a false teaching—then where does that leave present-day Adventists who are fully on board with its acceptance?
4. *Trinitarian tentacles.* The Trinity doctrine does not stand in isolation from the other doctrines. It has “tentacles” into a whole

host of other Adventist beliefs, from the nature of the Godhead to all aspects of the plan of salvation, even to the understanding of the sanctuary and final judgment.

Adventist theologians fully recognize the implications of its present Trinitarian doctrinal position. As stated in the Adventist book, “The Trinity”:

“As one line of reasoning goes, **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.**” —Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, John Reeve: *The Trinity*, 2002, p. 190.

2. Questions on the Nature of Christ

Competing teachings on the nature of Christ exist in the SDA church.

Begotten or unbegotten. Is the Son of God *begotten* or *unbegotten*? By begotten-ness, we are referring to whether the Son of God was *literally* born of God or *metaphorically* given the title of “Son” but in fact not a son—only role-playing as a son. Pioneer Adventists believed the Son was born (or “begotten”) of God, while present-day Adventist theologians believe he is role-playing as a son and not literally a son. For a full discussion on the present SDA position, see the article, “*A Question of Sonship*,” by Angel Manuel Rodriguez in AdventistBiblicalResearch.org. Obviously, these two competing views are polar opposites and irreconcilable. Someone is wrong—either the Adventist Pioneers or present-day Adventists.

Fatherhood of God. By the same logic, if the Son is not a true son, then the Father is not a true father. He is a *metaphorical* father, just as the Son is a *metaphorical* son. God is playing the role of a father, when in reality he is not. This is what today’s Adventist theologians would have you believe. That you should forget about taking the Bible literally, you must read it metaphorically. It’s all play-acting; it’s all make believe. God is not really “the Father” and Christ is not really “the Son”.

But that’s not what the apostle John tells us. According to John, this is the very sign of the antichrist: he who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). Ellen G. White certainly believed in the fatherhood of God. Here is one example in her writings.

12LtMs, Lt 50, 1897, par. 51: The Father, in union and loving sympathy with His Son, **subjected Himself to suffer with His Son.** He spared not **His only begotten Son**, but freely delivered Him up for us all. This gift of Christ is the crowning truth of God’s love, and His Fatherhood through all time and through eternity. Here the love of God in **His Fatherhood** is shown. Let us drink in this love, that we may know by experience what a real, tender, joyful, experience there is in a realization of **the Fatherhood of God.** “Let brotherly love

continue.” [Hebrews 13:1.] By bearing one another’s burdens, we are fulfilling the law of Christ.

Christ’s human nature. Past and present Adventists do not agree on the type of *human* nature Christ possessed when he lived on earth. This question on Christ’s *human* nature revolves around whether he had a pre-Adamic (*prelapsarian*) or a post-Adamic (*postlapsarian*) nature. Pioneer Adventists clearly did *not* believe in a pre-Adamic (*prelapsarian*) nature, while present-day Adventists do. This changeover occurred in the fifteen-year period between 1940 and 1955, where the words, “sinful” and “fallen,” with reference to Christ’s human nature were largely eliminated from denominationally published materials. Since 1952, phrases such as “sinless human nature” and “nature of Adam before the fall” have taken the place of the former terminology. An excellent detailed history of this changeover, although we are not in agreement with its conclusions, is found in the article, “*History of the changeover to the Unfallen Nature position*,” sdadefend.com.

The “second death.” Pioneer Adventists did not believe Christ died the “second death,” while present-day Adventists do hold to this view. Below is the official statement, which is found here and in other recent Adventist literature:

“The death that Christ tasted for everyone was the second death.”
—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 1988, p. 114.

A discussion on the subject of the “second death” is covered in detail in “*Notes on Revelation*” under Revelation 20:14.

The Father killed Jesus. Current Adventist teaching is that the Father killed Jesus, as the December 8, 2023, *Adventist Review* article affirms:

“To spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, **the Father killed Jesus instead**. . . . Or, to put it crudely, **the Father killed Jesus** so that He wouldn’t have to kill us.” —Goldstein, C. “Law, Freedom, Love.” *Adventist Review* online edition, December 8, 2023, emphasis mine).

However, this was not the early Adventist understanding, nor did EGW teach it, nor can it be proven from Scripture. The misunderstanding that present-day Adventists have, along with most of Christendom, is that God’s law functions like human law—that it is arbitrary and imposed, requiring legal oversight and enforcement. It is the belief that God is the active agent in causing suffering and death. When in reality, sin pays its own wages, and it is Satan who holds the power of death. Consider the following Scripture:

- *Romans 6:23*: For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- *Galatians 6:8*: For he who sows to his own flesh will **from the flesh reap corruption**, but he who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life.
- *James 1:15*: And when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And **when sin is fully grown, it brings forth death**.

It is plain from Scripture that it is sin which causes death, not God. And, as Hebrews tells us, it is Satan who holds the power of death:

Hebrews 2:14: Therefore, since the children all have flesh and blood, Jesus himself took on flesh and blood as well, so that through death he might destroy **the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil**,

(See the article, “*Fundamental Beliefs*,” under the section, “*God’s law*,” for a detailed discussion on God’s law and God’s wrath.)

Two deaths. The confusion lies in a misunderstanding of death. The Bible actually speaks of two deaths. The first death can be called “sleep-death”. It is this death which God, indeed, has the power to bring about. There are numerous examples in the Bible where God directly or indirectly caused this kind of death. Here are a few notable examples:

<i>Incident</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Noah’s Flood	Drowning	Gen. 6-9
Sodom & Gomorrah	Fire from Yehovah	Gen. 19:24
Lot’s wife	Pillar of salt	Gen. 19:26
Firstborn of Egypt	Yehovah smote	Ex. 12:29
Egyptian army	Drowning	Ex. 14:28
Nadab & Abihu	Fire from Yehovah	Lev. 10:2
Ten spies	Plague	Num. 14:37
Korah, Dathan, Abiram	Buried alive	Num. 16:32-33
24,000 immoral Israelites	Plague	Num. 25:9
Uzzah, touched the ark	Yehovah smote	1 Sam. 25:38
70,000 Israelites	Pestilence	2 Sam. 24:15
42 youth mock Elisha	Two female bears	2 Kings 2:23-24
185,000 Assyrians	Yehovah’s angel	2 Kings 19:35
Ananias & Sapphira	Unspecified	Acts 5:1-10
Herod	Angel of the Lord	Acts 12:23

But this first death is not really death, since they will all be resurrected—“some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”

(Daniel 12:2). The first death is a kind of suspended animation in which a person awaits the corresponding resurrection. The second death, however, is the true death. It is the second death that the wages of sin brings. It is this second death that Satan causes—and which Christ came to destroy:

- *1 Corinthians 15:26*: The last enemy to be abolished is death.
- *2 Timothy 1:10*: but has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

The “second death” is covered in detail in “*Notes on Revelation*” under Revelation 20:14. This second death is eternal death. It is the state of annihilation from which there is no return. This death is the result of unremedied sin and is the fruit of Satan’s power to alienate people from God, the source of life. **This death will occur, not when God uses his power to inflict it, but when he stops using his power to prevent it.** In other words, God has been using his power to hold at bay what sin produces, until such a time that this probationary period of grace is completed. In the end, the final end—the Day of Judgment—God “lets go” and surrenders the persistently rebellious to reap the full consequences of what they have insisted upon, separation from Him, the source of life, and they die eternally.

God is the source of life; Satan and sin are the source of death. It was not God who killed Jesus, but Satan, who “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). EGW believed the same thing:

[DA 761.2](#): Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God**, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. . . .

The cross. What happened at the cross is that God gave his only begotten Son to mankind. But mankind, who is under the power of sin and Satan, was moved by Satan to kill Jesus. “Men of Israel. . . this man [Jesus]. . . you took and put to death, having him nailed to the cross by the hands of lawless men.” (Acts 2:23). Yet Satan holds the ultimate responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ, not God. God gave us life through his Son, but Satan made and continues to make every effort to extinguish it.

The reason the Father could resurrect Jesus was that Satan had no claim on him. Since Jesus had lived a spotless, sinless life when he was on earth, there was no justifiable reason for Jesus to remain in the grave to await the second death. Satan, “who has the power of death” (Heb. 2:14)—the second death—had no justifiable, legal claim on Jesus as his captive. And because of this, all who take hold of the gift of Christ by faith can also escape death—the second death. “Blessed and holy are those

who take part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them” (Rev. 20:6). Thus, *Jesus* escaped the second death through a righteous life, and *we*, as believing Christians, escape the second death through Christ’s imputed righteousness.

3. Questions on the Atonement

The debate over the Atonement among Adventists is whether it is *single* or *dual*.

Single vs. dual atonement. Early Adventists, up through the mid-1950s, believed in “dual atonement”. A transition occurred from the mid-1950s until today, where “single atonement” is the teaching that prevails in Adventist literature. These competing views have important theological implications.

Single atonement. That Christ’s death on the cross is all the atonement I will ever need. It is “finished atonement”. Nothing more is needed, except my acceptance of that salvation. I am saved by justification alone. It was “finished justification” on the cross. Single atonement denies that Christ is performing a second or “final atonement” in heaven before he comes again.

Dual atonement. That Christ’ death on the cross fulfilled the *daily* sanctuary service typology, but that the *yearly* service (performed once a year on the Day of Atonement) is yet unfulfilled. Below are some quotes from EGW on the subject:

- [GC 352.2](#): In the typical system, which was a shadow of the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ, the cleansing of the sanctuary was the last service performed by the high priest in the **yearly round of ministration**. It was **the closing work of the atonement**—a removal or putting away of sin from Israel. It prefigured the closing work in the ministration of our High Priest in heaven, in the removal or blotting out of the sins of His people, which are registered in the heavenly records. This service involves a work of investigation, **a work of judgment**; and it immediately precedes the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; for when He comes, every case has been decided. Says Jesus: “My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12. **It is this work of judgment**, immediately preceding the second advent, that is announced in the first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7: “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.”
- [GC 421.2](#): For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, **yet their sins still remained upon the books of record**. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so **before Christ’s work**

for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary.

Thus, dual atonement teaches that while atonement began at the cross, it continues until the “work of judgment” is complete. For the **righteous**, it is completed when Christ finishes his high priestly ministry in heaven before he returns as King of kings at the Second Coming. For the **wicked**, this “work of judgment” is completed when “removal of sin from the sanctuary” is performed in the Final Judgment at the end of the Millennium, when the sins of the righteous are placed on Satan (the scapegoat) and he and his angels, together with the wicked, are destroyed.

Practical significance. Probably the most important significance is in the daily life of the believer. In EGW’s words:

[1SM 366.1](#): But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, **no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties.** God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

Faith in Christ results in a change of heart. The believer is “born again” and is given a new heart, new thoughts, new motives. He no longer lives a life of wickedness but of obedience to God’s principles as revealed in his word. In EGW’s own words, he cannot remain justified “while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties.” It is not a “once-saved-always-saved” theology, but one in which a believer can lose his salvation by determined disobedience.

[11LtMs, Lt 83, 1896, par. 33](#): The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the rule of faith and practice. **Justification by faith in Christ will be made manifest in transformation of character.** This is the sign to the world of the truth of the doctrines we profess. The daily evidence that we are a living church is seen in the fact that we are practicing the word. A living testimony goes forth to the world in consistent Christian action.

The faith of the believer must prevail to the end; he must run the race of faith and cross the finish line. This life of faith is made evident by the continual yielding of his life to the will of God, “for God is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Table of differences. The following table summarizes the theological differences between the single and dual atonement ideas.

Theme	Single atonement	Dual atonement
Justification	Finished at the cross	Started at the cross, but finished when Christ's high priestly ministry in heaven is completed, before the Second Coming
God's law	Faith in Christ is the solo ticket to heaven. Away with God's law; it was nailed to the cross.	Faith in Christ is a change of heart ("born again") experience which results in holy living. It does not "justify" a believer who continues to break God's law.
Final atonement	Completed when one believes ("once-saved-always-saved")	Completed when one believes "to the end" of life. Salvation can be lost through determined disobedience.
Salvation	Easy to be saved. Just pray the "sinner's prayer" and you're all set.	Easy to be lost. Sin is enchanting, always inviting. A believer can choose to break faith at any time. God does not force anyone to remain with him.
Trials and tribulations	Comes from the devil. God promises us prosperity in this life (prosperity gospel).	God ordains the "testing" of our faith (James 1:3; Heb. 12:1-13). Christians should expect trials and wants in this life.
Christ's life	The Perfect Life for us to receive. No need to copy it.	The Perfect Life for us to copy. He is our Perfect Example for us to reflect ("in the image of")
Repentance	Declare ourselves as sinners.	Declare ourselves as sinners and repudiate sin ("turn away")
Victory over sin	Not achievable and not important. Christ paid it all.	Achievable and important, esp. at the end of time when Christ finishes his ministry in heaven.
Sanctuary typology	Affirms the "daily" sacrifice only	Affirms both the "daily" and "yearly" (Day of Atonement) sacrifices

4. Questions on the Spirit of Prophecy

According to the Book of Revelation, the two identifying characteristics of the remnant people in the last days are that they: (1) keep the commandments of God, and (2) have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17). We are further told that the testimony of Jesus is “the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

Adventists use these two verses to make the claim that they are the last-day, remnant church by virtue of the fact that they: (1) keep *all* the commandments of God which includes the 4th commandment (the true Sabbath); and (2) had a prophet in their midst in the person of Ellen G. White (1827-1915) and her testimony lives on in her writings. When Adventists use the term, “Spirit of Prophecy,” they are usually referring to the writings of Ellen G. White.

At issue is whether the interpretation of Revelation 19:10 is an accurate one. That is, whether “the testimony of Jesus,” which the remnant will possess (Rev. 12:17), also means they have “the spirit of prophecy” (interpreted to mean, having the prophetic gift), and that this prophetic gift is satisfied in having a prophet (namely, Ellen G. White) in their midst.

A detailed discussion of Revelation 19:10 is found in “*Notes on Revelation*”. The conclusion found in the notes is that the saints at the end of time will *all* possess “the testimony of Jesus” and they also will *all* possess “the spirit of prophecy”. This is the *literal* interpretation. There will not be *one* prophet among them, but *all* will prophesy. It will be the second (greater) fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, when God will pour out his spirit on *all* flesh and “your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28, cf. Acts 2:17). It will not be confined to one prophet, and it will not be *symbolic* in nature.

Such a claim, Seventh-day Adventists do not make, nor can make. Otherwise, where is the (greater) testimony of Jesus manifest in the spirit of prophesy? Where is the latter rain spiritual manifestation? Where are the multitude of prophets found in the church? Where are their sons and daughters prophesying, old men dreaming dreams and young men seeing visions? Adventists claim none, because they have none. One prophet does not make the remnant church, as defined by the Book of Revelation and the prophet Joel. Its fulfillment is yet future.

5. Questions on Revisionist History

Trinity adoption. The history of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church came to adopt the Trinity doctrine and fully reject the staunch anti-Trinitarian position (held for well over a century) will depend on who is telling it. A modern-day *revisionist* will emphasize a “Paradigm Shift” in

1898 by the publication of Ellen White's *Desire of Ages*, while a non-revisionist will emphasize the "Kellogg Crisis" of 1903-1907. Given the polar opposite sides of this debate (each declaring the other in error of its history) and the current official position being Trinitarian, those holding the anti-Trinitarian position are typically asked to either remain silent or leave. If they do not comply, they are disfellowshipped.

Pioneer Adventists in error. Seventh-day Adventists pride themselves for advancing in truth from Protestant foundations. They believe that all their unique teachings regarding the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, etc. are advancing truths. All except one—the most foundational of truths—the Trinity. Apparently, God misled the Adventist people and their prophet in adopting the heretical teaching of Arianism for the first 70 or so years of its history, up until 1914 at least. The 1914 Adventist Yearbook still retained the early Adventist Arian view of God (found in the Yearbook's section, "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists").

The transition was first noted in the 1919 Bible Conference in which the Deity of Christ was hotly debated. This was followed by the 1931 Yearbook, "Fundamental Beliefs," which changed the wording to include the terms "Godhead" and "Trinity". It was not until 1980 when the transition was complete, with the wording that we see today.

Bear in mind, that the Trinity doctrine has been the fundamental belief of most of Christendom for well over 1,500 years. Talk about a misstep and waste of time for the self-proclaimed remnant church. And, if it is true that this gigantic misstep was taken with regard to the Trinity doctrine, what about its other peculiar doctrines? Could they also be in error?

False statements by Adventist revisionists. Numerous false statements have been made by the *revisionists* of Adventist history. Here is a sampling of the false statements, as can be found in Jerry Moon's *Adventist Review* article, "*Heresy or Hopeful Sign? Early Adventists' struggle with the truth about the Trinity*," dated April 22, 1999:

1. **Un-endowed scholars.** Jerry Moon belittles the pioneers as individuals who "weren't endowed scholars with unlimited time for study." Apparently, to arrive at Biblical truth one must be an endowed scholar with unlimited time for study. No doubt Jesus and the apostles were levied the same accusations by the learned theologians of their day.
2. **Alleged late attention to the Trinity doctrine.** Not true. Many of the leading pioneers were non-Trinitarian in the early years. One can find many anti-Trinitarian comments from James White and Merrit E Cornell in the mid-1850s, from Joseph Bates, JH Waggoner, JN Loughborough and RF Cottrell in the 1860s, etc. It was not an afterthought or late development by any measure.
3. **Alleged eventual acceptance of the Trinity.** Not true. The body of early Adventists never accepted this doctrine. Even well into

the 1920's LeRoy Froom was confronted with opposition from the older generation of Adventists regarding his Trinitarian ideas. "You cannot imagine how I was pummeled by some of the old timers because I pressed on the personality of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead" (Letter by LeRoy Froom to Dr. Otto H. Christenson, October 27, 1960).

4. **That EGW never expressed anti-Trinitarian views.** Not true. This was attested by a prominent non-SDA scholar, Dr. Walter Martin. He affirmed that Ellen White made many statements that were clearly non-Trinitarian and gave many examples in his public discourses on the subject.
5. **Alleged *Desire of Ages* paradigm shift.** A thorough analysis of the false claims regarding certain statements in *Desire of Ages* is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say, the *Desire of Ages* is replete with non-Trinitarian statements, impossible to ignore by a careful reader.
6. **That there were no anti-Trinitarian publications after 1898.** Not true. Numerous post-1898 articles and publications by EGW contain non-Trinitarian statements.
7. **That EGW "never wrote an article directly confronting wrong views about the Godhead."** Not true. The most famous was her battle with J. H. Kellogg and his pantheistic and ultimately Trinitarian views involving his book, *The Living Temple*. Another example is Brother Chapman in Letter 7, 1891 (Manuscript Releases, vol. 14, pp. 175-180).
8. **That the Pioneers were more interested in understanding the character of God than His nature.** Not true. First of all, since when does the study of the character of God not involve the nature of God? The two go hand in hand.
9. **Alleged abundant Biblical basis for the Trinity doctrine.** Not true. There are NO PROOF texts. This is admitted by the Church's very own research branch, the BRI, as cited in the article, "*Trinity doctrine examined.*" Here is another quote from the *Review and Herald*, July 30, 1981, p. 4, "While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact by Bible writers. . . .Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity."

Daniells to Froom, 1930. Le Roy Froom (1890–1974) is a key figure in the church's transition from Arianism to Trinitarianism. Back in the spring of 1930, A. G. Daniells encouraged Le Roy Froom to be,

"a connecting link between past leaders and the present. But, he said, it is to be later—not yet, not yet. . . . Possibly it would be necessary to wait until certain individuals had dropped out of action, before the needed portrayal could wisely be brought forth." —Le Roy Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, p. 17.

As history shows, Froom accepted this assignment. The change was to be made when the last of the leaders holding the pioneer beliefs had passed away.

Books of a new order. In his book, *Movement of Destiny*, in the chapter entitled, “1931 Opens New Epoch of Unity and Advance,” Froom states that the decade from 1931 to 1941 “marked the end of an old epoch, and the beginning of a new day in unification and auspicious witness for us as a Movement” (*Movement of Destiny*, p. 421). The first order of business was to change the *Baptismal Certificate* to be used for new converts. A new “Baptismal Covenant” and Baptismal “Vow” was written which “was based upon our ‘Fundamental Beliefs’ statement of 1931” (*Movement of Destiny*, p. 420). The next order of business was to change the wording of “standard works.” In Froom's own words:

Movement of Destiny, p. 422: The next logical and inevitable step in the implementing of our unified “Fundamental Beliefs” involved revision of certain standard works so as to eliminate statements that taught, and thus perpetuated, erroneous views on the Godhead.

EGW writings manipulation. Froom used partial data presentations, out of context quotations, and ellipses to make Mrs. White seem like she was supporting doctrines that she really was not—i.e. the Trinity, the pre-fall, sinless flesh, nature of Christ, and single atonement. The best example of Froom's agenda is found in his book, *Evangelism*, published in 1946, which is a compilation from the writings of EGW. The website <https://www.truthseeker.church/the-book-evangelism> goes into detail on the distortions found in this book.

6. Questions on Authentic Adventism

Ironies. In the broadest sense an *irony* is the juxtaposition of what on the surface appears to be the case and what is actually the case. Here are some examples:

1. **Sola scriptura.** The website, adventist.org/beliefs, has on its front page the following, “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.” **Irony:** Its research branch, the BRI, freely admits regarding the Trinity doctrine that, “No text of Scripture specifically says that God is three Persons” (discussed in, “*Trinity doctrine examined*”). Thus, “the Bible as their only creed” cannot be used to defend Belief #2.
2. **Andrews University.** This Adventist university (andrews.edu) was named after the Adventist pioneer, J. N. Andrews, a staunch anti-Trinitarian. **Irony:** Yet their School of Theology teaches the Trinity. Also his biography on their website makes no mention of this fact (encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=C8VX).

3. **Dual atonement.** Present-day Adventists teach single atonement theology, while at the same time accepting EGW's writings as authoritative when she, in fact, teaches dual atonement theology.
4. **Babylon.** Adventists have traditionally presented the Catholic Church as fulfilling the Babylon of the Book of Revelation, while at the same time aligning themselves with Catholic ecumenism. See the section on "*Ecumenism*" below.

At this point, present-day Adventist beliefs have drifted far enough from its original, foundational teachings that one can legitimately ask the question of whether it is authentic Adventism at all. And, if not, then what should be done about it.

Ecumenism. Although the SDA Church openly states that it resists the movement which advocates full ecumenical integration with other churches, it nevertheless has a long history of *dialogue* with the aim to find some form of ecumenical unity. In other words, while it states one thing, it practices another. This is well document in the video, "*The Seventh Day Adventist Church's Apostasy in Ecumenism*," Duration 30:04 (<https://tinyurl.com/mr42pf5z>). The following table presents the historical evidence.

SDA Ecumenical Timeline

<i>Year</i>	<i>Event</i>
1948	WCC (World Council of Churches) formed in Geneva, Switzerland, founded to work for the cause of ecumenism.
1955-57	Dialogue and agreement with evangelicals Martin and Barnhouse. " <i>Questions on Doctrine</i> " is published (1957) which adopts a new <i>Catholic</i> Jesus.
1962-65	Vatican II in Rome. Four Adventist representatives present.
1965-71	Bert Beach, official SDA liaison to WCC, initiates yearly SDA—WCC meetings in Geneva area.
1968	SDA joins WCC Faith and Order Commission
1968-present	SDA and CWC (Christian World Communions) yearly meetings.
1973	Bert Beach with WCC writes book, " <i>So Much In Common between the World Council of Churches and the Seventh-day Adventist Church</i> " published by WCC in 1973. One notable quote: "The member churches of the World Council of Churches and Seventh-Day Adventists are in agreement on the fundamental articles of the Christian faith as set forth in the three ancient symbols (Apostolicum, Nicaeno-Constantinopolitum, Athanasium). This agreement finds expression in unqualified acceptance of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Two Natures. " —Ibid., p. 107.
1975	Protest of SDA Ecumenism in Hungary. 1,500 SDA's disfellow-shipped.

1976	SDA President Neal Wilson tells court that anti-papal attitude of the church was thrown into the historical trash-heap.
1977	Bert Beach gives gold medal to the Pope in Rome.
1977-80	Protest of True and Free SDA's in USSR ignored. Shelkov (83) dies in Siberia.
1980	New 27 Statements—WCC compatible. Ecumenism, Trinity incorporated. No second or third angel's messages.
1981	"Adventist" trademarked under commercial law.
1981-82	SDA signs Baptism, Eucharist, Mission (BEM) Document with 100 other churches.
1983	Walter Martin asks the SDA GC if the 1955-56 agreement is still valid. Reply: Yes.
1984-99	Secret Roman Catholic—SDA dialogues begin in Poland. Public Agreement signed—1999.
1985	SDA leaders in England agree with Margaret Thatcher to close businesses on Sunday.
1985	New SDA [<i>Catholic</i>] Hymnal. 13 new hymns to Trinity.
1986	" <i>What I Like About Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Charismatics, Catholics, our Jewish Friends and Adventists</i> " by George Vandeman, Pacific Press.
1990	Cosmic Christ commissioned painting handed out to all SDA GC delegates.
1991	Roy Adams, Adventist Review: "Eucharist fits into ambit of Three Angel's Messages."
1993	George Knight: "SDA pioneers would not be able to join SDA church today."
1995	New Trinitarian SDA logo, replaces the 3 angels logo.
1995	New Catholic encyclical— <i>Ut Unum Sint</i> (Latin for "That they may be one"). Declares the Catholic Church's full commitment to ecumenism. The Pope becomes the head of the fraternal system of churches.
1995	Vatican flag marches into SDA GC. Sign of Daniel 11:41 fulfilled.
1996	SDA—Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.
1996	Porter SDA Hospital merges with Catholic hospital in Denver, Colorado
1997	Bert Beach works with WCC to determine best time to celebrate Easter.
1994-98	SDA—Lutheran dialogues. Agreement signed on Justification. Obedience to law not necessary for salvation.
1999	SDA clergy welcome the pope to St. Louis, Missouri
1999	Roman Catholic—SDA dialogues in Poland. Public Agreement signed. Unity over Blessed Trinity.
2000	Bert Beach elected vice chair of Meeting of U.S. Church Leaders steering committee.

2000	SDA “ecumenical observers” attend Baptist World Congress.
2000	Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and United Nations attend SDA GC.
2001	SDA—World Alliance of Reformed Churches [WARC] dialogues
2001-03	SDA—Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic) dialogues
2002	Vatican invites Bert Beach (representing SDA’s) to Religious Observance at Assisi.
2003	SDA’s seek fellowship with Coptic Pope.
2004-05	SDA—Salvation Army dialogues
2005	SDA’s participate in Global Christian Forum—Lusaka, Zambia
2006	SDA—Presbyterian Church dialogues (USA)
2006-07	SDA—World Evangelical Alliance [WEA] dialogues, 420 million evangelical Christians. SDA’s want to join WEA.
2007	SDA expands dialogues to World Religions. Council on Inter-church/Inter-religion affairs created.
2007	SDA’s participate in worldwide Global Christian Forum meeting in Kenya.
2010	SDA’s celebrate 100 th year anniversary of Ecumenical Movement in Capetown, South Africa. Partnership in mission.
2010	SDA dialogue with Universal Society of Hinduism.
2010	Secretaries of the Christian World Communion elect SDA John Gras Secretary for 5th time.
2010	SDA dialogue with Mennonite World Conference.
2016	Ganoune Diop, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, involved in an ecumenical audience with the pope on Wednesday, October 12, 2016 at the Vatican.
2018	United Nations symposium, co-sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The event, held Jan. 22 at the United Nations regarding the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs.
2019	SDA pastor celebrates Mass with Catholics and Evangelicals
2019	Ganoune Diop presents at the United Nations addressing a diverse range of organizations, including Protestant, Catholic, Islamic and Jewish groups.
2019	Ganoune Diop and Jonathan Duffy, attend the June, 2019 G20 Interfaith Forum in Japan.
2020	SDA pastor, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals sign a historic “Ecumenical Charter” that Affirms Faith in “One, Holy, Catholic Apostolic Church”

As the above history shows, far from being exclusivist, the SDA Church has sought ecumenical alignment with Catholics, Evangelicals, and others for decades. The same sentiment among Protestants toward Romanism existed in EGW's day:

[GC 563.1](#): Romanism is now regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in former years. In those countries where Catholicism is not in the ascendancy, and the papists are taking a conciliatory course in order to gain influence, there is an increasing indifference concerning the doctrines that separate the reformed churches from the papal hierarchy; the opinion is gaining ground that, after all, we do not differ so widely upon vital points as has been supposed, and that a little concession on our part will bring us into a better understanding with Rome. The time was when Protestants placed a high value upon the liberty of conscience which had been so dearly purchased. They taught their children to abhor popery and held that **to seek harmony with Rome would be disloyalty to God**. But how widely different are the sentiments now expressed!

Split on theology and practice. The reality today is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no longer a unified church, even without regard to its doctrinal history. For example, on the subject of women's ordination, several worldwide divisions (primarily led by the North American Division) have adopted (and practice) the ordination of women, in opposition to the church's official position (as of 2020). Also, movement toward sexual liberalization (i.e. gay clergy, abortion, divorce, etc.) and ecumenism has increased, particularly in the last couple of decades.

These issues are not unique to Adventists. Other church denominations have had to deal with them as well. So much so, that many have formally, organizationally split over them, including:

- **Methodist:** United Methodist vs. Global Methodist – over gay marriage issues
- **Lutheran:** Lutheran vs. Evangelical Lutheran – over sexual liberalization, ecumenism and biblical inerrancy
- **Presbyterian:** Presbyterian vs. Presbyterian Church in America vs. Evangelical Presbyterian vs. Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians – over homosexual clergy, women's ordination, liberalism, reformed theology and ecclesiastical polity
- **Episcopal:** Episcopal vs. Anglican Church of North America – over liberal views

You will note that moral issues (i.e. LGBTQ, women's ordination, gay marriage, etc.) is a common reason for the splits. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not far behind in this regard.

Adventist trademarks and lawsuits. The names "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist," and the church logo, are all registered trademarks. The acronym "SDA" is used with what's called common-law rights, meaning

that the Adventist Church has been using it for a long period of time as a name that identifies the organization. So the Church has rights with that, as well. The Church also has a copyright on the term “haystacks” by a Supreme Court ruling in 2016. The ruling states that while the farming industry may refer to a “singular, large stack of hay as a ‘haystack,’ any use of the plural ‘haystacks’ is now the exclusive domain of the Seventh-day Adventist Church”.

A string of trademark lawsuits on the use of “Adventist” has been ongoing from the early 1980s up to the present time. The SDA church has won most of their cases, so it would be foolish for any splinter group to attempt to use the name “Adventist” to officially identify itself in any way. It is unknown how much church funds have been used for this purpose, but it is undoubtedly large since lawyers don’t come cheap.

Feasibility of a split. My estimation is that although a split of the SDA Church would be beneficial and proper, given the major differences between historical and modern-day Adventists, and between liberal and conservative groups, yet it is unlikely to happen. It is unlikely primarily because of the economic impact it would have on the church. Not only does the corporate body hold legal rights to the name (“Adventist”), but they also own the church properties and institutions. The split would involve the messy business of dividing the properties, intellectual rights and wealth—not an easy thing to do when money is involved.

If a split were to occur, it would be better to branch out as an entirely different organization with a different corporate name that does not include “Adventist” in its title so as to avoid litigation in the courts. Apparently, “Seventh-day” is permissible in the name, just not the term “Adventist”. Unless, of course, the SDA corporate entity relinquishes ownership to the name, which I don’t believe it will do.

Splinter groups. A notable phenomenon in the last few decades is the increasing formation of “splinter groups” among those dissatisfied with the official theology and practice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While there are a few independently-organized, corporate churches (see, for example, revelation.org), the majority congregate as “house churches”. The subject of “house churches” is discussed further in the article, “*Pagan Worship*”.

7. Questions on the Three Angels' Messages

First angel's message. The first angel's message reads,

Revelation 14:7: He said with a loud voice, "**Fear God** and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

A person who does not have a correct understanding of who God is and how he is to be glorified, will not correctly understand the first angel's message.

[EW 237.2](#): As the churches refused to receive the first angel's message, they rejected the light from heaven and fell from the favor of God. They trusted to their own strength, and **by opposing the first message placed themselves where they could not see the light of the second angel's message**. But the beloved of God, who were oppressed, accepted the message, "Babylon is fallen," and left the churches.

The second angel's message and the wine of Babylon. The message of the second angel exposes the false doctrines of Babylon, which is referred to as the "wine of Babylon" (Rev. 14:8). This wine of Babylon was understood by the Adventist Pioneers to include the Trinity doctrine. Then, if one accepts the Trinity doctrine, neither the first *nor* the second angels' messages can be correctly understood and proclaimed. In the words of the Adventist Pioneer, Roswell F. Cottrell (1814-1892),

"But to hold the doctrine of the **trinity** is not so much an evidence of evil intention as of intoxication from that wine of which all the nations have drunk." —*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 6, 1869, p.11

True knowledge of God. The message of the first angel involves a true knowledge of God. This is foundational to a correct understanding of the second *and* third angels' messages. In the case of the third angel's message, one who "worships the beast and his image," having drunk the wine of Babylon, will also drink the "wine of God's wrath" (Rev. 14:10). The warning is that judgment follows an adherence to the doctrines of Babylon; which, as already stated, includes the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus,

[RH March 9, 1897, par. 10](#): **Unless men shall know God as Christ has revealed him**, they will never form a character after the divine similitude, and will therefore never see God. . . .

And how did Jesus Christ reveal God? In Jesus' own words,

John 17:3: And this is eternal life, that they may know you, **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Jesus Christ revealed God as the only true God. In the words of EGW:

[RH March 9, 1897, par. 9](#): It is our privilege to know God experimentally, and in **true knowledge of God** is life eternal. The **only begotten Son of God was God's gift to the world**, in whose character was revealed the character of him who gave the law to men and angels. He came to proclaim the fact, "**The Lord our God is one Lord,**" **and him only shalt thou serve**. He came to make it manifest that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." That which proceeds from the mind of God is perfect, and needs not to be taken back, corrected, or altered in the least. We may ascribe all perfection to God. He holds in his hand the existence of every human being, and upholds all things by the word of his power.

Concluding thoughts

As you can see, the SDA Church of the Adventist Pioneers (up through the early 1900's) is not the SDA Church of today. By their own admission, had the SDA Pioneers been living today, they could not join the church, because of their doctrinal differences—i.e. regarding the nature of God, the nature of Christ, the nature of the Atonement, etc. Today's SDA Church has also lost sight of its primary mission objective—the proclamation of the three angels' messages—as a consequence of a false understanding of God, having drunk the wine of Babylon.

➤ Parable of the Donkey and the Tiger [↩]

by Grady Polcyn

The Donkey said to the Tiger, “*The grass is blue.*”

The Tiger replied, “*No, the grass is green.*”

The discussion heated up and the two decided to go before the Lion, the King of the jungle.

The Donkey began to shout, “*Your highness, is it true that the grass is blue?*”

The Lion replied, “*If you believe that it’s true, then the grass is blue.*”

The Donkey continued, “*The Tiger disagrees with me, contradicts and annoys me. Please punish him.*”

The King declared, “*The Tiger will be punished with five years of silence.*”

The Donkey jumped cheerfully and went on his way.

The Tiger accepted his punishment, but before he left he asked the Lion, “*Why have you punished me? After all, the grass is green.*”

The Lion replied, “*In fact, the grass is green.*”

The Tiger asked, “*So, why are you punishing me?*”

The Lion replied, “*That has nothing to do with the question of whether or not the grass is blue or green. The punishment is because it is not logical for an intelligent creature like you to waste time arguing with a donkey. And on top of that, come and bother me with a question like that.*”

The worst waste of time is arguing with the fool and fanatic who does not care about truth or reality, but only the victory of his beliefs and illusions.”

The moral of this story: There are people who, no matter how much evidence we present to them, are not in the capacity to understand and others are blinded by ego, hatred and resentment. All they want is to be right, even if they are not.

One of the most basic principles of success is to maintain a high teachability index—that is, to remain teachable and coachable.

You’ll find that the most successful people are always keeping their mind and ears open to improvement; but only from those that are more successful than them (in whatever aspect of life they are trying to improve in).

Don’t get caught in the trap of arguing with those committed to misunderstanding you. Identify when this is happening and with whom, and then re-evaluate your circle, if needed.

Resources

➤ Translation of *pneuma* [↩]

Pneuma is an ancient Greek word for "breath", and in a religious context for "spirit" or "soul". *Pneuma* is also used in Greek translations of *ruach* in the Hebrew Bible, such as the Septuagint. Like *ruach*, the Greek word *pneuma* has many meanings. In the New Testament, *pneuma* is most often translated as spirit and spiritual, but can also mean breath, wind, and mind. Frequency in the New Testament: 379 times.

***Pneuma* definition:** wind, breath, things which are commonly perceived as having no material substance; by extension: spirit, heart, mind, the immaterial part of the inner person that can respond to God; spirit being: (evil) spirit, ghost, the spirit of God, holy spirit.

Gender in Greek. In the Greek language, there are three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Each noun in Greek has a specific gender and, unlike English, these genders don't only apply exclusively to nouns referring to people, but also to nouns that refer to things or animals. Therefore, gender should be viewed as a grammatical attribute of a noun and not necessarily as the sex of a person, animal, or thing.

***Pneuma* is neuter.** The Greek word *pneuma* is a neuter word. That is, it is neither male nor female. However, when neuter words are referred to with personal pronouns, they can also be male or female. For example, *child* is a neuter word in Greek, but writers refer to a child not as *it* but as *him* or *her*, based on whether the child is a girl or a boy. For another example, the word *Gentile* is neuter, but the apostles always referred to Gentiles as *them*, not as *those things*. Thus, when a neuter Greek word refers to a person, Greek writers are free to use personal terms (he, her, who, etc.) when referring to that word.

The authors of the New Testament often changed the gender of articles, adjectives, and pronouns that referred to a neuter word—if that neuter word referred to a person. However,

Although there were many opportunities to do so, and although it is allowed by the rules of Greek grammar, New Testament writers never changed from neuter to masculine when referring to the *pneuma* of God. They always referred to *pneuma hagion* ("spirit holy") or *hagion pneuma* ("holy spirit") as "it" or "which", never "he" or "whom".

Simply put: The writers of the New Testament never used a personal term when speaking of the holy spirit simply because they did not think the spirit is a person! It is not so much what they wrote that is the issue as it is *what they did not write!*

***Pneuma* with the word "holy".** When employed with *hagion* ("holy") it is used in four ways:

1. *pneuma hagion* - "spirit holy"
2. *hagion pneuma* - "holy spirit"
3. the *pneuma hagion* - "the spirit holy"
4. the *hagion pneuma*- "the holy spirit"

***Pneuma* with and without the article "the".** When used alone *pneuma* is either found with or without the article "the". In the gospels "the" is absent approximately 40% of the time. However, Greek scholars have confessed that no satisfactory principle can be laid down for the use or non-use of the article with proper names. It may be nothing more than a matter of writing style.

Gender and the article "the". The article always has the same *gender*, *case*, and *number* as the word it modifies. This agreement can be helpful in identifying the *case*, *gender* and *number* of unfamiliar nouns. There are 17 different ways to spell "the" in Greek. However, with respect to the holy spirit we can simplify things. We can ignore all plural forms since there is only one holy spirit. We can also ignore all feminine forms since none of the apostles ever referred to the holy spirit as a "she". This leaves us with the following eight (8) possible forms:

Article "the"		
Case	Masculine	Neuter
<i>Nominative</i> – subject of the sentence	ὁ	τό
<i>Accusative</i> – direct object	τόν	τό
Genitive – of, from the	τοῦ	τοῦ
Dative – in, to, by the	τῷ	τῷ

It simplifies further given that the genitive and dative cases (the last two rows in the table above) have identical masculine and neuter forms (i.e. τοῦ and τῷ). This means that when you see these forms in the Greek text, you can ignore the gender since you cannot know whether it is masculine or neuter. This leaves us with only the *nominative* and *accusative* cases to determine whether the authors intended a masculine or neuter meaning to the "holy spirit".

A full word study of *pneuma* in the New Testament of the *nominative* and *accusative* forms reveals that only the neuter form "τό" is used and never the masculine form (i.e. ὁ and τόν).

Thus, the only reasonable conclusions, based on an assessment of the Greek words used in the New Testament are:

1. **"Spirit of God" is not a person.** The authors of the New Testament did not think of the spirit of God as a person.
2. **Translation bias.** It is a fact that every Greek word in reference to the holy spirit in the New Testament is a neuter word. Also, in every case where New Testament writers had a choice between a masculine form that differed from a neuter word, they chose the

neuter word—100% of the time! That translators generally render it masculine is not from the Greek text but from the translators' interpretation or *bias*, whether knowingly or unknowingly.

“in holy spirit”. There are a number of places in the NT, chiefly in the writings of Paul and John, where the phrase “in holy spirit” is found. The word “in” is the Greek preposition *en* (G1722), which is generally translated as “in”. Greek grammarians refer to this use of *en* as the “static *en*,” which defines a relationship, a connection, an intimate association with, a union with, or in a state of agreement with. (English does not typically use “in” to describe such a relationship.)

In cases where the article “the” is *not* found in the Greek (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:3, “in holy spirit”), the article “the” is not needed because the preposition *en* can make *pneuma* (spirit) definite without the article. The preposition *en* means it can be understood as if “the” was actually present. There is no need for the article “the” to be used to make the object of a preposition definite.

Most English translations do include the article “the” and generally translate it as “by the Holy Spirit”. However, this obscures the actual (if not subtle) meaning of the Greek phrase. We have chosen to translate it as “in [**union with the**] holy spirit” to give a better sense of what the Greek is actually saying.

Instances of *pneuma* in the Gospels. There are 102 instances of *pneuma* in Matthew (19), Mark (23), Luke (36) and John (24). All the ones that speak of “unclean” spirits are shown in gray in the table below, since our focus is on those instances that relate to the spirit of God.

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Matthew			
Mat. 1:18	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	...she was found pregnant by holy spirit
Mat. 1:20	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	...being generated in her is of holy spirit
Mat. 3:11	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	He will be baptizing you in holy spirit
Mat. 3:16	τό (acc-neuter) [“descending”; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...He perceived the spirit of God descending as if a dove
Mat. 4:1	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	...led up into the wilderness by the spirit
Mat. 5:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Happy, in spirit, are the poor
Mat. 8:16		<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	...and He cast out the spirits with a word
Mat. 10:1		<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	...He gives them authority over unclean spirits
Mat. 10:20	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...but the spirit of your Father is speaking in you
Mat. 12:18	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	I shall be placing My spirit on Him
Mat. 12:28	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Now if, by the spirit of God [<i>en pneumati theos</i>]

Mat. 12:31	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...yet the blasphemy of the spirit shall not be pardoned
Mat. 12:32	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...whoever may be saying aught against the holy spirit
Mat. 12:43		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...whenever the unclean spirit
Mat. 12:45		<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	...taking along with itself seven other spirits
Mat 22:43	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	How, then, is David, in spirit, calling Him Lord
Mat. 26:41	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	The spirit, indeed, is eager; yet the flesh is infirm
Mat. 27:50	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...crying with a loud voice, lets out the spirit
Mat 28:19	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	into the name ... of the holy spirit
Mark			
Mark 1:8	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...yet He shall be baptizing you in holy spirit
Mark 1:10	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...and the spirit, as a dove
Mark 1:12	τό (nom-neuter) ["drove out"; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	And straightway the spirit drove out
Mark 1:23		<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit
Mark 1:26		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the unclean spirit, shouting with a loud voice
Mark 1:27		<i>pneumasi</i> (dat)	...for with authority the unclean spirits also
Mark 2:8	τοφ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	And straightway Jesus, recognizing in His spirit
Mark 3:11		<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	And the unclean spirits
Mark 3:29	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...blaspheming against the holy spirit
Mark 3:30		<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...An unclean spirit has he
Mark 5:2		<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...a man out of the tombs, with an unclean spirit
Mark 5:8		<i>pneuma</i> (voc)	...Come out, unclean spirit
Mark 5:13		<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	...the unclean spirits entered into the hogs
Mark 6:7		<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	gave them authority over the unclean spirits
Mark 7:25		<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...whose little daughter had an unclean spirit
Mark 8:12	τό (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	And sighing in His spirit
Mark 9:17		<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...having a dumb spirit
Mark 9:20		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the spirit straightway violently convulses him
Mark 9:25		<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...rebukes the unclean spirit
Mark 9:25		<i>pneuma</i> (voc)	Dumb and deaf-mute spirit
Mark 12:36	τό (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...David, said, in the holy spirit
Mark 13:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...it is not you who are speaking, but the holy spirit
Mark 14:38	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	The spirit indeed is eager, yet the flesh is infirm.
Mark 15:39	"breathes his last"	<i>exepneusen</i>	crying thus, He expires
Luke			
Luke 1:15	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...with holy spirit shall he be filled
Luke 1:17	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...in the spirit and power of Elijah

Luke 1:35	—no article ["coming"; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Holy spirit shall be coming on you
Luke 1:41	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...and Elizabeth is filled with holy spirit
Luke 1:47	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	And my spirit ["the spirit of me"] exults
Luke 1:67	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	And Zechariah, his father, is filled with holy spirit
Luke 1:80	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	Now the little boy grows up and was staunch in spirit
Luke 2:25	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Simeon ... and holy spirit was on him
Luke 2:26	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	And he was apprised by the holy spirit
Luke 2:27	τό (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	And he came, in the spirit, into the sanctuary
Luke 3:16	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	He will be baptizing you in holy spirit and fire
Luke 3:22	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	and the holy spirit descends on Him
Luke 4:1	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (gen)	Now Jesus, full of holy spirit
Luke 4:1	τό (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (dat)	...was led in the spirit in the wilderness
Luke 4:14	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	And Jesus returns, in the power of the spirit
Luke 4:18	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	The spirit of the Lord is on Me
Luke 4:33		<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...a man having the spirit of an unclean demon
Luke 4:36		<i>pneumasin</i> (dat)	...with authority ... is He enjoining the unclean spirits
Luke 6:18		<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	and who are annoyed by unclean spirits, were cured
Luke 7:21		<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	He cures many of ... wicked spirits
Luke 8:2		<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	...cured of wicked spirits and infirmities
Luke 8:29		<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	For He charged the unclean spirit...
Luke 8:55	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	And back turns her spirit, and she rose instantly.
Luke 9:39		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...a spirit is getting him
Luke 9:42		<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	Yet Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit
Luke 10:20		<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	that the spirits are subject to you
Luke 10:21	τό (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	In this hour He exults in the holy spirit and said
Luke 11:13	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...be giving holy spirit to those requesting Him!
Luke 11:24		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Whenever the unclean spirit
Luke 11:26		<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	...seven other spirits more wicked than itself
Luke 12:10	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...who blasphemes against the holy spirit
Luke 12:12	τό (nom-neuter) ["teaching"; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	for the holy spirit will be teaching you in the same hour
Luke 13:11		<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...a woman having a spirit of infirmity eighteen years
Luke 23:46	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Father, into Thy hands am I committing My spirit
Luke 23:46	"breathes his last"	<i>exepneusen</i>	Now, saying this, He expires
Luke 24:37	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...they supposed they are beholding a spirit
Luke 24:39	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...for a spirit has not flesh and bones

John			
John 1:32	τό (acc-neuter) ["descending"; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	I have gazed upon the spirit, descending as a dove
John 1:33	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...the spirit descending and remaining on Him
John 1:33	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	This is He Who is baptizing in holy spirit
John 3:5	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...begotten of water and of spirit
John 3:6	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...begotten by the spirit is spirit
John 3:6	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...begotten by the spirit is spirit
John 3:8	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	The <i>pneuma</i> [spirit or wind] is blowing where it wills
John 3:8	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...begotten from the spirit
John 3:34	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...for God is not giving the spirit by measure
John 4:23	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...will be worshiping the Father in spirit and truth
John 4:24	—no article	<i>pneumo</i> (nom)	God is spirit
John 4:24	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...must be worshiping in spirit and truth
John 6:63	τό (nom-neuter) ["is"; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	The Spirit is that which is vivifying
John 6:63	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life
John 7:39	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	Now this He said concerning the spirit
John 7:39	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	For not as yet was holy spirit given
John 11:33	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	He was deeply moved in spirit
John 13:21	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Jesus was troubled in spirit
John 14:17	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	the spirit of truth
John 14:26	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now the <i>parakletos</i> , the holy spirit
John 15:26	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of truth
John 16:13	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of truth
John 19:30	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	And reclining His head, He gives up the spirit
John 20:22	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	He exhales and is saying to them, "Get holy spirit!"

Acts

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Acts 1:2	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...through holy spirit directing the apostles
Acts 1:5	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	yet you shall be baptized in holy spirit
Acts 1:8	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...the coming of the holy spirit on you
Acts 1:16	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	in which the holy spirit said
Acts 2:4	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	And they are all filled with holy spirit
Acts 2:4	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	as the spirit gave them utterance
Acts 2:17	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	I shall be pouring out from My spirit
Acts 2:18	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...shall I be pouring out from My spirit
Acts 2:33	του (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...obtaining the promise of the holy spirit from the Father

Acts 2:38	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...you shall be obtaining the gratuity of the holy spirit
Acts 4:8	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	Then Peter, being filled with holy spirit
Acts 4:31	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...and they are all filled with the holy spirit
Acts 5:3	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...for you to falsify to the holy spirit
Acts 5:9	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Why is it that you agreed to try the spirit of the Lord?
Acts 5:16		<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	...bringing the infirm and those molested by unclean spirits
Acts 5:32	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...as well as the holy spirit which God gives
Acts 6:3	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...full of the spirit and of wisdom
Acts 6:5	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	Stephen, a man full of faith and holy spirit
Acts 6:10	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke
Acts 7:51	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...you are ever clashing with the holy spirit!
Acts 7:55	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...possessing the fullness of faith and holy spirit
Acts 7:59	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...Stephen ... Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!
Acts 8:7		<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	...those having unclean spirits
Acts 8:15	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...so that they may be obtaining holy spirit
Acts 8:17	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...and they obtained holy spirit
Acts 8:18	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the spirit is being given, offers them money
Acts 8:19	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...he may be obtaining holy spirit
Acts 8:29	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now the spirit said to Philip
Acts 8:39	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of the Lord snatches away Philip
Acts 9:17	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...and be filled with holy spirit
Acts 9:31	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...the consolation of the holy spirit
Acts 10:19	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the spirit said to him
Acts 10:38	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Jesus ... as God anoints Him with holy spirit and power
Acts 10:44	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the holy spirit falls on all those hearing the word
Acts 10:45	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...the holy spirit has been poured out
Acts 10:47	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...who obtained the holy spirit even as we
Acts 11:12	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now the spirit said to me
Acts 11:15	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the holy spirit falls on them
Acts 11:16	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...yet you shall be baptized in holy spirit
Acts 11:24	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...and full of holy spirit and faith
Acts 11:28	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...Agabus, rising, signifies through the spirit
Acts 13:2	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the holy spirit said ... Barnabas and Saul
Acts 13:4	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...being sent out by the holy spirit
Acts 13:9	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...being filled with holy spirit
Acts 13:52	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	And the disciples were filled with joy and holy spirit
Acts 15:8	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...giving the holy spirit according as to us also
Acts 15:28	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	For it seems good to the holy spirit

Acts 16:6	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...being forbidden by the holy spirit to speak the word
Acts 16:7	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...and the spirit of Jesus does not let them
Acts 16:16		<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	...a certain maid, having a python [divination] spirit
Acts 16:18		<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...Paul ... said to the spirit
Acts 17:16	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...Paul ... his spirit was incited in him
Acts 18:25	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...and fervent in spirit
Acts 19:2	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Did you obtain holy spirit on believing?
Acts 19:2	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Nay, neither hear we if there is holy spirit
Acts 19:6	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the holy spirit came on them
Acts 19:12		<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	Besides, wicked spirits go out
Acts 19:13		<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	...those having wicked spirits
Acts 19:15		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...the wicked spirit said to them
Acts 19:16		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...in whom the wicked spirit was
Acts 19:21	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...Paul pondered in spirit
Acts 20:22	τοῦ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	...I, bound in spirit, am going to Jerusalem
Acts 20:23	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...more than that the holy spirit
Acts 20:28	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	...among which the holy spirit appointed you supervisors
Acts 21:4	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	...who said to Paul, through the spirit
Acts 21:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now this the holy spirit is saying
Acts 23:8	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Sadducees, indeed, are saying ... nor spirit
Acts 23:9		<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now if a spirit or messenger speaks to him
Acts 28:25	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Ideally the holy spirit speaks through Isaiah

Romans

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Rom. 1:4	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	according to the spirit of holiness
Rom. 1:9	τοῦ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	I am offering divine service in my spirit
Rom. 2:29	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in spirit, not in letter
Rom. 5:5	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	through the holy spirit which is being given to us
Rom. 7:6	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter
Rom. 8:2	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	for the spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus frees you
Rom. 8:4	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	but in accord with spirit
Rom. 8:5	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	yet those who are in accord with spirit
Rom. 8:5	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	to that which is of the spirit
Rom. 8:6	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	yet the disposition of the spirit is life and peace
Rom. 8:9	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Yet you are not in flesh, but in spirit
Rom. 8:9	—no article ["home"; M or N]	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	if so be that God's spirit is making its home in you
Rom. 8:9	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Now if anyone has not Christ's spirit
Rom. 8:10	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit is life because of righteousness

Rom. 8:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now if the spirit of Him Who rouses Jesus
Rom. 8:11	—no article ["home"; M or N]	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	because of His spirit making its home in you
Rom. 8:13	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	Yet if, in spirit
Rom. 8:14	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	For whoever are being led by God's spirit
Rom. 8:15	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again
Rom. 8:15	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	but you got the spirit of sonship
Rom. 8:16	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	The spirit itself is testifying
Rom. 8:16	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	together with our spirit
Rom. 8:23	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	who have the firstfruit of the spirit
Rom. 8:26	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now, similarly, the spirit also is aiding our infirmity
Rom. 8:26	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	but the spirit itself is pleading for us
Rom. 8:27	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	is aware what is the disposition of the spirit
Rom. 9:1	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	testifying together with me in holy spirit
Rom. 11:8	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	God gives them a spirit of stupor
Rom. 12:11	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	fervent in [the] spirit
Rom. 14:17	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	and joy in holy spirit
Rom. 15:13	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	in the power of holy spirit
Rom. 15:16	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	having been hallowed by [in] holy spirit
Rom. 15:19	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	in the power of God's spirit
Rom. 15:30	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	and through the love of the spirit

1 Corinthians

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
1Co. 2:4	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	with demonstration of spirit and of power
1Co. 2:10	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	through His spirit
1Co. 2:10	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	for the spirit is searching all
1Co. 2:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of humanity
1Co. 2:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of God
1Co. 2:12	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	not the spirit of the world
1Co. 2:12	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	but the spirit which is of God
1Co. 2:13	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	taught by the holy spirit
1Co. 2:14	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	of the spirit of God
1Co. 3:16	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of God
1Co. 4:21	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	in love and a spirit of meekness
1Co. 5:3	—no article	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	yet present in spirit
1Co. 5:4	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	and my spirit
1Co. 5:5	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	that the spirit may be saved
1Co. 6:11	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumatī</i> (dat)	by the spirit of our God
1Co. 6:17	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	he who joins the Lord is one spirit
1Co. 6:19	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	your body is a temple of the holy spirit

1Co. 6:20	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	with your body and with your spirit
1Co. 7:34	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	holy in body as well as in spirit
1Co. 7:40	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	that I also have God's spirit
1Co. 12:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	speaking by God's spirit
1Co. 12:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	except by holy spirit
1Co. 12:4	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	yet the same spirit
1Co. 12:7	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the manifestation of the spirit
1Co. 12:8	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	through the spirit
1Co. 12:8	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	according to the same spirit
1Co. 12:9	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	by the one spirit
1Co. 12:10	—no article	<i>pneumaton</i> (gen)	discrimination of spirits
1Co. 12:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	one and the same spirit
1Co. 12:13	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	For in one spirit
1Co. 12:13	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	all are made to imbibe one spirit
1Co. 14:2	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	yet in spirit he is speaking secrets
1Co. 14:12	—no article	<i>pneumaton</i> (gen)	zealots for spiritual endowments
1Co. 14:14	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	my spirit is praying
1Co. 14:15	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	praying in the spirit
1Co. 14:15	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	In the spirit will I be playing music
1Co. 14:16	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	blessing in the spirit
1Co. 14:32	—no article	<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	<i>the</i> spiritual endowments
1Co. 15:45	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	the last Adam a vivifying spirit
1Co. 16:18	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	they soothe my spirit and yours

2 Corinthians

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
2Co. 1:22	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the spirit in our hearts
2Co. 2:13	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in my spirit
2Co. 3:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	but with <i>the</i> spirit of the living God
2Co. 3:6	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	but of <i>the</i> spirit
2Co. 3:6	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	yet the spirit is vivifying
2Co. 3:8	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the dispensation of the spirit
2Co. 3:17	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now the Lord is the spirit
2Co. 3:17	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	where the spirit of the Lord is
2Co. 3:18	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	even as from the Lord, <i>the</i> spirit
2Co. 4:13	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	having the same spirit of faith
2Co. 5:5	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the earnest of the spirit
2Co. 6:6	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in holy spirit, in love unfeigned
2Co. 7:1	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	from every pollution of flesh and spirit
2Co. 7:13	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	for his spirit has been soothed

2Co. 11:4	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	you are obtaining a different spirit
2Co. 12:18	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Walk we not in the same spirit?
2Co. 13:14	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the communion of the holy spirit

Galatians

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Gal 3:2	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Did you get the spirit by works of the law
Gal 3:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Undertaking in spirit
Gal 3:5	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	did you get the spirit by works of law
Gal 3:14	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the promise of the spirit
Gal 4:6	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	God delegates the spirit of His Son
Gal 4:29	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	according to spirit
Gal 5:5	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	For we, in spirit
Gal 5:16	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	Walk in spirit
Gal 5:17	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	against the spirit
Gal 5:17	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit against the flesh
Gal 5:18	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	led by spirit
Gal 5:22	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	fruit of the spirit
Gal 5:25	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	If we may be living in spirit
Gal 5:25	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in spirit we may be observing
Gal 6:1	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in a spirit of meekness
Gal 6:8	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	sowing for the spirit
Gal 6:8	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	from the spirit
Gal 6:18	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	be with your spirit

Ephesians

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Eph 1:13	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	sealed with the holy spirit
Eph 1:17	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	giving you a spirit of wisdom
Eph 2:2	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the spirit now operating
Eph 2:18	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in one spirit
Eph 2:22	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	God's dwelling place, in spirit
Eph 3:5	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in spirit
Eph 3:16	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	through His spirit
Eph 4:3	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the unity of the spirit
Eph 4:4	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	one body and one spirit
Eph 4:23	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in the spirit of your mind
Eph 4:30	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	to the holy spirit of God
Eph 5:9	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	fruit of the spirit
Eph 5:18	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	filled full with spirit
Eph 6:17	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	sword of the spirit

Eph 6:18	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in spirit being vigilant
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Philippians thru Philemon

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Philippians			
Phi 1:19	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the spirit of Jesus Christ
Phi 1:27	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	standing firm in one spirit
Phi 2:1	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	if any communion of spirit
Phi 3:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in the spirit of God
Colossians			
Col 1:8	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	your love in spirit
Col 2:5	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in spirit, I am with you
1 Thessalonians			
1Th 1:5	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	but in power also, and in holy spirit
1Th 1:6	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	with joy of holy spirit
1Th 4:8	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	who is also giving his holy spirit to you
1Th 5:19	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	Quench not the spirit
1Th 5:23	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	your unimpaired spirit and soul and body
2 Thessalonians			
2Th 2:2	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	either through spirit, or through word
2Th 2:8	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	will dispatch with the spirit of His mouth
2Th 2:13	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	in holiness of <i>the</i> spirit
1 Timothy			
1Ti 3:16	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	justified in spirit
1Ti 4:1	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now the spirit is saying explicitly
1Ti 4:12	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	in love, in spirit
2 Timothy			
2Ti 1:7	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	not a spirit of timidity
2Ti 1:14	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	guard through <i>the</i> holy spirit
2Ti 4:22	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	be with your spirit!
Titus			
Titus 3:5	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	renewal of holy spirit
Philemon			
Phm 1:25	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	be with your spirit!

{Col 1:8} “your love in *the* spirit.” The article “the” is not present and not needed because the preposition “in” (en) can make the “spirit” (*pneuma*) definite without the article.

Hebrews thru Jude

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Hebrews			

Heb 1:7	—no article	<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	makes angels his spirits
Heb 1:14	—no article	<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	ministering spirits
Heb 2:4	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	partings of holy spirit
Heb 3:7	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	according as the holy spirit
Heb 4:12	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	parting of soul and spirit
Heb 6:4	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	becoming partakers of holy spirit
Heb 9:8	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	by this the holy spirit
Heb 9:14	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	through the eonian spirit
Heb 10:15	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Now the holy spirit
Heb 10:29	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	and outrages the spirit of grace?
Heb 12:9	—no article	<i>pneumaton</i> (gen)	the Father of spirits
Heb 12:23	—no article	<i>pneumasin</i> (dat)	to <i>the</i> spirits of the just perfected
James			
Jas 2:26	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	the body apart from spirit is dead
Jas 4:5	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	the spirit which dwells in us
1 Peter			
1Pe 1:2	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	in holiness of spirit
1Pe 1:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of Christ
1Pe 1:12	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	holy spirit dispatched from heaven
1Pe 1:22	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	through <i>the</i> spirit
1Pe 3:4	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	quiet spirit
1Pe 3:18	τῷ (dat-neuter)	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	yet vivified in spirit
1Pe 3:19	—no article	<i>pneumasin</i> (dat)	being gone to <i>the</i> spirits in jail
1Pe 4:6	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	living according to God, in spirit
1Pe 4:14	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	for the spirit of glory and power
2 Peter			
2Pe 1:21	—no article	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	being carried on by holy spirit
1 John			
1Jo 3:24	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	by the spirit which He gives us
1Jo 4:1	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	do not believe every spirit
1Jo 4:1	τὰ (acc-neuter)	<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	but test the spirits
1Jo 4:2	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	the spirit of God
1Jo 4:2	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	every spirit
1Jo 4:3	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	every spirit
1Jo 4:6	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	the spirit of truth
1Jo 4:6	τό (acc-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	the spirit of deception
1Jo 4:13	τοῦ (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatos</i> (gen)	He has given us of His spirit
1Jo 5:6	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit it is which is testifying
1Jo 5:6	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	for the spirit is the truth
1Jo 5:8	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit, and the water, and the blood

Jude			
Jude 1:19	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	not having the spirit
Jude 1:20	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	praying in holy spirit

Revelation

Verse	Greek "the"	Case of <i>pneuma</i>	Concordant Literal Text
Rev 1:4	τῶν (gen-neuter)	<i>pneumatōn</i> (gen)	the seven spirits
Rev 1:10	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	I came to be, in spirit
Rev 2:7	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 2:11	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 2:17	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 2:29	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 3:1	τὰ (acc-neuter)	<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	the seven spirits of God
Rev 3:6	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 3:13	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 3:22	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	what the spirit is saying to the ecclesias
Rev 4:2	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	immediately I came to be in spirit
Rev 4:5	τὰ (nom-neuter)	<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	the seven spirits of God
Rev 5:6	τὰ (nom-neuter)	<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	the seven spirits of God
Rev 11:11	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of life out of God
Rev 13:15	—no article	<i>pneuma</i> (acc)	to give spirit to the image
Rev 14:13	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	Yea, the spirit is saying
Rev 16:13	—no article	<i>pneumata</i> (acc)	three unclean spirits
Rev 16:14	—no article	<i>pneumata</i> (nom)	spirits of demons
Rev 17:3	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	he carries me away, in spirit
Rev 18:2	—no article	<i>pneumatōs</i> (gen)	every unclean spirit
Rev 19:10	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit of prophecy
Rev 21:10	—no article	<i>pneumati</i> (dat)	he carries me away, in spirit
Rev 22:17	τό (nom-neuter)	<i>pneuma</i> (nom)	the spirit and the bride

Reference: "The influence of Trinitarian doctrine on translations of the Bible," by John David Clark, Sr., GoingToJesus.com (<https://tinyurl.com/2kvrnym4>)

➤ Chiasitic Bible Readings [4]

Group guidelines. Here are some suggested guidelines for a Bible study group.

1. **Prayer.** Start with one or two prayers to ask for God's presence in the study. Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned when they are led by God's spirit.
2. **Pre-study.** The group should have a schedule on what they will discuss in a given meeting and over the coming weeks. This way, they can read and study the material beforehand and be prepared to participate.
3. **Pre-read.** First, read the text as a group that is up for discussion. If the text is too long, then read a smaller portion and discuss before continuing with the next. The reader (or readers) should be volunteers. Some don't like to read out loud and in public, so don't embarrass them.
4. **Read with enthusiasm.** Make the text come to life as much as possible. Read with confidence; not in a monotone voice, but undulate. Express emotion when appropriate. Emphasis (accentuate) what you believe to be key words and phrases.
5. **Participation.** Everyone gets a chance to speak. A study group is not a lecture by one or two individuals. It's a shared experience where everyone is allowed to participate. "Babblers" and "know-it-alls" should find a different venue.
6. **Dealing with disagreements.** Invariably, disagreements will arise. These disagreements can be fruitful when members discuss them in a polite and constructive manner. Don't attack a person's character (*ad hominem* attacks), and don't take it personally, when mistreated—the better man is the one who does not retaliate. If the debate gets out of control, table the discussion on that topic and move on. If the topic is important enough, turn the debate into "position papers". That is, the debate no longer becomes a matter of verbal opinions, but of opinions *in writing* with supporting references.
7. **Time management.** Start on time. End on time. Do not cater to habitual latecomers—those manifesting a lukewarm interest in Bible study, with an attitude of laziness and disrespect of other people's time.
8. **End with praise.** A closing prayer is Ok, but not sufficient. There is greater value in collectively thanking God for a revelation of his truth. This can be done by reading (or singing) a psalm, or singing a spiritual song or hymn to end the Bible study session. If a psalm can be found that fits the context of what was studied, then so much the better.

Bible study principles.

1. **Observation.** What did the *original* author say, to the *original* audience, at the *original* time? This is a reading, examination and (first-level) understanding of the passage. In this level, you are *raking* the leaves. In the next level, you are *digging* for gold.
2. **Interpretation.** What does it mean? Context is everything. The three C's of Bible study: The *context* in the passage, the *context* in the original culture, the *context* in our culture today. Ask yourself: who, what, where, when, why and how. Understand its literary context? Literary genres include: law, history, poetry, prophecy, letters, parables, etc. How is their culture (i.e. customs, idiomatic terms, etc.) different from ours? What are the timeless principles?
3. **Application.** How does this change me? Bible study is not just for head-knowledge, but for heart-knowledge. It is not just how often you read the Bible, but how often the Bible reads through you. Biblical knowledge is great, but biblical application in our lives is even better. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). Questions that you might ask: Is there a sin I need to confess and forsake? Is there a promise I need to claim? Is there an example I need to follow? Is there a command I need to obey? Is there a praise I need to give?

Reading schedule. Divide the year into three, four-month periods called *quadrimesters* (i.e. *quad*=4, *mense*=month; Latin: *quadrimestris*). The following is in regard to the New Testament only.

1. **1st quadrimester (January-April).** The life of Christ in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
2. **2nd quadrimester (May-August).** The Book of Acts and the letters of Paul (Acts, Romans through Philemon).
3. **3rd quadrimester (September-December).** The Hebraic letters (Hebrews through Jude) and the Book of Revelation.

This is a multi-year effort, lasting 4-5 years at least. A four-year schedule might look like the following:

1st quadrimester

Y	BOOK	January	February	March	April
1	Matthew	1-13		14-28	
2	Mark	1-10		11-16	
3	Luke	1-14		15-24	
4	John	1-12		13-21	

2nd quadrimester

Y	BOOK	May	June	July	August
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1	Acts	1-12	13-28
2	Rom./Gal.	Rom. 1-11	Rom. 12-16; Gal. 1-6
3	1+2 Cor.	1 Cor. 1-16	2 Cor. 1-13
4	Eph.-Phm.	Eph., Phil., Col.	1+2Thes. 1+2Tim. Tit. Phm.

3rd quadrimester

Y	BOOK	September	October	November	December
1	Hebrews	1-7		8-13	
2	Ja., 1+2 Pet.	James 1-5		1+2 Peter	
3	1+2+3 Jn, Jd	1 John 1-5		2+3 John; Jude	
4	Revelation	1-11		12-22	

The 3rd quadrimester is relatively light in content, compared to the first two quadrimesters, but that should not be a problem. You can use the extra time to include content from Old Testament books that relate to these Hebraic books, particular on themes such as the Jewish sacrificial system found in the Torah, as well as end-time prophecies found in the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament. Additional study on the Psalms which are referenced in the New Testament would also be good, given that the Book of Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament (estimated at 116 references).