

On the Triunity of God

We—a group of Seventh-day Adventist pastors, professors, and church members, who met at Foothills Camp and Retreat Centre near Bowden, Alberta, Canada, March 13–15, 2026, for a Bible conference that was sponsored by the Alberta Conference Ministerial Department to equip our pastors to teach the triunity of God through a prayerful exploration of its different aspects in Scripture, informed by Church history, Adventist history and the writings of Ellen G. White, theology, and philosophy and in accordance with our denomination’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs and 1986 “Methods of Bible Study” statement—have come to the following consensus:

The Trinity

There is one true Creator and Sustainer God, beside whom there is no other. God is love and exists from everlasting to everlasting as a triunity of three distinct, coequal, fully-divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—united as love. . . . (Gen 1:1; John 1:1–3; Acts 17:26; Exod 20:3; Deut 4:35; 6:4; 10:17; Isa 44:6; 45:5–6; Rev 1:8, 17; 22:13; 1 John 4:8, 16; Ps 90:2; Gen 1:26; Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 1:21–22; 13:14; Eph 4:4–6; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:1; Rev 14:12–13; 12:17; 19:10; . . .).

In the preamble to the Fundamental Beliefs, the General Conference in session has humbly invited Adventists to expect that God will lead our movement progressively to a fuller understanding and a better expression of its beliefs. In that spirit, we propose this basic consensus statement as *an expansion of the first sentence* of Fundamental Belief 2, providing greater clarity and specificity about what we believe, while remaining compatible with and fully supportive of what it already teaches.

Having endeavored to express ourselves in language that is closer to the wording of the Bible, more precise relative to matters under dispute, and clearer in contemporary English (in order of priority), we anticipate that Seventh-day Adventists will recognize their beliefs in our basic consensus statement about divine trinity, regardless of their views about matters of secondary importance for belief-based fellowship.

We do not claim to offer an exhaustive explanation of God in any respect, as if that were possible. This means that we do not consider mere divergence on secondary matters, when handled in a Christ-like manner, to be grounds for church discipline nor cause for dismissal from church employment.

However, we have found that these other matters are important because of their implications for faith and practice. Therefore, in response to conversations about the triunity of God in the Adventist community and broader Christian tradition, we have also agreed to encapsulate the support for and implications of our primary consensus about

what Adventists believe in a series of ten secondary, complementary pairs of affirmation and denial with biblical support:

1. We affirm that God is love, in that other-oriented love is foundational to God's being, encompassing all God is and does, and structures all other aspects of God's being. This love awakens love, inspiring loyalty, imitation, and worship from God's creatures (Deut 6:4–5; 1 John 4:16, 19; Exod 34:6–7; John 3:16; Rom 5:5, 8; 8:35–39; Gal 5:22).

We deny that love is *merely* one attribute of God's being among many because it is rather the greatest of the three cardinal virtues, without which we cannot have saving knowledge of God (1 Cor 13:13; 1 John 4:7–8).

2. We affirm that God is one in nature, name, and character; counsel, purpose, and action; excellence, glory, and worth (Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29–31; Heb 1:3; Matt 28:19; Acts 4:12; Rom 10:9, 13; John 14:9; 1 John 1:3; John 17:3; 5:17, 19; Rom 1:1–7; Ps 150:2; Phil 2:9; Isa 42:8; 48:11; Mark 8:38; John 1:14, 18; Rev 4:11; 5:9).

We deny that God is one *only* in divine cooperation for creation and the plan of salvation (Rom 3:30; Eph 4:4–7; Jas 2:19).

3. We affirm that for the one, true God to be love from eternity-past, always, and forevermore, God must have existed from everlasting to everlasting as three Persons who can distinctly act to give, receive, and regard love (Lam 3:22; John 17:24; Prov 8:22, 30–31; Rom 5:5; 15:30; Rev 1:4–5; 21:6).

We deny that God's unity implies that God is *simply* one, without parts or distinctions, to the effect that there cannot be three divine Persons in one God (Gen 1:26; 3:22).

4. We affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three mutually indwelling "persons." In contemporary English, this means that each divine Person is a fully self-aware moral agent with integrated abilities of reason, will, desire, and emotion, who experiences triune existence in interpersonal relationships (John 10:30; 17:21; 14:10–11; Matt 26:36–46; John 6:38; Mark 1:12; Acts 13:2; Rom 8:26–27; 1 Cor 12:11; compare with Ellen G. White's most frequent descriptions of "the three great personal powers" [Lt 205, 1901] as "agencies," "authorities," "worthies," "representatives," "dignitaries," and "persons").

We deny that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three "beings," which, in contemporary English, implies that they exist as separate individual gods. The three divine persons exist not as three beings but as one Being: God (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7; compare Ellen G. White's single, sermonic reference to "the three holiest

beings in heaven” in Ms 95, 1906, to the second definition of “being” in Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* as the equivalent of “person”).

5. We affirm that the personalities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the most excellent because of their divine triune existence (John 1:18; 16:7; Rom 8:27).

We deny that the trinity of God diminishes the personality of God, as it does not imply a single divine personality divided into fractions (Eph 1:3–14; 2 Cor 13:14; Rev 1:4–5).

6. We affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit give, receive, return, and regard other-oriented love throughout a tri-personal divine history that has lasted and will last from everlasting to everlasting (John 17:23–24; Matt 3:16–17; Rev 22:1–2).

We deny that God exists, or has ever existed, entirely outside of any sort of time, where there is no before and after, that is, where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could not have back-and-forth relationships, giving other-oriented love at one moment and returning it at another moment (Isa 54:7–8; Hos 11:8–9; 2 Pet 3:8).

7. We affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from everlasting to everlasting in symmetrical, back-and-forth relations ordered by their one character of mutual love: The Person entitled Father is the everlasting Person who always loves the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Person entitled Son is the everlasting Person who always loves the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Person entitled Holy Spirit is the everlasting Person who always loves the Father and the Son. The divine Persons are one in name and take various, sometimes overlapping, titles in accordance with their inscrutable decisions based on mutual deliberation about their diverse, often shared, roles in creation and salvation—counsel into which God’s creatures are not taken. (Matt 3:17; 28:19; John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 14:31; 15:9–10; 17:23–24, 26; Rom 5:5; 15:30; Gal 5:22; Col 1:8; Isa 9:6; Job 38:4; Isa 40:12–13; Ps 110:1; 2 Tim 1:8–10; 1 Pet 1:20).

We deny that the biblical titles of Father and Son, the language of the Son’s uniqueness, or that of his begottenness and the Spirit’s procession at the Son’s ascension can sustain teachings that categorically distinguish the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by asymmetrical relations of origin. That is, the unbegotten Father generates the begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit correspondingly proceeds from the Father or the Father and the Son. (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9; Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; John 15:26; contra both the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and non-trinitarian interpretations of begetting and proceeding).

8. We affirm that because the three Persons are one in excellence, character, counsel, and action, the Persons all freely, evaluatively, and in rational

deliberation submit to one another as coequal, free moral agents. The divine Persons submit in this way out of their everlasting disposition of mutuality based on their unifying character of other-oriented love. This free, moral giving and returning of submission includes the temporary submission of the Son and Holy Spirit for the plan of salvation. While submitted to the Father for the plan of salvation, the Son followed the Father's example of submission, and we are to follow the same paternal pattern (John 1:18; 5:17–19; 10:30–38; 14:9; Eph 5:1–2, 21).

We deny that the Son always and only submits to the Father and that the Holy Spirit always and only submits to the Father and the Son. If a divine Person were disposed from eternity-past to continually and only function in submission to another Person from everlasting to everlasting, those acts of one-way submission would be done without any realizable power to choose, evaluate, or effect outcomes in divine deliberation. So, a Person who submits to another Person in that way would not be a coequal divine agent in terms of excellence, character, counsel, and action. Consequently, the three Persons would not be triune free moral agents and, therefore, not one God in nature (John 5:22; 15:16; 1 Cor 15:24–28; Phil 2:6–11; Heb 5:8).

9. We affirm that the coequality, unity, love, and mutual submission of the divine Persons are examples of how humans, made in God's image and likeness, should love one another in the family, church, and society (Gen 1:26, 27; John 17:20–23, 24; 15:9, 12, 13, 17; Phil 2:1–11; Eph 5:1, 21).

We deny that there is a biblical example of one-way submission in the everlasting relationships of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that exactly corresponds to the prototypical human relationship of Adam and Eve (pre- or post-Fall) and is presented as the ideal relationship between husband, wife, and children. Rather, Scripture only presents the relationship of Christ and the Church as a divine example for human familial relationships (Eph 5:21–6:9; contrast 1 Cor 11:3–5, which concerns the conduct of men and women in worship).

10. We affirm that God in Christ by the Holy Spirit is continually shedding new light on his people through the Scriptures and that we still “have many lessons to learn and many, many to unlearn” (Eph 1:16–18; 4:13; John 16:13; Jas 1:16–18; Col 1:10; Ellen G. White, 1SM, 37).

We deny that the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church ever held a consensus view that rejected the triunity of God as expressed in our basic consensus statement that we have explained with these pairs of affirmation and denial (Heb 13:7; see Denis Kaiser, “The Trinity in Early Adventist History (1846–1915),” in *Revisiting the Trinity*, vol. 1 [2025]).

On these things, we agree.

Ryan Ackerman
Arden Brock
Ryan Brousson
Jonathan Campbell
David Hamstra
Paul Llewellyn
Grant Lottering
Nwamiko Madden
Samuel Pagán de Jesús
Tyler Rosengren
Matthew Tinkham, Jr.

These things, we, voting majorities of the district ministerial associations of the Alberta Conference, also recommend.

Calgary Area Ministerial Association (voted May 21, 2026)
The College Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church Pastoral Staff (voted June 7, 2026)
Greater Edmonton Ministerial Association (voted May 5, 2026)
Rural and Remote Adventist Ministers Association (voted May 12, 2026)

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