



A LETTER OF APPEAL



A Letter of Appeal

The following is an appeal letter made to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Argentina, asking to study and reconsider the fundamental belief #2, the Trinity¹. In it, there is a brief description of the appeal process started in 2019. The author started a previous process in Argentina in the year 2004, dialoguing with pastors of his local church. However, since he was unaware of the process established by the church, he talked to pastors of his church and conference, and in giving them, as well as the publishing house (ACES) and theology teachers at the SDA university (UAP), the book “A Study on the Divinity”⁵⁶, asking them to show him specifically where he was departing or erring from the testimony of the Scriptures.

The process begun in the year 2019 was, in part, started because of what the author understands is a significant deviation from the intention of the body of the Seventh-day Adventist believers. It was only in 1980 that the body of believers represented in the General Conference session voted in the Fundamental Beliefs. Up to this moment, this had never happened before. There were Fundamental Beliefs, but they had never been taken to the General Conference session for approval or inclusion in the core workings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And these beliefs were approved with certainties given to the legislative body. In the session minutes we read:

“NEAL C. WILSON: For some time we have been considering a refinement of our Statement on Fundamental Beliefs. I think you have that document in your hands. No doubt you have done both some studying and some praying.

We have heard a variety of interesting rumors. Some, it is said, understand that the church leaders want to destroy completely the foundations of the church and set the church on a course that

would be un-Biblical, contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism.

My fellow delegates, there is nothing that is further from the truth. We have also heard that any time we touch the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs we would be introducing the Omega, the final confusion of theological and doctrinal positions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I suggest to you that this is also a very unfortunate statement.

I can understand how individuals far removed from where some of these things are being studied, and who may not themselves have been asked to participate in a restudy or refinement of wording, might feel that there is something very sinister, mysterious, and secret going on that will suddenly confront us, and that it may contribute to the ultimate detriment and demise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My fellow delegates, I assure you that no one who has been struggling with some of these matters has any such intention. There are others who think they know why this is being done. They believe it is being prepared as a club to batter someone over the head, to try to get people into a narrow concept of theology, not leaving any opportunity for individual interpretation of prophecy, or any individual views with respect to theology or certain areas of doctrine.

This also is unfortunate, because this never has been and is not the intention of any study that has been given to the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs.

Some academics, theologians, and others have expressed the fear that this statement was being developed so that the church could confront them with a checklist to determine whether they should be disqualified from teaching in one of our institutions of

higher education. It is very, very tragic when these kinds of rumors begin to develop.”²

The Fundamental Beliefs were not voted to become “as a club to batter someone over the head”, nor to determine if someone can be employed by the institution or not. It didn’t even cross their minds to use them as a criteria for belonging. But in fact, this is what happens with most Fundamental Beliefs.

The appeal letter that you are about to read was given to the Seventh-day Church of _____, in Argentina, at the end of 2022. The next answer from the church was in December 2025, where in meeting with pastor J and elders F, K, L, M and pastor G, and after verifying if we still continued believing what we believe in terms of the doctrine of God, they proceeded to inform us of the beginning of the disfellowship process. The meeting with the church board was on the 7th of February 2026, and on the 2nd of May, 2026, four people were disfellowshipped as an answer to this appeal letter. Literally, we were personally told right after that last meeting: “This is exactly what you were asking for”. This, as it will be evident as you read the attached letter, was not what was being asked.

It is my hope and prayer that God bless and guide His people, and that they can be free, truly free, in the Lord.

_____, December 2, 2022

Dear pastor A, and elders B, C, D, E, F and pastor G:

I would first like to thank you all for your ministry in the _____ Church and your care for the spiritual health of all its members. It is my desire and prayer that God's blessings will be in your homes and ministries, and to encourage you that by the Holy Spirit you press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. This letter first presents a brief historical review, followed by some statements in Adventist Church publications regarding the Trinity, followed by a statement on my personal belief on the doctrine of God, then procedures, and finally, an appeal and request.

1. Historical Summary:

I approach you because of a concern of which we have spoken before personally several times before:

At the beginning of 2019, sometime during the month of March or April, elder H, who was at that time elder of the church, spoke to me with the intention of clarifying some hearsay that he had received in regards to my beliefs on God. It was surprising to me, since it was less than 7 months since we had returned to Argentina after 10 years being overseas, and it was less than three months since we had been attending the _____ Church. In this regard, the friendly willingness and openness shown by elder H was encouraging. He advocated for a dialogue and study on the matter at that time. I would like to highlight the way he

approached this matter: by directly talking to the person involved instead of just letting himself be driven by rumors.

Unfortunately, meetings with the elders that had already been appointed were cancelled, but not by me (with pastor A being invited from the beginning). We continued the dialogue with pastor A, with whom I met two or three times towards the end of 2019 and early 2020 when the pandemic had just started. But it appeared self-evident, at least to me, that pastor A was busy enough between the different churches and requests from the brethren to be able to dedicate enough time to this matter. Because of this, in dialogue with elder H in December 2020 and then March 2021, I again pleaded for what had originally been planned and then cancelled: a meeting with the elders and the pastor, and in case pastor A could not attend, to at least meet with his knowledge and approval. What was the purpose of the meeting? To express what I understand that the Scriptures declare about God, and to invite the elders to study the topic and point out the errors that I might have in my understanding, and in that way put an end to hearsay and rumors from others who have never had the integrity to speak to me personally. At the same time, to invite them to consider and evaluate their own position on this matter.

At that time, March 2021, there was a suggestion to approach this issue through a Theological Committee. To this I responded that, personally, I have no problem studying the issue with anyone who wants to, but that my request was that the predetermined procedure must be followed (see more about this ahead in this letter), and that my spiritual leaders in my local church would study together with me.

In August 2021 the _____ Church Nominating Committee suggested my name for the office of Outreach Coordinator, to which I declared, first to pastor A and then to the Church Nominating Committee, that I would gladly accept, but that they needed to know that I was in no position to teach the church fundamental belief #2. For that reason I again begged that this doctrine be studied together so that we might get out of this quagmire. In July of this year, pastor A again approached me to let me know that we would meet to consider this issue, so I find it hopeful and encouraging to have this meeting with you all on this Friday December 2, 2022.

2. Some Statements Regarding the Trinity and the Bible:

Regarding the doctrine of God, this is what the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in recent years, has made clear through publications and the pen of its theologians. From now on, all emphasis in **bold** and/or underlined is my own.

1. “While **no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact by Bible writers** and mentioned several times. ... Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity. Nevertheless, **reason supplies evidences** that support our belief in God.”³
2. “**The concept of Trinity**, namely the idea that the three are one, **is not explicitly stated but only assumed.**”⁴
3. “Although not a Biblical expression, the term *Trinity* has been found a most fitting way of referring to the one God who has revealed Himself in the Scriptures as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The concept suggests that within the one essence of the Godhead we are to distinguish three persons who are neither three parts

nor three modes of God, but coequally and coeternally God. **Some will tend to resist this doctrine because it is not found expressly stated in the Scriptures.** But although it may indeed at first view seem contradictory, let me urge my modern readers not to reject it prematurely on the premise that it does not make sense, for without it some Biblical statements would remain meaningless.”⁵

4. “The Bible's clear **allusions** to the Trinity are enough for Adventists.”⁶
5. "The role of the trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that **the word itself does not appear in the Bible, nor is there any clear statement of the idea.** But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of Biblical claims and concepts. So **even though the doctrine of the trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God,** it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the Biblical view of God.”⁷
6. “Patriarchs and Israelites were surrounded by pagan polytheist nations. In order to counter those influences, the Old Testament declares emphatically that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Kings 19:15; Isaiah 45:5). **Before Christ lived on this earth, it would have been very difficult to comprehend the existence of one God made up of three Persons. Because of that, the doctrine of the Godhead is not clearly expressed in the Old Testament. However, besides declaring that there is only one God, the Old Testament also hinted at the plurality within the only God, giving clues that the Godhead was composed of more than one person.** If “The LORD our God *is* one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4), how can there be more than one divine person? **The answer is simple: God is a compound unity.** ⁸

7. **“Probably the strongest clues** to such a divine triunity occur in the famous gospel commission that Jesus gave the church in its baptismal formula: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28: 19).⁹

Leaving the proverbial phrase aside¹⁰, I still believe it is critical that we, as Bereans, engage in the discovery process of finding the truth in Scripture, without ignoring the following:

- i. The Word of God is the supreme source of authority when it comes to doctrine (Isaiah 8:20; John 17:17). All Scripture is truth (2 Timothy 3:16), we cannot add nor subtract to it (Revelation 22:18-19), nor contradict it or put it against itself (John 10:35; Isaiah 8:20). Scripture explains Scripture, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21).
- ii. The knowledge of God is of critical importance (John 17:3; 1 John 4:8; Hosea 4:1-3).
- iii. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the church raised by God and established to preach the good news of the three angel’s messages (Revelation 10:11; 12:17; 2 Peter 3:3-5).
- iv. Our church leaders and authorities have been appointed by God, and the Biblical calling is to respect them and have them in high esteem, carefully considering and hearing their advice (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5).
- v. It is right to hearken unto God more than men. In order for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to attain the purpose for which it was raised, it needs and depends on its leaders, employees and members, that they, each one of them, subject themselves to the authority of the Word of God (Acts 4:19, 20; Malachi 2:1, 2, 7).

- vi. We are saved individually, not as a group, and the study of this topic is an individual and personal calling, given the fact that each one of us will stand before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of himself (Ezekiel 18:20; 33:12-16; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 3:20).

3. Personal belief

Taking into account what has been written above, what follows is the testimony of the Scriptures (in smaller font my own words), which I believe is a reasonable and succinct expression of my personal belief and what I have found in the Bible.

“For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him;”¹¹ “King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God”¹² “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see”¹³, “the living and true God”¹⁴,

“and one Lord Jesus Christ”¹⁵, “the Word was God”¹⁶, “the Son of the Father in truth”¹⁷, “in the form of God”¹⁸ and “the express image of his person”¹⁹, “equal with God”²⁰, who “was set up from everlasting, from the beginning”²¹, “the Prince of life”²² “by whom *are* all things”²³ and “by whom also he [God] made the worlds”²⁴, “all things were created by him, and for him”²⁵, “whom he [God] hath appointed heir of all things”²⁶ “as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name”²⁷, “Thy throne, O God”²⁸, “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou

art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?”²⁹, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”³⁰, “made himself of no reputation”³¹ and “was made flesh, and dwelt among us”³², whom “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power”³³ “full of the Holy Ghost”³⁴ saying: “The Son can do nothing of himself”³⁵, “the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”³⁶

In the same way Jesus with His disciples, promising “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter”³⁷, “ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”³⁸, “I will come to you”³⁹, “and I in you”⁴⁰. “Judas”⁴¹, understanding well, asks: “how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”⁴² “I go away, and come *again* unto you”⁴³, “I in you”⁴⁴, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches”⁴⁵. Thus, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts”⁴⁶, “having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you”⁴⁷, which is “times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”⁴⁸, “Now the Lord is that Spirit”⁴⁹ “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord”⁵⁰, “the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit”⁵¹, waiting for the end of times, “THE Revelation of Jesus Christ”⁵², “the mystery of God”⁵³, “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”⁵⁴.

It is true that this statement can be expanded, summarized or arranged differently, and while it could be improved, it is composed of Biblical expressions. On the other hand, these are the expressions that I have difficulty finding in Scripture:

- a. “God the Son” and “God the Spirit”⁵⁵

- b. “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons”⁵⁶

4. Procedure

For this reason, I ask you, pastor and elders of the _____ Church, to please consider, pray, and study this subject carefully. At first glance it might appear to be a simple semantic question, when in fact it has vast implications, which for lack of space cannot be detailed here, but that we can study together. For your own personal study, in case it would be useful, I am giving each of you “A Study on the Divinity”⁵⁷. If you find that your brother is at fault, please do not be afraid to show, with the Word of God, his errors, which according to your understanding are serious enough to prevent him from publicly speaking.

James 5:¹⁹ **Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth**, and one convert him; ²⁰ Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

In this regard, I beg you, please do not remain in doubt, and to prudently and prayerfully consider the Biblical testimony. I want to assure you that you have my unrestricted and unconditional support for discussing and studying any doubt or concern, in whatever is necessary. The Biblical testimony is ample, clear, simple and profound at the same time, and it is possible to know and understand the truth of God as declared in the Scriptures with Biblical certainty. In case you see light in the Scriptures and in what your brother presents, my appeal to you is that you respect and follow the procedure established by the church itself. This consists in the body of elders and the pastor submitting a request to the board of the _____ Church, and studying this subject with them, just as I’m trying to do with you. If the board reaches the same conclusion, follow the

same procedure with the local conference / mission, and so on until the last instance. Since the belief statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are found in the Church Manual, chapter XV⁵⁸, and I am requesting **a study and change** of these statements, the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual defines the procedure as follows:

- a. “The standards and practices of the Church are **based upon the principles of the Holy Scriptures**. These principles, underscored by the Spirit of Prophecy, are set forth in this *Church Manual*.”⁵⁹
- b. “The *Church Manual* is divided into two types of material. **The content of each chapter is of worldwide value and is applicable to every church organization, congregation, and member.**”⁶⁰
- c. **“No attempt should be made to set up standards of membership or to make, or attempt to enforce, rules or regulations for local church operations that are contrary to these decisions adopted** by the General Conference in Session and that are set forth in this *Church Manual*.”⁶¹
- d. “Realizing the importance of conducting the worldwide work of the Church “decently and in order,” the 1946 General Conference Session voted that **“all changes or revisions of policy that are to be made in the Manual shall be authorized by the General Conference Session.”**—*General Conference Report*, No. 8, p. 197 (June 14, 1946).”⁶²
- e. **Changes** in the *Church Manual*, except for the notes and editorial changes, **can be made only by action of a General Conference Session, where delegates of the world church have voice and vote. If a local church, conference, or union conference/mission wishes to propose a *Church Manual* revision, it should submit its proposal to the next constituent level for counsel and study. If that level approves the proposal, it submits the suggested revision to the next level for additional evaluation. If the various**

levels approve the proposal, it eventually comes before the **General Conference Church Manual Committee**, which considers all recommendations. **If the Church Manual Committee approves a revision, it prepares it for presentation at an Annual Council and/or General Conference Session.** ... The *Church Manual* Committee reports proposed nonsubstantive editorial changes to the main content of the *Church Manual* to an Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, which may give final approval. However, in the event the Annual Council determines by one-third vote that an editorial change substantively alters the meaning of a passage, the proposed change must go to the General Conference Session.”⁶³

As it is evident in point c, **“No attempt should be made to set up standards of membership or to make, or attempt to enforce, rules or regulations for local church operations that are contrary to these decisions adopted”**. This means that this is the established procedure, and no attempt should be done to change it, like for instance a Theological Committee, no matter how well-intentioned it might be.

5. Appeal and Request

Dear elders, the primacy of the Word of God is the first teaching or fundamental belief of our church, and this is not by chance. All the other doctrines owe their *raison d'être* and existence to this first one. But, even considering this, in the Church Manual it is declared:

“Seventh-day Adventists accept **the Bible as their only creed** and hold certain Fundamental Beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference

Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."⁶⁴

The Bible is the only creed that the Adventist Church has, and as such is at the top of the hierarchy of doctrinal authority. The Church has no other creed. I understand that, because of the insurmountable contradictions, it is humanly impossible, and therefore inappropriate and unattainable, to request the brethren to have the Bible as their creed, to accept the Bible as "the supreme, authoritative and the infallible revelation of His will"⁶⁵ (fundamental belief #1), and then to demand belief in non-biblical expressions concerning God (fundamental belief #2), and then, further down the hierarchy of beliefs, to teach and expect belief in the prophetic gift of Ellen G. White (fundamental belief #18). Because if we study the whole of Ellen White's writings, we will also see that she does not support in her writings what the church currently teaches regarding God. For these reasons, **I request a dedicated Bible study on this subject with my elders and pastor, and if you see light in what I present, please initiate the request for consideration and study to the board of the _____ Church in order to comply with the procedure established for changing the fundamental beliefs as they are written in the Church Manual.** I remain totally and completely available and committed to facilitate this process. I pray to God that He gives you the spirit of wisdom, understanding, and discernment in these matters.

May God bless you each one of you, hoping that

"Whoever speaks, let it be with God's words."⁶⁶ and
"judge righteous judgment"⁶⁷.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Daniel Bernhardt

¹ <https://adventist.org/beliefs#official-beliefs>

² *Review and Herald*, April 23, 1980. General Conference Bulletin No. 5.
<https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19800423-V157-20.pdf#search=1980%20path%3A%22http%3A%2F%2Fdocuments%2Eadventistarchives%2Eorg%2FPeriodicals%2FRH%22>

³ *Review and Herald*, Volume 158, Number 31, 1981.

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19810730-V158-31.pdf>

⁴ Fernando Canale, *Doctrine of God*, Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology, volume 12, page 138, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000.

⁵ Raoul Dederen, *The mystery of the Trinity*, Review and Herald, 26th of August, 1993.

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19930826-V170-34.pdf>

⁶ Jan Charles Haluska. *The Trinity*.

<https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/trinity/article/go/-/the-trinity/>

⁷ Richard Rice, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 1985

⁸ Carlos Steger, *La doctrina bíblica de la Deidad*, Revista Adventista, Número especial. The text in the Spanish is as follows:

“Los patriarcas y los israelitas estuvieron rodeados por pueblos paganos politeístas. Para contrarrestar esa influencia, el Antiguo Testamento afirma enfáticamente que hay un solo Dios (Deut. 6:4; 2 Rey. 19:15; Isa. 45:5). Antes de que Cristo viviera en esta tierra, hubiera sido muy difícil comprender la existencia de un solo Dios constituido por tres Personas. De ahí que la doctrina de la Deidad no aparezca en forma explícita en el Antiguo Testamento. “Sin embargo, además de afirmar que hay un solo Dios, el Antiguo Testamento también dejó entever la pluralidad dentro del único Dios, dando indicios de que la Deidad está formada por más de una persona. Si “Jehová nuestro Dios, Jehová uno es” (Deut. 6:4), ¿cómo puede haber más de una persona divina? La respuesta es sencilla: Dios es una unidad compuesta.”

⁹ Whidden, Moon y Reeve. La Trinidad, ACES, 2008, página 35.

¹⁰ In Spanish there is a popular saying that basically states that “facts admitted need no proof”. It goes as “A confesión de parte, relevo de pruebas”.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 8:5-6

¹² 1 Timothy 1:17

¹³ 1 Timothy 6:15-16

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 1:9

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 8:6

¹⁶ John 1:1

¹⁷ 2 John 3

¹⁸ Philippians 2:6

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²⁰ Philippians 2:6
²¹ Proverbs 8:23
²² Acts 3:15
²³ 1 Corinthians 8:6
²⁴ Hebrews 1:2
²⁵ Colossians 1:16
²⁶ Hebrews 1:1
²⁷ Hebrews 1:4
²⁸ Hebrews 1:8
²⁹ Hebrews 1:5
³⁰ John 5:26
³¹ Philippians 2:7
³² John 1:14
³³ Acts 10:38
³⁴ Luke 4:1
³⁵ John 5:19
³⁶ John 14:10
³⁷ John 14:16
³⁸ John 14:17
³⁹ John 14:18
⁴⁰ John 14:20
⁴¹ John 14:22
⁴² John 14:22
⁴³ John 14:28
⁴⁴ John 15:4
⁴⁵ John 15:5
⁴⁶ Galatians 4:6
⁴⁷ Acts 3:26
⁴⁸ Acts 3:19
⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:17
⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:5
⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 15:45
⁵² Revelation 1:1
⁵³ Revelation 10:7
⁵⁴ Colossians 1:27
⁵⁵ <https://www.adventist.org/trinity/>
⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
⁵⁷ <https://maranathamedia.com/book/view/a-study-on-the-divinity>
⁵⁸ <https://www.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-Seventh-day-Adventist-Church-Manual.pdf>
⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, page 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, page 17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, page 17-18.

⁶² *Ibid.*, page 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, page 18-19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, page 168.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, page 168.

⁶⁶ 1 Peter 4:11 - NET

⁶⁷ John 7:24

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