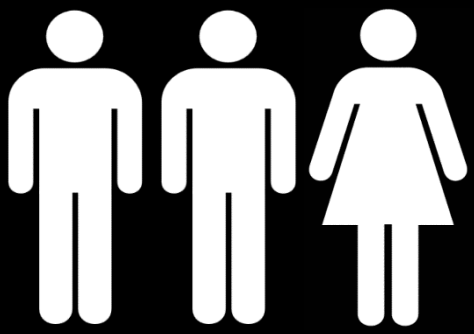
BEYOND BELIEFS 2



THE TRINITY

Millennial young adults' response to Fundamental 2

Nice guy, or guys,
but is there one God or three??? :D

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Millennial young adults' response to Fundamental 2 – The Trinity: Nice guy, or guys, but is there one God or three?

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Abstract

The *Beyond Beliefs* study asked 179 Seventh-day Adventist Millennial young adults to write a 150-200 word comment for every single one of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Adventism including Belief *2 – The Trinity*. Analysis of the 168 returned responses identified that Millennials were generally favorable to this belief although many find it confusing, difficult to understand, and grabble to explain it. The current wording of *Belief 2 – The Trinity* seems to leave room for multiple conflicting theological concepts of the Trinity. One group of participants interpreted the Trinity as three components of one person while another group considered it as three people with three purposes, working together to achieve a common goal. This confusion becomes even more apparent when reading the participant responses to *Beliefs 3-5 – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,* when a shift in previously voiced positions for *Belief 2 – The Trinity* seems to occur. Relevant findings relating to their conception of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit will also be individually discussed. This report concludes with aspects millennial young adults found beneficial regarding the Trinity belief and identifies problematic areas to address. It also raises several discussion topics that may be pertinent to Millennial young adults and assist them in understanding a Trinity belief.

The Beyond Beliefs Study

The purpose of the Beyond Beliefs study was to comprehensively and empirically investigate qualitatively how Millennial young adults (aged 18-33) really felt about each and every one of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and to collect quantitative data relating to over 100 religious, social, and behavioral topics. Until now, it has only been anecdotally assumed that a Millennial young adult who identifies as a Seventh-day Adventist or is a baptized member, and/or attends an Adventist educational institution, has a comprehensive knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and endorses them fully. *Beyond Beliefs 1* and *Beyond Beliefs 2* collected data over five semesters from 679 participants in eight cohorts at Andrews University.

The purpose of this report is to specifically outline the findings related to *Belief 2 – The Trinity*, *Belief 3 – God the Father*, *Belief 4 – God the Son*, and *Belief 5 – God the Holy Spirit*. In the interests of brevity, a comprehensive overview of the *Beyond Beliefs* study and literature review can be found at www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports. This report was presented at the 2016 Adventist Theological Society Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Method

Participants in Brief

A comprehensive overview of the participants in the Beyond Beliefs study can be found at www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports. Participants (Cohorts 1, 2, 5, 7, & 8) were sourced from the General Education class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith. Over 930 written responses were collected from Cohort 1 (also the *Beyond Beliefs 1* study) from a sample of 37 participants belonging to the North American Division. In *Beyond Beliefs 2*, responses from an additional 142 participants (Cohorts 2, 5, 7, 8) were collected, 17% of which identified as international students. All major ethnic groups were represented in both samples, as were male and female participants. The *Beyond Beliefs* study is a transparent study, thus, the 4,000+ responses of all 179 participants will be available in a two volume publication, *Beyond Beliefs 2 – Respond.* All 168 returned responses to *Belief 2 – The Trinity* are available as a free sample chapter on www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports for interested parties to read.

This study was undertaken with official approval from the Andrews University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and in compliance with the United States federal *Office for Human Research Protections* (OHRP) guidelines for research on human subjects. All the participants in the *Beyond Beliefs* study

gave their informed consent to participate and permission to have their submissions used in online, hard copy, or e-book publications related to the Beyond Beliefs study. Participant responses have not been altered, however, specific identifying information has been deleted and replaced with a description of the words removed to ensure the integrity of the context. Participants were given a candy bar or health bar as gratuity for their participation.

Materials and Procedure in Brief

A comprehensive overview of the materials and procedure used in the Beyond Beliefs study can be found at www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports. As a part of a larger study which included a 100-item quantitative and qualitative survey, 179 participants in specified cohorts (Cohorts 1, 2, 5, 7, & 8) were asked to write a 150+ word response to each of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism including *Belief 2 – The Trinity*. Participants were asked to describe what they liked/disliked about the belief, if they felt it was important/unimportant, and if they felt it was relevant/irrelevant.

With the exception of Cohorts 7 and 8, participants submitted each response after reading the belief statement and commentary as outlined in the publication *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*[1] but prior to undertaking a class related to the associated belief. This was to minimize peer and teacher influence. Cohorts 7 and 8 were asked to read the official belief statement and supporting biblical references in conjunction with the *Beyond Beliefs 1 – Results*[2] (Cohort 1 results) publication and provide an additional comment describing their personal response to what their peers had reported, namely, if they agreed or disagreed with their peers and why. This was to identify how consistently Millennial young adults agreed with or disagreed with their peers and enrich previously collected responses, as many Cohort 7 and 8 participants expanded on concepts raised by participants in Cohort 1.

For the purposes of this study, there were no "right" answers, views, or perspectives relating to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, as this study was undertaken to determine and describe the varying feelings and attitudes held by young adults towards the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. Allowing participants to broadly respond to each belief provided them the freedom to express their ideas and questions without feeling they needed to give the researcher the "right answer." However, because of the open-ended nature of the research questions, just because a participant did not articulate a specific theme in their response to a certain belief, does not indicate that he/she would disagree or agree with that specific aspect of that belief if he/she was asked. That being said, what participants

[1] Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005.
[2] Sigvartsen, Leanne M., Jan A. Sigvartsen, and Paul B. Petersen. *Beyond Beliefs 1 - Results: What Millennial young adults really think of the 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Berrien Springs, MI: ClergyEd.com, 2014.

do write is still salient because it denotes the issues that readily come to mind when responding to a certain belief and may indicate what is of most importance to them. Personally interviewing young adults may yield a more comprehensive answer, however, that method also has its shortcomings in that it affords too much potential for the interviewer to influence or lead the participant with the specificity of their questions. Also, when multiple people are emphasizing a certain theme, that theme is most likely something they feel is significant. Thus, it becomes relevant for the researchers to consider and is therefore inside the scope of the current report.

Participants were also asked to select one of the 28 belief statements and write a 1500-word commentary regarding this belief for young adults (18-30 years of age). There were 31 participants who elected to write their commentary on the beliefs related to the Trinity which included: *Belief 2 – The Trinity* (8 participants), *Belief 3 – God the Father* (7 participants), *Belief 4 – God the Son* (9 participants), and *Belief 5 – God the Holy Spirit* (7 participants).

More information about the *Beyond Beliefs* study and findings relating to all 28 Beliefs from the Spring 2013 cohort (*Beyond Beliefs 1*) can be found in the 452 page publication, *Beyond Beliefs – Full Report, Cohort 1* which is available through www.amazon.com, Logos, Logos SDA Gold Package or Higher, and www.Beyond-Beliefs.com. A free 252-page electronic version of this report is also available at www.Beyond-Beliefs.com.

Results and Discussion

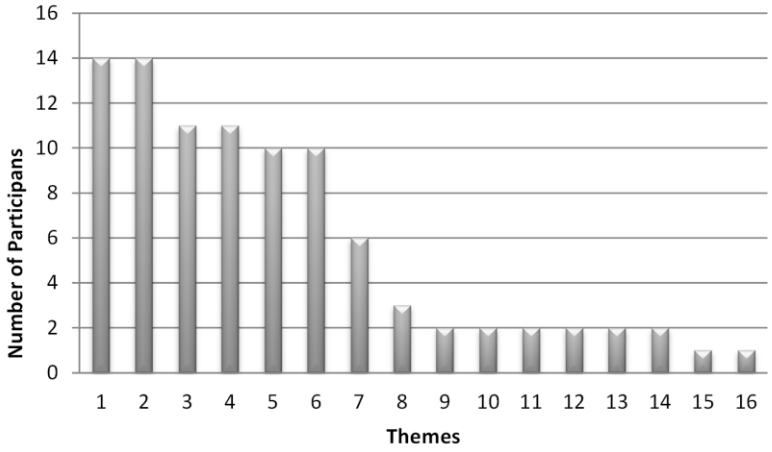
When analyzing the detailed responses written by the participants of the initial *Beyond Beliefs 1* study, saturation point occurred after 15-20 responses which is consistent with scholarly empirical qualitative studies of this nature[3], providing support that Millennial young adult responses, while varied, were not infinitely diverse and the initial sample of 32 returned responses for *Belief 2 – The Trinity* was more than sufficient to identify the scope of themes associated with the Trinity Beliefs (see figure below). Analysis of the additional 136 returned responses for *Belief 2 – The Trinity* in *Beyond Beliefs 2*, revealed no new significant themes, suggesting[PP1] the main perspectives held by Millennial[PP2] young adults regarding the Trinity were captured in the initial study. Interestingly, what changed was their analogy or the examples they used to describe the Trinity, but even then, the same analogies and examples were often used across participants suggesting Millennials have a shared cultural experience that leads them to use the same narratives to describe a complex issue, or, they have heard/read the same narrative elsewhere and are merely repeating it. Given this, the addition of 136 responses may seem superfluous, given the thematic scope was identified in the initial 32 participant sample, however, these extra 136 voices are important because they provide a richness to the data and give a larger group of Millennials a real voice in describing their faith experience. This comprehensive description by so many Millennials can be of enormous benefit to leadership, theologians, clergy, laity, and strategic planners who often rely on their own anecdotal observations because there is a lack of relevant empirical data that captures Millennials own responses in their own words. This makes the Beyond Beliefs qualitative dataset an important strategic planning and historical document.

To this end, the following results and discussion will focus on the themes and results of the initial *Beyond Beliefs 1* study (Cohort 1) but will make reference to the additional 136 responses sourced in *Beyond Beliefs 2* and the 31 expanded 1,500 word commentary submissions.

[3] Mark Mason, "Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews," Forum: Qualitative Social Research 11, no. 3 (September 2010): n.p. Cited 11 September 2016. Online: http://www.qualitativeresearch.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3027.

The Trinity – Themes

(Cohort 1)



THEMES

1	The belief is confusing and difficult to understand	44 %
2	The Trinity is one God of which there are three components	44 %
3	If God wants to be worshiped, we should be able to understand him	34 %
4	Creation or Nature or Scripture can be used to prove the existence of God	34 %
5	The Trinity is three separate Gods	31 %
6	God is so complex humans could never understand him	31 %
7	This belief is critical to Adventism	19 %
8	Faith precedes a decision to accept nature, creation or scripture as proof of God	9 %
9	Atheists have no grounds for their beliefs	6 %
10	This belief is irrelevant	6 %
11	Did not like this belief	6 %
12	This belief supports other beliefs	6 %
13	The Trinity provides an example of how Christians should work together	6 %
14	The Trinity makes it easy to understand God	6 %
15	If the Trinity is three separate Gods, is an assertion of monotheism accurate?	3 %
16	If the Trinity is a single deity then why open prayer to the Father and conclude it in the Son's name?	3 %

The Trinity is difficult to understand

One of the presiding themes of this belief was that it was confusing and difficult to understand which was stated by 44% of participants.[4] One participant writes: "What I dislike is that it is one of the most difficult things to understand and it has a tendency to push individuals away from the religion" (participant 153), and another notes:

[4] Some of these participants still attempted to describe their understanding of the Trinity, but still expressed confusion, suggesting an uneasy understanding.

> "What I dislike about this fundamental is that it is very hard concept to understand. I have been a Seventh-day Adventist all my life and I would still find it very difficult to explain it to someone who didn't know what it was. I wish that there could be more sermons on the Trinity to explain it better and go into depth about how it actually works" (Participant 75).

When one reads the official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist church, it is not hard to understand why. The belief itself is potentially ambiguous (it states there is "one God" but also mentions "three co-eternal persons") and seems to intentionally leave room for multiple, conflicting theological concepts of the Trinity. Predictably, two theological concepts were described with 44% of participants interpreting this statement as three components of one person and an additional 31% of participants who described the Trinity as three people with three purposes, working together to achieve a common goal, which only 13% of participants articulated as saving the lost.

God is so complex we could never understand him

While 31% of participants dismissed this uncertainty with a belief that God is so complex we could never understand him, 34% of participants suggested that if humans are expected to worship, adore and serve God, shouldn't they be permitted to understand him. This is a good point, particularly if God provides instances of "self-revelation" as the belief states. While this may be a convenient way of side-stepping a complex issue, it is clearly problematic for many young adults. For them it raises more questions than it addresses and leads to enormous diversity and explanations of the Trinity – which may or may not be consistent with the official beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Participant 105 questions this attitude by noting:

> "Stating that our God is beyond comprehension feels, like, lazy. I think that we should try to describe how the three aspects of God can join together since we have three fundamentals devoted to how they work alone. Though it is important to describe certain aspects of God, the wording could be a lot more succinct. These are our fundamentals, they should not be vague overviews with flowery language, they should be succinct explanations of what we believe. I get the feeling that the authors of the fundamentals went to a lot of trouble to keep the descriptions short but in doing so, they limited the amount of important information that they would include."

One guy or three?

One participant also suggested that if there are in fact three separate individuals in the Trinity, can a religious group who endorses this concept call themselves monotheistic? Another participant also asked why, if Seventh-day Adventists believe in a single deity made up of three aspects, do they open their prayers with "Dear Heavenly Father" but conclude them with "in the name of Jesus."

Interestingly, when responding to *Belief 2 – The Trinity*, 44% of Millennial young adult responses described God as one being who had three aspects, while only 31% described a separate three-person Trinity. This changed, however, when they responded to *Belief 3 – God the Father*, *Belief 4 – God the Son*, and *Belief 5 – God the Holy Spirit*. When considering God the Father as its own belief, separate to the Trinity belief, 37% of participants eluded to him being a different person to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Only 17% still alluded to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit being one person – this is a significant drop in the numbers who previously stated that they subscribed to this Trinity model. Only one participant stated that they were still unsure about the separation and unity concept relating to the Trinity. Many participants did not articulate any Trinity model, suggesting that perhaps they were still unsure, or identifying one way or the other was not a concern for them. It could even be they felt they had stated it in the previous belief or they had changed their mind since the previous chapter. We do not know, but given there was a majority shift in models endorsed by participants, further attention in articulating the nature of the Trinity may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Millennials do not readily articulate that a belief in God requires an initial faith assumption

Participants also suggested that nature, creation and scripture could be used to prove God's existence. Two even suggested that in light of the above, atheists had no grounds for their beliefs. Again, only three participants acknowledged that a faith decision or assumption precedes a decision that nature, creation and scripture could be used to prove God's existence. Not realizing they have made a faith decision or assumption for their belief in God, may be problematic when trying to discuss their beliefs with others.

Is there a ranking in the Trinity? If so, do we really need to rank one guy?

Three participants used marriage as an analogy for the Trinity, which has been closely related to a headship model for marriage. Conversely, one participant expressed uncertainty regarding the ranking of the Trinity, and another stated that they are all equal. In *Beyond Beliefs 2*, one participant writes: "I do agree with the idea that people do think that there are rankings. People think that God the Father is on the top and the Holy Spirit on the bottom" (Participant 71). Another participant considers the terminology used to describe the members of the Trinity to be a complicating factor:

> "With the concept of a family functioning as one and having family member terms associated with each role, it becomes a lot more difficult for the human mind to not think of the Trinity as being a hierarchy. God the Father is mainly perceived as being the head of the Trinity. The reason for this is simply related to our human understanding of the word "father." In my opinion, the fundamental should have

used a different choice of words to explain the different roles however, since scripture is what we are using as our foundation, we should follow the concepts listed in it. God the Father is how that specific role is labeled" (Participant commentary).

What is a good analogy?

As stated previously, more analogies or examples (used by those brave enough to try and describe the Trinity) were added in the larger *Beyond Beliefs 2* sample (n=136). However, these same new analogies and examples were often used across participants in the *Beyond Beliefs 2* sample, suggesting Millennials may have a shared cultural experience that leads them to use the same narratives to describe a complex issue like the Trinity, or, they have heard/read the same narrative elsewhere and are merely repeating it. This aspect is salient because if an adequate analogy can be formulated, it will be adopted, shared and repeated by Millennial young adults.

Analogies used for the Trinity	
Marriage and the Family	Marriage/Family – The unity of husband and wife in marriage is considered a parallel to the Trinity consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, one participant states: "I don't believe that the analogy with marriage works so well due to the fact that in marriage you have literally two people representing the idea of one solid idea or mentality that sort of works together." (Participant 162) Another participant found this analogy mind boggling stating: "But what always puzzled me is this: how is Jesus the Son of God the Father if the Father never married and there is no woman involved? How does that work? They all are eternal, so they have no beginning and no end, but yet one of them in the son of another? That just always puzzled me. Also, to me it implies that Jesus is somehow less powerful than the Father, because He is the Son. I know it isn't true, but at the same time my brain is tied up in knots about the whole concept." (Participant 116) A third participant writes in the commentary: "The best way I could think of explaining this concept in modern language, is to propose the idea of a family. Each member of the family may have different roles, but they all carry the same last name. Even with this example, it still does not fully depict the functionality of the Trinity. Everyone in a family doesn't have the same mind, purpose and goal."
A Band	Each member makes up the band. One participant writes: "I learned it as though you have, say, the name of a band." (Participant 66).
A Computer	Computer – "My brother gave me this example of the Godhead being like the computer. A computer has three individual parts. You have the keyboard and mouse, the monitor and the system unit. They are all separate pieces but together they make up a computer. Even after this analogy I am still very confused." (Participant 128)

An Egg	The egg consists of three parts – shell, egg, and yoke. One participant modified this analogy noting: "The Godhead is not like the components of a single egg – egg shell, egg white, and egg yolk. Rather, it is like having three individual eggs working together to make an omelet" (Participant 123). Another participant noted in their Belief 2 commentary that this analogy was flawed since each part of the egg does not constitute the egg by itself, in contrast to each member of the Trinity, who are fully God.
Three-in-one Shampoo	"The problem with this [analogy] is that it can be broken down into each of the three agents and each of those agents performs a different function. Each agent can do its function, although each one is not shampoo by itself." (Participant commentary)
Mathematical Equation	Algebraic: not 1+1+1=3 but 1x1x1=1 – "Three pieces, all input, but one sum equal to one and all of the factors." (Participant 86) Sine wave. "Looking in two dimensions a sine wave crosses the x-axis at intervals of pi. If one were to look at this in one dimension on the x-axis one would see three separate points and only see those points. When in two dimensions those points can be seen as a part of a larger whole that is one, which would be like God. This too has a flaw in that a sine wave will go on infinitely so there would be infinitely many points on the line while there are only three parts to the Godhead" (Participant commentary).

They liked Belief 2 – The Trinity, *but…*

The response to this belief was generally favorable, with only two participants stating that they disliked it. One suggested this was because it didn't provide enough detail to understand it, and the other disliked that no mention of God's eternal love is stated in the belief statement, something he/she felt should also be stated. Two participants indicated that this belief was irrelevant, because it didn't matter if there was one God or three because belief in either/or did not determine salvation. In favor of the Trinity, two participants suggested that the Trinity concept makes it easy to understand an incomprehensible God, however, neither articulated how, suggesting a rote learned response, rather than one that was the result of critical thought. Some felt it was crucial to Adventism (19%). Two participants felt it supported other beliefs, and two felt that the Trinity was an example of how Christians should work together to achieve a common goal.

Belief 3 - God the Father

The overall response to *Belief 3 – God the Father* was positive as many participants felt it described God the Father appropriately. Twenty-two participants suggested that this belief described and emphasized the positive traits of God the Father, traits that one participant said "made him worthy of worship." However, there was still some remaining confusion as to what God the Father was and how he fit into the Trinity. When considering God the Father separate to the Trinity, 37% of

participants eluded to him being a different person to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Only 17% alluded to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit being one person – this is a significant drop in the numbers who previously stated they subscribed to this Trinity model. Only one participant stated that they were still unsure about the separation and unity concept relating to the Trinity. Many participants did not articulate any Trinity model, suggesting that perhaps they were still unsure, or identifying one way or the other was not a concern for them. It could even be they felt they had stated it in the previous belief or they had changed their mind since the previous chapter. We do not know, but given there was a majority shift in models endorsed by participants, further attention in articulating the nature of the Trinity may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church – particularly since more Trinity models, than those described by Millennials, do exist.

Belief 4 - God the Son

Jesus is clearly the stand out favorite among the Trinity. There was an energy in the responses given in *Belief 4 – God the Son* that was not evident in responses regarding God the Father (*Belief 3*). One participant describes Jesus this way,

> "It is easier to tell your friend about this guy who loves you so much that they would die for you than about this guy who killed thousands of people on a regular basis, or a guy who's not really a guy but a spirit" (Participant 7).

The most popular theme, identified within the responses of 80% of the participants, was the view that Jesus is a savior who died for the sins of the world. Many participants who articulated this theme emphasized their appreciation of this gift. This suggests that when a deity is proactive in doing something significant, specifically for young adults, this deity is perceived more favorably. Thus, a religiosity/deity that emphasizes what significant benefits it/him/they can do for a young adult, rather than didactic requirements the young adult has to do for the religion/deity, may be an approach that the Seventh-day Adventist church could incorporate into their belief commentaries and ministries for young adults.

Additionally, 53% of participants also discussed Jesus as being a human with 43% also mentioning that because he was tempted he knows what they go through when they are tempted. Young adults in this study seem to identify with Jesus more than with other figures of the Trinity. Interestingly, only 10% stated that Christ was an important aspect of Adventism, but 37% stated that he was an important aspect of Christianity, giving Christ a larger relevancy than just Adventism. In this sample, 30% of participants stated that Christ was an example for living that should be followed and, surprisingly, only 20% mentioned the need to have a "relationship" with Christ.

There were different roles Jesus was perceived as fulfilling, and they are as follows: 27% stated that he was the forgiver of sins; 23% stated he was the means by which believers can know God the Father; 13% stated that a belief in Jesus was the path to eternal life.

In this belief, 23% of responses indicated that God the Father and God the Son were two different people. Only 10% alluded to God being one person. This is an interesting finding as it could indicate that young adults may perceive the Trinity as one person when presented with the concept of a Trinity. However, if presented separate conceptual information about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there may be more of a tendency to regard them as three separate people rather than just one. The next belief regarding the Holy Spirit may provide further insight into whether this is the case.

Belief 5 - God the Holy Spirit

Only two participants stated that they disliked this belief, otherwise it was well received. What they disliked was largely associated with continuing confusion between a one God with three components Trinity model, and a three separate persons Trinity model. No other Trinity models were expressed by the young adult participants. In this case, 52% alluded to the Trinity being three separate persons, but only 26% stated that the Trinity was one person with three components. Again, a three-separate person Trinity was more prevalent when Trinity members/components are described and discussed individually, as was the case in this belief which was about the Holy Spirit.

Two participants also stated that they were surprised that the Holy Spirit was described as a person in the belief's commentary, and two stated that if this was the case, "spirit" wasn't a good word to describe this person, because they wondered how a person was supposed to "fill you" in relation to being "filled with the spirit." Paradoxically, having Jesus "in their hearts," whom young adults also perceived as not only a person but also as human, was not questioned in the previous belief. Perhaps this dissonance may be due to unfamiliarity with the Holy Spirit or insufficient narratives associated with this member of the Trinity. Additionally, 11% of participants raised the issue of the Holy Spirit being female, presumably because they had learned/heard that in ancient Hebrew scripture, the Hebrew word for Holy Spirit is feminine. More research into how young adults perceive and relate specifically to the Holy Spirit may prove interesting and timely given the dissonance expressed above.

Despite this, many participants stated that the Holy Spirit was something that 63% of participants described they could be "filled by" or have in their life. They did not, however, articulate that they needed to have a relationship with this deity, as they had stated with God the Father and God the Son.

Conclusion

The Trinity belief presents some benefits and problems for Millennial young adults as described below.

Beneficial Aspects of this Belief	Identified Problematic Areas to Address
▪ THE TRINITY IS AN EXAMPLE FOR HOW CHRISTIANS CAN WORK TOGETHER This is provided the Trinity is defined as three separate deities.	▪ AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOD While this may be a convenient way of addressing a complex issue, it is problematic for some young adults. For them it raises more questions than it addresses and leads to enormous diversity and explanations of the Trinity. ▪ IS THERE ONE GOD OR THREE? The current writing of the belief is ambiguous and confusing to young adults. The net effect is that young people are creating diverse and inconsistent perceptions about God in what could be an effort to make sense of this ambiguity. Such differences in beliefs may make it difficult to achieve overall cohesion within a religious organization, particularly with regard to a belief which some young people (19%) find crucial to their faith. ▪ IS THERE A RANKING WITHIN THE TRINITY? Given the Trinity was used as an analogy for marriage, a ranking or egalitarian relationship within the Trinity may need to be defined - particularly if a religious organization endorses a marriage equality model, and the equality of women. ▪ A BELIEF IN GOD IS BASED ON FAITH Again, only a few participants identified that a decision of faith was associated with using nature, scripture and creation to prove the existence of God.

The wording of the Trinity belief seems to be problematic in its current form, as it leads to too many diverse outcomes and opinions by young adults (like the ranking issue) who seem to be grappling with and inconsistently defining this concept for themselves. There may be dissonance in advocating an incomprehensible God, who at the same time is known and provides "self-revelation"

- just not enough. Mention is given of the rewards God receives for being God, however, no mention is made in the belief or commentary regarding the rewards humans receive for revering God, like eternal love, which was suggested by one participant.

Millennial young adults do like this belief and make a faith decision assumption to believe in God, even though they do not seem to realize it. They do feel the Trinity provides an example for how Christians can work together, but again, this too is complicated by the noticeably inexplicit Trinity model described by *Belief 2 – The Trinity*.

Presentation Discussion Topics

The *Beyond Beliefs Study* is a solution focused study and based on the confusion expressed in many of the participants regarding the Trinity, the following discussion may be helpful. As a part of this presentation, the authors would like to seek the feedback from the scholarly community regarding the following discussion topics that may be pertinent to Millennial young adults:

- **Does God have both Masculine and Feminine Attributes?**
    - Father (m), Son (m), and Holy Spirit (f).
    - Is God male or is he both male and female?
- **Are analogies adequate?**
    - When using analogies, while no analogy is perfect, would mentioning its strength and weakness to Millennials be of benefit?
    - Should we understand God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as analogies?
        - Do we emphasize the function/role of these terms rather than their physical relationship?
        - Does this analogy assume a hierarchical relationship?
    - Are Marriage/Humankind/Body of Christ helpful analogies for Millennials in understanding the Trinity?
- **Would considering a triune God viewed in light of a Polytheistic Worldview be helpful?**
- **Why is the Trinity belief important in the first place? Does it really matter and what difference does it make in the spiritual life of a Millennial young adult?**