

The Pioneers Speak - Part 4 of 4

About God's Spirit

From the pen of Inspiration: **“The Word of the Lord has guided our steps since the passing of the time in 1844. We have searched the Scriptures; we have built solidly; and we have not had to tear up our foundations and put in new timbers.”** (Letter 24, 1907)

“The time has come when we must firmly refuse to be drawn away from the platform of eternal truth, which since 1844 has stood the test.” (Letter 277, 1904)

What the Pioneers Wrote About God's Spirit

J. N. LOUGHBOROUGH - “The Spirit of God is spoken of in the Scriptures as God's representative—the power by which he works, the agency by which all things are upheld. This is clearly expressed by the Psalmist.... Psa. 139:7-10. We learn from this language that when we speak of the Spirit of God, we are really speaking of his presence and power.” (RH Sept. 20, 1898)

M. C. WILCOX - “God is the source of all life.... God's life is eternal life, even as He is 'the eternal God.' ...'But God is a person; how can His life be everywhere present?' God is everywhere present by His Spirit.... The presence of God is therefore His Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is therefore the life of God. And so we read of 'the Spirit of life' (Rom. 8:2), that 'the Spirit is life because of righteousness' (verse 10); that 'the Spirit giveth life' (2 Cor. 3:6).” (ST June 2, 1898)

E. J. WAGGONER - “Finally, we know the Divine unity of the Father and the Son from the fact that both have the same Spirit. Paul, after saying that they that are in the flesh cannot please God, continues: 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' Rom. 8:9. Here we find that the Holy Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ....” (Christ And His Righteousness [1892], 23)

A. J. MORTON - “The Holy Spirit is divine because it proceeds from divinity. You can no more separate divinity from the Spirit of God and Christ than you can separate divinity from God and Christ. It is, therefore, the presence of the Spirit in the words of God's promises which enable us to receive the divine nature from those promises.” (ST Oct. 26, 1891)

URIAH SMITH - "J. W. W. asks: 'Are we to understand that the Holy Ghost is a person, the same as the Father and the Son? Some claim that it is, others that it is not.'

"Ans.—The terms 'Holy Ghost,' are a harsh and repulsive translation. It should be 'Holy Spirit' (hagion pneuma) in every instance. This Spirit is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit being the same whether it is spoken of as pertaining to God or Christ. But respecting this Spirit, the Bible uses expressions which cannot be harmonized with the idea that it is a person like the Father and the Son. Rather it is shown to be a divine influence from them both, the medium which represents their presence and by which they have knowledge and power through all the universe, when not personally present. Christ is a person, now officiating as priest in the sanctuary in heaven; and yet he says that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is there in the midst. Mt. 18:20. How? Not personally, but by his Spirit. In one of Christ's discourses (John, chapters 14, 15, and 16) this Spirit is personified as 'the Comforter,' and as such has the personal and relative pronouns, 'he,' 'him,' and 'whom,' applied to it. But usually it is spoken of in a way to show that it cannot be a person, like the Father and the Son. For instance, it is often said to be 'poured out' and 'shed abroad.' But we never read about God or Christ being poured out or shed abroad. If it was a person, it would be nothing strange for it to appear in bodily shape; and yet when it has so appeared, that fact has been noted as peculiar. Thus Luke 3:22 says: 'And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.' But the shape is not always the same; for on the day of Pentecost it assumed the form of 'cloven tongues like as of fire.' Acts 2:3, 4. Again we read of 'the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.' Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6. This is unquestionably simply a designation of the Holy Spirit, put in this form to signify its perfection and completeness. But it could hardly be so described if it was a person. We never read of the seven Gods or the seven Christs." (RH Oct. 28, 1890)

J. H. WAGGONER - "There is one question, which has been much controverted in the theological world upon which we have never presumed to enter. It is that of the personality of the Spirit of God. Prevailing ideas of person are very diverse, often crude, and the word is differently understood; so that unity of opinion on this point cannot be expected until all shall be able to define precisely what they mean by the word, or until all shall agree upon one particular sense in which the word shall be used. But as this agreement does not exist, it seems that a discussion of the subject cannot be profitable, especially as it is not a question of direct revelation. We have a right to be positive in our faith and our statements only when the words of Scripture are so direct as to bring the subject within the range of positive proof.

"We are not only willing but anxious to leave it just where the word of God leaves it. From it we learn that the Spirit of God is that awful and mysterious power which proceeds from

the throne of the universe, and which is the efficient actor in the work of creation and of redemption.” (The Spirit Of God; Its Offices And Manifestations [1877], 8)

MRS. S. M. I. HENRY - “Q. Do you think the Spirit of God is a person, or is it simply the power by which God works, and which he has given to man for his use?

“A. The pronouns used in connection with the Spirit must lead us to conclude that he is a person,—the personality of God which is the source of all power and life.” (The Abiding Spirit, 1899)

M. C. WILCOX - “28. THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT. Ques. 1. Some say the Holy Spirit is a person; others say He is a personality; and others, a power only. Till how long should this be a matter of discussion?...

“Ans. 1. The personality of the Holy Spirit will probably be a matter of discussion always. Sometimes the Spirit is mentioned as being ‘poured out,’ as in Acts 2. All through the Scriptures, the Spirit is represented as being the operating power of God....

“The reason why the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as a person, it seems to us, is that it brings to us, and to every soul that believes, the personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ....

“Because of the lack of faith, it was ‘expedient,’ necessary, that He should go away; for He declared, ‘If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you.’ John 16:7. His disciples could not realize the presence of the Spirit of God as long as Christ was with them personally. In that sense, He could be with those only who were in His immediate presence. But when He went away, and the Spirit came, it could make Christ present with everyone, whether that one was—with Paul in Athens, Peter in Jerusalem, Thomas in India, John in Patmos.

“These are simply illustrations. Wherever God's children are, there is the Spirit—not an individual person, as we look upon persons, but having the power to make present the Father and the Son. That Spirit is placed upon God's messengers, the angels; but the angels are not the Spirit. That Spirit is placed upon God's servants, His human messengers; but the human messengers are not the Spirit. They are possessed by the Spirit, and used by the Spirit, and have within them the power of the Spirit; but they are not the Spirit. The Spirit is independent of all these human or material agencies. Why not leave it here? Why not know that the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Deity, goes out into all the earth, bringing the presence of God to every heart that will receive it?” (Questions And Answers, Vol. 11 [1919, 1938], 37-39; in the 1945 ed., 33-35)

M. C. WILCOX – “Question 187. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MINISTERING SPIRITS. What is the difference between the Holy Spirit and the ministering spirits (angels), or are they the same?

“A. The Holy Spirit is the mighty energy of the Godhead, the life and power of God flowing out from Him to all parts of the universe, and thus making a living connection between His throne and all creation. As is expressed by another: ‘The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ.’ It thus makes Christ everywhere present. To use a crude illustration, just as a telephone carries the voice of a man, and so makes that voice present miles away, so the Holy Spirit carries with it all the potency of Christ in making Him everywhere present with all His power, and revealing Him to those in harmony with His law. Thus the Spirit is personified in Christ and God, but never revealed as a separate person. Never are we told to pray to the Spirit; but to God for the Spirit. Never do we find in the Scriptures prayers to the Spirit, but for the Spirit.” (Questions And Answers Gathered From The Question Corner Department Of The Signs Of The Times, Pacific Press, 1911 p.18-182)

“And yet there is order observed in God's working; there is the regular channel through which His life force flows to the children of men, and by which His blessed Spirit does its work. We read: ‘The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John; who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ Rev. 1:1, 2. Here we have the order of divine procedure: (1) The Father; (2) Jesus Christ; (3) Christ's angel; (4) John the apostle and prophet; (5) the church. And as respects the latter, the messages to the church are given through the ministers, or watchmen, of that church. ‘God in His wisdom can work and does work in other ways, because conditions of men demand it, but this is the regular way.’

“The glory supreme and insupportable of the Godhead is represented in the Father. 1 Tim. 6:16. Jesus Christ has forever blended the divine with the human, and from Him flows out the Spirit of life to all His children. The angels are the mediums, the ganglia, on these great currents of God's life to reinforce, so to speak, these life currents. They can bear without exaltation God's Spirit and its outshining glory, and in themselves bring the presence of God to His children, and drive back the angels of evil which seek to destroy them.” (ST Feb. 26, 1908)

Note - Rest assured, brethren. If any pioneer had made a wrong statement or advocated unbiblical teachings, God would have had Ellen White speedily challenge the error, just as she did with Dr. J. H. Kellogg regarding his book The Living Temple.

Note - To my Seventh-day Adventist brothers and sisters around the world: The lack of agreement between the words of the pioneers and the teachings of the Trinity doctrine is no side issue or small irrelevant matter. What eternal purpose is served if we have come out of the Babylonian doctrine of Sunday worship, which breaks the fourth commandment, only to embrace the false doctrine of the Trinity, the same god of the beast power, which breaks the first commandment? We must become “the restorers of paths to dwell in,” and heartily embrace the doctrinal beliefs of the pioneers regarding the Godhead, which were established and confirmed by unquestionable divine authority. Truth has ever been unfolding, but regarding the Godhead, our pioneers had it right. It is so sad that the watchmen have allowed a once-settled doctrine to now be called falsehood.