

The Pioneers Speak – Part 1 of 4

About the Trinity

God's Prophet has encouraged us to study the writings of our pioneers. These were not ignorant men. John N. Andrews memorized the whole New Testament and a good portion of the Old Testament. They were not distracted with electronic devices or worldly cares. Often when they met for study, they spent long hours, well into the night. God was giving them our pillar doctrines and when they got bogged down on a particular point, God would take Sister White into vision and the correct view would be confirmed. One of the earliest points of doctrine is the truth about the Godhead. Remember, these early pioneers came into the Millerite/Advent movement from Trinitarian churches. They believed in the Trinity until God showed them otherwise.

Remember this also, all the statements of the Pioneers regarding the Trinity, God the Father, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit; if they were wrong, God would have had Sister White correct them with haste, just as she did with John Harvey Kellogg and his pantheistic teaching of God in his book "The Living Temple."

James White was a very vocal anti-Trinitarian to his death at age 60 and never once did God instruct Ellen White to correct her husband.

Today, leadership roles are attempting to gag and muzzle the writings of our pioneers. The subject is too important to dismiss without a thorough investigation.

Ellen White wrote this very powerful statement, ***"When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. Men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. The truth for this time, God has given us as a foundation for our faith. He Himself has taught us what is truth. One will arise, and still another, with new light which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy Spirit. Spirit."*** {CW 31.2}

Note- Did you absorb what the prophet through the Spirit wrote? God has given us as a foundation for our faith. He Himself has taught us what is truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. When the church today says the pioneers were wrong, they are clearly stating that God was wrong. Are we to say that intellectual philosophy is superior to Divine wisdom?

Ellen White wrote, ***“A few are still alive who passed through the experience gained in the establishment of this truth. God has graciously spared their lives to repeat and repeat till the close of their lives, the experience through which they passed even as did John the apostle till the very close of his life. And the standard-bearers who have fallen in death, are to speak through the reprinting of their writings. I am instructed that thus their voices are to be heard. They are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time.”*** (CW [1905] 31-32)

Note- She said the pioneers, though fallen in death, by their writings, they are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time. In the previous statement she wrote, *The truth for this time, God has given us as a foundation for our faith.* But the truth God gave the pioneers is no longer the foundation of our faith because leadership says they were wrong. I believe we should reject those who reject the testimony of Jesus.

The standard-bearers who have fallen in death, are to speak through the reprinting of their writings. I am instructed that thus their voices are to be heard.

Now we will study, “What the Pioneers Wrote About the Trinity

JAMES WHITE – “The way spiritualizers ... have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural trinitarian creed, viz., that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, though they have not one passage to support it, while we have plain scripture testimony in abundance that he is the Son of the eternal God.” (Day Star, January 24, 1846)

J. H. WAGGONER - “...The great mistake of Trinitarians, in arguing this subject, is this: they make no distinction between a denial of a trinity and a denial of the divinity of Christ. They see only the two extremes, between which the truth lies; and take every expression referring to the pre-existence of Christ as evidence of a trinity. The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ and his divinity; but they are entirely silent in regard to a trinity....” (The Atonement [1884], 165)

A. J. DENNIS - “What a contradiction of terms is found in the language of a trinitarian creed: 'In unity of this Godhead are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' There are many things that are mysterious, written in the word of God, but we may safely presume the Lord never calls upon us to believe impossibilities. But creeds often do....” (ST May 22, 1879)

R. F. COTTRELL - “My reasons for not adopting and defending it, are 1. Its name is unscriptural—the Trinity, or the triune God, is unknown to the Bible; and I have entertained the idea that doctrines which require words coined in the human mind to

express them, are coined doctrines. 2. I have never felt called upon to adopt and explain that which is contrary to all the sense and reason that God has given me. All my attempts at an explanation of such a subject would make it no clearer to my friends.” (RH June 1, 1869)

J. N. LOUGHBOROUGH - “The word Trinity nowhere occurs in the Scriptures. The principal text supposed to teach it is 1 John 5:7, which is an interpolation. Clarke says, 'Out of one hundred and thirteen manuscripts, the text is wanting in one hundred and twelve. It occurs in no MS. before the tenth century. And the first place the text occurs in Greek, is in the Greek translation of the acts of the Council of Lateran, held A.D. 1215....’” (RH Nov. 5, 1861)

Note: First John 5:7 reads, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” Ellen White never once quoted it, and a great majority of Bible commentaries tell us that this verse has no legitimate place in the Scriptures. Please see the study we have produced “Matthew 28:19 and 1 John 5:7 - Quicksand or Stable Ground?” This study gives numerous proofs as to why both scriptures are not inspired.

J. B. FRISBIE - "We will make a few extracts, that the reader may see the broad contrast between the God of the Bible brought to light through Sabbath-keeping, and the god in the dark through Sunday-keeping. Catholic Catechism Abridged by the Rt. Rev. John Dubois, Bishop of New York, page 5:

“Q. Where is God? A. God is everywhere. Q. Does God see and know all things? A. Yes, he does know and see all things.... Q. Are there more Gods than one? A. No; there is but one God. Q. Are there more persons than one in God? A. Yes; in God there are three persons. Q. Which are they? A. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Q. Are there not three Gods? A. No; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, are all but one and the same God.’...

“These ideas well accord with those heathen philosophers.... We should rather mistrust that the Sunday god [the Trinity] came from the same source that Sunday-keeping did....” (RH March 7, 1854)

J. N. LOUGHBOROUGH - “Questions for Bro. Loughborough.

“Bro. White: The following questions I would like to have you give, or send, to Bro. Loughborough for explanation. W. W. Giles, Toledo, Ohio

“Question 1. What serious objections is there to the doctrine of the Trinity?

“ANSWER. There are many objections which we might urge, but on account of our limited space we shall reduce them to the three following: 1. It is contrary to common sense. 2. It is contrary to scripture. 3. Its origin is Pagan and fabulous.... Instead of pointing us to scripture for proof of the Trinity, we are pointed to the trident of the Persians.... This doctrine of the trinity was brought into the church about the same time with image worship, and keeping the day of the sun, and is but Persian doctrine remodeled. It occupied about three hundred years from its introduction to bring the doctrine to what it is now. It was commenced about 325 A.D., and was not completed till 681. See Milman’s Gibbon's Rome, vol. iv, p. 422. It was adopted in Spain in 589, in England in 596, in Africa in 534....” (RH Nov. 5, 1861)

J. H. WAGGONER - “The [Athanasian] creed was formulated and the faith defined by Athanasius. Previous to that time there was no settled method of expression, if, indeed, there was anywhere any uniformity of belief. Most of the early writers had been pagan philosophers, who to reach the minds of that class, often made strong efforts to prove that there was a blending of the two systems, Christianity and philosophy. There is abundance of material in their writings to sustain this view. Bingham speaks of the vague views held by some in the following significant terms:

“There were some very early that turned the doctrine of the Trinity into Tritheism, and, instead of three divine persons under the economy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, brought in three collateral, co-ordinate, and self-originated beings, making them three absolute and independent principles, without any relation of Father or Son, which is the most proper notion of three gods. And having made this change in the doctrine of the Trinity, they made another change answerable to it in the form of baptism.’— Antiquities, book 11, chap. 8

“Who can distinguish between this form of expression and that put forth by the Council of Constantinople in a.d. 381, wherein the true faith is declared to be that of 'an uncreated and consubstantial and co-eternal Trinity'? The truth is that we find the same idea which is here described by Bingham running through much of the orthodox literature of the second and third centuries. There is no proper 'relation of Father and Son' to be found in the words of the council, above quoted....

“Bingham says this error in regard to a Trinity of three co-ordinate and self-originated and independent beings arose in the church very early; and so we find it in the earliest authors after the days of the apostles....” (Thoughts on Baptism [1878], 180-181, italics original)

R. F. COTTRELL - “That one person is three persons, and that three persons are only one person, is the doctrine which we claim is contrary to reason and common sense.

The being and attributes of God are above, beyond, out of reach of my sense and reason, yet I believe them; but the doctrine I object to is contrary, yes, that is the word, to the very sense and reason that God has himself implanted in us. Such a doctrine he does not ask us to believe. A miracle is beyond our comprehension, but we all believe in miracles who believe our own senses. What we see and hear convinces us that there is a power that effected the most wonderful miracle of creation. But our Creator has made it an absurdity to us that one person should be three persons, and three persons but one person; and in his revealed word he has never asked us to believe it. This our friend thinks objectionable....

“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. The fact that this was one of the leading doctrines, if not the very chief, upon which the bishop of Rome was exalted to the popedom, does not say much in its favor. This should cause men to investigate it for themselves; as when the spirits of devils working miracles undertake the advocacy of the immortality of the soul. Had I never doubted it before, I would now probe it to the bottom, by that word which modern Spiritualism sets at nought....

“Revelation goes beyond us; but in no instance, does it go contrary to right reason and common sense. God has not claimed, as the popes have, that he could 'make justice of injustice,' nor has he, after teaching us to count, told us that there is no difference between the singular and plural numbers.

“Let us believe all he has revealed, and add nothing to it.” (RH July 6, 1869)

A. T. JONES - “Another, and most notable opponent, was Servetus who had opposed the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, and also infant baptism....” (RH June 17, 1884)

D. W. HULL - “The inconsistent positions held by many in regard to the Trinity, as it is termed, has, no doubt, been the prime cause of many other errors. Erroneous views of the divinity of Christ are apt to lead us into error in regard to the nature of the atonement....

“The doctrine which we propose to examine, was established by the council of Nice, A.D. 325, and ever since that period, persons not believing this peculiar tenet, have been denounced by popes and priests, as dangerous heretics. It was for a disbelief in this doctrine, that the Arians were anathematized in A.D. 513.

“As we can trace this doctrine no further back than the origin of the 'Man of Sin,' and as we find this dogma at that time established rather by force than otherwise, we

claim the right to investigate the matter, and ascertain the bearing of Scripture on this subject.” (RH Nov. 10, 1859)

Ellen White wrote, “God has given me light regarding our periodicals. What is it? —He has said that the dead are to speak. How? —Their works shall follow them. We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work. They moved forward step by step under the influence of the Spirit of God. One by one these pioneers are passing away. The word given me is, Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced ...These articles must be reproduced. There is truth and power in them. Men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

“Let the truths that are the foundation of our faith be kept before the people....” (RH May 25, 1905)

Note - We know that every one of these statements is true and accurate, because God’s prophet was never directed by God to challenge their correctness or authenticity. Rather, she was inspired to urge that their words be repeated and reprinted.