

THE PIONEERS and the TRINITY

Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, [OLDER BRETHREN AMONG THE PIONEERS ARE HERE THUS REMINISCENTLY REFERRED TO. "FATHER PIERCE" WAS STEPHEN PIERCE, WHO SERVED IN MINISTERIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE WORK IN THE EARLY DAYS. "FATHER ANDREWS" WAS EDWARD ANDREWS, THE FATHER OF J. N. ANDREWS.--COMPILERS.] Elder [Hiram] Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me. {EGW 1SM 206.4}

"Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs. More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity." George Knight, Ministry, October 1993, p. 10.

"Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of 'present truth'. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord...the Trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists." William G. Johnsson, Adventist Review, Jan 6, 1994, p. 10.

What Our Pioneer's Believed About the Trinity

JAMES WHITE

"The way spiritualizers this way have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural Trinitarian creed" The Day Star, Jan. 24, 1846.

J.H. WAGGONER

"The great mistake of Trinitarians, in arguing this subject, seems to be 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, 1872 ed, chapter 4, "Doctrine Of A Trinity Subversive Of The Atonement" p. 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." Signs of the Times, 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..." Review and Herald, 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 Latern, held A.D. 1215.'- Com. on John 1, and remarks at close of chap." Review and Herald, Nov. 5, 1861. | back |

A side note about 1 John 5:7

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)

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. In the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, it says, "The passage as given in the KJV is in no Greek MS earlier than the 15th and the 16th centuries. The disputed words found their way into the KJV by way of the Greek text of Erasmus (see Vol. V, p. 141). It is said that Erasmus offered to include the disputed words in his Greek Testament if he were shown even one Greek MS that contained them. A library in Dublin produced such a MS (known as 34), and Erasmus included the passage in his text. It is now believed that the later editions of the Vulgate acquired the passage by the mistake of a scribe who included an exegetical marginal comment in the Bible text that he was copying. The disputed words have been widely used in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, but, in view of such overwhelming evidence against their authenticity, their support is valueless and should not be used. In spite of their appearance in the Vulgate A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture freely admits regarding these words: "It is now generally held that this passage, called the Comma Johanneum, is a gloss that crept into the text of the Old Latin and Vulgate at an early date, but found its way into the Greek text only in the 15th and 16th centuries" (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1951, p. 1186)

(The SDA Bible Commentary, comments on 1 John 5: 7)

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? Ans. 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." Review and Herald, Feb. 28, 1854, The Sunday God, p.50. [emphasis supplied].

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.-Gib. vol. iv, pp. 114, 345; Milner, vol. i, p. 519." RH-Nov. 5, 1861. | back |

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, coordinate, 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. 3, &4. "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 coordinate 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.

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." Review and Herald, 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." Review and Herald, 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." Review and Herald, Nov.10, 1859.

Trinity Doctrine
God the Father
God's Son
The Holy Spirit

What Our Pioneer's Believed About the Father

JAMES WHITE

"To assert that the sayings of the Son and his apostles are the commandments of the Father, is as wide from the truth as the old Trinitarian absurdity that Jesus Christ is the very and eternal God." Review and Herald, Aug. 5, 1852, p.52.

J.N.ANDREWS

"That God is the fountain and source of immortality is plain from the statement of Paul. He speaks thus of God the Father: 'Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting; Amen.' 1 Tim. 6:16. This text is evidently designed to teach that the self existent God is the only being who, of himself, possesses this wonderful nature. Others may possess it as derived from him, but he alone is the

fountain of immortality. "Our Lord Jesus Christ is the source of this life to us. 'For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' John 5:26. 'As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.' John 6:57. The Father gives us this life in His Son. 'And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.' 1Jn 5:11, 12. These Scriptures do clearly indicate that Christ is the source of endless life, and that those only have this who have Christ." Review and Herald, Jan. 27, 1874 p.52.

D.M. CANRIGHT

"Text: 'But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.' 1 Cor.8:6... "At the time when the Bible was written, nearly the whole world had adopted either Polytheism or Pantheism. Polytheism taught that there were many gods...In opposition to that, Moses and the prophets set forth the grand fact that this doctrine of many gods was a lie, and that there was but one God, Jehovah the living God... "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.' Dt. 6:4. Here we strike the key-note of the doctrine of the Deity. 'The Lord our God is ONE Lord.' Not many, not a thousand, not a hundred, not ten, not three, but only ONE-one God... [Ex. 20:3; Dt. 4:35; 2Sam. 7:22; 2Kings 19:15; Neh. 9:6; Psa. 86:10; Isa. 43:10; Isa 44:6,8; Isa. 45:5,22; quoted] No comments of ours can make these declarations plainer. There is just one eternal God and no more,-one who is the Author and Father of all things.

"Turning to the New Testament, we find the same doctrine taught just as plainly as in the Old. Neither Moses nor the prophets ever set forth the unity of God more strongly than Jesus himself. He taught it and reiterated it many times. Thus he says: 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul...And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he.' Mark 12:29-32. "The scribe said, 'There is one God, and there is none other but he.' To this declaration Jesus assented. 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.' John 17:3 Jesus says his Father is the only true God. But Trinitarians contradict this by saying that the Son and Holy Ghost are just as much the true God as the Father is... [1 Cor. 8:4-6 quoted] "Says the great apostle, 'There is none other God but one,' and 'there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.' He tells us who this one God is. It is not the Holy Ghost; it is not Jesus Christ, but it is the Father. Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 1:17.

There is, then, only one wise God. 1 Tim. 2:5; Dt. 6:4. Those who are familiar with the Bible will see that I have selected only a few of the plainest texts upon this doctrine. How the doctrine of the Trinity, of three Gods, can be reconciled with these positive statements I do not know. It seems to me that nothing can be framed which more clearly denies the doctrine of the Trinity, than do the Scriptures above quoted.

"And then the Bible never uses the phrases, 'Trinity,' 'triune God,' 'three in one,' 'the holy three,' 'God the Holy Ghost,' etc. but it does emphatically say there is only one God, the Father. And every argument to prove three Gods in one person, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, all of them of one substance, and every way equal to each other, and all three forming but one, contradicts itself, contradicts reason, and contradicts the Bible... "God is self-existent, and the source and author of all things,-of angels, of men, of all the worlds,-of everything. Thus Paul says, 'For of him and through him and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.' Rom. 11:36. "He is the source of all life and immortality. Thus, speaking of the Father, Paul says, 'Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.' 1 Tim. 6:16. Notice that this glorious God is the only one who, in himself, possesses immortality. That is, he is the fountain-head, the source of all life and immortality... "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' John 5:26.

This statement is unequivocal. The Father has life in himself, and in his great love for his Son he bestows the same gift upon him; but it will be noticed that the Father is the one from whom the gift came... "How carefully Paul distinguishes between the Father and the Son. He says, 'The Father, of whom are all things,' and 'Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.' The Father is the source of everything. Jesus is the one through whom all things are done. All the authority, the glory, and the power of Christ he received from his Father...

"A belief in this doctrine is very important. Indeed, it cannot be too strongly insisted upon. Jesus even declares that the knowledge of this truth is necessary to eternal life. 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.' John 17:3. "We must know the Father as the only true God. Then there is no true God besides the Father. But we must also know his Son Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. How simple and plain is this doctrine, and how abundantly sustained by the Holy Bible." Review and Herald, Aug. 29, 1878; (emphasis supplied).

A.T. JONES

In 1890 Jones writes:

"Again, speaking of the appearing of Jesus Christ, the Word says: 'In His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, the 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.' 1 Tim. 6:15-16. Christ has brought this immortality to light...Now as immortality is to be sought for, and as God is the only one who has it, and as Christ is the only one who has brought it to light, it follows that immortality must be sought of God, through Christ." Bible Questions and Answers Concerning Man, pp. 3-4.

E.J. WAGGONER

"Christ and His Righteousness."

"We are mindful of Paul's words, that 'to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him' (1 Cor. 8:6); just as we have already quoted, that it was by Him that God made the worlds. All things proceed ultimately from God, the Father; even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father..." Christ and His Righteousness p. 19.

Trinity Doctrine
God the Father
God's Son
The Holy Spirit

What Our Pioneer's Believed About God's Son

JAMES WHITE

"The Father is the greatest in that he is first. The Son is next in authority because He has been given all things." Review and Herald, Jan. 4, 1881.

J.N. ANDREWS

"And as to the Son of God, he would be excluded also, for he had God for his Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have beginning of days. So that if we use Paul's language in an absolute

sense, it would be impossible to find but one being in the universe, and that is God the Father, who is without father, or mother, or descent, or beginning of days, or end of life." Review and Herald, Sept. 7, 1869.

C.W. STONE

"The Word, then, is Christ. This text speaks of his origin. He is the only begotten of the Father. Just how he came into existence, the Bible does not inform us any more definitely; but by this expression and several of a similar kind in the Scriptures, we may believe that Christ came into existence in a manner different from that in which other beings first appeared; that he sprang from the Father's being in a way not necessary for us to understand" The Captain Of Our Salvation, 1886, p. 17.

E.J. WAGGONER

"In arguing the perfect equality of the Father and the Son, and the fact that Christ is in very nature God, we do not design to be understood as teaching that the Father was not before the Son. It should not be necessary to guard this point, lest some should think that the Son existed as soon as the Father; yet some go to that extreme, which adds nothing to the dignity of Christ, but rather detracts from the honor due him, since many throw the whole thing away rather than accept a theory so obviously out of harmony with the language of Scripture, that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He was begotten, not created. He is of the substance of the Father, so that in his very nature he is God; and since this is so 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.' Col. 1:19...While both are of the same nature, the Father is first in point of time. He is also greater in that he had no beginning, while Christ's personality had a beginning." Signs of the Times, April 8, 1889 p. 214.

"The Word was in the beginning." The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase. It is not given to men to know when or how the Son was begotten; but we know that He was the Divine Word, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created...[Micah 5:2 quoted] We know that Christ "proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man." Christ And His Righteousness, 1890, p. 9.

"As the Son of the self-existent God, he has by nature all the attributes of Deity. It is true that there are many sons of God; but Christ is the 'only begotten Son of God,' and therefore the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was, or ever can be. The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15); but Christ is the Son of God by birth." *ibid.* p. 12. "All things proceed ultimately from God, the Father; even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father..."*ibid.* p. 19.

"The Scriptures declare that Christ is "the only begotten Son of God." He is begotten, not created. As to when He was begotten, it is not for us to inquire, nor could our minds grasp it if we were told. The prophet Micah tells us all that we can know about it, in these words: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin. There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 1:18), but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning." *ibid.* p. 21, 22; (emphasis supplied).

W.W. PRESCOTT

"As Christ was twice born, once in eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and again here in the flesh, thus uniting the divine with the human in that second birth, so we, who have been born once already in the flesh, are to have the second birth, being born again of the Spirit, in order that our experience may be the same, the human and the divine being joined in a life union." Review and Herald, April 14, 1896 p. 232.

A.T. JONES

"He was born of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Jesus Christ was born again. He came from heaven, God's first-born, to the earth, and was born again, But all in Christ's work goes by opposites for us: he, the sinless one, was made to be sin, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He, the living one, the prince and author of life, died that we might live. He whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity, the first-born of God, was born again, in order that we might be born again.

If Jesus Christ had never been born again, could you and I have ever been born again? No. But he was born again, from the world of righteousness into the world of sin; that we might be born again, from the world of sin into the world of righteousness. He was born again, and was made partaker of the human nature, that we might be born again, and so made partakers of the divine nature. He was born again, unto earth, unto sin, and unto man, that we might be born again unto heaven, unto righteousness, and unto God." Review and Herald, Aug. 1, 1899 (Lessons on Faith p. 154.)

JAMES WHITE

"Paul affirms of the Son of God that he was in the form of God, and that he was equal with God. 'Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' Phil. 2:6. The reason why it is not robbery for the Son to be equal with the Father is the fact that he is equal... The inexplicable Trinity that makes the godhead three in one and one in three, is bad enough; but that ultra Unitarianism that makes Christ inferior to the Father is worse. Did God say to an inferior, 'Let us make man in our image?'" Review and Herald, Nov. 29, (1877), p. 172.

JAMES EDSON WHITE

"The angels, therefore, are created beings, necessarily of a lower order than their Creator. Christ is the only being begotten of the Father." Past, Present and Future, 1909, p. 52.

J.M. STEPHENSON

"To be the only begotten Son of God must be understood in a different sense than to be a Son by creation; for in that sense all the creatures he has made are sons. Nor can it refer to his miraculous conception, with the virgin Mary, by the Holy Ghost; because he is represented by this endearing title more than four thousand years before his advent in the village of Bethlehem. Moreover, he is represented as being exalted far above the highest orders of men and angels in his primeval nature. He must therefore be understood as being the Son of God in a much higher sense than any other being. His being the only begotten of the Father supposes that none except him were thus begotten; hence he is, in truth and verity the only begotten Son of God; and as such he must be Divine; that is, be a partaker of the Divine nature.

This term expresses his highest, and most exalted nature... "The idea of Father and Son supposes priority of the existence of the one, and the subsequent existence of the other. To say that the Son is as old as his Father, is a palpable contradiction of terms. It is a natural impossibility for the Father to be as young as the Son, or the Son to be as old as the Father. If it be said that this term is only used in an accommodated sense, it still remains to be accounted for, why the Father should use as the uniform title of the highest, and most endearing relation between himself and our Lord, a term which, in its uniform signification, would contradict the very idea he wished to convey. If the inspired writers had wished to convey the idea of the co-etaneous existence, and eternity of the Father and Son, they could not possibly have used more incompatible terms. And of this, Trinitarians, had the honesty to acknowledge, in the conclusion of his work on the Son-ship of Christ, that, 'in the order of nature, the Father must have existed Before the Son.'" Review and Herald, Nov. 14, 1854.

D.M. CANRIGHT

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,' &c. According to this, Jesus Christ is begotten of God in a sense that no other being is; else he could not be his only begotten Son. Angels are called sons of God, and so are righteous men; but Christ is his Son in a higher sense, in a closer relation, than either of these. God made men and angels out of materials already created. He is the author of their existence, their Creator, hence their Father. But Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father's own substance. He was not created out of material as the angels and other creatures were. He is truly and emphatically the 'Son of God,'...Heb.1:1-8 quoted.

"By this we see that a very plain and great distinction is made between the Son and all the angels. They are all commanded to worship him. No created being can ever be worthy of worship, however high he may be, neither would it be right nor just for God to bid one order of his creatures to worship another. Divinity alone is worthy of worship, and to worship anything else would be idolatry. Hence Paul places Christ far above the angels, and makes a striking contrast between them." Review and Herald, June 18, 1867.

R.F. COTTRELL

"Men have gone to opposite extremes in the discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. Some have made Christ a mere man, commencing his existence at his birth in Bethlehem; others have not been satisfied with holding him to be what the Scriptures so clearly reveal him, the pre-existing Son of God, but have made him the 'God and Father' of himself." Review and Herald, July 6, 1869.

"But if I am asked what I think of Jesus Christ, my reply is, 'I believe all that the Scriptures say of him. If the testimony represents him as being in glory with the Father before the world was, I believe it. If it is said that he was in the beginning with God, that he was God, that all things were made by him and for him, and that without him was not anything made that was made, I believe it. If the Scriptures say he is the Son of God, I believe it. If it is declared that the Father sent his Son into the world, I believe he had a Son to send..."

"It may be objected, If the Father and the Son are two distinct beings, do you not, in worshipping the Son and calling him God, break the first commandment of the decalogue? "No; it is the Father's will 'That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.' We cannot break the commandment and dishonor God by obeying him. The Fathers says of the Son, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' Should angels refuse to worship the Son, they would rebel against the Father.

Children inherit the name of their Father. The Son of God 'hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than' the angels. That name is the name of his Father. The Father says to the Son, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.' Heb. 1. The Son is called 'The mighty God.' Isa. 9:6. And when he comes again to earth his waiting people will exclaim, 'This is our God.' Isa. 25:9.

It is the will of the Father that we should thus honor the Son. In doing so we render supreme honor to the Father. If we dishonor the Son, we dishonor the Father; for he requires us to honor his son. "But though the Son is called God yet there is a 'God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ' 1Pet. 1:3. Though the Father says to the Son, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever,' yet, that throne is given him of his Father; and because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, he further says, 'Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee.' Heb. 1:9. 'God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ.' Acts. 2:36. The Son is 'the everlasting Father,' not of himself, nor of his Father, but of his children. His language is, 'I and the children which God hath given me.' Heb. 2:13." Review and Herald, June 1, 1869.

JOHN MATTESON

"Christ is the only literal son of God. 'The only begotten of the Father.' John 1:14. He is God because he is the Son of God; not by virtue of His resurrection. If Christ is the only begotten of the Father, then we cannot be begotten of the Father in a literal sense. It can only be in a secondary sense of the word." Review and Herald, Oct. 12, 1869, p. 123.

URIAH SMITH

"The Scriptures nowhere speak of Christ as a created being, but on the contrary plainly state that he was begotten of the Father. (See remarks of Rev. 3:14, where it is shown that Christ is not a created being.) But while as the Son he does not possess a coeternity of past existence with the Father, the beginning of his existence, as the begotten of the Father, antedates the entire work of creation, in relation to which he stands as joint creator with God. John 1:3; Heb 1:2. Could not the Father ordain that to such a being worship should be rendered equally with himself, without its being idolatry on the part of the worshiper? He has raised him to positions which make it proper that he should be worshipped, and has even commanded that worship should be rendered him, which would not have been necessary had he been equal with the Father in eternity of existence.

Christ himself declares that 'as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' John 5:26. The Father has 'highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.' Phil. 2:9. And the Father himself says, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' Heb. 1:6. These testimonies show that Christ is now an object of worship equally with the Father; but they do not prove that with him he holds an eternity of past existence." Thoughts on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation 1882, p. 430.

"God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be,--a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity,--appeared the Word. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' John 1:1. This uncreated Word was the Being, who, in the fullness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in the mysterious expressions, 'his [God's] only begotten Son' (John 3:16; 1John 4:9), 'the only begotten of the Father' (John 1:14), and 'I proceeded forth and came from God.' John 8:42. Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared." Looking Unto Jesus, 1898, p. 10. | back |

JOSEPH BATES

"My parents were members of long standing in the Congregational church, with all of their converted children thus far, and anxiously hoped that we would also unite with them. But they embraced some points of faith which I could not understand. I will name two only: their mode of baptism, and doctrine of the Trinity.

My father, who had been a deacon of long standing with them, labored to convince me that they were right in points of doctrine...I said to my father, 'If you can convince me that we are one in this sense, that you are my father, and I your son; and also that I am your father, and you my son, then I can believe in the Trinity.'...In a few days I was immersed and joined the Christian church." The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates, 1868, pp. 204, 205.

JAMES WHITE

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for THE faith which was once delivered unto the saints...'Jude, 3-4...The exhortation to contend for the faith delivered to the saints, is to us alone. And it is very important for us to know what the apostle meant, that we may know what for and how to contend. In the 4th verse he gives us the reason why we should contend for THE faith, a particular faith; 'for there are certain men,' or a certain class who deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ...The way spiritualizers this way 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." The Day Star, Jan. 24, 1846.

"Here we might mention the Trinity, which does away with the personality of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ..." Review and Herald, Dec. 11, 1855 p.85.

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." Review and Herald, Nov.10, 1859.

Trinity Doctrine
God the Father
God's Son
The Holy Spirit

What Our Pioneer's Believed 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." Review and Herald, Sept. 13, 1898, p. 690.

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)." Signs of the Times, 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, p.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." Signs of the Times, Oct. 26, 1891, p.342.

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 Christ's." Review and Herald, 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.

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, wherever 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 there? 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 editions, p.37-39. In the 1945 edition p.33-35.

M.C. WILCOX

"Ques. 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? "Ans. 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 reenforce, 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." M.C. WILCOX, Signs of the Times, Feb. 26, 1908.

The Doctrine of the Trinity
Review and Herald, June 1st 1869, page 4

This has been a popular doctrine and regarded as orthodox ever since the bishop of Rome was elevated to the popedom on the strength of it. It is accounted dangerous heresy to reject it; but each person is permitted to explain the doctrine in his own way. All seem to think they must hold it, but each has perfect liberty to take his own way to reconcile its contradictory propositions; and hence a multitude of views are held concerning it by its friends, all of them orthodox, I suppose, as long as they nominally assent to the doctrine.

For myself, I have never felt called upon to explain it, nor to adopt and defend it, neither have I ever preached against it. But I probably put as high an estimation on the Lord Jesus Christ as those who call themselves Trinitarians. This is the first time I have ever taken the pen to say anything concerning the doctrine.

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.

But if I am asked what I think of Jesus Christ, my reply is, I believe all that the Scriptures say of him. If the testimony represents him as being in glory with the Father before the world was, I believe it.

If it is said that he was in the beginning with God, that he was God, that all things were made by him and for him, and that without him was not anything made that was made, I believe it.

If the Scriptures say he is the Son of God, I believe it.

If it is declared that the Father sent his Son into the world, I believe he had a Son to send.

If the testimony says he is the beginning of the creation of God, I believe it.

If he is said to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, I believe it.

And when Jesus says, "I and my Father are one," I believe it;

and when he says, "My Father is greater than I," I believe that too; it is the word of the Son of God, and besides this it is perfectly reasonable and seemingly self-evident.

If I be asked how I believe the Father and Son are one I reply, They are one in a sense not contrary to sense. If the "and" in the sentence means anything, the Father and the Son are two beings. They are one in the same sense in which Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one. He asked his Father that his disciples might be one. His language is, "that they may be one, even as we are one."

It may be objected, If the Father and the Son are two distinct beings, do you not, in worshipping the Son and calling him God, break the first commandment of the Decalogue?

No; it is the Father's will "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

We cannot break the commandment and dishonor God by obeying him. The Father says of the Son "Let all the angels of God worship him." Should angels refuse to worship the Son, they would rebel against the Father.

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But though the Son is called God yet there is a "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1, 3. Though the Father says to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," yet, that throne is given him of his Father ; and because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, he further says, "Therefore God even thy God, hath anointed thee." Heb. i, 9. "God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ." Acts. ii, 36. The Son is "the everlasting Father," not of himself, nor of His Father, but of his children. His language is, "I and the children which God hath given me." Heb. ii, 13.

R.F. COTTRELL