

Early Adventist Contributions



It needs to be understood clearly that the contributions of early Adventists to this matter does not form a basis for the Creation Seventh Day Adventist position on the Godhead. In other words, if the pioneers of the Advent faith erred in their understanding of Yahweh and Yahshua (and some of them did) this would not affect the way the Scriptures are read. Naturally, the tradition of any Church will color the way certain aspects of the Bible are understood, at least initially; however, the freedom that comes from eschewing a formal “Church creed” allows for increasing light, correction of past errors, and the progressive elimination of misunderstandings.

Mainstream Adventists certainly ascribe to the “increasing light” concept by claiming that the Trinity came about because the non-Trinitarian teachings of the earlier Advent people were erroneous, and later rejected in favor of clearer truth. This is, however, an improper application of a valid principle, for a number of reasons outlined below.

a) The Holy Spirit does not lead men in a circuitous route.

God’s people do not go from truth to error and then back to truth unless there is apostasy, which is not recorded (to any degree) as marking the progress of the collective Advent people in the early days. The Scriptures reveal the path of a reforming individual or set of individuals with unmistakable language: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Pro 4:18) “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2Cor 3:18) “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:13b, 14)

Once again, for emphasis: unless there is open apostasy, the Spirit of Yahweh never leads men into error from truth; this would be a denial of the Father’s very purpose in sending the Spirit: “He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come.” (John 16:13 – remembering that gender neutral pronouns are used throughout)

To further strengthen this position, we must remember that the early Advent people had the assistance of the clearly manifest Spirit of prophecy in the writings of Ellen G. White, who considered understanding the person of the Creator the most important factor in the faith of the Church. Some may contend that Luther, Calvin and others erred in various matters, and this is true – on the other hand they had neither the benefit of “open vision” nor a framework of dedicated Bible students working in unison as did those who anticipated the soon return of Christ in the middle-to-late 1800s.

b) None of the Biblical reasons for the non-Trinitarian paradigm accepted by Adventist pioneers were ever refuted

The Adventist pioneers set forth arguments from both Scripture and logic in defense of their position. They avoided both Trinitarianism and strict Unitarianism, which they considered extremes, [James White, Aug 5, 1852, Review and Herald – Vol. 3] and they fully acknowledged the divine, uncreated nature of Christ. The difference between early Adventists and Trinitarian movements primarily involved the nature of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptural discussion of which we have briefly described above.

None of the modern apologists for Adventism have ever been able to satisfactorily (in the view of Creation Seventh Day Adventists) answer any of the Bible arguments used by the early figures of Adventism. Neither the reasoning nor verses they employed have changed in the past century; no new light has been shed on the Word of the Almighty that would counter what He has been pleased to reveal to His people in the past. The only conclusion that may be reached is that, along with the increasingly worldly spirit manifest in mainstream Adventism, the true concept of the Godhead was correspondingly lost.

Creation Seventh Day Adventists cannot, in any form of intellectual honesty or spiritual consistency, concede that while the practices and teachings of mainstream Adventism have become worldlier, its view of the Godhead has become clearer. This would be a direct contradiction of divine principle. (John 7:17) Without strong evidence from the Scriptures, and the application of sound reasoning regarding exactly why the pioneer position from the Bible was in error, objective students of Biblical and Adventist history can make no other conclusion than CSDAs have made.

c) No divine or prophetic correction was ever brought to the topic.

The claims of some Adventists researchers that Ellen White became a Trinitarian later in life is belied by both the lack of written evidence of this, and her son's statements after her death, which indicate that she never accepted that position, nor should her writings be used to support it. W.C. White is on record as stating, "The statements and the arguments of some of our ministers, in their effort to prove that the Holy Spirit is an individual as are God the Father and Christ the eternal Son, have perplexed me, and sometimes they have made me sad." [Letter, W. C. White to H. W. Carr, 1939]

If Ellen White became a Trinitarian late in life, her family was kept in ignorance of this most important fact, and so were all of her contemporaries. The existing facts of the matter indicate that Mrs. White was invariably supportive of the writings of Adventist pioneers, who were uniformly non-Trinitarian, even while rebuking certain well-known figures such as J.H. Kellogg, who strayed from a strictly Biblical interpretation of the Godhead.

For more information on the position of Seventh-day Adventist pioneers regarding this issue include:

<http://faithofjesus.to/binary/essays/ePioneer.html>

However, the Biblical argument is the major focus; the position of our spiritual forefathers is merely a matter of historical consistency. For the benefit of readers who may be relatively new to the topic, however, a few of the shorter quotations taken from the first link above are provided:

"They who have read our remarks on the death of the Son of God know that we firmly believe in the divinity of Christ; but we cannot accept the idea of a trinity, as it is held by Trinitarians, without giving up our claim on the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption." [J. H. Waggoner, 1884, *The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*, pp. 164, 165]

"As fundamental errors, we might class with this counterfeit Sabbath [Sunday sacredness] other errors which Protestants have brought away from the Catholic church, such as sprinkling for baptism, the trinity, the consciousness of the dead, and eternal life in misery. ... can it be supposed that the church of Christ will carry along with her these errors till the judgment scenes burst upon the world? We think not." [James White, Sep 12 1854, *Review and Herald*, Vol. 6, No. 5, P 36, Par 8, emphasis added]

“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.” [Uriah Smith, Oct 28, 1890, Review and Herald]

“This [Trinitarian] doctrine destroys the personality of God, and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The infamous measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.” [J. N. Andrews, March 6, 1855, Review and Herald, Vol. 6, No. 24, P. 185]

“The seventeenth chapter of John is alone sufficient to refute the doctrine of the Trinity.” [J. N. Loughborough, Nov 5 1861, Review and Herald, Vol 18, p 184, par 1-11]

“The doctrine of the Trinity is a cruel heathen monstrosity, removing Jesus from his true position of Divine Savior and Mediator. It is true we cannot measure or define divinity. It is beyond our finite understanding, yet on this subject of the personality of God the Bible is very simple and plain.” [Letter, J. S. Washburn, 1939]

With this small sample of quotes in mind, we next need to examine just why this matter is important.

Taken from the CSDA Baptismal Guideline "The Highway of Holiness Vol. 1"