

The Godhead -- for John

Note: The following letter was written to a student of mine who was confused on the topic of the Godhead. There is a movement that would teach Adventists that (A) our pioneers did not believe in three members of the Godhead (B) that Ellen White did not teach the existence of three members of the Godhead [until her writing were altered] (C) that the Bible shows plainly that Jesus was born in the days of eternity past and that the Spirit is not a third person, but the mind of the Father and/or the Son [as the Spirit of man is not another entity apart from man].

The letter below was written early in the morning while I was traveling between appointments and is lacking in documentation. Also, it relies on two letters from other brothers that I have not been able to recover. For that reason I am adding documentation and information as a preface to the letter now. Likely, that preface will exceed the letter in length. It takes more space to prove something than to state it.

Relevant Facts:

Regarding EGW's views:

The accusation that writings have been changed is solemn. The Ten Commandments forbid false witness. The New Testament forbids (**I Tim 5:19**) one to receive an accusation against an Elder except in the presence of two or three witnesses. The burden of proof in accusation lies with the accuser. Anyone daring to allege that the inspired books have been altered by Froom or others must prove their accusations with photocopies of Ellen White's original handwriting.

If the proof exists, then this can be readily done by anyone who cares to do it. The originals are available for reading and copying. But the originals bear testimony that it was EGW's own pen that wrote "heavenly trio" and "three persons" and "three dignitaries" of heaven.

In short, making the accusation of change is an open violation of the command "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Those who have not perceived the baseness of the proposal might be helped by this realization. The "changed writings" argument is lightly disguised infidelity.

EGW's views can be found compiled in the book *Evangelism* pp. 613-617. Key phrases found there and that undermine the false Godhead doctrine are:

"There are three living persons of the heavenly trio—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."
[1905]

“Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent, Son of God.

“There never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God” [1900]

“Had been with God as one brought up with Him.” [1900]

“Equal with God,” “self-existent” [1897]

“From everlasting He was the mediator of the covenant.” [1906]

“In Christ is life original, unborrowed, underived.” [1898]

“The eternal heavenly dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit.” [1901]

“The Holy Spirit is as much a person as God is a person.” [1899]

“The Holy Spirit is a person [and] has a personality [and} is a Devine person.” [1906]

“The third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.” 1897

“Three highest powers in heaven—The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” [1905]

A statement from the first chapter of *Patriarchs and Prophets* is often used to show that Ellen White envisioned a two-person Godhead. The statement lends itself to the idea, but certainly does not say it. The Spirit is not mentioned. Christ is presented as the co-worker with the “Sovereign of the Universe” and as the “only being” that could understandably enter into God’s work of Creation. Genesis 1 makes it clear that the Spirit of God was active in the planning of the work of Creation. The Spirit, while having personality, appears to have no bodily existence. This makes the Son alone the “being” that could cooperate with God (the Father and the Spirit). The Spirit inspired the pages (PP 33-34) and we should not be surprised if the page devoted to exalting Jesus would not at the same time exalt the Divine Author of the page.

The PP 34 statement makes use of Proverbs 8 as a reference to Christ. The verses there that speak of Christ being “brought forth” are favorites of anti-trinitarians.

Dear John,

About eleven years ago I was with a group of young people at a spiritual retreat. There I was confronted with an old acquaintance of mine. Scott Stanley was a traveling preacher and was staying at the home of a Mr. Brown

or another man that has two daughters with very very long hair. I have forgotten their names. This happened in North Carolina, and I bring it up because the pages that you sent me (I received them yesterday) look so very familiar that I can not but believe that it was written by one of them, or by one that they had talked to. Like Dan, I know that you did not write it.

I do not know if you remember that in class I began to give the same Bible study that you sent out, but then went on to show its falsehood. If you look through your notes on the Arian controversy from History class, you will find helpful material. I am so busy but am taking precious moments to write to you and to let you know that I am praying for you.

In that retreat I was confronted with the same arguments and they were given, not by a paper, but by a charismatic and persuasive individual. I went home and cried (literally) and prayed for God to give me light. For several days I fasted on fruit and studied and studied. What I share below is what I found in that study. It was one of the clearest times in my life that I knew that God was speaking to me.

But first I want to share with you, in a public way, your two biggest mistakes. These are more important than the doctrinal issue, and as you recognize them, that realization will save you much grief and trouble later.

1) You were not careful and cautious enough. You did not have enough fear of teaching error even though we are told that teachers will have greater condemnation (James 2:1). Reread the experience of William Miller in the *Great Controversy*. It was not until he had studied the doctrines that he was teaching earnestly for 13 years that he dared to teach them. His attitude, recognizing the ease with which a man may be deceived, saved him from teaching error, on one hand, and from being repelled away from truth by powerful arguments on the other. Not hours, not a few days, but a great deal of research might have been done by you before sending out your e-mail that would have saved you the trouble.

2) You did not first humbly submit your startling truths to brethren of experience to see if they had found any light in it. I am sure you are aware of this quote so will not take the time to find it. If your e-mail was an attempt to do that, it should have been prefaced that way. It was sent as if you had written it yourself (which was also a mistake, credit should be given where credit is due, and readers have a right to judge the tree by its fruits. If the author's name had been available, it might have saved someone from unnecessary trouble.)

But to the doctrinal issues:

Here are a few questions that deserve answering that are brought up by the forwarded tract.

1. What is the Omega of apostasy? What was the Alpha? How are they related?
2. Did Ellen White change her views on the nature of the Godhead?
3. Why were early writers in the church not rebuked for their views if their views were errant on this topic?
4. What is the meaning of Proverbs 8 in relation to the Deity and preexistence of Christ?
5. What day did the Father say to Jesus, "This day have I begotten thee?"
6. How should we arrive at scriptural truth? (This is important)
 - a. Relation of obscure to plain passages
 - b. Relation of a papal claim that their doctrine is built on the "trinity."
 - c. Relation of inferences to statements
 - d. Relation of views on inspiration and the use of Ellen White.

I must limit myself to these for time constraints. Let me say that what Dan has written I have read and am choosing not to present again the things that he has presented. The other gentlemen that replied to all included an important reference to the mystery of the Holy Spirit that would be worthy of meditation. And one other point. John, you are treading in an area that is spiritually hazardous. The Devil has a simple trick that goes like this (beware of it). 1. Lead a man into an error regarding the personality of the Holy Spirit. 2. If he becomes convinced of the truth later, remind him that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. 3. Drive him to distraction with the thought that his case is hopeless. That is the trick. If you come to point number 2 or 3, remember that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not committed in a week or a month. You have been deceived, but you have not hardened your heart in rebellion. Believe that the Father, for Christ's sake, has seen fit to help you and be thankful for the new chance to teach the truth.

1. What is the Omega of Apostasy? What was the Alpha?

These questions are related. See the book *Omega* and the book *Hindsight* (and call Dave Fiedler) for more information on this topic. Let me greatly summarize by saying that the following logic is faulty. Given: The omega will be startling. Given: The ideas presented are startling. Concluded: They unmask the omega.

If the logic went like this, it would be less faulty, but would be faulty still: Given: The Omega will be startling. Given: The ideas in this paper are startling. Concluded: The ideas in this paper are the Omega. (I do not believe that to be the case, but wrote it to show you that at the least it was better logic. There is a grave difference between a startling truth and a startling apostasy. Don't confuse them.)

2. Did Ellen White change her views on the nature of the Godhead?

Here is a remarkable point that deserves attention. Ellen White did not write false views that she held as Testimony. If she believed in error on this point, she did not write it. When she began to write about the Godhead, her writings were clear on the point of three Persons.

3. Why were early writers in the church not rebuked for their views if their views were errant on this topic?

The argument drawn from silence is weak. Early pioneers were not rebuked for their pork eating either. There is a line of wisdom that we should realize. If God, through his prophet, had presented truth that was obnoxious to the early pioneers in the first days of the message, they likely would have rejected White rather than accept the truth. And if they had accepted the truth at THAT time, it would have been a startling truth and would have drawn the attention away from the three steps that your early quote mentions, the three angel's messages. The truth about the Godhead was brought to the body when the church was ready for it, and in such a way as to not draw the attention away from the truths that were to be our message. For an interesting study on the nature of new truth entering the body, see Ellen White's counsel to Haskel regarding the use of pork in the first volume of the Testimonies. (all references in this document are from my head and are accordingly very fallible).

4. What is the meaning of Proverbs 8 in relation to the Deity and preexistence of Christ?

Dan has shown some interesting things regarding "chuyi." Here are a few more. The first instance of the Hebrew word is in Gen. 8:10, "And he stayed yet other seven days." The word "stayed" is chuyi. One of its meanings includes "to wait" or "to be waiting." Its use in reference to birth is derived from the fact that it has a meaning of "writhing in pain." Such a reference would be a poor one to describe a Birth taking place before the curse that made birthing painful.

5. What day did the Father say to Jesus, "This day have I begotten thee?"

I am sure that you remember this. While the author of your paper indicates that it was ages ago, and while Hebrews one indicates the timing of the decree "Let all the angels worship Him," it is Acts 13:33-34 that tells us when the Father said "This day have I begotten Thee." It was at the resurrection. This is why Jesus is referred to not only as the Only Begotten, but as the First Begotten from the Dead. Isaac was also called the only begotten, and Lazarus among others was begotten from the dead before Christ in point of time. But our Savior's resurrection was the condition of the salvation of all other resurrected saints. Their resurrections would have been void without His. The resurrection of Jesus was different than that of any other Being in that he alone had life in Himself to rise from the dead.

6. How should we arrive at scriptural truth? (This is important)

More important than answering each of the objections in the paper is this section. Study it well.

a. Relation of obscure to plain passages

A common trick of the Devil is to take obscure passages and use them to explain away plain passages. In this context he does it often. So when Jesus said "There is none good but one, and that is God" was he saying "you have called me God" or was he saying "You should not call me God?" It is not very clear from the context. But Jesus received similar worship from Thomas ("My Lord and My God!" Jn. 20:28-29). If Jesus was consistent, then Jesus was (see DA) drawing from the man a fuller statement of his confidence in Jesus as the Messiah. That is the very opposite meaning assigned to the verse in the study. Satan always attacks plain passages with obscure ones. That is how he can get pride and self into the argument, and that works on his side, When a difficult passage is used, a man must take a stand on it before he can use it. And once he takes a stand on it, his pride and selfishness are ready to defend the stand.

b. Relation of a papal claim that their doctrine is built on the "trinity."

There have been a lot of papal writers in the last two thousand years. Some would say that the church doctrine rests on the mystery of the Eucharist. Others would say that it rest on the teaching of Jesus himself. Others on the plethora of wisdom as represented in the Apostle's creed. The claims of

the papal church are no evidence either for or against any point of doctrine. The only exception would be a point of doctrine about what the Roman church teaches. On that point Roman dignitaries might teach with authority.

But it is nonsense that the Roman doctrine is built upon the mystery of the Trinity. The Roman church was constructed in doctrine through the ages while the very nature of God was a continuing argument. The idea that the SDA church is doubtfully the Remnant based on the arguments drawn from Johnson and the Romish document is a serious claim to place on such a sandy foundation.

c. Relation of inferences to statements

“There are three that bear witness in heaven.” 1 Jn. 5:7 (higher criticism has manhandled this passage.)

“With my Father on his throne.” Rev. 3:21

“Whose going forth has been from everlasting.” Mic. 5:2

“Only begotten.” (many places)

Compare these. The first and third are statements regarding Jesus and the Godhead. They say that there are three members, and that Jesus has existed from eternity. The second and forth are statements on other topics that seem to have a bearing on the truth about the Godhead. The Spirit is not mentioned in Rev. 3:21, so we infer that there is no third person. There is the problem. Inference is just another way of adding human reason and tradition to our method of finding truth. What we infer is based on what we think. Acts 13:2 speaks plainly about the Holy Spirit as a person. When we form a doctrine we should make a wide distinction between arguments drawn from statements on the topic under discussion, and arguments drawn from inference.

d. Relation of views on inspiration and the use of Ellen White.

The author of the paper quotes Ellen White. Scott Stanley did also. But he did not have faith in her writings. He picked the things that he believed in, and found evidence that the rest was “influenced” or was outdated light. If a man quotes EGW as an authority, but does not accept her authority, his quoting of her is itself dishonesty. Think about that.

John, put together, yourself, and in your own words, the Biblical arguments against the Three-person Godhead that seem unanswerable, and send them to me, and I will find time to deal with them one by one. I did read the whole paper, and every paragraph creates a burning in me to write so much. But it takes much truth to extinguish a little error, so I have written this to show the underlying principles that may save you from similar bouts with error in the future.

Let me know what you think.

Pray and study, study and pray.

Your servant in Christ,

Eugene

PS Don't "run" with anything before serious study and counsel and prayer and time.

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