

OK 508

Ministerial Association
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

TAKOMA PARK, WASHINGTON 12, D. C.

J. LAMAR McELHANY, CHAIRMAN
LEROY E. FROM, SECRETARY
R. ALLAN ANDERSON, ASSOCIATE
LOUISE C. KLEUSER, ASSOCIATE

August 8, 1945

Elder H. C. Lacey
2854 Piedmont Avenue
La Crescenta, Calif.

Dear Brother Lacey:

I am coming to you with an inquiry that you may or may not feel free to answer. It pertains to the beginnings of the discussion of Trinitarianism versus Arianism. Elder Andreasen has been under the impression that when Mrs. White began to write those statements, most of which now appear in Desire of Ages concerning the eternal existence of Christ and His oneness with the Father through all past time, that there was no agitation or discussion of any sort.

On the contrary, Elder D. E. Robinson of the White Estate, is under the impression, I believe from something told him by you, that over at Cooranbong around 1898 or 1899 you were giving a series of studies on the Trinity and were challenged by some of the brethren. I think Marian Davis was present at the time, and I believe he is under the impression that she was the one who told Sister White of the discussion. And, as in many other instances, Mrs. White was given light that was possibly discomfiting to those who had believed the Arian view of the relatively recent origin of Christ.

Would you feel free to tell me whether that statement of your discussions in Australia is relatively correct? In fact, I wish you would make a rather complete statement for me because of the impression that obtains with some that there was absolutely no agitation prior to this. Would you furthermore give me any evidence aside from your memory of it? Do you have any letters? Is there any correspondence of any sort relative to it, or any other documentation that would help me in this matter?

I assure you that I am not seeking to create any difficulty or to indulge in any agitation. It is simply a matter of information in the background of discussions of Arianism and Trinitarianism which periodically arise.

Awaiting your response with interest, I am

Sincerely your brother in service,

LEF-tw

L. E. From

2854 Piedmont Avenue
La Crescenta, Calif.
Aug. 11, 1945

Elder L. E. Froom
Ministerial Association
Takoma Park, Washington 12, D.C.

Dear Brother Froom:

Your good letter sent by air mail has just reached me through the afternoon post. I am hurrying this preliminary word back to you, acknowledging receipt of your request, and assuring you that I will give the matter my first attention as soon as possible.

You see, today is our Golden Wedding anniversary. Being Sabbath, we are staying quietly at home, as the 'Doings' are on the program at my first-born daughter's home tomorrow afternoon. Naturally we shall be preoccupied just about all day, and I will be unable to take up in any detail an answer to the query you raise regarding 'discussions' on the Trinity held way back in Cooranbong, in 1896, as I recall it, until after this exciting time has past!

But immediately after, I will begin (D.V.). I have some very distinct recollections of what took place at that time, some of which I passed on to Elder D.E. Robinson, when he visited me here recently. However, in transmission to you, they have changed somewhat, (though substantially true), so I will endeavour to give you first hand what really occurred, according to my best remembrance.

Very sincerely yours, in this wonderful Truth,

2854 Piedmont Avenue
La Crescenta, Calif.
Aug 30, 1945

Elder L. E. Fromm
Ministerial Association
Takoma Park, Washington 13, D. C.

Dear Brother Fromm:

The celebrations, with their aftermath, are over, and I can now attempt to answer some of the questions you asked in your letter of the 8th inst.

1st. "The beginnings of the discussion of Trinitarianism versus Arianism."

Well, that was not quite the angle in which I was involved in the studies conducted at Cooranbong way back in 1896. At that time, Professor Prescott was tremendously interested in presenting Christ as the great 'I AM' and in emphasizing the Eternity of His existence, using frequently the expression 'The Eternal Son'. Also he connected the 'I AM' of Exodus 3:14, which of course was Christ the Second Person of the Godhead, with the statement of Jesus in John 8:58, which we all agreed to; but then linked it up also with other 'I am's' in that Gospel - 7 of them, such as 'I am the Bread of Life' 'I am the Light of the World' 'I am the Door of the Sheep' etc. all very rich in their spiritual teaching - but which seemed a little far-fetched to me especially, as the 'I am' in all those latter cases is merely the copula in the Greek, as well as in the English. But he insisted on his interpretation. Sr Maria Davis seemed to fall for it, and lo and behold, when the 'Desire of Ages' came out, there appeared that identical teaching on pages 24 and 25, which, I think, can be looked for in vain in any of Sr. White's published works prior to that time!

Important

In this connection, of course you know that Sr Maria Davis was entrusted with the preparation of 'Desire of Ages' and that she gathered her material from every available source - from Sr White's books already in print, from unpublished manuscripts, from private letters, stenographical reports of her talks, etc. - but perhaps you may not know that she (Sr Davis) was greatly worried about finding material suitable for the first chapter, she appealed to me personally many times as she was arranging that chapter (and other chapters too for that matter) and I did what I could to help her; and I have good reason to believe that she also appealed to Professor Prescott frequently for similar aid, and got it too in far richer and more abundant measure than I could render. Perhaps I MAY SAY THAT SR DAVIS WAS UNWILLINGLY DRAWN TO ME AS A young worker, just out of College, and was anxious to have me join the editorial staff of Sr White's books etc; but I was far too much interested in the Educational work to give that up, even though Elder W.C. White the editorial idea

Important

W.C. White favored the editorial idea quite a bit. But my wife and I were teachers in our school, and wished to continue in it.

However, Professor Prescott's interest in the "Eternity of the Son," and the great "I AM'S" coupled with the constant help he gave Sr Davis in her preparation of the 'Desire of Ages,' may serve to explain the inclusions of the above-named teachings in that wonderful book.

As to any special controversy, or agitation, over the matter of the Trinity, I cannot recall anything serious at all. Of course I have always known that Elder Uriah Smith was an Arian in belief, ("Thoughts of Daniel and the Revelation" reveal that!) and that our people undoubtedly generally followed that view. But we, as a family, had been brought up in the Church of England, and were naturally, may I say, Trinitarians. We just ~~know~~ believed it, subconsciously, and I do not remember our ever discussing the question with the brethren who brought us into the Truth, Elder M.C. Israel, and young brother W.L.H. Baker. One thing I do recall is my mother's remarking on the strange language used by our ministers is speaking of the Holy Ghost as 'it' and 'its' as though they thought of the Holy Spirit as an influence, instead of as a Person. That seemed very strange to her, and in a measure to me also (I was about 17 then)

Now this brings me to the second point in my letter: The angle in which I was involved in that convention at Cooranbong was, not the Eternity of the Son, but the Personality of the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps a few words of historic background may be helpful here:-

As already stated, I was really a Trinitarian at heart. And I went through Healdsburg College, and Battle Creek College, with a dim sort of a feeling that there was something wrong about our teaching on the Ministry and Personality of the Holy Ghost. (Of course, that term was never used, except in reading from the Bible, - it was always 'Holy Spirit' and referred to as 'it') And then in the Testimonies I noticed that, practically everywhere, the same language was used, - 'Holy Spirit' 'it' 'its' etc. as though the 'Spirit of God' were an influence, instead of a Person, the Third Person of the Godhead.

During my college course at Battle Creek, in March 1894, I attended as a delegate from the College, the second international convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, held at Detroit Michigan. There I heard such men as Mr J.R. Lott, Mr Robert Spzer, and such Spirit-filled servants of the Lord as J. Hudson Taylor, A.T. Pierson, A.J. Gordon, with Miss Geraldine Guinness and others. I remember too how Sr. Georgia Burruss (now Mrs L.J. Burgess of National City, California, who was also a delegate at that convention, and who became afterwards our first woman missionary to India, I believe) was impressed by the spiritual teachings and appeals of these men. I recall her saying something like this: Brother Lacey, these men are not Sabbath-keepers, as we understand it, but the Lord is certainly using them mightily: I have never felt the deep moving of the Spirit of God upon my heart, as I have here at this convention. And I couldn't help agreeing with her exactly.

Well now, one thing I noticed vividly; the emphasis placed by all these teachers upon the ministry of the 'Holy Ghost' in our lives as God's servants and missionaries, a ministry as of a real, definite, divine person, always with us, and in us; the Comforter as taught by Jesus Christ in His last paschal discourse, and as revealed in the book of Acts, and presented everywhere throughout the Epistles and the Revelation.

On the voyage back to Australia during September 1895, I made that theme, the Personality and Work of the Holy Ghost, a special subject of Bible Study. And I became convinced for myself! So when I was asked to conduct a series of Bible Studies at the 9:00 o'clock hour in a convention in Cooranbong in 1896, I presented that theme very much to the interest (I well remember!) of Sr Marian Davis, who took copious notes, and also to that of Elder A.G. Daniells, who was frequently present, and expressed conservative appreciation.

When the "Desire of Ages" came out in 1898, Brother Daniells himself called my attention to the expression found on page 871, where the Spirit is spoken of as 'the third person of the Godhead' (I had not at that time seen a printed copy) and made some kindly comments. Later, in 'Testimonies for the Church, Series B, No 7' on page 63 (Nov 1905) I found this paragraph:-

"The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fulness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. THERE ARE THREE LIVING PERSONS IN THE HEAVENLY TRIO; in the name of these three great powers - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized; and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ."

exactly as I had endeavoured to teach 9 years previously.

In this same connection I was interested to note the language used in the article "The Holy Spirit in our Schools" found in ST. 61, 62, and bearing date 'May 10, 1896' Cooranbong N.S.W., where every time the Holy Spirit is referred to, the pronouns 'He,' 'Him,' 'His' are employed. And He is called a 'heavenly messenger' 'The heavenly guest' repeatedly, and apparently 'the great Teacher Himself.'

Well, I fear this reply has dragged on too long! Please forgive me for any undue loquacity. But I was mightily interested in these matters over there in Cooranbong, and am still, for that matter, and shall be pleased to communicate with you further, if you wish it.

Very fraternally yours,

H. C. P. Jones

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J. LAMAR MCELHANY, CHAIRMAN
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LOUISE C. KLEUSER, ASSOCIATE

September 26, 1945

Elder H. Camden Lacey
2854 Piedmont Avenue
La Crescenta, Calif.

Dear Brother Lacey:

Thank you for your very interesting recital under date of August 30 as just received. I am glad for the effort that you have put forth to tell us about your personal interest in the personality of the Holy Spirit and also of the discussion by Professor Prescott in Australia back in the year 1896 concerning the eternal Son. It was not so much the background of the personality of the Holy Spirit that concerned me as whether the eternity of the Son of God was being agitated or was under discussion at the time that Sister White began to present it in Desire of Ages.

There are very definite epochs in Sister White's work. Starting with the initial vision in December 1844, we come to 1848 when the sweeping panorama of events from paradise lost to paradise regained was given her. Ten years later in Ohio this was repeated, and she was told to write it out. This formed Spiritual Gifts, Vol. I. Later amplifications came, and the Spirit of Prophecy series resulted. Then finally came the larger volumes of the Conflict series came. Great Controversy was developed in greater fullness when Sister White was in Europe. It seems that the Spirit of prophecy was never the instrument to initiate doctrine or other truths among us. Rather they have come from study, and then have been confirmed by the Spirit of prophecy when controversy has arisen and there was danger of rejection of light.

If you know of any other sources from which I might get further information as to any discussion of the eternal pre-existence of Christ, I should be grateful for the same.

Sincerely your brother in service,

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L. E. Froom