

Review and Herald

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June 2, 1947.

OFFICE OF THE EDITOR

Elder H. C. Lacey,
2854 Piedmont Ave.,
La Graciosa, Calif.

Dear Brother Lacey:

1. Will you extend your helping hand to me once more? I am in Washington making the last revision of my manuscript for the first volume of An Episodic History of Seventh-day Adventists. Two or three large questions confront me.

2. One of these is the history of the trinitarian and antitrinitarian doctrines among us. I understand that some of our leading men in the beginning were opposed to the doctrine of the trinity, at least as expressed by certain trinitarians. They, or at least most of them, believed in the divine nature of Christ, blended with the human, and seem to me thus to have held a true trinitarian faith. As expressed by Waggoner in his Atonement, they objected to a trinitarian tenet that on the cross the human nature only of Jesus suffered death, that his divine nature did not die. To me, as to Waggoner, this view seems to be due to a confusion of thought--identifying divine life with the person of God. It is of course inconceivable that God could die; but it is conceivable that the life of God, which is the source of all life, could be poured out in the Redeemer to heal the wounds of sin. And but for the Spirit of prophecy, I would hold to that view. Now I have the intellectual task of rearranging my concepts to harmonize with Sister White's pronouncements.

3. She says: "Humanity died; divinity did not die." Youth's Instructor, Aug. 4, 1898, p. 603. "When Christ was crucified, it was his human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible." Letter 280, 1904, p. 4, White Publications. "The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with his body, and did not wing its way to heaven." Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 3, p. 202. That last quotation creates as much of a question as it solves. But I believe, with her, that, "This is a great mystery, a mystery that will not be fully, completely understood in its greatness until the translation of the redeemed shall take place." I do not seek to comprehend, but only to find a formula that I can believe.

4. Waggoner objected to that trinitarian statement that only the human nature of Christ suffered, that it belittled the atonement, and indeed made common cause with the Unitarians. He, James White, John Loughborough, and others held a view apart from both Unitarians and Trinitarians. Uriah Smith in the beginning seems to be an Arian, but he modified this view as the years went on. There were objectors to their views, of course, men who had been brought up on the doctrine of the trinity. Elder Spicer says his father, who was a Seventh-day Baptist preacher when he accepted Adventism, grew so offended

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at the antitrinitarian atmosphere in Battle Creek that he ceased preaching. Doubtless others had their qualms; yet I do not know of any such presenting their views in print. Perhaps freedom of our press was not then so great as in an earlier day.

3 The position of the White Publications men is that the Spirit of prophecy in Mrs. White never pronounced upon doctrine until that doctrine had first been studied out from the Bible and preached by some men. Examples cited are: time of beginning of the Sabbath, health reform, organization, justification by faith; and this doctrine of the trinity seems to be another case.

4 How I should be grateful for any light you have to throw upon the subject. D. E. Robinson says that you are the first one he knows of to teach the straight doctrine of the trinity, in Australia. Perhaps you were Jashobean the Hackmonite, but I am supposing there were also other Twenty-nine of the Mighties. There is to me a twilight zone in this history which I wish to have lighted. Did all the fathers sin? And if so, did they repent? How prove the unity of the faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and we are Athanasians? Andreasen is very positive that, "Waggoner must be repudiated," which I understand means, "condemned." I am slow to censure any of the fathers, but I am ready to make situations as clear as they appear to me. In the beginning of my writing I did not realize that the question of the trinity among us was of so serious a nature, and my reference to it in an early chapter was quite inadequate. I may have to expand it elsewhere, yet I do not want to make it more of a major question than it was.

7 I have not yet studied all the material available to me here, but shall set to work on it now. Let me know, if you please, what your part in this movement was, where you got your view and inspiration, who else was instrumental in presenting it, what the actual views of the pioneers were, what relation to the question Sister White had through the years.

8 I expect to be here in Washington for yet two or three weeks, but the earlier I have all possible information, the better. Your response at as early a date as convenient will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, your brother,

A. W. Spalding
A. W. Spalding.

*(Replied by post card - via mail)
June 4, 1947 - 2:30 pm
waiving for a time further study
of Rev 17. - in Firooz's letter!*