

No more than swine's blood!

By Terry Hill

Over the years I have asked quite a number of Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians - some of whom have been of the ministry - did a divine person die at Calvary? Regardless of whom I ask, the answer is usually the same.

I am told that a divine person did not die at Calvary - only human nature died.

When I first realised that this is what was taught within trinitarianism – even by Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians (including those of the ministry), I was truly shocked – particularly as for such a long period of time I had claimed to be a trinitarian myself (but that's another story). Needless to say, because of these realisations, I immediately stopped referring to myself as a trinitarian. This is because I had no desire to be ranked amongst those who believe such things. My belief is that a divine person really did die at Calvary and that He is the only one who could make the atonement.

There are other reasons why I eventually came to reject the trinity doctrine but I will not go into these here. As we shall see, the entire purpose of this article is to show what Ellen White wrote about who and what died at Calvary – something about which there appears to be a great deal of confusion amongst Seventh-day Adventists.

Ellen White says

When making my objections known to Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians, especially to those of the ministry, the answer is invariably returned to me that Ellen White had said that at Calvary “divinity did not die”. I have also been met with the reply that Ellen White said “Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible” (or some such wording).

Whilst I agree that Ellen White did make this sort of statement, the question that must be asked is – what did she mean by it? Did she really mean that a divine person did not die at Calvary – or was there some other thought she meant to convey?

Later on in this study we shall be looking at these ‘divinity/deity did not die’ statements but before we do this there are a few things I would like to mention. I do believe that if we are to understand correctly what Ellen White meant by her words (about anything), what I am about to say is very important.

An inspired person

I do believe that Ellen White was an inspired person. This is because I believe that she was given by God the gift of prophecy. This is exactly the same gift that the Bible writers were given in order to write as they did. Admittedly the words they used were usually their own (their own selection) but the thoughts that prompted these words were born of God (God breathed).

This being accepted, it must also be reasoned that if each of these writers were divinely inspired, then they all should be found to be in harmony with each other – meaning that they should not be understood to contradict each other.

It must also be said that it would be wrong to 'force' anyone who is believed to be inspired to contradict themselves or - to put it another way - two statements made by someone who is believed to be inspired should never be regarded as being opposite in meaning. They should be considered the truth with whatever conclusions they mutually impose on one another. In other words, the entire truth is only understood when they are compared and accepted collectively (not taken as single statements on their own).

In brief therefore, any two statements regarded as inspired should be seen as harmonising with each other and not be contradictory. This is because they would have only one divinely inspired authority. Putting it more simply - God would not inspire someone to write two statements which were contradictory to each other.

There is one more thing to remember. This is that just like the Bible writers, Ellen White did not set out a systematic study of any subject. This means therefore that just like we do with the Scriptures, *everything* she wrote on any topic must be taken into consideration.

In other words, we must not just take one statement and build a thesis upon the basis of it. Statements she wrote (concerning any subject) must be compared with each other. Only in this way will a balanced conclusion will be drawn of what she meant by her words.

The reason for this article

The reason why I have written this article is that I sincerely believe that concerning the issue of who or what died at Calvary (which is an integral part of the trinity debate today within Seventh-day Adventism), Ellen White's writings are being misused (perhaps abused would be a more appropriate word).

I believe that if Ellen White were here today, she would wholeheartedly endorse the belief that a divine person truly did die at Calvary and that only a divine life could pay the price of our redemption. She would also maintain that it was only the Father who could have released the divine person of Christ from His death.

These statements therefore – the ones that say 'divinity did not die' and 'deity did not sink' etc - I firmly believe are being misused to enforce a position - taken by the present day Seventh-day Adventist trinitarians - that Ellen White would never have endorsed. We shall see this now.

Only a divine person

In the 3rd Volume of the Spirit of Prophecy Ellen White penned these words

“Not one of the angels could have become surety for the human race: their life is God's; they could not surrender it.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 21st June 1900, 'The price of our redemption part IV')

She then went on to say

“The angels all wear the yoke of obedience. They are the appointed messengers of Him who is the commander of all heaven. But Christ is equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man's freedom.” (*Ibid*)

These words are not easily misunderstood. A 'third-grader' should quite easily understand

them.

Ellen White is saying here that only a divine person (One equal with God) could “pay the ransom for man's freedom”. She said that He was the only one who could surrender His life. How else can these words be understood? What other meaning could they possibly have?

She then added regarding the pre-existent Christ

“He is the **eternal, self-existing Son, on whom no yoke had come**; and when God asked, “Whom shall I send?” he could reply, “Here am I; send me.” **He could pledge himself to become man's surety**; for he could say that **which the highest angel could not say**, -- I have power over my own life, “power to lay it down, and . . . power to take it again.” (*Ibid*)

Here it is made clear that it was only the divine Son of God (the One “on whom no yoke had come”), who could become man’s surety. He was the only one who could say “I have power over my own life, “power to lay it down, and . . . power to take it again””.

Once again it is emphasised that no one less than a divine person could pay the price of man’s redemption. Not even an angel could pay it let alone a human being – said Ellen White.

In 1908 (this was now 10 years after the publication of ‘The Desire of Ages’) the following was published in the Signs of the Times

“**The Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander**, was touched with pity for the fallen race. **His heart was moved with infinite compassion** as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the times, 4th November 1908, ‘When sin entered’, see also, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 63, ‘The Plan of Redemption’*)

Notice here of whom it is being spoken. It is the divine Son of God, “heaven's glorious Commander”.

She later wrote

“In all the universe there was **but One who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims**. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, **only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression.**” (*Ibid*)

According to what we have been told here, how many could be found in the universe to make the atonement? The emphasis is that “only one equal with God” could make it.

Ellen White again explains

“**None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law**, and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin--sin so offensive to a holy God that **it must separate the Father and the Son.**” (*Ibid*)

Again I would ask you to note the emphasis – this is that in freeing mankind from the

bondage of sin and death (two inseparable bedfellows) – “it must separate the Father and the Son”. We shall see later that trinitarians say that regardless of circumstances, this is impossible to happen.

Again we can see that Ellen White says that no one but the pre-existent divine Son of God could pay the penalty for sin. In dying in the agonies of Calvary, it was He that took the punishment of sin.

She also wrote

“Before the Father **He pleaded** in the sinner's behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words can not express. Long continued was that mysterious communing--"the counsel of peace" -- for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is a lamb "foreordained before the foundation of the world"; yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, **to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race**. But "God so loved the world, that **He gave His only-begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O, the mystery of redemption! the love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which "passeth knowledge"?" (*Ibid*)

It may seem very strange to us that God should “struggle” over anything but this clearly shows us that it was God’s dear Son who had to make the sacrifice – and it caused the Father great pain in allowing Him to do it.

In her book ‘Early Writings’, Ellen White explains that the angels offered their lives but this was not enough to pay the redemption price. She wrote

“The angels prostrated themselves before Him. **They offered their lives**. Jesus said to them that He would by His death save many, that **the life of an angel could not pay the debt.**” (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, Spiritual Gifts, Page 150, 1882*)

She then added concerning the divine Son of God

“**His life alone** could be accepted of His Father as a ransom for man” (*Ibid*)

Again these are words easy to understand. Only the life of a divine person – the divine Son of God – would be accepted by the Father as the redemption price. No one else could be found to do it.

She later wrote

“With a holy sadness Jesus comforted and cheered the angels and informed them that hereafter those whom He should redeem would be with Him, and that **by His death** He should ransom many and destroy him who had the power of death. **And His Father would give Him the kingdom** and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, and He would possess it forever and ever.” (*Ibid*)

She added

“Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. And the heavenly host sang a song of praise and adoration. They touched their harps and sang a note higher than they had

done before, for the great mercy and condescension of God in **yielding up His dearly Beloved to die for a race of rebels.**" (*Ibid*)

There can be no mistaking Ellen White's words. It was the divine Son of God who had to die.

In 1899 (the year after 'The Desire of Ages was published) Ellen White wrote

"Nothing less than the life of Christ would atone for man's transgression." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 15th November 1899, 'The Law Revealed in Christ'*)

She later added

"The Son of God accepted the work joyfully, becoming man's substitute and surety, that He might save him from his sin, and call him from transgression to obedience. **He pledged Himself to take man's nature**, and stand at the head of the human race, to satisfy every claim made against them as a people bound in the slavery of sin." (*Ibid*)

Notice here again who it was that accepted the responsibility of redeeming mankind from sin. It was the One who **"pledged Himself to take man's nature"**. It was a divine person - the divine Son of God. Nothing less than His divine life – we are told here through the spirit of prophecy – would atone for man's sin.

We are then told

"The truth could come to man only through Christ, for He was the image of the invisible God. He represented **the power and glory of the Father**, and the divine signature was upon all His words and works." (*Ibid*)

Here again is the reason why the pre-existent divine Son of God was the only acceptable person in the universe who could offer His life for sin. It was because **"He"**, the divine Son of God, **"was the image of the invisible God"**. He is God in the person of the Son.

From the above, we can see that Ellen White made it abundantly clear that to redeem mankind from sin, it was necessary for **a divine person** to die. This divine person was **the pre-existent Son of God**. He was the only one who could do it.

Admittedly not everyone may believe what was said here by Ellen White - or believe that it came from an 'inspired person' – but I do not see how her words can be misunderstood.

How can a divine person die?

How it is possible for a divine person die is an age old question. It is one that from logic is not easily answered yet if Ellen White is to be believed, it had to happen – that is if the human race was to be redeemed.

In his book 'Christ and His Righteousness', which is said to depict his message at the now famous 1888 General Conference session at Minneapolis, Ellet Waggoner penned these words

"If anyone springs the old cavil, how Christ could be immortal and yet die, we

have only to say that **we do not know**. We make no pretensions of fathoming infinity." (*E. J. Waggoner, Christ and His righteousness, page 23 1890*)

Obviously Waggoner believed that a divine person did die at Calvary. He penned these words when our denomination (the Seventh-day Adventist Church) was still non-trinitarian.

After listing a number of other divine mysteries (these are such as the incarnation and the resurrection etc) Waggoner concluded

"It should be sufficient for us to accept as **true those things which God has revealed** without stumbling over things that the mind of an angel cannot fathom. So we delight in the infinite power and glory which the Scriptures declare belong to Christ, **without worrying our finite minds in a vain attempt to explain the infinite.**" (*Ibid*)

Here Waggoner is saying that we should accept what the Scriptures say in their simplicity. This is even though we cannot understand just **how** the death of a divine person was achieved.

We can say the same of the incarnation. As Christians we accept that it did happen but how it was achieved we do not know. This is because it has never been explained to us - and perhaps even if God did explain it, we would still not understand.

How a divine person can die

Ellen White answered the question that Waggoner could not fathom (how a divine person could die).

She explained

"Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and **clothed His divinity with humanity**, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, **that dying in humanity** He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 97, 1898, p. 5. To "My Brethren in North Fitzroy," November 18, 1898*)

Please take note of these words very carefully. As far as our study is concerned they are extremely important.

Here we have been told how a divine person can die. Ellen White said it was by becoming incarnate (see John 1:1 and verse 14) and then surrendering His **divine personage** to **His human nature**. Notice that Ellen White did not say that the Son of God surrendered His divine nature to His humanity but surrendered Himself (His divine personage) to it. This is very important.

In other words, by the acquiescing **of Himself** (His divine personage) to His human nature, the divine person of Christ was able to do that which He could not do in His pre-existence as God. The latter was when He had His existence only in divine nature. In brief, Ellen White is saying that by taking upon Himself our human nature (becoming incarnate), the divine Son of God could die.

As she went on to explain

“He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man, Christ could die.”
(*ibid*)

These words are not difficult to understand

Ellen White is saying here that in becoming incarnate, the divine Son of God could do something which He could not do prior to becoming incarnate – or to put in another way – when existing in His divine nature alone (as God), the Son of God could not die but by the adopting of human nature He could die. This was the end purpose of the incarnation. It was to provide atonement with God, by a divine person (God), for the whole of mankind (see Hebrews 2:16-18).

Only one person

From the writings of Ellen White, many statements could be produced saying that we cannot understand how the incarnation was achieved but I do not believe we need to be reminded of this fact here. I am sure that all of us reading this article realise this already.

What I would like to share with you is where Ellen White wrote concerning the incarnation

“Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were *mysteriously blended in one person* -- the Man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead *bodily*.” (*Ellen G. White, September 3rd 1904, Letter 280a to ‘Ministers, Physicians, and Teachers’*)

I would ask you to note here that although there were two natures in Christ (one divine and one human), these were blended together to form only “one person”, In other words, ***each nature was not a person.***

As she also explained to the youth of her day

“The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the *helpless babe* in Bethlehem's manger *is still the divine Son of God?*” (*Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor 21st November 1895*)

Here is the crux of the matter. Although the divine Son of God took upon Himself our human nature, this ‘holy thing’ (see Luke 1:35) – the person of Jesus - was still the divine Son of God. In other words, this “one person” of two natures is the divine Son of God incarnate. He is not someone other than the divine Son of God.

Reason with me for a moment. As far as the person of Jesus is concerned, who and what were involved at Calvary? There was (a) the incarnate divine personage of the Son of God. There was (b) divine nature and (c) human nature. As has been said, each nature was not a person.

Now what did Ellen White say died at Calvary? If you remember she said

“Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, *that dying in humanity* He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death.” (*Ellen G. White, Letter 97, 1898, p. 5. To “My Brethren in North Fitzroy,” November 18, 1898*)

She added

“He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man, Christ could die.”
(Ibid)

Now we know who and what died at Calvary – according to what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. It was (a) the incarnate divine person of the Son of God (God in the person of the Son) and (c) human nature. This means that (b) divine nature did not die. We shall return to this point later.

The trinitarian view

We will now take a look at the trinitarian view of God. This will give us an insight as to how trinitarians view the incarnation – also how they view the death of Jesus at Calvary. As you will see, this is very important – but it may be not as how you view it. It depends upon whether you are a trinitarian or not.

In my pursuit of what trinitarians really do believe, I asked an orthodox priest if he could help me. He sent me this quote which he said I could freely share with others.

He explained

“We [orthodox trinitarians] maintain rather the **invariability of the Godhead** (its simplicity and unity) in the sense that **no action can lead to ontological change**; namely in this case that the Word, one ousia with the Father and the Spirit, **never leaves the Father's side even when He joins with our human nature in the Incarnation.**” (Email, Father Gregory Hallam, Orthodox Priest, to Terry Hill, 16th May 2007)

If you have never previously encountered trinitarian theology, this may seem very strange but this is what is believed by trinitarians. It is that even whilst Christ was here on earth, He was also with His Father in the one substance of God (He “never leaves the Father's side”).

This very same theology can be seen in a hymn (a Christmas hymn) that was written by a 7th century trinitarian monk named St. Germanus. It is called ‘A Great and Mighty Wonder’.

The second verse says (this is obviously with respect to the incarnation of Christ and the belief that God is a trinity of persons)

“The Word becomes incarnate **and yet remains on high**,
And cherubim sing anthems to shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again: “To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!”
(St. Germanus, ‘A Great and Mighty Wonder’)

Here again we can see it said, as was said by the orthodox priest, that even in the incarnation, the divine Christ remains united with (un-separated from) the Father – meaning that He remains in the one substance of the trinity God. It can be said therefore, according to this reasoning, that when on earth He was still in Heaven (“on high”) with His Father.

This is only the same as was said by Pope Damasus. He said in a letter (this after pronouncing anathemas on people who did not believe certain things taught by what we now know as the Roman Catholic Church)

“We anathematize also them that say that the Word of God is **separated from the Father by extension and contraction**, and blasphemously affirm that He is without essential being or is destined to die.” (*Pope Damasus to Bishop Paulinus, Theodoret’s Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, chapter XI*)

He also said

“If any one says that the Son of God, living in the flesh when he was on the earth, **was not in heaven and with the Father**, let him be anathema” (*Ibid*)

All of the above is typical trinitarian reasoning. It is that the ‘one God’ consists of three persons and that regardless of the circumstances, none of the three can ever be separated from each other — even in the incarnation. To put it in another way, even in the incarnation, the Son of God was with His Father (and the Holy Spirit) in the substance of the trinity. This is because trinitarians believe that all three divine persons are of one indivisible substance (essence) and therefore constitute the ‘one God’.

This is exactly the same as the present official Seventh-day Adventist position on the trinity. This can be seen in their official explanation of their fundamental beliefs. We shall see this now

Seventh-day Adventist trinitarianism

Belief No. 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs says

“**There is one God**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **a unity of three co-eternal Persons** (*Seventh-day Adventists believe ... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines, page 16.*).

Take note of ‘who’ is said to be the “one God”. It is this “unity of three co-eternal Persons”.

This fundamental belief then continues to describe this unity “one God” (the trinity God) by explaining

“**God is immortal**, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation” (*Ibid*)

We can see from this that the ‘one God’ (the three-in-one trinity God) is immortal therefore none of the three personalities can ever cease to exist – neither can they ever be separated from each other. If they could be separated from each other, then obviously they would not constitute the ‘one God’. Needless to say, there is no mention in Scripture of this ‘three-in-one’ unity God.

In an explanation of this fundamental belief, Ekkehardt Mueller, as Associate Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute wrote (this was in the institute’s newsletter ‘Reflections’)

“Each person of the Godhead is by nature and essence God, and the fullness of the deity dwells in each of them. On the other hand, each person of the Godhead **is inseparably connected to the other two.**” (*Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute, Reflections newsletter, July 2008, Page 9, ‘Scripture Applied, - A Bible Study’*)

He concluded

“These three personalities participate **in one substance.** In the divine unity there are three coeternal and coequal persons, who, though distinct, **are the one undivided God.**” (*Ibid*)

As can be seen, official Seventh-day Adventist theology has now come into line with orthodoxy – at least on this explanation of God being a trinity.

Mueller says that the three in “one substance” are “the one undivided God” and that each divine person is “inseparably connected to the other two”.

In other words, as was stated by an orthodox priest (see above) “no action can lead to ontological change; namely in this case that the Word, one ousia with the Father and the Spirit, **never leaves the Father’s side even when He joins with our human nature in the Incarnation**”.

This is why trinitarians believe that at Calvary, only the human nature of Christ died and not the divine person. They say that the divine person is always alive in the substance of the trinity. This obviously affects the atonement – because all that this gives humanity, as atonement for sin, is a human sacrifice – something which Ellen White says **could never pay the price of our redemption.** In fact when it is reasoned through, in trinitarianism it is not even a human person who makes the atonement – only human nature. According to trinitarians, the one person does not die (remember there were not two persons in Christ only one – the man Christ Jesus)

In my understanding of trinitarianism, it appears that the incarnation is seen (by trinitarians) like a puppeteer who has his hand inside of a puppet. In other words, no matter what happens to the puppet (the human nature of Christ) it never affects the puppeteer (the divine Christ). This I believe is a wrong view of the incarnation. This is like God being ‘in’ things – which is a view akin to pantheism.

Exiled from the Father

In contrast to trinitarianism we have been told through the spirit of prophecy

“Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God. Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became **an exile from the heavenly courts,** but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss.” (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 131, ‘The victory’*)

This shows us that even in ‘The Desire of Ages’, Ellen White spoke out against trinitarian reasoning. She said that in becoming incarnate, Christ became “**an exile from the heavenly courts**”. As we can see from what we have read above, a trinitarian would never believe

such a thing.

This is no different than when she wrote

“A way is opened before everyone in the office to engage from the heart directly in the work of Christ and the salvation of souls. **Christ left heaven and the bosom of His Father** to come to a friendless, lost world to save those who would be saved.” (Ellen G. White, 3rd Vol. Testimonies page 190, ‘Laborers in the Office’).

She then said

“**He exiled Himself from His Father** and exchanged the pure companionship of angels for that of fallen humanity, all polluted with sin.” (Ibid)

This is as far from trinitarianism as light is from darkness. Ellen White was definitely not a trinitarian – not by any stretch of the imagination.

Did Ellen White really believe that a divine person died at Calvary?

In the Signs of the Times in 1879, Ellen White wrote

“**Jesus had united with the Father in making the world.** Amid the agonizing sufferings **of the Son of God**, blind and deluded men alone remain unfeeling. The chief priests and elders revile God's dear Son while in his expiring agonies. Yet inanimate nature groans in sympathy with **her bleeding, dying Author.**” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 21st August 1879 ‘The Sufferings of Christ’)

Here we are told very plainly who died at Calvary. It was the One through whom the Father had created the world. It was the divine Son of God, the “Author” of creation (see John 1:1-3, Ephesians 3:9, Hebrews 1:1-2 etc).

She then said

“The earth trembles. The sun refuses to behold the scene. The heavens gather blackness. Angels have witnessed the scene of suffering, until they can look on no longer, and hide their faces from the horrid sight. **Christ is in despair! He is dying!** His Father's approving smile is **removed**, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. **They could only behold in amazement their loved Commander suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law.**” (Ibid)

Here we must ask a question.

Who is this “loved Commander”? Needless to say it was the divine Son of God.

Here therefore is a very important question - if the divine person was not really suffering or dying at Calvary (as in trinitarianism), how could the Father's approving smile be removed from Him or how could the angels desire to help their creator? As trinitarians say, the divine person (the Son of God) was still alongside His Father in the ‘triune substance’ of God? If the latter was true, Ellen White's words would make no sense at all. For her words

to make sense, it would have to be believed, as was said by Ellen White, that Christ had “exiled Himself from His Father” – something not believed by trinitarians.

Ellen White was definitely not speaking here as a trinitarian. She believed that the Son of God (a divine person) was separated from the Father and that He really did die at Calvary – not just that human nature died.

Eighteen years later in the Review and Herald she wrote

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.” Human passions were raging at the foot of the cross when the earth was bereft of the light of the sun. The Sun of Righteousness was withdrawing his light from the world, and **nature sympathized with her dying Author.**” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 28th December 1897 ‘He was Wounded for our Transgressions’)

Again Ellen White said it was the “Author” of nature who died. If only the human body of Jesus died - and not the person of the divine Son of God – then her words make no sense at all.

A few paragraphs later Ellen White wrote

“Again came the cry, as of one in mortal agony, “It is finished.” “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” **Christ, the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory, was dead.** The Jewish leaders had crucified **the Son of God**, the long-expected Messiah, him (so the people had hoped) who was to bring about so many reforms. They refused the only One who could save them from national ruin.” (Ibid)

Here we are told that it was the divine Son of God, “the Majesty of Heaven” who died. This could not be made any clearer than it is said here.

In the second volume of the Testimonies to the church, Ellen White wrote

“**Nature sympathized with the suffering of its Author.** The heaving earth, the rent rocks, proclaimed that it was **the Son of God who died.**” (Ellen White, 2nd Vol. Testimonies page 211, ‘The sufferings of Christ’)

Wherever we go through the writings of Ellen White, It will always be seen that a divine person did really die at Calvary.

Divinity did not die

Having established that Ellen White repeatedly said that a divine person did die at Calvary, we shall now take a look at the statements that the trinitarians produce to ‘so say’ prove that this messenger of God maintained that a divine person did not die (only that human nature died) – which is the trinitarian view.

The first statement is the most popular one used. This is where Ellen White said

“**He who had said**, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again,” came forth from the grave **to life that was in himself. Humanity died: divinity did not die.**” (Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor 4th August 1898, see also Youth’s Instructor 3rd January

1905)

Take a very close look at what is being said here.

The entire emphasis here (the context of the statement) is on **the life** that was **in** Christ. This is the life that Ellen White referred to in 'The Desire of Ages' as "original, unborrowed, underived" (see page 530). We can see therefore that when Ellen White said here that "divinity did not die", she was referring to this life (the divine life or divine nature that was in Christ). She was not referring to His divine personage. Read it again and you will see what I mean.

There is also another thought here. This is that if the person of the divine Son of God had not laid down His life, then He could not take it up again.

Ellen White then added (which is in complete harmony with the conclusions drawn immediately above)

"In his divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that he has life in himself to quicken whom he will." (Ibid)

We can see therefore that when understood correctly, this "divinity did not die" statement is referring to the divine life (divine nature) that was in Christ. It is not referring to Himself (the divine person of Christ) as a person.

The other statement used by trinitarians to 'so say' prove that Ellen White said that a divine person did not die at Calvary is the one we have already looked at above. This is the one that says

"Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person--the Man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Ellen G. White, September 3rd 1904, Letter 280a to 'Ministers, Physicians, and Teachers')

She followed this by saying

"When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible." (Ibid)

Again we must ask, did Ellen White mean here a divine person did not die or did she mean that divine nature did not die – the same as she meant in that previous statement? I believe the answer is obvious – but then again – I am not a trinitarian. I believe that Ellen White was here referring to the divine nature of Christ – the same as in the previous statement.

Notice again that the two natures (not two persons) were "mysteriously blended in one person". It was this "one person" who died at Calvary. This was the incarnate Son of God. In other words, as was said by Ellen White (see above), "that dying in humanity He [the divine person of Christ/God] might by His death destroy him who had the power of death." There can be no mistaking Ellen White's words because she did add

"He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man, Christ could die." (Ellen G. White, Letter 97, 1898, p. 5. To "My Brethren in North Fitzroy," November

18, 1898)

In other words, by becoming incarnate, God, in the person of His Son, died at Calvary.

As has also been said above, we must not 'force' a divinely inspired person to contradict themselves so it must be accepted here that when she said "Deity did not sink and die", Ellen White could not have been referring to a divine person. Over and over again she said that only the death of a divine person (God) could provide the atonement – also that a divine person died at Calvary. It would be very wrong to attempt to make her contradict herself.

It can also be seen quite easily that the context of this statement is "nature". It is a contrast between "Deity" (divine nature) and "human nature". This statement therefore is completely in harmony with all the other statements we have read from the spirit of prophecy. It is not saying a divine person did not die at Calvary but that divine nature (divine life) did not die.

As she said though regarding the death of Christ at Calvary (this was after saying that this great mystery will not be understood in its greatness until after the resurrection)

"But the enemy is determined that this gift shall be **so mystified that it will become a nothingness**. If believers only knew what this means, the work would be done in our churches that must be done if the members ever enter the kingdom of heaven. **But when men in responsible positions pervert their reason and give themselves up to Satan's way of thinking, they will surely stand before the world on Satan's side**, however great their influence may have been and still is, doing the work that Satan did, led and inspired by his spirit." (Ellen G. White, September 3rd 1904, Letter 280a to 'Ministers, Physicians, and Teachers')

This is how it seems to be becoming today within Seventh-day Adventism. Ellen White's statements are being misused to say something that she obviously did not mean to say – and it is causing confusion. We should be very guarded over these things. We should not listen to those who say that Ellen White said that at Calvary a divine person did not die. This is the reasoning of the enemy. It not only makes the atonement "nothingness" but also mystifies the whole issue of what really happened at Calvary.

Here is another statement used by the trinitarians to try and prove that Ellen White said a divine person did not die at Calvary. This is when she said

"When the voice of the angel was heard saying, "Thy Father calls thee," He who had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again," "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," came forth from the grave **to life that was in Himself. Deity did not die. Humanity died**, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 131, 1897)

She then added

"**In His divinity** Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that He had life in Himself to quicken whom He will." (Ibid)

Again this "Deity" can easily be seen to be "**the life that was in Himself**". This again (divine nature) is contrasted with human nature (humanity).

As we noted above (see *Ellen G. White, Letter 97, 1898*), Ellen White said that the divine person of Christ died in His humanity. In other words, deity as a person (God) did suffer and die at Calvary – but not divine nature.

This ‘divine life’ is the divine nature of Christ (not His personage). That Christ did retain this in the incarnation is well explained in the following words

“Wondrous combination of man and God! (Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 5th July 1887 ‘Christ man’s example’)

Ellen White then said of Christ

“He might have helped his human nature to withstand the inroads of disease by pouring from his divine nature vitality and undecaying vigour to the human. But he humbled himself to man's nature.” (Ibid)

This “He” is the divine Son of God. It was He (a divine person) who “humbled himself to man's nature”. Here we are told that Christ had the opportunity to transfer immortality from His divine nature to help His human nature but He chose not to do so. Instead He acquiesced Himself to His human nature.

As Ellen White continued in saying

“He did this that the Scripture might be fulfilled; and the plan was entered into by the Son of God, knowing all the steps in his humiliation, that he must descend to make an expiation for the sins of a condemned, groaning world. What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination cannot take it in. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh! God became man! It was a wonderful humility!” (Ibid)

Notice again that these words are referring to a divine person.

Only the Father

For Christ to exercise divinity He needed to be awoken from His sleep of death. This ‘awakening’ could only be done by His Father. Christ was unconscious in death – just as is everyone else who dies.

As Ellen White made clear

“He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house as a prisoner of divine justice, and he was responsible to the Judge of the universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, and his Father only could release him.” (Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor. 2nd May 1901, ‘The Lord is risen’)

Some may argue that the divine person was still alive in the tomb but notice these words of Ellen White (very importantly remember that the incarnate Christ was only one person)

“Jesus said to Mary, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” When he closed his eyes in death upon the cross, the soul of Christ did not go at once to Heaven, as many believe, or how could his words be true--“I am not yet ascended to

my Father"? ***The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with his body***, and did not wing its way to Heaven, there to maintain a separate existence, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight." (Ellen G. White, Vol. 3 *Spirit of Prophecy* page 203, 'The women at the tomb' 1878)

Then, obviously so that no confusion would ensue, she added

"All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with his body in the sepulcher; and when he came forth it was as a whole being; he did not have to summon his spirit from Heaven. He had power to lay down his life and to take it up again." (Ibid)

Men need to understand

In 1899, one year after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', Ellen White penned these words

"Teach the great, practical truths that must be stamped upon the soul. Teach the saving power of Jesus, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 4th April 1899, 'After the camp meeting')

So what comprised these "great, practical truths"? She later explained

"Men need to understand that the Deity suffered under the agonies of Calvary. The Majesty of heaven was made to suffer at the hands of wicked men, -- religious zealots, who claimed to be the most enlightened people on the face of the earth. Men claiming to be the children of Abraham worked out the wrath of Satan upon the innocent Son of the infinite God." (Ibid)

Here is one of the "practical truths" that Ellen White said "must be stamped upon the soul". It was that ***"Deity suffered*** under the agonies of Calvary".

Here also we must ask a question. Are the two statements ("the Deity suffered under the agonies of Calvary" and "Deity did not sink and die") contradictory to each other? Of course not! The contexts supply the meaning of the words. The first is referring to deity as a person whilst the second is referring to deity as a nature. The two statements are not contradictory at all - at least not when read as they should be read. They are in fact in harmony with each other.

Again Ellen White refutes trinitarianism. She makes it clear that it was ***the divine person*** who suffered at Calvary – and not just human nature.

Nothing new

Within Seventh-day Adventism, this erroneous idea that a divine person did not die at Calvary is nothing new. It was spoken against at great length by J. H. Waggoner (the father of E. J. Waggoner).

He wrote in his much-read work 'The Atonement'

"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**.” (J. H. Waggoner, *Review and Herald*, November 10th 1863, ‘*The Atonement –part II, The doctrine of a trinity degrades the atonement*’)

How true this is today. Most trinitarians still regard the divinity (pre-existence) of Christ as proving God to be a trinity.

Joseph Waggoner then said

“The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ **and his divinity; but they are entirely silent in regard to a trinity**.” (*Ibid*)

This is also very true.

Waggoner also added with respect to the teaching of trinitarians

“The declaration, that **the divine Son of God could not die**, is as far from the teachings of the Bible as darkness is from light. And I would ask the Trinitarian, **to which of the two natures are we indebted for redemption ?**” (*Ibid*)

Here we can see again the confusion between nature and personality but the point is clear as to what Waggoner actually meant. He is simply asking - are we indebted to human nature for redemption or do we have a sacrifice that is divine?

In reply to this question he said

“The answer must, of course, be, **to that one which died or shed his blood for us**; for “we have redemption through his blood.” Then it is evident, that **if only the human nature died, our redeemer is only human, and that the divine Son of God took no part in the work of redemption**, for he could neither suffer nor die.” (*Ibid*)

Waggoner concluded

“Surely I said right, **that the doctrine of a trinity degrades the atonement**, by bringing the sacrifice, the blood of our purchase, down to the standard of Socinianism.” (*Ibid*)

He also wrote in 1867

“I believe the Trinitarian views are unscriptural, and greatly disparage the atonement by denying that the Son of God died; and if the Unitarians were endeavoring to shield the plan of salvation from such violence we could joyfully bid them Godspeed. But they run to the opposite extreme, and are full **as far from a scriptural view of the atonement as the Trinitarians**, and I think farther.” (J. H. Waggoner, *Review and Herald*, November 19th 1867, ‘*What think ye of Christ?*’)

This latter view was also taken by Judson Washburn – a prolific evangelist who knew James and Ellen White very well (in fact he was baptised by James White). When he sensed that the trinity doctrine was trying to be introduced into Seventh-day Adventism

(this was in 1940), he wrote an open letter to the General Conference saying (he was here referring to the trinity doctrine)

“This monstrous doctrine transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church **is seeking to intrude** its evil presence into the teachings of the Third Angel’s Message.” (Judson Washburn, ‘The Trinity’, letter to the Seventh-day Adventists General Conference, 1940)

He then said with reference to the trinity doctrine teaching that the divine Son of God did not die at Calvary

“Any doctrine that leads a man to deny that the Son of God died must be an evil doctrine, an anti-Christian doctrine, not from God but from Satan.” (Ibid)

He added

“Seventh-day Adventists claim to take the word of God as supreme authority and to have “come out of Babylon,” to have renounced forever the vain traditions of Rome. If we should go back to the immortality of the soul, purgatory, eternal torment and the Sunday Sabbath, **would that be anything less than apostasy?**” (Ibid)

His conclusion was

“If, however, we leap over all these minor, secondary doctrines and accept and teach the very central root, doctrine of Romanism, the Trinity, **and teach that the son of God did not die**, even though our words seem to be spiritual, is this anything else or anything less than apostasy? **and the very Omega of apostasy?**” (Ibid)

No more than swine’s blood

Some may be wondering why the above wording (‘No more than swine’s blood’) is also the title of this article. The answer is very simple. It is because realising that trinitarianism maintains that a divine person did not die at Calvary (only human nature died), John Loughborough (the last of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to die) wrote

“It will not do to **substitute the human nature of Christ** (according to Trinitarians) as the Mediator; for Clarke says, **“Human blood can no more appease God than swine’s blood.”** Com. on 2 Sam. xxi, 10.” (John Loughborough, Review and Herald, November 5th 1861, ‘Questions for Bro. Loughborough’)

There is no need for lengthy explanations of what was meant here by Loughborough. This statement speaks for itself.

As Ellen White said so clearly (see above)

“Not one of the angels could have become surety for the human race: their life is God’s; they could not surrender it. The angels all wear the yoke of obedience. They are the appointed messengers of Him who is the commander of all heaven. **But Christ is equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man’s freedom.**” (Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor, 21st June 1900, ‘The price of our redemption part IV’)

In closing I would ask you this:-

To whom does this world owe its redemption? To whom does the forgiven sinner owe his or her salvation? If a divine person did not die at Calvary then it is not to a divine person that we owe our salvation or allegiance. Whoever or whatever died at Calvary paid the penalty for sin. Whoever or whatever died at Calvary made the atonement. We need to think on these things.

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