

5th February 2014

Dear Max

In your email to me dated 20th January 2014 you made the following remark

“If Jesus died as God back in AD 31 and was dead for three days, then the whole of Creation would have disintegrated.”

You then commented (I assume this is in keeping with your belief that Christ, even if He had sinned, would not have lost His eternal existence)

“Why should the intelligent creatures on other planets be destroyed because Jesus failed in relation to a problem on our planet?”

The above remarks are undoubtedly based upon your trinitarian understanding of God. From what you say, I can only conclude (because creation did not disintegrate in AD 31) that you believe Jesus did not die as God – whatever that may mean to a trinitarian.

I may be wrong but it seems to me that what you are actually saying is that when the person of Jesus died, the divine person of the Word (the divine Son of God) was still alive. I cannot see how else your statement can be understood.

If I have wrongly assessed your belief, you will need to provide me with a far more detailed explanation of it than you have done here. Perhaps then I will be able to understand what you and your fellow trinitarians really do believe. This is particularly so regarding who made the atonement. At the moment I am not sure who - or what - you are saying made it.

Obviously you are saying someone died and someone did not die, either that or something died and someone did not die but I am not sure which way it is. Whichever way it is, I cannot make sense of it.

I may be simplistic in my thinking but the way I see it is this: a divine person either died at Calvary or He did not die. It has to be one way or the other. It certainly cannot be both. My belief is that a divine person did die – meaning that God in human flesh made the atonement.

The Scriptures tell us that to redeem this world from sin, the pre-existent Word (the divine Son of God) came down from Heaven, became incarnate through a virgin birth at Bethlehem, lived a sinless life amongst us for 33 years, then, by His voluntary death at Calvary, made the atonement. The Bible also tells that upon the third day of His death, the Father raised Him to life again, after which, for a further 40 days, He gave many infallible proofs He was alive. He then returned to His Father in Heaven where as our high priest He is now mediating on our behalf. When this work is finished He will then return to earth for His people. These are my summary thoughts. Whilst they may sound rather simplistic, they are I believe in accordance with that which God has revealed through the Scriptures.

If a particular teaching (whether it be the trinity doctrine or anything else) leads someone to doubt these things that God has made so plain in the Scriptures, then there must be something seriously wrong with that teaching. This is no matter how intellectual it may appear to be. In reality, the gospel is very simple. Even a child may understand it.

You also said in the same email

“I would suggest to you Terry that if you want to impress me with your integrity please take seriously the things I have offered to you in favour of the Trinity. Also, prove your arguments from the Bible as Ellen White says you must.”

As you are aware Max, in my response to your website challenge (this was attached to the email I sent to you on the 1st January 2014) I did show very clearly why I do not accept the trinity doctrine. One of the reasons I gave was that the essentials needed for such a teaching cannot be found in Scripture. These essentials constitute an explanation of how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have their existence together. In other words, in order to have a trinity doctrine, it would require an explanation of the nature of the Godhead – or, to put it another way, an explanation of divinity. Without this explanation there is no trinity doctrine. It really is that simple.

You and I know that no such explanation can be found in Scripture, so when you say “please take seriously the things I have offered to you in favour of the Trinity”, you know this is impossible for me to do.

Trinitarians such as yourself believe that the persons of the Godhead are one in substance (are one divine being) but because the Bible does not say anything concerning this, how would we know? It is just an assumption. Even if we accepted this to be true it would still remain a mystery to us. This is because we know nothing about the substance (nature) of divinity. This means that to have a trinity doctrine, we would need to make another assumption. We would need to assume that we do understand the nature of this substance (the nature of divinity) – also that we can explain it. Thus it is, in trinitarianism, one assumption is built upon another assumption.

With regards to the nature of the Godhead therefore, the Scriptures offer no explanation. This is why I see no point in discussing it. Many theologians will agree, the trinity doctrine cannot be proven from using Scripture alone. Assumptions do need to be made.

This is something I will not do. I will not assume something concerning which, God has chosen to be silent. If God is silent concerning something, then we should be the same. God is silent for a reason.

Another reason why I reject the trinity doctrine is because the Scriptures are clear that the divine Son of God, in becoming incarnate, risked His eternal existence. I say this because if He had sinned – which the Scriptures say was possible - God would not have resurrected Him. This is because there would have been nothing to merit Him a resurrection. Like you and me, He would have become a sinner.

As you know (I explained this also in the study I sent to you), the trinity doctrine forbids this risk belief. This is because trinitarianism says that all three persons of the Godhead are inseparably united together in the one being of God – who (or which) is immortal. Thus in trinitarianism, apart from any other implications of this teaching, it is impossible for any of the persons of the Godhead to either lose their existence or become separated from each other.

You ask me to explain from the Scriptures why I believe as I do. This will not be a problem to me. In fact it is very simple. Before I do though, please allow me to make this one observation.

If you are saying (by your remarks) that Ellen White had told us we must be able to prove our doctrines from using Scripture alone (without using her writings) I quite agree with you but this is a far cry from saying she told us to ignore what God has revealed through her. God gave to her the gift of prophecy. This is obviously very important. At least it is to God.

Paul explained why God has given these gifts to His church. He said they were

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:” Ephesians 4:12 -15

It is only reasonable to believe that because God has given us (as a church) the gift of prophecy for such purposes as stated here, it would be an insult to Him if we ignored it. It would be like throwing it back in His face (telling Him we do not need it). As Paul explained, God has given spiritual gifts to His people so that we may “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”. It is obvious therefore that when we consider doctrine, God wants us to take note of whatever He has revealed through this gift. To say He wants us to ignore it would not make any sense. Certainly it would not be Scriptural to say it.

Having said that, I will honour your request. I will show you from the Scriptures alone (which I believe is what you are really asking) exactly what I do believe. The following therefore is what I believe the Scriptures tell us concerning Christ's death at Calvary, also the possibility of Him sinning and losing His existence – which is what our present discussion is all about. I hope this will make my position clear to you. May God bless you as you read it. Perhaps in turn, if you believe I am wrong in my assessment of what the Scriptures say, you will show me from using Scripture where I am wrong. Please [click here](#) to jump to the beginning of my study.

The death of Christ and the possibility of Him sinning

Two distinct personages

Throughout the Scriptures, God and Christ are revealed as two distinct personages. As the prophet Zechariah wrote

“...Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:12-13

The word “both” conveys the idea of two. It does not mean three, four or five. It must also mean more than one. This is why the word “both” can only mean two. There is no mention in Scripture of three divine beings involved in this “counsel of peace”

In the introduction to their epistles, the apostles penned words to the effect: “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (see Romans 1:7, Galatians 1:3, James 1:1 etc). Their words therefore depict God the Father and Christ as two individual persons. None of these writers say ‘from the Holy Spirit’. For this there must have been a reason. God inspired them to write as they did.

When in prayer, Jesus spoke the following words to His Father

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3

Jesus said plainly that His Father is the “only true God”, thus assuring us that He and His Father are two distinct personages. Note Jesus said nothing about knowing the Holy Spirit.

He continued

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” John 17:4-5

Again we see Jesus saying that He and His Father are two individual persons. He was referring to the time when He was with the Father before the creation of our world.

After His resurrection (obviously prior to returning to His Father) Jesus said to Mary

“...Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” John 20:17

There can be no mistaking that the Father and Jesus are two personages. This is how they are spoken of throughout the entirety of Scripture. Never are they said to be one and the same person or one person.

As Jesus said to Nicodemus

“God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life.” (*John 3:16 New Century Version*)

Jesus has told us that God has given His one and only Son. It is only reasonable to believe therefore that God had a Son to give. Again we see two distinct personages.

I will be the first to admit that there must be a certain oneness of existence between God and Christ but as I said previously, God has been silent about it (the nature of divinity) therefore concerning it we must not speculate. It is only reasonable to conclude though, whatever is the explanation, it will always allow the Father and the Son to be depicted as two individual personalities. This is because this is the way they are spoken of in Scripture.

In keeping with the words of Jesus (that the Father is the only true God – John 17:3), the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth

“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6

Again we see two personages. The first says Paul is the “one God, the Father *of whom are all things*” whilst the second is Christ, the One “*by whom are all things*”. Throughout the Scriptures the same picture is presented. The Father is depicted as the primal source (of all things) whilst the Son is always the medium.

The words “*by whom are all things*” are also in keeping with those which Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus and Colossae (see Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:16-17). It was the same as said by John in the opening of his gospel. This is that all things were created by Christ (John 1:3, 10). Christ therefore is our Creator.

Christ was the pre-existent Word (John 1:1). God created everything by the Word (John 1:3). He is “the image of the invisible God”, meaning the image of the Father (Colossians 1:15). The Scriptures also say He is the “express image” of God’s (His Father’s) person (Hebrews 1:3). He is not the Father but in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 1:19, 2:9). Again we see two individual personalities.

It is interesting to note how John began writing out the Revelation he had received on the Island of Patmos. He wrote

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.” Revelation 1:1

The revelation did not originate from Jesus. God gave it to Him. Jesus gave it to an angel. The angel gave it to John. Again this depicts God and Christ as two personages. In this 'handing down' of divine revelation involving four different persons, no mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

Combating false teachings

When John wrote his gospel (near the end of the first century of the Christian era), there were those whom we know today as the Docetae who were teaching that Christ only ‘appeared’ to have a human body therefore they said He only ‘appeared’ to have suffered and died. It was also the time when Cerinthus was promulgating the idea (within the

church) that Christ was born of natural human parentage (Joseph and Mary). He taught that the divine Christ entered into Jesus at His baptism – departing from Him again at the crucifixion. Either way, in both of these belief systems, the divine Word (Christ) was never truly made flesh: neither did He truly suffer and die at Calvary. This reveals the evil of these two beliefs.

It is no surprise therefore that John opened his gospel in such a manner as he did. It was to refute such teachings. He wrote

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:1-3

The “God” whom the Word was with can only be the Father. It cannot be anyone else (see 1 Corinthians 8:6). The Word and God (the Father) therefore were – and still are - two personages. John said it was the Word who came to earth and became flesh. It was not the Father who became flesh.

The gospel writer also went on to say

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”. John 1:14

This was in direct refutation of the teachings of both the Docetae and Cerinthus.

The divine person of the Word was not within the human body of Jesus manipulating Him like a puppeteer manipulating a puppet. The Word had actually left (vacated) Heaven and had become flesh. Thus it was, in one sense, He had become a new person – the man Christ Jesus. This person had not heretofore existed. In Jesus, the two natures had been blended together to form ONE PERSON, therefore the two natures could not be separated. The divine Word had truly become flesh. It can also be said that He had become the Son of God in a new sense.

John also explained

“No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”. John 1:18

Again this “God” can only be the Father. This was the “God” (the person) whom the Word was with in the beginning (John 1:1). Again we see two divine beings.

This is only the same as when Jesus said

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” Matthew 11:27

“And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.” John 5:37

It is evident from what Jesus says here that God the Father has a voice and a shape – else there was no point in making these remarks.

It is also evident that God (the Father) and the Word are two distinct divine beings. This was a major point of John's opening words (John 1:1-3, 11, 14 and 18). He was also refuting the false teaching of the Docetae – which was that divinity would not have associated with sinful humanity. John said that a divine being had actually been made flesh (verse 14). Wonder of wonders. How can we fathom the depths of such humility? Our God, in the sinless person of His only begotten Son, became flesh as we are. Christ was God in human flesh. What a condescension – and He did it all for us.

John, when he wrote his gospel and his epistles, was very concerned about these false teachings that were in circulation. He was concerned for the spiritual welfare of his little flock. He sought to protect them from being deceived by these heresies. To those whom he loved therefore he gave this warning (a warning that we would do well to heed today)

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 1:7

John referred to those such as the Docetae and Cerinthus as “a deceiver and an antichrist”. These are very strong words but it shows the importance that the one who had been with Jesus from the beginning placed upon the belief that the Word had really come to earth and had truly been made flesh. All those who did not believe this to be true, John would have described as antichrist. As he also said

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;” 1 John 1:1

As I think you will agree, this reminds us of the way John opened his gospel (John 1:1-3, 14).

John is once again refuting the beliefs of the Docetae. He is saying that himself and others (such as the other disciples and the very first Christians) had actually “handled” Jesus. This denied the belief that the Word had not really become flesh. Now we can see John's purpose in writing His gospel and his epistles.

He also said to his “beloved” brethren in the church that they should “try (test) the spirits because of the “many false prophets” that were around at that time (1 John 4:1). He then wrote

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” 1 John 4:2-3

John wrote his gospel, as well as his epistles, to show that the divine person of the Word had truly become flesh. His opening words (John 1:1-18) struck a decisive blow to those in the church who would teach otherwise. These words would certainly have grabbed the attention of his readers. Even today they are the subject of volumes of books and endless discussions.

Everything written by John was in support of his opening remarks. It was to show that Christ is truly the Son of God. As he said as he drew his gospel to a close

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John 20:30-31

John also wrote to his “little children” in the church

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”¹ John 2:21-22

This was the reason why John wrote his gospel. It was to show that Christ is truly the Son of God therefore because of this He is God (John 1:1). This is the very thing that the Jews would not accept. This is something that John took great care to point out in his gospel. He thought it to be very important. It is obviously meant to say something to us today. We would do well to heed what he was pointing out.

John, as did the other gospel writers, recorded that the Jewish leaders would not accept that Christ was truly the Son of God (see John 5:17-18, 10:23-39). These Jews said the reason Jesus deserved to die was because of His claim of Sonship with God (Matthew 26:63-66, Mark 14:61-65, John 19:6-7). They said He was being blasphemous (Matthew 26:65, Mark 14:64, John 10:33). They obviously took His claims literally. In other words, they knew very well that by claiming to be the Son of God, He was claiming to be God (see also John 8:58-59 and 10:33). This is the point John was emphasising in his gospel.

The divine Word dies

John goes on to tell us that it was the incarnate Word (Jesus) who died at Calvary. It was not someone other than the Word who died. This Word was not substituted by someone or something else. The divine person of the Word, whom John said was God (John 1:1), died at Calvary. This is why it can be truly said that God died at Calvary. The Bible is very clear on this matter. It says nothing of anyone else dying, or as some suggest, that only humanity died. If you believe it does say the latter, then I suggest you tell me where it says it. The Bible clearly says that THE PERSON (the pre-existent Word) who became incarnate died. He died in His humanity.

All the gospel writers are in harmony with each other

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.” Matthew 27:50

“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.” Mark 15:37

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” Luke 23:46

Understandably – and in keeping with the reason why he wrote his gospel - John wanted to assure his readers that the pre-existent Word really did become flesh and really did die. This is probably why he gave a much more detailed account of the actual death of Jesus than the other gospel writers. He explained

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and

saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” John 19:30-34

John regarded it as imperative that those who would read His gospel should be assured that Christ’s body was real (that He had truly been made flesh) – also that He had truly died. He made a point of mentioning that the soldier “pierced his side” with a spear making “blood and water” gush out. This would not have happened if His body had been a phantom as taught by the Docetae. This was a direct refutation of their beliefs.

All of the gospel writers said that the One who had come to earth really did die. There was no sham or make-believe about it. The pre-existent Word was not alive whilst the humanity of Jesus was dead. The pre-existent Word was dead.

Paul emphasised this truth by explaining

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

If you have missed what I am saying Max, let me put it this way.

There is nothing in the Bible that even remotely suggests that someone other than the divine pre-existent Word (who became flesh) died at Calvary. From all that has been revealed from Scripture, the person of Jesus was fully divine and fully human. This may be difficult for us to grasp but if we are to stay true to the Bible (comparing Scripture with Scripture without contradiction), this is what we need to accept.

There is nothing in Scripture either to suggest that the two natures of Christ were two persons, or that they merged together to form a third nature. All we can conclude from Scripture is that the two natures (the divine and the human) blended together to form ONE PERSON – the man Christ Jesus.

Christ was only ONE PERSON. It was this ONE PERSON, the incarnate pre-existent divine Son of God who died at Calvary. A person died at Calvary – not just human nature. This was a divine person – made flesh. Again this may be difficult for us to understand but from what is revealed in Scripture, this is the only conclusion we can draw. There is no explanation in Scripture as to *how* God achieved the incarnation – thus to us it must remain a mystery. As the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of God, wrote

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” 1 Timothy 3:16

Please take note Max: I am not saying that at Calvary divine nature died. I am saying that a DIVINE PERSON died in humanity. Nature is not a person. You have human nature; I have human nature; yet we are two different individual persons. This is even though we have exactly the same human nature. It is the same with God and Christ. They both have divine nature but they are two distinct personages. They are not one and the same person.

Some may ask how can a divine person die but that particular question has not been given us to answer. There is nothing in Scripture to explain how this was achieved. All that we know from Scripture is that it was achieved.

There are many things not explained in Scripture - at least as to how they were achieved. How did God create something from nothing? From a human standpoint this is impossible yet we believe it to be true. How does the Holy Spirit dwell within every child of God? God does not explain it yet we still believe it. How did God achieve the incarnation? We have no idea but again we accept He did it. We just accept it by faith because the Bible says it is true. This is how we need to accept that a divine person died at Calvary. We may not know the actual mechanics of how it was achieved but we can believe it to be true.

A deception of Satan

It is clearly evident it is Satan who suggests that a divine person cannot die. Our adversary does not want us to believe that God, in order to secure our salvation, would truly sacrifice His own Son. This is because it says too much about God's love for humanity (John 3:16, Romans 8:3,32). Satan wants to confuse the issue – and may I say that amongst present-day Seventh-day Adventists, he appears to have had a great deal of success. There seems to be a lot of confusion over who and what died at Calvary. Satan certainly has been very busy.

When Jesus withdrew to Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (Matthew 16:13). They replied saying that some were saying He was “John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets” (verse 14). Jesus then asked “But whom say ye that I am? (verse 15). Peter was the first to answer saying “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (verse 16). Jesus responded by saying that flesh and blood (human reasoning) had not revealed this to Peter but the Father who is in Heaven (verse 17). In other words, it was divine revelation.

The Scriptures then tell us

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Matthew 16:21

Obviously Peter did not accept what Jesus was saying because he said to Him “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (verse 22).

Reason with me.

Peter had just confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God. Jesus told Peter it had been the Father who had revealed this to him, not human reasoning. Jesus also said He would build His church upon the belief that He (Jesus) was the Son of God. Peter obviously thought that if Jesus was really the Son of God He could not die.

In response to Peter's remarks Jesus said

“... Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”Matthew 16:23

It appears that Peter had not yet grasped the idea that the prime purpose of the divine Son of God in coming to earth was to die. It seems that he did not understand that the One

whom he had just referred to as the Son of God was also the lamb of God – the One who had been ordained to be slain for the sins of humanity. It was a lesson that was going to prove difficult for him to learn.

Jesus was saying that even though He was the Son of God, He still could die. He also said that for the sake of humanity He intended to die. It is a suggestion of Satan that the divine Son of God could not die and did not die.

The possibility of Christ sinning

So what if Christ had sinned? What would have happened to Him? The only conclusion we can draw is that God would not have resurrected Him. What other conclusion is possible? He would have become a sinner. When Adam sinned he became a sinner. It would have been exactly the same with Christ if He had sinned. Why should it be any different? God holds everyone responsible for the things they do as individuals (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). He would not have excluded Christ just because He was His Son.

Look at it this way. If Christ had sinned and had been resurrected to eternal life, this would only have been the same as if God had allowed Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, access to the tree of life. It would have immortalised sin. If Christ had sinned and had been resurrected to eternal life, He would be an immortal sinner.

It can only be concluded therefore that if Christ had sinned, God would not have rolled the stone away from the door of the tomb. Such was the risk Christ took to become the Saviour of the world.

The risk in Christ coming to earth can only be described as infinite. He took the infinite risk. He could have failed. He could have lost His existence. Such was the love that both God and Christ had – and still have – for fallen humanity. In order to provide for our salvation, God was even willing to risk losing His own Son (Romans 8:3, 32).

Christ's death at Calvary was voluntary. No one could take His life from Him. This is why He had to *choose* to give it up (John 10:15, 17-18, 15:13).

The Bible is also very clear that when the divine Christ became incarnate, He took upon Himself not only our fallen nature but also all the liabilities and limitations of that nature.

The writer of Hebrews tells us

“For verily he [the pre-existent Word] took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”
Hebrews 2:16-18

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in ***all points tempted like as we are***, yet without sin”. Hebrews 4:15

Where in the Bible does it say the pre-existent Word only took on Himself *some* of our liabilities and limitations? It says here in Hebrews that “***in all things*** it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren”. This means it was possible for Christ to sin. If this could not

have happened then he was not made like us “in all things”. It would also mean He was not “in all points tempted *like as we are*”.

Jesus was born of Mary. He took her humanity. This is after humanity had been weakened by 4000 years of sin. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that the flesh Jesus took in the incarnation was anything different than Mary’s flesh. He partook of post-fall humanity not pre-fall humanity – and remember, His divine nature was not one person and his humanity another person. There is nothing in the Bible that would even suggest such a conclusion. Christ took our place completely. This was even to the point of putting at risk His own existence. He became as one of us in all things. Those who do not believe He could have sinned do not really believe He became flesh.

Having said that, we must remember that He was God incarnate. He was not exactly like us. He was, as the angel Gabriel called Him, “that Holy thing” (Luke 1:35). In Him there was no propensity (inclination) to sin. In that respect He was sinless. He was therefore a man who partook of our infirmities and of our weaknesses but not of our sinfulness.

The divine and the human were combined to form ONE PERSON - the man Christ Jesus. It was He, this ONE PERSON, who died at Calvary. If you believe the Bible says otherwise then you will need to give me chapter and verse where it says it. It was the Word who became flesh (John 1:14 etc.) who died at Calvary. It is to Him we owe our salvation.

As has been said earlier, trinitarianism forbids this risk belief. This is because in the trinitarian view of God, none of the persons of the Godhead can be separated from each other. They are said to be of 'one substance', meaning that all three persons make up the 'one being' of God or the 'one God'. This 'one being' or 'one God' is said therefore to be unchanging and immortal. Thus in trinitarianism, this risk belief is prohibited.

Our Creator died at Calvary

The proof that a divine person died at Calvary is that the Scriptures tell us

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

The person who “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death” was the One who was in the form of God - the One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. This was the pre-existent Word (John 1:1). He is the One who tabernacled amongst us (John 1:14). He is the One who died at Calvary.

In the book of Hebrews we are told exactly the same. It was the pre-existent person who died.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Hebrews 2:9

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” Hebrews 2:14

Again the Bible is very clear. The One who died at Calvary is the One “[who was made a little lower than the angels.](#)”. This was the pre-existent Word. It was He who was made flesh and dwelt amongst us (John 1:14)

The Bible also tells us that God created all things by the pre-existent Christ – meaning by the Word (John 1:3, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:12-17, Hebrews 1:1-2) therefore we can also say that the One who died at Calvary was the One by whom all the worlds were made. This was the one and the same person. It was our Creator.

As John wrote of the pre-existent Word

[“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”](#) John 1:10-11

It was the pre-existent Christ who made the worlds. It was also He who was made flesh (John 1:14). It was our Creator therefore who died at Calvary. It was one and the same person.

Zechariah prophesied that our Creator would die. This is when he wrote

[“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”](#) Zechariah 12:10

This is with reference to the return of Jesus. It is saying that those who “[pierced](#)” Him at Calvary will once again look upon Him when He returns in clouds of glory (Revelation 1:7). This was the promise Jesus made to Caiaphas (Matthew 26:64). The One who is speaking through Zechariah is none other than the Creator of this world (see 12:1). It was His side that was pierced at Calvary.

When John wrote the following, he must have been thinking not only of Zechariah's prophecy but also of Jesus as the antitype of the Passover lamb (this was after he had written about the legs of Jesus not being broken and the soldier piercing Christ's side with a spear)

[“And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”](#) John 19:35-37

Jesus was the anti-type of the passover lamb. As the Messiah it was necessary for Him to fulfil the type. No bone of the type was to be broken (see Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12). Jesus was indeed the anti-typical lamb of God.

The Father resurrects Christ

Referring back to your email Max you said

[“If Jesus died as God back in AD 31 and was dead for three days, then the whole of Creation would have disintegrated. Why should the intelligent creatures on other planets be destroyed because Jesus failed in relation to a problem on our planet?”](#)

I cannot understand why you made this comment. The Father was not dead when Jesus died – and why, if Jesus had failed, should all the intelligent beings on other planets be destroyed? There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that if Christ had failed the Father would have become impotent. There is nothing to suggest in Scripture either that divine nature died at Calvary – only that a divine person died.

It was the Father who resurrected Christ. The Father was still alive when the divine Christ was dead in the tomb. As Paul wrote to the Galatians and Ephesians

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)” Galatians 1:1

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” Ephesians 1:19-20

Again we see God the Father and Christ as two persons. Christ could not have resurrected Himself. He was dead. The Bible clearly tells us that the dead know nothing (Psalms 6:4-5, 115:17, Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, Job 14:21 etc). This is how it was with the divine Christ in the tomb. If He was truly dead then He knew nothing. If He was still alive then He did not die for the sins of humanity. If He did not die then He did not make the atonement. The belief that the divine person of Christ was alive whilst the human body of Jesus was dead could give rise to the idea that the 'immortality of the soul' belief is true. We must be very guarded not to even suggest that the divine Christ was still alive when the human body of Jesus was dead.

There is nothing in Scripture to suggest the divine Word was still alive whilst His human nature was dead. If He was truly dead then to be able to live again He needed His Father to call Him from the grave. This is just as we need Christ to call us from the grave so that we may live again. As Jesus explained

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” John 5:25

Jesus said dead people will hear His voice. His voice will penetrate the grave.

Some may point to the fact that Jesus said to the disbelieving Jews (referring to His body)

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” John 2:19.

This is exactly what did happen. His body was put to death – and He, the pre-existent Word - died in His humanity.

In His pre-existence as God, this is something He could not do. This is because then He only existed in divine nature. Now though, in the incarnation, He had a human nature. In this nature He, the pre-existent Word, could die. This is the genius of the incarnation. The incarnation allowed our God to personally experience death. It allowed our Creator to die.

The Bible describes death as a sleep - not annihilation. When Christ was in the grave He was what we would term 'asleep'. This is how the apostle Paul explained death to the believers in both Thessalonica and Corinth. He said

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” 1 Corinthians 15:51

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” 1 Thessalonians 4:14

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

Christ's spirit, like our spirits are in death, was 'asleep'. It was in a state of unconsciousness. When people die they are not annihilated – at least not when they die the first death. The second death is different. This is annihilation (see Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 14-15, 21:8) This is when body and soul is destroyed (see Matthew 10:28). This is eternal separation from God.

Jesus experienced what this separation will be like. This is why He cried out in agony of soul

“.... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46

Jesus did not experience this because of something He had done wrong. He experienced it because He had taken upon Himself the guilt and punishment of all the sins of humanity.

Paul also wrote to the believers in Rome

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Romans 8:11

Again we see it was the Father who raised Christ from the grave (see also Colossians 2:12).

The person in the tomb was only ONE PERSON. He only had ONE SPIRIT. It was this ONE SPIRIT that this ONE PERSON put into the care and keeping of His Father (Luke 23:46). In other words, Christ's Spirit in the grave was asleep (dormant). It was not until that Spirit was awakened that Jesus could exercise His divinity. Thus He was in the tomb dependant upon His Father to wake Him. Only then could Christ's words be fulfilled “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). It was then that Jesus could say once again “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). It was also proof that when He said concerning His life “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”, He was telling the truth. He had received this commandment from His Father” (see John 10:18). He could then come forth by the life that was in Himself (in His divinity).

What He could have done, if He had chosen to do so, was to use that same life (divinity) to stop Himself from dying. As it was He chose not to use it. Instead He surrendered Himself to His humanity. This is why it is said of Him that He voluntarily died. No one took His life from Him. He gave it up as a sacrifice. This is why John wrote

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” John 19:30

Notice the order. Jesus bowed His head and THEN died. People normally 'fight' to stay alive. Then, when they die, the head drops. With Jesus it happened the other way around. He voluntarily submitted to His humanity. He was not compelled to die. He chose to do so.

When Christ said “It is finished” He was echoing the thoughts of His Father. The sacrifice was complete. It had met the demands of God's broken law. The atonement had been made. Our salvation was made sure. God would have said “enough has been done”. Justice had been satisfied. At the cross, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other (Psalms 85:10).

There were not two persons in Jesus. There was not one person alive and another one dead. He was only ONE PERSON. This ONE PERSON was dead. From the afternoon of the day before Sabbath until the early hours of the first day of the week, the Spirit of Jesus was asleep in the grave. It is very obvious to anyone that if that ONE PERSON (who was still asleep in the tomb) had sinned, He would not have been resurrected to eternal life. This is because there would have been nothing to merit Him to a resurrection. Like us He would have been a sinner. This is why I am saying that if He had sinned, which the Bible says was possible (Hebrews 2:16-18, 4:15), He would have lost His existence. God would have treated Him no differently than He treated Adam when he sinned. As Peter said “....Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” Acts 10:34.

Regarding the One who was coming, the prophet Micah, some 700 years previous to the event, prophesied

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Micah 5:2

The one “whose goings forth have been from of old” is none other than the divine Word (John 1:1) – the Word who eventually would be made flesh (verse 14). It was He who would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem. It was He who would die at Calvary.

Isaiah, contemporary with Micah, also spoke of this Coming One. He wrote in what we call the fifty-third chapter of his book

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:12

Isaiah prophesied of the suffering Messiah that it would be said that He had “poured out his soul unto death”; also that He would be “numbered with the transgressors”. Isaiah also said that it would be said of Him whom we have seen was the Word (who had pre-existed with God) that He would “bare the sin of many” and would make “intercession for the transgressors”. This is the one great theme of the Bible. It is the one theme that throughout eternity will be the song and the science not only of the redeemed but also of the unfallen angels. What can match this theme? Nothing! This is why we dare not get it wrong. Our

salvation and the salvation of others depend on a right understanding of what God has wrought through the sacrifice of His Son. We must get it right. Charles Wesley had it right when he wrote the following hymn

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood
Died He for me, who caused His pain
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace
Emptied Himself of all but love
And bled for Adam's helpless race
'Tis mercy all, immense and free
For O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light
My chains fell off, my heart was free
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee
My chains fell off, my heart was free
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee

Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiven;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.

No condemnation now I dread
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine
Alive in Him, my living Head
And clothed in righteousness divine
Bold I approach the eternal throne
And claim the crown, through Christ my own
Bold I approach the eternal throne
And claim the crown, through Christ my own

As we have seen above, our God did die at Calvary. Of this there is no doubt. As Wesley wrote, the immortal did die.

A few closing thoughts

As we meditate upon the incarnation – also endeavour to understand what God has done by giving His Son as a sacrifice to pay for our sins - we need to be very careful that we do not say or write anything that may in any way take away from them what they have both wrought. I would ask therefore, in contemplating this great theme, for you to consider this very important question.

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. 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.

I suppose I could say more Max but I am sure you see the point I am making.

Have I proven my belief using Scripture alone? I would think that any honest person would answer in the affirmative. What say you?

Christian regards

Terry

God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. (*John 3:16 New Century Version*)

Website: <https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/>