

Sent to Larry Crews, Support Specialist, Ellen G. White Estate 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016  
CC to Tim Poirier, Vice-Director Ellen G. White Estate

Dear Larry

Thank you for your May 2016 correspondence. I appreciate your comments. In response I will share a few thoughts with you. If you can find the time I would welcome your thoughts.

As I understand it, the view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today - also that of the ministry – as well as that of the White Estate in general - is that Ellen White was a trinitarian. I disagree with this view. I believe that Ellen White was no more a trinitarian than I am. I will explain why I reason this way.

If it is claimed that Ellen White was a trinitarian, this pre-supposes two things. This is that

(a) The person making the claim possesses a thorough knowledge of the writings of Ellen White.

(b) The person making the claim has, in his or her mind, a definition of the trinity doctrine.

As I am sure you will agree, without this information it would not be possible to say whether Ellen White was a trinitarian or not.

The first premise (a) may be reasonably obvious (having a thorough knowledge of Ellen White's writings) but not so much the second (b). We must ask therefore, what is it that constitutes a trinity doctrine?

### **The trinity doctrine**

Amongst theologians there is one particular concept that is common to any version of the trinity doctrine. This is that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparably united as the one God in one indivisible substance (one trinitarian being). Without this concept there cannot be a trinity doctrine.

Over the years I have had this same conversation with many Seventh-day Adventists - and even though at first they attempted to argue the point, they have, in the finality, admitted this to be true. This is because when all is said and done, they could not provide an alternative definition of the trinity doctrine (**how** the three persons of the Godhead are one).

This 'one substance' concept therefore is the very foundational belief of any trinity doctrine. This is how it was in the 4<sup>th</sup> century when this teaching was first formulated and how it is today. The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church puts it this way (referring to the Athanasian Creed)

"Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the

substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part one, The Profession of Faith, No.'s 266, 267*)

As we shall see, this is exactly the same as the Seventh-day Adventist version of trinity doctrine.

At the Eleventh Synod of Toledo in Spain (this was in 675 AD), the Catholic Church declared

"We confess and we believe that the holy and indescribable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one only God in His nature, a single substance, a single nature, a single majesty and power...We acknowledge Trinity in the distinction of persons; we profess Unity because of the nature or substance. The three are one, as a nature, that is, not as person. Nevertheless, these three persons are not to be considered separable, since we believe that no one of them existed or at any time effected anything before the other, after the other, or without the other." (*As quoted in Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary's College, St. Mary's, Kansas, 'The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation'*)

Again, in this particular respect, meaning the oneness and the three persons being inseparable, also the co-eternity of the three, the Seventh-day Adventist version of the trinity doctrine is exactly the same as orthodoxy.

### **Current Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and theology**

Concerning the Godhead, in our official published fundamental beliefs, there are four different statements. These statements are No.'s 2, 3, 4 and 5. No. 3 concerns the Father. No. 4 concerns the Son of God. No. 5 concerns the Holy Spirit. This means that everything found in Scripture concerning the Father can be listed under No. 3. It also means that everything found in Scripture concerning the Son can be listed under No. 4. It also means that everything found in Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit can be listed under No. 5. Would we though, if we listed out all of these things, have a trinity doctrine? No we would not. The 'oneness' would be missing. This is why, since 1980 in our fundamental beliefs, we have had belief No. 2. This statement does speak of God as a trinity of divine beings. It says

"There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **a unity** of three coeternal Persons. 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." (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, page 156, 2010*)

Please keep in mind that this trinity belief (No. 2) is a separate belief from No. 3, 4 and 5.

So what constitutes this “unity”? What makes the three persons the “one God”?

It can only be the ‘one substance’ concept. Without it we would only have beliefs concerning the individual persons of the Godhead. This is duly recognised by our own church theologians. These are such as Ekkehardt Mueller, Gerhard Pfandl and Fernando Canale. In support of the Seventh-day Adventist trinity doctrine they duly noted

“The three persons share one indivisible nature. 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 newsletter Reflections, July 2008*)

“Trinitarianism is the orthodox belief that there is but one living and true God. Nevertheless this one God is a unity of three persons, who are of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director, Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute, ‘The Doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists’, 1999*)

“In Scripture God has revealed His transcendent nature as Trinity, namely three distinct divine Persons who act directly and historically in history and constituting the one divine Trinitarian being.” (*Dr. Fernando Canale, the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 138*)

These theologians are in agreement with each other. They all agree that the trinity doctrine says that the three persons exist inseparably in one indivisible substance (one triune or trinitarian being) as the one God. In fact one of these statements is from the Seventh-day Adventist Handbook of Theology (Volume 12 Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia). Where though in Scripture can be found such an idea? The answer is it cannot be found. This is because it is not there. It is purely supposition (philosophical speculation). This is why the trinity doctrine is only an assumed doctrine. This is duly recognised in our own denominational Handbook of Theology. This is where it says

“The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed.” (*Fernando L. Canale, the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia Volume 12, page 138, ‘Doctrine of God’*)

This is very true. The trinity doctrine cannot be found in Scripture. At the very best it is only an assumed (speculative) teaching.

Richard Rice, Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Loma

Linda University, wrote in his book 'The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective'

"The role of the trinity in a doctrine of God always raises questions. One reason is that the word itself does not appear in the Bible, nor is there any clear statement of the idea. But the Bible does set the stage for its formulation, and the concept represents a development of biblical claims and concepts. So even though the doctrine of the trinity is not part of what the Bible itself says about God, it is part of what the church must say to safeguard the biblical view of God." (*Richard Rice, The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, page 89, 'A constructive proposal', 1985)

Rice agrees that the trinity doctrine cannot be found in Scripture. He says that no clear statement of the idea can be found. He also correctly says it was the church that formulated this teaching. This was after the canon of Scripture had been closed. This is why with respect to our salvation it is not necessary to believe such a teaching. In other words, we can reject the trinity doctrine without it affecting our salvation. The Seventh-day Adventist Church rejected it for well over 100 years. It was deemed to be unscriptural.

Max Hatton, who wrote the highly-promoted denominational book 'Understanding the Trinity', has this to say on his website with respect to what is believed and taught by the present Seventh-day Adventist Church

"Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all fully God and exist in a single Divine Substance. There are not three gods but a single God consisting of Three Divine Persons.... Some try to make out that they are a Trinity because they all agree and cooperate together. Obviously, this does not make them One God and they are three no matter what else may be said about them.

To sum up, SDA believe that there are Three Persons who exist in the One Substance of God." (*Max Hatton, website article 'A Revealing Futile Joust By Semi-Arians' <http://thetrinitydoctrine.com/articles/a-revealing-futile-joust-by-semi-arians/>*)

Hatton is correct. Just to say the three divine personalities "agree and cooperate" with each other does not make God a trinity. It does need the one substance concept.

In another article, Hatton says the following about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

"We are compelled by Scripture to accept that the Three, who are all true God, comprise a single Entity - the Trinity. There is only one true God so we have no alternative but to be driven to the conclusion that the Three are an indivisible One sharing a single Divine Substance or Essence." (*Max Hatton, 'Our God is an Awesome God, page 17*)

Again we return to the one substance (one essence) idea.

The same reasoning can be found on pages 20-21 of Hatton's book '*Understanding the Trinity*'. He concluded in his article

"The Three are obviously One, inextricably bound together in One Divine Substance." (*Ibid page 21*)

This is exactly the same trinity reasoning as that of the theologians quoted above. This includes Roman Catholic and the Seventh-day Adventist theologians. This today is what is taught within Seventh-day Adventism. It is in fact its current theology. As Hatton says, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are "an indivisible One sharing a single Divine Substance", inextricably bound together in One Divine Substance". This is the trinity doctrine. It is exactly the same concept as that of the original trinity doctrine espoused today by the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations. Without this concept there would not be a trinity doctrine.

Raoul Dederen (Professor of Theology, Emeritus Andrews University) made exactly the same observation. He wrote in a paper called 'Reflections of the Doctrine of the Trinity'

"The word "person" itself is still a poor way of expressing the reality. Here more than anywhere else in theology are we reminded of the purely hypothetical character of our speculations. Therefore, we must confess that the Trinity is one indivisible God and that the distinctions of the persons do not destroy the divine unity. This unity of God is expressed by saying that he is one substance. Nevertheless, in the divine unity there are three co-eternal and co-equal persons, who, though distinct, are the One undivided and adorable God. This is the doctrine of Scripture." (*Raoul Dederen, Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity, page 16, Andrews University Seminar Studies, Vol. VIII, No. 1 January, 1970*)

Dederen concluded concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

"The work of the Trinity is outwardly indivisible just as the Trinity is indivisible." (*Ibid*)

From an appraisal of the above we can see that in keeping with Roman Catholicism, the Seventh-day Adventist Church agrees that the three persons of the Godhead are inseparably (indivisibly) united as the one God in one indivisible substance – meaning that none of the three can ever become separated from each other. This is the standard belief of any trinity doctrine. As has been noted, if this one substance (one divine trinitarian being) belief is absent then there is no such teaching as the trinity doctrine.

### **What did Ellen White say?**

Now that we have established what constitutes trinitarianism, the question must be asked, "Did Ellen White make any such profession?"

The answer is “No she did not!” The nearest we can get to the ‘one indivisible substance’ idea is where she wrote (referring to where Jesus said that He and His Father were one)

“With what firmness and power he uttered these words. The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a convicting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes. The Jews understood his meaning, there was no reason why they should misunderstand, and they took up stones to stone him.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, November 27<sup>th</sup> 1893*)

When Ellen White wrote the words “one substance” she qualified what she meant by them. She added, “possessing the same attributes”. This is an affirmation of Christ’s divinity. This is why the Jews wanted to stone Jesus. They knew He was claiming divine status (as God).

It would not be possible to conclude that Ellen White was referring here to how God the Father and Christ exist together (as purported by the trinity doctrine). This is because she actually denied that it is possible to explain it.

In 1906, 13 years on from the above statement, she wrote the following in the Review and Herald

“There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible.” (*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh*)

Ellen White agreed that prior to the foundation of our world there was a certain oneness between God the Father and Christ but she said that this truth, whilst explaining many other things, “is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible. In other words, even if God revealed it to us, it would still be beyond our comprehension to understand it. This is where we should leave it. We should not, in an effort to explain it, invent a teaching such as the trinity doctrine. This is only the same as saying we can explain something about God’s being that God has chosen to keep to Himself. Surely this is nothing less than an effrontery to our Creator.

The above was written by Ellen White 8 years after ‘*The Desire of Ages*’ was published. This means that in this book she could not have been promoting the trinity doctrine.

Did you notice in the above statement (concerning oneness) that Ellen White did not even mention the Holy Spirit? I find such statements very interesting.



This was many years after she had first said that the Holy Spirit is a person.

Ellen White repeatedly warned against attempting to 'explain' God. Here are some of her more notable statements

"The revelation of Himself that God has given in His word is for our study. This we may seek to understand. But beyond this we are not to penetrate. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God; but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion." (*Ellen G. White, 8<sup>th</sup> Volume Testimonies, page 279, 'The essential knowledge', 1904*)

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"God's Word and His works contain the knowledge of Himself that He has seen fit to reveal to us. We may understand the revelation that He has thus given of Himself. But it is with fear and trembling, and with a sense of our own sinfulness, that we are to take up this study, not with a desire to try to explain God, but with a desire to gain that knowledge which will enable us to serve Him more acceptably. Let no one venture to explain God. Human beings cannot explain themselves, and how, then, dare they venture to explain the Omniscient One? Satan stands ready to give such ones false conceptions of God.

To the curious I bear the message that God has instructed me not to frame answers to the questions of those who enquire, in regard to the things that have not been revealed. The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children. Beyond this, human beings are not to attempt to go. We are not to attempt to explain that which God has not revealed. We are to study the revelation that Christ, the great Teacher, has given of the character of God, that in spirit and word and act we may represent Him to those who know Him not.

In regard to the personality and prerogatives of God, where He is and what He is, this is a subject which we are not to dare to touch. On this theme silence is eloquence. It is those who have no experimental knowledge of God who venture to speculate in regard to Him. Did they know more of Him, they would have less to say about what He is. The one who in the daily life holds closest communion with God, and who has the deepest knowledge of Him, realizes most keenly the utter inability of human beings to explain the Creator.

Let men beware how they seek to look into the mysteries of The Most High" (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 132, Nov. 8, 1903, "God's Chosen People', 'A right knowledge of God'*)

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“There are some things upon which we must reason, and there are other things that we must not discuss. In regard to God—what He is and where He is—silence is eloquence. When you are tempted to speak of what God is, keep silence, because as surely as you begin to speak of this, you will disparage Him.

Our ministers must be very careful not to enter into controversy in regard to the personality of God. This is a subject that they are not to touch. It is a mystery, and the enemy will surely lead astray those who enter into it. We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world. God is a person, and Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as “the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.” (*Ellen G. White, Ms 46, May 18<sup>th</sup> 1904*)

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“A familiarity with the Word of God is our only hope. Those who diligently search the Scriptures will not accept Satan's delusions as the truth of God. No one need be overcome by the speculations presented by the enemy of God and of Christ. “We are not to speculate regarding points upon which the Word of God is silent. All that is necessary for our salvation is given in the Word of God. Day by day we are to make the Bible the man of our counsel.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1905, ‘Christ our only hope’*)

We can see from the above that Ellen White would never have consented to the trinitarian view of God. This is irrefutable – at least it is to those who have made a thorough study of her writings. She denied that God could be explained - period.

Interestingly, all of these statements were made in the backdrop of a very influential leader in Seventh-day Adventism, namely John Harvey Kellogg, saying that he had come to believe in the trinity doctrine. This was something not generally professed at that time (in the early 1900’s) by Seventh-day Adventists. In fact Kellogg is the first Seventh-day Adventist that I can find who professed a belief in this teaching. This was in 1903.

Ellen White plainly said that God and Christ were two separate individuals. In ‘Early Writings’ we find these words

“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, "If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist." (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, page 54, 1882*)

She later added

“I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him if

His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, "I am in the express image of My Father's person." (Ibid page 77, see also *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 2 page 74, 1860*)

Here we are told by Ellen White that she was shown in vision two divine personages – one of whom is the “express image” of the “Fathers person”. Notice again that she did not mention the Holy Spirit. She did not ask either whether the Holy Spirit has a form. Never did she say she ‘saw’ three persons. I would say this is very interesting – also very significant.

She continued

“I have often seen that the spiritual view took away all the glory of heaven, and that in many minds the throne of David and the lovely person of Jesus have been burned up in the fire of Spiritualism.” (Ibid)

This “spiritual view” could quite possibly be the trinity doctrine.

Max Hatton, on his website in support of current Seventh-day Adventist trinitarianism, says this

“The fact that Mrs White says she saw in vision that Jesus and the Father are quite separate individuals does not fit with the Trinitarian concept found in Scripture.” (Max Hatton, website article ‘Ellen G. White and the Trinity Doctrine’)

In another article he explains in more detail

“The fact that Mrs White says she saw in vision that Jesus and the Father are quite separate individuals bothers me no end. I cannot accept that they are just as she said she saw them. There is nothing Trinitarian about the whole scene she describes. In fact it is quite contrary to it. On the other hand it is quite in line with the teaching of the Semi-Arians. I have wondered whether what she saw was in a dream which she mistook for a vision?” (Max Hatton article, ‘Excuse me but I have a worrying problem’)

Max Hatton is denying that Ellen White was shown in vision that God and Christ are two separate individuals. As a trinitarian this is something he would need to do else he would be denying trinitarianism. He is quite right though. What Ellen White said she was shown is not in keeping with trinitarianism.

Ellen White made other statements that trinitarians such as Max Hatton would never accept. This is where she wrote

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 116, Dec. 19, 1905, ‘An Entire Consecration’, see also *The Upward Look, page 367*)

“From eternity there was a complete unity between the Father and the Son. They were two, yet little short of being identical; two in individuality, yet one in spirit, and heart, and character.” (*Ellen G. White, Youth’s Instructor 16<sup>th</sup> December 1897 ‘The New Commandment part 1’*)

This is just about as far from trinitarianism as it can possibly get. No trinitarian would either agree with or make such statements. It is though in keeping with the belief that in eternity Christ is begotten of the Father (that Christ is truly the Son of God – God in the person of the Son), which was the belief of Seventh-day Adventists for over 100 years. This though would be too much to go into here. It will need to be the subject of another communication. Suffice to say for now that Ellen White wrote, as we noted above (when telling us not to attempt to explain God)

“God is a person, and Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as “the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.” (*Ellen G. White, Ms 46, May 18<sup>th</sup> 1904*)

Notice the date. It was 1904 – shortly after Kellogg had said he had come to believe the trinity doctrine.

### **The implications of the trinity doctrine**

When it is suggested that God is a trinity of divine beings as purported by the trinity doctrine, various implications arise. This is mainly due to the ‘one indivisible substance’ theory.

In 2008, an Orthodox Priest explained to me what is believed by trinitarians. He said

“We [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 [substance] 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*)

This is basic trinitarianism. It applies to any version of the trinity doctrine. It means that even in the incarnation, the Son never actually leaves the Father’s side; neither does He therefore literally vacate Heaven. In the incarnation therefore He can be likened to an extension of God into the human body of Jesus. This appears to be the trinitarian understanding of the Word made flesh.

This is duly recognised by Max Hatton. In a book he wrote called ‘The Trinity Doctrine For Seventh-day Adventists’ he explained

“In summary we can say that St. Germanus had it right when he wrote in a seventh century hymn:

The Word becomes incarnate

And yet remains on high!"

*(Max Hatton, The Trinity Doctrine For Seventh-Day Adventists, 2008)*

St Germans was a 7<sup>th</sup> century monk. This hymn is a Christmas Carol. It is called 'A Great and Mighty Wonder'. The second verse says (this is with respect to the incarnation of Christ and the belief that God is a trinity)

"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')*

This is trinitarianism – meaning that even in the incarnation, the Son is never literally separated from His Father. He is always "on high" with His Father.

Through Ellen White, Seventh-day Adventists have been told differently. In the Youth's Instructor in 1897, which was the year previous to the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', Ellen White wrote the following

"It is important that we each study to know the reason of the life of Christ in humanity, and what it means to us, -- why the Son of God left the courts of heaven,-- why he stepped down from his position as Commander of the heavenly angels, who came and went at his bidding,--why he clothed his divinity with humanity, and in lowliness and humility came to the world as our Redeemer." *(Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1897, 'Christ's Mission to Earth')*

Here the youth were urged to understand **why** the Son of God vacated Heaven and came to earth. This very same counsel is just as applicable to us today.

This next quote tells us that the Son of God literally exiled Himself from His Father. It says

"Christ left heaven and the bosom of His Father to come to a friendless, lost world to save those who would be saved. He exiled Himself from His Father and exchanged the pure companionship of angels for that of fallen humanity, all polluted with sin." *(Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 3, page 190, 'Laborers in the Office')*

How much plainer language could have been employed to show that Christ literally separated Himself from the Father? Clearly we have been told that the Son of God "exiled Himself from His Father". There is no intimation here, as is said in trinitarianism, that the Son cannot be separated from the Father. Again the messenger of God wrote in 1890

"If Christ had studied his convenience, he would never have left heaven to come to our world to die, to hang upon the accursed tree for us."

*(Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1890, 'Conditions for Obtaining Eternal Riches')*

If Ellen White had believed (as do orthodox trinitarians) that in the incarnation the divine Son of God was still on high with His Father, this statement would not make any sense. Certainly she was not a trinitarian.

Later in that same paragraph she gave advice that everyone would do well to heed. It was that

*"God has given us reasoning faculties, and he wants us to use them."  
(Ibid)*

Over and over again in Ellen White's writings we are told that Christ literally vacated Heaven. In 1905 she wrote

*"Think of how much it cost Christ to leave the heavenly courts, and take his position at the head of humanity. Why did he do this? -- Because he was the only one who could redeem the fallen race." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1905, 'God's purpose for us')*

The idea that the Son never becomes separated from the Father leads to a number of implications and beliefs. One of these is that when Christ died at Calvary, it was only His human nature that died - not the divine person Himself. Two articles dealing with this topic can be found here

[Who or what died at Calvary?](#)

[No more than Swine's Blood](#)

Max Hatton of course, as a trinitarian, denies that the divine Son of God died at Calvary. In 2002, in his very first email to me, he wrote saying (this is when I asked him if he believed that the divine Son of God had died at Calvary)

*"If Jesus was God He has always existed and did not die when the Godman died" (Email, Max Hatton to Terry Hill, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2002*

Two years ago in 2014, in an email he sent around to his friends, he wrote the following (again denying that a divine person died at Calvary)

*"I made it clear to Terry that as long as I believe that Jesus was Yahweh ad [sic] as long as I believe in the Trinity doctrine he has no hope of convincing me that the Divine Word died on the cross. He admits that Jesus as God could not die prior to the Incarnation but He must think that something happened to the Divine Jesus because of the Incarnation for after it he believes that the Divine Jesus could die." (Max Hatton, Email to multiple recipients, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014)*

This is exactly what I do believe. It is also exactly the same as we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. This is where Ellen White wrote

“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. 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*)

Ellen White is saying here that in becoming incarnate, the divine Christ could do something that He could not do in His pre-existence as God. This is my belief. I believe that in His pre-existence, Christ could not die but by becoming incarnate He could die – which is exactly what He did at Calvary. The divine person died in His humanity. This was the main purpose of the incarnation.

In reply to Max Hatton's claims I wrote the following article

### [A response to a trinitarian's view of the death of Jesus](#)

It can be seen therefore that this 'one indivisible substance' concept has very serious implications. Apart from anything else it seriously affects the atonement. In trinitarianism, only the humanity of Jesus dies – not the divine person. Consistently though we have been told through the spirit of prophecy that a divine person did die at Calvary – also that only the death of a divine person would suffice as atonement for sin. This can be seen [here](#)

### [Ellen G. White - The death at Calvary of the divine Son of God](#)

From reading the above, it becomes very clear that Ellen White could not have agreed with the trinitarian view of what happened at Calvary. On this count therefore she could never have been a trinitarian.

I will now show you another very good reason why Ellen White could never have been a trinitarian. In fact it shows that she would have rejected any notion of such a thing.

### **The risk factor**

There is one belief held by many non-trinitarians (such as myself) that would be totally impossible to hold in the trinitarian model of God yet it was a belief held by Ellen White. As of yet I have never heard a trinitarian Seventh-day Adventist theologian or minister promote it let alone use her writings in support of it. Personally I believe that in our understanding of God's love for fallen humanity, this teaching should be paramount. It certainly reveals the depth of God's love for us.

This is the belief that when the decision was made for Christ to become incarnate, a risk was taken concerning His eternal existence. This belief is prohibited in trinitarianism. This is because in trinitarianism, none of the three divine personalities (because all three constitute the 'one indivisible God') can ever be separated from each other. It is true to say also that in trinitarianism,



nor can any of the three go out of existence. This is probably why, even though it is of the utmost importance, trinitarians will never be found promoting this 'risk' belief. What other teaching though can say more about God's love for us (that in order to save us He was willing to put His Son's eternal life at risk)?

Did Ellen White say anything concerning this risk? She certainly did. Here are some statements from her writings. These will firmly establish she was not a trinitarian.

"We do not comprehend the infinite condescension of Christ in consenting to war with the enemy, or the infinite risk he ventured in engaging in the great controversy in our behalf." (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times 25<sup>th</sup> April 1892, 'The purpose and plan of grace', see also The Present Truth UK, February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1893*)

Ellen White speaks here of the "infinite risk" that Christ took in securing our salvation. We will allow her to explain what she meant.

"To the honor and glory of God, His beloved Son -- the Surety, the Substitute -- was delivered up and descended into the prisonhouse of the grave. The new tomb enclosed Him in its rocky chambers. If one single sin had tainted His character the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber, and the world with its burden of guilt would have perished." (*Ellen G. White, Ms. 81, 1893, p. 11, Diary entry for Sunday, July 2, 1893, Wellington, New Zealand*)

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"Christ has found his pearl of great price in lost, perishing souls. He sold all that he had to come into possession, even engaged to do the work, and run the risk of losing his own life in the conflict." (*Ellen G. White, Letter 119, 1895*)

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"Remember that Christ risked all; "tempted like as we are," he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict." (*Ellen G. White, General Conference Bulletin 1<sup>st</sup> December 1895 'Seeking the Lost'*)

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"Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss." (*Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages. Page 49 'Unto you a Saviour'*)



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“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'*)

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“Had there been the least taint of sin in Christ, Satan would have bruised His head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope.” (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1898, see also Selected Messages Book 1 page 256*)

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“Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His Deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty.” (*Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, 10th May 1899, 'Christ glorified'*)

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“He became subject to temptation, endangering as it were, His divine attributes. Satan sought, by the constant and curious devices of his cunning, to make Christ yield to temptation.” (*Ellen G. White, Letter 5, 1900, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventists Bible Commentary Volume 7 page 926*)

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“He Took the Infinite Risk      The issues at stake were beyond the comprehension of men, and the temptations that assailed Christ were as much more intense and subtle than those which assail man as His character was purer and more exalted than is the character of man in his moral and physical defilement. In His conflict with the prince of darkness in this atom of a world, Christ had to meet the whole confederacy of evil, the united forces of the adversary of God and man; but at every point He met the tempter, and put him to flight. Christ was conqueror over the powers of darkness, and took the infinite risk of consenting to war with the enemy, that He might conquer him in our behalf. (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1915, 'The Mighty and Inspiring Conflict', see also Signs of the Times, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1893, 'The plan of salvation'*)

If God is a trinity as purported in our fundamental beliefs (meaning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute the 'one God' therefore these three persons are inseparably connected to each other in the one indivisible being

of God), this would make it impossible for any of the three to lose their eternal existence. Ellen White obviously disagreed with this reasoning. She believed they could become separated – and permanently. She was definitely not a trinitarian.

Very interesting is a remark that was made by Ella Robinson. She was the eldest granddaughter of Ellen White. In an interview with James R Nix (present Director of the Ellen G. White Estate) she spoke of a sermon she had heard her grandmother (Ellen White) preach. She recalled

“I see grandma standing in the pulpit, dressed in her loose fitting, black sack suit, narrow cuffs of white, narrow white collar secure at the throat by a small broach. She’s been telling of the matchless love of Christ in suffering ignominy and death and even running the risk of eternal separation from His Father in heaven by taking upon Himself the sins of the world. She pauses, look up, and with one hand resting on the desk and the other lifted heavenward she exclaims in a ringing voice, ‘Oh, Jesus, how I love you, how I love you, how I love you.’ There is a deep hush. Heaven is very near.” (*Ella Robinson, Interview with James R Nix, October 12th 1969*)

It is evident that those close to Ellen White - those who had heard her preach and those who knew of her beliefs - knew she firmly believed that in entering into a plan of redemption for the human race, there was a risk taken concerning Christ's eternal existence. As Ella Robinson recalled, Ellen White spoke of Jesus “[running the risk of eternal separation from His Father in heaven](#)”. This is in keeping with the statements of Ellen White that we have read above. This is where she had said that “[tempted like as we are,](#)” he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict” - also that if Christ had sinned, “[the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber](#)”, thus He would never have been resurrected by His Father. This would have been an eternal separation.

In 1899, Ellen White wrote these words

“The Captain of our salvation was perfected through suffering. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was necessary for the awful darkness to gather about His soul because of the withdrawal of the Father’s love and favor, for He was standing in the sinner’s place, and this darkness every sinner must experience. The righteous One must suffer the condemnation and wrath of God, not in vindictiveness; for the heart of God yearned with greatest sorrow when His Son, <the Guiltless,> was suffering the penalty of sin. This sundering of the divine powers will never again occur throughout the eternal ages.” (*Ellen G. White, Manuscript 93, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1899*)

\*The words “the Guiltless” were added by Ellen White in her own handwriting after the manuscript was typed.

If Christ had sinned, this “**sundering**” would have become permanent. It would have meant the eternal separation of the Father and the Son. The above had been written by Ellen White the year following the publication of the '*Desire of Ages*'. Note too that it was after the publication of this book that she made a number of these 'risk' statements. What should all of this be telling us? It is telling us that in this book, Ellen White could never have intended to depict God as a trinity of divine beings as in the trinity doctrine.

Even if nothing else was known of Ellen White's writings (other than we have just read above) it would be impossible to conclude that she was a trinitarian. There is no way a trinitarian can believe the things she wrote in these statements. This is why trinitarianism destroys the gospel. In other words, the trinity doctrine not only conceals what God and Christ risked in order to save us but also actually denies it. I could never be a trinitarian and deny this risk. I would consider myself a traitor to both God and Christ. On this subject I could say more but that's enough for now.

### **Closing remarks and observations**

So as can be seen Larry, a correct understanding of Ellen White's writings reveals unmistakably that she was not a trinitarian. Never could she have agreed with the philosophical reasoning found in this teaching. It is the same with me. My beliefs, based upon the Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, could never allow me to believe that God is a trinity as purported by the trinity doctrine. Yes I believe along with Ellen White that there are three persons of the Godhead but this is a far cry from saying that I believe God to be a trinity as depicted by the trinity doctrine. I make no such confession.

As I said to Bro Poirier, Ellen White would never have agreed that Scripture could support such reasoning as the trinity doctrine. We know this because she said that in the incarnation Christ literally exiled Himself from the Father (which is impossible in trinitarianism). She also said that in the making of the decision for Christ to become incarnate a risk was taken concerning His eternal existence. Again this is impossible in trinitarianism. This is more than likely why our theologians, in promoting the trinity doctrine, do not use her writings where she says these things. If they did it would defeat their entire argument. In fact Fernando Canale, when I spoke to him about this subject, replied to me saying

“Thank you for reading the treatise on the Docrine [sic] of God. God the son could have sinned but he would not have lost his existence. I do not know where you got the idea that sin would have brought the death of the eternal Son of God. God, because he is God cannot die. Humans can die. Sin in Christ would have determined death for all humans, and would have affected the life of the Son and the trinity in ways we cannot comprehend but will not have cause the death of the Son and change the Trinitarian structure of God's Being.” (*Fernando Canale, email to Terry Hill, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007*)

There is much that could be said about this statement but space does not permit, suffice to say that it can be see that Canale, as a trinitarian, denies

that Christ could lose His existence – even if He had sinned. Like Max Hatton he also says that Christ cannot die therefore he is saying that the divine person of Christ did not die at Calvary. This is exactly the opposite to what we have been told through the spirit of prophecy. Notice particularly the final sentence.

In a follow-up email he replied

“I think that when we go to the possible consequences for the divinity if Christ had sinned, we enter into the mystery that has not been revealed and probably cannot be revealed because it touches the inner structure of the divine being we cannot understand. The idea that Christ will not have resurrected if he had sinned seems contradictory to the fact that he has life in itself. By definition the divinity cannot cease to exist, or to be the fountain of life. Besides, the real inexistence of the second person of the divinity will probably make the other two disappear as well because God is one. Yet, please bring in mind that we can indulge in our questionings but we should be respectful of divine mystery (privacy) were silence is golden as Ellen White used to say.” (*Fernando Canale, email to Terry Hill, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2007*)

This again is exactly the opposite to what Ellen White wrote. She said that if Christ had sinned “the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber” but Canale says, as a trinitarian, “The idea that Christ will not have resurrected if he had sinned seems contradictory to the fact that he has life in itself”.

As we can see from the above, it has been revealed to us what would have happened to Christ if He had sinned. God therefore has not been silent on this matter.

The one thing that Ellen White did repeatedly emphasise is that the divine person of the Son of God did die at Calvary. This can be seen in the articles I recommended above.

As I also made clear to Bro Poirier: It is so sad that in order to promote such philosophical reasoning as the trinity doctrine we need to, as a denomination, 'keep silent' about some of the things God has told us through Ellen White. Look at it this way: on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest), what value would you place on the belief that in order to save us, Christ risked His eternal existence? I would say it was 10+ yet today we (a) do not use her writings to promote such a belief and (b) we promote a theology which actually denies (prohibits) it. This really is very sad. Should we not, rather than be selective of what has been written by Ellen White, use ALL of what she wrote? Perhaps then we shall understand what God really has revealed to us through her.

This brings me to my final point.

Last month along with your emails you sent to me Bro Poirier's article '*Ellen White's Trinitarian Statements: What did she actually write?*'. I had already

read this article a number of times so there was nothing in it that I did not know already but thank you for sending it. What I would comment on though is the phrase “Trinitarian Statements”.

I quite agree that if God was a trinity (as depicted by the trinity doctrine) then the Ellen White quotes used by Bro Poirier would be in keeping with this but what about the things she wrote that actually denies trinitarianism (as we have noted above)? Should not these also be included in understanding what God has revealed through His messenger?

It is exactly the same with the quotes you suggested that I read in the book ‘Evangelism’. I quite agree that as they are quoted in this book, they would fit into a trinitarian concept of the Godhead but what about the things she wrote that are decidedly non-trinitarian? Why were these not included? There must be a reason for it. Why be so selective?

Picking out statements from Ellen White’s writings that would fit into a trinitarian concept of God whilst at the same time ignoring her statements that fail to do so is not the correct way to use her writings. To understand correctly what God has revealed through her – also to find out what Ellen White’s beliefs were on this topic – it is necessary to quote all of what she wrote on this subject. Never, just to suit our own agenda, should we be selective in what we quote. This would be tantamount to deception.

Allow me to make just one final observation.

It does not matter how many ‘three persons of the Godhead’ statements we come across in Ellen White’s writings, neither does it make any difference how many times we find where she said that the Holy Spirit is a person. The fact remains that neither of these things, nor these two things together, make her a trinitarian. I believe that what has been shown above confirms this to be true.

I do hope that some of the above shows why I believe that the trinity doctrine is a false doctrine – also why I believe that Ellen White could not have been a trinitarian. If you believe I am wrong in my reasoning then please feel free to comment. I will look forward to hearing from you.

God bless

Terry

Website: <http://www.theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk>

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Last edited 18<sup>th</sup> January 221