

The Death of the Son of God

JASON SMITH·TUESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2016

I received a message from one of the brothers asking me to clarify my view on whether Divinity died or not. He explained that he was having some difficulty reconciling EGW's seemingly opposite statements on the matter. Therefore I am going to share my understanding on the matter now and I will attempt to parse between the SDA trinitarian view (at least as some of our leading men ascribe to it) and a common SDA non-trinitarian view

RISK OF ETERNAL DEATH IMPOSSIBLE ACCORDING TO THE TRINITY:

Our first point here will be to show that according to **some** SDA trinitarians today the Son of God did not actually face the risk of the death. Our brothers say this because they do not see the pre-incarnate 2nd Person of the Godhead as begotten. Thus they cannot perceive the Son of God as a separable Being from God, even during His incarnation! Their understanding of the one true God is 3 Persons **inseparably unified**. This has become the central pillar of their theology that all other doctrines yield to. The following SDA scholars spell it out plainly: *“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) *“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)

*“The Three are obviously One, **INEXTRICABLY BOUND TOGETHER IN ONE DIVINE SUBSTANCE.**”* (Max Hatton, Our God is an awesome God, page 21, April 2014)

Now, again, this is the central pillar of modern day SDA theology (which is quite strange inasmuch as it is not taught explicitly to us anywhere in the Bible or SOP) and it is why the Biblical Research Institute made the following claim in a document *“prepared for the dialogue with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.”* *“Nature of God. A reading of the above statements [the SDA Fundamental Belief statements] will show that with respect to their doctrine of God **Seventh-day Adventists are in harmony with the great creedal statements of Christendom**, including the Apostles' Creed, Nicea 325), and the*

additional definition of faith concerning the Holy Spirit as reached in Constantinople (381)". (Seventh-day Adventists, an Introduction to Their Beliefs, George Reid, Biblical Research Institute) Now the salient point here is that this assumed doctrine of 3 Persons unified as one indivisible God triumphs over the incarnation (which actually is taught to us quite explicitly in the Bible and SOP!). Max Hatton clarifies why this is in this next quote:

*"In the Divine/human Jesus we have Divinity and humanity somehow MERGED TOGETHER **BUT NOT INEXTRICABLY**.* (Email, Max Hatton to Terry Hill, 28th February 2014)

Here the doctrine of the trinity has led to a conclusion contrary to inspiration. We are told by the servant of the Lord: *"The two expressions "human" and "divine" were, in Christ, **CLOSELY AND INSEPARABLY ONE**, and yet they had a distinct individuality.* {ST May 10, 1899, par. 11}

*"Christ's humanity **COULD NOT BE SEPARATED** from His divinity."* {ST April 14, 1898, par. 6}

Now that we have exposed the trinitarian understanding of a 3 person indivisible God and elevation of this assumed doctrine above the incarnation we are now prepared to examine its logical conclusion in terms of whether the Son of God risked death or not.

"...Deity is immortal and therefore cannot die in any sense. It is impossible for an immortal being to give up life. Immortality is deathlessness..." (E. Gane "Ellen G. White on the Absolute Deity of Christ)

As sister White warns us *"the track of truth lies close beside the track of error, and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error* (1SM 202). There is an aspect of truth and error in the statement above. As we continue on I hope that you will be able to discern this for yourself. Let's continue on with some other statements that show the logical conclusion of the trinitarian view here.

*"Thank you for reading the treatise on the Doctrine [sic] of God. **God the son could have sinned but he would not have lost his existence. I do not know where you get 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, 14th September 2007)

***"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, 16th September 2007)

“So now you know where I stand on the little game the Anti-Trinitarians like to play. They try to set you up for a big fall by their use; I should say misuse, of Ellen White. I would answer them on No. 1. “Yes He could have sinned.” On No. 2. “It would have affected Him terribly if He had sinned. He would be shattered to a depth that we could never understand. God would be defeated, the human family would be forever lost, the residents of the other occupied planets would be in great distress and would probably lose a lot of confidence in God. It would have **adversely affected Christ’s humanity somehow but his Deity would not be affected to the extent that He would be obliterated. He is Eternal**, Omnipotent, and such-like and **could never die.**” .{Max Hatton, HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST FROM ANTI-TRINITARIANS} “Thank you for collecting the Ellen White quotes in this area. I have examined each one of them and find that **they do not state exactly what would have happened if Christ had sinned. There was a risk, that is clear, but just what that risk was is not clearly spelled out.**” (Glyn Parfitt to Terry Hill, 8th October 2009)

"The danger in Jesus incarnation was that if he sinned, then divinity and the trinity would be eternally linked to Jesus’ dead humanity. **Jesus actually risked a fate worse than death**, being eternally connected with sin. (Email from Douglas Jacobs to Jason Smith, Monday, January 26, 2015) Now the men I have quoted above are leading men in the denomination. They teach the pastors! Yet we see it asserted that the Son of God, if He had sinned, would not have lost existence. Glyn Parfitt, after reading EGW’s clear statements on what would have happened if Jesus had sinned, which I will show shortly, claims that it is not clearly spelled out! And Dr. Jacobs, who also saw these quotes, conjured up a most interesting view in response to them. In response to his view we note that there is no such thing, Biblically speaking, as “a fate worse than death.”

Now interestingly enough when I brought this same subject up in this forum, by asking two of the trinitarian defenders if the self-existent God, the great I AM, could cease to exist eternally here was the reply I received. The question was dismissed as being outside of the realm of reality (that makes it sound like it is not a real possibility) and not necessary to know. One went further and said that I was playing God and going beyond what was revealed.

Brother Richard Mendoza wrote: *Your question is out of realm of reality. We don't need to know what would have happened if Christ (human and divine being) had sinned.* [End Quote]

Brother Shelton Donald wrote: *..., I exactly told him he is playing God* [End Quote]

Brother Shelton Donald wrote: *.., All anti-trinitarians trying to go beyond the whats revealed!!! Thats what the enemy of God trying to be and finally cast out of heaven.* [End Quote] In a different forum, even after being exposed to these EGW quotes, brother Mendoza wrote this: Brother Richard Mendoza wrote: *That whether non of the members of the TRINITY "could loose their existence" is again speculative and has not been revealed in the Bible. . . Leave it there. . . EGW or no EGW. . . It's not Bible doctrine. . .*

Are you aware that BIBLE DOCTRINE is what the whole BIBLE teaches on a given subject. . . A faint illusion is not a doctrine. . . If it were a doctrine we would find it throughout the BIBLE. [End Quote] Presumably he meant to write “one” instead of “non” Now I share this as more evidence that the trinitarian view, at least as some hold to it, has a particular

problem with this idea. **Yet let's see what the Bible and SOP say Jesus' fate would have been. We will see that it's not speculative at all according to the Bible and even more so the SOP.**

RISK OF ETERNAL DEATH A REALITY ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE AND SOP:

Proof 1:

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 6:23)

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians we understand that there is a 1st death (likened to a sleep) and a 2nd death (a permanent non-existence). The "death" being spoken of in the verse above is contrasted with "eternal life" and this evidences that we are talking about the ultimate wage of sin, the 2nd death, a permanent non-existence. This is the wage that we will pay for our sins if we do not accept the atonement made by the Son of God. Keep that in mind as we look at this next verse.

*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. (Heb 2:17)*

According to Hebrews, the prerequisite for Jesus to be our High Priest, is that He had to be made like us "in all things." **If we face the risk of eternal non-existence but He did not then was He really made like us in all things? Of course not!** Unbeknownst to them (at least we hope so!) our trinitarian brethren above are actually invalidating the plan of salvation by disqualifying Jesus as our High Priest.

Proof 2:

Besides the argument above we note that the book of Hebrews explicitly tells us that Jesus faced the possibility of death.

*Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears **unto him that was able to save him from death**, and was heard in that he feared; (Heb 5:7)*

It would be a complete farce for the Son of God to be relying upon His Father as the One "able to save Him from death" if He did not actually really face such a possibility.

Proof 3:

To the Biblical data above we add a selection of quotes from sister White which explicitly assert this reality. "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)

*"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')*

*“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)

*“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 1st December 1895 ‘Seeking the Lost’)

*Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour’s 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.***{1SM 256.1

*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*** (The Signs of the Times, May 10, 1899)

It is irrefutable that the incarnated Son of God could have actually died! He was not permanently, unconditionally God. The whole idea of 3 persons inseparably unified as the one true God does not pass the test of inspiration. As EGW explains the Man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty. He had stepped down from His high position as co-regent with the Lord God Almighty and would not take that title back up again until He completed His work on earth. Now of course this is anathema to trinitarianism as Joseph Rector (former Adventist and now a critic of the church) asserts: *“.. no solid Trinitarian would ever say, “The man Christ was not the Lord God Almighty.” Jesus WAS the Lord God Almighty—even in His humanity.*(Joseph Rector’s Review of Ellen White Under Fire) When we understand that the pre-incarnate Son of God was begotten of the Father then we can more easily comprehend how He could have a conditional Deity. He could actually give His life back to the Father. Look at the ST May 10, 1899 quote again. **The Son, who received the Father's life as His own, voluntarily put the retention of His Deity, His very eternal existence, on a conditional basis.** He was offering to give it all back to the Father if He failed in His work of redeeming humanity. This was His infinite risk. Please keep in mind that last quote above (ST May 10, 1899) because it will be of use to us as we move on to the next heading.

DEITY DID NOT DIE:

Now just as certain of my trinitarian brethren struggle with (or reject) the idea that the Son of God could have lost His eternal existence or Deity (i.e. He would have actually have died) so also some of my non-trinitarian brethren struggle with (or reject) the idea that His Deity did not die. Yet this is a clear teaching of the Bible and SOP too.

Proof 1:

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body. (John 2:19-21)

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I

have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-19)

The Bible is very clear here. Jesus stated "*I will raise it [My human body] up*" and He explained that God the Father told Him to lay down His life and then take it back up again. He had the power to do this. Now if anyone else said this, even an angel, it would be insanity! Remember the Son of God had two distinct individualities within Himself that were inseparably one. *The two expressions "human" and "divine" were, in Christ, CLOSELY AND INSEPARABLY ONE, and yet they had a distinct individuality.* {ST May 10, 1899, par. 11} This is a part of the mystery of godliness. Jesus was well aware of what His Divine individuality enabled Him to do (i.e. resurrect Himself).

Proof 2:

We see a very clear statement from sister White that confirms what is above.

*"As a member of the human family, He was mortal; **BUT AS A GOD, HE WAS THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE TO THE WORLD. HE COULD, IN HIS DIVINE PERSON, EVER HAD WITHSTOOD THE ADVANCES OF DEATH, AND REFUSED TO COME UNDER ITS DOMINION;** but **He voluntarily laid down His life**, that in so doing He might give life and bring immortality to light. He bore the sins of the world, and **ENDURED THE PENALTY, WHICH ROLLED LIKE A MOUNTAIN UPON HIS DIVINE SOUL.** He yielded up His life a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die. He died, not through being compelled to die, but by His own free will. This was humility. The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man. He brought into His human nature all the life-giving energies that human beings will need and must receive.* {5BC 1127.1}

*Wondrous combination of man and God! **HE MIGHT HAVE HELPED HIS HUMAN NATURE TO WITHSTAND THE INROADS OF DISEASE BY POURING FROM HIS DIVINE NATURE VITALITY AN UNDECAYING VIGOR TO THE HUMAN.** But He humbled Himself to man's nature. He did this that the Scripture might be fulfilled; and the plan was entered into by the Son of God, knowing all the steps in His humiliation, that He must descend to make an expiation for the sins of a condemned, groaning world. What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination cannot take it in. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh! God became man! It was a wonderful humility.* {5BC 1127.2}

Do you see it? Jesus could have tapped into His Divine nature and used It to sustain His human one. This is actually the resource which enabled Him to speak of Himself as self-resurrecting. I hope this is clear. Also please keep this quote in mind because we will return to it again. And again let us also remember that His Deity could be lost. This is how He, even as as a God, could have ceased to exist. **So He had the exact same risk as we do but His risk of death is found in the conditional retention of His Deity.** I hope this is clear. **Proof 3:**

With the point about His two distinct individualities established we are now, hopefully, prepared to understand and accept the following series of statements.

When Christ was crucified, it was HIS HUMAN NATURE THAT DIED. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible. (MR 21 pg 418)

When the voice of the angel was heard saying, "Thy Father calls thee," HE who had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again," "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," CAME FORTH FROM THE GRAVE TO LIFE THAT WAS IN HIMSELF. DEITY DID NOT DIE. HUMANITY DIED, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." In His divinity Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. (SDABC Vol 5 pg 1113)

"I am the resurrection, and the life." He who had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again," came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. HUMANITY DIED: DIVINITY DID NOT DIE. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. (YI Jan 3, 1905; SM bk 1 pg 301)

"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... {Lt97-1898.11} Now let's move on to what I was asked about.

DID EGW CONTRADICT HERSELF? I'm assuming the brother who asked me this question was talking about the following quotes:

"When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. DEITY DID NOT SINK AND DIE; that would have been impossible. (MR 21 pg 418)

"There is no one who can explain the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. Yet we know that He came to this earth and lived as a man among men. The man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty, yet Christ and the Father are one. THE DEITY DID NOT SINK UNDER THE AGONIZING TORTURE OF CALVARY, yet it is none the less true that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." {Ms140-1903.28}

"Men need to understand that DEITY SUFFERED AND SANK UNDER THE AGONIES OF CALVARY. Yet Jesus Christ whom God gave for the ransom of the world purchased the church with His own blood. The Majesty of heaven was made to suffer at the hands of religious zealots, who claimed to be the most enlightened people upon the face of the earth. {Ms153-1898.21}

What are we to make of these statements? Here are my observations:

1) In all 3 statements Deity did not die.

- A) Statement 1- Deity did not sink AND DIE
- B) Statement 2 - The Deity did not sink under the agonizing torture of Calvary
- C) Statement 3- Deity suffered and sank under the agonies of Calvary.

2) In the 2nd and 3rd statement, which do seem to contradict each other, we see the definite article "the" in only one of the statements.

- A) Statement 2 - THE Deity did not sink
- B) Statement 3- Deity suffered and sank

It would seem to me that the solution here is that when sister White speaks of "THE Deity" which did not sink under Calvary's torture she is speaking of God the Father. Notice in that quote she has differentiated the Lord God Almighty (the Father) from the Man Christ Jesus. And when she says that Deity suffered and sank under Calvary's torture she is there speaking of the Son. And again please bear in mind that in none of the statements does Deity die. **So then why would the Son as Deity sink at Calvary but not "the Deity" (aka: the Father)?** I believe the answer is found in the quote mentioned previously to which we now return.

"He bore the sins of the world, and ENDURED THE PENALTY, WHICH ROLLED LIKE A MOUNTAIN UPON HIS DIVINE SOUL... {5BC 1127.1}

It was the Divine Person of the Son who took the "sins of the world" which was "like a mountain upon His Divine soul." He was the One who felt this weight and this is what caused a sinking. There is no contradiction here. EGW never taught that Deity died.

SO THEN WHAT DID HAPPEN AT CALVARY?

If Deity did not die then what did happen? I believe two things. Let's look at the first.

I believe the Son of God slept. He died the 1st death for He did not remain conscious. He, as a whole Person, slept in the tomb but please remember that He retained His Deity. Thus the power of an eternal life was still within Him.

"The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with his body, and did not wing its way to Heaven, there to maintain a separate existence, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight. All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with his body in the sepulcher; and when he came forth it was as a whole being; he did not have to summon his spirit from Heaven. He had power to lay down his life and to take it up again. {3SP 203.2}

Now let's look at the second. As we noted above the weight of the sins of the world was placed upon Christ. It was like a mountain upon His Divine soul. And something actually happened with the Oneness that existed between the Son and Father. It was sundered.

*"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. {Ms93-1899.23}* Now there is an important point to understand here. Jesus had committed Himself into the hands of His Father. Remember His prayer? *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) **The Son of God placed His entire Being, even His Divinity, into the Father's hands. Had He sinned in any particular then He would have never lived again but we know He did not sin.*** Thus the Father never took His Son's Deity away. And so the Son trusted that the Father would awaken Him according to the prophetic Word and this is what happened. *He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house **as a prisoner of divine justice**, and he was responsible to the Judge of the*

*universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, **and his Father only could release him.*** {YI May 2, 1901, par. 8} Here we see that God the Father only could release His Son. Even though the Son “came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself” because His “Deity did not die” (SDABC Vol 5 pg 1113) it was the Father who had to release Him. God did not give life to His Son at this time but woke Him up. These are great mysteries. So then what of the 2nd death? As we spoke of much earlier in this document, the wages of sin is an everlasting death. It will be the experience of every unrepentent sinner. Yet those who are in Christ will not experience this for the 2nd death has no power over them. Why not? Because Christ, in His Divine Person, has actually born our punishment. He was separated (aka: sundered) from the Father so that we would never have to be. He took our punishment.

*"The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, **“Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance”*** (Letter 22, February 13, 1900)

*Jesus was bearing the sin of the world; he was enduring the curse of the law; he was vindicating the justice of God. **Separation from his Father, the punishment for transgression, was to fall upon him,** in order to magnify God's law and testify to its immutability. And this was forever to settle the controversy between Satan and the Prince of heaven in regard to the changeless character of that law. (ST Dec 9, 1897)*

"He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. (DA pg 25)

I believe this great and awful 2nd death - an everlasting death- was experienced by Christ in His soul, in His Divine Person. He alone could pay this type of debt. As the begotten Son of God, a Being whose existence cannot be reckoned according to time, He is greater than even everlasting death. By this momentary sundering of Divine powers the everlasting death penalty was swallowed for humanity. This, to me, is the greatest proof the full Deity of the Son of God. The fact that He could pay a penalty like this in an instance by separating from the Father and yet still resurrect shows Him to be the Son of God beyond doubt.

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4)

Glory! Hallelujah! Praise the Name of Jesus, the begotten Son of God who was begotten as a man for our sakes. Praise the Name of God His Father, the One who gave Him to our fallen race! He did not have to yield His Son. And may such praise be made through the enabling power of Their holy Spirit. Maranatha beloved! This same Jesus will soon appear.

“He is coming to us by His Holy Spirit today. Let us recognize Him now; then we shall recognize Him when He comes in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. God calls upon you to get ready to meet Him in peace. {RH April 30, 1901, Art. D, par. 8}

Could Jesus die? Could He have lost His eternal existence? How did He pay the 2nd death?

These are great questions, are they not? Here of late I have been in communication with brother Fernand Canale (author of the article "The doctrine of God" in the SDA Bible Commentary Series). He is one of the leading Trinitarian scholars within the church.

While we discussed many issues (and I approached the matter with questions, particularly because he is a well-reputed expert) one of the subjects we had something of a discord about (and it was very peaceable and he even issued a disclaimer in his email that he could be wrong about certain things) was whether or not the Son of God could have lost His eternal existence.

My answer to that question is yes. My correspondence with him stimulating my thinking and I decided that I would like to make a very clear articulation of my view. And from that platform I would like to touch upon the other issues questioned above. The pool I will draw from is God's Word, the Bible, and then also some from the testimony of Jesus through Sister White. So without farther ado, and please remember to pray for God's guidance, let's jump into it.

(PS: These are also my sermon notes but if anyone wants to borrow them, or even preach it, feel free. As they say preaching is nothing but the art of sanctified plagiarism! Lol!)

Bible Evidence # 1:

"For the **wages of sin is death**; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 6:23)

As Biblically informed Christians we understand that there is a 1st death (likened to a sleep) and a 2nd death (a permanent non-existence). The "death" being spoken of in the verse above is contrasted with "eternal life" and this evidences that we are talking about the ultimate wage of sin. A permanent non-existence. This is the wage that we will pay for our sins if we do not accept the atonement made by the Son of God. Please keep that in mind as we look at this next verse.

"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. (Heb 2:17)

According to Hebrews, the prerequisite for Jesus to be our High Priest is that He had to be made like us "in all things." If we face the risk of eternal non-existence but He did not then was He really made like us in all things? Of course not! Unbeknowst to them (at least we hope so!) certain of our Trinitarian brethren are actually invalidating the plan of salvation by disqualifying Jesus as our High Priest.

Bible Evidence # 2:

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him **from death**, and was heard in that he feared; (Heb 5:7)

Note: It would be a complete farce for the Son of God to be relying upon His Father as the One "able to save Him from death" if He did not actually really face such a possibility. When we add this to our first evidence, about the type of death He faced, then this is even stronger.

Bible Evidence # 3:

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17, 18)

Note: There is a point here that the KJV brings out that I believe many miss because, in their zeal to prove a certain view, they tend to focus on the ability of Christ in vs. 18. Yet look at the terminology in vs. 17.

Jesus says "I lay down my life" (present tense, active voice, indicative mood) that "**I might take it again**" (future tense, active voice, subjunctive mood)

What I have just shared above should help you to see a point. Jesus spoke about something in the present tense and then the future tense.

He was laying down His life. And this is Him speaking in the active voice. He was doing this Himself. And it is in the indicative mood, which means a simple statement of fact.

Yet what Jesus said He would do in the future, is that He "might take it again." Now what does that word "might" mean? It indicates a possibility but not a certainty. You see Jesus is now speaking in the active voice. It is something He would do if it was to be done but in the subjunctive mood. You see the subjunctive mood indicates contingency. It is not used to express a **certainty but a possibility!**

Are you getting it? I hope you are! Jesus is saying here that I lay down my life that (so, in order) that I "might" or "may be able to" or "can possibly" take it up again.

Now I know some people will think this is blasphemous but it's just what the Greek says! Jesus Himself is cognizant of the fact that there was a viable possibility that He might not be able to take His life back up again. And now you should see how Bible evidences # 1 and # 2 are supported here by Jesus' own statement which is our Bible evidence # 3.

And now let me touch briefly upon vs. 18. We will break it down in 3 parts - A, B and C.

A) "No man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself...(vs. 18a)

When Jesus says no man taketh it from me, this is an **open assertion of His Divinity**. Due to His Divine individuality, which was distinct within Himself and retained all of its essential properties and characteristics, He actually had the ability to sustain His own life. He had life within Himself as the Father has life within Himself. That is what was given to Him. **Thus, in order to die, He actually had to yield up His life**. He had to refuse to exercise that attribute and use it to sustain Himself. This is an amazing condescension on His part.

"As a member of the human family, He was mortal; BUT AS A GOD, HE WAS THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE TO THE WORLD. HE COULD, IN HIS DIVINE PERSON, EVER HAD WITHSTOOD THE ADVANCES OF DEATH, AND REFUSED TO COME UNDER ITS DOMINION; but He voluntarily laid down His life, that in so doing He might give life and bring immortality to light. He bore the sins of the world, and ENDURED THE PENALTY, WHICH ROLLED LIKE A MOUNTAIN UPON HIS DIVINE SOUL. He yielded up His life a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die. He died, not through being compelled to die, but by His own free will. This was humility. The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man. He brought into His human nature all the life-giving energies that human beings will need and must receive. {5BC 1127.1}

*In your letter in regard to the temptations of Christ, you say: "If He was One with God He could not fall." . . . The point you inquire of me is, In our Lord's great scene of conflict in the wilderness, apparently under the power of Satan and his angels, was He capable, in His human nature, of yielding to these temptations? {3SM 129.2} I will try to answer this important question: As God He could not be tempted; but as a man He could be tempted, and that strongly, and could yield to the temptations. His human nature must pass through the same test and trial Adam and Eve passed through. **HIS HUMAN NATURE WAS CREATED; IT DID NOT EVEN POSSESS THE ANGELIC POWERS.** It was human, identical with our own. He was passing over the ground where Adam fell. He was now where, if He endured the test and trial in behalf of the fallen race, He would redeem Adam's disgraceful failure and fall, in our own humanity. {3SM 129.3}*

B) "...I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again....(John 10:18b)

When Jesus says I have power to lay it down and take it up, this is an open acknowledgement of what the blend of His humanity and Divinity allowed for Him to do or, maybe a better way of saying this, is what it allowed God to do for Him and through Him. It was actually His human nature that enabled Him to die, even though He was yet a Divine Person too.

"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... {Lt97-1898.11}

And it was the retention of His Divine nature, even in death, that allowed for Him to take His life back up again. That is, be awoken from death by His Father. **Not given new life but awakened to the life that was dormant within Himself.**

"When the voice of the angel was heard saying, "Thy Father calls thee," He who had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again," "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," CAME FORTH FROM THE GRAVE TO LIFE THAT WAS IN HIMSELF. DEITY DID NOT DIE. HUMANITY DIED, but Christ now proclaims over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." IN HIS DIVINITY CHRIST POSSESSED THE POWER TO BREAK THE BONDS OF DEATH. (SDABC Vol 5 pg 1113)

C) "...This commandment have I received of my Father. (John 10:18c)

When Jesus said this, we see His total dependence upon God the Father. This is the great statement of faith from the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words He knew that He

would die. That He would have the experience! He knows what it is like, it is nothingness, no conscious existence, and He also knew that His Father would wake Him up from it. Thus He had to trust God in death just like we have to trust Him in death! Do you understand?

Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love. {PP 36.2}

He not only tasted death for every man (Heb 2:9) but did so in order to take away our fear of it! He said, in effect, by faith in God the Father, I will go into the grave and face your greatest fear for you. Then, when you see me conquer it you will have a reason to no longer be afraid of it, if you are in me. Again do you understand?

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; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb 2:14, 16)

Yet His death was no farce. **He could not resurrect Himself because He was not alive and conscious.** I would note though that the popular Trinitarian teaching that His Divinity stayed alive has a grain of truth in it but if articulated poorly it is misleading because people will interpret that to mean that Jesus' two natures separated (or experienced two different things) at death with the Divine one remaining conscious while the human one experienced the unconscious slumber of death. Yet this was not so. Jesus, as a whole Person, slept in the tomb. He did not go outside of Himself at death.

"The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with his body, and did not wing its way to Heaven, there to maintain a separate existence, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight. All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with his body in the sepulcher; and when he came forth it was as a whole being; he did not have to summon his spirit from Heaven. He had power to lay down his life and to take it up again. {3SP 203.2}

So only His Father could raise Him so John 10:18c was the ultimate expression of faith on the part of the Son of God!

"He was in that stony **prison house as a prisoner of divine justice**, and he was responsible to the Judge of the universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, and his Father only could release him. {YI May 2, 1901, par. 8}

We must understand, again, that God did NOT breathe new life into Son but rather awakened Him to the Divine life that was dormant within Himself. His Divinity did not die (that is, it did not cease to exist).

"...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...**{ST May 10, 1899, par. 11}

Did you catch it? You see He retained His Deity but put it on a conditional basis. It could not be lost WHILE He stood faithful and true. Many do not understand the length of the chain let down to rescue us and how great of a condescension the only begotten Son of God made for us. He actually altered His nature to make this possible.

"...Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity...{Ms29-1899.4}

Thus He paid an infinite cost and had a painful process just to become one of us! That, by itself, is amazing!

"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... {Lt97-1898.11}

And so here we find how the Son of God risked death and staked His own eternal existence on the controversy.

"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 1st December 1895 'Seeking the Lost')

"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')

"Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, **he would have bruised the Saviour's 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.** {1SM 256.1}

Now there is one last point to be addressed here. Since the wages of sin is everlasting death (see Bible evidence # 1 above) then this must have somehow been paid for us. How then could Christ pay an everlasting death yet resurrect? Should He have remained in the grave, forever separated from God continually paying our sin debt from that point forward?

Honestly, if your theology subjects God and His Son to time then I do not see how you can avoid an answer of yes. If, however, your theology believes that God made the ages through His Son (see Heb 1:2) then there is an answer. He would transcend time, just like His Father, being begotten from all eternity. That is, His realm or mode of existence, the place from whence His goings forth (or origins - Heb: motswah) is not to be reckoned, even cannot ever be reckoned by time. While we cannot, ourselves, relate to God in any other dimension but time and thus we speak of Him as the Ancient of days or the days of eternity past, there is nevertheless a simultaneous conception of "eternity" (Heb: olam) in the heart that prevents us from fathoming His work from beginning to end (Eccl 3:11).

This is the prerogative and realm of the only begotten Son. Only He can touch God in fullness if you will, being the Son of His substance.

Consequently, how the everlasting death penalty was paid, as though the eternal Spirit which was shared between Father and Son.

"How much more shall the **blood of Christ, who THROUGH [Gr: dia] THE ETERNAL SPIRIT offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** (Heb 9:14)

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)

We know of Christ that He was "a divine spirit" in a human temple of flesh.

"He united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. He united himself with the temple.... {YI December 20, 1900, par. 7}

His statement in Luke 23:46 is a letting go of Himself, a surrendering to the death and trusting God the Father to wake Him back to life. And even more than this it was a separation of **Their oneness in spirit.**

"As the disciples comprehended it, as their perception took hold of God's divine compassion, **they realized that there is a sense in which the sufferings of the Son were the sufferings of the Father.** 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. {YI December 16, 1897, par. 5}

"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.... {Ms93-1899.2}

"It was not a dread of the physical suffering he was soon to endure that brought this agony upon the Son of God. He was enduring the penalty of man's transgression, and shuddering beneath the Father's frown. He must not call his divinity to his aid, but, as a man, he must bear the consequences of man's sin and the Creator's displeasure toward his disobedient subjects. **AS HE FELT HIS UNITY WITH THE FATHER BROKEN UP**, he feared that his human nature would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the prince of the power of darkness; and in that case the human race would be irrecoverably lost, Satan would be victor, and the earth would be his kingdom. The sins of the world weighed heavily upon the Saviour and bowed him to the earth; and the Father's anger in consequence of that sin seemed crushing out his life. {3SP 95.3}

God the Father and His only begotten Son, who were one in spirit, **Both possessing the fullness of the Godhead bodily, were sundered! They were split apart! Something happened internally between the Two. The Divine powers (Father and Son) were**

separated - the holy Spirit, which, though a person (internally shared person?), is the power and presence of God - something mysterious happened that level in terms of the linkage between Father and Son. And here the 2nd death was swallowed! Only a greater than all eternity future, if you will, can pay this and resurrect. This is why His resurrection is the greatest and most irrefutable proof of His Divinity!

And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: (Rom 1:4)

"The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul, the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This forced from the lips the anguished cry, **"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"** **It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God,**—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God. {BTS March 1, 1908, par. 3}

"It was only by the death of Christ that the human race could be redeemed. Man had broken the law of God, and Christ alone could atone for the transgression. But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, to make him willing to save. No, no. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, **THE HEART OF INFINITE LOVE PAID THE PRICE OF OUR REDEMPTION.** "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." {BTS March 1, 1908, par. 4}