

Be not deceived – Christ really is the Son of God

By Terry Hill

"I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the "last days"; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth. Thus God dealt with Peter when He was about to send him to preach to the Gentiles. (Acts 10.)

To those who may circulate this little work, I would say that it is designed for the sincere only and not for those who would ridicule the things of the Spirit of God." (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings, page 78, 'Experience and Views', 1882*)

Concerning the person of Christ – also His pre-existence - there is today within the Seventh-day Adventist Church a great deal of confusion over what God has revealed through the spirit of prophecy. I find that Ellen White's writings are very often used (or perhaps better said 'misused') to say things she never really believed. For this reason I share with you the following. Hopefully it will serve also to correct certain misrepresentations of our past denominational faith.

Misunderstandings

Throughout the time period of Ellen White's ministry (1844-1915) – also during the decades immediately following her death (1920's, 1930's and 1940's) – the standard teaching within Seventh-day Adventism (the denominational belief) was that in eternity Christ was begotten (brought forth) of the Father therefore He is truly the Son of God. Thus He was said to be – because of this Sonship - God in the person of the Son (certainly not someone created by God).

It can be said therefore that for the first 100 years of our existence as God's remnant people – 70 of which were when we had God's messenger (Ellen White) amongst us - this was the standard teaching within Seventh-day Adventism. That we were teaching this for this length of time can be clearly seen because even in 1936, in a set of Sabbath School lesson studies ordained by General Conference to explain our fundamental beliefs to all who took part in these studies, this Sonship belief was still highly prominent. For a detailed look at this set of lesson studies, see chapter 16 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Godhead/aGHD1.pdf>

At the same time as they held to this Sonship belief, Seventh-day Adventists rejected the trinity doctrine. This is because they reasoned it to be unscriptural. Regardless of this they did believe in the full and complete divinity of Christ. He was said to be God – in the person of the Son.

It is more than likely that this rejection of the trinity doctrine - which as most realise is the mainstay teaching of many Christian denominations - plus the belief that in eternity Christ was begotten of God, was the reason for those not of our faith sometimes concluding that we did not believe in the divinity of Christ. This of course

was a total misunderstanding of what we really did believe.

When she was in New Zealand, Ellen White experienced this misunderstanding for herself. She explained (after saying that those of other denominations were spreading false rumours about what was believed by Seventh-day Adventists)

“For instance, an effort was made to obtain the use of the hall at a village four miles from Hastings, where some of our workers proposed to present the gospel to the people; but they did not succeed in obtaining the hall, because a school-teacher there opposed the truth, **and declared to the people that Seventh-day Adventists did not believe in the divinity of Christ.** This man may not have known what our faith is on this point, but he was not left in ignorance. He was informed **that there is not a people on earth who hold more firmly to the truth of Christ's pre-existence than do Seventh-day Adventists.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 5th December 1893, ‘An appeal for the Australasian field’)

To Seventh-day Adventists, this was confirmation that what they were teaching concerning Christ's pre-existence was the truth – and remember, this was when we were teaching that in eternity He was begotten (brought forth) of the Father therefore He is truly the Son of God.

For further details of how early Seventh-day Adventists regarded the pre-existent Christ, see chapter 13 of the Godhead study found here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Godhead/aGHD1.pdf>

Ongoing confirmation through the spirit of prophecy

Ellen White fully endorsed the Sonship belief held by Seventh-day Adventists. Never did she say that in this matter they were mistaken. In fact in 1895, which was two years after she made the above statement, she wrote in the 'Signs of the Times' (this is when she was still in Australia and near the completion of compiling 'The Desire of Ages')

“A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, **but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person**, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 30th May 1895, ‘Christ our complete salvation’)

As we have already noted, this begotten (Sonship) belief was then, in 1895, the denominational faith of Seventh-day Adventists therefore this spirit of prophecy statement would again have been confirmation that our Sonship belief concerning Christ was in accordance with what God has revealed. In other words, this statement confirmed to early Seventh-day Adventists that their Sonship belief was

the truth.

These Sonship sentiments are exactly the same as those found in E. J. Waggoner's book 'Christ and His Righteousness' (1890). Throughout the book he says that Christ is begotten of God. This is why, so he explained, Christ rightfully takes the name Jehovah. This Sonship belief was the basis of his message at the now famous 1888 General Conference session held at Minneapolis.

Concerning the person of Christ, there was no objection to Waggoner's reasoning at Minneapolis. In fact Ellen White endorsed his message. She said that at Minneapolis had been given "the message that God commanded to be given to the world" (*Testimony to Battle Creek 1st May 1895, MR 1100 Volume 14*) – also that it had been "the most faithful preaching of the gospel" (*Manuscript No 1216, Volume 16, 1889*).

Six weeks after making the above 'begotten' (Sonship) statement, Ellen White penned the following words (again assuring Seventh-day Adventists that what they believed about Christ's pre-existence was the truth)

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, gave his only begotten Son, tore from his bosom **Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." (*Ellen G. White, Review & Herald 9th July 1895 'Te Duty of the Minister and the People'*)

Notice here we are told that Christ was "**made in the express image**" of God's person whereas in the previous statement it is said that He was "**begotten in the express image of the Father's person**". Both of these statements speak of something happening (begotten/made) in eternity but as Ellen White said, Christ is not a created being (see above). This is because He was not created as were angels but in eternity was brought forth of God (the Father).

Thus it is that Christ is God Himself in the person of the Son, or, to put it in another way, Christ is God's person (personality) shown (expressed). He is therefore truly the Son of God and truly God.

Begotten in eternity

Apart from the fact that it was in eternity, God has not revealed 'when' Christ was begotten but what we have been told is (note this was with reference to Jesus saying to the Jews "before Abraham was I AM" - see John 8:58)

"Here Christ shows them that, altho they might reckon His life to be less than fifty years, **yet His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation.**" (*Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times. 3rd May 1899 'The Word made flesh'*)

Ellen White then added

“The existence of Christ before His incarnation **is not measured by figures.**”
(*Ibid*)

It is not important for us to know exactly when Christ was begotten of God only that He is begotten of God. This tells us that He is not only the Son of God but also God in the person of the Son.

In his book 'Christ and His Righteousness' – also in keeping with what we have just read from the spirit of prophecy - Ellet Waggoner penned these words

“The Word was “in the beginning”. **The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase.**” (E. J. Waggoner, 'Christ and His Righteousness', page 9, 1890)

He then added with respect to **how** and **when** the Son of God was begotten

“It is not given to men to know **when or how the Son was begotten**; but we know that He was the Divine Word, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created.” (*Ibid*)

“We know that Christ “proceeded forth and come from God” (John 8:42) but it was **so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man.**” (*Ibid*)

Although using different words, this was only the same as was said by Ellen White (see above). This was the belief she endorsed

Christ the Son of the infinite God

The year after her experience in New Zealand (see above), Ellen White asked the youth of her day

“Who is Christ? (Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, 28th June 1894, 'Grow in grace')

She answered by saying

“**He is the only begotten Son of the living God.** He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought, -- as a thought made audible.” (*Ibid*)

In another statement - this time written in 1905 (which was 7 years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages') - she explained

“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)

In personality it is the Father who is the infinite God. In personality, Christ is the Son

of the infinite God. Yet because Christ was brought forth (begotten) of God (the Father) He is, as Ellen White says here, “truly God in infinity”. It is only correct to say therefore that Christ is truly God in the person of the Son.

Repeatedly Ellen White wrote of Christ as the Son of the infinite God. She wrote such as

“When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission by assuming the likeness of a man **when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God.**” (Ellen G. White, letter, to J. H. Kellogg, Letter No. K-303, August 29th 1903)

“**The Son of the infinite God came to this earth**, and honored it with his presence. He emptied himself of his glory, **and clothed his divinity with humanity**, that humanity might touch humanity, and reveal to fallen man the perfect love of God.” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 6th June 1907, ‘No other Gods before me’)

“When in the fulness of time **the Son of the infinite God came forth from the bosom of the Father** to this world, **He came in the garb of humanity, clothing His divinity with humanity.**” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 17th May 1905, ‘A teacher sent from God’)

“The One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. **He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the Infinite God.**” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies on Education 1897, page 173, ‘The divine teacher’)

“But while God's Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding his pre-existence. **The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God**, in union and oneness **with his Father.**” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 5th April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh’)

“The whole nation [of Jews] called God their Father, and if Jesus had done this in the same sense in which they did, the Pharisees would not have been so enraged. **But they accused Jesus of blasphemy, showing that they understood that Christ claimed God as His Father in the very highest sense.**” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 5th March 1901, ‘Lessons from the Christ-Life’)

“When Christ was upon earth, it was difficult for those with whom he daily associated to realize **that he was divine**. It was difficult for the members of his own family to comprehend **the fact that he was the Son of God.**” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 11th June 1889, ‘Man's Failure to Comprehend Divinity in Humanity’)

“It was natural for the parents of Jesus to look upon Him **as their own child**. He was daily with them, His life in many respects was like that of other children, and **it was difficult for them to realize that He was the Son of God.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 81, ‘The Passover visit’)

“O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that **the infinite God** would consent to the humiliation of **his own dear Son!**” (Ellen G. White, *Christian education*, page 107 ‘The book of books’, 1893)

Christ is God essentially

Referring to the incarnation Ellen White wrote

“**He [Christ] was all the while as God, but he did not appear as God.** He veiled the demonstrations of Deity which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration, of the universe of God. **He was God while upon earth**, but he divested himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of a man.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 5th July 1887, ‘Christ man’s example’)

“**Christ had not ceased to be God when He became man. Though He had humbled Himself to humanity, the Godhead was still His own.**” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 663, ‘Let not your heart be troubled’)

“True, he declared, "There is none good but One, that is God," but again he said, "I and my Father are one." **Jesus speaks of himself as well as the Father as God**, and claims for himself perfect righteousness.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 10th October 1892, ‘Draw from the source of strength’)

“Before men or angels were created, the Word was **with God, and was God**”. (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 5th April 1906, ‘The Word made flesh’)

“The world was made by him, "and without him was not anything made that was made." If Christ made all things, he existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. **Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense.** He was **with God from all eternity**, God over all, blessed forevermore.” (Ibid)

“God showed his love for us **by adopting our nature, in the person of his Son**. God himself inhabited humanity, making us partakers of the divine nature, **that by the incarnation and death of his only begotten Son**, our adoption as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ might be fully accomplished. The origin of this wonderful achievement was his own spontaneous love.” (Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, 16th December 1897, ‘The New Commandment part 1’)

Controversy in Heaven

There are many spirit of prophecy statements that could be quoted as saying that Christ, in His pre-existence, was the Son of God. Here are some that show the original controversy in Heaven was concerning His Sonship.

It will be seen in these statements that the fallen angels were trying to persuade the unfallen angels that Christ is not really the Son of God. Needless to say, this was a major controversy. Christ's identity was being questioned.

From the spirit of prophecy we read

“Satan well knew the position which Christ had held in Heaven as the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father; and that Christ should leave the joy and honor of Heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension. He knew that this condescension on the part of the Son of God boded no good to him.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 4th August 1887, ‘Christ’s triumph in our behalf’)

“When Satan learned the purpose of God [the creation of our world], he was envious at Christ, and jealous because the Father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man. Satan was of the highest order of angels; but Christ was above all. He was the commander of all Heaven. He imparted to the angelic family the high commands of his Father.” (Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, Volume 3, page 36, ‘The temptation and fall’, 1864)

“All the angels were astir. Satan was warring against the government of God, because ambitious to exalt himself and unwilling to submit to the authority of God’s Son, Heaven’s great commander.” (Ibid, page 37)

“While some of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion, others reasoned with him to dissuade him from his purposes, contending for the honor and wisdom of God in giving authority to his Son. Satan urged, for what reason was Christ endowed with unlimited power and such high command above himself! He stood up proudly, and urged that he should be equal with God. He makes his boasts to his sympathizers that he will not submit to the authority of Christ.” (Ibid)

“This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ.” (Ellen G. White, Letter 42, to Elder D. A. Parsons, April 29th 1910, as quoted in ‘This day with God, page 128)

In contrast to this we are told

“They [the unfallen angels] clearly set forth that Jesus was the Son of God, existing with him before the angels were created; and that he had ever stood at the right hand of God, and his mild, loving authority had not heretofore been

questioned; and that he had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, 9th January 1879, ‘The fall of Satan’, see also *Spirit of Prophecy Volume 1* page 17, ‘The Fall of Satan’)

The fallen angels were trying to obscure the fact that Christ really is the Son of God. It was on this point (the Sonship of Christ) that they were seeking to deceive the loyal angels.

Satan has brought this dispute down to earth. He and his cohorts are still trying to persuade people today (even Christians) that Christ is not really who He claimed to be – meaning the one and only begotten Son of God.

Some may ask why is he doing this. The answer is returned through the spirit of prophecy

“Satan is determined **that men shall not see the love of God, which led him to give his only begotten Son to save the lost race**; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.”(Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, 20th March 1894, ‘Christ the center of the message’)

It is only when we realise that God gave His own dear Son to die for us that we can fully understand what it really cost God to save us. This truly was a father sacrificing his own son for someone else’s misdeeds. What amazing love! Can it be fully comprehended?

Unfortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist church officially says today that Christ is not really the Son of God. Instead they say He has only been role-playing the part (pretending to be a son) – which to a great extent conceals the love of God which led Him to sacrifice His Son. Needless to say, this realisation requires us to make a choice regarding whom and what we believe.

For a detailed understanding of what the Seventh-day Adventist Church is teaching today concerning this 'role-playing Christ', also the 'role-playing Godhead', please see chapter 12 here

<http://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Godhead/aGHD1.pdf>

No change – no deception

Through the spirit of prophecy we have been told

“**There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ**. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had **made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning**. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions.” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 36, ‘Why was sin permitted?’)

“Though He was the Son of God, yet He had taken human nature upon Him, and He was moved by human sorrow. His tender, pitying heart is ever awakened to sympathy by suffering. He weeps with those that weep, and rejoices with those that rejoice.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 533, ‘Lazarus come forth’)

“Not long before this [the raising of Lazarus], Christ's enemies had accused Him of blasphemy, and had taken up stones to cast at Him ***because He claimed to be the Son of God***. They accused Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan. ***But here Christ claims God as His Father, and with perfect confidence declares that He is the Son of God.***” (Ibid page 536)

“In all that He did, Christ was ***co-operating with His Father***. Ever He had been careful to make it evident that ***He did not work independently***; it was by faith and prayer that He wrought His miracles. ***Christ desired all to know His relationship with His Father.***” (Ibid)

The conclusion is

“Here the disciples and the people were to be given the most convincing evidence in regard ***to the relationship existing between Christ and God. They were to be shown that Christ's claim was not a deception.***” (Ibid)

Christ was not pretending to be a son. He really was – and still is – the divine Son of God. We have His word for it (John 3:16-18, 5:25, 9:35-38, 10:36, 11:4).

The Son of God in the gospels

The entire purpose of John's gospel is to show that Christ is truly the Son of God (John 20:31). This belief was the confession of His followers (see Matthew 14:33, 16:16, Mark 1:1, John 1:18, 1:34, 1:49, 3:36, 6:69, 11:27).

Christ's claim to divine Sonship was also the reason why the Jews said He was worthy of death (Matthew 26:33, 27:40, 27:43, John 19:17). Even the unclean spirits confessed that Christ was the Son of God (Matthew 8:29, Mark 3:11, 5:7, Luke 4:41, 8:28). It was also the point upon which Satan tested Christ (see Matthew 4:3, 6, Luke 4:3, 9).

Satan is still the master deceiver. He has a very clever deception for every truth of the Scriptures. It was so that we would not be fooled by these deceptions that God gave to His remnant people the gift of prophecy (see Ephesians 4:11-15).

We need to think on these things.

Terry Hill (UK)

Email:- terry_sda@blueyonder.co.uk

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

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