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# The Holy Spirit as a Representative of Christ in Ellen G. White's Writings

Denis Kaiser

When General Conference president A. G. Daniells (1858-1935) read a lengthy sketch of Ellen G. White's life at her final funeral service on July 24, 1915 in Battle Creek, Mich., he highlighted the character and nature of her teachings. He stated that her writings taught, among other matters, "The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead and Christ's representative on earth, is set forth and exalted as the heavenly teacher and guide sent to this world by our Lord to make *real* in the hearts and lives of men all that he had made *possible* by his death on the cross."<sup>1</sup> While Daniells knew that Ellen White was not the first person to advocate the personhood of the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> he was certainly correct in his estimation that her advocacy lent major support to the dissemination and broader acceptance among Seventh-day Adventists of the belief in the Holy Spirit as a person and the importance of the Spirit's work in representing Christ to the world.<sup>3</sup> Although Adventist scholars have generally perceived Ellen White's statements on the Spirit's personality and his representation of Christ as evidence for her growing vocal support for the biblical doctrine of the Trinity among Adventists starting in the mid-1890s, more recently there have been some voices that argued that she merely suggested that the Holy Spirit was not a distinct divine being

1. A. G. Daniells, "Life Sketch of Sister E. G. White by Elder A. G. Daniells," *Review and Herald*, August 5, 1915, 7.
2. See H. C. Lacey to W. C. White, July 27, 1936, White Estate Incoming Correspondence, EGWE; Gilbert M. Valentine, "Learning and Unlearning: A Context for Important Developments in the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of the Trinity, 1888-1898," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 55, no. 2 (2017): 213-36.
3. Jerry Moon, "The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003): 275-92; Denis Kaiser, "The Reception of Ellen G. White's Trinitarian Statements By Her Contemporaries, 1897-1915," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 25-38.

but a spiritual manifestation of Jesus and, in that sense, a third personification of divine power. Those contrasting interpretations of the terminology that Ellen White employed raise the question of how she herself understood those terms and how she wanted to be understood.

In this paper, I therefore examine how Ellen White employed terms such as “representation,” “personification,” and “personation” as well as their derivatives both in her published and unpublished writings. Besides those terms, I will also examine her usage of words that she utilized to describe the joint efforts of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with a particular consideration of the times during which she used those words because some people have asserted that Ellen White only began to use them to counter John Harvey Kellogg’s alleged attempt to introduce the doctrine of the Trinity into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1903.

## The Representative of Christ

Ellen White wrote an enormous amount of material on the work of the Holy Spirit, which we cannot summarize all here. There are nevertheless some aspects that may be outlined as they relate to this study. She frequently emphasized that the Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ.

Before discussing the role of the Spirit in representing Christ, it may be of interest to see that she also saw Jesus as a representative. She stressed that He was “man’s Representative and Advocate”<sup>4</sup> or “the representative of humanity.”<sup>5</sup>

Turning to the Spirit’s work as a representative, we may see that most of statements on the Spirit’s representation of Christ start in late 1894. Thus, in October 1894, she wrote that the Spirit is “our advocate that stands by our side and places our petitions before the

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4. Ellen G. White, *Redemption: or, The Ministry of Peter and the Conversion of Saul*, Apostles of Christ no. 7 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1877), 64; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, The Spirit of Prophecy 3 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1878), 3:331, 332.

5. Ellen G. White, “Accountability for Light,” *Review and Herald*, April 25, 1893, 257.

Father all fragrant with His [Christ's] merits.”<sup>6</sup> The statement is remarkable because Ellen White usually refers to Jesus as our advocate in heaven; here she refers to the Holy Spirit as our advocate on earth. Similarly, she distinguished the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit when she wrote to General Conference president O. A. Olsen in 1892 that “all heaven is in sympathy with you. While the Holy Spirit is our intercessor in the court of conscience, the Lord Jesus is our intercessor in the heavenly courts.”<sup>7</sup> In May 1895, she added that as the representative of Christ, the Spirit “comes to every individual of the human family to impress them with the truth.”<sup>8</sup> In September 1895, she wrote her son Edson,

The light has been shining upon justification by faith and the imputed righteousness of Christ. Those who receive and act in the light given, will, on their teachings, give evidence that the message of Christ crucified, a risen Saviour ascended into the heavens to be our Advocate, in the wisdom and power of God in the conversion of souls, bringing them back to their loyalty to Christ. These are our themes—Christ crucified for our sins, Christ risen from the dead, Christ our Intercessor before God: and *closely connected with these is the office work of the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ, sent forth with divine power and gifts for men. . . .* Those who will be worked by the Holy Spirit bear the living testimony, and have not only a theory of the truth, but are God’s witnesses.<sup>9</sup>

On October 11, 1895, she wrote S. N. Haskell that he did not have to feel lonely or discouraged because “the representative of Christ is

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6. Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Sabbath Afternoon Sermon, ‘The Vine and the Branches’,” October 27, 1894, Ms 43, 1894, EGWE.
  7. Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, October 22, 1892, Lt 97, 1892, EGWE. I am grateful to Dan Augsburg, the respondent to my paper, who pointed my attention to this statement.
  8. Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Thoughts on 1 Peter 1,” May 19, 1895, Ms 12, 1895, EGWE.
  9. Ellen G. White to James E. White, September 25, 1895, Lt 86, 1895, EGWE.

your companion,” alluding to the Holy Spirit without explicitly mentioning the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Eighteen months later, she did something similar when she wrote that “the representative of Christ is present” with us during the Lord’s supper.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, during a sermon on October 19, 1895, she admonished her audience: “Let us walk in the footsteps of Jesus, in order that the Holy Spirit, which is the representative of Christ, may be our Counsellor to guide us in every perplexity.”<sup>12</sup>

Representing Jesus, the Spirit wants to be our constant helper. If we “depend on the efficiency of the Holy Spirit,” we will receive “divine illumination.” As the Spirit “works outward” “from the heart,” a character is developed “that God will approve.” In this way, Christ fulfills the promise to never leave us nor forsake us (Deut 31:6; Hebr 13:5).<sup>13</sup> In Ellen White’s view, the Holy Spirit points believers to Christ and reveals Him to their minds. The Spirit works on their hearts and conforms them to the image of Christ because “Christ is the model upon which the Spirit works. By the ministry of His Word, by His providences, by His inward working, God stamps the likeness of Christ upon the soul.”<sup>14</sup> Besides clarifying that the Spirit is God, she also explains the work of the Spirit. In numerous ways, the Spirit points people to Jesus and transforms their minds into His character. Similarly, she wrote in May 1897,

*The Holy Spirit, sent in the name of Christ, was to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. The Holy Spirit was to be the representative of Christ, the Advocate who is constantly pleading for the fallen race. He pleads that spiritual power may be given to them, that by the power of One mightier than all the enemies of God and man, they may be able to overcome their spiritual foes. . . . The thought that their Teacher was going to leave them filled the disciples with sorrow; but He comforted them with*

10. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, October 11, 1895, Lt 26, 1895, EGWE.

11. Ellen G. White, “The Ordinance of Feet Washing,” March 29, 1897, Ms 19, 1897, EGWE.

12. Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Sermon at Armadale,” October 19, 1895, Ms 18, 1895, EGWE.

13. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, May 30, 1896, Lt 38, 1896, EGWE.

14. Ellen G. White to Brother Humphries, February 7, 1897, Lt 74, 1897, EGWE.

the assurance that He was coming again to take them to the place He would prepare for them. He assured them that if He went not away, He could not provide them with an Advocate: that if they only knew of the future blessings that were to come because of His departure, they would not mourn; they would rejoice in the presence of the Holy Spirit who was to be with them always. He told them that if He went not away, they could not do a greater work. But that deprived of His personal presence, by faith they would see and know Him, and by continuance in His love, by showing their appreciation of the truth by revealing to others what the truth is; in obeying His commandments and bearing a living, vital testimony; in doing His work that He had left in their hands, carrying it forward to completion, *they would become representatives of Christ.*<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit represents Christ to them, they are to represent Christ to others. As Christ's representative, the Spirit functions as a "constant guide" to lead the believers into all truth. Ellen White usually quoted John 14:26 in that context of the Holy Spirit's representation of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> She also mentioned that the Holy Ghost is the spiritual life of Jesus with which he imbues the believer. It was only by receiving that heavenly gift that evangelists were prepared to be representatives of Christ and teach the truth.<sup>17</sup> Later, she added that somebody who "is filled with the Holy Spirit" will prove "that he is a true representative of Christ in word, in spirit, in action" when severely tested and tried.<sup>18</sup> In addition, in John 14:16-17 she

15. Ellen G. White, "Christ's Representatives," May 13, 1897, Ms 44, 1897, EGWE.

16. Ellen G. White, "Search the Scriptures," June 9, 1898, Ms 67, 1898, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Search the Scriptures--No. 3," *Youth's Instructor*, October 27, 1898, 846; Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 450.

17. Ellen G. White, *Redemption: or, The Resurrection of Christ, and His Ascension*, Life of Christ no. 6 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1877), 60; White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 242.

18. Ellen G. White, "The Need of Self-Surrender," October 8, 1899, Ms 148, 1899, EGWE.

saw additional evidence for Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit "to do a mighty work as His representative."<sup>19</sup> To those who accepted Jesus as their "personal Savior, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness."<sup>20</sup>

Now, prior to the mid-1890s, Ellen White made a few remarks that seemingly equate the Holy Spirit with Jesus. Thus, she wrote in July 1891, "Jesus comes to you as the Spirit of truth." Speaking of "Christ as an indwelling Savior," she noted that "in order that Christ may be in the soul, it must first be emptied of self; then there is a vacuum created that may be supplied by the Holy Spirit."<sup>21</sup> Three years later, she wrote a letter to her son Edson and his wife Emma, in which she made remarks that would later reappear in slightly modified form in the *Desire of Ages*.

Lt 119, 1895	<i>Desire of Ages</i> ,
Although our Lord ascended from earth to heaven, the Holy Spirit was appointed as His representative among men. [John 14:15-18] Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His Father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth. The Holy Spirit is Himself, divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent. [John 14:26; 16:7] <sup>22</sup>	The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high. <sup>23</sup>

19. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 47.

20. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 49.

21. Ellen G. White, "Relationship of Institutional Workers," July 26, 1891, Ms 8c, 1891, EGWE.

22. Ellen G. White to James E. White and Emma White, February 18, 1895, Lt 119, 1895, EGWE.

23. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 669.



Whereas the first statement could, at least partially, give the impression that the Spirit is Christ in another mode, the second statement is more ambiguous in that regard and requires other qualifying statements. Another statement in this category comes from a letter written in April 1895 to W. W. Prescott, "It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ. If we commune with God, we shall have strength and grace and efficiency."<sup>24</sup>

Besides the idea suggested by some that the Spirit is a spiritual manifestation of Christ himself, there are at least two other explanations for those statements, many of which are unpublished. Those statements may either constitute incomplete statements or entail a deeper concept of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit.

Ellen White occasionally repeated the above idea even in publication, albeit with variation. Thus, in October 1895, she wrote, "Let us walk in the footsteps of Jesus, in order that *the Holy Spirit, which is the representative of Christ*, may be our Counsellor to guide us in every perplexity."<sup>25</sup> In December 1898, she wrote, "*The Holy Spirit, which is Christ's representative*, is now in our world to bring all things to our remembrance, that His claims shall not be forgotten or neglected."<sup>26</sup> This particular statement may be especially relevant as it could suggest that the 1894 statement to Prescott only lacks the apostrophe and the word "representative." This is in line with other statements where she spoke of "the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ,"<sup>27</sup> or of "the Holy Spirit, the representative of Himself [Jesus]."<sup>28</sup> In March 1896, she wrote that "the Holy Spirit, the representative of the Captain of the Lord's Host, comes down to direct the battle."<sup>29</sup> In June 1898, she added,

24. Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, April 10, 1894, Lt 66, 1894, EGWE.

25. White, "Sermon/Sermon at Armadale," Ms 18, 1895.

26. Ellen G. White, "True and False Gods; Abiding in Christ," December 1898, Ms 194, 1898, EGWE.

27. White to James E. White, Lt 86, 1895. See also White, "Search the Scriptures--No. 3," 846.

28. Ellen G. White to James E. White and Emma White, December 22, 1895, Lt 128, 1895, EGWE.

29. Ellen G. White to A. O. Tait, March 9, 1896, Lt 102a, 1896, EGWE.



He [man] prays for *the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ* to be his constant guide, to lead him unto all truth. He repeats the promise of Christ, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, even as I have said unto you.”<sup>30</sup>

In September 1901, she made a similar remark when she wrote, “It is *the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ*—the Christ-power—that impresses the heart. The Holy Spirit is sent to abide with us always.”<sup>31</sup> The statement that the Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ also appeared several times in print.<sup>32</sup>

However, maybe Ellen White did intend the statements exactly in that way. The study of her statements on “personification” and “personation” below will show that Ellen White suggested that just as the Father came to us through Christ because the latter perfectly represented and personified the Father—therefore Christ is truly the Son of God—so the Spirit perfectly represents and personifies Christ—therefore the Spirit is truly the Spirit of Christ. Through the Spirit, Jesus himself is coming. Whatever the Holy Spirit does reflects upon, represents, and personifies Jesus. This harmonizes with her statements that “when Christ ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit took His place, and was perfect representation of him,”<sup>33</sup> just as she had noted earlier

30. White, “Search the Scriptures,” Ms 67, 1898.

31. Ellen G. White, “Lessons from the Third of Revelation,” Ms 92, 1901.

32. Ellen G. White to James Edson White, September 25, 1895, Lt 86, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, October 11, 1895, Lt 26, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “The Ordinance of Feet Washing,” March 29, 1897, Ms 19, 1897, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, “The Lord’s Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing—No. 5,” *Review and Herald*, June 28, 1898, 405; Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Armadale, Australia], “Sermon at Armadale,” October 19, 1895, Ms 18, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Christ’s Representatives,” May 13, 1897, Ms 44, 1897, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, “Christ’s Representatives—No. 1,” *Southern Review*, September 13, 1898, [1]. See also Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, May 30, 1896, Lt 38, 1896, EGWE.

33. Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, December 18, 1898, Lt 126, 1898, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, “The Abiding Trust,” *Gospel Herald*, June 11, 1902, 178. I am indebted to Dan Augsburg who pointed my attention to that statement.

that Christ was the “One in the world who was a perfect representation of the Father.”<sup>34</sup>

Another observation may be in place at this point—her expanding use of personal pronouns for the Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup> Until the early 1880s, she referred to the Spirit always with the neuter pronoun. In 1884, she for the first time employed the masculine pronoun for the Spirit. Thus, she wrote, “The Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies the Saviour. It is *his* office to present Christ.”<sup>36</sup> Seven years later, she spoke of “the Holy Spirit working upon our hearts; *he* takes of the things of God, and presents them anew to our minds.”<sup>37</sup> Other statements could be cited. One might expect that by the mid-1890s she began to switch entirely to a use of the masculine pronoun when talking about the Holy Spirit, yet Merlin Burt notes that “she used the pronouns *It* and *He* variously both before and after her explicit statements on the Holy Spirit.”<sup>38</sup> It seems that Ellen White was comfortable with the existing tension of the Spirit being a person and a power. Interestingly, by the turn of the century, she would refer to all three—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—as both persons and powers, as will be shown below.

## The Holy Spirit Personifies Christ

In 1893, Ellen White wrote, “The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ’s name. He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality. We may have the Holy Spirit if we ask for it and make it [a] habit to turn to and trust in God rather than in any finite human agent who may make mistakes.”<sup>39</sup> The statement was never published during Ellen

34. Ellen G. White, “Christ’s Mission to Earth,” December 9, 1897, Ms 143, 1897, EGWE. Cf. also Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell and Hetty Haskell, January 18, 1902, Lt 1, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, April 15, 1903, Lt 55, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “A Divine Leader,” *Signs of the Times*, December 20, 1905, 9.

35. This has been outlined quite well in Merlin D. Burt, “Ellen White and the Personhood of the Holy Spirit,” *Ministry*, April 2012, 19. The findings of this paragraph are taken from him.

36. Ellen G. White, “Man’s Obligation to God,” *Signs of the Times*, April 3, 1884, 209.

37. Ellen G. White, “Meeting Trials,” *Review and Herald*, August 25, 1891, 529.

38. Burt, “Ellen White and the Personhood of the Holy Spirit,” 19.

39. Ellen G. White, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sons of God,” c. 1893, Ms 93, 1893, EGWE.

White's own life time, yet it illustrates her thinking on the subject. Some writers suggest that, in her view, the Spirit was simply another manifestation of Christ. Contrasting interpretations of the statement therefore make it necessary to explore how Ellen White used the term "personify" and its derivatives in other places.

She employed the terms "personification," "personify," "personifies," and "personified" in ten different cases. First, she stated that Jesus personified the Father. Thus, in 1893, she referred to Jesus as "the divine, personification of the Infinite God."<sup>40</sup> A couple years later, she added that Jesus, "the personification of the only true God, . . . possessed goodness, mercy, and untiring love, whose heart was ever touched with human woe, and accepting a murderer in his place."<sup>41</sup> Second, she made the above statement in 1893 where she reasoned that the Holy Spirit personifies Christ. Third, she wrote that an educator who has given his heart to Jesus and relies on Him will personify in his life "the humility of Jesus."<sup>42</sup> Here, a person personifies the character of Jesus, which is one crucial part of a proper representation of Him. Fourth, she also stated that some people personify Satan. Thus, in her view, when the Jewish leaders chose Barabbas over Jesus, Satan was exalted. In fact, "here was Satan personified, chosen before Christ, the Son of God."<sup>43</sup> "Satan was personified in Barabbas. The children acted as the father. His works, Christ declared, they would do."<sup>44</sup> Further, "by those who mocked Christ as He hung on the cross, Satan and his angels were personified. He filled them with vile and loathsome speeches. He inspired their taunts."<sup>45</sup> She enlarged that perspective by saying that those who "accuse the brethren," "discourage them in their work," and put "into the minds of others the evil leaven of criticism" "personify Satan" and become "his helping

40. Ellen G. White to J. Harris and Sister Harris, June 1893, Lt 93, 1893, EGWE.

41. Ellen G. White, "Christ or Barabbas?" c. 1897, Ms 40, 1897, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Christ or Barabbas?," *Review and Herald*, January 30, 1900, 65; Ellen G. White to A. J. Sanderson, March 5, 1902, Lt 30, 1902, EGWE.

42. Ellen G. White, "To Superintendents and Teachers," *Sabbath-School Worker*, October 1885, 54; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sabbath-School Work* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1900), 18.

43. Ellen G. White, "Wise and Unwise Use of Money," September 28, 1896, Ms 25, 1896, EGWE.

44. Ellen G. White, "Before Pilate and Herod," October 1897, Ms 112, 1897, EGWE.

45. Ellen G. White, "Christ and the Law," September 22, 1897, Ms 106, 1897, EGWE.

hand.”<sup>46</sup> Fifth, she employed the term also for Satan who will attempt to personify Christ and “counterfeit righteousness,” yet he “will turn people from the law of God.”<sup>47</sup>

There are some additional statements that exhibit a meaning of the term “personify” that at first sight differ from the above usage in which usually one person or being personifies another person or being. In a sixth case, she said that Jesus was “the personification of all human goodness.”<sup>48</sup> Here, Jesus personifies and reflects all positive human character traits, and thereby becomes the proper head of humanity. Seventh, in a similar way, she stated that the Lord “is the truth personified.”<sup>49</sup> She compares “the truths of God’s Word” that church workers are applying to people’s hearts with Christ who is the Truth. In his life, thoughts and words and actions were congruent, being an example to us in everything he said and did. In sum, his character reflected the image of God. Eighth, she stated that “the Lord designs His church below to be a place where heaven is personified.” That, for her, “heaven” was not merely an idea, concept, or principle is clear from her explanation in the sentence after the next one. She wrote that “the three highest powers of heaven combined to organize a church composed of members who would be distinguished from world-lovers and world-servers by the spiritual nature of their profession and their practical godliness.” Here, “heaven” was an allusion to “the three highest powers of heaven,” which she defined in numerous places in the document as “the Father, the Son, and the

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46. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, January 1, 1903, Lt 16, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “God is Stronger Than All the Powers of the Fallen Foe,” *Bible Training School*, June 1903, 2.

47. Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, September 19, 1895, Lt 54, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, September 19, 1895, Lt 55, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Special Instruction Relating to The Review and Herald Office, and The Work in Battle Creek*, [Pamphlet 80] (N.p.: n.p., 1896), 31 [reprint of Lt 54, 1896]; Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, Special Testimonies, Series A no. 9 (N.p.: n.p., 1897), 21 [a partial reprint of Lt 54, 1895]; Ellen G. White, “The Bible in Our Schools,” *Review and Herald*, August 17, 1897, 514.

48. Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, January 12, 1898, Lt 31, 1898, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Special Testimony to Battle Creek Church* (n.p.: The Author, 1898), 36.

49. Ellen G. White, “Gratitude to God for His Goodness and Mercy,” September 11, 1905, Ms 43, 1906, EGWE.

Holy Ghost.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, akin to the third case above, the church is to represent the unity and relationship of the divine persons. Ninth, in contrast, she used the term to suggest that Satan personified himself. That statement deserves a closer examination. During an oral, stenographically recorded conversation with A. T. Jones, she warned him against going to Battle Creek and Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. She stressed that “now, the devil personifies himself.” “The devil link[ed] right in with men that profess to believe the truth . . . [and] that Satan was here in person, right here.” Like the situation described in Zechariah 3:1-10, “[the devil] is right there, and he is accusing them, accusing.”<sup>51</sup> Whereas one could get the idea that Satan would personify himself, one has to consider her remarks in that context. She suggested that by employing specific humans, Satan became active in those situations. Through those humans, Satan would be represented and personified. Of course, that self-representation of Satan was self-serving and sinful. In that sense, this case was not much different from the fourth context above. Tenth, Ellen White noted that the religion of some elders in the church claims to do everything in the name of Christ, yet in their religion “self is personified” and reflected.<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly, in all the above cases, Ellen White employed the term “to personify” and its derivatives to describe how one being or several beings reflect or imitate the character or appearance of another being. Even when a self-representation happens, as in the case of Satan, even he has to utilize other beings to represent his own character.

## **The Holy Spirit Personates Christ**

Besides speaking of the Holy Spirit as one who personifies Christ, she also referred to the Spirit as one who is “personating Jesus.” Thus, on February 6, 1894, Ellen White wrote a letter to her son James

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50. Ellen G. White, “God’s Purpose for His People,” April 19, 1900, Ms 27a, 1900, EGWE.

51. Ellen G. White, “Interview Between E. G. White and A. T. Jones,” August 15, 1903, Ms 195, 1903, EGWE.

52. Ellen G. White, “Partakers of the Divine Nature,” *Review and Herald*, August 28, 1900, 545.



Edson White and his wife Emma, in which she noted, “The Holy Spirit is promised to all who will ask for it. When you search the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is by your side, personating Jesus Christ.”<sup>53</sup> One year later at the General Conference session, J. H. Durland quoted this remark from that letter, which was then printed in the *General Conference Bulletin*.<sup>54</sup> Whereas modern writers would likely use the term “impersonate,” Ellen White employed the term “personate.” Some readers surmise that her use of the term simply indicates a spiritual manifestation of Jesus himself and not that one being represents or imitates another being. Her use of the term “personate” and its variants (“personated,” “personates,” “personating”) in other cases may provide insight into Ellen White’s understanding of its meaning, suggesting a similar meaning in this case where she states that the Holy Spirit personates Jesus. She employed the term and its variants fifteen times for Satan attempting to personate Jesus Christ;<sup>55</sup> fifteen times for Satan and his demons personating dead people<sup>56</sup> such as the

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53. Ellen G. White to James E. White and Emma White, February 6, 1894, Lt 102, 1894, EGWE.
  54. White to James E. White and Emma White, Lt 102, 1894, quoted in J. H. Durland, “The Book of Colossians--No. 10: Life Hid in Christ,” *General Conference Bulletin*, February 17, 1895, 182.
  55. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: From the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of Time*, Spirit of Prophecy 4 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1884), 442; Ellen G. White, “Satan’s Last Deception,” c. 1884, Ms 16, 1884, EGWE [3x]; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* (Battle Creek, MI, Oakland, CA: Review and Herald; Pacific Press, 1888), 624; Ellen G. White, “David’s Prayer,” *Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888, 787 [a sermon delivered at Battle Creek, Mich., December 8, 1888]; White to James E. White and Emma White, Lt 102, 1894; Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, March 15, 1894, Lt 103, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Character of the Last Conflict,” *Review and Herald*, April 14, 1896, 225, 226; Ellen G. White to Church in Adelaide, April 22, 1897, Lt 1, 1897, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “God’s Messengers,” August 12, 1897, Ms 92, 1897, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Apostasies,” c. 1897, Ms 185, 1897, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Gospel Workers*, Special Testimonies, Series A no. 11 (N.p.: n.p., 1898), 9; Ellen G. White, “Sermon: The Christian’s Hope,” October 5, 1901, Ms 110, 1901, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1911), 624.
  56. Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 16 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), 72; Ellen G. White to G. I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, January 20, 1884, Lt 6, 1884, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Delusions of the Last Days,” c. 1894, Ms 92, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Delusions of the Last Days,” *Signs of the Times*, May 28, 1894, 451; Ellen G. White, “Try the Spirits,” *Signs of the Times*, September 3, 1894, 676; Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott and Sarah

late Samuel,<sup>57</sup> the apostles,<sup>58</sup> and beloved relatives or friends;<sup>59</sup> two times for Satan seeking to personate the angels of light;<sup>60</sup> two times for Satan personating the serpent in the garden of Eden;<sup>61</sup> two times for wicked humans who personate Satan in their fight against Jesus;<sup>62</sup> and one time for one individual (a Mr. Alpin) who personated another individual (a Dr. Terry).<sup>63</sup> Her usage of the term “personate” describes, without any exception, the attempt of one being to “personate,” represent, imitate, or pretend to be another being. In no case did one being refer to himself in another form. Interestingly, about 46 percent of the occurrences (17 out of 37) are statements made between 1890 to 1898. In most cases, Satan tries to personate Christ or deceased individuals (15 times each). In fact, in the letter to her son in February 1894, she makes the following two remarks: “When you search the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is by your side, *personating Jesus Christ*. . . . He [Satan] will assume to personate the angels of light, to *personate Jesus Christ*.”<sup>64</sup> In sum, all evidence suggests that her remark about “the Holy Spirit . . . personating Jesus Christ” is comparable to her statements about Satan attempting to “personate Jesus Christ” (one being personating another being), yet with the exception that only the Holy Spirit is personating or representing Jesus perfectly. Satan imitates Christ to deceive people into a counterfeit and bring

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Prescott, February 17, 1900, Lt 28, 1900, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “The Work for this Time,” February 20, 1900, Ms 16, 1900, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 2:172.

57. Ellen G. White, “Visit to the Hansen Home,” July 1886, Ms 58, 1886, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets: Or, The Great Conflict Between Good and Evil as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 680.
58. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 1884 ed., 4:375; White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, 1888 ed., 557; White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 1911 ed., 557.
59. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 1884 ed., 377; White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, 1888 ed., 560; White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 1911 ed., 560.
60. White to James E. White and Emma White, Lt 102, 1894, EGWE; White to A. T. Jones, Lt 103, 1894.
61. White, “Delusions of the Last Days,” Ms 92, 1894; White, “Delusions of the Last Days,” May 28, 1894, 451.
62. Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen and Wife, October 1896, Lt 80, 1896, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “As It Was in the Days of Noah: The Love of Our Redeemer,” June 4, 1902, Ms 72, 1902, EGWE.
63. Ellen G. White to Harmon Lindsay, April 24, 1893, Lt 79, 1893, EGWE.
64. White to James E. White and Emma White, Lt 102, 1894 (emphasis supplied).



them into bondage to himself, whereas the Holy Spirit truly represents Jesus and unselfishly points people to him.

## Ellen White's Use of the Term "Personality"

Beyond her use of the words "to personify" and "to personate," Ellen White suggested that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all have a personality and that their personalities are comparable and of the same type. She applied the term "personality" in combination with the verbs "to be" and "to have," with the preposition "of" to express a genitival construction, and simply without a possessive notion. Her use of the term in conjunction with the different verbs, propositions, and constructions will shed light on how she understood the term "personality" in varying contexts.

### Having a Personality

When she coupled the term "personality" with forms of "to have" she generally referred to it in terms of "individuality." The synonymous usage of the terms is evident in her remark that "every parent has an individuality, a personality, of his own," adding "he has just as much right to his personal independence as any ruler has."<sup>65</sup> There are at least four different entities of which she said that they have a "personality."

First, she spoke of Jesus as having a personality.<sup>66</sup> Second, she stated that God, the Father, has a personality. Interestingly, all those statements concerning the Father were made in response to the panentheistic views of God promoted by John Harvey Kellogg in his book *The Living Temple* from 1902 to 1903. In her view, "human science" which says that "God [was] not having a personality" was "a lie."<sup>67</sup> She also wrote "that God has a personality as verily as has Christ."<sup>68</sup> Third, in 1906, she added that "the Holy Spirit has a

65. Ellen G. White, "On the Church School Question," July 14, 1902, Ms 100, 1902, EGWE.

66. Ellen G. White, "The Personality of God," c. 1891, Ms 24, 1891, EGWE.

67. Ellen G. White, "Diary/Regarding Dr. J. H. Kellogg," January 5, 1902, Ms 236, 1902, EGWE.

68. Ellen G. White, "Christ Our Example in Medical Missionary Work," October 27, 1902, Ms 130, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, September 23, 1903, Lt 212, 1903, EGWE.

personality” too because otherwise “He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God.”<sup>69</sup> And fourth, she referred to the personality of various humans such as Herbert C. Lacey and his wife Lillian,<sup>70</sup> each medical worker,<sup>71</sup> each parent,<sup>72</sup> and each Christian.<sup>73</sup> Those remarks were often made to stress that all people have an individuality of their own and therefore their actions should not always depend on other people.<sup>74</sup> Of course, there were some people who “require[d] that every plan should reflect their own personality” and “their own methods of labor” because they did not trust others.<sup>75</sup> Yet, those who labor together with God retain their individuality as persons and they do not have “the same stamp of character.” While there is diversity between them, in their “diversity there is unity in Christ Jesus” and they should be “acting out” their personality in union with Christ.<sup>76</sup>

Whereas there are several statements on “the personality of” a person or somebody’s “personality” that likely fit her use of the word “personality” in terms of individuality, such statements will not be discussed here but in a separate section below because they appear in different constructions. Ellen White’s use of the phrase “to have a personality” always applies to beings who have their own distinct individuality, suggesting that she understood the term in the same way when she applied it to Holy Spirit.

## Being a Personality

Ellen White employed the term also to suggest that somebody is a “personality.” Her usage of the term in that way implied meanings such as a person or being with individuality.

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69. Ellen G. White, “Preach the Word,” February 7, 1906, Ms 20, 1906, EGWE.

70. Ellen G. White to H. C. Lacey and Lillian Lacey, March 22, 1897, Lt 89b, 1897, EGWE.

71. Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, October 9, 1902, Lt 159, 1902, EGWE.

72. White, “On the Church School Question,” Ms 100, 1902, EGWE.

73. Ellen G. White, “A Working Church,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, November 5, 1903, 1; Ellen G. White, “Diary/The Use of Means and Family Responsibilities,” October 20, 1903, Ms 204, 1903, EGWE.

74. White, “A Working Church,” 1.

75. Ellen G. White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895, 433.

76. White, “Diary/The Use of Means and Family Responsibilities,” Ms 204, 1903.

As seen above, she stated in 1893 that the Holy Spirit “is a distinct personality,” suggesting that the Spirit “is” a “personality” and is “distinct” from Christ.<sup>77</sup> She made similar statements concerning Christ and the Father. Thus, she referred to Jesus as being a personality.<sup>78</sup> Stressing his preexistence, she wrote that “His personality did not begin with His incarnation in the flesh.”<sup>79</sup> In 1903, she wrote that “*Christ and God are one, and yet they are distinct personalities*. Christ spoke with conscious authority, as one possessing in Himself power that would enable Him to perform His work.”<sup>80</sup> Here Ellen White stressed that while Christ and God “are one,” they also “are distinct personalities.” In other words, Christ “is a distinct personality” from the Father just as the Holy Spirit “is a distinct personality” from Christ. On May 19, 1905 she added the following explanation to Jesus’ prayer in John 17, which was published verbatim less than two weeks later in the *Review and Herald*:

*Christ is one with the Father, but God and Christ are two distinct personages. Read the prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of John, and you will find this point clearly brought out. How earnestly the Saviour prayed that His disciples might be one with Him as He was one with the Father. But the unity that is to exist between Christ and His followers does not destroy the personality of either. They are to be one with Him as He is one with the Father. By this unity they are to make it plain to the world that God sent His Son to save sinners. The oneness of Christ’s followers with Him is to be the great, unmistakable proof that God did indeed send His Son into the world to save sinners.*<sup>81</sup>

77. White, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sons of God,” Ms 93, 1893.

78. Ellen G. White to Brother Scazighini, August 3, 1894, Lt 77, 1894, EGWE.

79. White to Brother Scazighini, Lt 77, 1894.

80. Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Our First Parents,” September 27, 1903, Ms 140, 1903, EGWE (emphasis supplied).

81. Ellen G. White, “The Work in Washington (Second Surprise Party),” May 19, 1905, Ms 58, 1905, EGWE (emphasis supplied); Ellen G. White, “The Work in Washington: A Talk by Mrs. E. G. White, Friday, May 19, at 10 A.M.,” *Review and Herald*, June 1, 1905, 13.

Here, Ellen White employs the phrase “distinct personages” interchangeably with “distinct personalities,”<sup>82</sup> in all cases applying the terms to distinct beings. Lastly, in January 1906, she notes that

These words [John 17:18-23] show that *God and Christ are two personalities, distinct and separate. The unity* for which Christ prays, which is to make believers one with Him, as He is one with the Father, *does not destroy the personality of God or the personality of Christ.* The believers become sons of God, and *the personality of all is preserved.*<sup>83</sup>

In all those statements, Ellen White suggests that each being is a distinct personality or personage, and divine oneness and unity does not destroy those unique personalities but preserves them. While she highlighted that Christ perfectly represents the Father and the Holy Spirit perfectly personifies Christ, emphasizing their perfect harmony and unity/oneness, she also spoke of Jesus being a distinct personality from the Father and of the Holy Spirit being a distinct personality from Jesus. Therefore, her use of the phrase “distinct personality” shows that the Spirit’s personification of Jesus is one of one being personifying another being rather than one being personifying himself.

### **The Personality of Somebody**

In addition, Ellen White used the term “personality” also with the preposition “of” to express a genitival construction. Since those statements do not fall clearly into either of the two categories above—to have a personality (the individuality of a being), or to be a personality (a being with individuality)—they will be discussed separately here. Interestingly, in most of those statements, she warned of the sentiments and fanciful teachings of John Harvey Kellogg’s book *The Living Temple* “regarding the personality of God.”<sup>84</sup> In the context of

82. Cf. White, “The Fall of Our First Parents,” Ms 140, 1903.

83. Ellen G. White to E. W. Farnsworth and Wife, January 29, 1906, Lt 52, 1906, EGWE (emphasis supplied).

84. Ellen G. White to Teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, September 22, 1903, Lt 211, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, October 6, 1903, Lt 232, 1903, EGWE [4x]; Ellen G. White to Medical Students and Nurses, November 5,

those “spiritualistic theories,” she told the editors of the denominational periodicals to avoid trying “to explain in regard to the personality of God.”<sup>85</sup> Referring to both the Father and the Son, she wrote in November 1904 that “the oneness existing between the Father and the Son does not affect the distinct personality of each. And though believers are to be one with Christ, their identity and personality is recognized through the whole of this prayer [John 17].”<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile, in July 1904, she spoke in reference to Kellogg’s panentheistic ideas and stressed that “those who are indeed children of God” will enjoy “a blessed unity” and “will not, by their words and acts, lead any one to doubt in regard to the distinct personality of God, or in regard to the sanctuary and its ministry.”<sup>87</sup> In the same vein, she noted that Kellogg held differing views on the dwelling place of God.<sup>88</sup> She extended the warnings against the ideas found in *The Living Temple* to its “specious, deceptive sentiments regarding the personality of God and of Christ.” She felt that those sentiments turned the personalities of Christ and God into nonentities.<sup>89</sup> In her view, those “sentiments regarding the personality of God and Christ . . . would undermine the foundation of our faith,” among others as it relates to “the sanctuary question.”<sup>90</sup> They were “sophistries” and “mysticism” that were “doing away with the personality of God, and with the personality of

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1903, Lt 240, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Physicians and Ministers, October 1903, Lt 242, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Decided Action to be Taken Now,” October 1903, Ms 117a, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Teach the Word,” *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1903, 8; Ellen G. White, “A Right Knowledge of God,” November 8, 1903, Ms 132, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Letters to Physicians and Ministers: Giving Messages of Warning and Words of Counsel and Admonition Regarding Our Present Situation*, Special Testimonies, Series B no. 2 (n.p.: The Author, 1904), 51-54 [4x]; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Messages of Warning and Instruction to Seventh-day Adventists Regarding Dangers Connected with the Medical Missionary Work*, Special Testimonies, Series B no. 7 (N.p.: The Author, 1906), 37.

85. Ellen G. White to editors of our periodicals, May 21, 1904, Lt 179, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Brethren, May 21, 1904, Lt 377, 1904, EGWE.
86. Ellen G. White to Sister Grey, November 23, 1904, Lt 317, 1904, EGWE.
87. Ellen G. White to E. R. Palmer and Sister Palmer, July 8, 1904, Lt 233, 1904, EGWE.
88. White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Letters to Physicians and Ministers*, 51, 53.
89. Ellen G. White, “Remarks of Mrs. E. G. White to the Delegates of the Thirty-sixth Session of the General Conference,” May 30, 1905, Ms 70a, 1905, EGWE.
90. Ellen G. White to E. W. Farnsworth and Vesta J. Farnsworth, February 19, 1906, Lt 72, 1906, EGWE.



Christ.”<sup>91</sup> In the fall of 1907, she spoke of Dr. Kellogg’s “heresies regarding the personality of Christ and God.”<sup>92</sup> All those statements, particularly those in connection with God’s dwelling place, seem to employ the term “personality” in reference to a being or beings with individuality.

Another construction with the preposition “of” suggests the meaning of being, person, character, etc. Thus, she wrote in 1895, “Over and over the message has been given to me that we are not to say one word, not to publish one sentence, unless positively essential in vindicating the truth, that will stir up our enemies against us, and arouse their passions to a white heat by personalities.”<sup>93</sup> When reprinted in 1909 the statement read, “Over and over the message has been given to me that we are not to say one word, not to publish one sentence, especially by way of personalities, unless positively essential in vindicating the truth, that will stir up our enemies against us and arouse their passions to a white heat.”<sup>94</sup> While the construction “by way of personalities” sounds rather unusual, the context of the statements clarifies that she warned her readers against publicly criticizing and attacking people/personalities.<sup>95</sup>

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91. Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Thoughts on 2 Peter 1,” March 24, 1906, Ms 138, 1906, EGWE.

92. Ellen G. White to Members of the Battle Creek Church, October 24, 1907, Lt 356, 1907, EGWE.

93. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, January 30, 1895, Lt 11, 1895, EGWE.

94. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:241; Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are “Laborers Together with God”* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 326

95. Timothy L. Poirier, email to Denis Kaiser, March 24, 2021 [no. 1] This understanding of the use of the term “personality” in that construction is supported by Ellen White’s remark in late 1888. “Elder Waggoner had taken a straightforward course, not involving personalities to thrust anyone or to ridicule anyone. He conducted the subject as a Christian gentleman should, in a kind and courteous manner. This was acknowledged to be the case by those who were holding opposite views. If only Elder Morrison had done the same and had entered upon the work without these preliminaries before a large congregation, many not of our faith being present! Their course of action and their expressed ideas and objections against presenting these subjects before even our own people did not harmonize.” See Ellen G. White, “Looking Back at Minneapolis,” c. November–December 1888, Ms 24, 1888, EGWE. I am grateful to Tim Poirier for bringing this statement to my attention. Timothy L. Poirier, email to Denis Kaiser, March 24, 2021 [no. 2].

## Personality Without Possessive Notion

In some instances, Ellen White employed the term “personality” without any possessive notion. She occasionally did that when talking about the Father’s and Christ’s personality. Thus, she wrote in September 1903:

*While Christ stood forth as the Son of man, in His own personality, He was at the same time one with the Deity. He stood within the light surrounding the throne of God, and His words were spoken with power and authority. “The Father is in Me, and I in Him,” He declared. [John 10:38] “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” [Matthew 11:27] “Whatsoever the Father doeth, that also doeth the Son likewise.” [John 5:19] “I and My Father are one.” [John 10:30] “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” [John 14:9] Christ and God are one, and yet they are distinct personalities. Christ spoke with conscious authority, as one possessing in Himself power that would enable Him to perform His work.<sup>96</sup>*

Both at the beginning and at the end of the statement she stressed the distinct personalities of the Father and the Son while at the same time emphasizing their unity and oneness. Judging from that parallelism, it may therefore be concluded that the phrase “in His own personality” is qualified by the phrase “they are distinct personalities,” indicating that like the Father, Jesus is a person/being with individuality. One month later, Ellen White made another statement, expressing the same idea in slightly different words.

*While Christ stood forth distinct in His own personality, He reflected the luster of the greatness that was His because of His position of honor within the encircling light of the eternal throne, in unity with*

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96. White, “The Fall of Our First Parents,” September 27, 1903, Ms 140, 1903, EGWE (emphasis supplied).



*God*. His words were spoken with the authority referred to in the Scriptures: “Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.” [John 17:1] “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” [Matthew 11:27] “What things soever He (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” [John 5:19]<sup>97</sup>

The beginning clause of the statement is almost identical to the previous statement. Quoting again from Matthew 11:27 and John 5:19, she emphasized that despite his unity, or oneness, with God, Christ is a distinct personality, a being with individuality.

In March 1905, she quoted Hebrews 11:6 and added a comment on God’s personality. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, (as He has declared Himself in His personality) and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”<sup>98</sup> Although the use of the term “personality” is not entirely clear in this context, she apparently employed it in the sense of individuality and character. In December, she added that Jesus “is truly God in infinity, but not in personality.”<sup>99</sup> Considering that she generally applied the word “God” to the Father, she seemed to stress here that Jesus was fully God but was also a distinct personality, alluding to the idea of Jesus being God and being with God found in John 1:1. Four months later, she reminisced about a meeting that took place two years earlier, relating to Kellogg’s panentheistic sentiments, in which she emphasized that she had “not tr[ie]d to do away with His [Jesus’] personality, and put Him into a leaf or a flower or anything else that He has created.”<sup>100</sup>

97. Ellen G. White, “Christ, Our Divine-Human Example,” October 26, 1903, Ms 156, 1903, EGWE (emphasis supplied).

98. Ellen G. White to Workers in the Glendale Sanitarium, March 14, 1905, Lt 97, 1905, EGWE.

99. Ellen G. White, “An Entire Consecration,” December 19, 1905, Ms 116, 1905, EGWE.

100. Ellen G. White, “Lessons from the First Chapter of Second Peter,” April 14, 1906, Ms 49, 1906, EGWE.

In 1907 she quoted from Hebrews 1:4-12 and added the comment “Note the two distinct personalities” between verses 5 and 6.<sup>101</sup> She obviously referred to the Father and the Son. Determining the meaning of the word “personalities” in this instance depends largely on the interpretation of verses 5 and 6 (quotations from Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14; Deut 32:43; Ps 104:4; 45:6-7; 102:25-27), whether those passages refer to their ontological relationship or to their covenant relationship and character. Considering Ellen White’s usage of the term in other places may suggest that she used the term either to refer to the Father and Son as two distinct beings with individuality or to their individuality / individual personalities.

She also used the term “personality” in reference to other people and herself. Thus, in 1905, she admonished her readers to “stand in your God-given personality.” In the context of the statement, she stressed that “God has given us ability to think and act.” We were not to submit to another person’s will and become a mere shadow of that person, but we should act carefully and look for wisdom from God.<sup>102</sup>

## **The Holy Spirit, One of Three**

Starting in 1896, Ellen White wrote multiple statements that highlighted the threefold relationship within the Godhead. Most of those statements were made in the context of the covenantal pledge at a believer’s baptism. Placing the Holy Spirit next to the Father and the Son, she emphasized in all those statements the joint activities of the three. Interestingly, the majority of those statements are found in unpublished form, often made in sermons and talks. That allowed her to answer right away questions that might arise in the audience.

### **Three Divine Powers**

Many of those statements were linked to, and made in the context of, God’s pledge to his believers as they were pledging themselves to God at their baptism (Matt 28:19, 20). Baptism was done “in the

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101. Ellen G. White, “Make a Covenant by Sacrifice,” May 20, 1907, Ms 57, 1907, EGWE.

102. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905), 498, 499.

threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>103</sup> She added that “these three all co-operate in the great work of the covenant made by baptism in the sight of the heavenly universe. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit receive the believing soul into covenant relation with God.”<sup>104</sup> They are “the three highest powers of heaven,” “powers infinite and omniscient.”<sup>105</sup> She also referred to them as the “three great powers” “in heaven,” “of heaven,” or “in the heavenly courts.”<sup>106</sup> In other words, “We are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and these three great, infinite powers are unitedly pledged to work in our behalf if we will co-operate with them.”<sup>107</sup> When “man is laid in his watery grave,” those “three great powers in heaven are witnesses; they are invisible but present.”<sup>108</sup>

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103. Ellen G. White, “God’s Purpose for His People,” April 19, 1900, Ms 27a, 1900, EGWE.

104. Ellen G. White, “Preparation for Baptism, Part 1,” August 12, 1900, Ms 56, 1900, EGWE.

105. White, “God’s Purpose for His People,” Ms 27a, 1900; cf. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Omaha, Nebr.] “Thoughts on John 17,” September 10, 1904, Ms 158, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Los Angeles, Calif.] “Thoughts on Revelation 7,” August 12, 1905, Ms 191, 1905, EGWE. In another statement, she speaks of “the three highest powers in the heavenly courts.” See Ellen G. White, [Talk at St. Helena, Calif. Camp Meeting] “Address to Young People,” June 27, 1907, Ms 61, 1907, EGWE. She also spoke of them as “the three highest powers in the universe.” See Ellen G. White, “Morning Reflections,” June 20, 1908, Ms 67, 1908, EGWE.

106. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Omaha, Nebr.] “Thoughts on Revelation 1-3,” September 11, 1904, Ms 159, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White, Talk/Extracts from Remarks at Mountain View, Calif., January 20, 1905, Ms 187, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, [Talk at Takoma Park, Md.] “Lessons from the Third Chapter of Philippians,” May 13, 1905, Ms 54, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, [Talk at Takoma Park, Md.] “The Need of Home Religion,” May 25, 1905, Ms 66, 1905, EGWE; White, “Thoughts on Revelation 7,” Ms 191, 1905; Ellen G. White, “A Message to Believers,” c. 1905, Ms 78, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Be Earnest and Steadfast,” c. 1905, Ms 181, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Come Out and Be Separate,” November 1905, Ms 21, 1906, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Members of Our Churches in Melbourne, Australia, February 5, 1907, Lt 32, 1907, EGWE; Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Oakland, Calif.] “Abiding in Christ,” March 10, 1908, Ms 37, 1908, EGWE. For similar statements such as “these three powers of heaven” etc., see Ellen G. White, “Our Work,” December 25, 1905, Ms 162, 1905, EGWE.

107. Ellen G. White, [Talk at Battle Creek, Mich.] “I thank the Lord that so many . . .,” April 3, 1901, Ms 144, 1901, EGWE.

108. Ellen G. White, “Preparation for Baptism, Part 2,” April 12, 1900, Ms 57, 1900, EGWE.

As a Christian submits to the solemn rite of baptism, the three highest powers in the universe—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—place their approval on his act, pledging themselves to exert their power in his behalf as he strives to honor God. . . . The three great powers of heaven pledge themselves to furnish to the Christian all the assistance he requires.<sup>109</sup>

Then the baptized person “has become a receiver of the pledge from the three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>110</sup> In Ellen White’s view, we were to cooperate with God in reply to his response to us. “It is the fulfilment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. . . . Then co-operate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf.”<sup>111</sup> Similarly, she noted that “in the presence of the three highest powers of heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—we have pledged ourselves to do the will of Him [Christ].”<sup>112</sup> In commenting on Matthew 28:19, 20, she referred to them as “the three great

109. Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, January 26, 1904, Lt 53, 1904, EGWE. See also Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Berrien Springs, Mich.] “Lessons From the Third Chapter of Revelation,” May 21, 1904, Ms 50, 1904, EGWE.

110. White, “Preparation for Baptism, Part 2,” Ms 57, 1900. See also Ellen G. White to E. E. Franke, October 5, 1900, Lt 21, 1901, EGWE.

111. Ellen G. White, “Words of Instruction to the Church at Healdsburg, Calif.,” February 5, 1901, Ms 11, 1901, EGWE. See also Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Battle Creek, Mich.] “The Christian Life,” April 14, 1901, Ms 31, 1901, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Christlikeness in Business Dealing,” March 2, 1902, Ms 30, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Christ’s Method of Imparting Truth,” October 6, 1902, Ms 118, 1902, EGWE (3x); Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Kress, December 15, 1902, Lt 200, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Burden, June 3, 1903, Lt 102, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Judge Jesse Arthur, July 3, 1903, Lt 129, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, [Sermon at the Sanitarium Chapel at St. Helena, Calif.] “Thoughts on Matthew 6:19-21,” July 11, 1903, Ms 190, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, Extracts from Recent Testimonies, c. 1903, Ms 136, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, November 18, 1903, Lt 253a, 1903, EGWE.

112. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at the S.D.A. Memorial Church in Washington, D.C.] “Words of Encouragement,” April 30, 1904, Ms 106, 1904, EGWE. See also Ellen G. White, [Sermon at the M St. Memorial Church in Washington, D.C.] “Simon Peter, a servant . . .,” April 30, 1904, Ms 108, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White, [Sermon at San Diego, Calif.] “Thoughts on 1 Peter 2,” May 5, 1907, Ms 180, 1907, EGWE.

personal powers, the authorities in heaven.”<sup>113</sup> In the face of detractions, falsehoods, and temptations, she counselled believers to “keep yourselves where the three great powers of heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—can be your efficiency.”<sup>114</sup> In another statement she noted that God had one name—“the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” “the three powers in heaven.”

God has denominated us as His people, and when you went down into the water in baptism, what name were you baptized in? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. That is the name you were baptized in. Now you profess to be dead to the world, and you have given your earthly history up to God, and God has pledged that the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost will give you all the heavenly advantages, that you shall have might and power to resist the devil so that he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you, and He will lift up a standard for you against the enemy so that you can resist him. Now we must consider that we are within that covenant. God pledged that if we would keep His commandments, the three powers in heaven would be at our command.<sup>115</sup>

She believed that God’s prophets knew of and believed in the intimate unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After speaking earlier of the “three great powers of heaven” that pledged themselves to us at our baptism, she wrote, “Those to whom the Lord spoke anciently were in possession of the knowledge of the true God. Their message to the world was the existence of a personal God and the unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in carrying forward the great work of redemption in every soul that is

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113. Ellen G. White to I. H. Evans, June 1901, Lt 205, 1901, EGWE.

114. White to Burden, Lt 102, 1903; Ellen G. White to Brethren and Sisters, December 31, 1903, Lt 1, 1904, EGWE.

115. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Philadelphia, Penn.] “Thoughts on 1 John,” August 14, 1904, Ms 153, 1904, EGWE.

emptied of self.”<sup>116</sup> Discussing the subject again in the context of the covenantal pledge at our baptism, she also referred to them as “the three powers of the Godhead.”<sup>117</sup> In 1906, she referred to the three again in the same context as “that heavenly party.”

All heaven is pledged in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost they receive at their baptism. That heavenly party is pledged that They will be with you to keep your baptismal vows, and that you shall rise up from the water to live in newness of life. . . . The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—all these blend, and in Their strength you can be overcomers by the blood of the Lamb and the words of your testimony.<sup>118</sup>

### Three Agencies and Three Instrumentalities

She also employed other terms to describe the three divine persons and powers. Thus, she spoke of them as “three distinct agencies” that “work together for human beings.”<sup>119</sup> She also spoke of “the life of these three great agencies.”<sup>120</sup> She said that “at the baptismal ceremony we virtually take a most solemn oath in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, that henceforth our lives will be merged into the life of these three great individual Agencies.”<sup>121</sup> She added, “At the time of our baptism, we pledged ourselves in the presence of the three most powerful agencies of

116. White, “A Message to Believers,” Ms 78, 1905. For the phrase “the three great powers” of heaven see also Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Escondido, Calif.] “Thoughts on 2 Peter 1,” May 12, 1907, Ms 183, 1907, EGWE (3x).

117. Ellen G. White, “I Have a Message to Speak to the Churches,” May 3, 1907, Ms 149, 1907, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, “A Message to the Churches,” *Review and Herald*, July 18, 1907, 8. See also Ellen G. White, “Words to Church Members,” June 19, 1907, Ms 141, 1907, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, “Words to Church Members,” [Australasian] *Union Conference Record*, October 7, 1907, 1.

118. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Oakland, Calif.] “Thoughts on Revelation 7,” September 22, 1906, Ms 144, 1906, EGWE.

119. White, “God’s Purpose for His People,” Ms 27a, 1900.

120. Ellen G. White, “God’s People to Be Living Epistles,” July 6, 1907, Ms 67, 1907, EGWE.

121. Ellen G. White, “God’s People to be Living Epistles,” November 30, 1900, Ms 68, 1900, EGWE.



heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—that we would henceforth walk in newness of life. At the same time, all Heaven pledged itself to endow us with the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>122</sup> Ellen White also referred to the three divine persons as “the three great instrumentalities of heaven.”

The excellence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will appear in them as, in conformity with their baptismal vows, they give themselves to obedience to God’s will. . . . The three great Instrumentalities of heaven co-operate for their complete and perfect unity, that the world may see in their lives the fruit of heaven and the excellence of the principles of truth.<sup>123</sup>

### One Godhead of Three Persons

In contrast to the idea that the term “Godhead” applies solely to the Father, Ellen White employed the term “Godhead” a few times directly and jointly to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>124</sup> Thus, she wrote in January 1901: “The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption.”<sup>125</sup> Five months later, she noted that “the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—were working in behalf of man.”<sup>126</sup> In an address to churches three years later, Ellen White made a remarkable statement in which she equated “the eternal Godhead” with “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

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122. Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Hart, March 1903, Lt 160, 1903, EGWE.

123. White, “Words of Instruction to the Church at Healdsburg, Calif.,” Ms 11, 1901.

124. I am indebted to Dan Augsburg for the statements in this section.

125. Ellen G. White to Brethren and Sisters in Australia, January 21, 1901, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, *The Second Tithe* (Cooranbong, Australia: Avondale Press, 1901), 5; Ellen G. White, “An Important Letter,” *[Australasian] Union Conference Record*, April 1901, 2; Ellen G. White, “Sanitariums as Centers of Influence and Training,” *Review and Herald*, May 2, 1912, 4.

126. Ellen G. White, “Then Opened He Their Understanding . . .,” June 12, 1901, Ms 47, 1901, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, “Our Failure to Fulfill the Saviour’s Commission,” *Review and Herald*, January 7, 1902, 1.



His [Christ's] commission is, "Go through and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." [Matt 28:19] Before the disciples shall compass the threshold, there is to be the imprint of the sacred name, baptizing the believers in *the name of the threefold powers in the heavenly world*. The human mind is impressed in this ceremony, the beginning of the Christian life. It means very much. The work of salvation is not a small matter, but so vast that the highest authorities are taken hold of by the expressed faith of the human agency. *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the eternal Godhead* is involved in the action required to make assurance to the human agent to unite all heaven to contribute to the exercise of human faculties to reach and embrace *the fulness of the threefold powers to unite in the great work appointed*, confederating the heavenly powers with the human, that men may become, through heavenly efficiency, partakers of the divine nature and workers together with Christ.<sup>127</sup>

Those remarks foreshadowed similar statements on the "three powers of the Godhead" and "the three representative powers of the Godhead."

### Three Dignitaries, Authorities, Worthies, and Divine Representatives

She also referred to the three divine persons as the three highest "dignitaries" and "worthies" in heaven. Alluding to the covenant relationship with the believer that begins at baptism, she wrote in late August 1901,

When we have accepted Christ, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit have pledged ourselves to serve God, the Father,

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127. Ellen G. White, "That They All May Be One," May 14, 1904, Ms 45, 1904, EGWE (emphasis supplied).

Christ, and the Holy Spirit—the three dignitaries and powers of heaven—pledge themselves that every facility shall be given to us if we carry out our baptismal vows to “come out from among them, and be . . . separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing.”<sup>128</sup>

A couple days later, she told teachers, “When you gave yourself to Christ, you made a pledge in the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the three great personal dignitaries of heaven. . . . The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the three holy dignitaries of heaven, have declared that they will strengthen men to overcome the powers of darkness.”<sup>129</sup>

In a similar vein, she referred to them as the three highest authorities in heaven. Thus, in June 1902, she wrote, “We took our baptismal vows in the presence of the three highest authorities of the heavenly courts—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>130</sup> Ellen White spoke of them also as “representatives” of divinity. She wrote,

The ceremony of baptism is a most solemn one. Men and women are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This signifies that the three greatest representatives of heavenly authority behold the baptismal service and hear the vows that are made by human agents to walk henceforth in newness of life.<sup>131</sup>

She also wrote that “the three representative powers of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, were pledged to carry out God’s plan for the salvation of the lost race.”<sup>132</sup> In another statement, she stated that

128. Ellen G. White, [Talk at Healdsburg, Calif.] “Teachers to Have an Abiding Christ,” August 30, 1901, Ms 85, 1901, EGWE.

129. Ellen G. White, [Talk at the Church School Teachers’ Institute at Healdsburg, Calif.] “Lessons from the Third o Revelation,” September 5, 1901, Ms 92, 1901, EGWE.

130. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Petaluma, Calif.] “On the Training of Children,” June 8, 1902, Ms 87, 1902, EGWE.

131. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at the Sanitarium Chapel at St. Helena, Calif.] “If ye then be risen with Christ . . .,” April 19, 1902, Ms 57, 1902, EGWE.

132. Ellen G. White, “A Call to Consecration,” June 18, 1907, Ms 139, 1907, EGWE.

the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, these three representatives of heavenly authority behold the scene and accept the vows made by human agents to walk henceforth in newness of life. In taking the baptismal vows, you have united with the highest powers in the heavenly courts, to live a life patterned after the life of Christ.<sup>133</sup>

In 1906, she once again emphasized their concerted active role, referring to them as the “three highest authorities.” This time she wrote into her diary a message that she had dreamed of giving to a church in a dream. Commenting on Matthew 5:17-19, she wrote:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven (by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost): but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great (by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost) in the kingdom of heaven.” The three highest authorities in the universe, with all the heavenly family, shall call great, in the fullest sense of the term, those who do and teach the commandments of our heavenly Father.<sup>134</sup>

In a letter to the wife of Stephen T. Belden (his first wife, Sarah Harmon, was Ellen White’s sister) on December 26, 1906, she emphasized again that “on profession of faith, the willing candidates were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the three heavenly authorities who pledge themselves to help in times of necessity those who take part in this ordinance.”<sup>135</sup> A couple months later, in a sermon at Loma Linda, California, she spoke “of

133. Ellen G. White to Sister Rumbaugh, December 21, 1909, Lt 174, 1909, EGWE.

134. Ellen G. White, Diary, entry for October 11, 1906, Ms 129, 1907, EGWE.

135. Ellen G. White to Sister S. T. Belden, December 26, 1906, Lt 396, 1906, EGWE.

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” as “the three great authorities of heaven” that, at our baptism, have been pledged to be with us.<sup>136</sup>

In the summer and fall of 1906, Ellen White went a step further by calling them the “the three great Worthies” and “the three great worthies of heaven,” with Matthew 28:19 clearly referring to “the name of the three great worthies in heaven.”<sup>137</sup>

### **Three Personages, Persons, Personalities, Characters, and Beings**

In her response to the panentheistic ideas that John Harvey Kellogg, M.D., advocated from 1902 to 1907, Ellen G. White became even clearer. He initially argued that through His Spirit, the Father was present in all things. Various church leaders labelled that idea as “pantheism” and accused him of robbing God of his personality.<sup>138</sup> By September 1903, Kellogg adopted Ellen White’s Trinitarian language and argued that it was the Holy Spirit that was present in all things. Since she had referred to the Spirit as “the third person of the Godhead,” he reasoned that nobody could accuse him anymore of robbing God of his personal nature. Neither Ellen White nor other church leaders bought into his reasoning however because it suggested that now all humans, both believers and unbelievers, as well as all animals, insects, etc. had the Holy Spirit. For example, Ellen White responded to his views in November 1905 as follows.

Such representations as the following are made:  
 “The Father is as the light invisible; the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit as the light shed abroad.”  
 “The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son

136. Ellen G. White, [Sermon at Loma Linda, Calif.] “Thoughts on Hebrews 1,” April 27, 1907, Ms 177, 1907, EGWE.

137. Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Thoughts on Matthew 4,” July 24, 1906, Ms 139, 1906, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Lessons from the Fifteenth of Romans,” October 20, 1906, Ms 95, 1906, EGWE.

138. Pantheism asserts that God is the entire universe whereas panentheism suggests that God is present everywhere in the universe, or, in other words, God is present in all things. Technically, Kellogg advocated panentheistic ideas, not pantheistic ideas. Regardless, both ideologies make God more or less synonymous with his creation and therefore impersonal.

is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life." Another representation: The Father is like the invisible vapor. The Son is like the leaden cloud. The Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power."

All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue. They weaken and diminish the Majesty which no earthly likeness can be compared to. God cannot be compared with the things His hands have made. These are mere earthly things, suffering under the curse of God because of the sins of man.

*The Father* cannot be described by the things of earth. The Father is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily and is invisible to mortal sight.

*The Son* is all the fulness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be "the express image of His person." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is shown the personality of the Father.

*The Comforter* that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fulness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour.

*There are three living persons of the heavenly trio*; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will

co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.<sup>139</sup>

The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead, the Son reveals all the fullness of the Godhead, and through the Spirit, we receive of the fullness of the Godhead.<sup>140</sup> She also made other statements in which she emphasized both the distinction and the unity of the divine persons. She said to the General Conference on May 16, 1905: “All through the Scriptures, the Father and the Son are spoken of as two distinct personages. You will hear men endeavoring to make the Son of God a nonentity. He and the Father are one, but they are two personages.”<sup>141</sup> Three days later, she repeated those thoughts and stressed that the oneness is of a relational nature and not an ontological one:

Christ is one with the Father, but God and Christ are *two distinct personages*. Read the prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of John, and you will find this point clearly brought out. How earnestly the Saviour prayed that His disciples might be one with Him as He was one with the Father. But the unity that is to exist between Christ and His followers does not destroy *the personality of either*. They are to be one with Him as He is one with the Father.<sup>142</sup>

One year later, she reasoned that the Holy Spirit had to be “a divine person” who had to have “a personality” because he testifies to us “that we are the children of God.”

The Holy Spirit always leads to the written Word.  
The Holy Spirit is a person; for He beareth witness  
with our spirits that we are the children of God. . . .

139. White, “Come Out and Be Separate,” Ms 21, 1906 (emphasis supplied).

140. See also White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 50.

141. Ellen G. White, [Talk at the General Conference in Takoma Park, Md.] “Lessons from the First Epistle of John,” May 16, 1905, Ms 56, 1905.

142. Ellen G. White, [Talk at Takoma Park, Md.] “The Work in Washington,” May 19, 1905, Ms 58, 1905, EGWE (emphasis supplied); Ellen G. White, “The Work in Washington: A Talk by Mrs. E. G. White, Friday, May 19, at 10 A.M.,” *Review and Herald*, June 1, 1905, 13. For similar remarks see Ellen G. White, “That They All May Be One,” March 8, 1906, Ms 29, 1906, EGWE.



The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.<sup>143</sup>

To comprehend how Ellen White understood the term “personality,” it is necessary to examine her own use of the term and its derivatives. She used the term in connection with “to have” and “to be,” as well as in genitival constructions (“personality of” and someone’s “personality”). When she spoke of somebody having a “personality,” she employed the term in terms of “individuality.”<sup>144</sup> She identified four different entities that “have” their own personality: Jesus;<sup>145</sup> the Father;<sup>146</sup> the Holy Spirit;<sup>147</sup> and humans.<sup>148</sup> Some people distrusted everybody else and therefore required from them that “every plan should reflect their own personality” and “their own methods of labor.”<sup>149</sup> Ellen White stressed that all people should be permitted to have their own personality and their actions should not always depend on other people’s dictates.<sup>150</sup> Those working together with God could retain their own individuality as persons and while there would be diversity among them, they would act out their personality in union with Christ.<sup>151</sup> The observations are significant because they suggest that, in her view, only intellectual beings have a personality,

143. Ellen G. White, “Preach the Word,” February 7, 1906, Ms 20, 1906, EGWE.

144. Ellen G. White, “On the Church School Question,” July 14, 1902, Ms 100, 1902, EGWE.

145. Ellen G. White, “The Personality of God,” c. 1891, Ms 24, 1891, EGWE.

146. Ellen G. White, “Diary/Regarding Dr. J. H. Kellogg,” January 5, 1902, Ms 236, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “Christ Our Example in Medical Missionary Work,” October 27, 1902, Ms 130, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, September 23, 1903, Lt 212, 1903, EGWE.

147. Ellen G. White, “Preach the Word,” Ms 20, 1906.

148. Ellen G. White to H. C. Lacey and Lillian Lacey, March 22, 1897, Lt 89b, 1897, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, October 9, 1902, Lt 159, 1902, EGWE; White, “On the Church School Question,” Ms 100, 1902; Ellen G. White, “A Working Church,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, November 5, 1903, 1; Ellen G. White, “Diary/The Use of Means and Family Responsibilities,” October 20, 1903, Ms 204, 1903, EGWE.

149. Ellen G. White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895, 433.

150. White, “A Working Church,” 1.

151. White, “Diary/The Use of Means and Family Responsibilities,” Ms 204, 1903.



implying that in her view that Holy Spirit is a distinct being. The second category of statements concerned that an entity “is” a personality. She said of the Holy Spirit that he “is a distinct personality,” and similarly wrote that the Father and Christ “are distinct personalities,” using the phrases “two personalities” and “two distinct personages” interchangeably.<sup>152</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ’s name.  
He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.<sup>153</sup>

Christ and God are one, and yet they are distinct personalities. Christ spoke with conscious authority, as one possessing in Himself power that would enable Him to perform His work.<sup>154</sup>

These words show that God and Christ are two personalities, distinct and separate. The unity for which Christ prays, which is to make believers one with Him, as He is one with the Father, does not destroy the personality of God or the personality of Christ. The believers become sons of God, and the personality of all is preserved.<sup>155</sup>

Ellen White believed that just as the Holy Spirit is personality distinct from Christ, Christ is a personality distinct from the Father. All her uses of the term “personality” in genitival constructions (personality of somebody, or somebody’s personality) fall into either of the two categories above—the individuality of an intellectual being; or an intellectual being with individuality. To have a “God-given personality” meant to have “the ability to think and act.”<sup>156</sup> All of this suggests that, in Ellen White’s view, the Holy Spirit is a being although she always carefully avoided any overly bodily and material

152. Cf. her use of the two phrases in White, “The Work in Washington, D.C.,” Ms 58, 1905; White, “The Fall of Our First Parents,” Ms 140, 1903.

153. White, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sons of God,” Ms 93, 1893.

154. White, “The Fall of Our First Parents,” Ms 140, 1903.

155. Ellen G. White to E. W. Farnsworth and Wife, January 29, 1906, Lt 52, 1906, EGWE.

156. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905), 498, 499.

overtones.<sup>157</sup> That all three divine personalities were comparable in her view is evident from her sermon at Oakland, Calif., on July 24, 1906.

Why, it says, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *Three personalities; and these three personalities* are the pledged power from God that His people shall have, if they have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Now there is no excuse for souls to be left in ignorance and weakness if they will be gospel believers, if they will carry out these principles, and know that *the three great Worthies, the Powers in heaven*, are pledged to the church of God that will work in harmony with Christ's teachings. . . . they [the saints] *fall down and worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*.<sup>158</sup>

Although the statement does not contain the explicit notion of "three" powers, persons, etc., it places the Holy Spirit next to the Father and the Son as receiving worship from the saints. The latter will literally "fall down and worship" them. Such language could invoke a physical notion of the Spirit, yet one has to keep in mind that Ellen White never positively touches on the ontological nature of the Holy Spirit.

Alluding to the personalities of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, she referred to them as "characters." Speaking to the churches in Washington, D.C. in May 1904, she said,

The three great and glorious heavenly characters are present on the occasion of baptism. All the human capabilities are to be henceforth consecrated powers to do service for God in representing the Father, the

157. Her remarks that the Holy Spirit "is walking through these grounds" (1899) and that the saints will "fall down and worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (1906) were the closest allusion to materiality of the Holy Spirit that one can find in White's writings. See White, [Talk] "Extracts From Talks Given by Mrs. E. G. White at the Opening of College Hall, Avondale, and in the Avondale Church," Ms 66, 1899; White, "Sermon/Thoughts on Matthew 4," Ms 139, 1906.

158. White, "Sermon/Thoughts on Matthew 4," Ms 139, 1906 (emphasis supplied).

Son, and the Holy Ghost upon whom they depend.  
All heaven is represented by these three in covenant  
relation with the new life.<sup>159</sup>

Ellen White employed another term (“the three holiest beings in heaven”) during a sermon on Romans 15 that she preached at Oakland, California on October 20, 1906.

Here is where the work of the Holy Ghost comes in, after your baptism. You are baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. You are raised up out of the water to live henceforth in newness of life—to live a new life. You are born unto God, and you stand under the sanction and the power of the three holiest beings in heaven, who are able to keep you from falling.<sup>160</sup>

Some readers have questioned whether the document is authentic, yet there are various reasons that speak in favor of its authenticity. First, other contemporary Adventist writers also wrote of the Holy Spirit as a being and therefore there is nothing odd about the use of that term in this document.<sup>161</sup> Second, the document was not added to her collection after her death. Instead, while Ellen White was preaching, one of her literary assistants took it down in shorthand and shortly afterwards it was added to her bound letter book of 1906–1907. Third, there are at least two or three variants of this manuscript and all of them contain the same Trinitarian statements (“three worthies,” and “three holiest beings in heaven”). The copy at the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University contains corrective notes by C. C. Crisler’s hand whereas the copy in the bound letter book is a clean copy where all those corrections had been implemented. Crisler was Ellen White’s personal secretary from 1900 to 1915, and in 1912 she specified that he be one of the original trustees of her

159. White, “That They All May Be One,” Ms 45, 1904.

160. White, [Sermon at Oakland, Calif.] “Lessons from the Fifteenth of Romans,” Ms 95, 1906.

161. Uriah Smith, “It Doth Not Yet Appear,” *Review and Herald*, December 5, 1899, 789; S. N. Haskell, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1905), 374; M. E. Steward, “The Divine Godhead: God, the Father,” *Review and Herald*, December 15, 1910, 8.

estate upon her death, implying that she trusted him as well as his work and judgment. (An intentional insertion by Crisler of an idea alien to Ellen White's own ideas would imply a measure of deception and criminal energy that is not supported by any evidence.) His corrective notes appear not only in the published portions but go throughout the document, suggesting that he wanted to ensure the accuracy of the entire document, not only the published part. None of those corrective notes deal with the Trinitarian statements, suggesting that those statements were perceived accurate by both Crisler and White. Fourth, a published account of the sermon testifies of the accuracy of the transcription. Although none of the Trinitarian material of the sermon was published in the *Review and Herald* on December 13, 1906,<sup>162</sup> the selected portions (taken from various parts throughout the document) that were published are largely the same as in the transcription, suggesting that Ellen White was satisfied with the precise transcription. Usually, Ellen White was reading articles published under her name prior to their publication to confirm that she was fine with its content.

## Conclusion

Starting in the early and mid-1890s, Ellen G. White perceived the Holy Spirit as a divine agent who personifies, personates, and represents Jesus to his followers, just as Jesus personified, personated, and represented the Father to them. One may argue that just as Jesus did not testify of himself but glorified the Father, did the works of the Father, shared the words of the Father, etc., the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, does the works of Jesus, reminds of the words of Jesus, etc. Thus, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit reflect unselfish love by drawing attention to another one rather than themselves. Just as Jesus and the Father are distinct personalities/beings, having a distinct personality/individuality, so the Holy Spirit is a distinct personality, having a distinct personality.

Ellen White made a couple dozen statements in which she described the joint-work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in

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162. Ellen G. White, "The Work in Oakland and San Francisco—No. 3," *Review and Herald*, December 13, 1906, 9-10.

pledging themselves to each person who accepts Jesus as her Savior and pledges herself to the heavenly family. Although many of her statements came in response to Kellogg's panentheistic ideas, particularly after October 1903 when he adopted her Trinitarian language to veil those ideas, she began to employ Trinitarian language several years prior to the inception of the crisis. Thus, the statements she made and the language she employed were not conditioned by the parameters of his remarks. Most of those statements were made in the context of the covenant relationship that begins at the baptism of the person. Ellen White referred to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together as three divine powers, agencies, persons, dignitaries, authorities, instrumentalities, representatives, agencies, characters, personalities, worthies, and beings who are actively collaborating in the justification and sanctification of the believer. A study of each of those terms could provide fresh insights into the nature of the divine collaborative work. Further, the redeemed saints will fall down and worship those three divine beings.

Nevertheless, she consistently stayed away from speculating on the Holy Spirit's bodily form or physical nature. That aspect constituted a mystery which she did "not seek to understand or to explain" because it was "too high" for her.<sup>163</sup> Interestingly, until the end of her life, Ellen White continued to refer to the Holy Spirit as both "he" and "it," thereby likely implying that the Spirit is both a person and a power. In addition, Whereas Ellen White never explicitly used the word "Trinity," neither in the affirmative nor in the negative, a habit that permitted her to stand clear of the philosophical and theological baggage of the term, she did employ other terminology, such as "the third person of the Godhead," that many Trinitarians had frequently used for decades.<sup>164</sup>

In sum, while Ellen White avoided speculative terminology and problematic connotations about the physical nature of the Spirit, she stressed the Spirit's distinct personality and individuality that always labors to point people to Jesus and to transform their lives so that their character, their words, and their actions represent Jesus. She

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163. Ellen G. White to Brother Chapman, June 11, 1891, Lt 7, 1891, EGWE.

164. Search the term "the third person of the Godhead" in *Google Books*, <https://books.google.com/>.

was clear that in the attempt of perfectly personifying the Father, Jesus did not lose his distinct personality. Through Jesus, the Father came to us. Similarly, in the attempt of perfectly personifying Jesus, the Holy Spirit does not lose his distinct personality. Through the Spirit, Jesus comes to us. Further, by personifying Jesus through the Holy Spirit's work in us, we will not lose our distinct personality. The manifestation of reciprocal unselfish, other-centered love in the collaboration of the divine persons results in complete harmony, unity, and oneness.