

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON



In 1906 Ellen White penned these words

“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.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 20 1906)

“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.” (Ibid)

“He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man, which is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (Ibid)

Here we are very clearly told that the Holy Spirit is definitely a person - also that He witnesses to “our spirits”. Must we now conclude though that our spirits exist separately from ourselves as another person from and like ourselves – just as many people conclude that the Holy Spirit exists separately from God the Father and Christ (meaning that He is a divine being with individuality like God and Christ)? Obviously not – but what we can see here is that the Holy Spirit is “a divine person”.

As we have been told in ‘Special Testimonies Series B No. 7’

“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.” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies Series B No. 7 page 63, November 1905)

The trinitarians see this as a trinitarian statement but Ellen White was not a trinitarian. Just because Ellen White (or anyone else) says that are three persons of the Godhead, this does not make them a trinitarian. To be a trinitarian, one must believe that all three make up the one God and that each are inseparably connected to each other in one indivisible substance. Ellen White believed no such thing. In fact she said exactly the opposite. (See chapters 23 & 24 of the Prophet Still Speaks web address below)

She also wrote in 1901

“Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfilment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, with His Son, and with His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then co-operate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf. Doing this you will reveal to the world the principles of righteousness.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 19th June 1901, ‘Christ’s prayer for us’)

God has not revealed the nature of the Holy Spirit therefore this nature cannot be understood by humanity. This means that it cannot be said, on the basis of the writings of Ellen White, that the Holy Spirit is a person like God and Christ (or like you and me) are

persons. From the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White, what we know for sure is that He is both God and Christ omnipresent.

In 1899, Ellen White spoke these words

“We have been brought together as a school, and we need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds, that the Lord God is our keeper, and helper. He hears every word we utter and knows every thought of the mind.” (Ellen G. White, Ms 66, 1899, p. 4. Talk, April 15, 1899).

When Ellen White said here that “God is a person”, she must have been referring to the Father. Remember though, even though she says that the Holy Spirit “is as much a person as God is a person”, she still said that we cannot understand His nature.

She also wrote in 1900

“The work is laid out before every soul that has acknowledged his faith in Jesus Christ by baptism, and has become a receiver of the pledge from the three persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (MS 57, 1900).” (Ellen G. White, as quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Volume 6 page 1074)

The next year she wrote a letter to the Australasian field. In it she said:

“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.” (Ellen G. White, Australasian Union Conference Record, 1st April 1901, ‘An important letter’, see also Review and Herald, 2nd May 1912, ‘Sanitariums as centers of influence and training’)

“In order to fully carry out this plan, it was decided that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, should give Himself an offering for sin. What line can measure the depth of this love?” (Ibid)

This ‘giving’ must not be taken as though it was a committee decision. In the previous paragraph it said

“There [*in the heavenly courts*] God decided to give human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”” (Ibid)

This is the Father giving His only Son (John 3:16, Romans 8:3).

“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.” (Ibid)

Never in the Scriptures - or in the spirit of prophecy - is the Father or the Holy Spirit referred to as begotten. This applies exclusively to the Son of God. This is why He is the only One who in His own right can truly be called the Son of God. This is why He is unique.

In Ellen White's writings there can be found a number of 'three persons' statements concerning the Godhead (more than I have quoted here) – meaning there is no doubt that she said that Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead – but never did she say He has a nature just like the Father and the Son. She maintained that His nature is a mystery not revealed by God. This is where we should leave it – not insist – as purported by Seventh-day Adventists in their trinity doctrine - that He is a person like God and Christ.

Having said this, it must also be recognised that there are also a multitude of statements from Ellen White's writings that speak of the Father and the Son but do not mention the Holy Spirit. Whilst these are far too many to quote here, we will quote some of them. They are such as

“Who is able to describe the last scenes of Christ's life on earth, His trial in the judgment hall, His crucifixion? Who witnessed these scenes?--The heavenly universe, God the Father, Satan and his angels.” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 12th July 1899, ‘A crucified and risen Saviour’)

Notice Ellen White does not say that the Holy Spirit witnessed the crucifixion. She appears to include everyone – even “Satan and his angels” – but not the Holy Spirit.

This was written one year after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages'.

Seven years later in 1906, these words were found in the 'Signs of the Times'

“In the Bible every duty is made plain. Every lesson reveals to us the Father and the Son. The Word is able to make all wise unto salvation. The Word is able to make all wise unto salvation. In the Word the science of salvation is plainly revealed. Search the Scriptures; for they are the voice of God speaking to the soul.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 10th October 1906, ‘Blessed are they that do’, see also 8th Volume Testimonies page 157 ‘Letters to physicians’)

No mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

Here is a similar quote. This is with reference to when Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan.

“With what intense interest the whole universe watched the conflict that was to decide the position of Adam and Eve. How attentively the angels listened to the words of Satan, the originator of sin, as he placed his own ideas above the commands of God, and sought to make of none effect the law of God through his deceptive reasoning! How anxiously they waited to see if the holy pair would be deluded by the tempter, and yield to his arts. They asked themselves, Will the holy pair transfer their faith and love from the **Father and Son to Satan?** Will they accept his falsehoods as truth? They knew that they might refrain from taking the fruit, and obey the positive injunction of God, or they might violate the express command of their Creator.” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 12th May 1890, ‘God’s requirements in grace, the same as in paradise’)

Again there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White must have had a reason for omitting Him.

In the ‘Great Controversy’ are found these words. They are written on the very last page –

with reference to when sin and sinner will be no more.

“And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.” (Ellen G. White, Great Controversy page 678, ‘The Controversy ended’)

No mention is made of revelations of the Holy Spirit – only “of God and of Christ”.

“God is love. The evil that is in the world comes not from his hands, but from our great adversary, whose work it has ever been to deprave man, and enfeeble and pervert his faculties. But God has not left us in the ruin wrought by the fall. Every facility has been placed in reach by our Heavenly Father, that men may, through well-directed efforts, regain their first perfection, and stand complete in Christ. In this work God expects us to do our part. We are his--his purchased possession. **The human family cost God and his Son Jesus Christ an infinite price.**” (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies on Education, page 21, ‘The true higher education’, 1897)

There is no mention of a sacrifice made by the Holy Spirit. In fact she even said.

“Can anyone consider the condescension of God in preparing the gospel feast, and its great cost, and treat the invitation slightly? No man, nor even the highest angel, can estimate the great cost; **it is known only to the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, The Bible Echo, 28th October 1895, ‘The Gospel Invitation’)

The Holy Spirit is not included.

Note to the following. In 1897 Ellen White wrote “As the angels beheld the overmastering anguish of the Son of God, the words were spoken, "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent." Father and Son have clasped their hands, and are mutually pledged to fulfill the terms of the everlasting covenant, to give fallen man another chance.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases Volume 12, No. 999, 1897)

Then, with regards to the words of Jesus “It is finished”

“When Christ spoke these words, He addressed His Father. Christ was not alone in making this great sacrifice. It was the fulfillment of the covenant made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the earth was laid. With clasped hands they entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the substitute and surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan's sophistry.” (Ibid)

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Did you notice nothing is said about clasping hands with the Holy Spirit? These same thoughts were transposed into 'The Desire of Ages'. Referring to when Christ first returned to Heaven on the resurrection morning we have been told

“Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race.” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, page 834, ‘To my Father, and your Father’)

Two years after the publication of 'The Desire of Ages', much the same was said in the 'Youth's Instructor'

“As the divine Sufferer hung upon the cross, angels gathered about him, and as they looked upon him, and heard his cry, they asked, with intense emotion, "Will not the Lord Jehovah save him? Will not that soul-piercing cry of God's only begotten Son prevail?" Then were the words spoken: "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent. Father and Son are pledged to fulfill the terms of the everlasting covenant. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ was not alone in making his great sacrifice. It was the fulfilment of the covenant made between him and his Father before the foundation of the world was laid. With clasped hands they had entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan's sophistry.” (Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 14th June 1900, ‘The price of our redemption Part III’)

Again no mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

The following are other 'Father and Son' statements. As you read them, ask yourself why Ellen White would not have included the Holy Spirit. Ask yourself (thinking about what you personally believe) if you would have included the Holy Spirit.

Note also that like some of the other previous quotes, the first five are with reference to the time period after we have been redeemed from the earth.

“The sinner could not be happy in the companionship of the saints in light, with Jesus, with the Lord of hosts; for on every side will be heard the song of praise and thanksgiving; and honor will be ascribed **to the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 24th October 1912, ‘The Measure of Light Given Measures Our Responsibilities’)

““I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Revelation 21:22. The people of God are privileged to hold **open communion with the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 1911 edition, ‘The Controversy Ended’)

“We may all win heaven; **we may all be welcomed to the city of God by the Father and the Son**; we may all wear the crown of immortality.” (Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, 21st November 1911, ‘Christ our Pattern’)

“In that day [Christ's Coronation Day] the redeemed will shine forth in **the glory of the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 21st November 1906, ‘The Results of Forgetting God’)

“Through the eternal ages the offensive character of sin will be seen in **what it cost the Father and the Son**, in the humiliation, suffering, and death of Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Bible Training School, 1st December 1907, ‘Wonderful Love’*) “In the beginning **the Father and the Son had rested upon the Sabbath** after Their work of creation.” (*Ibid*, page 769, ‘*In Joseph’s Tomb*’)

“The most convincing argument we can give to the world of Christ's mission is to be found in perfect unity. Such oneness as exists between **the Father and the Son** is to be manifest among all who believe the truth.” (Ellen G. White, *Bible Training School, 1st February 1906, ‘One, even as we are one’*)

“Through the efficacy of the atonement made, man may return to his allegiance. Through accepting the righteousness of Christ, he may become loyal to the law of God, **united to the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, 3rd May 1906, ‘The Great Controversy’*)

“In the Bible every duty is made plain. Every lesson **reveals to us the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times, 10th October 1906, ‘Blessed are they that do’*)

“Those to whom God reveals by his Spirit the truths of his Word will be able to testify to an understanding of that mystery of godliness which from eternal ages has been hid **in the Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, 19th August 1909, ‘As ye have received so walk’*)

“The great gift of salvation has been placed within our reach at an infinite cost to the **Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald, 21st November 1912, ‘Peril of Neglecting Salvation’*)

“He expired on the cross exclaiming, “It is finished,” and that cry rang through every world, and through heaven itself. The great contest between Christ, the Prince of life, and Satan, the prince of darkness, was practically over, and Christ was conqueror. His death answered the question as to whether there was self-denial with the **Father and the Son.**” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times, 5th January 1915, ‘The Mighty and the Inspiring Conflict’*)

“By daily communion with God he [the minister who has made a full consecration] becomes mighty in a knowledge of the Scriptures. His fellowship is with **the Father and the Son**; and as he constantly obeys the divine will, he becomes daily better fitted to speak words that will guide wandering souls to the fold of Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers, page 23, 1915, ‘Called with a Holy Calling’*)

“I write this that all may know that there is no controversy among Seventh-day Adventists over the question of leadership. The Lord God of heaven is our King. He is a leader whom we can safely follow, for He never makes a mistake. Let us honor **God and His Son**, through whom He communicates with the world.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 8, page 238, ‘Be on guard’, 1904*)

“The enmity that God has put in our hearts against deceptive practises, must be kept alive, because these practises endanger the souls of those who do not hate them. All deceptive dealings, all untruthfulness regarding **the Father and the Son**, by which their characters are

presented in a false light, are to be recognized as grievous sins." (Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B No.2 page 10, The great controversy)

"Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with himself, even the oneness which exists between him and his Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God." (Ellen G. White, General Conference Bulletin, 1st July 1900, 'Unity among believers')

"Think of the importance Christ places on unity. He prayed that the oneness existing between **Him and His Father** might exist among His followers that the world might know that God had indeed sent His Son into the world to save sinners. How shall this prayer be answered?-- By every believer putting away evil thinking and evil speaking." (Ellen G. White, Pacific Union Recorder, 13th March 1902, 'Christlike service')

"He [Christ] desires the union between those who work for Him to be as close as the union between **Him and His Father**. Those who have felt the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit will heed the lessons of the divine Instructor, and will show their sincerity by doing all in their power to work in harmony with their brethren." (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 29th October 1901, 'Judge not. No. 1')

If you had written these statements, would you have included the Holy Spirit? If so, ask yourself why Ellen White didn't.

I believe the weight of evidence is overwhelming. We are not told that in eternity we shall have fellowship with the Holy Spirit – only that our fellowship will be with the Father and the Son. There must have been a reason for Ellen White writing this way so many times. Note that each of these statements was made in the early 1900's – meaning after 'The Desire of Ages' was published. It is no wonder that in the spirit of prophecy we find these words

"The Father and the Son alone are to be exalted." (Ellen .G. White, Youth's Instructor, July 7th 1898, 'God's word our study book, No. 2')

"Would the sinner, who hated God and would not yield to the overtures of mercy on earth, enjoy everlasting life with Christ and the Father? Could he who despised the companionship of the Father and the Son on earth come into fellowship with them in heaven?" (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times 5th January 1891, 'What is involved in neglect of salvation?')

Notes from:

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