

What is the SDA Doctrine of the Personality of God?

Description

([Podcast Version](#) – [Follow/Subscribe](#))

In [my last post](#), I mentioned a [short article](#) that my wife and I wrote answering the question, “What is the SDA doctrine of the Personality of God?” If you don’t know much about the subject, it’s easy to pass it by without giving it much thought. But it’s actually a super important question and one that I think can’t fail to arouse your interest if you only turn your attention to it for well...maybe the length of this blog post. So, that’s what I want to do – I want to give you the opportunity to really consider the personality of God and to be exposed to the early SDA doctrine concerning the personality of God.

The bulk of this post will essentially be an edited version of that article. But first, I need to mention one more thing. When you hear the phrase “the personality of God,” what do you think of? Most people today think of God’s character – how loving and merciful, or compassionate God is. As important as it is to understand the character of God, that isn’t what the early SDAs meant by the personality of God. They were addressing a more fundamental issue of whether God is a person and what it even means to be a person. With that in mind, let’s get to the article:

Question:

What is the SDA doctrine of the Personality of God?

Answer:¹We also have a video series answering this question. You can watch it [HERE](#).

Whatever it may be, Ellen White called it a [foundation truth](#) that “[is everything to us as a people](#).” This tells us a couple of things:

First: It’s supremely important.

Second: The SDA doctrine of the personality of God was understood by the SDA people at large.

This second point is reinforced by the fact that Ellen White referred to it as a pillar of our faith and said the writings of the pioneers should be reprinted if and when pillars like this are threatened:

Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith concerning the sanctuary, or concerning the personality of God or of Christ, are working as blind men.... When men come in who would move one pin or pillar from the foundation which God has established by His Holy Spirit, let the aged men who were pioneers in our work speak plainly, and let those who are dead speak also by reprinting of their articles in our periodicals. — [{Ms62-1905.14, 20}](#)

The personality of God was revealed in some of Ellen’s earliest visions ([Broadside1 April 6, 1846, par. 7](#); and Early Writings [pages 54-55](#), [77](#), and [92](#)). Also, the pioneers taught clearly and directly

on this topic. Here are just a few examples of articles written by various pioneers:

James White

[Personality of God,](#)

Joseph H. Waggoner

[God Is](#)

Augustin C. Bourdeau

[The Hope That Is In You](#)

Uriah Smith

[The Image of God: Is God A Person?](#)

D. M. Canright

[The Personality of God](#) (As I mentioned in [the last post](#), James and Ellen White personally assisted him with this article.)

R. F. Cottrell

[Man Made in the Image of God](#)

J. N. Loughborough

[Is the Soul Immortal?: Is God A Person?](#)

I must stress that these articles are just a small sample of what the SDA pioneers wrote on the personality of God. It was a regular topic in their periodicals. [Teresa](#) and I have been going through every occurrence of the word “person” in early SDA writings, and yeah...there’s a whole lot they have to say on the topic.

So, with all that said, what did they say? What is the SDA doctrine of the Personality of God? Reading the above articles makes it plain ? for God to be a person means that He’s a strictly material Being with a body and parts in the shape of man, [occupying both space and time](#). The pioneers state it thus:

Now what is the meaning of the word *person*? ... It does not and cannot mean an immaterial, intangible, shapeless, formless essence. It always means an intelligent being, having a body, shape and form. ... The God of the Bible is not a mere principle, an essence or soul of the universe, but he is a real, personal being, having a body, form, shape, and local habitation... ? [Canright](#)

...God is a material, organized intelligence, possessing both body and parts. — [Bourdeau](#)

...Christ is said to be “the image of the invisible God.” ...Christ has a body composed of

substance, flesh and bones; and *he* is said to be, “*the image of the invisible God.*” ... God is a person with a body and form. — [J. N. Loughborough](#)

God is a person, for he made man in his own image; so is his only begotten son ... they both exist with body and parts ... the ancient of days, or God, has a head, and hair on his head, and a body... — [James White](#)

So there you have it. This is the SDA doctrine of the personality of God! He is a real material person, not an essence – not a bodiless spirit, but a person like you and me, composed of body, parts, and passions. Sadly, most SDAs have long forgotten this truth. Even while Ellen White was still alive this pillar truth was being covered over. In [Testimonies for the Church Volume 8, p. 291](#), Ellen said,

Already there are coming in among our people spiritualistic teachings that will undermine the faith of those who give heed to them. The theory that God is an essence pervading all nature is one of Satan’s most subtle devices. It misrepresents God and is a dishonor to His greatness and majesty.

Clearly, this is an incredibly important subject. And what you’ve heard here is just the beginning. To investigate this subject further, please check out the personality of God tag below. This tag will connect you to everything on our website that relates to the personality of God and more content will continue to be added over time. And don’t forget to check out [the podcast version of this blog!](#)

We have a video series explaining this doctrine more fully. You can watch the whole thing here:

And for a more detailed exploration of what individual SDA pioneers had to say on this subject, we recommend this playlist:

- 1

We also have a video series answering this question. You can watch it [HERE](#).