

What Did Ellen White Teach About the Personality of the Holy Spirit?

Description

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This question is closely connected to the question we addressed [in the last post](#). As a reminder, the question last time was “What is the SDA doctrine of the Personality of God?” Also like the last post, the answer I’m about to give is an edited form of a short article [Teresa](#) and I wrote answering this question.

I definitely recommend reading [the last post](#) as it provides the basis for the answer to the question at hand. Still, here’s a brief recap:

The early SDA doctrine of the personality of God was that God is indeed a person and that what it means to be a person is to be a strictly material being with a body, parts, and passions, occupying both space and time. When Ellen White made statements like, “God is a person,” “God has a personality as verily as has Christ,” and “He is a personal being,” this is what she was affirming – she was saying God is a material being. Remember, this is simply what the early SDAs understood personhood to be. They rejected the idea of a bodiless mind, considering it a form of spiritualism, and insisted instead that any thinking agent – any person, must be a physical being whose thoughts are the result of the organization and operation of their material brain. I’m deliberately phrasing things in a few different ways to make sure you don’t miss the idea because it’s really important. I’ll state it in one more way before we move on. The early SDAs had an overtly materialistic perspective on what it means to be a person. They didn’t believe in immaterial spirits or souls. They held that persons are as material as any animal, having nothing non-physical in their nature. When they, including Ellen White, said that God is a person, this is what they meant. God is neither a bodiless spirit, nor a conscious essence pervading nature, nor is He a being possessing a non-physical mind. On the contrary, God is, in his very nature, a material body whose shape is like that of humanity. He is localized in space and time with no non-physical element. His intelligence and consciousness arise from the material organization and operation of his brain, just as our intelligence and experience arise from the material organization and operation of our brains, and just as the intelligence and experience of any animal arise from their brains. A person is a being as truly and purely material as any animate or inanimate object and the early SDAs held that there is no such thing as a person of any other kind.

They said God is a person, and they said the Son of God is a person. But this raises a question – what about the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit also a person? Ellen White had some things to say about this. Let’s read a few of her statements:

*“The Holy Spirit ... personifies Christ, **yet is a distinct personality.**”* [{Ms93-1893.8}](#)

*“Evil had been accumulating for centuries, and could only be restrained and resisted by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, **the third person of the Godhead,**...”* [{Lt8-1896.2}](#)

*“... we need to realize that the Holy Spirit, **who is as much a person as God is a person,** is walking through these grounds, unseen by human eyes,”* [{Ms66-1899.11}](#)

*“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. “Hold fast” to this pledge.”* [{Ms92-1901.5}](#)

*“**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.”* [{Ms20-1906.32}](#)

*“There are **three living persons** of the heavenly trio. In the name of these three powers,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.”* [{Bible Training School, March 1, 1906, par. 2}](#)

From these quotes, it's clear that Ellen White taught that the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from both the Father and the Son. But not only that, she even made it a point to specify that the Holy Spirit is “as much a person as God is a person.” And when you know that Ellen taught that for God to be a person means that He's a strictly material being – an intelligent physical body with parts and passions, this makes her teaching on the personality of the Holy Spirit very explicit – the Holy Spirit is a person, which is to say the Holy Spirit is a strictly material being – an intelligent physical body with parts and passions. This teaching is very much in line with the early SDA view of the Godhead. They emphasized that the Father and the Son could not be two personalities of the One Being that is God. Instead, they taught that the Father and the Son are two distinct (material) Beings. Likewise, when Ellen White declared that the Holy Spirit is a person, she wasn't saying that the Holy Spirit is a third personality of the One Being that is God; no, she was saying the Holy Spirit is a distinct person — a distinct material being. Some of you may be familiar with the notion in the classical doctrine of the Trinity that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons of One Being. Early SDAs, including Ellen White, rejected this distinction between person and being and held instead that to be a person means to be a material being and that each divine person is thus a separate being. That Ellen White regarded the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three separate beings, is made perfectly clear in the following statement:

*“You are baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. ... 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.”*

[{Ms95-1906.29}](#)

This should make the subject pretty plain. And if you are someone who believes that Ellen White's teachings were inspired by God, I hope you'll rejoice to learn that the Holy Spirit is a third person in the Godhead – a third material being. How much do you know about this third person of the Godhead? If it's important to have a relationship with Jesus and his Father — two of the three holiest beings in heaven that can keep us from falling — isn't it just as important to get to know this third being who is also able to keep us from falling? If you want to learn more about who the Holy Spirit is, we have more studies on the topic [HERE](#).