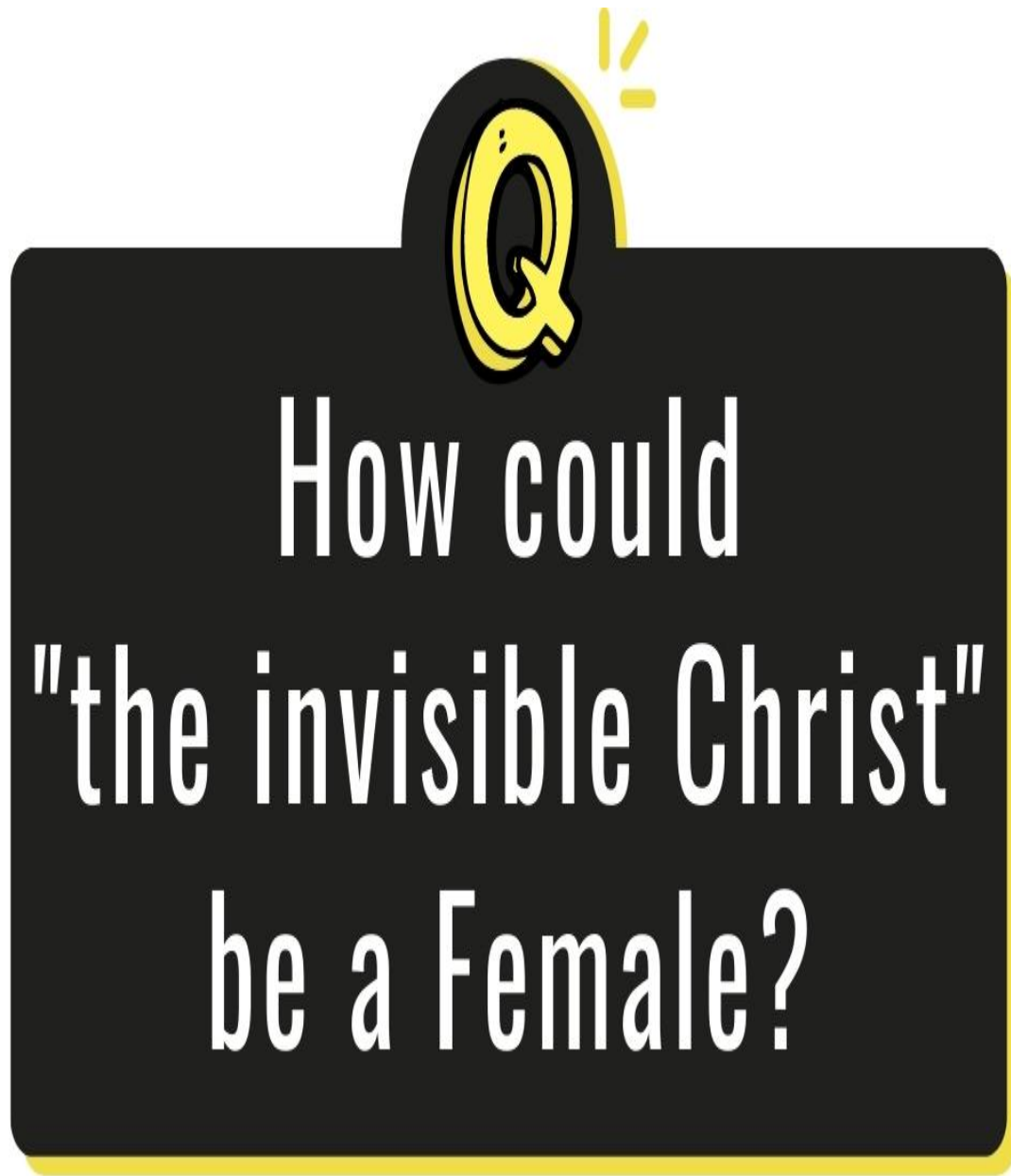


How Could “The Invisible Christ” Be A Female?

Description



Question: Please explain the SDA doctrine of the personality of God and harmonize the following statement from Victor Houteff, wherein he says the Holy Spirit is the invisible Christ, with what you are teaching that the Holy Spirit is a Female.

Thus “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Pet. 1:21.
Briefly summarized, the term Messenger of the Covenant means the Holy Spirit (the

invisible Christ) in Heaven's visible representative—be it Moses, John, Christ, Elijah, or some other. {1ANS 79}

Answer: (by [Teresa Wilde](#))

This question is framed very appropriately since understanding the truth regarding the personality of God is essential for understanding what it means for the Holy Spirit to be “the invisible Christ.” However, the first thing I should point out is that the idea that the Holy Spirit is the invisible Christ in no way implies what gender the Holy Spirit must have. It doesn't speak to the issue at all. Two options occur to me as to how someone might assume that the phrase “the Holy Spirit (the invisible Christ)” indicates the Holy Spirit could not be Female. One option is to infer that the term “the invisible Christ” means Jesus is somehow made invisible and thus, the Holy Spirit is the same person as Jesus (and therefore, male). The other option is to infer that there's a part of Jesus that is invisible and this invisible part of him (whatever that would be?) can disperse all over the place – more like an influence than an actual being – in which case, this “spirit” would be without gender (or possibly, male).

It's essential to keep in mind that no truth is independent of already-established truths. Each truth must be built upon the plan of addition; they must be laid upon the more foundational truths in order to stand firm. And, if we have a misunderstanding regarding any of the foundational truths, we will inevitably have misunderstandings regarding additional truths. Having a right understanding of the central doctrines as laid down at the beginning of the SDA movement will be essential if we want to be able to understand the truth of this matter. Two topics that are most directly relevant here are (1) the SDA doctrine of the personality of God, and (2) the early SDA understanding of the nature of reality (materialism). The SDA pioneers not only taught that God is a strictly material Being with a body, parts, and passions (emotions), they also taught that *nothing* immaterial exists. If a being exists, it must be a strictly material being with no immaterial aspect to their person.

The statement from Victor Houteff doesn't directly say anything about whether or not the Holy Spirit is a person, nor what the word “person” even means, nor whether he thought the Holy Spirit is a distinct person from Jesus. It simply isn't addressed. But, Ellen White certainly speaks directly to this point quite clearly, leaving no room for doubt or speculation as to whether or not the Holy Spirit is a person. Rather than make inferences from Houteff's passing statement, let's go to more direct statements and allow those to inform us of how we should understand this issue.

In 1899, Ellen White said that the Holy Spirit is as much a person as God is a person. [{Ms66-1899.11}](#)

But, what did Ellen White even mean by the word “person”? Did she mean an immaterial, non-bodily entity or being? Did she mean a mere influence exerted by either the Father or the Son? What did she think it means for God to be a person? That's the first thing we'd have to know. That will make Ellen's statement that the Holy Spirit is as much a person as God is a person crystal clear. And thankfully, we have a lot of written material to show what she, and the rest of the early SDA pioneers, meant by the word “person.”

The SDA pioneers understood the word “person” to always mean a material being with a body and parts, [occupying both space and time](#). (Click [here](#) for more on that topic.)

One of the first things God showed to Ellen in vision is that the Father has a physical body and that Jesus is the *express image* of his Father’s person. She then conveyed to the other early SDAs what she had been shown. The earliest pioneers would gather together and study for hours upon hours earnestly seeking to learn the truth upon various subjects, but when they couldn’t figure it out on their own, God would reveal the truth to Ellen in vision. All of the people present at the studies knew that she did not understand these things without the aid of divine revelation. So, when they would study and study trying to understand various points of truth and would come to the point that they just couldn’t understand, Ellen says that God would then give her a vision that would clearly explain these passages of scripture and answer the questions that they weren’t able to discover without the aid of divine revelation. This process settled the pioneers in the truth of the manifestation of the Spirit of Prophecy through Ellen White, and when disunity threatened the early SDAs due to variances upon the meaning of certain topics, God would use this gift of the spirit to bring the people into unity once again. Those who accepted the word of God through Ellen White gave up their private opinions and accepted God’s revelation. I’ll be sharing portions from Ellen White’s writings wherein she relates this history.

One reason this history is relevant is, it shows that the doctrine of the personality of God was established by divine revelation very early on in the SDA movement – early 1845 as shown by this quote from Ellen White:

In February, 1845, I had a vision of events commencing with the Midnight Cry. I saw a throne and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus’ countenance and admired his lovely person. The Father’s person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered him. I asked Jesus if his Father had a form like himself. He said he had, but I could not behold it, for said he if you should once behold the glory of his person you would cease to exist. {Broadside1 April 6, 1846, par.7}

The personality of the Holy Spirit, however, wasn’t revealed through Ellen White until much later – the early 1890s. So, let’s review the doctrine of the personality of God first.

Ellen wrote:

I am authorized by the Lord to say, The sentiments contained in Living Temple in regard to the personality of God are opposed to the truth that God has given us. [{Lt232-1903.40}](#)

This statement affirms that the doctrine of the personality of God was established by divine revelation — it was a truth that God, Himself, revealed. There was no need for anyone to be speculating about it.

God gave the truth to Ellen White through visions, and she gave the truth to the pioneers in the movement. Years later, when J. H. Kellogg started to promote pantheistic theories regarding the

personality of God, Ellen White had to remind him and others of the truths that God established among them as a people, and she had to tell Kellogg that he was not clear on the personality of God. In so doing, she told him that this doctrine was everything to them as a people. The following quote is from a letter she wrote to him:

You are not definitely clear on the personality of God, which is everything to us as a people. {[Lt300-1903.7](#)}

Something that is “everything to us as a people” is clearly an important subject and it should be treated with the utmost reverence and humility. If we don’t take pains to approach the subject with pure principles and a sincere desire to know what is truth, the character of the assistant by our side will be impure, which means it won’t be holy angels by our side as we study — it will be satanic agencies.

Ellen White explains this principle in Gospel Workers:

The spirit in which you come to the investigation of the Scriptures will determine the character of the assistant at your side. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. But if the Bible is opened with irreverence, with a feeling of self-sufficiency, if the heart is filled with prejudice, Satan is beside you, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light. {GW92 127.3}

There are some who indulge in levity, sarcasm, and even mockery toward those who differ with them. Others present an array of objections to any new view; and when these objections are plainly answered by the words of Scripture, they do not acknowledge the evidence presented, nor allow themselves to be convinced. Their questioning is not for the purpose of arriving at truth, but was intended merely to confuse the minds of others. {GW92 128.1}

Let’s have these heavenly principles in mind as we continue.

While Ellen White told J. H. Kellogg that he was not clear on the personality of God, she also said there were some who knew and understood the truth regarding the personality of God. She even identifies some by name. She once told a church congregation in California:

We are on the very same foundation; we have the same evidence, and we worked on it day and night, to know in regard to the sanctuary question, and in regard to the personality of God, and of Christ, and of all these subjects. {Ms138-1906.40}

There were only a few of us, but we would get together, and we would begin in the early evening, and work through the truth, and then they would get to the point: “We cannot handle that; we must give it up; we cannot handle it.” {Ms138-1906.41}

The power of God came upon me then, and light was reflected through the frail

instrument, and it was brought out clearly. Again and again, and over and over, as it was opposed, there substantiated; every species of doctrine that we had been holding. {Ms138-1906.42}

Now, you see, it is not possible for us to let go of this and take hold of some of these new suppositions and fallacies. We cannot do it. And I mean to present before the people, how God has wrought. {Ms138-1906.43}

You have listened to Elder Loughborough. He was with us from almost the first of our work, and he knows and he understands these things, and others understand them. {Ms138-1906.44}

From this, we can know that what J. N. Loughborough taught regarding the personality of God is the truth upon the subject.

Here's an excerpt from Loughborough:

It is inferred because the Bible says that God is a Spirit, that he is not a person. An inference should not be made the basis for an argument. Great Scripture truths are plainly stated, and it will not do for us to found a doctrine on inferences, contrary to positive statements in the word of God. If the Scripture states in positive terms that God is a person, it will not answer for us to draw an inference from the text which says "God is a Spirit," that he has no body. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 41.12](#)}

We will now present a few texts which prove that God is a person. Exodus 33:18, 23. "And he (Moses) said, I beseech thee shew me thy glory." Verse 20. "And he said, Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live." Verses 21-23. "And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." If God is an immaterial Spirit, then Moses could not see him; for we are told a spirit cannot be seen by natural eyes. There would then be no propriety for God to say he would put his hand over Moses' face while he passed by, (seemingly to prevent him from seeing his face,) for he could not see him. Neither do we conceive how an immaterial hand could obstruct the rays of light from passing to Moses' eyes. But if the position be true that God is immaterial, and cannot be seen by the natural eye, the text above is all superfluous. What sense is there in saying God put his hand over Moses' face, to prevent him from seeing that which could not be seen. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 41.13](#)}

Says one, I see we cannot harmonize the matter any other way, than that there was a literal body seen by Moses; but that was not God's own body, it was a body he took that he might show himself to Moses. Moses could form no just conceptions of God unless he assumed a form. So God took a body. This throws a worse coloring on the matter than the first position; for it charges God with deception; telling Moses he

should see him, when in fact Moses according to this testimony did not see God, but another body. A person must be given to doubt almost beyond recovery, that would attempt thus to mystify, and do away the force of this testimony. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 41.14](#)}

Exodus 24:9. "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." They were permitted to see his feet, but no man can see his face and live. No mortal eye can bear the dazzling brightness of that glory of the face of God. It far exceeds the light of the sun. For the prophet says, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." Isaiah 30:26. Notwithstanding this seven-fold light that is then to shine, the prophet speaking of the scene says, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." Isaiah 24:23. The testimony of John is, [Revelation 21:23,] "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 41.15](#)}

Infidels claim that there is a contradiction in the testimony of Moses, because he said, he talked with God face to face. We reply, there was a cloud between them, but God told Moses, "No man shall see me and live." The Testimony of the New Testament is in harmony with that of the Old upon this subject. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14. Who with mortal eyes could behold a light that far outshines seven fold the brightness of the sun? Surely none but the holy can behold him, none but immortal eyes could bear that radiant glory. Although the Word says we cannot see God now and live, the promise is, that the pure in heart shall see him. Matthew 5:3. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Revelation 22:4. "And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 41.16](#)}

Paul, [Colossians 1:15,] speaking of Christ, says, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature." Here Christ is said to be "the image of the invisible God." We have already shown, that Christ has a body composed of substance, flesh and bones; and he is said to be, "the image of the invisible God." Well, says one, we admit his divine nature is in the image of God. If by his divine nature you mean the part that existed in glory with the Father before the world was, we reply, that which was in the beginning with God, (the Word,) was made flesh, not came into flesh, or as some state, clothed upon with a human nature, but made flesh. But says another, God is said to be invisible. Because he is invisible now, it does not prove that he never will be seen. The Word says, "The pure in heart shall see" him. Willing faith says, Amen. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 41.17](#)}

Paul's testimony in Philippians 2:5, 6, shows plainly what may be understood by the

statement, that Christ is the image of God. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." How can Christ be said to be in the form of God, if God has no form? Romans 8:3. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Christ is in the form of God, and in the form of men. This at once reveals to us the form of God. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 42.1](#)}

Daniel speaking of God, calls him the Ancient of days. Daniel 7:9. "And the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool." This personage is said to have a head, and hair; this certainly could not be said of him if he was immaterial and had no form. But Paul's testimony in Hebrews 1:3, ought to settle every candid mind in regard to the personality of God. Speaking of Christ, he says, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his (the Father's) person." Here then it is plainly stated God has a person. Christ is the express image of it. Then we can understand Christ where he says, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." John 14:19. He could not have meant, that he was his own father; for when he prayed he addressed his Father as another person who had sent him into the world. He styled himself the Son of God. Then he could not be the Father of which he was the son. When he says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," he must mean, that as he was the express image of the Father's person, those who saw him saw the likeness of the Father in him. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 42.2](#)}

But we will now return to the subject of The creation of man. We have seen already that man's being made in the image of God, could not refer to a moral image, for it would involve the absurdity that the lifeless clay of which man was formed, had a character like God. We now see the Scriptures clearly teach, that God is a person with a body and form. Then Genesis 1:26, may be understood to teach the fact, that man was made in the form of God. Other scriptures agree with this testimony. See Genesis 9:6. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." This testimony cannot apply to a spirit, or immaterial part of man: that which is in the image of God has blood. 1 Corinthians 11:7. "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God." James [Chap 3:9] speaking of the tongue says, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude (likeness, resemblance – Webster) of God." The foregoing testimony settles the point, that the image of God does not refer to character but to form. {[ARSH September 18, 1855, p. 42.3](#)}

Again, that was just an excerpt.

In addition to J. N. Loughborough, Ellen names other people who were also knowledgeable regarding these foundation truths (including the personality of God). She relates this history in many of her writings during the years of the Kellogg crisis. Here's just one example. It's from a letter she wrote to J. H. Kellogg regarding his false portrayal of the personality of God in his book The Living Temple:

There are many things that you must overcome before you can be saved. In the heart that is not led by God, there is a something that leads it to desire to be sustained in its wrong course. The men who faithfully tell you the truth, pointing out your mistakes, you have regarded as your enemies. But often they are your best friends and, in telling you wherein you were walking in strange paths, were doing a very disagreeable duty. The Lord's servants are not to flatter your pride; they are not to stand silent, fearing to say, "Why do ye thus?" They are faithfully to warn you of your danger. {[Lt253-1903.3](#)}

My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder Edson, and many others who were keen, noble, and true were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for truth. At our important meetings, these men would meet together and search for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly; for we felt that we must learn God's truth. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. As we fasted and prayed, great power came upon us. But I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend what we were studying. Then the Spirit of God would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me with instruction as to the position we were to take regarding truth and duty. Again and again this happened. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God was plainly marked out before me, and I gave my brethren and sisters the instruction that the Lord had given me. They knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given me. Thus the leading points of our faith as we hold them today were firmly established. Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony. {[Lt253-1903.4](#)}

The whole company of believers were united in the truth. There were those who came in with strange doctrines, but we were never afraid to meet them. Our experience was wonderfully established by the revelations of the Holy Spirit. {[Lt253-1903.5](#)}

In another of her writings, Ellen names the personality of God as one of these pillar truths that was established early on.

Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. 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. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift, without an anchor. {[Ms62-1905.14](#)}

Ellen White named her husband as one of those present when these pillars were laid down. And what did her husband teach regarding the personality of God? Here are links to two of his articles: [Personality of God](#); and [THE Faith Once Delivered to The Saints](#). But I'll also briefly mention here that James White taught God is a person (a material, [tangible being](#)) in contrast with the idea that God is an immaterial or intangible being. And in his 1861 article Personality of God, we read that

“immateriality” is just another word for “nonentity.” This is quite significant in a number of ways, but for now, I’ll only point out that one of the objections Ellen White had to Kellogg’s spiritualistic teachings about the personality of God was that they led to the “nonentity of God.” You see, the word spiritualism means: “The belief in the non-physical (spiritual),” which is identical to “the belief in immateriality.” The [early SDA pioneers were materialists](#) – they believed that everything that exists is strictly material in nature; nothing immaterial exists, not even God, His son, or any other heavenly being. They taught that the devil himself is a strictly material being. The only being that could possibly exist is a material being because the very word “immaterial” conveys the same idea as “non-existence.” Understanding this eliminates any possibility of misinterpreting what Ellen White meant by saying the Holy Spirit is one of the “three holiest Beings in heaven.” {[Ms95-1906.29](#)} But, I’ll get to that shortly...

First, here is Ellen White’s statement wherein she says spiritualistic theories of the personality of God lead to the nonentity of God:

My husband has been dead twenty years, and before he died, things came in. Dr. Kellogg came into my room; I was occupying one of the large rooms at the office as my home. I had two or three rooms there, and he got a great light; and he sat down and told what his light was: it is just the same theories or errors, the same sophistries, that he is presenting, and did present in “Living Temple.” I said, “Dr. Kellogg, I have met that.” I met it when I first started out to travel. I met it in the North; I met it in New Hampshire. I saw the curse of its influence in Massachusetts, and the testimonies that were given to me were right to the point that we were not to have anything of this kind to be taught in our churches. And I talked with him. I gave the history—I have not time to give it to you here. I gave him the history of how that was treated by the Spirit of God, and how we as a people must escape the sophistries and delusions. And it was ministers that were deceiving the people with these sophistries. I will not tell you what they led to—it may have to come; but I will not tell you now what they led to; but I will tell you what this sophistry leads to: It leads to the nonentity of Christ, to the nonentity of God, his personality, and brings in,—what shall I call it?—a sort of manufactured theory of God and Christ.” {[Ms 70a, 1905, par. 11](#)}

Ellen also wrote the following to Kellogg:

But I have ever had the same testimony to bear which I now bear regarding the personality of God. {[Lt253-1903.9](#)}

In (Early Writings, 60, 66, 67), are the following statements: {[Lt253-1903.10](#)}

“May 14, 1851, I saw the beauty and loveliness of Jesus. As I beheld His glory, the thought did not occur to me that I should ever be separated from His presence. I saw a light coming from the glory that encircled the Father, and as it approached near to me, my body shook and trembled like a leaf. I thought that if it should come near me, I would be struck out of existence; but the light passed me. Then could I have some sense of the great and terrible God with whom we have to do.” {[Lt253-1903.11](#)}

“I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him if His Father was a person, and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, ‘I am the express image of My Father’s person!’ [Hebrews 1:3.] {[Lt253-1903.12](#)}

“I have often seen that the spiritual view took away all the glory of heaven, and that in many minds the throne of David and the lovely person of Jesus have been burned up in the fire of spiritualism. I have seen that some who have been deceived and led into this error, will be brought out into the light of truth, but it will be almost impossible for them to get entirely rid of the deceptive power of spiritualism. Such should make thorough work in confessing their errors, and leaving them forever.” {[Lt253-1903.13](#)}

Notice that Ellen says she has always born the same testimony regarding the personality of God — God is a person, with a bodily form. Jesus is the “express image” of his Father’s person. In the [Review and Herald, July 6, 1868](#), p. 36, the question was asked, What is meant by ‘the express image of his person’? (Hebrews 1:3) And the answer given is that the phrase means “material resemblance” and that this is a strong proof-text in favour of the personality of God. Materiality was always linked with the doctrine of the personality of God. This is but a tiny sampling of what’s available from the pioneers on this topic.

I believe that after fully reviewing the SDA doctrine of the personality of God provided in links throughout this article, it will be easy to see that when Ellen made statements like, “[God is a person](#),” “[God has a personality as verily as has Christ](#),” and “[He is a personal being](#),” she was saying God is a strictly material being. This lays the foundation for knowing what Ellen White meant by saying the Holy Spirit is as much a person as God is a person.

An important thing to take note of is that the early SDAs didn’t enter into the subject of whether or not the Holy Spirit is a person until the late 1870s. J. H. Waggoner wrote in 1875 and again in 1877:

There is one question, which has been much controverted in the theological world upon which we have never presumed to enter. It is that of the personality of the Spirit of God. Prevailing ideas of *person* are very diverse, often crude, and the word is differently understood; so that unity of opinion on this point cannot be expected until all shall be able to define precisely what they mean by the word, or until all shall agree upon one particular sense in which the word shall be used. {[SGOM 8.2](#)} (italics in the original)

And even though soon after this, some pioneers started to write articles on the subject of the personality of the Holy Spirit, they are very few. But what is most significant is that in their

discussion, [they maintained their materialistic meaning for the word “person.”](#) They weren't questioning whether the Holy Spirit was a material being as opposed to an immaterial being. The early pioneers knew that an immaterial being cannot exist. When they first started writing about the personality of the Holy Spirit, the issue was simply over whether the Holy Spirit is a person or not. In other words, they were questioning whether the Holy Spirit is a separate being from the Father and the Son, or whether the Holy Spirit is merely an influence exerted by either the Father or the Son (or both).

The gifts of the Spirit are placed in the church to bring about the perfecting of the saints in unity and knowledge {[Spiritual Gifts volume 1 p. 12.2](#); Ephesians 4:11-16}, and when disunity threatened the early SDAs, God would use Ellen White (through whom the Spirit of prophecy was being manifested at that time) to try to bring about unity. And when they started to dispute whether the Holy Spirit is a person or merely an influence, the only thing she stated overtly was that the Holy Spirit is a person without addressing the issue of gender. Her statements should have settled the question on the point of personality (personhood). If they had all believed God was speaking through Ellen White, it would have been settled. Some did believe God was speaking through her, and soon afterward, they wrote promoting the personhood of the Holy Spirit. R. A. Underwood was one such person, and you can read his articles by clicking [here](#). (Preceding these articles is an introduction written by Trent Wilde which provides a detailed historical context.)

Back to what Ellen revealed about the Holy Spirit...

Even after saying the Holy Spirit is a person, Ellen still often referred to the Holy Spirit as “it” and sometimes as “he.” In other words, because she used both terms, it's clear that she never specified what gender the Holy Spirit has. Whether this is because she didn't know the gender of the Holy Spirit, or whether God didn't permit her to share what the gender is, I couldn't say. But, regardless of her reasons, she was safe in using the same pronouns that people were accustomed to reading in the English translation of the New Testament. Even so, SDA pioneers knew that the Hebrew word is in the feminine gender because J. H. Waggoner mentions it in a [letter he wrote to James White](#) in 1879, two years before James died. Yet, even though Waggoner knew the Hebrew word was in the feminine gender, he didn't make an assertion that the Holy Spirit is female. Early SDAs simply didn't specify anything regarding the Holy Spirit's gender.

In 1893, Ellen said the Holy Spirit personifies Christ, yet the Holy Spirit is a distinct personality. [{Ms93-1893.8}](#) This is actually the earliest statement she made regarding the personhood of the Holy Spirit that we can find on record. So, the first thing God settled for the SDA people was that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person — the Holy Spirit isn't the same person as God, nor the same person as Jesus — the Holy Spirit and Jesus are as distinct from one another as Jesus is distinct from the person of his Father. It was just a few years later (1899) that Ellen said the Holy Spirit is “as much a person as God is a person.” It might be worth mentioning that the idea that the Holy Spirit is a person did not imply to SDAs that trinitarianism was true. [The question of personality \(personhood\) was distinct in their minds from the doctrine of the trinity.](#)

Here are a couple of other statements from Ellen that make it quite plain that the Holy Spirit is a literal physical being, separate and distinct from both the Father and the Son:

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}](#)

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 (along with the additional materials accessible from our [“Holy Spirit” tag](#)) should provide a solid basis for showing that the Holy Spirit is a physical being and is a distinct being from both the Father and the Son.

Now, regarding the question of gender...

Ellen never taught that “the Holy Spirit is female.” However, it’s just as significant to take note of the fact that she also never taught “the Holy Spirit is male,” or that “the Holy Spirit has no gender.” Ellen White simply never made a point, one way or the other, regarding the gender of the Holy Spirit. She simply maintains the same use of the pronouns that occur in the King James Version. And in the Greek language (the language in which the books of the New Testament were written), the word translated as “spirit” is “pneuma” which is neuter in gender and can be translated accurately as “he, she, or it.” The men who translated the New Testament chose to use the pronouns “he” and “it” to refer to the Holy Spirit; but in the Hebrew language, the word for spirit is “ruach” which is feminine. Again, Ellen White was not the one that God used to reveal that the Holy Spirit is female; so if a person takes the position that they will only accept something if it’s found within a particular prophet’s writings, they risk cutting off the very means by which God leads His people — the Spirit of prophecy. Most SDAs and DSDAs have taken the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, no more prophets to be sent to guide the apple of God’s eye. But this is yet another instance where one of the foundation truths upon which the SDA movement was established has been forgotten. What would you say to someone who asks you, “[What is the Spirit of prophecy?](#)” Would you point to a particular set of writings and say, “That’s the Spirit of prophecy”? Victor Houteff blatantly refuted this position. He agreed with the Bible and Ellen White in saying that the Spirit of prophecy would remain active in the church until the second coming of Christ, and that we cannot have a successful revival and reformation (sealing of the 144,000) without this gift active in the church. [The End of Davidian Quiescence](#) demonstrates *thoroughly* that Victor Houteff did not teach that he was the last prophet. Please read it prayerfully and humbly, remembering Ellen’s admonition that if we come to the investigation of scripture with prejudice, Satan will be beside us, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light. {GW92 127.3} I also recommend reading [The King of Crises in the Seventh-day Adventist Church](#) since it deals with the Spirit of prophecy as it relates to the current crises we’re facing within Adventism.

The femininity of the Holy Spirit is something that first became a teaching within Adventism through the ministry of Lois Roden – an inspired messenger like Ellen White. But, just like the teachings of Ellen White were received by divine revelation and are shown to be true from the

Bible, just so the teachings of [Lois Roden](#) were received by divine revelation and are shown to be true from the Bible. You can find studies on the femininity of the Holy Spirit at this [link](#).

I think that if you consider the information I've provided, you will see that Ellen White clearly taught that the Holy Spirit is a material being, separate and distinct from the Father and the Son. That should eliminate any misunderstanding regarding the Spirit being Christ's representative on earth. And regarding the invisibility of this Spirit, God is also said to be "the invisible God," yet God is a strictly material being. Jesus is said to be God's representative, yet Jesus is not the same being as the Father. The spirit is said to be Christ's representative, yet the Spirit is not the same being as Jesus. And while Jesus is the "express image" of his Father's person, the spirit is never said to be the "express image" of Jesus. So, there's really no way to justify an inference from the statement "the Holy Spirit (the invisible Christ)" that the Holy Spirit can't be female.

Another point to take note of while learning about the doctrine of the personality of God, is what early SDAs (including Ellen White) taught regarding the means by which God is omnipresent. They taught that God is omnipresent by means of the ministration of the Holy Spirit and the holy angels. These foundational truths have been almost entirely forgotten within Adventism, but I believe that if you take the time to read what the pioneers taught regarding God's omnipresence, you will see that neither God the Father, nor Jesus Christ, nor the Holy Spirit are everywhere present "personally." This is why we have ministering angels. No member of the Godhead is all-pervading or personally everywhere present, which is precisely why the myriad of holy angels are sent to minister throughout the universe. They are all ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14), yet the SDA pioneers taught that [they are material beings](#). They [travel back and forth from heaven carrying our petitions to Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary and bringing us tidings from heaven](#), Ellen White says that they [carry a golden card that grants them entrance through the heavenly city gates](#). If you've read much of Ellen White's writings, you are surely familiar with these ideas. The ministration of angels is closely connected to the doctrine of the personality of God for the very reason that SDAs understood and taught that God occupies a localized habitation and is not personally everywhere present. There's no way a material being can be personally everywhere present at once. Yet, this is precisely what Kellogg taught about the personality of God in his book *The Living Temple*.

Ellen White wrote:

Dr. Paulson's mind is becoming confused. He thinks he understands Dr. Kellogg's teachings; but he does not discern who is Dr. Kellogg's instructor. I am bidden to say to our people, Do not confound the words of Sister White with the deceptive fallacies of the enemy. Extreme views of "God in nature" undermine the foundation truths of the personality of God and the ministration of angels. A confused mass of spiritualistic ideas takes the place of faith in a personal God. I take no stock whatever in some of the principles that are now being advocated. {Lt271b-1903.3}

There's a very clear exposition by D. M. Canright (revised by J. H. Waggoner) regarding the ministration and nature of angels by the title, "[Angels: Their Nature and Ministry](#)" that does a good job of expanding upon this doctrine. It appears to have been revised in 1891 which is still prior to the first statement from Ellen White affirming that the Holy Spirit is a distinct personality from Jesus (1893); so even though it doesn't address the personality of the Holy Spirit, it still does a

good job of providing an overall portrayal of how the early SDAs viewed the ministration of angels and it explicitly identifies them as corporeal (bodily) beings. Clearly, the early SDAs did not equate the term “spirit” with anything like “incorporeal” and thus, we should not infer from the term “spirit” that it refers to an “incorporeal” entity.

I think it should be clear that Ellen White taught the Holy Spirit is a person — a material being distinct from the Father and the Son — and that she did not teach anything regarding the gender of the Holy Spirit. I also think that it should be clear that the phrase “the invisible Christ” simply does not speak directly upon the issue of what gender the Holy Spirit has. Our studies on the femininity of the Holy Spirit provide abundant evidence to show that the person of the Holy Spirit is indeed a female. But, without a clear understanding of the SDA doctrine of the personality of God, this evidence would likely be irrelevant. The gender of the Holy Spirit wouldn’t matter if the Holy Spirit isn’t a distinct person from the Father and the Son, right? Once you know that the Holy Spirit is a person — as much a person as God is a person — it becomes much easier to see the answer to the gender question.

For your own benefit, please consider the weight of evidence seriously and prayerfully, in true humility before God. Remember the counsel of Proverbs 18:13 as well as the counsel we have for how to study the scriptures laid out in Gospel Workers (1892) pp. 125-130 — How Shall We Search The Scriptures?

I leave you with these statements from Ellen White:

In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began “at Moses and all the prophets” and “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Luke 24:27. But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form. {COL 127.4}

We should not study the Bible for the purpose of sustaining our preconceived opinions, but with the single object of learning what God has said. {GW92 125.1}