

Ellen White and the Use of “Three” Concerning the Godhead

Or

A Response to the Question

What did Ellen White mean when she employed phrases like "third person of the Godhead", "three Living persons in the heavenly trio", "the three holiest beings in heaven", "the three great powers of heaven", "the three highest powers in the universe", and "the three great worthies in heaven"?

*By Adrian Ebens
November 2010*

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Introduction

There are a number of statements in the Spirit of prophecy that could suggest that the Godhead is three separate beings. The purpose of this paper is to examine these statements in the light of all the evidence available

Let me first present the historical background to the use of these statements which will facilitate a strong level of connection between us and then move forward from there.

In searching these statements we find the following:

Context and Usage of These Terms

We will first observe their sequencing as prioritized according to frequency of use.

“three great powers of heaven”	Search = 29 entries, 15 original sources
“three highest powers”	Search = 12 entries, 6 original sources
“third person of the godhead”	Search:= 21 entries, 4 original sources
“the threefold name”	Search = 7 entries, only 1 original source
“three living persons of the heavenly trio”	Search = 5 entries, only 1 original source
“three great worthies”	Search = 4 entries, only 1 original source

Next, observe the dates of first occurrence and number of times published for each expression:

third person of the Godhead

1896, 1897, 1898, 1904, 1905, 1908

the threefold name

1900

three great powers of heaven

1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1907, 1910

three highest powers

1904, 1905, 1907, 1908, 1909

three great worthies, three holiest beings, three persons of the heavenly trio

1906

In summary we see these statements all occurred between 1896 and 1910. The favoured usages were the three great powers, the three highest powers and the third person of the Godhead. With that in mind let us seek to harmonize all the evidence before us.

1. No Dispute Concerning Three Powers

There is no doubt about the fact that there are “three great powers” or “three highest powers.” This is clearly revealed in Scripture.

1. “The power of the Most High” Luke 1:35; “the power of God” Rom 1:16
2. “Christ the power and wisdom of God” 1Cor 1:24; “the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” 1Cor 5:4
3. “through the power of the Holy Ghost” Rom 15:13; “power of the Spirit of God” Rom 15:19

2. The Dividing Line – Inheritance versus Self-Originated Life

While there is no dispute concerning the existence of the three highest powers, there is a difference of understanding on the relationship of these three powers. I submit to you for your consideration that there is an assumption in this question that these three powers are all self-originated powers with no possibility of inheritance. There is an assumption that inheritance would disqualify a person from being considered Divine.

This assumption is unwittingly reflected in the slight misquoting of the statement “*three Living persons in the heavenly trio.*” The statement actually says “three living persons **of** the heavenly trio.” Is there a difference between *in* and *of*? The word *in* gives the sense of “contained within” while *of* gives the sense of emerging or coming out of. This of course may not alter the meaning but in my mind it leans towards a relationship of the three powers of coming out from one source point. I will offer several considerations for the inherited Divinity of Christ as the most normal, literal and grammatical way of reading the Scriptures and Ellen White.

A. Terms of Father and Son

What is the normal, literal and grammatical meaning of these terms? Check this study http://www.fountain-of-living-waters.com/?page_id=69 to see the manifold expressions of Father and Son, Son of God, Father and His Son. All of these references speak to the reality of the Son coming from the Father. A careful reading of the latter section of Testimonies Vol 8 reveals clearly the identities of Father and Son. For instance:

The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?" Hebrews 1:1-5.

God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son. {8T 268}

In the first paragraph Ellen White states the clear relation of Father and Son. In Paragraph two, she supports this relation and distinction with Heb 1:1-5 and then in paragraph 3 states plainly God is the Father of Christ, Christ is the Son of God. The normal, literal and grammatical meaning of this is straight forward. It is simply expressing the literal understanding of the terms Father and Son.

As James White states “The simple language of the Scriptures represent the Father and Son as two distinct persons. With this view of the subject **there are meaning and force to language which speaks of the Father and the Son.**” James White, *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1871

We might also mention Prov 8:22-30 with Ellen White's direct reference to being brought forth:

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right. This was no robbery of God. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way," He declares, "before his works of old. **I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:** while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth" (Proverbs 8:22-27). Review and Herald, April 5, 1906

Once again:

"Through Solomon Christ declared: 'The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.'" Signs of the Times Aug 29, 1900

And again:

And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22-30. Patriarchs and Prophets p. 34, 1890

I see no reference to personification, metaphor or symbolism in the quotes above, such concepts did not arise until the 1950's.

B. Proceeded Forth

John 8:42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

The word proceeded forth from strong's means *From G1537 and G2064; to issue (literally or figuratively): - come-(forth, out), depart (out of), escape, get out, go (abroad, away, forth, out, thence), proceed (forth), spread abroad.* This word is then coupled with the word "came" which means to arrive or come. If the word proceeded forth is not read literally to issue and come out of but is rendered only to come, then Jesus is made to say that I came and came from God which is an obsolete duplication. When the doctrine of inheritance is applied then the passage avoids this duplication and reads literally and grammatically in a normal fashion.

This coming out from the Father is repeated a number of times in Scripture. For example:

John 16:27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out (proceeded forth) from God.

E.J Waggoner regularly referred to John 8:42 and 16:27 in His presenting of Christ.¹

John 16:28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world
The disciples responded in verse 29, “Lo, now you speak plainly” and verse 30, “by this we believe that you came forth from God.” Jesus refers to this is his prayer to the Father:

John 17:8 they...have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

Again, Jesus refers to two events: coming out from the Father, and coming/being sent to the world.

C. Begotten

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten (strongs: only born) of the Father,) full of grace and truth. – I am aware of the current scholars redefining of the word but the possibility of only born is only negated upon the assumption of a self-originated life. As Ellen White states:

A complete offering has been made; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,"-- not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and Divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. {ST, May 30, 1895 par. 3}

For a comprehensive list of statements from Ellen White on the begotten see my article *The Begotten Son in the Writings of Ellen White*.

http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=719

D. Express Image

The term *express image* also speaks of inheritance. You are familiar with the passage:

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

The term *express image* means: From the same as G5482; a *graver* (the tool or the person), that is, (by implication) *engraving* ([“character”], the *figure* stamped, that is, an exact *copy* or [figuratively] *representation*): - express image.

This term is not simply *likeness*, as is used in Col 1:15, it is exact copy, the figure stamped from the original. Now within the teaching of inheritance which is mentioned in verse 4, that makes complete sense. However for Father and Son to be identical we would need a statement to say that the Father is the express image of the Son, but this never occurs. An *express image* means a copy, and a copy means that one has come from the other.

¹ See Christ and His Righteousness Page 9 and 22 for example.

E. Made in Our Image

The creation of Adam and Eve serve as a powerful illustration of the Son coming forth from the Father. I dedicate chapter 31 of my manuscript, *The Return of Elijah* to this parallel. Yet for simplicity here I would ask for the literal and grammatical meaning of the following passages.

“After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out their purpose, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. **And now God says to his Son, ‘Let us make man in our image.’**” 1SP 24

“God, in counsel with his Son, formed the plan of creating man in **their own image.**”
RH 24 Feb 1874.

And as James White expressed it:

“We do not deny the Divinity of Christ. We delight in giving full credit to all those strong expressions of Scripture which exalt the Son of God. **We believe him to be the Divine person addressed by Jehovah in the words, ‘Let us make man.’**”
James White, Review & Herald, June 6, 1871

Whenever Adventist scholars and pastors quote Gen 1:26 they usually indicate that Gen 1:26 indicates that “our image” simply means the plurality of the Trinity, ([See my article: God Said to His Son - Let Us Make man in Our Image](#)) but Ellen White clearly states that “our image” refers to the image of the Father and the Son; The Father said to His Son these words. This understanding adds deep significance to the bringing forth of Eve from Adam as an image of the bringing forth of the Son from the Father as expressed in Prov 8:22-30.

F. The Message of Waggoner and Jones

I invite you to read what Jones and Waggoner say about the Bible verses I have listed above in the height of their preaching the 1888 message. What did Ellen White say of their presentation of the Divinity of Jesus?

“Messages bearing Divine credentials have been sent to God’s people; **the glory, the majesty, the righteousness of Christ, full of goodness and truth, have been presented; the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ has been set forth among us with beauty and loveliness**, to charm all whose hearts were not closed to prejudice. We know that God has wrought among us.” EGW 1888 materials page 673

Ellen White did not say anything against Waggoner and Jones’ expressions on the Divinity of Christ. She states clearly that they presented Christ in all the fullness of Divinity. You can’t get any fuller than “all the fullness.” See Chapter 26 of *The Return of Elijah* for more details. It is important to remember that the prophet states that the latter rain began to fall under the message they presented.

The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel **has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer.**

This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. {RH, November 22, 1892 par. 7}

Could the latter rain begin to fall when these men both presented Christ as being born of the Father? Ellen White clearly states the latter rain began to fall under their preaching, which included a presentation of Christ in all the fullness of the Godhead. E.G White, A.T Jones and even A.G Daniells indicate we rejected that message. Therefore, it only makes sense that a rejection of the Son of God in the mid 1890's which led to the ushering in of another God has prevented the latter rain from falling for the last 120 years. If you agree with Leroy Froom, N. Pease, L.H Christian and many others that we accepted the 1888 message, then you would be hard pressed not to see that the Trinity is the culmination of the 1888 message and the triumph of the eternal verities as Froom expresses it. However, we still must explain the 120 year drought of the latter rain, 2 world wars, millions of souls perished and for what? The questions I raise here are at the edges of this discussion but still are questions I seek answers for. Why would God let millions suffer and die with the loss of life on a scale not seen previously in human history unless something tragic occurred in the mid 1890's? Something to ponder.

Finally on the subject of 1888 Ellen White wrote from Australia in 1898 the following:

Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving the message of mercy to the world, **Christ would have come to the earth, and the saints would ere this have received their welcome into the city of God.** {AUCR, October 15, 1898 par. 12}

We might go a step further and reflect on this statement by Ellen White in 1883 before the 1888 message. If the pioneer view (which was deeply in the grip of a literal reading of 1 Cor 8:6 of One God and One Lord contained with the 1872 statement) was so Biblically wrong as is claimed today, how could Christ come to a people who did not actually acknowledge "His Trinitarian self revelation?"

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on **unitedly** in the opening providence of God, receiving **the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit** proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and **Christ would have come ere this** to receive His people to their reward. {Manuscript 4, 1883; Ev 696.2}

If Christ could have come before 1883 how can the full power of Rev 18 be manifested in a Trinitarian context? Are we able to entertain the possibility that Trinitarianism was not a requirement for Christ to come and that indeed the platform laid by our pioneers was solid?

G. The Death of the Cross

One of the most pivotal points concerning whether Christ inherited His Divinity revolves around the death of the cross. From a Trinitarian perspective, self-originated life is central to the qualification as Divine. Dr Barry Harker expresses it this way:

There are no degrees of omnipotence. You have it or you don't. It cannot be conferred. Equality in the Godhead is not by virtue of relationship to God. Each member of the Godhead is God. **Equality of power is one crucial factor determining**

membership of the Godhead. The relationship between members of the Godhead is based on their inherent equality. Barry Harker, Evaluation of Return of Elijah Page 5. 27-Sep-2007

This perception of Deity is what our pioneers felt was a degrading of the atonement, for it places Christ in a position where He could not actually die. J.H Waggoner stated it succinctly when he said:

Many theologians really think that the Atonement, in respect to its dignity and efficacy, rests upon the doctrine of a trinity. But we fail to see any connection between the two. To the contrary, the advocates of that doctrine really fall into the difficulty which they seem anxious to avoid. Their difficulty consists in this: They take the denial of a trinity to be equivalent to a denial of the divinity of Christ. Were that the case, we should cling to the doctrine of a trinity as tenaciously as any can; but it is not the case. **They who have read our remarks on the death of the Son of God know that we firmly believe in the divinity of Christ; but we cannot accept the idea of a trinity, as it is held by Trinitarians, without giving up our claim on the dignity of the sacrifice made for our redemption.** J. H. Waggoner, 1884, *The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*, pages 164, 165

J.H Waggoner's words are fulfilled completely and to the letter by Woodrow Whidden when he states:

The very union of divinity with humanity in Christ's incarnate nature suggests that though divinity did not literally die, it as good as died in the following sense: Christ's deity, along with His humanity, self-sacrificially consented to death at every step of the way of the Cross. And in so doing the **very nature of Christ's human death was invested with the infinite value of eternal love.** Woodrow Whidden. God is Love – Trinitarian Love! Journal of Adventist Theological Society, 17/1 (Spring 2006) p. 104

Do you believe that Jesus "as good as died" and that what transpired was a human death with divine intention? This was and always is the crux of the atonement issue. If qualification for divinity can only be certified by self-originated power then logically it is impossible to die. If that original life unborrowed and underived was inherited as clearly stated in John 5:26, then the power aspects of divinity can be laid down while the Divine knowledge that the Son possessed (John 10:15) of His Father remained with Him. If Christ did not lay down the power He inherited, we would never know if He lived by the Father's power while on earth or His own power. At any moment Satan could accuse Him of fraud and Jesus would have no defense.

Some of the clearest evidence I have found that Christ inherited His Divinity is the clear testament of EGW that Christ could have suffered eternal loss if He had have sinned. A Trinitarian could never accept this view. Read carefully the literal grammatical statements that follow:

Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. **His Deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty.** ST May 10, 1899

"Remember that Christ risked all; "tempted like as we are," he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict. Heaven itself was imperiled for our redemption. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Jesus

would have yielded up his life, we may estimate the value of a soul.” GCB, December 1, 1895

“To the honor and glory of God, His beloved Son -- the Surety, the Substitute -- was delivered up and descended into the prisonhouse of the grave. **The new tomb enclosed Him in its rocky chambers. If one single sin had tainted His character the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky chamber, and the world with its burden of guilt would have perished.**” (Ellen G. White, Ms. 81, 1893, p. 11, Diary entry for Sunday, July 2, 1893, Wellington, New Zealand)

I would like an explanation of these passages. Could the Jesus you worship have staked His eternal existence in this conflict? If your Saviour had have sinned would He have remained in the grave forever? Did your Saviour indeed risk all? I put it to you, that a Triniarian Christ could never risk all for us and never ever was in danger of being kept in the tomb forever.

The Saviour I worship is a marvel worthy of supreme adoration that He was willing to be lost forever for me. Such risk, such love, such amazing condescension!

H. The Solid Platform.

I was again brought down through these messages, and saw how dearly the people of God had purchased their experience. It had been obtained through much suffering and severe conflict. God had led them along step by step, **until He had placed them upon a solid, immovable platform.** EW 259 (1882)

If God laid a solid immovable platform for our movement, then would not that platform have at its centre the “no other foundation than can be laid” in the person of Jesus Christ? Indeed.

“**After the passing of the time in 1844 we searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with the brethren, and we studied and prayed earnestly.** Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, “We can do nothing more,” the Spirit of the Lord 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 how we were to labor and teach effectively. **Thus light was given that helped us to understand the Scriptures in regard to Christ, his mission, and his priesthood.** A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.” RH, May 25, 1905 par. 24

It is a simple deduction of logic in my mind that if our pioneers had a wrong view of Christ as the begotten Son of God then it is impossible to conceive that the platform they laid was immovable, for indeed we have moved away from that platform as a church. Are we sure we are still standing on the solid platform as a church? See *The Return of Elijah* Chapter 26 for more or my article *No Other Foundation*:

http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180

Probably one of the most direct passages from Ellen White that makes sense to me in terms of inheritance, but not in terms of self-origination, is this passage:

The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, is truly God in infinity, but not in personality. UL 367

Jesus is God in infinity because He inherited all the fullness of the Godhead, but not in personality in the sense that He is not the “great source of all” DA p. 21. All things are BY Him (infinity) yet all things are OF (personality) the Father. 1 Cor 8:6. In what way would you understand the literal grammatical meaning of Jesus not being God in personality?

I. My Father and Your Father

For me personally, knowing that Jesus is indeed the very Son of God is what gives me the greatest confidence that God is indeed a Father and knows what it means to be a Father. He is qualified to Father the universe because He is firstly a Father of “His own kind” within the realms of Divinity. It gives me confidence that the Father really meant those words at the baptism “You are my dear Son in whom I delight” (Tyndale). The sense of possession and ownership which flows on to us by knowing we are accepted in the Beloved. (Eph 1:6). This provides the very assurance of acceptance, blessing and love that my soul yearns for. I do not find this in the Trinity. The acceptance of a co-equal, self-originated power does little to take away my doubts that I could ever be accepted. But knowing that Jesus received all things from his Father raises my confidence that the Father would give me all things that I need to live as a man. Indeed this is the promise of Romans 8:32. I then find force in the words “I go to my Father and your Father, to My God and your God.” John 20:17.

I think I have submitted more than sufficient evidence for the possibility of Divinity by inheritance. The only thing that prevents this is the claim that this evidence is invalid due to the assumption of Divinity by self-origination. Many scholars acknowledge the Trinity is an assumed doctrine (See *The Return of Elijah* Chapter 27 “Assumed As a Fact”). This assumption destroys the normal, literal and grammatically ~~and normal~~ reading of the terms Father, Son, begotten, express image, proceeded forth etc. All these terms are required to take a symbolic meaning for the sake of an assumption. This is highly risky in light of the Bible statement that “he that has the Son has life.” Having a symbolic Son is vastly different from having a literal one.

3. The Holy Spirit: Direct Representative or Self-Originated Emulating Representative.

As we stated earlier, there is no doubt at all about three powers in heaven. It is rather the relationship between the three powers that is at question.

A. No Dispute on Representation

We would both agree that the Holy Spirit is the representative of the Father and the Son. One of the most common Bible texts that speak of this representation is:

John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

I think we would both agree that the Spirit is a mystery that is hard to define, but the central aspect of the Spirit is that it represents God and Christ to us. He does not speak of Himself but brings to us the sweet presence of Christ to abide in our hearts. Christ abiding in our hearts is one of the most precious aspects of the gospel.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

1Cor 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

B. What is the Process of Representation?

We might venture to ask how does Christ live in me? How is Christ in us and how do we have His mind? Obviously we do not exactly know how this occurs. The Spirit blows where it wills and we don't know where it comes from and where it goes, yet it is really this question that causes division regarding the Spirit.

The view of the Trinity indicates that this representation is actually a process of emulation. The personality of Christ is transferred to the "being" of the Holy Spirit in some fashion and the Spirit through some process brings the very characteristics of Christ to us.

My understanding is that the Spirit is an agency of the Father (John 15:26; Matt 10:20) through which the personal presence of Himself and His Son (John 14:23) can be in all places in the universe at one time.

The Spirit is certainly a third power through which God works, notice this quote

C. Spirit is a Free, Working, Independent Agency Yet Used by the Father as it Pleases Him

The Holy Spirit is a free, working, independent agency. **The God of heaven uses His Spirit as it pleases Him**; and human minds, human judgment, and human methods can no more set boundaries to its working, or prescribe the channel through which it shall operate, than they can say to the wind, "I bid you to blow in a certain direction, and to conduct yourself in such and such a manner." *Signs of the Times*, March 8, 1910

The Spirit is a free, working, independent agency and God uses His Spirit as it pleases Him. This is very important to hold in balance. It is free and independent in one sense and yet at the same time is an agency used by the Father as the Father pleases. As Ellen White goes on to say, we can't set boundaries on how it works or how it operates.

For me, I see the Spirit as the agent of the Father as His direct representative. The Father is present with me directly via the agency of the Spirit.² I do not need to experience it through another being and risk creating the thought that the Father is not actually there but has an intermediary ambassador. Coming back to a statement regarding the three powers of heaven, we see that these powers serve the Father's purpose:

‘In the great closing work we shall meet with perplexities that we know not how to deal with, but let us not forget that **the three great powers of heaven are working**, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that **God will bring His³ purposes to pass.**’--
Manuscript 118, 1902.

Now some people believe that the Father has His own omnipresence apart from the Spirit which presents quite a conundrum in terms of two beings possessing omnipresence. If two beings are omnipresent then at some point of intersection there is a merging of identities because by default two beings can't be omnipresent. Many understand that Christ gave up His own omnipresence and has it via the Spirit, so the belief of ambassadorship is much stronger for Adventists.

D. Christ Our Comforter

Yet seeing the Spirit as an agent or power of direct representation, I can read all the passages of Scripture that speak of Christ in my heart in a normal, literal manner.

When it says that I have the mind of Christ, then I understand that it is the very mind of Christ transported through the agency of the Spirit. I do not think of another being engaged in an emulation process and reproducing Christ's mind for me on the understanding that He is exactly the same as Jesus.

The most precious example to me regarding direct representation is this verse:

Gal 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Through my understanding of direct representation, it is the very spirit of Christ that comes into my heart. The first time I really grasped this, I wept for joy at the thought that it is the very mind and presence of the person that walked the dusty paths of Israel and was hung on the cross who abides in my heart, indeed Christ is with us, even to the end of the world.

When I think of this process occurring through another being, Christ still feels far away, detached, uninvolved, and it's not the same. Even if the Spirit is just like Christ, the Spirit as a being did not live in human flesh, did not face my temptations and did not die for me. Christ did all these things. He is the one I know and love. He is the one I want direct contact with because I know He understands me and my trials.

² See Willie White's 1935 letter to H.W Carr for a good explanation of this. Many people discount Willie White's letter and yet no one worked more closely with Ellen White than Willie. Also since Willie was her son, she had plenty of time to "convert" Willie to the "truth" after James died if it was important. This never happened or we must conclude that Willie was extremely stubborn or slow or both from a Trinitarian view point.

³ I understand the word His in its literal grammatical sense of one person.

This is why Christ said both these statements:

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

It is another comforter because it is another power than Christ. It is the free independent agency; yet:

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Christ indeed comforts me through His Spirit. The normal and literal way of reading this is that Christ directly comforts me through this agency. This is why Ellen White says of Christ:

“**The Saviour is our Comforter.** This I have proved Him to be.” 8MR p. 49

“Let them study the seventeenth of John, and learn how to pray and how to live the prayer of Christ. **He is the Comforter.** He will abide in their hearts, making their joy full. His words will be to them as the bread of life...” RH Jan 27, 1903

“As by faith we look to Jesus, our faith pierces the shadow, and we adore God for His wondrous love in giving **Jesus the Comforter.**” 19MR 297

Once again notice the direct representation in the following passage:

"He [Christ] is coming to us by His Holy Spirit today. Let us recognize Him[Christ] now; then we shall recognize Him[Christ] when He [Christ] comes in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. God calls upon you to get ready to meet Him in peace. RH, April 30, 1901.

It is this direct representation through the agency of the Spirit that causes Paul to interchange between God and the Spirit and Christ and the Spirit, for the Spirit is a direct representative.

Rom 8:9-10 But ye are not in the flesh, but in **the Spirit**, if so be that **the Spirit of God** dwell in you. Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his. (10) And if **Christ** *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the **Spirit** *is* life because of righteousness.

E. Omnipresence of Christ

“It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in My name." "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" [John 14:16, 17].” **This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter.** 14MR 179

I am not sure how much clearer that can be made, at least in my mind. The omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ called the Comforter.

This is central to why I see “the three powers” as two beings and a free independent agency used by the Father and Son to be present with us. This agency brings the person of Christ directly to me.

This brings us to the phrase “the third person of the Godhead.” The Spirit is a third person in that it is a free and independent agency, yet it is the person of Christ that is coming to us through this agency. I think we both understand that the term *speaking in the third person* is speaking of yourself as if you are someone else. This is an entirely legitimate usage of the term *third person*. This is what I see Christ explaining in this verse:

John 14:16-18 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; (17) *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (18) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Ellen White explains it this way:

“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 [Christ] divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He [Christ] would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent.**” 14 MR 23.

Attempts have been made to state that *divested* does not mean “stripped” in this case yet this is the most common usage and Ellen White uses it this way in all occasions that I have searched out. It is also suggested that the antecedent to *Himself* is the Holy Spirit and not Christ, yet this argument introduces the redundancy of the word *Himself* and confuses the meaning of “He would represent Himself.” This argument also assumes by default that the Holy Spirit is a separate being, which assumption cannot be used to support what is not yet proved.

These cavils aside, the statement presents a beautiful picture of the Holy Spirit being the personality of Christ divested of the aspects of humanity. This is exactly as I understand it.

The agency of the Spirit coming forth from the identity of Christ is most powerfully expressed as follows:

F. Law of Life for the Universe not Just Humanity

John 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

This breath is the Spirit that flows forth from Christ; the Fountain of Life. Christ receives His Life (John 5:26. The Life is what is original, unborrowed and underived; let us not confuse the person with the life) and then from Christ flows this breath or water. The principle is simple; it involves three powers with Son representing the Father and Spirit representing Father and Son.

Ellen White calls this the Law of Life for the Universe:

But turning from all lesser representations, [notice representation] we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. “I do nothing of Myself,” said Christ; “the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.” “I seek not Mine own glory,” but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all.** And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life. {DA 21}

Notice carefully the following points:

1. This is the Law of Life for the Universe
2. It is the Father’s life that flows through the Son
3. Through the Son it returns to the Father – the great Source of all
4. Through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete.

This passage deserves pondering for its principles are repeated in Scripture over and over through symbols of water, manna, the vine, the tree of life and so on. Consider the following passages. Many people recoil from calling the Holy Spirit an influence, yet Ellen White does. Of course the Spirit is not a *mere* influence; it brings the very person of Christ and the Father to us. The Spirit is the person of the Father and His Son represented. So it is not merely an influence.

Through faith in Jesus Christ the chain of mutual dependence is fastened to the throne of God, and through the agency of man humanity is bound to God. “God has promised his Holy Spirit, the highest power in the universe, to be embodied in men, that through faith in Jesus Christ humanity may be elevated. **An influence emanating from God draws and concentrates the power of the universe, that a lost and rebel race may be reconciled and restored to God.** ST, September 4, 1893 similar expression in Steps to Christ 1892 p. 98; 2T p. 189 1868; The Southern Watchman June 25, 1903; Youth’s Instructor Nov 3, 1898

As the Divine Endowment—the power of the Holy Spirit—was given to the disciples, so it will today be given to all who seek aright. This power alone is able to make us wise unto salvation, and to fit us for the courts above. Christ wants to give us a blessing that will make us holy. “These things have I spoken unto you,” He says, “that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Joy in the Holy Spirit is health-giving, life-giving. **In giving us His Spirit, God gives us Himself,—a fountain of Divine influences, to give health and life to the world.** ST, March 15, 1910.

4. Complications with Three Self Originated Beings

A. Confusing/Blending Identities of Father and Son

The heart of salvation rests in knowing the Father and His Son, anything that confuses our knowledge of the identities of Father and Son can affect our salvation. This has always been a key concern for the

founders of the Advent movement. One of the central concerns was a clear understanding of the scenes in Daniel 7 and 8 and the judgment. Incorrect ideas concerning the investigative judgment can cause complacency that leads to running out of oil and being classed amongst the foolish virgins. Notice the following from James White:

Says the prophet Daniel, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hairs of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." Chap.vii,9. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom." Verses 13, 14.

Here is a sublime description of the action of two personages; viz, God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Deny their personality, and there is not a distinct idea in these quotations from Daniel. James White, *The Personality of God*, Page 3 and 4

Ellen White backs this sentiment when she says:

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. MR760

At the heart of the Advent message is a clear distinction between the Father and His Son. It is no accident that Adventism is the only church to receive a doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary; it is traced to a belief that the Father and Son each have a form and are real literal beings that are indeed Father and Son. All of the creeds emphasize God as a spirit being without body or parts which makes it impossible to conceive of the actions of Daniel 7 and the judgment scene depicted. For more details see my article *No Other Foundation*

http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180

The entire body of Adventist doctrine was hammered out upon a literal reading of Scripture as developed by William Miller⁴ and endorsed by Ellen White⁵ and the other pioneers. I invite you to read chapter 25 of *Return of Elijah*⁶ which shows how the majority of Adventist doctrine has been spiritualised by Adventist Scholars in some quarter of the church due to an abandonment of the literal rule of interpretation. The rejection of the true Father and His Son invokes a train of heresies that sweeps away the immovable platform.

When the 1980 statement on God was introduced to Adventism, the wording creates confusion regarding the personalities of the Father and the Son. It destroys the actual meaning of the terms Father and Son and leaves them as having no distinct relation to each other. Notice what it says.

2. Trinity:

⁴ For Miller's Rules of Bible Interpretation see

http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=260

⁵ See http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=258

⁶ Also see my sermon: The Inroads of Spiritualism. <http://www.vimeo.com/15862381>

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. **He is infinite and beyond human comprehension,** yet known through His self-revelation. **He** is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

The fundamental refers to Father, Son and Spirit as a unity of three co-eternal Persons and then goes on to refer to this unity as “He”. This is done by many Adventist Scholars:

We would suggest that God in **His Trinitarian self-revelation**, has claimed that He created us to reflect the love that supernaturally resides in **His very being as an eternally loving God who is one in three.** Furthermore, the triune love found in God is not self oriented and thus strongly implies that we find our greatest joy and satisfaction in living and serving others." Whidden, Moon and Reeve, The Trinity Page 247

The use of the word “He” to describe Father and Son and Spirit creates confusion. It blends the three persons into a non-personal entity. Ellen White warns:

Again and again we shall be called to meet the influence of men who are studying sciences of satanic origin, through which Satan is working to make a nonentity of God and of Christ. {9T 68.1}

If Father, Son and Spirit are three self-originated beings with no distinguishing features other than labels and because the Father and Spirit have never been seen, the danger of merging their identities increases dramatically. When you use the word **He** to address the three, you strip them of their individual personalities and run the risk of reducing them to raw power, might, knowledge and presence or reworded, the three omni’s of Augustine. Is it any wonder that our sanctuary doctrine is under attack when more and more of our scholars refer to Father and Son collectively as **He**. I see this process as Satanic in origin and completely undermines our Sanctuary message. This does not mean everyone will reject our sanctuary message (although many have), but it means the planks that uphold it have been seriously weakened if not entirely stripped away.

B. Mystic Susceptibility

Another problem I see in this merging of Father, Son and Spirit into a singular **He** is a parallel to eastern mysticism. We observe the three members of the Godhead in their efforts to remain selfless, merging themselves into the 3 in 1 Godhead. This is similar to the process of Buddhism:

The Buddha had invented a new system of yogic meditation (vipassana) and it was assuredly this that led to his final insight. Most systems of his time induced trance like state known as "samadhi" in which the self was said to merge with the universal godhead or Brahman - like a "dew drop falling into an ocean". [Introducing Buddhism](#)

The eastern philosophy draws its adherents through the logical impossibility of becoming everything by becoming nothing and invites us to merge with the Godhead. Trinitarianism draws its adherents through the logical impossibility of Three persons in One God and invites us to observe this merging of

its members in selflessness. The process is slightly different yet the outcome is the same. See my article *The Trinity and the Loss of Identity*
http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=788

Again, not everyone is going to directly embrace mysticism, yet the planks that would safeguard this are removed. It is interesting to note the rapid rise of the *emergent church* in Adventism. I see that what I have described as a preparation for this. I also see the Trinity as being a perfect tool for ecumenism in that it takes logical impossibilities and merges them into one unity.

C. The Holy Spirit as a Separate Being

All Adventists agree that the Father and Son are personal beings. As Ellen White states:

There is a personal God, the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son. RH,
November 8, 1898

Yet as we mentioned earlier, the church now sees the Holy Spirit as a separate being. I have great difficulty with this because, while I can imagine a locus point for the Father and Son as personal beings because they both have a form, the Spirit does not have a form and is omnipresent leaving me incapable of conceiving a central locus point for His being. Whether we like it or not this opens the door to believe that God is indeed present in the flowers and in the trees. While you would not believe it, the door is open for others if they wish to follow this path. And indeed this is the path that Kellogg followed.

A.G Daniells to W.C White regarding Kellogg's View:

“Ever since the council closed I have felt that I should write you confidentially regarding Dr Kellogg's plans for revising and republishing ‘The Living Temple’.... He (Kellogg) said that some days before coming to the council, he had been thinking the matter over, and began to see that he had made a slight mistake in expressing his views. He said that all the way along he had been troubled to know how to state the character of God and his relation to his creation works... **He then stated that his former views regarding the trinity had stood in his way of making a clear and absolutely correct statement; but that within a short time he had come to believe in the trinity and could now see pretty clearly where all the difficulty was, and believed that he could clear the matter up satisfactorily. He told me that he now believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and his view was that it was God the Holy Ghost, and not God the Father, that filled all space, and every living thing.** He said if he had believed this before writing the book, he could have expressed his views without giving the wrong impression the book now gives. I placed before him the objections I found in the teaching, and tried to show him that the teaching was so utterly contrary to the gospel that I did not see how it could be revised by changing a few expressions. We argued the matter at some length in a friendly way; but I felt sure that when we parted, the doctor did not understand himself, nor the character of his teaching. And I could not see how it would be possible for him to flop over, and in the course of a few days fix the books up so that it would be all right.” Letter: A G Daniells to W C White. Oct 29. 1903 p1.2. (Emphasis added)

Kellogg's Alpha was aided by a belief in the Trinity and seeing the logical implications of worshipping a being without body or parts that fills all heaven and earth. By restricting the agency of the Spirit to flowing from the Father and Son, the Spirit is anchored to the Father and Son as its beginning point and only representing the Father and Son. This prohibits the possibility of believing that God is in the flowers and the trees. The part of our church that emphasizes three beings (Moon, Whidden, Reeve, Parfitt etc) are susceptible to this, while others like Hatton are not susceptible because of his belief of three persons in one Being.

The other problem with the Spirit being a separate being is that it causes conflict with quotes like:

Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,--one in nature, in character, and in purpose,--the **only** being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. GC 493

"No man, nor even the highest angel, can estimate the great cost [of God's condescension in preparing the gospel feast]: it is known **only** to the Father and the Son." Bible Echo, Oct 28, 1895

"The Father and the Son **alone** are to be exalted." Youth's Instructor July 7, 1898

To say that GC 493 says nothing about the Spirit is an impossibility for the Trinitarian. If the Spirit is Omniscient and Omnipresent then how can He not be present at the council or not know its decisions? *Functional Hierarchy* does not satisfy the demands of the Divine requirements of Omnipresence and Omniscience.

The Bible Echo statement speaks of the knowledge of the condescension involved in the plan of salvation, how can it only be known to the Father and Son if the Spirit is Omniscient?

Written the same year as the Desire of Ages, the Father and the Son are exalted exclusively

There must be logical consistency on these issues.

The final question I will address is the "Three Holiest Beings," for this is the anchoring statement for much that would appear to discredit all that I just said.

The statements which demonstrate only a single occurrence ("threefold name", "three holiest beings", "three persons of the heavenly trio") raise some concern for the lack of corroborating usage. Such reservations are in harmony with the reserve exercised for single texts supporting any doctrinal issue.

The concern is further enhanced when we discover that one of these was a sermon delivered by E. G. White at the Congregational Church, then being used by the Oakland SDA Church, on 18th and Market Streets, in Oakland, California, on Sabbath afternoon, October 20, 1906, but only transcribed by a listener in the audience and not published until after her death in Manuscript Releases volume 7 in 1976.

I am reminded that Ellen states:

I am now looking over my diaries and copies of letters written for several years back.
. . . I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in

testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have things to revive past history, that they may see that there is one straight chain of truth, **without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.** This, I am instructed, is to be a living letter to all in regard to my faith.--Letter 329a, 1905. 3SM 52

Couple that with this:

And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: **Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works.** 5T 696

In my mind if I accept the “Three Holiest Beings” statement as it stands then I have a conflict with a large body of inspiration for a statement that was never written or verified by her and not published until 1976. This is not a statement I am willing to use as my trump card for my beliefs. It does not bear the weight of evidence.

“The threefold name” and “heavenly trio” statements do not concern me, for as I have stated, I firmly believe in the three great powers of heaven and the Spirit as an independent, free agent used by the Father. But once again there is a question of living persons verses personalities which alters the meaning significantly.

D. A Democratic God

In an article by Samuel Bacchiocchi on the Trinity, he addresses an extremely vital point in my mind and reflects a value system that I believe is dangerous.

Shortly we shall see that the monarchical conception of the Trinity is reflected especially in the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, where the pope acts as God’s official representative on earth, invested with special powers to govern the church. The outcome of this monarchical practice is the passive submission of believers who fail to exercise their spiritual gifts within the body of Christ. By contrast, **the biblical view of the Trinity as perfect communion of the Three, gives rise to a community of believers with a variety of gifts that are valued and exercised as expressing the communion of the Trinity itself.** Samuel Bacchiocchi – The Importance of the Trinity

A worship of three co-equal and co-eternal beings presents no room for children or true subordinates. All are equal in everything. This view of God can heavily impact families and communities in their operations. Notice also that in Bacchiocchi’s Trinity, it is the gifts that make the persons appreciated and valued. This is an extremely toxic concept in my mind and is at the centre of much of the ladder climbing in Adventism. There is much more that could be said on this but you can read that in the latter half on my manuscript – *The Return of Elijah* and my review of Dr Bacchiocchi’s work.

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At the very least I have laid out for you what I believe is a sound alternative for an understanding of the three powers of heaven. I believe it avoids many of the problems I have raised for your consideration and is defensible from Scripture and the weight of evidence in the Spirit of Prophecy. I submit these to you for your prayerful thought and consideration.