

Claim: The Holy Spirit is Jesus "Divested of...Humanity"

The claim is made that the Son of God, in a spiritual form, was the apostolic church's counselor, guide and leader throughout the book of Acts, and in every generation thereafter.

The following statement is presented in support for this argument:

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** divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent. - Letter 119, Feb. 18, 1895; 14MR 23.3

It is further argued that if the Holy Spirit never had the "personality of humanity" then how could He be divested of it, since the word "divest" means "to rid of something", "to strip off". The conclusion is thus drawn from this statement that the Comforter is simply the spiritual, rather than the physical part of Christ's personality.

However, this argument that the word "Himself" is referring back to Christ fails on two counts. The first that we will consider is Ellen White's usage of the phrase, "...is himself...".

Such phrases as "God is Himself...", "Christ is Himself...", "man is himself...", etc are found in 25 source passages in Ellen White's writings. In every instance they are equivalent to the more frequently used expressions, "God Himself is...", "Christ Himself is...", "man himself is...", etc. In not one instance was this wording found in which the "himself" in the phrase "is himself" referred to someone other than the person immediately preceding. It never refers to someone contextually more distant. A full listing of all 25 passages worded like "himself is..." is found at the end of this article.

It is therefore highly unlikely that, in the passage under study, the word "himself" would be referring back to the more distant word "Christ".

Thus we find that the expression:

The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity...

is equivalent to:

The Holy Spirit Himself is divested of the personality of humanity...

Stated this way, it is clear that the word "divested" refers to the Holy Spirit, not to Christ.

Secondly, this conclusion is supported by the fact that Ellen White later reworded the passage under study as follows:

The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally.

Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high. - *Desire of Ages* 669.2, 1898

That the two statements are essentially the same is evident from the fact that all key words and concepts are present in each. However, as reworded for *Desire of Ages*, the word "himself" has been eliminated, and it is clear that the word "divested" again refers to the Holy Spirit, not to Christ. Note as well that the *Desire of Ages* rewording took place three years after the original statement in the letter she wrote in 1895.

There are many other similar statements which confirm these concepts concerning the relation of Christ to the Holy Spirit, including the following:

During His humiliation upon this earth, **the Spirit had not descended** with all its efficacy; and Christ declared that if He went not away, it would not come, but that if He went away, He would send it. **It was a representation of Himself**, and after He was glorified it was manifest. - ST May 17, 1899, par. 3

When Christ ascended to heaven, **the Holy Spirit took his place**, and was a **perfect representation** of him. - GH June 11, 1902, par. 7

In the plan of restoring in men the divine image, it was provided that the **Holy Spirit** should move upon human minds, and be **as the presence of Christ**, a molding agency upon human character. - RH February 12, 1895, par. 5

[Note in the above quote that the Holy Spirit is as the presence of Christ. If the Holy Spirit were literally Christ Himself, then it would not be necessary to qualify His presence with the word "as", which in this context means "just like" or "equivalent to".]

The Lord Jesus acts through the Holy Spirit; for it is **His representative**. - *Messages to Young People*, pg 55

The Spirit is freely given us of God if we will appreciate and accept it. And what is it? The **representative** of Jesus Christ. - 11LtMs, Lt 38, 1896, par. 7

Moreover, the idea that the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself but divested of the personality of humanity conflicts with such statements as:

To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, **forever to retain His human nature**. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. - DA 25.3

In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a **tie that is never to be broken**. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us.... To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, **forever to retain His human nature**.... God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. - RC 45.5

In earthly courts, when a king would make his greatest pledge to assure men of his truth, he gives his child as a hostage, to be redeemed on the fulfillment of his promise; and behold what a pledge of the Father's faithfulness; for when he would assure men of the immutability of his council, he gave his only begotten Son to come to earth, to take the nature of man, not only for the brief years of life, but **to retain his nature** in the heavenly courts, **an everlasting pledge** of the faithfulness of God. - RH December 22, 1891, par. 4

Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and yet He pleased not Himself. He took upon Himself human nature for no other purpose than to place man on vantage ground before the world and the whole heavenly universe. He carries sanctified humanity to heaven, there **always to retain humanity** as it would have been if man had never violated God's law. - UL 313.6

How can Christ be "divested of the personality of humanity" while retaining His humanity?

As to the argument that the word "divested" normally implies that some attribute was previously possessed, but the Holy Spirit never possessed humanity, the *Oxford Dictionary* says concerning the past participle "divested":

The latter is found loosely used for: **Devoid of**. (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. III, 1933, pg 552

There are 57 source passages in which Ellen White uses the word "divested" and in many of these it is clear that the attribute said to be "divested" was previously possessed. However, in some instances Ellen White used this word in the sense of "devoid of" or "free of":

The life of a Christian will be **divested** of all pretense, **free** from all affectation, artifice, and falsehood. - 5T, 50

Here the word "divested" is used in parallel with, and synonymously with the word "free". The word "freed" would imply previously bondage, but the word "free" does not imply this. The coupling of the word "free" with the word "divested" in this way indicates that the word "divested" as used by Ellen White need not necessarily imply that the attribute or thing was previously possessed.

This and other similar statements support the concept that when Ellen White said:

The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity...

the word "divested" need not necessarily imply that the Holy Spirit was previously "cumbered with humanity."

This is made clear in the corresponding statement in *Desire of Ages*, page 669:

The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but **divested** of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof.

Thus, when looked at carefully, from every angle, the passage under study gives no support to the claim that the Holy Spirit is literally Jesus in spirit form without the limitations of humanity.

Ellen White's Expression "...is himself..."

God is Himself [2]

God is Himself the source of all mercy. (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pg 22).

God is himself the Rock of Ages, a refuge for his people, a covert from the storm, a shadow from the burning heat. (*Review & Herald*, Feb. 24, 1885).

Man is Himself [1]

Man is himself responsible for receiving or rejecting sacred truth. (*Signs of the Times*, June 23, 1887).

He is Himself (Christ) [1]

Christ has declared our position. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the **light** of life" (John 8:12). **He is Himself** the bright and morning Star. He is the Sun of Righteousness, the brightness of His Father's glory. (*This Day with God*, pg 357).

He is himself (Satan) [1]

Satan was the first rebel in the universe, and ever since his expulsion from heaven he has been seeking to make every member of the human family an apostate from God, even as he **is himself.** He laid his plans to ruin man, and through the unlawful indulgence of appetite, led him to transgress the commandments of God. (*Maranatha*, pg 139).

He is Himself (man) [7]

The true minister of God will not attempt to stand before the people until **he is himself** transformed by grace. (*Review & Herald*, Nov. 4, 1884).

Isaiah had denounced woes upon others for their apostasy and separation from God. He had been almost ready to yield to discouragement, so keenly did he realize that he dwelt among "a people of unclean lips;" but now he sees himself in danger. **He is himself** "a man of unclean lips." He had no disposition to exalt himself. (*Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, Sept. 9, 1895).

The educator of youth will do well to remember that with all his advantages of age, education, and experience he is not yet a perfect overcomer; **he is himself erring** and makes many failures. (*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pg 420; *Christian Education*, pg 25).

He cannot be a true educator until **he is himself a learner** in the school of Christ, receiving an education from the divine Instructor. (*Signs of the Times*, March 14, 1900; PH131, *Church Schools*, pg 20; (Australasian) *Union Conference Record*, July 26, 1899; *Special Testimonies on Education*, pg 49; *Counsels to Parents & Teachers*, pg 65).

If one is seen exalting himself, and oppressing his fellow-laborers who are in a more lowly position, if he is harsh and unsympathetic toward those who are not as favorably situated as he is himself, then he is failing to represent the character of his professed Master. (*Review & Herald*, Oct. 8, 1895).

I entreat Bro. Miller to find no fault with others until **he is himself thoroughly converted**; and then he will have no disposition to find **fault**. (PH11 , *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, pg 37).

Since the General Conference of 1901, I have carried a very heavy burden. Before I went to the Conference, light was given me that we must do **all** that we could to help Dr. Kellogg. The Lord said, "He is My physician, But **he is himself in need of healing**." (*Battle Creek Letters*, pg 88)

Who is Himself (Satan) [1]

The sophistries regarding God and nature that are **flooding** the world with skepticism are the inspiration of the fallen foe, **who is himself** a Bible student, who knows the truth that it is essential for the people to receive, and whose study it is to divert minds from the great truths given to prepare them for what is coming upon the world. (*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, pg 292; *Evangelism*, pg 602; *Review & Herald*, Oct. 22, 1903).

Who is Himself (man) [5]

He who is himself a reformer can accomplish good in seeking to reform others. (PH066, *Health, Philanthropic, and Medical Missionary Work*, pg 39; *Counsels on Health*, pg 342).

Men should never exchange the heavenly Guide for an earthly guide, **who is himself only a part of the great web of humanity**, like unto themselves, finite and fallible. (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 13, pg 29).

Truth is often preached by one who has not experienced its power; but it is truth nevertheless, and is blessed to those who, drawn by the Spirit of God, accept it. But when the truth is presented by one **who is himself sanctified** through it, it has a freshness, a force, that gives it a convicting power to the hearer. (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 16, pg 106; *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pg 1024).

The word of God, spoken by one **who is himself sanctified** through it, has a life-giving power that makes it attractive to the hearers, and convicts them that it is a living reality. When one has received the truth in the love of it, he will make this manifest in the persuasion of his manner and the tones of his voice. (*Desire of Ages*, pg 142; *Lift Him Up*, pg 187).

She has been enamored and listened to the voice of one [Caldwell] **who is himself far from me**. He is not walking in the light, but in a false show following another leader. (*Manuscript Release* No. 926: pg 65).