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## A TALE OF TWO BOOKS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOHN HARVEY KELLOGG'S LIVING TEMPLE AND ELLEN G. WHITE'S MINISTRY OF HEALING

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**A TALE OF TWO BOOKS:  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOHN HARVEY KELLOGG'S  
*LIVING TEMPLE* AND ELLEN G. WHITE'S *MINISTRY OF  
HEALING*<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract*

In contemporary society John H. Kellogg is more known for his medical inventions, than he is for the book *The Living Temple*, which was published in 1903. However, within Adventism the name Kellogg denotes crisis and controversy. The thesis of this paper is that Ellen White responded to the Kellogg's publication in three ways: personally—to John Kellogg; prophetically—to the Seventh-day Adventist Church; and publicly—with the book *The Ministry of Healing*, which was published two years later in 1905. It is the public response that is of primary interest to this paper. Ellen White wrote many personal letters to Kellogg leading up to and following, his publication. She wrote letters of concern and warning to parents, ministers, teachers, and church leaders. In none of her letters did she hold back. It was important that members knew what the theories in Kellogg's book represented, and why it could be so damaging to the mission of the Church. Kellogg is not mentioned in *The Ministry of Healing*, although his pantheistic theories are directly addressed. His book is not mentioned, but when you compare her book to his, it is evident that she is responding. For example, he begins with "The Mystery of Life," she begins with "The True Medical Missionary." The fact that Kellogg had been the leader in the medical field among Seventh-day Adventists, and the degree of the controversy, gives credibility to the assertion that she would be concerned enough to respond, and that her response would concern medical mission work. By analyzing her responses, what can we learn from how she publicly dealt with Kellogg's book?

Keywords: John Harvey Kellogg, Ellen G. White, leadership, crisis, Living Temple, healing, health, public, spirituality, pantheism, panentheism, Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup>I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Denis Kaiser under whose mentorship this article was written. His encouragement and assistance has helped me to improve the present research and make it publishable. I would also like to thank Dr. John Reeve, and Dr. Stan Patterson for providing valuable feedback. Lastly, I am indebted to my cousin, Dr. Mark Brown, DDS who expressed similar thoughts on this issue during a vacation in California, and encouraged me to pursue the idea.

*Introduction*

The controversy surrounding John Harvey Kellogg has been well documented and is in many ways “old news.” In a recent doctoral dissertation by Zorislav Plantak, the conflict between Kellogg and church leaders, especially Arthur G. Daniells, is analyzed and discussed. However, Plantak’s emphasis is not on Ellen G. White’s theological response to Kellogg, rather he takes note of her intermediary role in the conflict.<sup>2</sup> In a journal article from 2014, Ángel Manuel Rodríguez writes on the “theological and practical significance of health reform in the writings of Ellen G. White,” but not with reference to the Kellogg controversy.<sup>3</sup> Other works on Kellogg provide helpful insight into his personality, and the setting and issues surrounding the two publications, but they do not offer an analysis of the various ways in which White responded.<sup>4</sup>

As with all controversy, conflict is inevitable, if any resolution is to be made. This was also the case with the Kellogg Crisis, one of the greatest theological controversies within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the first fifty years of the denomination’s existence. Of course, it should be noted that the theological controversy did not take place in a vacuum. Only a year before John Harvey Kellogg published his book *The Living Temple* in 1903, the Battle Creek Sanitarium had burned to the ground, and it was part of his plan to raise money for new buildings with this publication.<sup>5</sup> Thus, he was also personally invested in this endeavor.

<sup>2</sup>Zorislav Plantak, “Ethical Analysis of Abuses of Power in Christian Leadership: A Case Study Of ‘Kingly Power’ in the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2017), 116–118.

<sup>3</sup>Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Theological and Practical Significance of Health Reform in the Writings of Health Reform in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 25, no. 2 (2014): 132–157. Further, two later articles by Warren A. Shipton deal with Ellen White on health issues, and while he does refer to John Harvey Kellogg, it is in relationship to certain health issues, not to the publications dealt with in this presentation. See Warren A. Shipton, “Ellen White, Health, and the Third Angel’s Message: Part 1—Improving Health through Reducing Transmissible Diseases,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 28, no. 1 (2017): 61–91; Warren A. Shipton, “Ellen White, Health, and the Third Angel’s Message: Part 2—Minimizing Non-Communicable Diseases,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 28, no. 2 (2017): 139–169.

<sup>4</sup>See Richard W. Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.: Pioneering Health Reformer* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006); Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); and, of course, Howard Markel, *The Kelloggs: The Battling Brothers of Battle Creek* (New York: Vintage Books, 2018).

<sup>5</sup>Plantak, “Ethical Analysis of Abuses of Power in Christian Leadership,” 163–164.

John Skrzypaszek points out that “the publishing of *The Living Temple* was a capstone which precipitated the final stage in the Kellogg drama. Those parts of the book which dealt with human physiology were of no concern. It was the introductory chapter, which expressed his theological reflections, that triggered reactionary responses.”<sup>6</sup> One of these reactionary writers was Ellen G. White, but how did she respond? My thesis is that she responded in three ways: personally, prophetically, and publicly.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how the publication of *The Ministry of Healing* in 1905 served as a public response to the panentheistic theories in Kellogg’s book, without directly referencing his work.<sup>8</sup>

### *Background: Before the Books*

At the outset, it is important to note that Ellen White wrote many letters to John H. Kellogg prior to his publication of *The Living Temple* in 1903. As early as 1886, even before she travelled to Australia, she encouraged Kellogg to stay close to Christ. In one of her letters, she even begins with the words, “Jesus loves you.”<sup>9</sup> Later, in 1892, she wrote, “God is very near you in your work, angels are close in attendance; then let not any feelings or any words or works of human beings overwhelm you.”<sup>10</sup> It is evident throughout her letters that she is full of compassion, and longs for Kellogg to know and accept God’s love for him. However, in this letter she also warned Kellogg about “erroneous views of science” that others had followed, and expressed her disapproval of employing those “who are not believers in present truth.”<sup>11</sup> In 1897 Kellogg presented his views publicly in a series of ministers-meetings,<sup>12</sup> and by 1898 Ellen White appealed to him with these words, “Brother John Kellogg, my mother-heart goes out toward you with weeping, for by symbols I am warned that you are in danger.

<sup>6</sup>John Skrzypaszek, “John Harvey Kellogg’s Concept of the Godhead,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies on the Trinity*, eds. Paul Petersen and Robert K. McIver (Hindmarsh, Australia: ATF Theology, 2014), 208.

<sup>7</sup>Due to space limitations and intended audience of this article, it will be a representative sampling of statements from Ellen White concerning *The Living Temple* that will be presented.

<sup>8</sup>It is in no way my intention to propose that Ellen White’s major publication on health, *Ministry of Healing*, only seeks to accomplish one purpose, i.e. a response to John Harvey Kellogg, yet it is this response, which is the focus of this article.

<sup>9</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 16 July 1886, Lt 8, 1886, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD (hereafter EGWE).

<sup>10</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 5 April 1892, Lt 18, 1892, EGWE.

<sup>11</sup>White to Kellogg, 5 April 1892.

<sup>12</sup>Cory Wetterlin, “Ellen G. White’s Understanding of Indwelling of the Holy Spirit: A Chronological Study,” *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal* 1, no. 2 (2015): 49.

Satan is making masterly efforts to cause your feet to slide, but God's eye is upon you."<sup>13</sup> In the years, which followed she reproved him in earnest, and in 1900 she wrote, "The work that is coming from your hands is not pure and sanctified."<sup>14</sup> Then, in 1903, John Kellogg published his book *The Living Temple*.

### *The Living Temple*

To better understand Ellen White's responses to Kellogg's book, some of his ideas must first be presented. In the preface, he expresses the hope that this work "may serve as a beacon light to some who are seeking a better way of life."<sup>15</sup> In the first three sections of the book, he presents the foundational theories for the health principles and guidance that follow.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to observe that after Kellogg introduces his panentheistic views of God in nature, he immediately answers the objection that some might say this negates the personality of God. Subsequently, he affirms his belief in a personal God, but goes on to describe the concept of "God as All-Energy."<sup>17</sup> He even states, "there must be something more tangible, more restricted, upon which to center the mind in worship. It is for this reason that Christ came to us in the image of God's personality."<sup>18</sup> It is as if he claims that the concept of a personal God is necessary for the sake of human comprehension, but it is not the best representation of the essence of God's being.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 29 December 1898, Lt 132, 1898, EGWE.

<sup>14</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 21 January 1900, Lt 177, 1900, EGWE.

<sup>15</sup>John Harvey Kellogg, *The Living Temple* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing Company, 1903), 5.

<sup>16</sup>Kellogg, *The Living Temple*, 17–77. A few statements will serve as examples of his view of God, as it is beyond the scope of this article to treat Kellogg's position in depth. Rather, it is to demonstrate how Ellen White responds. Kellogg writes, "We recognize one common Life, - a kindred force which springs in every limb that leaps and moves." Kellogg, *The Living Temple*, 15. "In the growth and habits of plants, also, there is abundant evidence of the presence of this universal Intelligence." Kellogg, *The Living Temple*, 20. "God is the explanation of nature, - not a God outside of nature, but in nature, manifesting himself through and in all the objects, [...] Where's God's Spirit is at work, where God's power is manifested, God himself is actually and truly present." Kellogg, *The Living Temple*, 28.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>19</sup>Kaiser describes how Ellen White disagreed with Kellogg's views: "She argued that he would depersonalize God, while she was concerned with the personality of the divine persons. Although he was employing some of her language in describing God, it only veiled his own very different concept." Denis Kaiser, "The Reception of Ellen G. White's Trinitarian Statements by Her Contemporaries (1897-1915)," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 25–38.

One last example, to demonstrate Kellogg's theological understanding of God in nature is found in the third section, where he asserts, "The light which comes from the sun is energy, - not simply sun energy, but divine energy. The great apostle enunciated this basic, physiological, and theological fact when he wrote, 'God is light.' 1 John 1:5."<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps statements such as this one that made Kellogg's contemporaries describe his views not as pantheistic, but pantheistic.<sup>21</sup>

In my opinion, his views as a foundation for health principles, serve as a clear contrast to those of Ellen White later published in *The Ministry of Healing*. However, before her public response is analyzed it is relevant to present a brief sketch of how she responds privately—to Kellogg, and prophetically—to the Church.

*A Personal Response: To John H. Kellogg*

After the publication of *The Living Temple*, Ellen White continued to write Kellogg, and directly addressed the theories put forward in his book. "*The Living Temple* contains the alpha of a train of heresies."<sup>22</sup> She also stated, "When you wrote that book you were not under the inspiration of God."<sup>23</sup> But although, she rebuked his work, she pleaded with him to come to Christ. She was still concerned for his salvation. Nonetheless, she did not withhold anything of what God instructed her to say. She plainly told Kellogg whose influence had directed him in this project. One of the most direct statements in her letters to Kellogg was the year after his publication about what took place at the GC session in 1903. She wrote, "At one time it was presented to me that evil angels clothed with beautiful garments were escorting you from place to place, and inspiring you to speak words of boasting which were offensive to God."<sup>24</sup> It must have been difficult for both Kellogg, and Ellen White considering their relationship preceding the controversy. Conflict is never easy, especially because it is not *just* about the argument, it is also about the person. A pertinent statement was made in a letter to Kellogg marked "not sent" from 1903. Referring to his book she wrote, "If ever there was a time when the writings of every author needed to be criticized, it is now."<sup>25</sup> It is evident that she

<sup>20</sup>Kellogg, *The Living Temple*, 64.

<sup>21</sup>Wetterlin notes: "While most at the time considered Kellogg to be a pantheist rather than a panentheist, Kellogg's view is more in line with the panentheism, which is developed by John Cobb." See Wetterlin, "Ellen G. White's Understanding of Indwelling of the Holy Spirit: A Chronological Study," 38.

<sup>22</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 26 November 1903, Lt 265, 1903, EGWE.

<sup>23</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 20 November 1903, Lt 253, 1903, EGWE.

<sup>24</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 27 July 1904, Lt 257, 1904, EGWE.

<sup>25</sup>Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 16 October 1903, Lt 232, 1903, EGWE.

felt strongly about what Kellogg had written, and the influence it might have. Thus, she did not restrict her response to her personal letters. She also wrote prophetically, and exerted her influence as best she could within the Church.

*A Prophetic Response: To the Church*

When I choose to call Ellen White’s response to the Church prophetic, it is not meant to negate the personal response, or the public. Neither is it meant to imply any predictive element, but it signals how she exerted her role in her messages of warning and concern to people in the Church after the publication of *The Living Temple*. In 1904 she warned parents not to send their children to Battle Creek to study, and in this context, she wrote, “Years ago I did not think that they would meet these errors right in the sanitariums; but when *Living Temple* came out, and some of our ministers told me that there was in it nothing but what I had been teaching all my life, I saw how great the danger was.”<sup>26</sup> This statement demonstrates the centrality of the publication, and the necessity of speaking out, because Kellogg’s theories were evidently not exclusive to him. But also, that it was not possible for everyone to distinguish between his presentation of God, and her own teachings. Even the same year that Kellogg’s book was published, Ellen White wrote from her home in California addressing Seventh-day Adventist physicians and ministers. The full writing was published three years later, in 1906:

God has permitted the presentation of the combination of good and evil in “Living Temple” to be made to reveal the danger threatening us. [...] We must now lift our voices in warning. Will our people acknowledge God as the supreme Ruler, or will they choose the misleading arguments and views that, when fully developed, make Him, in the minds of those who accept them, as nothingness? [...] The sentiments in “Living Temple” regarding the personality of God have been received even by men who have had a long experience in the truth. [...] Those doctrines, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy. They estimate as nothing the light that Christ came from heaven to give John to give to His people.<sup>27</sup>

These statements directly reference *The Living Temple*, and Ellen White stressed what Kellogg’s theories did to the personality of God. What he put forward was not a minor deviance from majority held positions of doctrine, or policy. She viewed it as dangerous, and something she was responsible to refute and challenge. It is also noteworthy how she refers to “the light that Christ came from heaven to give John,” thus interpreting the personality of God, and the concept of light differently than what Kellogg wrote. As has been described, she did this in letters to Kellogg. She wrote to the Church, also to its leaders and expressed how

<sup>26</sup>Ellen G. White, “The Foundation of Our Faith,” 18 May 1904, Ms 46, 1904, EGWE.

<sup>27</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Messages of Warning and Instruction to Seventh-day Adventists* (n.p.: n.p., 1906), 36–37. The original letter was sent in October 1903.

important it was to deal wisely with the controversy surrounding Kellogg.<sup>28</sup> Yet, there was one avenue left. Kellogg's views had been published in a book. They were now public. Two years after the publication of *The Living Temple*, Ellen White also published a book, *The Ministry of Healing*.

*A Public Response: The Ministry of Healing*

It may seem odd to refer to *The Ministry of Healing* as a public response, when everything previously referenced is also public. But whereas it is possible to dispute whether Ellen White's letters were intended for public viewing, her books were published and distributed to a much wider audience, even during her own life time. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that her publications subsequently following Kellogg's book, would be reactionary in nature. However, when asked to explain the theories of *The Living Temple*, "I reply, 'They are unexplainable.' The sentiments expressed do not give a true knowledge of God."<sup>29</sup> So, instead of explaining it, she did something more profound. She presented "a true knowledge of God." She wrote a book, where the first nearly 100 pages were about the person of Jesus Christ, and how he interacted with people, when He came to this earth.<sup>30</sup> She even entitled the first major section of the book "The True Medical Missionary." The fact that Kellogg had been the leader in the medical field among Seventh-day Adventists, and the degree of the controversy, makes it plausible that we should expect Ellen White to describe what she does. Also, it should not be shocking that her response would concern medical mission work.

In *The Ministry of Healing*, the person of Christ is not an aspect of God that she simply tries to justify. The person of Christ and His love for humanity is the centrality of what she wants people to understand. "Christ came to the earth and stood before the children of men with the hoarded love of eternity, and this is the treasure that, through our connection with Him, we are to receive, to reveal, and to impart."<sup>31</sup> She had also written, referring to *The Living Temple*, "We need not the mysticism that is in this book." But there was no question how much she believed people need Christ. She had made this appeal to Kellogg as well, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>28</sup>Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells and his fellow workers, 12 April 1903, Lt 49, 1903, EGWE.

<sup>29</sup>Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 202. The article in this publication appeared for the first time in Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Letters to Physicians and Ministers Instruction to Seventh-day Adventists* (n.p: n.p, 1904), 51–59.

<sup>30</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (1905; reprint; Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012), 16–107.

<sup>31</sup>White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 37.

Another surprise in what she had written, and what I am suggesting, is the following statement:

About the time that *Living Temple* was published, there passed before me in the night season, representations indicating that some danger was approaching, and that I must prepare for it by writing out the things God had revealed to me regarding the foundation principles of our faith. A copy of *Living Temple* was sent me, but it remained in my library, unread.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, to claim that *The Ministry of Healing* is a response to *The Living Temple* seems absurd, considering that Ellen White did not read it, before she wrote what God had revealed to her. But given that these things are spiritual, could it be that God had given her a response, even before she read Kellogg's book?

She was reluctant to respond, but circumstances changed, when it began circulating that her writings were in harmony with what was presented in Kellogg's book. She was heartbroken, and wrote of her decision to respond with the testimonies: "I hesitated and delayed about the sending out of that which the Spirit of the Lord impelled me to write. I did not want to be compelled to present the misleading influence of these sophistries. But in the providence of God, the errors that have been coming in must be met."<sup>33</sup> They were, on several fronts. And while she responded with her letters, personally and prophetically, Kellogg's view of God was challenged again, but in a different way with her book.

In the beautiful description of the life of Christ, she wrote the following, "The Saviour's life on earth was a life of communion with nature and with God. In this communion He revealed for us the secret of a life of power."<sup>34</sup> She did not describe God as nature, or God in nature. She described Christ in communion "with nature and with God." And she returned to this thought much later in the book with the section "The Essential Knowledge." In those chapters Kellogg's theories were directly refuted, but without mentioning his name, or his book. She wrote how "the sunlight, and the flowers in their delicate beauty, point to their Creator."<sup>35</sup> In the subsection entitled "Nature Is Not God" she wrote, "God's handiwork in nature is not God Himself in nature."<sup>36</sup> Further, she wrote, "The work of creation cannot be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?"<sup>37</sup> "The Mystery of Life" is the title of the first chapter of *The Living Temple*. She wrote, "In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God."<sup>38</sup> And again, in contrast to Kellogg's Universal Intelligence she

<sup>32</sup>White, *Selected Messages*, 1:202.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 1:205.

<sup>34</sup>White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 51.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 411.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 413.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 414.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 415.

wrote, “It is not by inherent power that year after year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun.”<sup>39</sup> She also wrote:

Christ came to teach human beings what God desires them to know. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love. Yet not from the stars or the ocean or the cataract can we learn of the personality of God as it was revealed in Christ. God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, she wrote directly about pantheistic theories, but this was not in the first sections of the book, and it was not even in the first part of the section that more directly deals with Kellogg’s theories. She presented first “a better knowledge,” before disputing what she considered false.

Today there are coming into educational institutions and into the churches everywhere spiritualistic teachings that undermine faith in God and in His word. The theory that God is an essence pervading all nature is received by many who profess to believe the Scriptures; but, however beautifully clothed, this theory is a most dangerous deception.<sup>41</sup>

If she had begun *The Ministry of Healing* by responding to *The Living Temple*, then that is what the book would have been about. It would have been an argument, and it might have limited her book merely as a contribution to a controversy more than 100 years ago. Instead, in *The Ministry of Healing*, it is still possible to find exactly that, healing in Christ. Her public “response” did something that the other responses did not. It presented a better view of God that is not dependent on any knowledge of the Kellogg crisis. And it is still relevant whenever similar thoughts are represented today.

### *Conclusion*

In Ellen White’s responses to Kellogg, and his theories hopefully there are lessons of leadership for us today. She responded personally, prophetically, and publicly. How do we respond, when controversy arises? She responded in every way she could, but she also followed Christ’s counsel, when He said, “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 416.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 419.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 428. Another direct statement against Kellogg’s theories is found toward the bottom of the same page: “The spiritualistic theories concerning God make His grace of no effect. If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power within him.”

as doves.” (Matt 10:16). She did not write that *The Ministry of Healing* was a response to *The Living Temple*, but given the evidence presented, I think it is fair to say that it also served this purpose. And because, it was an indirect response packaged into a better description, it still serves this purpose. Moreover, it demonstrates that by examining the historical context of one of Ellen White’s major publications, it may be possible to discover more than what is explicitly stated. When it is no longer possible to ask the author what motivated them to write what they did, all that is left is to dig into history, examine the context, and weigh the evidence. In this case, reading *The Ministry of Healing* is not about finding counter arguments to *The Living Temple*. It is about coming to Christ as the True Medical Missionary.