

Prayer to the Father

John 16:24-27

²⁴Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

²⁵These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. ²⁶**At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:** ²⁷**For the Father himself loveth you,** because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

Desire of Ages

As yet the disciples were unacquainted with the Saviour's unlimited resources and power. He said to them, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name." John 16:24. He explained that the secret of their success would be in asking for strength and grace in His name. **He would be present before the Father to make request for them.¹ The prayer of the humble suppliant He presents as His own desire in that soul's behalf.²** Every sincere prayer is heard in heaven. It may not be fluently expressed; but if the heart is in it, it will ascend to the sanctuary where Jesus ministers, and **He will present it to the Father³** without one awkward, stammering word, beautiful and fragrant with the incense of His own perfection. {DA 667.3}

Jesus told the disciples that He would NOT carry their prayers to the Father on their behalf. The point Jesus is making is that the Father loves them just as much as He loves them. Because the Father Himself loves them, they are to pray directly to the Father. There are no differences between Jesus and the Father, and both are equally accessible to us. However, Ellen White makes exactly the opposite statement in three different sentences in this one paragraph. (Numbered 1, 2, 3.) In her statement, she overlooks the fact that Jesus said He would *not* pray to the Father for them. Read this in a variety of translations to see that this is the meaning of the Greek text.

Rather than expounding on the meaning and application of the actual words of Jesus, Ellen White repeats a position that rests firmly on Catholic teaching. The Church at Rome adopted a teaching about the Father that is essentially pagan in origin. The gods of most pagan religions are fearsome, and as much distance as possible is needed between the god and the individual to insulate one from the wrath of the god. In Catholic teaching, the Father is distant and far too holy to be bothered by sinners. In this sense, He is in the same position as the angry pagan gods. He will, however, entertain petitions from His Son, Jesus, who spent time on Earth as a man experiencing all the drama and trauma that is common to the human experience. Beyond that, Jesus died to pay for the sins of sinful human beings (so the story goes), so – against His better judgment – the Father listens to the prayers presented to Him by Jesus.

But Catholics don't pray to Jesus. They pray to His mother, Mary, who is considered by that Church to be sinless. When Mary wants a prayer request answered, she takes those prayers to Jesus and tells Him to present them to the Father. As an obedient son, He does exactly as His mother asks. The only things missing from the above statement by Ellen White is a prayer to Mary and the Rosary.

Ellen White's description implies that the Father is not able to hear or is not interested in hearing the awkward, stammering words of the penitent sinner — that He will only listen to the petitions that

have been edited and cleaned up by Jesus. This is exactly the sentiment Jesus was attempting to combat when He instructed His disciples to pray directly to the Father because the Father loves them in exactly the same way He does. Contrary to the teachings of pagan religions, the Father is not angry with human beings! The Father hears every awkward, stammering prayer of every penitent sinner and accepts that person and loves him or her when they seek reconciliation with Him! The Father has as much love for individual men and women who struggle with the problems of this world as Jesus ever had. The Father stands ready to save those who long to live in harmony with His will just as Jesus does.

I have no doubt that Ellen White wrote the statement with the most sincere desire to point the penitent sinner to God. But her statement cannot be inspired by the Holy Spirit when her words are exactly the opposite of the words of Jesus. If inspiration is involved in her statement, the source of inspiration must be from the enemy of Jesus and the Father. The alternative is to conclude that Ellen White was inspired to write these words, which necessarily means that Jesus was not telling the truth to His disciples when He told them to pray directly to the Father. I am not willing to accept this alternative.

I have every confidence that if this error had been pointed out to Ellen White, she would have immediately corrected her statement. But because this statement stands in such stark opposition to the words of Jesus, I can positively conclude that this was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. I believe her writings are generally inspiring, but they were not inspired by the Holy Spirit as the writings of scripture are inspired.

We must keep in mind that the Millerite Movement, as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church that grew out of it, was a continuation of the Protestant Reformation whose mission is to remove the corruption of the Catholic Church from the teachings and practices of Christianity. Much of the “theology” of the Church of Rome is based on the teachings and practices of Mithra, Ashtheroth, and other pagan religions, and some of those teachings continue to be promoted by all Protestant churches. Ellen White’s comments are made in this context. There continues to be remnants of these teachings and practices even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church; thus there is a continuing need for reformation in the Church.