

HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY
In the Thinking of Ellen White

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**ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF
THE DOCTOR'S DEGREE**

**UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
2010**

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Painopaikka: Yliopistopaino 2010

ISBN 978-952-92-7891-6 (nid.)

ISBN 978-952-10-6440-1 (PDF)

E-thesis: <http://ethesis.helsinki.fi>

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Acknowledgements

When I was still a child my Lutheran grandmother spoke with appreciation about Ellen White's book *Steps to Christ* and recommended it to me. For decades White's teachings guided me in my personal spiritual quest. But I never imagined that this acquaintance would develop into an academic interest in her spiritual perceptions and teachings and in spirituality on the whole. It was as a result of a coincidence of a number of factors that I started this study in 2003.

I want to thank God for all the help I have received throughout this project. In the case of Christian spirituality, acknowledging the role of divine guidance and assistance is certainly necessary. But special thanks belong to a number of people without whom I could not have succeeded in my study. To Professor Heikki Kotila I am greatly indebted for his wise guidance, his useful observations and suggestions, and his words of encouragement, which were a constant source of inspiration and motivation. I regret his untimely death, and at the same time I owe him my heartfelt appreciation for his excellent work.

The interaction in our seminar group proved to be beneficial in all our individual projects. MTh Maria Buchert, MTh Risto Leppänen and MTh Ben Malinen, who have already defended their theses, shared many helpful and constructive comments and ideas, and I wish to my thanks to them for their support.

I extend a special thank you to Dr Aulikki Nahkola who initially encouraged me to proceed to further studies, and who has in several ways guided me in my study. She has read the manuscript and commented both on linguistic details and on major theological and methodological issues.

During my study I made four visits to Newbold College, England where I was able to research materials which were not available to me elsewhere. I am especially indebted to MSc Per Lisle and his staff at the Roy Graham Library for making special arrangements in order to accommodate me and my needs.

I also thank the pre-examiners, DPhil Michael Pearson and Docent Jaakko Rusama, for their careful reading of the manuscript and for sharing some excellent remarks and suggestions, which were useful in the finalisation of my dissertation.

My dear wife, Erja, has been there any time I needed someone to discuss emerging ideas and views. Her support and enthusiasm kept me going. Her support and enthusiasm have kept me going, even in the struggle with the finer points of English grammar. Thank you very much for all your help!

I am also grateful to several friends with whom I have had stimulating spiritual as well as academic discussions. I thoroughly enjoyed those moments of deep reflection and fruitful interaction with you, Seppo Romana, Kari Lähdesmäki and Satu Mäkelä, and others.

I also heartily thank Jonquil Hole for reading the final draft and for making linguistic corrections and other suggestions to add clarity to the text.

There is yet another person whose role has been very important, my computer advisor. Thank you, Samuel Kallio, for helping me out so many times when I was running out of resources and as the system was failing.

I look back to the past years of study with joy and gratitude. The journey has made my life so much richer.

Tiivistelmä

Spiritualiteetti viittaa syvälliseen, inhimilliseen ulottuvuuteen ja ominaisuuteen, jonka tarkka määrittäminen on haasteellista, ellei mahdotonta. Sitä vastaa yhtäältä uskonnollisuuden kautta toteutuva, elämän tarkoitukseen ja syvemmän olemuksen etsintään liittyvä hengellisyys, mutta toisaalta myös kaikkea muuta hengen viljelyä ja mielekkään olemisen tavoittelua tarkoittava henkisyys. John Swintonin mukaan hengen ulottuvuus on se inhimilliseen olemukseen kuuluva, dynaaminen elinvoima, joka virkistää ja elävöittää ihmistä ja motivoi häntä etsimään Jumalaa, arvoja, merkitystä, tarkoitusta ja toivoa.

Tämä tutkimus nostaa tarkastelun kohteeksi kokonaisvaltaisen hengellisyyden, jolloin huomio kiinnitetään niihin sidoksiin, joiden kautta hengen ulottuvuus liittyy muihin inhimillisen elämän olennaisiin toimintoihin ja näkökulmiin. Tällaisia ovat 1) ajattelu 2) teot ja käytännön toiminta 3) suhteet ja vuorovaikutusverkostot 4) tunteet ja kanssakäymistä ohjaavat asenteet 5) olemassaolon ja olemisen ulottuvuudet. Kokemusten merkitys, arvo ja mielekkyys hahmottuvat juuri hengen alueella, toisin sanoen sisäisesti, hengellisenä ja henkisenä asiana.

Tutkimusmateriaalina tässä tutkimuksessa on amerikkalaisen vuosina 1827 – 1915 eläneen Ellen Whiten kuusi myöhäiskauden teosta vuosilta 1892 – 1905 ja tutkimusmenetelmänä on käytetty systemaattista analyysiä. Olennaista Whiten tavassa käsitellä uskonnon harjoitukseen liittyviä aiheita on hänen käytännöllinen ja elämän arkeen kiinteästi niveltävä otteensa. Tutkimus paljastaa, että Martti Lutherin käsitykset ovat merkittävästi vaikuttaneet Whiten ajatteluun. Lähteistä paljastuu samankaltaisuutta hänen näkemystensä ja uusimman suomalaisen Luther-tutkimuksen Martti Lutherin tuotannosta esiin nostaman ajattelutavan välillä. Vaikka teologisen oppineisuuden kannalta White ja Luther ovat eri tasoilla, kummankin käsitys ihmisen ja Jumalan välisen suhteen perusolemuksesta on samankaltainen: Lähtökohtana sille on Jumalan rakkaus ja hänen armostaan lähtenyt toiminta. Toiseksi, ihmisen ja Kristuksen välinen, olemuksellinen yhteys, ”unio”, on perustana sille, että Jumala hyväksyy ihmisen ja huolehtii hänestä nyt ja ikuisesti. Kolmanneksi, tämä ihmisen ja Kristuksen liittoutuminen ja yhdistyminen ilmenee yhteistoimintana ja kumppanuutena yhteisten tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi maailmassa. White korostaa ihmisen ja Kristuksen välisen hengellisen suhteen vuorovaikutteista ja toiminnallista luonnetta, joka tulee ilmi epäitsekkyytinä, toisten ihmisten ja heidän tarpeittensa huomioimisena sekä myötätuntona ja kykynä asettua toisen asemaan.

Terveellistä elämäntapaa ja kasvatusta koskevat ajatuksensa White liittää siihen laaja-alaiseen näkemykseen hengellisyydestä, jonka tavoitteena on ihmisen kokonaisvaltainen hyvinvointi. Hän ei näe spiritualiteettia elämän arjesta irrallisena tai erillisenä saarekkeena, vaan ihmistä kaikessa ohjaavana, voimaannuttavana ja mielekkyyttä tuottavana, ensisijaisena ulottuvuutena.

Tutkimuksen kuluessa myös Whiten usein käyttämät ”Jumalalle antautumisen” ja ”luonteen” käsitteet nousevat tarkastelun kohteiksi. Hänen mukaansa ihminen ei tahdonponnistuksillaan yksin pysty tavoittamaan Jumalaa vaan hänen on lakattava Jumalan rakastavan kutsun edessä itse tahtomasta ja suostuttava

liittymään Jumalan tahtoon ja tarkoitukseen. Tämä liittyy siihen sisäiseen muutokseen, jota White kuvaa luonteen käsitteen avulla. Jumalan armon vaikuttama tahdon uudelleen suuntaaminen muuttaa ihmisen olemusta, arvoja, asennoitumisen tapaa ja myötätuntoisen vuorovaikutuksen kykyä niin ettei ihminen ole enää aivan sama kuin ennen. Kysymys on toisaalta yhtäkkisestä ja kertakaikkisesta olemuksellisesta muuttumisesta, mutta samalla myös hiljaisesta, elämänmittaisesta kasvusta ja kypsymisestä. Juuri luonteen käsitteen avulla White kuvaa hengellisyyttä ja siihen kuuluvaa sisästä matkaa.

Tässä tutkimuksessa spiritualiteettia lähestytään yleisinhimillisenä piirteenä ja ominaisuutena, jolloin huomio ei ole ensisijaisesti yksittäisissä opillisissa käsityksissä tai uskonnollisuuden harjoittamisen muodoissa. Tarkoituksena on luoda kokoava rakenne, jonka puitteissa holistinen spiritualiteetti voidaan selkeämmin hahmottaa ja yksilöidymmin ymmärtää.

Abstract

Spirituality refers to a profound human dimension and quality which it is challenging, if not impossible, to define exactly. It is represented on the one hand by a spirituality realised through means of religion, focused on seeking the purpose and ultimate being of life, but also by all other culture of the spirit in quest of a meaningful existence. According to John Swinton, the realm of the spirit is that characteristically human, dynamic life-force which vitalises and invigorates a person and motivates him/her to seek God, values, meaning, purpose and hope.

This dissertation makes holistic spirituality the object of its study, drawing attention to the connections by which the realm of the spirit is joined to other fundamental activities and dimensions of human life. These include 1) thinking 2) deeds and practical action 3) relationships and interactive networks 4) feelings and attitudes influencing behaviour 5) the dimensions of existence and being. It is in the realm of the spirit, in other words inwardly, as spiritual issues, that the meaning, value and significance of experiences are perceived.

The primary sources of this study comprise six books published between 1892 and 1905, products of the later years of Ellen White, an American who lived 1827–1915, and systematic analysis is employed as the method of study. A practical, down-to-earth touch is essential to White's way of discussing religious praxis. This study shows that the views of Martin Luther had a significant influence on White's thinking. The sources reveal a similarity between her views and the lines of thought in his literary production as highlighted by some of the most recent Finnish studies of Luther. Although White and Luther represent different levels of theological learning, both have a similar view of the essence of the relation between God and humankind: God's love and activity flowing from his grace lie at its basis. Secondly, the existential connection, "union" between a person and Christ is the foundation for God's acceptance of and care for him/her now and forever. Thirdly, this alliance and joining of Christ and the person is manifested as cooperation and companionship aimed at realising common goals in the world. White emphasises the interactive and active nature of the spiritual relationship between the person and Christ, which is expressed in unselfishness, consideration

for other people and their needs, and in compassion and an ability to place oneself in the position of another.

White connects her thoughts on a healthful lifestyle and education to a broad understanding of spirituality which aims for the person's holistic welfare. She does not see spirituality as insular, cut off from the day-to-day business of life, but rather as the primary dimension which energises, gives purpose and guides a person in all aspects of life.

During the course of the study the concepts "surrender to God" and "character", frequently used by White, became a focus of attention. According to White, a person cannot reach God alone, by an effort of the will; instead, when faced with God's loving invitation, one must cease to will for oneself and agree to unite with God's will and purpose. This is connected to the internal change which White describes by the concept of character. The new orientation of the will, accomplished by God's grace, changes the person's being, values, attitudes and ability for sympathetic interaction to such an extent that the person is no longer quite the same as before. There is, on the one hand, a sudden and total change of being, but at the same time a quiet, life-long growth and development are intended. It is through the concept of character that White describes spirituality and the inner journey it entails.

This study approaches spirituality as a universal human characteristic and quality, which means that the primary focus is not on individual doctrinal views or forms of religious practice. The purpose here is to outline a unifying structure within which holistic spirituality can be more clearly perceived and be understood in more detail.

1. Introduction

Ellen Gould White, née Harmon (1827–1915) is generally known as a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), a guide in manifold religious and ecclesiastical matters and a writer.¹ Within Adventism her multifaceted role, career and accomplishments have been evaluated primarily from the standpoint of her spiritual giftedness, even to the extent that that she is widely considered to possess a prophetic gift. As a result, most of the debate in recent years concerning her, evidenced by the material that has been posted on the web pages of the Ellen G. White Estate, shows that the main issue at the moment in relation to White seems to concern the question of her being an inspired writer and her prophetic role.² Nevertheless, many of her books are distinctly related to Christian spirituality by way of being inspirational or devotional in substance, or belonging to the category of spiritual guidebooks. Spirituality is, in fact, one of the main elements in the books which she published during her mature years.³

In this study I will leave aside the question of White's prophetic gift and the quality of her alleged inspiration.⁴ Instead, it appears to me that her ideas

¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Church was formally established in 1863 in Battle Creek, Michigan, and has since then grown into its present global membership of about 16 million in 201 countries and areas according to the latest statistics (2007). Church membership in the Scandinavian countries is rather small, only a few thousand members in each, while membership surpasses one million in the USA and numbers hundreds of thousands in countries like Mexico, Brazil, Papua-New Guinea, Kenya and the Philippines.

² <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/issues.asp> Downloaded 20.9.2009. The Ellen G. White Estate is an organisation which acts as the legal custodian of all the White writings, in accordance with her own will and testament.

³ *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (MB), *The Desire of Ages* (DA) and *Christ's Object Lessons* (COL) can be classified as books written for spiritual inspiration and guidance while *Steps to Christ* (SC) is an example of a book attempting to direct readers in relation to their spiritual experience. A spiritual attuning can also be distinctly detected thorough out *Education* (Ed) and *The Ministry of Healing* (MH).

⁴ <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>. Downloaded 25.9.2009. The 18th article of faith of the SDA church defines White's role and the significance of her spiritual gift in the following way: "One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction." Graham 1985, 186–222. Graham discusses the question of whether White is a prophet or not. He arrives at a positive conclusion. However, he

and teachings with reference to Christian spirituality constitute a substantial challenge worthy of an exhaustive study. What does her spirituality look like if analysed and evaluated within the framework of modern academic study of Christian spirituality?

Before digging deeper into Ellen White's spirituality, it is necessary to establish some of the basic facts regarding her as a person, as a writer and as a leader within an emerging religious movement, i.e. the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Setting her within an historical and denominational context and in the context of the doctrinal development of the movement will help to better understand her concepts, ideas and teachings on spirituality. I shall first define what I mean by Christian spirituality before exploring and discussing White's ideas and views about it.

1.1. The Historical and Doctrinal Development of Seventh-day Adventism

A Baptist lay-preacher, William Miller (1782–1849), having studied biblical prophecies, became convinced in 1818 that some of their time predictions seemed to point to the very time in which he was living. Ultimately he decided to start preaching about the second coming of Christ and to urge people to prepare for that great event. According to his interpretations and calculations certain time predictions in the book of Daniel (8:14) seemed to point to the year 1843.⁵ He assumed that this prophecy indicates the time of the return of Jesus in glory and the end of the world. His preaching resulted in the beginning of a great “Advent awakening”, with large numbers of Christians of several denominations, mainly in New England, expecting the Lord to come, according to the more specified calculations, on October 22, 1844.⁶

writes: “There is no attempt to place White in the same category as Isaiah or Daniel or Paul.” Standish & Standish 2004. Russell and Collin Standish set forth in their book their conviction that in the case of White it is possible to speak about an inerrant and infallible servant of God, similar to the Bible prophets. Land 1998, 185–130. According to Gary Land the divine inspiration of White had also been questioned quite early even by several prominent members of the SDA church such as John Kellogg.

⁵ Daniel 8:14. “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” KJV; LaRondelle 1989. It is important to realize the significance of biblical prophecy as a central point of reference in the development of Adventism as well as in most attempts to perceive its history and identity.

⁶ Arasola 1990. Arasola describes Miller's historicist hermeneutic and shows that the disappointment led to the abandonment of this popular method of prophetic interpretation. Knight

As the world did not come to an end on the predicted day, there was a disappointment as bitter as the happy excitement about Christ's return had been sweet. Most of those expecting the second advent of Christ concluded that the calculations were erroneous, while a small minority held on to the correctness of the time prophecy and the calculation, but believed that the interpretation of its meaning was mistaken. They became convinced that the sanctuary mentioned in Daniel does not refer to this world but that the fulfilment of the prophecy was instead celestial in nature. They also became persuaded that the fulfilment had to do with Christ's High Priestly ministry, the heavenly sanctuary and events taking place there. Holding on to the date, they continued to believe that it has eschatological significance. It was this notion which was bound to create a sense of urgency and tension in relation to individual spirituality.⁷ This group of believers constituted the nucleus of the movement which later became known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁸

1993. George Knight's account of Miller's life and ministry successfully enlightens the immediate historical, cultural and religious milieu which gave birth to Seventh-day Adventism and within which White's visionary ministry first emerged. Lindén 1978, 19–76. Lindén explores the religious setting in America and the influences affecting the emerging of the Millerite movement and the revival eventually leading to the birth of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Dick 1998, 1–28. Dick gives a historical account of the development and function of the Millerite movement in the 1830s and 1840s. The number of followers in the movement was about 100,000. Wellcome 1874/2008. The reprint of Isaac Wellcome's book gives an early view of understanding of the points of departure for the so-called Advent awakening and its developments. Rowe 2008. See also Land 2008, xii–xviii.

⁷ Rodríguez 2000, 375–417. Angel Manuel Rodríguez gives a doctrinal explanation of the SDA understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and its significance in the light of the sacrificial system of Old Testament times. Thus the cleansing of the temple in heaven is interpreted as a symbolic image indicating the beginning of the time of judgement and particularly its primary stage, often termed the pre-advent judgement. See also *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* 1988, 313–331; Pedersen 1995, 113–142. Gunnar Pedersen points out that within the Adventist context justification can be understood within the framework of Christ's high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus justification is perceived as a purely forensic act taking place in the divine realm.

⁸ Froom 1972, 541–560. Ultimately, according to LeRoy Froom, the sanctuary doctrine became a pivotal teaching of Adventism. Andreasen 1937/1938. Andreasen's application of the sanctuary doctrine on the role and mission of the church challenges its members to a rigorous religious life in order to be safe at the moment of judgement and to represent Christ perfectly as God's people of the end time. Knight 2000, 144–152. George Knight's critical evaluation of M.L. Andreasen's "last generation" theology is to be considered in attempting to assess Andreasen's ideas concerning the eschatological significance of the heavenly sanctuary. Knight regards sin as a problem deeper than mere behavioural defects, which need a divine solution. In his view Andreasen made salvation a human-centred affair. Adams 1993. Roy Adams also wrestles with the main challenges to SDA eschatological views which the Adventist sanctuary doctrine has imposed, but his interpretations seem to be more moderate than Andreasen's. Ford 1980. In his comprehensive book Ford critically examines the traditional SDA interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and the understanding of the sanctuary doctrine but also attacks these notions. See also Wallenkampf & Leshner 1981; Holbrook 1989. It is quite surprising that within the material of this study White makes next to no allusion to this central point in SDA doctrine; COL 320.

This disappointed group of Adventists seemed to be unified primarily by one point: they still believed that Daniel 8:14 presented a time-prophecy of 2400 years which ended in 1844. The group was made up of believers from various denominations and churches, and thus initially held a variety of views on several issues of doctrine. The shared convictions concerning the significance of this time prophecy and the attached eschatological views drew the group together and inspired them to strive for a better understanding of its meaning. Eventually it led to the formation of the sanctuary doctrine, according to which it is believed that there is an “investigative judgement” in heaven, this being the purpose of Christ’s ministry as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.⁹

A former sea captain, Joseph Bates (1792–1872), was another prominent Adventist pioneer. His previous affiliation with Seventh Day Baptists influenced his contribution to the formulation of doctrinal positions in the emerging new denomination. He was instrumental in introducing the idea of Sabbath-keeping to James and Ellen White, who also became nuclear founders of Sabbatarian Adventism. Through his book *The Seventh Day Sabbath; a Perpetual Sign* he led the church-in-making to the adoption of the seventh-day Sabbath as their day of rest and worship.¹⁰

The influence of John Nevins Andrews (1829–1883) on the development of SDA church and its teaching has been notable. His book *History of the Sabbath*, published in 1861, affirmed and clarified the Adventist understanding of the Sabbath.¹¹ He is also regarded as “the architect of Adventist doctrines” due to his contribution to the refinement of understanding on some of the central issues in the Adventist belief system, i.e. the sanctuary and the 2300 days prophecy, the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–12, and the eternal nature of God’s law.¹² The sanctuary doctrine constitutes one of the key doctrinal issues in Adventist theological self-understanding.¹³

⁹ Nichol 1944/1945, 247–260; Knight 1993, 217–242, 304–314.

¹⁰ Maxwell 1982, 352–363. Maxwell describes in detail Bates’s role in implanting the keeping of the Sabbath among the early Adventists, but also his general significance for the emerging movement. Knight 2004. George Knight regards Bates’ role in the foundation of the SDA church as central. See also Anderson 1998, 30–33.

¹¹ Cottrell 1985, 105–130.

¹² Revelation 14:6-12. “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

One of the most outstanding Adventist opinion-leaders was Uriah Smith (1832–1903), a long-term editor of the main Adventist church paper and a writer of several books.¹⁴ Among these were books on Revelation and Daniel which significantly shaped the life, thought and action of the young denomination.¹⁵ Smith's main contribution was in the area of interpretation of biblical prophecies. This interest in and emphasis on the apocalyptic visions and ideas of Daniel and Revelation still appears to flavour thinking within the SDA church.¹⁶

A former pastor of the Christian Connexion Church, an American offshoot of the Methodist Church, James White (1821–1881), husband of Ellen White, was one of the co-founders of the SDA church, and who was elected to several leadership and organisational positions in the SDA church.¹⁷ He founded the first church paper *The Present Truth*, relocated the headquarters of the denomination from New England to Michigan, and was the one who developed the denomination's educational structure, beginning in 1874 with the formation of Battle Creek College. He was a writer and a preacher, but he also served three separate terms as the president of the General Conference, the governing organisation of the church. Moreover, his initiative to begin publication of printed

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a White cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." KJV; Howell 1934, 12–47. Howell describes the early Adventist history within the frame of the three angels' messages. Mueller 1985, 75–104.

¹³ Maxwell 1981 b, 516–581.

¹⁴ The full name of the SDA official church paper at that time was *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. The original name of the church's official news magazine was *The Present Truth*, and it is now known as *Adventist Review*.

¹⁵ Smith's most influential books were entitled *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book Revelation*, published in 1867 and *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel*, published in 1873.

¹⁶ From 1950; Strand 1979; Maxwell 1985; Paulien 1988; Shea 1992; Rouhe 1998; Knight 2008; Hongisto 2009. There has been a continuous and keen interest in the messages of the books of Daniel and Revelation within the SDA church throughout its history. Both theological discourse and communal spirituality have consequently been affected by this thrust. The sanctuary doctrine is an example of the former, while some aspects of these books of the Bible influence the inner life of people by bringing encouragement to many, but also fear to some. See also Holbrook 1983. <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/What%20Prophecy%20Means%20to%20Church.htm> Downloaded 31.1.2009.

¹⁷ Wheeler 2003, 29–36.

materials was a move towards sharing Adventist religious convictions with others. Similarly, his decision to start a printing press gave birth to a publishing ministry. These projects led to an increasing emphasis on outreach, mission and expansion in the movement and its ministry. Eventually these have become typical features of Seventh-day Adventism – characteristics which seem to be important aspects also in Ellen White’s thinking.¹⁸

Early Adventists gathered together in Bible conferences in order to establish among themselves a biblically-based doctrinal understanding of the fundamental issues of faith, but also to strengthen mutual agreement on these beliefs. While the issue of keeping the Sabbath dominated the agenda of these meetings, some other essential doctrinal issues were left up to the individual, and many held on to their private notions.¹⁹ There was, for example, a considerable variety in how the nature of divinity was understood within the group. There was an obvious tendency towards Arian views. Fernando Canale suggests that some early Adventists in the 1850s had serious reservations regarding the classical Trinitarian understanding of God.²⁰ Alden Thompson is more specific, and notes that James White and Uriah Smith were the most notable non-Trinitarian Adventist leaders.²¹ It has been confirmed, however, that Trinitarianism was fully accepted by the church, though not until the first decades of the twentieth century.²²

An interest in education rose early among the pioneering Seventh-day Adventists. The first attempt to start a school was made as early as 1853 in Buck’s Bridge, New York. The next school in Battle Creek, Michigan, founded in 1861, has had a lasting impact on the denomination. It continues to exist to this day, now known as Andrews University, at Berrien Springs, Michigan.²³ However, the idea in the Adventist approach to education is not merely to operate schools

¹⁸ Wheeler 2003; Neufeld 1976, 1598–1604; Knight 1999a, 55–60.

¹⁹ Knight 1999a, 52–55. In 1848 and 1849 a total of twelve conferences were held in which the Sabbath issue was studied and finally an agreement reached.

²⁰ Canale 2000, 148–149; Whidden, Moon & Reeve 2002, 204–220. It has been pointed out how White also played a role in introducing Trinitarian aspects and ideas in her writings, thus bringing about a change in the doctrinal views on the doctrine of the Trinity within the SDA church.

²¹ Thompson 2005, 77–78; Dederen 2000, 198. Whereas, according to Raoul Dederen, James White and Joseph Bates held an Arian understanding of the origin of Christ prior to His incarnation.

²² Whidden, Moon & Reeve, 2002. 190–203; For further information see: Pfandl 1999; Burt <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Trinity%20in%20SDA%20History.pdf> Downloaded 31.10.2009.

²³ Knight 1999a, 75–79; VandeVere 1998, 56–60; Jordan 1988, 91–102.

and academic institutions as such, but more importantly to impress the lives of individuals holistically.

The organisation of the General Conference in 1863 meant that the SDA church became an independent, official denomination. Meanwhile, the church under creation naturally inherited features from other churches in the American context. But there were some novel elements shaping its appearance, too. The SDA church perceives itself as “the remnant church” which should be composed of loyal Adventist believers. It is held that some of the faithful, who will ultimately belong to it, may at present still belong to various other religious bodies.²⁴

The emphasis of Adventism on health, temperance and a healthful lifestyle stands out as an obvious mark of identification. Rennie Schoepflin suggests that there were a number of issues in the area of self-care and lifestyle which began emerging in American society in the nineteenth century quite apart from the Adventist influence. These included an interest in dietary reform, temperance and vegetarianism.²⁵ Ronald Numbers suggests that most Adventist health ideals were in fact based on health beliefs being propounded by contemporary health writers.²⁶

Health and wellbeing in the Adventist setting are not mere individual lifestyle matters, but they have become an essential part of the church’s ministry and mission. A medical doctor, John Harvey Kellogg (1853–1943), was pivotally instrumental in the development of the SDA health care ministry and in promoting alternative approaches to medical science and praxis through Battle Creek Sanatorium.²⁷

The interest in health impinges on another, more fundamental, holistic issue concerning human nature: what components or dimensions constitute our humanness? Some SDA pioneers had previously adopted a holistic

²⁴ Revelation 12:17. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” KJV; LaRondelle 2000, 857–892. The remnant theology in the SDA context is connected to the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14.

²⁵ Schoepflin 1987, 143–160.

²⁶ Numbers 1976/1992/2008.

²⁷ Robinson 1945/1965. Dores Robertson recounts the detailed and comprehensive story of the institutional development of the Adventist health and temperance ministry in America. Knight 1999a, 68–73; Neufeld 1976, 722–723, 135–140; VandeVere 1998, 55–56. Schwarz 2008, 29–107. Schwarz gives a detailed account of Kellogg’s role in the development of the Adventist health approach and his contribution to the health ministry and its promotion. See also Jordan 1988, 103–113; Numbers 1976/1992/2008.

view of humanity as well as a conditionalist understanding of immortality.²⁸ This means at least the following four things: Firstly, they did not believe in the existence of the human soul as an independent and separate entity, capable of existing apart from the physical being. Secondly, they believed that when a person meets death at the end of life, that individual is dead as a whole person and remains totally unconscious until the resurrection of the dead. Thirdly, they believed that humans are mortal and transient, that immortality is received on the condition that the person is saved into eternal life, which is an act of God and a gift of his grace. Fourthly, they believed that the fires of hell will ultimately annihilate and eradicate the wicked, and that they will not burn there eternally.²⁹

The roots of the Advent movement were in New England which in the nineteenth century was the stronghold of the Holiness Movement, Methodism and the Christian Connexion.³⁰ Hence it is no surprise that such doctrinal issues as sanctification, holiness and perfection were also introduced into the Adventist agenda of doctrinal debate.³¹ These matters subsequently created a dramatic dichotomy between the traditional Adventist approach, which emphasises obedience to the law of God, and that of some young Adventist preachers who later attempted to bring to the forefront an alternative approach more in line with the traditional Reformation focus on the doctrine of righteousness by faith through grace.³²

It was at the General Conference Session at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1888 that the dispute over justification became the foremost issue and where the matter was discussed with lasting results.³³ Indeed, this meeting seems to mark

²⁸ According to the view of conditionalist immortality, eternal life is given as a gift to those who will be saved while those who will not be saved will be annihilated in the fires of hell. Froom 1966. Froom explores in depth the SDA conditionalist position, its history and its implications for SDA theology.

²⁹ Cairus 2000, 212–232; Andreasen 2000, 314–346. The view of conditional immortality goes hand in hand with annihilationism.

³⁰ Knight 2000, 30–37. Knight points out the fact that such church founders as James White and Joseph Bates were members of the Christian Connexion Church.

³¹ LaRondelle 1975; Onjukka 1982; Knight 1992; Zurcher 2002; Blazen 2000, 298–299. These more recent examples show that the question of Christian perfection remains an object of continuous interest in SDA circles.

³² Knight 1989. According to George Knight, the correct understanding of the gospel was not the only matter at stake in those days, but a struggle for power was also going on. There seem to have been problems caused by lack of communication as well as respect between the leaders of the church. The real issue lay not so much in differences of theological understanding as in the absence of a loving Christian spirit between leading members.

³³ No distinction in meaning between justification and righteousness by faith is made in the sources, and both terms refer clearly to the same matter. These terms are also used interchangeably as synonyms in much of the Adventist literature regarding the issue of justification. It is not the task of this study to make a distinction here either.

a paradigm shift for the SDA doctrinal teaching on the gospel message, as well as for the church's approach to the spiritual emphasis of its essential elements. The doctrine of justification emerged into a more prominent position, at the same time also causing a reorientation within the church regarding the focus of doctrinal attention and emphasis in these soteriological matters.³⁴

Meanwhile, the advocates of the righteousness by faith teaching at the session and afterwards, such pastors as Alonzo T. Jones (1850–1923) and Ellet J. Waggoner (1855–1916), seemed mainly to aim toward persuading the audience with the power of their arguments. These arguments dealt mainly with correct conceptions of this fresh doctrinal emphasis.³⁵

The debates concerning the doctrine of salvation held after the Minneapolis session brought the SDA church closer to mainline Protestant ideas on the matter.³⁶ However, there was another, more disturbing, issue threatening the orthodoxy and unity of the church, which ultimately led to a situation where several leading members left the church. John Kellogg and Ellet Waggoner accepted and promoted pantheistic ideas and thus caused severe opposition among other leaders of the church. They did not allow the common Christian doctrine of the divinity to guide their interest in spirituality. According to George Knight the idea of union with Christ led them to pantheism instead of devotion to Christ.³⁷

³⁴ Daniells 1941, 87–94. Arthur Daniells, the president of the SDA church, noticed that the doctrine of justification by faith had been lost, but not that it had been re-installed as an essential part of the church's teaching. From 1972, 375–408; Whidden 1995; 69–115. Whidden explores the new doctrinal aspects brought forth at the Minneapolis Session in 1888 regarding justification by faith, the significance and meaning of the Minneapolis meetings and the impact of the new gospel-oriented emphasis on the SDA church. See also Moore 1995, 90–103.

³⁵ Daniells 1941; Olson 1966; From 1971, 188–374; Moore 1980; White 1984, 385–433; Knight 1989, 1998; Whidden 2008. These books are but a few examples of the literature which has been published by SDA authors dealing with the issue of justification and attempting to come to terms with the collective experience of the Minneapolis session. See also Wahlen 1988; Whidden 2008.

³⁶ Knight 1987, 53. Knight points out the fact that Alonzo Jones had already spoken about justification by faith at the Minneapolis meeting in exclusively objective or forensic terms. Blazen 2000, 278–286. It can be assumed that Ivan Blazen's opinions represent the generally accepted, present understanding on the issue of justification within the SDA church. According to him, justification should be understood as a forensic event. Paxton 1978. Presenting his criticism against the Adventist teaching on justification, Geoffrey Paxton shows how this teaching has been a difficult and controversial issue for the church. He claims that the church is not very keen to teach the doctrine of justification according to the Reformation tradition and that there are either Roman Catholic or semi-Pelagian or perfectionist overtones in its teaching instead.

³⁷ Kellogg 1903; From 1972, 349–351; McMahon 1979, 147–184; White 1981, 280–293; Knight 1987, 214; Schwarz, 1998: 86–88; Whidden 2008. George Knight makes a revealing observation concerning development within Adventism in the late 1800s and early 1900s: "To put it mildly, the Adventist air was quite heavy with ideas that one could interpret as pantheistic in the late nineties and early 1900s. Some of them undoubtedly grew out of exaggerated and overly literalized views of the indwelling Christ. The concept of the indwelling power of Christ was inherent in the 1888 message, but when pushed too far it easily crossed the border into pantheism." See also Schwarz 1998, 107–111.

Interestingly, the idea of union with Christ is one of the central themes in White's spiritual thinking. What she made of that topic, we will find out below.

1.2. Defining Christian Spirituality

Quite a few helpful definitions of Christian spirituality are known within academia, serving their purpose well in the context for which they have been designed. However, many definitions fall short, in themselves, of providing a foundation wide enough for a study which does not strictly follow the classical approach to Christian spirituality, such as is the case with Ellen White's ideas about spirituality. By combining a number of different points of view and approaches to spirituality, it is possible to arrive at an understanding which covers the meaning of this term more comprehensively so that it is applicable to White's spirituality.³⁸

Religion is the most common context for spirituality; hence, religious and theological language is normally used in describing spiritual experiences, in defining the features of spirituality and in expressing spiritual ideas. Several definitions of spirituality employ theology and experience as terms for delineating the content of this concept.³⁹ Owe Wikström speaks of the theology of spirituality as "experiential theology" (*theologia experientialis*).⁴⁰ When spirituality has recently been spoken of in many and diverse ways, these definitions outline the term as referring to a specifically Christian experience. As spirituality is part of a person's life and experience, methods used in the behavioural sciences are naturally helpful for gaining information about spirituality as a universally human experience.⁴¹ Yet, this information alone

³⁸ Shults & Sandaga 2006, 14. According to LeRon Shults and Steven Sandaga there are more than a hundred definitions for spirituality, but none of these is alone able to define the phenomenon sufficiently. On the other hand, it seems to me that spirituality may be such a compendious, complicated, multiform phenomenon that any attempt to encompass it in one definition is little short of ridiculous.

³⁹ Sheldrake 1998, xi; McGrath 1999 a, 2; Raunio 2003 a, 13; Kotila 2005, 196–199; Powell 2005.

⁴⁰ Wikström 1995, 39. Cottingham 2005, 5–8, 37–38. For John Cottingham, the primary starting point for spirituality is praxis. He regards devotional life and spiritual practices as ways into a faith relationship with God. There is no shortcut path to God, but a continuous, patient participation in the liturgical life of the church will help a person to find God. Wood 2003, 91–108; Wolfteich 2009, 121–143.

⁴¹ Heelas & Woodhead 2005. Paul Heelas's and Linda Woodhead's book *The Spiritual Revolution* is a recent example of an attempt to come to terms with spirituality as a phenomenon by using

cannot cover all aspects of a concept so saturated with theological meanings and overtones. Consequently spirituality has been under continuing and increasing theological investigation and evaluation for the past thirty years.⁴²

William James defined religion as “*the feelings, acts, and the experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine* (original italics).”⁴³ Thus according to him the essence of religion is found in spirituality or the individual inner sphere rather than in any other element attached to it.

Subsequently, for many people seeking engagement with spirituality it means “withdrawal” into a “solitary place” and also from social interaction. Following the example of St Antony in third and fourth-century Egypt, many others have sought peace and solitude in order to find a more meaningful relationship with God through disciplines such as prayer, contemplation and self-denial.⁴⁴ The origin of mystic asceticism can also be traced to the same root. These categories of spiritual activity have a long tradition, but they still represent a valid aspect of spirituality in our time. The experience of God can even now be conceived at the core level in mystical terms “not as a transcendent Other but as an immanent Self.”⁴⁵

While the search for privacy and seclusion continues to be an essential dimension in the spiritual quest, there are many scholars who emphasise the aspect of connectedness with others as a crucial element in fulfilling spirituality.⁴⁶ For David Longdale, Christian community is the context within

study methods commonly employed for instance by sociologists. Such studies may effectively describe the outward appearance of spirituality as a phenomenon, but their contribution is not substantial in defining what spirituality is really all about. Hey 2005, 419–441. David Hey explains how various empirical studies have helped in gaining a better understanding of spirituality.⁴² Perrin 2007. David Perrin introduces a number of methods and approaches which can be used in studying Christian spirituality. Schneiders 2005, 15–33. According to Schneiders, the formal object of the study of Christian spirituality is the religious experience. Josefsson 2005. Ulrik Josefsson’s study of the spirituality of the early Swedish Pentecostal movement is an example of how a study of spirituality is conducted on the basis of documented material. Spirituality in this study has been defined as “the lived religious life” and hence the discussed categories are the doctrines, the practices and the affections. Szalos-Farkas 2005. Zoltan Szalos-Farkas also uses a somewhat similar methodology to that of Ulrik Josefsson to explore White’s influence on the development of SDA spirituality. In conclusion he formulates a concept of “apocalyptic spirituality”, which in his view is actualized in the Adventist doctrines and special ministries in terms of health-care and educational institutions.

⁴³ James 1902/1985, 31.

⁴⁴ Keating 1999; Stewart 2005, 86–87.

⁴⁵ Perrin 2007, 241. See also Perrin 2007, 238–249; Perrin 2005, 442–458.

⁴⁶ Häyrynen & Kotila 2003. There is currently an increasing interest in retreats as opportunities for silence and contemplation.

which Christian spirituality finds a channel of expression and realisation.⁴⁷ David Hay speaks about “relational consciousness” as a defining feature of spirituality. For him, being in a relationship with others, with God and with the environment is the central spiritual element of this consciousness. Michael Leffel, referring to LeRon Shults and Steven Sandage, uses a “relational spirituality paradigm” in his attempt to create a framework for a useful approach to spirituality.⁴⁸ Hence it seems that various aspects of community and participation in its life, our web of relationships, our social contacts, human interaction and the affective elements involved are all included in spirituality. In this sense it appears that LeRon Shults’s term “relationality” is justified.⁴⁹

According to Mark McIntosh, the relational aspect of Christian spirituality goes deeper, even to “the *relationship* between God’s life as Trinity (original italics).” He speaks about the “trinitarian rhythm of self-sharing abundance.” It is, therefore, the trinitarian relational life which gives structure to spiritual growth and which illuminates “the human spiritual journey with eternal significance.”⁵⁰

Christian spirituality pertains also to the affective dimension, including such things as moods, feelings and relational attitudes. According to Alister McGrath, spirituality involves the engaging of our emotions in terms of meditation or various art forms. He suggests that there is a legitimate emotional component to theology which one should identify through one’s spiritual practices. Also such concepts as compassion, love and justice are examples of the affective dimension inseparably linked to Christian spirituality. Matis Nimetz mentions a number of other affectively charged “skills” and qualities in relation to spirituality: acceptance, empathy, openness and tenderness.⁵¹ Although Christian spirituality

⁴⁷ Lonsdale 2005, 240. For David Longdale, the church is the primary context of Christian spirituality because he presumes that it involves the prayer, devotion and worship of a community of believers, their practices and customs, their activities and their relational networks. Schmid 2007, 13–22. Similarly for Schmid, the communal aspect in spirituality is essential.

⁴⁸ Hay 2007, 13–22; Leffel 2007 a, 263, 265. Michael Leffel seeks to construct “an integrative psychology-theology framework for studying the *affective basis of spiritual transformation* (original italics).” He suggests that in attempting this “the relational spiritual paradigm provides an important theoretical advance in how we model the relationship between personality structure... and spiritual transformation...” Shults and Sandage 2006, 25, 221–233. LeRon Shults as a theologian and Steven Sandage as a psychologist wrote a book on spiritual transformation in which the relational aspect is significant.

⁴⁹ Shults 2006, 24.

⁵⁰ McIntosh 2005, 177–180.

⁵¹ Spohn 2005: 277–280. See also Swinton 2001/2003, 25; McGrath 2003, 21–23; Ruffing 2005, 309; Nimetz 2006, 142–154; Coleman 1995/2005, 256, 259. Daniel Coleman speaks about emotional and social skills as well as relational competences. See also Swinton 2001/2003, 141–

cannot be defined in terms of the affective dimension alone, it must be included in the picture when spirituality is described.

Kees Waaijman's definition of spirituality does not pave the way to easy solutions in the endeavour to capture the essence of spirituality and to study it critically, using the accepted scientific methodology. He writes: "Spirituality as we have defined it touches the core of our human existence: our relationship to the Absolute.... In our daily life, spirituality is latently present as a quiet force in the background, an inspiration and an orientation." However, this "quiet force in the background" has had a tremendous impact on the individual lives of people and on all human civilization throughout the ages.⁵² I speak of an experiential concept, yet psychological or sociological research can hardly reach its core. Likewise, since spirituality is experiential in nature, mere investigation of the doctrinal and theological issues attached to it will not yield all its secrets.

Christian spirituality can also be conceived from the point of reference of encounter with the sacred.⁵³ Rudolf Otto has done pioneering work in discovering the element of the holy, and Mircea Eliade is another scholar who has further explored this dimension which some spiritual guides regard as essential to the spiritual experience.⁵⁴

The common human desire to perceive and experience meaning, purpose, significance and sense in one's existence is another essential element in the spiritual quest. Referring to such existentialist philosophers as Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, Scott Webster speaks of "existential spirituality" as an integral part of the endeavour of finding personal

143. John Swinton, like Matis Nimetz, speaks about empathy as a learned skill which is necessary in the therapeutic context.

⁵² Waaijman 2002, 1. Kees Waaijman, a Carmelite friar and professor of spirituality, has written a systematic study of the manifestations of spirituality.

⁵³ Wikström 2004, 56–89. Owe Wikström describes the element of the sacred in ordinary terms and in connection with the common life. In his view, a longing for the sacred is an inborn human quality.

⁵⁴ Otto 1936; Eliade 1963; Kirov 2002, 117–126; Crowder 2003, 22–47; Wikström 2004; Eliade 2006 a, 41–67; Sandaga 2006, 156–158, 161–162, 225–228; Perrin 2007, 84. David Perrin's succinct statement about the element of the sacred effectively summarises the essential point: "People have come to discover that it is not in hardy logic of religious rules that we find answers to our deepest questions of life; rather we find them in meaningful encounter with the sacred dimension of life, which surfaces in various ways."

identity.⁵⁵ In fact, many scholars place spirituality in connection with the profound existential and ontological questions of life.⁵⁶

According to Alister McGrath, the concept of spirituality should be understood holistically, as a feature present in all human quests for a fulfilled and authentic Christian experience.⁵⁷ Heikki Kotila suggests that it concerns our deeply personal way of being and living. In spirituality we find our deepest essence and significance for our lives.⁵⁸ This means that spirituality has to do with a common human feature, need, dimension, ability or quality. Therefore everyone is a spiritual being, regardless of their religious affiliation or lack of it.

Alister Hardy adds another viewpoint, which is significant because he suggests that spirituality is something yet more specific than a mere human quality or dimension. He defines spirituality in the following way:

It seems to me that the main characteristics of man's religious and spiritual experiences are shown in his feelings for a transcendental reality... a feeling that 'Something Other' than the self can actually be sensed; a desire to personalize this presence into deity and to have a private I-Thou relationship with it, communicating through prayer.⁵⁹

The ways in which Simon Chan and Samuel Powell approach and describe Christian spirituality are also relevant in this conjunction. For them, spirituality is connected with living in accordance with biblical teaching and the Christian way of life. It is predominantly understood as a synonym for piety in the traditional sense. A living relationship with God is actualised and authenticated in right living, in honouring God and in showing love for him. This means that the life is consecrated to God, and as a result, such things as devotion, virtues, discipline and works of love are present.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Webster 2005, 11; Blarikom 2006, 247–262; Kangas 2010, 281–292. According to David Kangas Kierkegaard's ideas serve as significant guideposts for spirituality. See also, Schneiders 2005, 15–17.

⁵⁶ Shults 2006, 123–149; Hay 2007, 11, 13, 83; Schmid 2006, 227–246; Blarikom 2006, 247–262; Virtaniemi 2005, 115; Holder 2005, 9; Swinton 2001, 23, 28.

⁵⁷ McGrath 1999, 2. A holistic understanding of spirituality is approved by a number of scholars and writers; see e.g.: Kotila 2005, 200–201; Willard 2003: 39–53; Kettunen 2003: 361–379.

⁵⁸ Kotila 2003 a, 19.

⁵⁹ Hardy 1984, 131. See also Ubani 2005, 321–331. Martin Buber's ideas of the I-Thou relationship form the basis for Martin Ubani's examination of spirituality.

⁶⁰ Chan 1998, 16; Powell 2005, 3-5; Wood 2003, 91-108. In accordance with Simon Chan and Samuel Powell, Laurence Wood discusses the Wesleyan idea of spirituality understood as sanctification. Sheldrake 2007, 145–148. Sheldrake points out John Wesley's emphasis on love and service for one's neighbour as the key concepts of his spirituality. Wesley was a strong promoter of "experimental" faith.

There is a wide consensus that biblical teaching composes a vital element of Christian spirituality.⁶¹ Although it is true that our spirituality can be founded on knowledge from the Bible and that it can constantly draw inspiration from this source, there are yet some limitations of which we need to be aware. We may know God on the basis of the Scriptures, but we still cannot know him fully. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–c. 390) launched the expression “luminous darkness” in order to describe the problem of coming to know God. He started an apophatic tradition which emphasises the absolute transcendence of God in that he is beyond the human capacity for knowing.⁶² Contrary to this, as a result of modern trends of thought, it seems that many Protestant approaches to spirituality have rejected the apophatic point of view and emphasise theological knowledge as the foundation for authentic spirituality.⁶³

John Swinton’s approach to the concept of spirituality adds another insight into this matter. His observations prove to be useful and provide a foundation for further study. His book entitled *Spirituality and Mental Health Care* with its suggestions for practices in the care of patients with mental health problems is also relevant for my study.⁶⁴ Although his main thrust is an attempt to make a helpful contribution for professionals in mental health care, Swinton’s definition of spirituality deserves to be considered from the point of view which the study of the theology of spirituality offers.

In his endeavour to define spirituality, Swinton begins with the human spirit. He writes: “The human spirit is the essential life-force that undergirds, motivates and vitalizes human existence. *Spirituality* is the specific way in which individuals and communities respond to the experience of the spirit (original italics).” Thus the primary concept here is the human spirit, simply because spirituality derives its meaning from it. Swinton explains: “The human

⁶¹ Green 2005, 37–54; Thurston 2005, 55–70; Raunio 2003 c, 107–124.

⁶² Louth 1986/2004, 161–168; McGrath 1999, 118–119; Perrin 2007, 111–113. The fourteenth-century work of English mysticism, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, may serve here as another example of the negative approach where the point is “the unknowability of God”. See also Sheldrake 1998, 24–31.

⁶³ Talbot 2003, 116–134; Chan 1998, 40. Simon Chan suggests that “the Christian knowledge of who God is determines the character of Christian spirituality.” However, if there is a constant emphasis on the extensive knowledge pertaining to God which is available to us on the basis of God’s revelation, there seems to be a danger that it creates the false impression that God is, indeed, all-knowable.

⁶⁴ Swinton 2001/2003, 53. For instance, arguing in favour of the need to include spirituality as an integral part of mental health care, Swinton writes: “To ignore issues of spirituality and side-step questions of meaning, purpose, happiness and what it means to be human, is to risk developing understandings and forms of practice that ignore the essence of that it means to be human and to live humanly.”

spirit is the fundamental breath of life that is instilled into human beings and which animates them and brings them into life.... The spirit energizes human existence and fills it with meaning and purpose.”⁶⁵

The human spirit is an essential concept in Swinton’s attempt to construct an understanding of how spirituality is composed.⁶⁶ Swinton makes two fundamental observations: First, the human spirit is not a separate component of the person. In his view spirituality must be spoken of not in dualistic terms but as a holistic entity. Secondly, in his view the human spirit is that aspect of the person which “provides the drive for meaning, purpose and value in our lives.”⁶⁷ Thus Swinton defines: “The human spirit is an essential, dynamic life-force which vitalizes human beings and provides the motivation to discover God, value, meaning, purpose and hope.”⁶⁸

Having thus defined the human spirit, Swinton has produced the following formulation in answer to the question “What is spirituality?” “*Spirituality is the outward expression of the inner working of the human spirit* (original Italics). Spirituality is an intra-, inter- and transpersonal experience that is shaped and directed by the experiences of individuals and of the communities within which they live out their lives.”⁶⁹

Swinton lists the central features of spirituality in order to describe its essence and constitution.

⁶⁵ Swinton 2001/2003, 14. Perrin 2007, 20-23. Like Swinton, David Perrin also employs the concept of “spirit” in his attempt to define spirituality. According to him, the spirit refers to human consciousness, a constitutive dimension of human beings, and to the capacity for self-consciousness. The spirit involves the deepest dimensions of life.

⁶⁶ Ellison 1983, pp. 331–332 in Swinton 2001/2003, 16. “It is the *spirit* of human beings which enables and motivates us to search for meaning and purpose in life, to seek the supernatural or some meaning which transcends us, to wonder about our origins and identities, to require mortality and equity (original italics). It is the spirit which synthesizes the total personality and provides some sense of energizing direction and order. The spiritual dimensions does [*sic*] not exist in isolation from the psyche and the soma, but provides an integrative force. It affects and is affected by our physical state, feelings, thoughts and relationships. If we are spiritually healthy we will feel generally alive, purposeful and fulfilled, but only to the extent that we are psychologically healthy as well. The relationship is bi-directional because of the intricate intertwining of these two parts of the person.”

⁶⁷ Swinton 2001/2003, 17, 18; Kettunen 2003, 361–379; Sandage 2006, 199, 257–258; Chan 1998, 57. In addition to Swinton other scholars, too, emphasize the holistic approach to Christian spirituality.

⁶⁸ Swinton 2001/2003, 19.

⁶⁹ Swinton 2001/2003, 20.

THE CENTRAL FEATURES OF SPIRITUALITY⁷⁰

Meaning	the ontological significance of life; making sense of life situations; deriving purpose in existence.
Value	beliefs and standards that are cherished; having to do with the truth, beauty, worth of a thought, object or behaviour; often discussed as 'ultimate values'.
Transcendence	experience and appreciation of a dimension beyond the self; expanding self-boundaries.
Connecting	relationship with self, others, God/higher power, and the environment.
Becoming	an unfolding of life that demands reflection and experience; including a sense of who one is and how one knows.
Hope	a prospect of confidence and trust towards the future.

It is also possible to speak about spirituality even when it is not fully defined fully by the professionals using the term. For instance, there are specialists in the field of spirituality who do not primarily endeavour to define spirituality, but for whom spirituality seems, instead, to pose as a task, a challenge to action or for intervention. Particularly those who work as professional caregivers within churches or faith communities constantly meet people whose needs can be perceived as being essentially spiritual in nature. As a result, there are studies which deal with spirituality in terms of spiritual formation, spiritual guidance or spiritual direction. Even if these studies do not offer a refined conceptual definition of the core of spirituality, they do express some useful ideas and insights into ways of experiencing spirituality as an integral aspect of life. In such cases spirituality is distinctly presumed, though not defined, identified or classified.⁷¹

The significance of meaning is an essential feature of Swinton's approach to spirituality. He explores the aspect of meaning in relation to religion and religious participation. He argues that the most important factor in religion is

⁷⁰ The data for this division of the features of spirituality is adapted from Swinton 2001/2003, 25, 36, 160–161.

⁷¹ Moon & Benner 2004. A variety of scholars representing various faith communities describe in Moon and Benner their respective approaches to spiritual direction and spirituality as such. Kotila 2006 a. In Kotila several Finnish writers discuss local approaches to spiritual guidance from a multi-faith perspective and suggest methodological solutions to various challenges in dealing with spirituality. Stinissen 1997; Wikström 1995. Wilfrid Stinissen and Owe Wikström handle the topic of spirituality from within their particular field of expertise with the intention of instructing the reader in the practice of spiritual direction. Tasker 2002. Carol Tasker has studied various aspects of spiritual formation in a SDA collegiate context in her doctoral thesis. Wolfteich 2009, 121–143. Wolfteich writes about the close connection which he sees as existing between spirituality and practical theology.

not being religiously active, but rather the meaning this has for the individual.⁷² Owe Wikström suggests that spirituality is about the quest for the meaning of life and about gaining a comprehensive understanding of one's life and existence. Thus the search for meaning, meaningfulness and purpose of life is ontological by nature.⁷³ Consequently, I will refer below to ontology not as a branch of metaphysics, but instead as the common attempt to perceive the nature of being in a way which is personally significant. However, the concept of a person's union with Christ and various notions concerning the divine presence within will be discussed using ontology as a philosophical term to define the nature of being. Räsänen mentions that the standpoint of faith to which Christian spirituality is anchored is ontological in essence.⁷⁴

All the above-mentioned definitions of the concept of spirituality accumulate to form an understanding which proposes to be constructive and applicable for an analysis of White's approach to Christian spirituality. Because there is no single definition or point of departure which alone could serve as the basis for an effective exploration of her spirituality, in this study I shall approach my topic from a broader view of spirituality. This means that all the definitions above are relevant and applicable, at least to some extent, for the investigation of the sources of this study. I shall employ these multiple perspectives and complementing features, because in my view a comprehensive notion is necessary to bring out all the various features of her spiritual thinking.

1.3. The Life and Ministry of Ellen G. White

Ellen Gould White, née Harmon, was born in November 26, 1827 into a Methodist family in Gorham, Maine. In March 1840, at the age of twelve, she was baptised by immersion into the Methodist Church in response to William Miller's preaching and appeals to "come to Christ".⁷⁵ Because the family accepted affiliation with the "Advent awakening", they were all subsequently removed

⁷² Swinton 2001/2003, 35–36.

⁷³ Wikström 1995, 39–40. See also Kotila 2003 a, 19.

⁷⁴ Räsänen 2006, 133.

⁷⁵ LS 20–25; White 1985, 32–42. Ellen White describes her own religious awakening, conversion and spiritual revival. Jordan 1988, 39–58.

from the membership of the Methodist Church.⁷⁶ As a point of departure the influence of Methodism on White was notable, but her engagement with Millerism widened her perspectives and invited her to embrace new religious ideas.⁷⁷

As a consequence of an accident which White suffered at the age of nine, she could not continue her education after completing only two years at school. As a result, she never obtained any formal education or training; despite this she went on to write extensively, not only on religious matters but also on topics related to health promotion, nutrition, temperance and education. The limitations in her education naturally affected her way of thinking, her role and authority as a religious thought-leader, her academic credibility as well as her way of argumentation. But on the basis of her some two thousand visions and dreams she is also regarded by many within Adventism as a prophet.

It is within the context of the bewilderment, disillusionment and lack of ecclesiastical authority and leadership caused by the disappointment when Christ did not return as expected in 1844 that the 18-year-old Ellen Harmon, who later became Ellen White, received her first visions.⁷⁸ However, her significance lies not only in her ministry, but also in the prophetic meaning and importance which the Seventh-day Adventist church gave to this phenomenon. On the basis of a phrase in the book of Revelation (19:10) Adventists saw in White's work and messages a manifestation of the spirit of prophecy.⁷⁹ In addition to her having a

⁷⁶ LS 43–53; White 1985, 43–44. According to White's own explanation, the separation from church fellowship was partly because of doctrinal reasons and disharmony with the church rules. LS 26–31. But what also surfaces in her account of her early religious experiences is the lack of a secure and comforting membership in a caring community. The religious influences she felt were powerful and bewildering. In relation to her early Methodist influences, it is significant to note that she describes being perplexed over sanctification, among other things. She was forced to search for a direct fellowship with God through prayer and devotion.

⁷⁷ Johns, Poirier & Graybill 1993. The list of books in White's library at the time of her death indicates an interest in a wider field of religious views than those held by the parochial affiliation she was brought up with.

⁷⁸ EW 11–24. White gives her own account of her first vision. This vision was first published in 1846. For further information, see White 1985, 55–59. Arthur White, Ellen White's grandson, has written an extensive, multi-volume biography covering his grandmother's life and ministry. It appears that his personal interest as a family member motivated and guided his study and writing. Gordon 1983/2000. Gordon explores in detail the meaning and significance of the year 1844 in relation to the early development of the SDA church and its theological significance for the Adventist sanctuary doctrine.

⁷⁹ Revelation 19:10. "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." KJV.

unifying influence within the group of Advent-believers, the notion of White as a prophet soon became an identifying doctrinal feature of the SDA Church.⁸⁰

White can be regarded as a spiritual guide, a source of inspiration and direction in the Seventh-day Adventist church. But her status as an academically trained theologian cannot be substantiated on the grounds of her multifaceted ecclesiastical role.⁸¹ Nevertheless, her writings deal with a great number of issues theological in substance. Her writings express theological ideas or doctrinal positions, but she does not attempt to academically define theological or doctrinal points.

Along with the early Adventist leaders, White also influenced the development of the SDA church in several ways. Viewed from vantage point of the present, her impact appears wider and more long-lasting than that of “the brethren”. Interest in biblical prophecies had been an inseparable part of Adventist thinking from the beginning of the movement, but she improved and remodelled it into an alternative approach to the philosophy of history. Moreover, she also introduced ideas new to the church regarding education, church structure and administration, as well as health and healthful lifestyles.

In *Spiritual Gifts I–IV*, published between 1858 and 1864, White already introduces a wide range of topics whereby she attempts to create a coherent overview of the life and history of humanity from the perspective of salvation history. In *The Spirit of Prophecy I–IV*, published between 1870 and 1884, the theme of a “great controversy” between Christ and Satan, i.e. a spiritual battle between God and his opposing powers, was depicted more consistently. *The Conflict of the Ages* series in five volumes is the final form of her philosophy of history.⁸² Her intention in launching the “great controversy” theme seems to be to

⁸⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Believe...* 1988, 216–229; Rice 2000, 627–637; Bradford 2007. In his book Bradford defends the notion of White’s prophetic gift, her divine inspiration and her position as an authoritative voice within the church.

⁸¹ It must also be kept in mind that in nineteenth-century America academic training in theological disciplines was not as yet available in the sense in which we understand theological studies in modern universities. Referring to the previous footnote, I conclude that White systematically expanded her knowledge and understanding regarding theological topics. There are some in the SDA church who think that White should be regarded as a theologian. Pfandl. Online: <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Ellen%20White%20as%20a%20Theologian.pdf> Downloaded on October 4, 2009. Brinsmead 1975. Robert Brinsmead has made available an analysis of White’s theology in a systematic form. Even though the website does not give any information about the writer, it seems that Brinsmead’s material can also be found online on the following website: http://www.presenttruthmag.com/7dayadventist/EGWhite_theology/index.html Downloaded on October 4, 2009.

⁸² *The Conflict of the Ages* is the common name for a series of five books *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (1888), *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911) and *Prophets and Kings* (1916).

introduce a comprehensive framework within which her readers can detect a higher reason and an intelligible plan being worked out through all of human history, instead of events taking place as a result of pure coincidence.⁸³

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, Ellen White's role and authority has since the early days of the movement been established and repeatedly confirmed by the General Conference sessions as a prophetic voice and as a reliable source of truth in matters of doctrine and Christian practice.⁸⁴ This position is based on the notion that she acted and wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but also on the idea that her writings were inspired by God, which implies more than does mere guidance by the divine spirit.⁸⁵ This belief came into existence through an accumulation of what was considered evidence from the whole span of her life. She describes encounters with the supernatural in terms of a vision as early as in December 1844, just a few weeks after the Great Disappointment experienced by the Advent believers when Christ failed to return as expected. It is claimed that she experienced about 2000 visions and prophetic dreams during her lifetime.⁸⁶

Ellen White's marriage to James White on August 30, 1846, strengthened her position and made her work more effective with him as her partner. They had four sons, only two of whom survived to adulthood.⁸⁷ James

⁸³ An extensive introduction to White's books and other printed materials will be presented later in chapter 2.3.

⁸⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2005. In various church matters the *Church Manual* quotes White's texts in order to establish and affirm its positions. Dederen 2000. Also the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* presents a list of quotations from White's writings to conclude the discussion on each topic. It seems, therefore, that the SDA church regards her writings as a source of theological knowledge despite the fact that her theological authority cannot be supported by her training in theological discipline. Szalos-Farkas 2005, 50–93. Zoltan Szalos-Farkas gives a detailed description of White's central role and contribution to the early development of Seventh-day Adventism, the shift from scattered Millerism into a new unity as a Christian community. See also Delafield 1963.

⁸⁵ White 1973. Arthur White discusses the issue of inspiration in general, but his particular concern is still the notion of inspiration in relation to White. Rea 1982. Walter Rea is one of those who oppose the idea of White's inspiration or prophetic gift. Jemison 1955. There are other writers like Jemison who in dealing with White do not speak of inspiration but instead in terms of a prophetic gift or the gift of prophecy. Lindén 1983, 65–78.

⁸⁶ CET 45–64. White recounts her first vision from 1844. Her second vision followed in February 1845. White 1985, 55–67. Arthur White says that his grandmother soon started telling others about her vision and its content. She became convinced at an early stage that she had a calling to a special mission. Her first visions appeared in print in 1846. White 1973. White gives a detailed account of how the visions were given to Ellen White.

⁸⁷ White 1985. The White family started their life together from a rather low socio-economic position and status. Those years in the late 1840s and 1850s were at the same time the early stages of the SDA movement. When James White later occupied a position in church leadership, he obviously also enjoyed a modest but regular salary. The royalties from Ellen White's published books brought further income to the family. White 1982. It seems that during her late years in Saint Helena, California, White was able to enjoy reasonable economic security, and had reached a

and Ellen White, together with Joseph Bates, formed the earliest leadership nucleus of the Sabbath-keeping Adventist movement, and they hence came to be regarded as the originators of the SDA church. Even though she never held any administrative position in the church, White still increasingly influenced the direction of its ministry, its decision-making processes, its doctrinal thinking and also its organizational structure.

Ellen White's role was decisive in the formation of an educational philosophy, but also in giving practical direction to this area of action by strongly encouraging the establishment of new schools and even guiding in the choice of their location.⁸⁸ The SDA holistic health emphasis was initially based on a vision recounted by White in 1863. She is thus the architect and the main promoter of this lifestyle.⁸⁹

In addition, by writing personal letters to individuals in key positions in the church, by publishing articles, "testimonies" and other writings, White defined and aligned the ministry, the administrative structure and the purpose of the SDA church.⁹⁰ By means of her writings she actually defined the character of its spiritual substance and identity. This means that the ecclesiological self-understanding of the denomination is largely based on her writings. Therefore, not only the organizational arrangement of the church, but also its self-image as a community, has been affected by her ideas.⁹¹

In addition to White's multiple functions and roles in early Adventism, her work as a prolific writer is probably her most noticeable feature. In fact, she was only a teenager when some of her initial texts were published in 1846.⁹² By the time of her death in 1915 she had written more than 5000 articles and had published 40 books. Through her publications she has had an influence which cannot be estimated, as many of her books have been translated into more than one hundred languages and printed in millions of copies all around the world.

social position which can be classified as at least middle class status. She owned her home, Elmshaven, where she had a private office and her own staff.

⁸⁸ White 1983, 146–161. White's role was decisive in finding the location for Avondale College in Australia in 1894. White 1982, 11–21. A few years later, in 1905, she influenced the choice of location for an institution in California which later became known as Loma Linda University.

⁸⁹ White 1986, 73–98; Robinson 1945/1965, 75–85.

⁹⁰ Knight 2001. George Knight's account of the early organizational development of the SDA church shows that White had a leading role in designing, directing and supervising changes in the administrative structure of the church.

⁹¹ There are a number of writings which could be mentioned as examples of how White described the identity and mission of the SDA church in terms of the remnant. Here are just a few from the church paper: *RH* April 21, 1896; *RH* July 13, 1897; *RH* April 12, 1898; *RH* February 6, 1900;

⁹² *DS* January 24, 1846; *DS* March 14, 1846.

The nine-volume series of *Testimonies for the Church* comprises one major section of White's literary production. These testimonies are independent pieces of writing arranged by subject matter, in other words, there is no connecting theme running through them. They are mostly practical in approach, and they contain counsel, caution, guidance or direction for individuals but also for the wider context of ecclesiastical spirituality and religious life.⁹³

There has been a debate concerning the issue of White's use of sources in the compilation of her books.⁹⁴ Some who accuse her of plagiarism point to clear similarities in wording between her text and the text of some other writers. According to them, the fact that she borrowed from other literary sources is proof that she was not guided by the prophetic gift or the spirit of prophecy.⁹⁵

As far as this study is concerned, I regard the accusations made against White concerning plagiarism as irrelevant, because all the words and expressions she uses in her texts are still words and expressions which she has chosen and approved as effective vehicles for expressing her thoughts and ideas. Even though she borrowed expressions and longer sections from other writers, as far as the content of her text are concerned, all that she wrote communicates her ideas. Instead, I will consider her writings in terms of the wider structure of thought she has constructed and evaluate the originality of her thinking on that basis. There is a good reason to do so, as there are major themes perceivable in her writings which seem to function as the backbone of her thinking. For instance, many of White's writings can be described, as Alden Thompson puts it, as "her devotional commentaries of Scripture".⁹⁶

The debated issues regarding White are not only related to her as a person, her work or her writings but also to the premises from which her ideas are interpreted and evaluated. Consequently, the current debate within Adventism is about the authority of her ideas, counsels and advice. There is a tendency to view

⁹³ Graham 1985, 355–409. It seems that by and large White's writings were well-received and appreciated among the Adventist membership as well as their leaders, but there were also those who rose to object to her and to criticize her ideas and counsel. Roy Graham discusses two of the most prominent of her critics, Dudley Marvin Canright (1840–1919) and Ludvig (Louis) Richard Conradi (1856–1939).

⁹⁴ Vance 1999, 77–81.

⁹⁵ Numbers 1976/1992/2008; <http://www.ellenWhiteexposed.com/White4.htm>;

<http://www.nonsda.org/White/White77.shtml> Downloaded October 4, 2009;

<http://www.Whiteestate.org/issues/ramik.html> Downloaded November 12, 2009. In 1981 a copyright lawyer commissioned by the SDA church to study the matter confirmed that the way in which White used borrowed material from published sources was not problematic from a legal point of view. The report also suggests that nineteenth century practice in literary borrowing and referring to sources used differed from what is acceptable today.

⁹⁶ Thompson 2005, 10.

both her as a person and her writings from a point of view considerably shaped by American fundamentalism.⁹⁷ As a result, there seems to be a general inclination among both the scholars defending her and the ones opposing her to think that all that she has written is to be regarded as equally inspired. It is all, therefore, applicable to our situation or, if proven to be borrowed, of no value at all. Likewise, all that she wrote is regarded by members of the conservative wing in the church as important instruction to be observed, followed or obeyed. Against this background I find it necessary to analyse her writings as such, without any consideration of claims to divine inspiration or prophetic guidance.

In addition to her prolific writing, White was also a public speaker and preacher. She travelled extensively and saw a lot of the world. She lived in several places in the United States, and she spent two years in Europe (from August 1885 to August 1887)⁹⁸ and nine in Australia (from November 1891 to September 1900). For the final 15 years of her life she resided at her home in Saint Helena, California, where she died on July 16, 1915. Throughout her life she demonstrated an interest in spirituality. This study will focus on her mature years and use sources from 1892 to 1905. I feel it is highly appropriate that her ideas on spirituality also receive adequate attention, not just her impact as a controversial writer, religious guide and opinion leader.

⁹⁷ Knight 2000, 128-159. George Knight discusses the fundamentalist influence on Adventism between 1919 and 1950. He points out a clear shift toward fundamentalist attitudes during that time in particular. However, many of the views and attitudes then adopted still remain a part of the general Adventist way of thinking. Many influential Adventist theologians have applied fundamentalist hermeneutics in biblical interpretation to their discussion of White's texts. <http://lastgenerationtheology.org/index.php> Downloaded on October 4, 2009. The so called "last generation theology" is just one indication of the fundamentalist presence within today's Adventism. Bull & Lockhart 2007. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart describe and define the role of White within today's Adventism, but more importantly, they also point out that there is an ongoing struggle between the fundamentalist and the moderate wings of the church regarding issues essential to the construction of Adventist identity.

⁹⁸ Delafield 1975. During this period of two years White spent time in England, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, giving her support to the emerging SDA church.

2. The Purpose of the Study, Methodology, Sources, and Previous Studies

2.1. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse and define the spirituality of Ellen White as it is presented in her literary production between 1892 and 1905. I will examine some of the typical features of her spiritual thinking by using modern definitions of spirituality in general and the contemporary approaches to Christian spirituality in particular, as outlined above in chapter 1.2.¹ I claim that the books which she published during her mature years will most appropriately express her ideas on Christian spirituality in their best defined form. Many of her expressed spiritual ideas are not prominent in the period covered in the primary sources selected for this study. Yet the chosen six books of her mature years, *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Education* and *The Ministry of Healing* with their c. 2500 pages, do arguably provide a representative sample of the core of her thought. I will also argue that by that time her spiritual thinking had developed to its distinctive climax and also that the subject matter in these of her books most clearly and systematically relates to spirituality.

The analysis of the sources, their definition and description will be undertaken within the context of some of the common approaches to Christian spirituality as outlined above, but also to spirituality in more general terms. However, it is the outlining of various approaches to spirituality below which will provide a wider frame of reference for the definition, evaluation and description of White's thinking on spirituality. Thus my study can also be perceived as being connected to a wider context of academic study in the area of spirituality.

¹ It is my assumption that there are numerous forms of spirituality apart from and in addition to Christian spirituality, which is one of its specific factions. However, other forms of spirituality are not studied here.

My first hypothesis is that White does not explore or discuss the topic of Christian spirituality as such. That being the case, in an analysis and interpretation of the sources a number of terms, ideas and themes will emerge which are related to spirituality and form a framework in which spirituality occurs. First, she speaks about religious topics with a doctrinal content and meaning. Secondly, she addresses a number of matters which are practical and experiential by nature. Thirdly, there are relational dimensions present in the sources. Fourthly, she also mentions several elements which are connected to the emotions and feelings or are part of them. Fifthly, she writes about various issues of human life which are to do with existence or the way of being. By analysing these topics from the theoretical frame of Christian spirituality as introduced by scholars, it is possible to define the principal features of Ellen White's spirituality.

My second hypothesis is that a systematisation of White's spiritual ideas, attempting to create a logical structure of thought, will suggest their significance to a modern reader. It will also contribute to the wider discourse on spirituality for the benefit of those who are interested in spirituality in general and in the study of its multiple features and various manifestations.

As I have undertaken to analyse the holistic character of White's spiritual thinking, I have consequently set as my aim to define the nature and role of inwardness in relationship with her ideas on the physical and active aspects of religious experiences and customs. This means that I will explore and describe the connection of spirituality with religion understood as a set of teachings and practices. On this basis my goal is to show that the foundation of ecclesiastical spirituality is in the personal and inner spirituality of individual Christians. I will also attempt to bring out evidence for White's understanding of the church primarily as a body of believers who are united by fellowship and interaction instead of common doctrines, effective governance or administrative structures.

I argue that it is not possible to either understand or appreciate White's religious thinking without a proper acquaintance with her comprehensive approach to spirituality. Through perception of the dynamics of her spiritual thinking, her role within the wider realm of Christianity can be established. This cumulative knowledge about her spirituality will be an addition to the common attempt among scholars of spirituality to better apprehend some of the essential features of what Christian spirituality is all about.

2.2 Methodology

The method which I will employ in this study is systematic analysis as it has been defined and described within the Finnish academic setting.² Even though it is possible to define and describe the concept of spirituality for the practical purposes of a study, I argue, however, that it is not possible to comprehensively explore spirituality itself as an individual experience, which each person perceives in their unique way. Scholars can examine both the premises for spirituality and the results of personal spirituality but, as Christ states, it is not possible to know what the Holy Spirit does within and what takes place at the level of the human spirit.³ On this basis, my present study about Ellen White's spirituality is comprised of exploring, discovering, defining and describing the preconditions, the premises, the principles and the effects of her ideas about spirituality.

The process of analysis will progress in the following steps: At the initial stage of the study, I will analyse *Steps to Christ* because of its quality as a systematic guidebook for secular people to a fuller and more rewarding spiritual existence. On the basis of this book I will establish a preliminary structure of thought or a sequence of major concepts, suggestions, themes and ideas. In the second phase, I will analyse all the other books in my material in order to find passages applicable to spirituality. These passages will then be studied individually in order to establish whether each of them can be included in the structure created on the basis of *Steps to Christ*. Based on this, I will be able to confirm the final form of the outline for my study. As there is now a framework of spiritual topics, the final step will be to analyse the topics by using the text passages selected at the previous stage of analysis.

Because systematic analysis as a method typically includes an interpretive aspect, I will also utilise some hermeneutical dimensions to explore

² Jolkkonen 2007. Jolkkonen's method guide introduces the systematic method and applies it to theological studies in particular. Heinonen 2001, 66–72. Heinonen explores the possibilities of the systematic analysis method for theological study. Leppisaari 1998; Jussila, Montonen & Nurmi 1993. Although Leppisaari as well as Jussila, Montonen and Nurmi discuss this method within the discipline of education, their observations and suggestions are also applicable in a wider setting, in all studies where literary material is under investigation.

³ John 3: 5–8. Schneiders 2005, 25. Schneiders argues that “theology never fully comprehends the experience it seeks to understand. Lived spirituality will always involve elements and aspects which can only be investigated adequately by the use of other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, art, rhetoric, or science.”

White's spiritual teaching in order to discover essential elements which are meaningful and significant for modern readers. I will employ the methodological tools designed and introduced by David Perrin for the study of Christian spirituality by using texts as sources.⁴ This means that the descriptions and definitions of spirituality as introduced above in section 1.2. will be used both as a theoretical starting point and a frame of reference in the interpretation of the sources. The meanings of individual sentences or statements will be set in relation to the entirety of White's thinking, which gradually emerges through the process of systematic analysis.⁵

2.3. Sources

The primary sources for this study are the six last books which White published during the late years of her life between 1892 and 1905. She completed the books herself, and all of them are relevant from a point of view of Christian spirituality.⁶

1) *Steps to Christ* was published in 1892 and meant to serve as an evangelistic tool. The content indicates that it is actually a spiritual guide. It is the only one of her books which discusses in a systematic manner the spiritual path from alienation into a fellowship with Christ.

During her stay in Australia in 1891–1900 White wrote and published three books related to the life of Christ. 2) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* was the first of these, printed in 1896. It examines Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount with the stated intention to direct readers so that they through faith could live "the life of the Life-giver", indicating thus that the book was meant for spiritual inspiration and instruction.⁷

⁴ Perrin 2007, 185–215; Sheldrake 2005, 459–477.

⁵ Perrin 2007, 8–9; 43–44; 191–202; 204–208; Sheldrake 2005, 459–477; White 1973, 137–170. Arthur L. White, White's grandson, gives detailed instructions conveying the principles for interpreting White's writings in a chapter entitled "Hermeneutical Principles in the E.G. White Writings". He refers to ideas found in her writings which may guide in the hermeneutic task. His suggestions alone seem insufficient for arriving at the full meaning of each of the text passages which come under careful scrutiny in this study. <http://www.Whiteestate.org/issues/herm-pri.html> Downloaded 12.11.2009. Ellen G. White Estate suggests some principles for correctly interpreting the writings of White. See also White 1969, 88–91.

⁶ White used secretarial aides to help in compiling material from her previous writings for her books. However, she personally approved their final form and content. After her death a number of compiled books on various topics have been published. Obviously, she had no influence in what went into them.

⁷ MB viii.

3) In 1898 White's extensive discourse on Christ's life and teachings was published under the title *The Desire of Ages*. She developed the theme during a period of forty years; she had already begun in 1858, writing on the life of Christ under the title *Spiritual Gifts I*. She enlarged the material after some twenty years and it was published in 1876 and 1877 under the title *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volumes II and III. A comparison of these works indicates that she had pondered these themes and shows how her ideas had developed. DA is in effect the final result of a process of thought leading to mature views and understanding. The life of Christ and all the issues deriving from it constitute one of the principal themes in White's spiritual philosophy.⁸

4) *Christ's Object Lessons* was published in 1900. It is White's third book with Christ's life and ministry as its subject matter. As she deals with Christ's parables, the ideas presented aim to nourish personal spirituality and to be relevant for the spiritual development and well-being of her readers. Thus it also has a bearing on the attempt to define and describe her spiritual thinking.⁹

5) White wrote extensively on educational matters during her life time but she presented her ideas on the issue most comprehensively when she published the book *Education* in 1902. In it she deals with a Christian approach to education systematically, but also with individual issues which she regards as essential within this framework. Rather surprisingly, it is a fitting source for this study since it reflects some of her leading spiritual considerations. The issue of education belongs inseparably to her holistic concept of spirituality, and without this feature a presentation of her spiritual ideas would, therefore, not be complete. Holistic spirituality, as the term is used in this study, refers to an understanding of people as undivided and whole entities. In addition to the fullness of being, holistic spirituality encompasses also the idea of human life as unified and connected. Thus it is related to the dynamic and active dimensions of life, to its functions and activities. This means that I do not understand holistic spirituality only as a quality of persons but also as an inseparable aspect of all human life. Spirituality is an integral part of human existence, and it cannot be compartmentalised or regarded as a feature unrelated to every-day experiences.

6) An emphasis on health and comprehensive well-being can be regarded as one of the typical characteristics of White's teaching. In *The Ministry*

⁸ Olson. <http://www.Whiteestate.org/issues/DA-HOW/DA-How.html> Downloaded 17.9.2009.

⁹ 2SP. White deals with a number of Christ's parables in the second volume of *Spirit of Prophecy*.

of *Healing*, 1905, she presents a spiritually attuned approach to matters of physical health.¹⁰ A comprehensive analysis of her holistic thinking is substantially strengthened by the inclusion of this book also as a primary source for the present study. From 1863 onwards, the health emphasis, or “Health Reform” as she calls it, was a topic on which she wrote extensively.¹¹

One of White’s major works, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, was published in 1888 and revised in 1911. However, I have not included it as a primary source in this study for the following reasons: First, the material for my analysis had to be limited to a reasonable amount in order to make a thorough, systematic study feasible. Had GC been included as one of the primary sources, the work would have expanded beyond the boundaries of one academic dissertation. Secondly, in presenting broad church historical overviews it does not address the topic of Christian spirituality from the individual and personal angle which I have chosen as the vantage point of my exploration. Thirdly, the General Conference Session at Minneapolis in 1888 marks a paradigm shift in the spiritual thinking within Adventism which was largely a result of Ellen White’s intervention. Fourthly, the meeting can be seen also as the point at which altered emphases in her approach to the basic Christian teachings, such as e.g. justification, appears in her writings. Fifthly, I find it unsustainable to infer White’s later views on spirituality first expressed in an orderly way in SC into GC which was published four years earlier. I have chosen to focus on the thinking of her mature years for which the Minneapolis Session poses as a distinct point of demarcation.

In addition to the primary sources, the above-mentioned six books from White’s mature years, this study also includes references to a number of her books, articles and other texts which are available in printed form.¹² Much of what she wrote was in reaction to issues rising within the Adventist Church. She responded to situations which occurred, commented on issues which rose from time to time and gave her guidance or counsel on current challenges. Being reactive to changing situations and emerging challenges, such texts do not

¹⁰ White 1981, 376–380. Arthur White gives an account of the actual writing and publishing project of MH.

¹¹ White 1986, 73–98; Coon 1986. Coon indicates that Ellen White herself went through a process of gradual adjustment into the high health and dietary ideals which she presented in her writings. For instance, it was while she lived in Australia in the 1890s that she eventually “abandoned all meat from her table” and became a vegetarian.

¹² In 1998 The Ellen G. White® Estate published all the printed materials in digital form on a CD-ROM with the title *The Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings*.

necessarily express ideas to which White has had the opportunity to give sustained thought.¹³ In addition to representing her mature thinking, the six books listed above were also written by her for an audience wider than the SDA church. She does not here attempt to profile a distinctly Adventist spirituality, but instead approaches Christian spirituality from a more common Protestant point of view. As previously indicated, these books are the outcome of a thought process several decades long.

2.4. Previous Studies

Much has been written concerning White, her ministry and her teaching but little of this is very useful or applicable in relation to this study. There are but a few academic studies dealing directly with her spirituality; instead, most of the scholars examine her as a possessor of the prophetic gift. T. Housel Jemison wrote *A Prophet among You* in 1955 to defend her prophetic inspiration, role and authority. White's grandson, Arthur L. White, published a six-volume biographic series titled *Ellen G. White* between 1981 and 1986, giving a detailed account of the events of her life, but he engages in minimal critical analysis or evaluation. Rene Noorbergen's approach in his *Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny*, published in 1972, is more analytic than Arthur White's, yet his primary intention also is to defend White's prophetic role. Books like these are useful because they provide an abundance of factual information on dates, persons and events, so that the historical and doctrinal context of White's work and writings can be constructed. However, none of these studies makes any attempt to identify central themes of her spiritual thinking nor do they provide help in the analysis of her spirituality.

One typical feature which writers introducing White have in common is their focus on her prophetic gift. There are two more authors who should be mentioned in this connection. In 1998 Herbert E. Douglas published *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* and Juan Carlos Viera *The Voice of the Spirit: How God Led His People through the Gift of Prophecy*. These are books intended mainly for the Adventist audience. The

¹³ White used the title *Testimonies for the Church* (1–9T) for her written messages to the SDA church. Some of these consist of private letters which she considered to have wider significance; some are sermons which she delivered on a special occasion. Most of the “testimonies” are short texts she wrote on various topics, intended for direction, guidance, counsel, inspiration or comfort.

material in them does not offer any significant contribution to the analysis of White's spirituality as it is expressed in the books from her mature years.

First, it is important to notice that studies dealing with White and her writings tend to approach her entire literary production as a whole and make no attempt to estimate the importance of any particular phase above another. The assumption that she is an inspired writer, i.e. one functioning constantly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leads to all her works being regarded as equally valuable and beneficial. White's critics have consequently assumed the same approach. Accordingly, for her critics one discrepancy or apparently erroneous notion, such as the wrong number of moons orbiting a planet, for instance, has provided reason enough to disqualify all that she has said.¹⁴

Secondly, as the books promoting White concentrate on the issue of inspiration, similarly those opposing her attack her mostly on the same topic. One of her earliest critics was Dudley M. Canright's (1840–1919) *Life of Mrs E.G. White*, published in 1919. He was among the first to present plagiarism charges against her. Another more recent critic following the same line of reasoning was Walter Rea with his *The White Lie* from the year 1982. Because White used literary sources without referencing them in the manner expected today, Rea argues that she was a mere plagiarist and thus does not deserve to be taken seriously as a religious writer. Dirk Anderson's book *White out*, 1999, on the other hand, criticises White as a prophet on the account of failed and mistaken prophecies as well as embarrassing misinformation.

In defence against these and other allegations and criticisms a number of books have been published. Francis D. Nichol's *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, 1951, answers in detail a number of objections raised against various aspects of White's views and also questions and criticisms concerning her life, ministry and teaching. In 1981 John J. Robertson wrote a book *The White Truth* defending White as an inspired prophet against charges of plagiarism.¹⁵ Leonard Brand's and Don S. McMahon's *The Prophet and Her Critics*, 2005, claims to be a striking new analysis, which "refutes the charges that Ellen G. White 'borrowed' the heath message".¹⁶

¹⁴ Nichol 1951, 91–101. In his book Nichol also attempts answer to a number of critical arguments which have been presented against White.

¹⁵ Wolfgramm 1983. In his academic study Wolfgramm investigates the opposing ideas and arguments on the issue of White's position as an authoritative religious writer.

¹⁶ Several books have been published to defend White's position as a prophet, such as Standish & Standish 2004; Douglass 2007.

In 1976 Ronald Numbers published *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* which caused greater havoc than had been intended within the SDA church.¹⁷ It did not confirm her as a visionary health-promoter ahead of her time. Instead, Numbers convincingly argues that most of White's ideas regarding health were already taught by other health professionals of the time. Hence Numbers' findings call into question the inspiration of White and the notion that her teachings on health reform originate from heaven.

Some attempts have been made to understand both Ellen White as a person and her ideas by exploring the historical, religious, cultural, political and social context in which she lived and wrote. This is the aim in *The World of Ellen G. White*, edited by Gary Land, in which the contributors explore the context of her time.

A number of academic studies have also been conducted on White, including a few which deal with her spirituality. There are studies which deal with her ideas concerning soteriology or some of the specific soteriological aspects addressed in her writings. There are also studies related to her views on eschatology. It seems that the point of departure for these studies is the presumption that it is her theological and doctrinal ideas that compose the most relevant angle into her thinking.

There are several scholars who have taken an interest in her soteriological and eschatological views and opinions from a doctrinal point of view. William Lesher studied White's conception of sanctification in his doctoral dissertation in 1970, *Ellen G. White's Concept of Sanctification*. Arthur Moore's doctoral dissertation *Theology Crisis*, 1979, discusses White's concept of righteousness by faith in relation to contemporary SDA doctrinal issues. In 1989 Woodrow Whidden published a study with the revealing title, *Soteriology of Ellen G. White; The Persistent Path to Perfection*. In 1995 he continued with the same theme, this time with the title, *Ellen White on Salvation: A Chronological Study*. In 1997 he published yet another book dealing with White's other theological ideas, especially Christology, titled, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ: A Chronological Study*.

In his dissertation *The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century*, 1985, Ron Graybill compares Ellen White with other women who rose to prominent roles in their

¹⁷ The second edition of the book was published in 1992 and the third in 2008.

respective religious denominations. He points out certain similarities between White and, for example, Mary Baker Eddy, who was the leading figure in the formation of Christian Science.

Jairyong Lee's doctoral dissertation *Faith and Works in Ellen G. White's Doctrine of the Last Judgment*, 1983, deals with theological issues which have been typically connected to White. Her soteriological ideas are evaluated in an eschatological context. Gunnar Pedersen is another scholar who in his doctoral thesis in 1995 studied her soteriological ideas in relation to the final judgement; *The Soteriology of Ellen G. White Compared with the Lutheran Formula of Concord: A Study of the Adventist Doctrine of the Final Judgement of the Saints and Their Justification before God*. He understands justification as a forensic event which takes place in the "court room of heaven". The Adventist doctrine of investigative judgement, i.e. the final phase of Christ's ministry as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, seems to have provided for him the context in which justification is legally confirmed.

In an unpublished essay written at Andrews University in 1988, Russell Staples compares Ellen White's ideas on salvation with those of John Wesley. He evaluates her soteriological views as she expresses them in *Steps to Christ* in the light of Wesleyan thought as presented in John Wesley's summary sermon published in 1765, entitled *The Scripture Way of Salvation*. On the basis of this comparison, Staples suggests that White's spiritual teachings, and subsequently Adventist spirituality on the whole, have distinctive Methodist roots. However, a wider study would probably be needed to conclusively confirm this end result.

In addition, there are two academic studies which deserve a somewhat closer look due to their subject matter: both of them deal with White's spirituality. Emery Lorntz's doctoral dissertation from the year 2000 is entitled *Ellen G. White's Concept of Spirituality in Relation to Contemporary Christian Theology*. He has assumed the task of analysing White's concept of spirituality and defining her related ideas in comparison to concepts held by other selected theologians, namely Matthew Fox, Frances Schaeffer, Maria Harris and Russell Spittler. However, Lorntz defines White's spiritual thinking on the basis of a rather limited selection of sources, and there is, therefore, a need for a more broadly-based analysis and finely-defined description of her spirituality. That is attempted in this study.

Another dissertation exploring certain aspects of White's spirituality is Zoltan Szalos-Farkas's work from the year 2005 with the title *An Exploration of the Rise and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality with Special Reference to the Charismatic Guidance of Ellen White 1844–1915*. This church-historical study analyses White's influence on the development of SDA spirituality. Such an investigation discloses some central features of her spirituality, but the main focus in his work is on the effects and the consequences of her ministry. The decisive role of her influence in the development of SDA spirituality also indicates the significance of her spirituality and of her role as a spiritual guide. However, Szalos-Farkas's argument is not fully convincing because he does not undertake an in-depth analysis of the core of White's spiritual ideas before exploring their assumed influence on Adventist spirituality. While his primary research interest is the historical development within Adventism rather than the exploration of White's spirituality as such, I will in this study to attempt to identify and describe in detail some of the essential features of her spiritual thinking based on an analysis of the sources.

John Fowler's dissertation entitled *The Concept of Character Development in the Writings of Ellen G. White, 1977* is also relevant to the study of White's spirituality. Fowler analyses the concept of character development, interprets it from a psychological point of view and synthesises the findings.

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned studies contain a plentiful supply of biographical information about Ellen White's life, its individual events and some useful background knowledge to her writings, there is hardly any efficient analysis of the development of her ideas in them. None of the scholars have assumed the task of an extensive exploration of her spirituality. The writers mostly depend on verbatim quotations from her text, i.e. letting her own words speak for themselves, with no scholarly summary or explanation of the content of the quotation, but also without any attempt to critically and systematically construct a synthesis of her spiritual thought. What is also missing in these studies is a structured framework for her spiritual thinking based on an orderly and comparative investigation of the sources from a spiritual point of view. Instead of spirituality, her role as a prophet is the guiding principle and the predominant paradigm. Scholars mostly see White as a promoter of an alternative approach to Christian religion instead of as a philosopher of individual spirituality and a spiritual guide.

3. Encountering God's Saving Grace

In Ellen White's view, Christianity in its functioning mode reaches deeper than the level of external behaviour occupied by various religious functions, activities and ideas. She seems to presume that there is a sphere of spirituality which one cannot successfully describe due to its abstract quality. In contrast to this intangible sphere, we as human beings are more capable of perceiving and experiencing the realm of reality because it constantly verifies itself to us by virtue of the functions of being, doing, thinking, feeling and relating. The spiritual sphere affects the inner person and ultimately moves the whole person from within, yet it cannot be detected, let alone defined, from the point of view of observable behaviour. It seems, indeed, that White refers to Christian spirituality in particular when describing Christianity in the following way:

Christianity has a much broader meaning than many have hitherto given it. It is not a creed. It is the word of Him who liveth and abideth forever. It is a living, animating principle, that takes possession of mind, heart, motives, and the entire man. Christianity—oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man.¹

In order to understand White's spiritual thinking one needs first to be familiarised with her understanding of humanity.² As a starting point, we assume her view of humanity to be holistic, i.e. a view of the person as an undivided entity as opposed to any kind of dualism, which she abandons altogether. For her there is no separate or independent soul capable of existence apart from the body. In her view, Christian spirituality has to do with everything that people are and with all the experiences that our lives consist of.³ For her this

¹ TM 421–422.

² There are certain ideas about humanity that function as a basis for White's spiritual thinking. Brinsmead 1975, 31–39. Robert Brinsmead sees three main aspects in her views on humanity: 1. human beings are God's creation / the image of God, 2. the sinfulness of human beings, 3. the holism of human beings.

³ MH 130. "The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the

approach means that people exist fully here and now, they think, they feel, they relate to others, to God and to the environment, and they are active, they do things and they work.

But how does Ellen White view humanity as the object of God's love? What does she say about those who search for a closer fellowship with God and seek deeper meaning for their lives? From the opening chapter of her book *Education* can be found some points of reference for the attempt to depict a person's spiritual journey.

In section 3.4. I will introduce some of White's more pessimistic ideas regarding the hopelessness of the human state of sinfulness, but here I wish to first point out four areas in which she speaks positively about the possibility of spiritual transformation and growth as well as about the option of entering into a satisfying relationship with God. First, human beings are for her designed and formed as undivided entities capable of harmonious and holistic development. This means that a person's spirituality is inseparably linked to and also dependent on the growth and maturing of other human dimensions, such as the physical, the emotional, the intellectual and the social.⁴

Secondly, the most essential area of development concerns spirituality. White appears to suggest that all people are spiritual beings due to their inborn sensibility to various divine influences and their ability to respond to and to know God. The essence of spirituality can be described as an inner connectedness to and individual communion with the mind of God. This communion concerns all our individual dimensions and it includes us as whole persons.⁵

enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. His success here means the surrender to evil of the whole being. The tendencies of our physical nature, unless under the dominion of a higher power, will surely work ruin and death.

The body is to be brought into subjection. The higher powers of the being are to rule. The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God. The kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace, is to bear sway in our lives." See also Ed 195.

⁴ Ed 13. "Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come." The topic of education will be discussed separately in chapter 6.6.1.

⁵ Ed 14. "In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God,

Thirdly, another area in White's positive view of humanity is our individuality and power to think independently. She presumes that as a rule there is a basic freedom and independence of thought which is a natural quality of all human beings but which must also be cultivated and developed. In fact, it is this inherent propensity for uniqueness and the inborn ability to think freely that make spirituality possible in terms of inwardness. She suggests that because of this interior autonomy and liberty of thought, human beings may obtain and maintain an individual inner realm within which each person can be connected with God. Interestingly, she does not refer to intellectual powers alone in this connection, but also to the human ability to enter a less conscious and controlled level of thinking, namely meditation and contemplation.⁶

A fourth aspect in White's view of humanity, significant to establishing the human prerequisites for Christian spirituality, is the form in which she presents the issue. She focuses mostly on the positive prospects: what God has done for humanity and what wonderful gifts he has given. She emphasises the opportunities that each person has to find his/her way to God. But she also speaks about the unfortunate condition of humankind and its desperate state. She refers to several basic human spiritual needs, which for her appear to constitute the reason and precondition for Christian spirituality. I will here briefly examine five such features.

First, it is an inner longing for God which motivates a person for a spiritual quest. This inward hunger and thirst for God is primarily a natural inclination, but it is also something which the Holy Spirit creates in human minds.⁷ Secondly, there is the helplessness and desolation caused by sin and its consequences, which creates a deep need for a spiritual solution, a way of bringing the person back to connectedness with God.⁸ Thirdly, a personally

the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate."

⁶ Ed 17. "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought... Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen."

⁷ SC 28. "You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul." See also: SC 95; COL 149; COL 191.

⁸ DA 203. "Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. There are many who realize their helplessness, and who long for that spiritual life which will bring them into harmony with God; they are vainly striving to obtain it." See also COL 232.

perceived sense of guilt is also a strong incentive to search for a way out of the dilemma created by sin in general and personal moral failures in particular.⁹ Fourthly, for many the anxiety created by various life situations is the reason for their readiness for and openness to spirituality.¹⁰ Fifthly, the insecurity experienced by an individual and the general uncertainty of life are also factors which urge a person to search for spirituality.¹¹

3.1. The Love of God

In the first chapter of *The Desire of Ages* Ellen White introduces her theological premises for this extensive book on the life of Christ. Here she introduces the theme of God's love as a dominant feature of her thinking, as she considers love to be the very essence of God's being and character. God's divine love is also the main reason for his self-disclosure through revelation, for Christ's incarnation and for all of God's dealings with humankind.¹² White's focus on divine love provides the starting point for my investigation on her theology of spirituality as introduced within the material targeted by this study.¹³

The first chapter of the spiritual guide-book *Steps to Christ* also deals with the topic of God's love and introduces it as one of the principal

⁹ MH 143. "Everywhere there are hearts crying out for something which they have not. They long for a power that will give them mastery over sin, a power that will deliver them from the bondage of evil, a power that will give health and life and peace. Many who once knew the power of God's word have dwelt where there is no recognition of God, and they long for the divine presence." See also: DA 302; MH 85; MB 10.

¹⁰ DA 329. "Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those with which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found." See also MH 72

¹¹ MH 85. "When sin struggles for the mastery in your soul, and burdens the conscience, look to the Saviour. His grace is sufficient to subdue sin. Let your grateful heart, trembling with uncertainty, turn to Him. Lay hold on the hope set before you. Christ waits to adopt you into His family. His strength will help your weakness; He will lead you step by step. Place your hand in His, and let Him guide you." See also: MH 251.

¹² DA 22. "The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known."

¹³ <http://www.Whiteestate.org/issues/themes1.html>. Downloaded in September 10, 2007. In fact, the love of God has been regarded as the leading idea of all White's writings and her thinking by most of the scholars who have studied her writings extensively.

elements of the spiritual journey. By presenting an encounter with divine love as the initial step of the journey, White follows the tradition of a number of spiritual directors.¹⁴ Yet her contribution offers some distinctive features, which will be explored more closely as the steps leading to union with Christ progress. In her teaching, the theme of God's love forms the foundation on which other elements of spirituality are built.

So, the purpose of this chapter is to analyse the applicable text portions and to attempt to describe some of the rudimentary spiritual steps which coincide with the person becoming aware of God's saving love and the spiritual dimension of life. In addition, I will also examine some of White's ideas related to more advanced spiritual stages as well as to some issues which have a bearing on the entire life-long spiritual journey.

White regards the work of Creation as an act of God motivated by his love. Because of this, indications of his love can be detected everywhere, despite the fact that sin has stained the perfection of God's creation.¹⁵ This seems to suggest God's immanence in the natural world and even in the entire universe. It can be concluded, therefore, that in her view the divine love with its saving intention is ever present, preceding both the human fall into sin and the divine acts to save.¹⁶

Ellen White states that reflections of God's love can be observed in nature as a whole, as well as in its most minute details. She introduces the idea of God's love as the grand reason and motive behind all of God's actions, e.g. creation, redemption, providence, etc. She does not present the idea of divine love as something comprehended intellectually only, but first and foremost as a constant object of contemplation, meditation and thoughtful observation. God's

¹⁴ Mannermaa 1983; Raunio 2002 b, 145–164. Mannermaa and Rautio, among others, show the central role of the concept of love in Luther's thinking, hence it is also a focal point in his spiritual teaching. The unidentified writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Julian of Norwich, Bernard of Clairvaux and St John of the Cross are other examples of spiritual writers who have dealt extensively with the topic of love before White. Perrin 2005, 442–458. It is significant here to pay attention to the point of view presented by Perrin that the core of mysticism can be seen as an encounter and even oneness or intimacy with some absolute divine reality i.e. a loving God. He suggests that even if mystics may often exist at 'the edge' of church and society, they are pulled by an intimate and compelling love to bear witness to the profound and intimate love of God.

¹⁵ COL 24–27; MH 414–418. In addition to bearing testimony to God's creative power and wisdom, nature also provides numerous opportunities for gaining spiritual lessons. See further discussion of White's theme on nature as a means to fulfilling spirituality in chapter 4.6.4.

¹⁶ Cobb 1995, 50–51. It appears that, as a former Methodist, White's ideas are in tune with Wesley's teaching that the whole natural world is permeated by the presence of God. Cobb describes Wesley's understanding: "The immanence of God in all human beings is a major and emphatic theme of Wesley. That this immanence extends to the whole creation is the most natural and consistent view possible."

love as the moving force can be observed both in the work of creation as well as in the history of salvation and in all divine intervention in people's lives.¹⁷

While a believer's relationship with the loving God is characterised by confident trust and intimate interaction, divine love is also the basis for a cooperative union with God, where love is the strongest motivating power as well as the leading principle to be followed. But God's love is not just a theme to be pondered on religious occasions; instead the mind should constantly "dwell upon His love." Thus God's love, according to White, constitutes a fundamental element on which the whole life may rest.¹⁸

Despite her expression "'God is love' is written upon every opening bud", for White nature is not, as such, a sufficient revelation of the fullness of God's goodness, love and grace. She is convinced that any spirituality with its sole source in nature is not Christian. She sees the ultimate revelation of the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ and in his sacrifice.¹⁹

Ellen White's entire literary production indicates that her general thrust is a constant attempt to be as faithful to the Bible as possible. A strong emphasis on the Scriptures is a leading feature of her teaching regarding spiritual praxis.²⁰ Thus she maintains that a person does not learn to know the love of God primarily by individually perceived experience, but first and foremost from objective manifestations and indications of God's actions. Divine revelation is the only trustworthy source through which humans can obtain sufficient knowledge of God's love. It cannot be measured on the basis of personal experiences, feelings or impressions, although also these things may support and enhance one's spiritual progress in the long run. On the other hand, dwelling on negative

¹⁷ SC 21. "Oh, let us contemplate the amazing sacrifice that has been made for us!" See also SC 70–71; SC 89; SC 103–104. White's usage of terms such as contemplation and meditation differs somewhat from their classical meaning: her conception of meditation and contemplation is comprised of an active and conscious awareness of the attributes and actions of God, and an opening of oneself to the certainty of the things of God. For her, this type of mental activity means a purposeful directing of attention to divine things, a filling of the mind with ideas, emotions and impressions which encourage, comfort, uplift, strengthen or bless in some way. To be discussed in detail in chapter 4.6.

¹⁸ SC 70–71.

¹⁹ Ed 101. "Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature's teaching be read aright." See also: MH 413; 8T 291–292; SC 13. Although White regards nature as an element which may provoke and enhance a variety of spiritual sentiments, there is certain hesitancy in the way she deals with nature as a component of enriched spirituality. This caution is probably caused by the obvious threat of pantheism within the developing Seventh-day Adventism.

²⁰ According to White, Bible study is one of the key methods in caring for our spiritual welfare. The topic will be discussed further in section 5.4.1.

experiences may cause discouragement and a disability to perceive God's goodness and love.²¹

White speaks of the love of God as the most comprehensive and profound attribute of his character. By repeatedly calling attention to who God is and to the perpetual essence of his character, she provides a perspective which proves all thought of constantly shifting human experiences and individual circumstances as infallible indicators of God's love to be groundless. As love is the substance of God's character and his being, this means that his love for humanity is permanent, immutable and eternal. Even though its manifestation within the ever-changing phenomena of nature and human life may only appear coincidental and momentary, the love of God can be relied on with certainty because it is the core of his nature.²²

Speaking of God's love, White uses terms which are not exclusively theological but have a clear affective connotation. She suggests that the divine sympathy is directly moved by human experiences of affliction and hardship.²³ She also expresses God's love through images of his incarnation and sharing with the human family in all their pains and sufferings.²⁴

White presents God and his love as current, effective and active realities. Perceiving this love is made possible by living close to Jesus, which also leads to receiving reproof, and to the testing of a person's character and his/her hidden intentions. Within the realm of God's love the necessary internal confrontation with personal imperfection will not, however, be devastating.²⁵

The constant assurance of God's love provides a positive outlook for all spirituality. The invitation to "behold" the indications of this love refers to the subjective and never-ending experience of meditation on the individual level.²⁶ According to White, this act of focused thinking can take place through observation of the ingenious design of nature, by reflecting on biblical passages,

²¹ MH 488; DA 22; SC 117. See also DA 626. SC 15; MH 147, 418–419; COL 301–302. The affective component of spirituality will be discussed in detail later.

²² SC 10–12; DA 19–26; DA 761–762; SC 15. These are but a few of the examples indicating White's elaboration of the topic of love as the essential divine characteristic. See also MB 119.

²³ DA 356. White's text also expresses an element of closeness between divinity and humanity as she writes: "Jesus assures His disciples of God's sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart."

²⁴ DA 26.

²⁵ DA 394. "While we cannot now comprehend the works and ways of God, we can discern His great love, which underlies all His dealings with men."

²⁶ SC 15. "Such love is without a parallel. Children of the heavenly King! Precious promise! Theme for the most profound meditation! The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him!"

but most importantly, by carefully considering Jesus as a person and by going through the experiences of his earthly life using the human ability of imagination.²⁷

The reception of God's love is a crucial part of the personal, daily spiritual experience. Yet it is, in White's view, primarily an objective matter, related to the character of God and his intervention with the human situation in the course of history. The love of God means redemption for humankind, because it caused Christ to bind himself with humankind. The love of God was exhaustively expressed through Christ, and it cannot be fully experienced apart from a relationship with him. According to her, the love of God which was made manifest in Jesus, can be experienced, but never explained.²⁸

Divine love is, in fact, a topic presented by White as a perpetual object of study, with the purpose of becoming more intimately acquainted with it. Its altruistic character is to be the object of constant observation and contemplation, because it captures the essential kernel of truth concerning God. In addition to this, God's selfless love is also an ideal which everyone on a spiritual journey should constantly strive to make a reality reflected in one's every day interaction with other people. However, the mystery of God's love never reveals itself fully.²⁹

3.1.1. The Matchless Love of our Saviour

In order to understand Ellen White's teachings, recommendations, warnings and advice regarding spirituality, one must first grasp some of the basic themes of her thinking. Therefore, it is necessary to draw attention to certain theological preconditions and assumptions which constitute the foundation for her spiritual thinking. She does not present herself as a theologian – which she was not – but she writes of that which is relevant to the spiritual point of view on the basis of her experience and her personal walk with God.

²⁷ SC 86–87. See also MH 265. The role of imagination in spirituality will be treated more extensively later in chapter 5.4.2.

²⁸ SC 14; DA 22; COL 128. For White divine love is a distinctly spiritual concept and not an intellectual one: "Not in this life shall we comprehend the mystery of God's love in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." See also DA 176, 205, 478, 641, 678; SC 11–12.

²⁹ COL 128–129. "The work of our Redeemer on this earth is and ever will be a subject that will put to the stretch our highest imagination. Man may tax every mental power in the endeavor to fathom this mystery, but his mind will become faint and weary. The most diligent searcher will see before him a boundless, shoreless sea."

It is important to point out that Christ holds a central position in the content of the material selected for this study and the same is true of White's thinking as a whole. For her the purpose of the incarnation of Christ is "to reveal the light of God's love."³⁰ She regards Christ as "the only medium of connection" and the sole mediator of all blessings and benefits which people may experience through authentic spirituality. In fact, she claims that if spiritual exercise or activity neglects Christ, it is "in vain".³¹

White's writings reflect her exclusively Trinitarian thinking although she does not, for obvious reasons, formulate doctrinal positions.³² She may not have been a theologian, but she was, nonetheless, an instructor and guide into a fuller and richer spiritual experience. Because her ideas regarding spiritual fellowship with God and the practical dimensions of "Christ's love" grow out of her doctrinal conceptions, an awareness of her theological thinking is still important for any attempt to understand her spiritual teaching. Regarding the second person of the Godhead she holds a view in line with classical Christological teaching. After having analysed White's Christological ideas in detail, Webster concludes that Christ as the mediator between God and humanity is the heart of her Christology. What is significant in this conjunction is the fact that Webster's assumptions seem to support the view that the general tendency of White's Christology can be described in terms of the common Protestant understanding. The over-all debate regarding the human struggle for perfection must be kept in mind also in connection with the discussion of White's Christological views and their relevance to the spiritual quest. Within the Adventist setting the question seems to be related to Christ's humanness and his example for us. It has been argued that if Christ overcame temptation as a human being, that may mean that the same is possible for and even expected of us.³³

³⁰ DA 19.

³¹ Christ is the focus of the material for the obvious reason that DA is a biographical account of the life of Christ, COL deals with the parables of Christ, MB discusses Christ's Sermon on the Mount and the title of SC naturally conveys the idea that the attention of that book is fixed on him. SC 20, 21. "But in vain are men's dreams of progress, in vain all efforts for the uplifting of humanity, if they neglect the one Source [the Christ] of hope and help for the fallen race."

³² In opposition to the non-Trinitarian thrust within early Adventism White speaks in distinctly Trinitarian terms, see CH 222; Ev 615; UL 148; AUCR Oct.7, 1907; 6MR 27. These text passages suggest that she does not represent nor completely approve of all the theological understandings maintained by the church leadership.

³³ DA 663–664. "Christ had not ceased to be God when He became man. Though He had humbled Himself to humanity, the Godhead was still His own. Christ alone could represent the Father to humanity, and this representation the disciples had been privileged to behold for over three years." Webster 1984, 150–152; Adams 1994.

Likewise her soteriological conceptions, which in broad terms follow the mainline Protestant approach to the doctrine of salvation, form the foundation for her spiritual teaching. But she does not aim for the advancement of correct doctrinal understanding; instead she advocates spiritual development in the realm of the human spirit.³⁴ “Christ’s matchless love” is one of the concepts she presents in connection with a personal experience of salvation, a term which seems to refer primarily to the emotional element in the person receiving that love.³⁵ The doctrinal and conceptual elements of her ideas give shape, direction and structure to the highly individual experiences of spiritual pilgrims, such as their perception of divine love.

The empirical element is the constant focal point of White’s references to the love of Christ. As a matter of fact, she tends to concentrate on describing its impact. Obviously, for her Christ’s love is an active and effective force which makes an impact on those who come into personal and direct contact with it. Christ himself is actively reaching out to humanity with his love. Therefore, Christ’s love is a reality which can be accessed and enjoyed by anybody, but on the other hand, it becomes truly available and profitable only for those who search for it in earnest.³⁶

Christ himself is here depicted as an active person seeking opportunities to intervene positively in the lives of people. White suggests that the person who becomes the object of this divine love will perceive it as an uplifting, electrifying and meaningful experience. However, she does not mention the emotional impact of such an encounter, but instead points out the change which takes place in a person’s affective life in terms of attitude and mood. In her opinion, rest is an experiential result of a trustful relationship with Christ.³⁷

White’s view seems thus to be that rest is not an automatic result of the love of Christ meeting a human being. Instead, it is something which is within

³⁴ See, Swinton 2001, 14.

³⁵ DA 679. White writes about divine love as a counter force to human despair and hopelessness: “Instead of deploring difficulties, they are called upon to surmount them. They are to despair of nothing, and to hope for everything. With the golden chain of His matchless love Christ has bound them to the throne of God. It is His purpose that the highest influence in the universe, emanating from the source of all power, shall be theirs.”

³⁶ DA 480; COL 226. White’s ideas are intended for those who are threatened by the meaninglessness of life: “Christ longs to have care-worn, weary, oppressed human beings come to Him. He longs to give them the light and joy and peace that are to be found nowhere else. The veriest sinners are the objects of His deep, earnest pity and love. He sends His Holy Spirit to yearn over them with tenderness, seeking to draw them to Himself.”

³⁷ MH 72. “It is our privilege to rest in His love, to say, ‘I will trust Him; for He gave His life for me’.”

the human ability to decide upon and to pursue. However, she suggests that a clear interactive component is also involved in resting. Rest does not mean inactivity or indolence. It appears that, as a part of spiritual pursuit, it is an attitudinal response to a living, divine Person.³⁸

Terms such as trust, peace and rest in White's usage refer to the actual experiences as well as to the ways of thinking and reacting which typically cause them. It seems that in order for such positive effects (i.e. the enjoyment of trust, peace or rest) to occur, the person must possess a basic willingness to proceed in their direction. However, she suggests that before there is any such state or related emotion, there must be an individual awareness of the perpetual love of Christ. Human response follows only as a result of the divine initiative.³⁹

This indicates, furthermore, that Ellen White considers the moment when a person responds to divine provisions as a crucial point in his/her spiritual development. It is also significant to notice that when a person reacts to the love of Christ, responsiveness here will in most cases lead to other, similar positive effects. The dispersal of bewilderment and doubt is not a result of human effort but the fruit of an active grace drawing the person toward Christ's healing love.⁴⁰

The love of Christ is also described as a healing, motivating and stabilising influence which makes an impact on the receptive person from within.⁴¹ Along with this therapeutic influence, White introduces an aspect of Christ's love which, while comforting and creating hope, is yet at the same time demanding and challenging. Christ's ultimate altruism is not only presented as an inspiring idea which is meant to soothe, console and encourage, but Christ's selflessness is here pointed out as a path to be followed.⁴²

In White's view, people are not only objects of Christ' love, but they are, as soon as they receive this love, invited to practice it and live by it. A comprehensive reception of the divine love causes it to become visible, tangible

³⁸ MH 250. "When temptations assail you, when care, perplexity, and darkness seem to surround your soul, look to the place where you last saw the light. Rest in Christ's love and under His protecting care. When sin struggles for the mastery in the heart, when guilt oppresses the soul and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, remember that Christ's grace is sufficient to subdue sin and banish the darkness. Entering into communion with the Saviour, we enter the region of peace."

³⁹ SC 112. "[A]s we draw near to Jesus, and rejoice in the fullness of His love, our doubt and darkness will disappear in the light of His presence."

⁴⁰ MH 84–85. See also COL 95–102.

⁴¹ Ed 114. "Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal. Only he in whom that love flows, even as the sap in the tree or the blood in the body, can restore the wounded soul." See also: DA 92; DA 389; DA 638; MH 89–90; MH 106–115.

⁴² SC 77. See also COL 382.

and observable through the life and actions of the receiving person. White seems to promote a radical approach to spirituality, where it is not only a matter of a personal, inner process yielding mainly individual benefits. Social action, service and loving involvement in helping and enhancing the quality of life of one's fellow human beings are included in her outward-looking spiritual programme.⁴³ On the other hand, formal and superficial religiosity seems to fall short of the standard she has in mind because "if there is only a profession of godliness, without the love of Christ, there is no power for good."⁴⁴

Because White also appears to be aware of the hopelessness of the human instrument, she points out a solution which can realise her ideal: a constant awareness of Christ's love.⁴⁵ She promotes engagement in the kind of spiritual activities by which people may become more aware of Christ's love and which provide an opportunity for them to open up to the impact of that love.⁴⁶

White has a simultaneous interest in the elements which constitute individual spirituality, and in the larger whole within which each human individual is included as a part of God's loving and saving work. The theme of God's love is thus the point of departure for examining the great struggle between the cosmic forces of good and evil which are totally beyond human control, but at the same time the perspective of God's love brings purpose, hope and security for each individual in their struggle and search. A scrutiny of the whole scope of her ideas, not only of her choice of individual expressions, will reveal the religious and spiritual quality of her thinking. Rather than remaining on the surface level represented by the wording of individual sentences in the text, one must look for the structure of her thinking, the consistency and thrust of argument and ultimately the comprehensive body of ideas which she creates.

3.1.2. The Love of God and Human Worth and Dignity

When Ellen White speaks about the love of God, she refers twice to human worth as a consequence of the divine love. She appears to regard individual human

⁴³ COL 419. "There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love." Chapter 6 will deal in detail with the cooperative aspect of White's spirituality in terms of the acting out and reflecting of divine love.

⁴⁴ DA 439.

⁴⁵ COL 394. "By beholding the matchless love of Christ, the selfish heart will be melted and subdued."

⁴⁶ DA 280. "The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. In him who looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith the character of Christ will be manifest."

beings as the most valuable element in all of creation. As she expresses her ideas regarding human value and dignity, she applies that principle to the quality of our response to people's needs. It seems, therefore, that the love of God is not only a factor in the formation of individual spirituality, but it also moulds social concerns and relationships as well as our modes of interaction.⁴⁷

Because Christ's love for each human being is infinite, he gave himself as the ultimate ransom for humanity. White holds that for this reason all human beings are God's property, on the basis of the price paid for their rescue.⁴⁸ Another equally basic criterion stated to support the value of humanity is the fact that God has created them. This insight is significant in the search for ontological and existential meaning for one's life, in deriving a purpose for existence and in constructing one's identity and self-worth.⁴⁹

It can be concluded that seeing in each individual person the value that White suggests has two main results. Firstly, the awareness of one's personal value on the basis of God's love has an encouraging effect, which can help one to build a positive image of oneself and balanced self-esteem. However, this notion also has existential consequences: It provides the basis for a sense of personal security in the midst of the vastness of the universe and the unexpectedness of life, ultimately in the presence of God.⁵⁰

Secondly, the love of God is the basis for all estimation of other people and their worth. God's love is the same for everybody. This provides the

⁴⁷ SC 12, 15; DA 286. "The gospel places a high value upon humanity as the purchase of the blood of Christ, and it teaches a tender regard for the wants and woes of man." DA 480: "Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart." COL 197. "If you are in communion with Christ, you will place His estimate upon every human being. You will feel for others the same deep love that Christ has felt for you. Then you will be able to win, not drive, to attract, not repulse, those for whom He died." See also DA 578.

⁴⁸ DA 667. "Through the value of the sacrifice made for them, they are of value in the Lord's sight." See also: COL 326; DA 438, 488; MB 56; COL 187, 194, 196; MH 162, 498.

⁴⁹ Ed 79; DA 668. "The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them, and He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises." Swinton 2001/2003, 25. We are referring here to the central features of spirituality listed by Swinton and which have been referred to in the introduction of this study, in section 1.3. See also DA 287.

⁵⁰ DA 667. In general one can say that Christian spirituality is about encountering the ultimate realities: God, death, guilt, and about coming to terms with them. So is the case also with White: "In Christ's name His followers are to stand before God. Through the value of the sacrifice made for them, they are of value in the Lord's sight. Because of the imputed righteousness of Christ they are accounted precious. For Christ's sake the Lord pardons those that fear Him. He does not see in them the vileness of the sinner. He recognizes in them the likeness of His Son, in whom they believe."

foundation on which White builds her view of Christian spirituality and ministry. Furthermore, the value of each individual constitutes an indispensable element of the very foundation of Christian ethics, and thus the code for a worthy spiritual praxis.⁵¹ Because human beings are so highly valued by God, this estimation directs one to an equal appreciation of all human beings. This in turn promotes a course of action motivated by the same ethical estimation.⁵²

3.1.3. The Love of God as Saving Grace

An examination of Ellen White's writings does not yield support for any assumption of her following the Christian tradition of connecting the concept and the reception of God's grace strictly with the sacraments. The Protestant sacraments include baptism and the Lord's Supper, of which White tends to use the term "the ordinances". It should be noticed that she uses the term "*a sacrament*" only in DA 660. Even there the word is not connected to the communion, although that is the wider context as far as the subject matter is concerned. Thus the sacraments do not constitute a central component in the spiritual programme she promotes. A comparison of how sacramental spirituality is understood within mainline Christianity and of White's understanding of the issue indicates that her perception of and her approach to the sacraments or ordinances differ from the mainline Protestant understanding. Burns explores the issue of grace as an indispensable element of Christian spirituality. The role of the sacraments or ordinances in White's spirituality will be discussed in detail later in section 6.5.2.⁵³ Nevertheless, she emphasises God's grace as the crucial element

⁵¹ COL 383. "His cause is the cause of the oppressed and the poor. In the hearts of His professed followers there is need of the tender sympathy of Christ—a deeper love for those whom He has so valued as to give His own life for their salvation. These souls are precious, infinitely more precious than any other offering we can bring to God."

⁵² MH 162. "Rich and poor, high and low, free and bond, are God's heritage. He who gave His life to redeem man sees in every human being a value that exceeds finite computation. By the mystery and glory of the cross we are to discern His estimate of the value of the soul. When we do this, we shall feel that human beings, however degraded, have cost too much to be treated with coldness or contempt. We shall realize the importance of working for our fellow men, that they may be exalted to the throne of God." Fox 1999. Fox has adopted compassion as the primary approach to Christian spirituality. For White also, compassion as an emotional skill and as an attitude seems to constitute an essential concept which we will further explore in chapter 6 below.

⁵³ Burns 1986, 331–349; Laulaja 2003, 211–219; Pihkala 2003, 221–232; Peura 2003, 175–183; Hanson 2004, 117–133; Loades 2005, 254–268.

in the formation as well as in the maintenance of a saving relationship between sinners and God.⁵⁴

White does not present a clear description of how God's grace can be obtained. On the contrary, her emphasis seems to be primarily on the idea that God's grace is what he himself is, and therefore not a commodity to be gained or obtained.⁵⁵ Since God has approached humankind, grace, too, remains constantly available for all. Her main point seems to be that no religious act, nor any inner movement or feeling within, nor any experience can as such be the means through which grace is received or experienced. The only true indication and proof of God's grace is the fact that he has given his Son who offered the ultimate sacrifice for humankind.⁵⁶

There are a number of passages which indicate that grace is obtained in conjunction with individual contact with Christ or the reception of him as Saviour.⁵⁷ This implies that the concept of grace in White's language has a broad theological meaning and content. On the one hand, the term seems to refer to an experience which can be identified in typical soteriological terms. On the other hand, God's grace appears to cover all goodness, benefits, blessings and gifts which somehow benefit some area of human existence, things of which God alone can be the giver.⁵⁸

I refer here in this section and also several times below to Martin Luther and to scholars who have studied his theology. I do this for the following reasons: First, Ellen White expresses appreciation for Luther both as a Christian

⁵⁴ COL 394. "It is only through the unmerited grace of Christ that any man can find entrance into the city of God." See also COL 96.

⁵⁵ DA 19, 24. "Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see 'God with us.'"

⁵⁶ SC 68. "In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe."

⁵⁷ SC 23. "It is only through Christ that we can be brought into harmony with God." See also SC 18, 20, 26, 27, 62, 69.

⁵⁸ According to White, the effects of grace also include the following issues: MB 65 makes marriage an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity, COL 254 cures social evils, MH 115 gives power for obedience, DA 515 imparts heaven-born dignity and sense of propriety, softens the harsh, subdues the coarse and unkind, leads mothers and fathers, casts out evil passions, MB 117 gives power to resist temptations, MB 118; SC 65; Ed 80 transforms, DA 305 creates and perpetuates true peace, COL 354 works to deny old inclinations, to overcome powerful propensities, and to form new habits, COL 97 renews the heart, DA 478 uplifts the soul, MB 128-129 makes the heart humble, refined and tender, MB 135 refines and purifies feelings, COL 102 controls the temper and the voice, becomes visible in politeness and tender regard. COL 384; MB 82 develops traits of character which will refine, ennoble, and enrich the life, DA 439 partakers of grace will be a savor of life unto life. Then there will be no rivalry, no self-seeking, no desire for the highest place, and they will have that love which seeks not one's own, but another's wealth.

and a Reformer. She writes extensively about Luther's work and accomplishments. On the basis of my analysis of the sources, I have drawn the conclusion that her eagerness to promote the swift change at Minneapolis in 1888, from a concentration on obedience to God's law and sanctification to an emphasis on gospel and justification, was a result of her acquaintance with Luther's theology. I will discuss the emergence of a new prominence for righteousness by faith more closely below in section 3.3.4. White's thinking about spirituality was affected by Luther more than by any of the other prominent Reformers including John Wesley.⁵⁹ Secondly, even though there are distinct differences in the ways in which Martin Luther and Ellen White understood many doctrinal points, they both describe some of the essential features of Christian spirituality in such a similar way that some comparison is justified.

Due to White's broad understanding of grace, no comprehensive definition of it can be found in the material with which this study is concerned. The phrasing closest to an actual definition reads as follows: "Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings."⁶⁰ A distinct allusion can be detected here to that dimension of grace which Luther called "favour", or "forensic justification". The terms 'favour' and 'forensic justification' refer to the act through which God forgives and regards the sinner as a righteous person in his sight. A sinner is fully accepted and acquitted on the basis of the substitutive death of Christ on the cross for the sinner. Forensic justification is a legal term and thus the act is seen to take place in the court room of heaven, totally apart from a person.⁶¹ White defines more clearly elsewhere the juridical concept of the acquittal of the sinner and his/her acceptance as righteous on the basis of Christ's substitution of himself as the recipient of the sinner's punishment.⁶²

⁵⁹ GC 1911/1950, 120–210. White's *Great Controversy* describes Martin Luther, his ministry and his role in the Reformation very extensively, in a way which indicates her positive attitude to his theology and his work. White 1984, 213. Arthur White mentions that Ellen White wrote 20 articles about Martin Luther which were published in *The Signs of the Times* in 1883.

⁶⁰ MH 161. In COL 250 she writes: "We ourselves owe everything to God's free grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ. Let this grace be revealed to others."

⁶¹ Peura 1998 a, 42–69; Mannermaa 2002, 320–333; Juntunen 2003 a, 36–58.

⁶² SC 62. "We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous."

The second aspect of grace, the “gift” in Luther’s terms, a transforming grace, is also reflected in White’s texts.⁶³ The grace of God is the initiator of the process of its reception and of the transformation which it brings, but White makes clear her view that also the continuation of that process of change is solely a result of the divine grace.⁶⁴

White’s understanding of grace can fittingly be defined as the saving love of God, which was primarily manifested through the acts of creation and redemption, but which also continues to be revealed as an active force in the life of each human being every day. Hence grace seems to refer to those qualities, characteristics and activities of God which motivated his making provision for the salvation of humankind, but which also call for a human response. As grace became incarnate in Jesus Christ, the assurance of grace also can be found in the divine Person, Christ being thus the embodiment of grace.⁶⁵

Practically without formal education as she was, White did not attempt to create an intellectual appeal but rather her focus is on spiritually relevant issues. Her writings indicate that though she had grasped theological concept, her constant “burden” was to care for the spiritual welfare of the church and its members. Thus the main point of her writings is aimed at the human spirit rather than toward a comprehension of religious ideas as a theoretical structure.

As we take into account the assumption that White writes primarily with a view to the empirical aspects of religion, i.e. the spiritual well-being of her readers, it can be concluded that it is the people, not just their sins, who need God’s goodness, mercy and compassion. From the point of view of spirituality, the forensic aspect of justification, which deals mainly with the pardoning and remitting of sin, appears to be an abstract idea offering very few or no stimuli for

⁶³ SC 62–63. “More than this [i.e. justification], Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.” Cobb 1995, 40. According to Cobb, Wesley sees grace as “the power for good”. Even though there are indications that White’s view of grace has been influenced by Wesley’s ideas, there are differences, too: White does not use the concept “prevenient grace” which is a typical feature in Wesley’s theological language.

⁶⁴ COL 250. “We ourselves owe everything to God’s free grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ. Let this grace be revealed to others.” There will be a detailed discussion on transformation in section 2.3.5.

⁶⁵ DA 530. “The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of salvation.” See also SC 21. It seems that White presents Christ himself as the assurance of God’s grace. In comparison, members of traditional Protestant churches are admonished to seek assurance of grace from the sacraments. Meanwhile Evangelical Christians seek the same from experience, which is expected to indicate that a person has received God’s transforming grace. Regarding the Evangelical approach to the assurance of grace see Pokki 2005, 307–315.

human experience, activity or practice. This is because an exclusively forensic understanding of justification emphasises the action which takes place in the court room of heaven where the pardon of sinners and their righteous state is confirmed. In White's view "the abiding presence of Christ" is an experiential matter, connected to many observable manifestations and experiences.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, as has been shown, Ellen White was a keen believer in the doctrine of justification, including its forensic aspects.⁶⁷ However, her main emphasis is on the union with Christ, as an interactive relationship, but also as an essential component of justification. White's ardent interest in, as well as her extensive coverage of, various aspects of the union with Christ brings her doctrinal understanding of justification very close to Luther's ideas on the same issue.⁶⁸ In fact, the union with Christ is, as will be shown below, a gold mine as far as her understanding of spirituality is concerned.⁶⁹

One more observation seems relevant concerning some of White's idioms and terms which are also linked to the concept of grace either contextually or conceptually. An examination of these expressions sheds light on the way White understands God's grace. In her view, the divine grace contains an affective and active element in addition to the classical view of God's grace as God's favourable attitude toward humanity. Her language describes how God's grace is continually manifested in a way that can be perceived empirically, felt and individually applied.⁷⁰

God's sympathy toward human beings is one of the expressions used by White to describe this affective position. Another perspective is pursued when she combines the idea of God's graciousness with incarnation theology.⁷¹ Thus

⁶⁶ COL 419. "The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ."

⁶⁷ Some of White's *Testimonies* and articles, such as GW 161–162; 2TT 91–55; 5T 467–476; 1SM 389–398 express views, which seem to grow out of the forensic aspect of justification. It is also significant to notice that the Adventist doctrine of righteousness by faith defines justification in primarily forensic form. See Blazen 2000, 278–279.

⁶⁸ According to a number of Finnish scholars, the union with Christ is the essence of Luther's teaching of justification by faith. See Luther-scholars: Mannerman 1998, 25–41; Peura 2002, 207–226; Vainio 2004, 15–19.

⁶⁹ The union with Christ is the principal theme of chapter 5 below.

⁷⁰ COL 251 uses such expressions as "God's pardoning grace", "the great heart of Infinite Love", "the tide of divine compassion", "the tenderness and mercy". SC 15 speaks of "a tender pity and yearning sympathy".

⁷¹ DA 533. "Though He [Christ] was the Son of God, yet He had taken human nature upon Him, and He was moved by human sorrow. His tender, pitying heart is ever awakened to sympathy by suffering. He weeps with those that weep, and rejoices with those that rejoice."

Christ's identification with humanity brings him into proximity with human beings in such a way that his presence can continuously provide real solace, encouragement, comfort and strength.⁷² Because Christ shared in the human experience through incarnation, he is capable of feeling with people in their troublesome existence. Connection with the risen Christ has not been lost. This idea is one definite point of reference in any pursuit of Christian spirituality suggested by White for her readers.⁷³

White proposes that Christians who hold the perfection of Christ as their ideal will also ultimately "manifest the sympathy and tenderness of Christ." She claims this to be an accomplishment of God's grace. This means that sympathetic and tender conduct and feelings towards others provide an opportunity to perceive divine qualities on the basis of one's own experience. Therefore it can be argued that perceiving such divine qualities because of "[t]he influence of grace" may provide astounding personal perspective into divinity, and that perception may in turn prove to be existentially and ontologically significant.⁷⁴

White introduces essential elements for building basic trust and confidence in the way God acts with people. She emphasises that there can be no meaningful relationship with God unless there is a basic trust in the love, goodness, kindness and compassion of God.⁷⁵ As God's fundamental characteristics and attitudes are inseparably related to the manner and quality of his transactions with people, consequently the human experience of relating to the transcendent God is profoundly affected by the simple knowledge of these qualities. Only a sympathetic and merciful God can constitute a satisfactory counterpart in a spiritual programme where intimate connectedness and direct interaction are the foremost characteristics. Even more importantly, in the presence of a God of tender concern and kindness it is possible for human beings to face their condition as creatures "bogged down" in sin, to face their weakness,

⁷² DA 318. "He is touched with sympathy for our grief. His heart, that loved and pitied, is a heart of unchangeable tenderness. His word, that called the dead to life, is no less efficacious now than when spoken to the young man of Nain."

⁷³ DA 480. "Though now He has ascended to the presence of God, and shares the throne of the universe, Jesus has lost none of His compassionate nature. Today the same tender, sympathizing heart is open to all the woes of humanity."

⁷⁴ MB 135. "No man who has the true ideal of what constitutes a perfect character will fail to manifest the sympathy and tenderness of Christ. The influence of grace is to soften the heart, to refine and purify the feelings, giving a heaven-born delicacy and sense of propriety."

⁷⁵ SC 53. "God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion."

their in-born propensity towards alienation from God and their tendency to disregard his love.

3.2. Confronting One's Helplessness and Sinfulness

Throughout the primary sources, Ellen White points out that God constantly attempts to convince people of their need of Christ.⁷⁶ Even before there is a full conviction of one's hopeless sinfulness, and before faith is fixed on Christ as one's Saviour, there can, however, be some form of contact between the human soul and God. The love of God reaches every human being without any regard to the person's interests and activities in the religious realm.⁷⁷ White claims that God's love touches the mind through various manifestations of nature, and creates a longing for something or someone beyond the tangible and the visible. The Holy Spirit is also persistently at work on behalf of everyone. Fulfilling Christian spirituality is, therefore, within the reach of every human being despite their natural inclination to sin.⁷⁸

Following from this premise, even the rudimentary matters of the Christian faith are an integral part of Christian spirituality. As White endeavours to convince the sinner of his/her need of Christ and the necessary measures that should follow, she is in fact dealing with matters that are relevant to all who profess the Christian faith. This is because anyone involved in the spiritual pilgrimage will continually confront these elementary issues, such as the sinner's need of Christ, repentance and confession.⁷⁹ These essentials are always part of authentic Christian spirituality, not only because all humans sin and transgress, but also because of the inborn sinfulness which is an inseparable part of the human existence. In White's view an awareness of one's true helplessness is an

⁷⁶ See e.g. SC 9–41; COL 155, 158, 162, 330; DA 187, 198, 300, 308, 436, 466; MH 455; MB 7.

⁷⁷ DA 113. "Our Redeemer has opened the way so that the most sinful, the most needy, the most oppressed and despised, may find access to the Father. All may have a home in the mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare."

⁷⁸ SC 28.

⁷⁹ SC 64. "The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature."

incentive for a yet another experience of the basic gospel and the still closer connectedness with Christ which follows.⁸⁰

In White's thinking, the realisation of one's need of Christ precedes repentance and confession. Many a person perceives some features of the "loving-kindness" or "benevolence" of God's character, the wisdom of the biblical law or the principles of love, particularly in conjunction with some crucial turns of life, but that does not necessarily generate a desire to be united with Christ. Knowledge of the love of God is vital for the sinner from the perspective of entering into a saving relationship with Christ. Yet it is one's encounter with personal sinfulness and unworthiness which creates the thirst and hunger forcing the soul to turn to Christ for true cleansing, liberation from guilt and shame, justification and holiness. White also argues that unless there is this personal desperation, there can be no real sorrow for sin, genuine repentance or remorse for sin. These in turn are the conditions for confession, meaning honesty and candidness about oneself and a readiness to assume responsibility for one's sins.⁸¹

As White introduces Christ as the connecting link between God and sinners and confirms his love for humankind, she gives her first instructions for spiritual exercises. These include such activities as contemplation and meditation, but also thinking about the things of God, being acutely aware of his presence, qualities and characteristics, or concentrating on ideas or themes which relate to the divine. In conjunction with the inner mental process, the idea of appreciation adds an essential component. In other words, it is right at the beginning of the spiritual experience where her discussion on thanksgiving and worship also begins.⁸²

White indicates that spirituality is not a result of human initiative or decision. It is therefore significant that she suggests divine activity as the focus of attention and the reason for human gratitude. Indeed, God's acts of creation and expiation are performed outside of our circle of personal experience. The attention

⁸⁰ SC 65. "The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image."

⁸¹ MH 455. "In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power." See also SC 19.

⁸² SC 21. "Oh, let us contemplate the amazing sacrifice that has been made for us! Let us try to appreciate the labor and energy that Heaven is expending to reclaim the lost, and bring them back to the Father's house." Contemplation as a separate topic will be discussed in detail in section 5.4.5.

is squarely on what God has done and what he is doing, quite apart from the individual realm. Yet this divine ministry is not separate from the human existence. It must not be. Sinners are not automatically rejected because of their sin, but instead God has directed immanent agents and transcendent forces to work for their full happiness and wellbeing.⁸³

White suggests that constant appreciative awareness of this cosmic divine action in terms of the Godhead and angels is thus the keynote for the practice of Christian spirituality, which is designed to follow that first encounter with God.⁸⁴ Furthermore, this consciousness of the sacrifice, i.e. the labour and the energy which have been launched by God for the purpose of saving the members of humankind, will also function as “mighty incentives and encouragements to urge us to give the heart's loving service to our Creator and Redeemer.” SC 21.

White does not describe the mental demands of facing one's own sinfulness and one's inability to reach the standards given. Therefore she does not speak about the reactions commonly attached to human imperfection: perplexity, shame, the sense of powerlessness and despair. She does not define the experience of confronting one's own sinfulness and helplessness by the feelings which might be awakened. They are only vaguely present in the passages where she touches on this fundamental process. Instead, White employs expressions describing extremely negative behavioural, mental or spiritual features: DA 200 helplessness and bitter need, DA 493 continual sense of the weakness of the humanity, DA 299 their spiritual poverty, MB 8 having nothing good in themselves, MB 62 crippled and helpless, MB 9 weak, helpless and despairing, COL 120 sinful and polluted, COL 159 lost and hopeless. No one who realises such a negative condition as his own spiritual state can escape a tide of strong feelings of disorientation, fear, discouragement, loneliness, abandonment etc, before finding comfort and hope through faith in Jesus.

Though a strong emotional current can be found imbedded in that progression, in White's portrayal of the spiritual apparatus the affective elements

⁸³ SC 10. “God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love.” See also DA 21.

⁸⁴ DA 21. “The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.”

do not compose a noteworthy part of the experience. The reader may catch the emotional charge in passages like this one: “All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus.” MB 8. A sense of deep poverty of soul or finding nothing good in oneself is devastating for the individual. But it is apparently not White’s intention to deal with these negative emotional aspects.

White indicates that it is a demanding task to “know our real condition”, i.e. to come to terms with the negative and dark side of one’s identity and persona.⁸⁵ Yet she sees “pride” and “self-trust” as the major obstacles to perceiving the truth about oneself.⁸⁶ She may use these terms to describe a common and natural reaction to a very pessimistic estimation of one’s inner state. Terms such as denial, neglect or understatement might be used to describe the phenomenon in psychological language.

One of White’s suggestions raises hopes, although it does not offer an outright escape from the dire experience of confrontation with one’s sinfulness and helplessness.

In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. We shall see ourselves lost and hopeless, clad in garments of self-righteousness, like every other sinner. We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God’s infinite grace.⁸⁷

Christ as the incarnate God is also a manifestation of the divine grace, in the sense that merely observing him and thinking about him causes grace to impact the human mind, and as a result the person confronted is able to see

⁸⁵ COL 158. “But we must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will result in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace. The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit could not work with him. His soul was encased in a self-righteous armor which the arrows of God, barbed and true-aimed by angel hands, failed to penetrate. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. He came ‘to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.’ Luke 4:18. But ‘they that are whole need not a physician.’ Luke 5:31. We must know our real condition, or we shall not feel our need of Christ’s help. We must understand our danger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we should not desire healing.” Fontana 2003, 159–204; Ruffing 2005, 308–324. The concept of person, as well as different facets of spiritual development, is viewed from the perspective of modern psychology within the context of Christian spirituality. However, White does not describe the spiritual transformation from a psychological point of view but in terms of religious experience.

⁸⁶ MB 7. “Pride feels no need... There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person. Those who are rich and honorable in their own eyes do not ask in faith, and receive the blessing of God. They feel that they are full, therefore they go away empty.” See also COL 154.

⁸⁷ COL 159.

him/herself more candidly. But White mentions several other ways through which the divine influence impacts a person from within. The law of the Ten Commandments sets the divine standard, and the Holy Spirit uses this code to awaken the conscience to compare one's own conduct to the ideal.⁸⁸

White states that it is the Holy Spirit which "touches the hearts" of people DA 308, "convince[s] of sin" MB 7 and "convicts of sin" COL 100, "subdues" SC 73 and "moves upon the heart" DA 605, it presents Christ as the Saviour of sinful human beings and ultimately enables them also to view themselves as God intends them to. However, she concludes that it is the person of Christ, his character and ministry which have the most forceful impact, helping people to deal with "their helpless unworthiness" and to consolidate a positive self-image for which Christ provides himself as the model. It is for these reasons that White insists that a deep and intense encounter with Christ is needed.⁸⁹

Finding oneself sinful, wanting, broken, helpless and lost must not be seen to diminish a person's chances for the positive prospect of salvation. According to White, the contrary is true.⁹⁰ In fact, the reality of every person is absolutely hopeless, but the realisation of that state is the condition on which God is able to help. Along with her recommendation to face candidly and tackle one's real identity, three significant theological and philosophical issues also surface, which will all have a bearing on this attempt to outline the theology of White's spirituality.⁹¹

⁸⁸ DA 308. "When the law was proclaimed from Sinai, God made known to men the holiness of His character, that by contrast they might see the sinfulness of their own. The law was given to convict them of sin, and reveal their need of a Saviour."

⁸⁹ SC 91; MH 66. "In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every evil trait and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is still the same mighty Redeemer." These are some of the numerous passages which describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit on behalf of humanity: COL 58, 120, 237; DA 21, 308, 468, 493-494, 567, 656; SC 28, 57. See also MB 128; DA 308.

⁹⁰ MH 161. "God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need." White has several things to say about the necessity of sensing one's need for help, cleansing, forgiveness and mercy from God. In MH 455 she wrote: "In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need." See also MB 19; COL 58-59; DA 299; COL 152.

⁹¹ MH 455. "We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power." Furthermore MB 130-131 states: "That you feel and know you are a sinner is sufficient ground for asking for His mercy and compassion. The condition upon which you may come to God is not that you shall be holy, but that you desire Him to cleanse you from all sin and purify you from all iniquity. The argument that we may plead now and ever is our great need, our utterly helpless state, that makes Him and His redeeming power a necessity."

Firstly, the problem of evil and sin has to do with the whole person. This means that God's grace brings healing for sinners as whole personalities, not only for the shame, guilt, alienation and other negative consequences of erring and wrongdoing. White understands the problem of sin as a broader concept than a mere behavioural problem or distortion. Although saving and transforming grace comes from above and outside of the person, the process which God's grace initiates and performs in him leads the human counterpart into total involvement. Only the person him/herself is in a position to confront his/her own sinfulness and helplessness. The result of such total awareness is despair, unless the awareness is inseparably joined together with the therapeutic work of God's grace.⁹²

Secondly, while discussing the individual confrontation with sinfulness and helplessness, White's approach to spirituality also enters into the realm of existential and ontological meaning. She speaks about a life-long process, through which people come to ask themselves existential and ontological questions. These may include questions such as these: "As I realise that I have done wrong, who am I really? Why am I sinful and helpless? What am I at the core of my being – a sinner?" Confrontation with one's sinfulness and helplessness cannot but cause a search for an identity defined by something else or by someone else, i.e. God. The human spirit is essentially involved in that process, and therefore it is not only an exterior religious undertaking, but deals rather with those things which constitute spirituality as well as the core of selfhood.

Thirdly, since sinfulness and helplessness are not qualities chosen at will, one must ask what the origin of that condition actually is. Does committing sin alone make a person sinful, or is the source of this problem part of the common human condition? If it were possible for someone to stop sinning, would that make such a person less sinful and helpless? These simple questions indicate that there are yet grand doctrinal issues of hamartology and anthropology underlying the process of confrontation with one's sinfulness and helplessness.

When dealing with the present issue White also uses terms such as "weak" DA 493, "poor" DA 299, "polluted" COL 151, "despairing" MB 9 or "defected" COL 159. As these unfortunate qualities are greater than the human

⁹² SC 52. "Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity."

capacity for managing them, no spiritual praxis as such is capable of offering a final solution to such conditions. Unless the confrontation with one's own sin-marred state leads to the finding of forgiveness, acceptance and healing in union with a gracious God, such a confrontation could not be recommended under any circumstances. On the other hand, if this demanding effort of facing the negative aspects of one's identity is missing from the religious experience, such spirituality will appear ineffective, shallow and futile.

Without the convicting of the Holy Spirit and the influence of God's grace through various means, there could never be a sincere realisation of one's unfortunate state. But the divine agencies do not vicariously face dire spiritual misery on behalf of anyone, instead, all must personally view the records of their individual choices, actions, behaviours and experiences and draw the necessary conclusions.⁹³

3.2.1. Sorrow for Sin and Repentance

Ellen White's simple definition of repentance leads into a discussion of its meaning and role in her spiritual teaching.⁹⁴ Repentance and sorrow for sin refer to personally committed evil deeds, transgressions or actions against the law of God. So for White, repentance is an individual reaction to the sins one has committed, and she does not, therefore, include in the concept general sorrow or shame for inclinations or tendencies commonly regarded as sinful. However, she speaks about repentance also in terms of setting positive personal goals and adopting an altered attitude towards sin and wrongdoing.⁹⁵

Yet repentance cannot be considered an exercise in which a person can become involved on his or her own initiative. White's concept of penitence appears to be clear: It is motivated by an incentive which originates from Christ.⁹⁶

⁹³ MH 455. "We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power."

⁹⁴ SC 23. "Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life."

⁹⁵ SC 23; MH 511. "Christ in the heart, Christ in the life, this is our safety. The atmosphere of His presence will fill the soul with abhorrence of all that is evil. Our spirit may be so identified with His that in thought and aim we shall be one with Him." See also COL 48.

⁹⁶ SC 26. "It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, 'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'

This appears to mean that the readiness as well as the motivation for repentance is caused by God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Because of the emphasis on systematic divine involvement throughout the process of remorse, it becomes evident that repentance does not happen as a result of the sinner's own choice at all.⁹⁷

According to White repentance and all that it entails is a divine act.⁹⁸ While Christ is the source of repentance, he is also its ultimate object. Repentance means turning away from sin, sinfulness and its misery toward Christ as the sole helper in the predicament of sin.⁹⁹ Thus the human search for ultimate solutions takes place between two fundamental realities: on the one hand, the absolute sovereignty of God's grace, and on the other, total human helplessness to reach out from the state of sin.

Her references to the Holy Spirit as well as to Christ indicate how White's ideas grow out of her Trinitarian thinking also in regard to repentance. Even though she considers repentance to be a personal and uniquely individual human experience, she also recognises that both the need for it and the impulse for its initiation are of divine origin. That being the case, external human influence can only take the role of an instrument or a channel for God. Therefore, attempts to create pressure on other people to include repentance or stating demands for them to repent are inappropriate.¹⁰⁰

Ellen White maintains that repentance is an attitude of regret, penitence and sorrow, caused by God as a result of the person giving in to the drawing, coaxing, persuading and calling of his love. It leads to the opening of the heart to God and a request for superhuman help. Meanwhile, she also points out that in order for the process of repentance to be accomplished it is vital for the

Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ."

⁹⁷ DA 321. "Whatever the sin, if the soul repents and believes, the guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ; but he who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him. It is by the Spirit that God works upon the heart; when men willfully reject the Spirit, and declare It to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. When the Spirit is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul."

⁹⁸ DA 175. "Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God... Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon."

⁹⁹ SC 31. "There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are."

¹⁰⁰ MH 163. "It is a delicate matter to deal with minds. Only He who reads the heart knows how to bring men to repentance. Only His wisdom can give us success in reaching the lost."

person to sense that the divine drawing “deals truly with” the soul and is “earnest” and “persistent”.¹⁰¹ For some this remark may be necessary because personal sinfulness or feelings of guilt seem to them insignificant and trivial, while for others they appear to be an overwhelmingly discouraging reality.¹⁰²

White argues that the humility caused by repentance is the precondition for God’s love and forgiveness becoming truly meaningful and valued by a person who is on the way from the meaninglessness of guilt and shame towards a more fulfilling spiritual existence. Thus the despairing sinner may confidently approach Christ who is the heavenly High Priest and the mediator between God and humankind. He is not only a compassionate and sympathetic listener, but he is also capable of liberating a person from the culpability and disgrace of sin.¹⁰³

White encourages those who need repentance for the first time: there is a good, loving God waiting to receive and accept the penitent person.¹⁰⁴ Yet she does not present repentance as a singular or rare experience, instead, she states that “[a]t every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen.” COL 160. This view is contrary to the assumption that repentance belongs only to the initial stage of spiritual development. As an ongoing and progressive experience, repentance should be perceived as a process rather than an event.¹⁰⁵

White’s idea of the deepening of repentance refers to the empirical dimension rather than to any idea of the impact made by the Holy Spirit becoming more and more intense or pressing with time. On the contrary, a certain level of readiness and sensitivity appear to be needed for repentance to thrive. But even further, there seems to be an aspect of mutual involvement present, because White

¹⁰¹ SC 35. “Deal truly with your own soul. Be as earnest, as persistent, as you would be if your mortal life were at stake... As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save.”

¹⁰² Hence White advises in SC 36: “When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ and that you may be saved by His matchless love. 1 Timothy 1:15.”

¹⁰³ SC 37, 41.

¹⁰⁴ COL 206. “Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love.”

¹⁰⁵ COL 161. White explains why a continuous, repentant attitude is needed and what it involves: “God does not bid you fear that He will fail to fulfill His promises, that His patience will weary, or His compassion be found wanting. Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ’s will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life. ‘It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ Fear lest self shall interpose between your soul and the great Master Worker. Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through you God desires to accomplish. Fear to trust to your own strength, fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life’s pathway without His abiding presence.”

states concerning repentance: “This work He desires to accomplish for us, and He asks us to co-operate with Him.” COL 56.

To describe repentance as a spiritual process designed for dealing with one’s own sinfulness and guilt, White uses the biblical image of falling on the rock, with the rock referring to Christ.¹⁰⁶ Also here the cooperative dimensions of repentance are expressed, together with the accompanying attitudes of humility and faith. She appears to see repentance as progress which will meet its objective; there the oppressed person will be released from the weight of guilt.¹⁰⁷ Regret certainly does not rule out a perception of confidence and relief offered by Christ through union with him, because the state of sorrow and remorse is not an endless condition.

White also views the topic of repentance from an angle almost opposite to the one described above. The perpetual, never-changing love of God creates an inner, emotional space where it is possible for the fearful and shame-stricken sinner to confront personal shortcomings and mistakes. It is the human being for whom this personal experience of repentance is necessary, not God. He is gracious and loving, and it is not repentance that makes him so. Instead, God’s love makes it possible for humans to repent, and through repentance they can enter into a deeper knowledge of that love.¹⁰⁸

In this context White argues that if “you hunger for His mercy, desire His counsel, and long for His love” you meet the preconditions for coming to God for help and eventually for “true contrition”.¹⁰⁹ She does not indicate the actual origin of that desire; it may be generated by the Holy Spirit, it may also be a result of the way the human mind is created to function, or both. It may be concluded that in her view, an appropriate affective and emotional condition seems to be a vital factor in making spirituality viable for the individual person.¹¹⁰

For White, repentance is not a state of misery which should grip the Christian for life; rather joy will replace sorrow. Instead of gloom and discouragement, the penitent should catch a sense of the rejoicing in heaven. That

¹⁰⁶ DA 599. “To fall upon the Rock and be broken is to give up our self-righteousness and to go to Christ with the humility of a child, repenting of our transgressions, and believing in His forgiving love.” See Matthew 21:44.

¹⁰⁷ MB 10. “In true contrition we may come to the foot of the cross, and there leave our burdens.”

¹⁰⁸ COL 189.

¹⁰⁹ MB 130. She writes further in MB 131: “The condition upon which you may come to God is not that you shall be holy, but that you desire Him to cleanse you from all sin and purify you from all iniquity.”

¹¹⁰ DA 656. “For the repentant, brokenhearted one He is waiting. All things are ready for that soul’s reception. He who washed the feet of Judas longs to wash every heart from the stain of sin.”

in turn functions as fuel for further advancement on the spiritual journey. The primary sources of this study indicate White's idea to be that repentance is just one stage in a complex system, where it leads to certain developments without which no balanced spiritual existence can be reached.¹¹¹

3.2.2. Confession of Sin

In most cases Ellen White's instructions concerning confession of sin are specific. She emphasises that confession must include "true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit" and even "abhorring [of one's] iniquity" SC 38. However, confession is not a purely human endeavour despite the fact that the person is thoroughly involved in it. It cannot be only an act of habit or duty. It is the divine, dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit which makes confession an authentically spiritual experience.

The sinner performs the confession personally, but White makes clear her conviction that the human attempt has its beginning in the divine influence. She writes about the sinner considering the option of confession: "unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin." SC 40. This means, in consequence, that without the working of the Holy Spirit there is no actual confession of sins, and thus, if the identifying mark of a genuine spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit, a purely human-based confession falls short of fulfilling the criteria for valid spirituality.

For White, confession and declaration of guilt is not so much a repeatedly presented list of wrong, erroneous deeds committed, which disturb the conscience, but a holistic procedure which includes declaring guilt for personal sins and shortcomings, and also an acknowledgement of the fact that there is something fundamentally wrong and twisted in one as a person. White's understanding of confession is comprehensive, indeed. Moreover, it is an attitude which is to be maintained continuously throughout life.¹¹²

¹¹¹ DA 301; COL 190; DA 555. "No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct."

¹¹² COL 148, 152, 159–160. "It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves. Therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Only by constant renunciation of self and dependence on Christ can we walk safely."

White indicates that confession is also regarded as desirable and satisfying from God's point of view. But at that point she expands the meaning and substance of the term to include the presentation to God of one's needs and wants, as well as the whole of one's troubled existence.¹¹³

As far as the basic understanding of confession of sin is concerned, White is quite straightforward in her teaching. What happens within, that is, the awakening consciousness of wrong, acknowledgment of it, claiming ownership of it, and then disowning it, is more important than are any behavioural gestures and forms. Confession goes beyond profound self-awareness; similarly it contains more than a private acknowledgement of failure to oneself. Its primary meaning lies in bringing the totality of one's individual guilt and the totality of one's sin-caused problematic situation to God with the purpose of finding forgiveness and relief from guilt, and of regaining righteousness and holiness.¹¹⁴

Confession of sin is connected in White's thinking with the cosmic struggle between the powers of good and evil. One can here see how her spiritual teaching is linked with the theme of the great controversy, the cosmic, meta-historical conflict and controversy between Christ and Satan, which in White's view is indicated in various events of history. Satan, i.e. personalised evil, is primarily a fault-finder and an accuser. The confession of sins is presented as a means of defence and escape from the attacks of that superior accuser.¹¹⁵ Thus confession of sin means seeking refuge from tormenting accusations in the constant and unfailing divine love. That love covers and includes the whole person.

Confession is the means for finding forgiveness and an inner state of peace and rest. Forgiveness is linked to a person's relation to an ethical norm or standard, whereas peace and rest within are to do with what happens in the mind, more precisely, at the level of the human spirit. Forgiveness and acquittal of guilt are juridical decisions and therefore essentially forensic acts. Both aspects can be detected in White's spiritual teaching. While confession seems to lead primarily to

¹¹³ MB 84–85. "He invites us to take our trials to His sympathy, our sorrows to His love, our wounds to His healing, our weakness to His strength, our emptiness to His fullness. Never has one been disappointed who came unto Him."

¹¹⁴ SC 37. "The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy."

¹¹⁵ SC 36. "Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' and that you may be saved by His matchless love. 1Timothy 1:15."

a full-fledged reception of great love, the forensic aspects are still constantly present. She places the confessor in the courtroom of heaven, as it were, to present personal declarations of guilt. However, the confessor is not condemned but acquitted.¹¹⁶

Confession of sin composes a method for the human spirit to reach out from the loneliness of separation towards fellowship and connectedness, which offer broader perspectives because of the unconditional acceptance to which they lead. The uniting nature of confession is also made visible when those whose confessions have been accepted by God graciously accept the confessions of other wrongdoers who have previously offended them. The acknowledgement of guilt must, of course, be expressed in words and appropriate actions in order to produce the sought-after result, mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.¹¹⁷

The experience of confession may be difficult because of the embarrassment and the feelings of shame which often accompany it. However, the main obstacle to a sincere and honest confession is the human inability to perceive one's own guilt. The crushing commonness of sin as well as our habituation to its practice has destroyed our sensitivity. Divine assistance is thus indispensable.¹¹⁸

Within the SDA tradition confession takes place between the guilty and the offended parties, while sins and transgressions against God are confessed directly to him. It appears to be White who introduced that way of thinking, as she does not endorse traditional confessional praxis or the related ecclesiological procedures where a hearer of confession holds the authority of absolution. In her teaching, a true confession is presented direct to the one offended or wronged. As far as actual confessional praxis is concerned, she is brief, plain and practical. She even speaks about confession in terms of an on-going and uninterrupted

¹¹⁶ SC 36. "We have been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father in our behalf."

¹¹⁷ SC 37. "Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you." In SC 38 she instructs in detail: "Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity." Dealing with the same point, SC 41 states that: "...those who do acknowledge their guilt will be justified, for Jesus will plead His blood in behalf of the repentant soul."

¹¹⁸ SC 40. "When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin."

process.¹¹⁹ In addition to the fact that she refers to confession as an activity, it also appears to be an attitude, a mood and a state of mind: regret, penitence and sorrow for sin.

Passages related to confession also seem to indicate certain tendencies in White's over-all approach to spirituality. Confession can hardly be understood in terms of mere inwardness. It is usually something necessary for bringing together parties separated by a fault or crime. Therefore the relational, social and communal aspects are essential in a relevant act of confession. As a matter of fact, it seems that limiting confession to inwardness alone is not possible, because the need for it is created by outward, shared norms, standards, expectations and customs, together with the working of the Holy Spirit. The role and function of confession in many conflict situations is decisive, because it paves the way for reconciliation and the healing of broken relationships.

3.2.3. Conversion

No distinct definition of the meaning, content and coverage of Ellen White's concept of conversion is to be found within the primary sources. On the basis of some passages it is possible, however, to draw the conclusion that conversion was not one of her points of emphasis. It is rather surprising that even SC, which was intended to be a handbook for leading secularised people into spiritual affiliation with Christ, does not deal with this topic specifically or precisely. However, it is most unlikely that White would have disregarded the issue altogether. It seems, instead, that when describing and exploring this epochal event she favoured other terms.

¹¹⁹ White's guidance regarding confession is practical and caring: 2T 296. "It is not required of you to confess to those who know not your sin and errors. It is not your duty to publish a confession which will lead unbelievers to triumph; but to those to whom it is proper, who will take no advantage of your wrong, confess according to the word of God, and let them pray for you, and God will accept your work, and will heal you. For your soul's sake, be entreated to make thorough work for eternity. Lay aside your pride, your vanity, and make straight work. Come back again to the fold. The Shepherd is waiting to receive you. Repent, and do your first works, and again come into favor with God." In 5T 645–646 White disapproves of the practice of confessing the sins to a hearer of confession. SC 38. "True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty." Cf. Kotila 2009, 21–33. COL 160. "[T]here needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him."

In White's vocabulary such terms as "regeneration" and "new birth" have a meaning almost identical to conversion.¹²⁰ Whatever term is used, she stresses the issue of holistic reorientation as being of highest importance.¹²¹ While referring to "true conversion" she uses parallel expressions such as being "the partakers of the grace of Christ", coming to Christ, being "clothed with the righteousness of Christ and ... filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit" as well as having "tasted and seen that the Lord is good". SC 78-79. This language indicates that her notion of conversion includes a full array of meanings, and they also seem to be associated with crucial features of the Christian experience. It appears that all these phrases refer to the same decisive turning-point experience which, in the end, cannot be fully analysed, or defined in detail.¹²²

Ellen White uses terms such as "the mystery" and "the miracle" several times in conjunction with conversion.¹²³ By referring to conversion as a mystery which she can neither describe in detail nor define in a satisfying way, White fails to yield support to any approaches which favour exposing individuals to distinct, external expectations of their conversion experience or even demands for knowledge of its exact timings or other such details. It can be argued instead that conversion, as a miracle which God alone is capable of performing and a mystery beyond human comprehension, should be regarded with tact and discretion. Her ideas do not encourage evaluations of what God is achieving in the private realm of individuals.

In one instance White actually connects the experience of conversion to the doctrine of Christ's divinity. She suggests that every conversion, due to its miraculous character, is an indication of it.¹²⁴ If something of Christ's

¹²⁰ DA 168–177 Expressions such as "new birth" and "spiritual regeneration" are used, while the term "conversion" appears on page 172. SC 73 speaks about the "regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit" which renews the heart, and in the next sentence it is linked together with the "power of the love of Christ" which transforms the character. However, it is clear from the context that all these expressions refer to the same issue.

¹²¹ SC 67. "Not all the wisdom and skill of man can produce life in the smallest object in nature. It is only through the life which God Himself has imparted, that either plant or animal can live. So it is only through the life from God that spiritual life is begotten in the hearts of men. Unless a man is 'born from above,' he cannot become a partaker of the life which Christ came to give. John 3:3."

¹²² DA 173. "It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages."

¹²³ See e.g. Ed 172; DA 173; DA 407

¹²⁴ DA 406–407. "Every miracle that Christ performed was a sign of His divinity... Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' Ezek. 36:26.

divinity can somehow be understood through the conversion experience, this can be seen as a call for caution in regard to evaluations of the genuineness of people's conversions. If the dual nature of Christ is a mystery, so is the experience of conversion – beyond assessment and conjecture.

Conversion is a very private experience, about which people themselves may be unable to give a detailed account. Referring to the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) White describes the converting and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as something which is essentially unobservable. Although “the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest.” Conversion is a real and authentic human experience, though unavailable for intellectual scrutiny, analysis or explanation.¹²⁵

Conversion by its core nature is thus non-emotional, and as an experience it may not appear to be the expected single, ultimate turning point.¹²⁶ This being the case, White seems to picture conversion not so much as an unforgettable experience where feelings are much involved, but as an essentially quiet and spiritual one, in the sense that it means a new direction for the person as a whole. In fact, she speaks of it also as something continual and recurrent; Christians should “be converted every day.” This incessant process includes such things as a constant seeking of the Lord and enjoyment of free and joyous fellowship with God.¹²⁷

Perhaps unexpectedly, there are no allusions within the material relating conversion to the making of decisions, the use of will power or choosing to be saved. White sees conversion as a distinct product of the grace of God.¹²⁸ But she shows an equal interest in the effects and results of the conversion

The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle.”

¹²⁵ SC 57–58. “A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted.” SC 106 includes regeneration as one of the “mysteries too deep for human mind to explain”.

Concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the experience of conversion see also COL 98; DA 172.

¹²⁶ DA 515. “In working for the conversion of our children, we should not look for violent emotion as the essential evidence of conviction of sin. Nor is it necessary to know the exact time when they are converted.”

¹²⁷ MB 101. “If you will seek the Lord and be converted every day; if you will of your own spiritual choice be free and joyous in God; if with gladsome consent of heart to His gracious call you come wearing the yoke of Christ,—the yoke of obedience and service,—all your murmurings will be stilled, all your difficulties will be removed, all the perplexing problems that now confront you will be solved.”

¹²⁸ SC 57. Speaking about conversion White states: “If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us.” See also COL 100.

experience. For her, obedience to the commandments of God and responsible Christian living compose one important indicator of the authenticity of conversion, though not the only one. Humility, an unselfish attitude and self-sacrificing service, such as are shown by the Good Samaritan in the parable of Jesus (Luke 10:25–37), compose another vital sign.¹²⁹ It can be concluded that though pride, disobedience and selfishness indicate a lack of conversion, one still cannot produce genuine conversion by deciding to be altruistic, law-abiding and modest.

3.3. Sinners and Their Sins

Ellen White holds the view that, in the presence of God, humanness equals sinfulness, weakness and imperfection.¹³⁰ That does not, however, lessen God's interest in humankind, because he views them from the perspective of the possibilities and potential hidden in each individual.¹³¹ She views the problem of sin as something essentially negative, but which has nonetheless been solved. As her aim is to help and guide her readers in their spiritual experience, she does not deal extensively with the technicalities of how the problem of sin was solved, i.e. the doctrinal theories regarding atonement.

One of White's strategies was an attempt to provide her readers with a positive, hopeful perspective, since the problem they face with sin is so acute and urgent. She frequently presents ideas which are meant to raise hope and bring encouragement. At the same time, she is a realist in the face of the totalitarian rule of sin, and its devastating power. The solution to the predicament of sin is divine intervention.¹³²

¹²⁹ Referring to the actual keeping of the law she says in COL 313: "This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness." See COL 380; SC 78; DA 330–331.

¹³⁰ MH 428. "Our condition through sin is unnatural, and the power that restores us must be supernatural, else it has no value. There is but one power that can break the hold of evil from the hearts of men, and that is the power of God in Jesus Christ. Only through the blood of the Crucified One is there cleansing from sin. His grace alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature." See also MB 54, 89; SC 60, 62.

¹³¹ DA 294. "God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image." See also Ed 13.

¹³² White is a fervent believer in the power of God to save even the most wretched sinners and in his willingness to do so as a consequence of his infinite love and grace. Together with many gospel-oriented Christians, she also seems to presume that it is the absolute misery of human sin which makes the absolute goodness of God possible and necessary. On the basis of this divine

3.3.1. The Problem of Sin

The fact that White wrote *SC* for un-churched and even un-Christian readers provides the viewpoint from which the chapters dealing with sin and sinfulness can be understood.¹³³ Her approach in this book is evangelistic and pastoral, and therefore she does not describe the seriousness of sin in dismal colours and graphic detail. Yet she is serious in her intent when she discusses the problem of human sinfulness and evil. She has the spiritual life of her readers in mind, and therefore she does not write primarily as a systematic theologian. The main thrust is spiritual rather than intellectual also in those parts of her writings which deal with doctrinal issues.

However, it is apparent that theological ideas lie hidden in the background, as White with brief instructions guides the novice in Christian faith toward a meaningful spiritual existence. There are underlying understandings about God, about humanity, about sin and about salvation. She deals with sin as not a mere behavioural problem but as something to do with all levels of human existence. She appears to feel no need to argue in favour of any particular theological view, but rather to guide people who are under the burden of sin to an experience of forgiveness and saving grace. From that standpoint she attempts to introduce a way out and to encourage her readers, perhaps seriously encountering with personal sinfulness for the first time, to maintain hope because of the solution provided by God through Christ.

White makes it plain that it is the Holy Spirit who convicts the sinner of sinfulness and the need for forgiveness.¹³⁴ She does not overwhelm her readers with moralising remarks aimed at arousing feelings of guilt or despair; instead she kindles a desire to find a solution. As a matter of fact, later on in the book, she notes the dangers of dwelling too heavily and too long on personal

goodness, speaking of hope is justified. COL 163. "As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require." Ed 29. "The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ."

¹³³ White 1983, 11–12. The idea for writing *Steps to Christ* came as a suggestion from evangelists, who believed that a book dealing with the basics of the Christian faith would help them in reaching the secular public.

¹³⁴ SC 26. "Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts."

sinfulness and human limitations, because such negative considerations only prevent attention from being fixed on Christ, who alone is the sinner's hope. Since through Christ there is already a solution to the basic ontological and ethical problems of a person's past, one may concentrate one's attention on the ultimate solution for the present and future existence, of which the incarnate, resurrected and soon-returning Christ is the guarantee.¹³⁵

However, SC does not avoid the topic of human sin. Christian spirituality divorced from responding to its gravity and immensity would be mere wishful thinking. White states: "It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken." SC 18. This statement alone does not confirm beyond doubt her conviction that all humans are under "original sin", but she also alludes to this elsewhere in such a way that her position cannot be understood otherwise.¹³⁶

Her radical view of human sinfulness consequently demands that the saving grace of God must also be understood in equally radical terms. Salvation from sin is the result of purely divine activity which springs from the goodness and love of God.¹³⁷ No human action can aid the saving activity of God.¹³⁸ This leaves no room to suggest that she understands salvation in terms of cooperation between humans and God, i.e. that her doctrinal views in regard to the preconditions for salvation are based on a synergy of the divine and human counterparts.

It has been suggested that there is in John Wesley's thinking, as well as in Methodism in general, a tendency toward understanding the teaching of salvation at least partly in terms of a synergy between the human being and God. I will demonstrate below that the concept of cooperation is quite prominent in White's vocabulary, too. It is important, therefore, to confirm that she does not speak about salvation in terms of synergy. She does not regard the cooperation between the human being and God as a precondition for salvation, but she sees it

¹³⁵ SC 71–72. "When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life... We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him."

¹³⁶ SC 43. "By nature we are alienated from God." See also SDA BC Vol. 6, 1074; RH April 16, 1901; Olson 1970/2003, 27.

¹³⁷ SC 35. "As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but—O wondrous love!—God in Christ is "reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19." See also SC 60.

¹³⁸ SC 63. "Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."

as a result of the divine saving acts and the sinner's consequent saving union with Christ.¹³⁹

3.3.2. The Sin-problem Subdivided

The prominence of the Ten Commandments in Seventh-day Adventist doctrine and the emphasis on obedience to the Decalogue within the movement has directed both the understanding of sin as well as attitudes to it. As a consequence, sin is usually defined as “the transgression of the law” (1.John 3:4, KJV).¹⁴⁰

On the basis of the material of this study it can be argued that White, on the other hand, regards the problem of human sin as much more complex and convoluted.¹⁴¹ Her view can be defined by three distinct factors to be detected in her writing: a) Sin is a separation from God or a lack of union with God.¹⁴² b) Sin is a stain in the heart or a defect of character.¹⁴³ c) Sin is guilt.¹⁴⁴ White does not assume that one's juridical standing before God under condemnation of the law is the most urgent sin-related problem to be discussed, and thus she does not tackle it with the greatest vigour.

White's approach to sin, in which the juridical dimension is not prominent, can be better understood by considering the supposition that the irreligious person will probably not perceive his/her disharmony with divine law as the one biggest and most urgent difficulty. White assumes that the way one views him/herself, as well as one's relations to God and fellow human beings, will be at the top of the sinner's agenda.

The suggested solution to the dilemma of sin is as three-faceted as is the problem: Firstly, imputed righteousness by faith through grace forms the foundation for the removal of guilt and for acquitting the sinner. However, White is in no hurry to introduce this piece of good news. Explaining the technicalities

¹³⁹ Pokki 2005, 185–204. Pokki explores John Wesley's soteriological ideas and points out his tendency towards emphasis on the role of the human will.

¹⁴⁰ Fowler 2000, 264–266; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* 1988, 89.

¹⁴¹ Sin is according to MB 51 a virtual denial of God and rebellion against the laws of God's government, COL 311 transgression of God's law, COL 387 greatest of all evils, DA 37 rebellion in hostility to God, SC 29 defilement.

¹⁴² Ed 28–29. “Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him.” See also MH 419; SC 20, 21.

¹⁴³ SC 17–18.

¹⁴⁴ COL 46. “They have not seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the heart has not been humbled under a sense of its guilt.” DA 322. “Whatever the sin, if the soul repents and believes, the guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ; but he who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him.” See also SC 20, 30, 32; COL 197; MH 89–90.

of the doctrine of justification by faith does not necessarily enhance the development of budding spirituality. If the sinner is hesitant or even hostile to the Christian ideology, as the case quite often may be, an attitude change is necessary first, before the person can proceed deeper into Christian spirituality. God must find a way into the mind of the candidate for the spiritual pilgrimage to begin. This is something He alone can do.¹⁴⁵

Secondly, God performs the unifying work, so that the sinner can once again enjoy true fellowship with God. The movement is from separation and alienation to connectedness, participation, intimacy and interaction.¹⁴⁶ Throughout White's thinking, the idea of the union with Christ and participation with Him are indispensable parts of its central theme. Union with Christ has been a central theme within Christian spirituality, in many cases even its focal point. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin employ the theme of ontological union with Christ in their definitions of the doctrine of justification by faith. However, it is significant to notice that White does not use the idea in an ontological sense alone, but she seems to refer to a spiritual union where the presence of Christ becomes manifested in more concrete terms than mere ontological understanding would allow. It seems, however, that for John Wesley the theme of the union with Christ is not as central as it is for Luther and Calvin. The context in which he speaks about the union with Christ is sanctification, while for the other reformers this union is the grounds for justification.¹⁴⁷

Thirdly, White introduces the inner change brought about by divine work within the person as a major feature of the solution to the human predicament of sin. She does not refer to it as an inner developmental process, i.e. in terms of repairing what is broken or mending something which is out of order.

¹⁴⁵ SC 26. "It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ that leads to genuine repentance... We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ."

¹⁴⁶ SC 20. "But through Christ, earth is again linked with heaven. With His own merits, Christ has bridged the gulf which sin had made, so that the ministering angels can hold communion with man. Christ connects fallen man in his weakness and helplessness with the Source of infinite power. [Jesus, who is the incarnate Son of God, is] the only medium of communication between God and man."

¹⁴⁷ Metzger 2003, 201–213; Carpenter 2002, 366, 374, 382. In regard to Luther's ideas about the Union with Christ see Peura 1998 a, 42–69; Peura 2002, 207–226, and for Calvin's ideas see Carpenter 2002, 363–396; McCormack 2004, 101; Kärkkäinen 2004, 72–74. Union with Christ as a theme will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Instead, she is quite pessimistic about the possibility of achieving lasting changes by any improvement of the old person who is identified with sin.¹⁴⁸

She makes it plain that the renewal of the heart is not only a cosmetic and superficial operation, as she goes on to say: “The idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature is a fatal deception.” SC 18–19. This rules out all human assistance in bringing about an internal healing or an orientation of the mind towards balance and a wholeness of attitudes and feelings. The change is a radical and profound one, and it cannot be brought about by human resolution.¹⁴⁹

It is significant that White does not speak of the change within the heart in therapeutic terms, i.e. without fundamental change or bringing in new life from God; neither does she refer to it as a process taking place along the spiritual path.¹⁵⁰ The initial change that takes place in the heart of a person who enters the realm of spirituality is regarded as an act of creation. Only through such divine initiative and action can a sinner become a free agent able to function in the realm of spirituality.¹⁵¹

White does not consider human beings in the state of sin as being worthless to God. In her view “the faculties of the soul” are “lifeless” but can be quickened by divine grace.¹⁵² In her view, all human attempts to uplift humanity are in vain, if they neglect Jesus Christ as the only “Source of hope and help for the fallen race.” SC 21 Only divine intervention in the human destiny through Jesus Christ and His ministry, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit individually within human hearts, can bring real hope into the desperation of sin.

¹⁴⁸ SC 18. “The Saviour said, ‘Except a man be born from above,’ unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ John 3:3.”

¹⁴⁹ SC 18. “There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.”

¹⁵⁰ With the term therapeutic I refer to a natural, gradual process of healing and becoming whole. In opposition to that perception, White writes in SC 18: “Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life.”

¹⁵¹ SC 18–19. See also SC 73.

¹⁵² Ed 28–29. “And while Christ opens heaven to man, the life which He imparts opens the heart of man to heaven. Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him. All this work of evil it is Christ’s mission to undo. The faculties of the soul, paralyzed by sin, the darkened mind, the perverted will, He has power to invigorate and to restore. He opens to us the riches of the universe, and by Him the power to discern and to appropriate these treasures is imparted.”

As his first divine act within the hearts of sinners in drawing them toward their Creator, God creates “an inexpressible craving for something they have not”. SC 28. White recognises the importance of the yearning or longing for God which has been planted in the soul by God. Yet so hopeless and total is the power of evil and the grip of sin on human minds that people are incapable of themselves doing anything to change their hearts’ motivation, feelings, attitudes or values. Thus White concludes that “Christ is the source of every right impulse.” SC 26.

Divine implantation of right impulses, feelings, attitudes and motives does not, however, complete the renewal of the heart. According to White, sin also has to do with the human character and its defects, and so that is an area where other radical arrangements and the most profound change must take place. The term ‘character’ is one of White’s favourites. In her vocabulary the word seems to include several dimensions: psychological, ethical, ontological, and theological. In interpretations of the term, all of these should be taken into account. A solution to the deficiency of character is introduced later as she states that through union with the Saviour “Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.” SC 62. This means an ontological merge with Christ into such a union where all faults, failures and imperfections of the sinner are absolutely annulled by the perfection of the divine Christ.¹⁵³

3.3.3. Forgiveness

An analysis of all references to forgiveness within the primary sources does not yield a fully crystallised picture of White’s theological understanding concerning this matter. This may be because her emphasis seems to lie almost entirely on the relational aspects of forgiveness as opposed to a juridical solution.¹⁵⁴ That approach may be justified by the argument that forgiveness is a senseless word if separated from a communal and relational context. Because the experience of

¹⁵³ SC 70. “Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ.” COL 330. “All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.” See also SC 126. For a full discussion of White’s term ‘character’, see chapter 7, below.

¹⁵⁴ An apt example of that is in MB 113–116 where White explains and comments on Luke 11:4 “Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.”

forgiveness is in most cases a reciprocal occurrence, it must, in order to succeed, be the work of two active, favourably disposed parties who mutually participate in it with the purpose of producing this positive outcome.

On the other hand, White introduces elements of forgiveness which render possible, or invite the beginning of, certain inner processes of the human spirit. As she alludes to reconciliation and justification when speaking about forgiveness, these grand theological terms in this spiritual context contain the capacity of creating an option for perceiving one's own identity. This development may take place because forgiveness fundamentally changes the preconditions on the basis of which people can define their relationship to, and their standing in front of God. These are essential points of reference in human existence.¹⁵⁵

White takes the liberty of using these terms – 'reconciliation' and 'justification' – in this context in such a way that both their function and meaning are primarily relational. Forgiveness forms the basis for connection with God, which is one of the core elements of spirituality, without which a flourishing spiritual life is not possible. According to her, this critical change is a free gift from God, where no merit is taken into account.¹⁵⁶ This acquittal places the receiver in a position where he/she must submit to an inner adjustment process, through which his/her identity may be perceived as becoming essentially altered, and which will launch a corresponding mental and behavioural change as well. This means that forgiveness from the experiential point of view is never a matter of a moment. As far as God is concerned, forgiveness is instant, but due to its radical consequences for the individual, adjustment to that reality remains a feature of the spiritual journey which is present throughout life.

Since White assumes that the parable of the prodigal son could refer to anyone, her conclusions, too, are applicable to all; forgiveness is absolute, irreversible and perpetual.¹⁵⁷ The person who has been forgiven stands at the border between her/his past clouded by sin and the future enlightened by

¹⁵⁵ MB 113–116.

¹⁵⁶ DA 568. "Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration." See also MH 90.

¹⁵⁷ COL 204: "In the parable there is no taunting, no casting up to the prodigal of his evil course. The son feels that the past is forgiven and forgotten, blotted out forever." The irreversibility of God's forgiveness means that God does not reverse his decision to forgive. However, due to the inborn human bent towards sin there is a need for further forgiveness as people tend to sin and err despite all their good intentions not to. Hence, the statement does not mean the same as the common slogan: "Once saved, always saved".

forgiveness. Forgiveness thus constitutes a new standing from which the person may view his/her personal future with certainty: since the past has been blotted out, the threats attached to it will no longer rise to haunt one. Hope for the future has therefore taken the form of assurance and certainty in regard to things to come. It is no longer mere wishful thinking or a vague emotional state of hopefulness.

One piece of advice given by Ellen White provides another opportunity to pursue her understanding of forgiveness. It appears that, for her, forgiveness has its foundations explicitly in the love of God, and an awareness of that love is, in her opinion, actually needed more acutely than the promise of forgiveness. Although it may sometimes appear that the need for forgiveness is most urgent and necessary, it must not be allowed to prevent the satisfaction of the fundamental human need to reach out for sense and purpose in life. Ultimately, it is only God's love which can satisfy the search for life's ontological and existential meaning.¹⁵⁸

In connection with the theme of forgiveness, White speaks of divine love in the formation of the motivational basis of human behaviour. In addition to here confirming her previous assumption of the link between forgiveness and divine love, she also points out its affective significance for those who are pardoned. But the pardoned also need to be capable of forgiving. In order to gain the desire and motivation for mercy and pardon, she suggests that individuals must "come in touch with God", "become connected with God" and "look higher than [themselves]".¹⁵⁹

The point to be noticed here in regard to the inward spiritual process is the bidirectional intention of forgiveness, which is more than an intellectual understanding and perception of forgiveness. The first goal is reaching an inner affirmation of the constancy of Christ's forgiving love, but simultaneously, according to White, attention is turned outwards to other people. Forgiveness is not intended solely for inner healing, but equally as a remedy for the whole person, i.e. motivation, feelings, relationships and behaviour. In fact, God's pardoning love reaches fellow human beings through the witness of spiritually minded

¹⁵⁸ MH 267. In White's view the love of God has to be applied to the whole person and is thus an issue to be considered also in therapeutic work. "Men and women in need of physical and spiritual healing are to be thus brought into contact with those whose words and acts will draw them to Christ. They are to be brought under the influence of the great Medical Missionary, who can heal both soul and body. They are to hear the story of the Saviour's love, of the pardon freely provided for all who come to Him confessing their sins."

¹⁵⁹ DA 493.

Christians acting out that love, as their inner world is constantly saturated by God's forgiveness and love.¹⁶⁰

This leads to a further observation: It has been generally understood on the basis of White's insights into such matters as health and education that her view of humanity is holistic. From the same premises it can be argued that her spirituality, too, fulfils the criteria for being described and defined as holistic.¹⁶¹ However, the essence of her holistic spirituality cannot be characterised as such only on the basis of her comprehensive philosophy of healthful living and education. Instead, the core of her holistic spiritual teaching may be found in her broad-spectrum approach to spirituality as being fundamentally incarnational and also relational. Behaviour and action naturally express what is inside a person. In other words, White's spiritual teaching may not be classified as holistic exclusively on the basis of her recommendations in regard to external behavioural patterns, but rather because of her ideas regarding the inner motivating, enabling and empowering factors which make these external behavioural patterns feasible and spiritually justifiable.¹⁶²

Another point related to White's view of the bidirectional quality of forgiveness is indicated even more precisely in the following passage, in which the affective component of spirituality also becomes more distinctly specified. She states: "We are not forgiven because we forgive, but as we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own." COL 251¹⁶³

This appears to mean that forgiving, merciful and loving words and actions function as attitudinal indicators, but it also seems that only a person who has experienced forgiveness and unconditional acceptance is authentically ready

¹⁶⁰ COL 251. There is no room in White's thinking for an unforgiving spirit as she writes: "'But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'" Matt. 6:15. Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God's pardoning grace. In God's forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner's soul, and from him to the souls of others. The tenderness and mercy that Christ has revealed in His own precious life will be seen in those who become sharers of His grace. But 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' Rom. 8:9. He is alienated from God, fitted only for eternal separation from Him."

¹⁶¹ See Szalos-Fargas 2005, 207.

¹⁶² For this observation I am indebted to the insights found in an article by Adrian Thatcher. Thatcher 1993, 213–228.

¹⁶³ A few pages earlier White touches on the theme of the reciprocal nature of forgiveness when she writes in COL 247: "He who refuses to forgive is thereby casting away his own hope of pardon." COL 251. "The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own."

for and capable of such an attitude and mind-set. Therefore the conclusion can be stated in White's words in the following way: "The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is to know and believe the love that He has to us." MB 115.

With these statements White's reasoning appears become circular, and deciding what comes first and which are the results, seems impossible. It is clear, however, that White does not suggest that a forgiving attitude is a mechanical outcome of the reception of God's forgiveness, but that God's pardon and love function as transformative ingredients which profoundly impact the person from within.¹⁶⁴

Ellen White saw forgiveness as an integral part of a development which would result in gradual yet fundamental change. She maintains that receiving pardon would affect the forgiven person holistically, and not only as a transaction bringing about an alteration in legal standing. Consequently one must also notice that when speaking about forgiveness, White does not use such words as "restoration" MH 90, DA 568, "deliverance" MH 93 and "cleanse" MH 70 as synonyms or as metaphors for forgiveness, but instead they apply to actual divine actions which produce a perceived and real difference.¹⁶⁵

White's comments and ideas on forgiveness contain a clear message of hope for those who sin: to everyone who asks for the gift of forgiveness, it is generously granted. But if the actual asking is vital, so is the belief that God is, indeed, as good, loving and forgiving as he has revealed himself to be.¹⁶⁶

3.3.4. Justification

As a result of the Minneapolis GC Session in 1888 there was a change in SDA thinking, bringing a more clearly defined understanding of justification and sanctification.¹⁶⁷ However, the essential matter from White's point of view was not the correctness of the church's doctrine but its approach to spirituality. Her role at the session was decisive, as she forcefully lent her full support to the two

¹⁶⁴ MB 114. "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."

¹⁶⁵ In relation to cleansing the same concept is found also in SC 49 where God is said to "wash away your sins and give you a new heart".

¹⁶⁶ DA 515; SC 52. See also Ed 258; MH 70, 267.

¹⁶⁷ I have given some background information about the church historical context of the GC Session at Minneapolis in 1888 above in the introduction, see section 1.1.

pastors Jones and Waggoner who lectured on the topic of justification. She spoke several times during the session on the same issues, and was later vigorously involved in the process of introducing, endorsing and promoting the new emphasis to the adherents of the church.

An analysis of White's sermons and devotionals held during the session shows that her first concern was the spirituality of the participants, and also the spiritual well-being of the whole denomination. She did not aim primarily at a conceptual or doctrinal understanding of righteousness by faith, but at a perception of Christ as the source of all blessings as well as at improving the quality and intensity of a person's relationship with Christ.¹⁶⁸ An analysis of White's presentations during the session shows that her concern for the Adventists of the time was spiritual, i.e. she was concerned with the experiential rather than the intellectual and conceptual process within the young denomination.¹⁶⁹

White's role in the process of fostering the emphasis on righteousness by faith within Adventism has been under continuous careful evaluation ever since the GC Session in Minneapolis. It is clear that the new approach to such a central teaching had an effect also on her views regarding spirituality. Several authors who deal with the topic of justification seem to agree that the books which she published in the years following the Minneapolis GC Session continue to reflect the emphasis on justification by faith which she vehemently supported there.¹⁷⁰ The content of the material researched in this study is in line with this same tendency, and therefore the doctrine of righteousness by faith should be regarded as the motivating current of the entire thinking of her mature years.¹⁷¹

White's frequent references to the righteousness of Christ which the believer may possess by faith seem to stand for a spiritual attitude rather than for

¹⁶⁸ 1888 Materials 1987, 116–153. White's devotional speeches and sermons which she gave at the General Conference session at Minneapolis in 1888 are included in this material.

¹⁶⁹ 1888 Materials 1987, Chapter 6–19; White's concern is not for doctrinal issues but for the spiritual welfare of the church. She speaks about righteousness by faith, but her primary emphasis is the personal union with Christ of all those in the audience. Olson 1966, 56–65, 82–103. Olson speaks about a revival at the conference and about the spiritual renewal experienced by some of the church leaders during the session. Olson 1966, 115–148; Knight 1989. Both Olson and Knight indicate that the meetings were primarily about attitudes and "the spirit of Minneapolis" which was flavoured with selfishness, arrogance, lack of love and an insistence on being right. Wieland 1980. In the light of Wieland's book it appears that there are competing interpretations and views in regard to the content of the so called 1888 messages and their significance.

¹⁷⁰ Daniells 1941, 71; Olson 1966, 234–235; Knight 1989, 140. Such spiritually relevant books as SC, MB, COL and DA have particularly been mentioned.

¹⁷¹ Ott 1987. Ott explores White's ideas and views in relation to Christ's mediating ministry and the issue of justification by faith.

an acceptance and comprehension of a doctrinal stance. This attitude appears to consist of such positive and experimental elements which can best be expressed by referring first to one of their opposite components in her terminology, namely formalism.¹⁷² The term points to a superficial approach to religion where the essential spiritual elements embedded in Christianity do not meaningfully touch the core of the human spirit. As an intellectual outlook, formalism may manifest itself as rigid orthodoxy, and as an attitude to the Christian praxis, formalism emerges as legalism, moralism, religious sentimentalism or pharisaic hypocrisy.¹⁷³ Against such a position, White's teaching on righteousness by faith represents an honest, integrated and inward approach, where all praxis of religion flows out from within, and where its claims are treated not so much on the theoretical and intellectual level as allowed to speak to the personal and deeper level of the human spirit.¹⁷⁴

In the sources no clear reference to a strictly forensic interpretation of justification is to be found. Instead White saw righteousness by faith as something which takes place within the scope of the believer's actual experience, and which includes more than mere imputation of Christ's righteousness.¹⁷⁵

On the basis of the two passages quoted in the previous footnote, it can be concluded that White saw justification and sanctification as mutually synchronised aspects of one process. White here differs from the traditional Reformed and Wesleyan view of justification where the forensic understanding is prominent and where sanctification is understood to be a separate process. At this conjunction some similarities can be detected between the general intention of her views on righteousness by faith and those of Luther. It must also be kept in mind

¹⁷² DA 310. In his assessment of White's teaching of justification by faith, one Adventist leader in the early twentieth century, Arthur G. Daniells (1858–1935), also saw formalism as the major obstacle for spiritual revival and the subsequent fulfilling spiritual existence. Daniells 1941, 75–86.

¹⁷³ In MB 52 White speaks about "[t]he legal religion" in reference to the "hard, rigid orthodoxy of the Pharisees, destitute of contrition, tenderness, or love". DA 280 "A legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. Fasting or prayer that is actuated by a self-justifying spirit is an abomination in the sight of God... As it was in the days of Christ, so it is now; the Pharisees do not know their spiritual destitution... The righteousness of Christ is to them as a robe unworn, a fountain untouched."

¹⁷⁴ See COL 78–79.

¹⁷⁵ SC 63. For White the imputation of Christ's righteousness is part of a complicated spiritual process: "Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us." Furthermore DA 300 states: "The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells."

that terms such as justification, sanctification or righteousness by faith are used by White as spiritual or empirical terms, so they refer to an experience rather than the corresponding intellectual concept.¹⁷⁶ It can be argued that here the expression “our title for heaven” refers to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness for the benefit of the believing sinner, i.e. the forensic aspect of justification. Similarly the expression “our fitness to heaven” has to do with the effective aspect of justification, i.e. sanctification or transformation into the image of Christ.¹⁷⁷ There is no human merit involved in either.¹⁷⁸

As already indicated, for White Christ’s righteousness does not comprise mere juridical merit freely passed on to the repenting sinner’s credit. She sees justifying righteousness first of all as an inseparable quality of Christ’s person. Secondly, it has to do with the indefinable, divine effect which alters the very essence of being: the identity, moral quality, motivational and attitudinal internal make-up. All this in addition to changing the person’s legal standing in the presence of God. This indicates that justification includes distinct experiential aspects which can be assessed and evaluated from the point of view of spirituality.

White’s text reflects a certain theological understanding, and that too is significant, by way of providing a doctrinal frame of reference for her spiritual teachings. In fact, the systematic organisation of the aspects of one’s spirituality, analysing them by theological category and naming them using theological concepts and terms, is an essential part of anyone’s spiritual process. White, too, wanted to understand and categorise the spiritual experience in terms of the Christian doctrine. However, the actual consequence of her ideas must be evaluated from a spiritual point of view. She aims to guide her readers to a more meaningful relationship with God rather than arguing in favour of certain ways of theologically understanding the various aspects of salvation and all that it entails. Her primary aim is to help her readers to perceive more fully what it means to be saved.

Even though some of her doctrinal ideas do not become clear, due to the fact that her religious and theological terms and concepts are not distinctly and

¹⁷⁶ See Collins 2004, 175–202; Ahvio 2006, 419–429; Knight 1992, 87.

¹⁷⁷ White in RH, June 4, 1895. “The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven; the second is our fitness for heaven.”

¹⁷⁸ White writes about the reactions of the Pharisees to Christ in MB 54–55: “God offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God’s free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.”

systematically defined, her ideas can still be processed and understood on the basis of her actual purpose to guide her readers spiritually. As a spiritual guide White had the use of religious as well as theological terminology to convey her message. This way of speaking uses terms from a wide spectrum; care must, therefore, be taken in order not to miss those points which are relevant for spirituality by centring attention on only one possible meaning.

One such issue regarding the usage of concepts appears to be the references to character in several instances where White speaks about righteousness by faith. A detailed assessment of her ideas regarding character is presented below in chapter 7, but observations are already necessary at this stage.

White's understanding of character is complex, but one noteworthy aspect here is the fact that character has to do with the inmost core of a human being. In modern language character as a term refers to "the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual."¹⁷⁹ It is my assumption that discernible behaviour may be understood as one of the outcomes of the person's character, and that one's environment, experiences, perceptions, relationships etc. may impact and thus modify the character. Contrary to the common modern understanding, White writes:

We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.¹⁸⁰

Ellen White here describes a core spiritual experience and she does it in terms of theology and doctrinal language. For spirituality she has no specific terminology, and so utilises purely theological terms. And it is true that the epoch-making transformation within does have deep theological meaning as well as carrying special significance in terms of personal spirituality. However, it should be kept in mind that the experience comes first and the assessment and evaluation of it produce the theological formulation.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ The New Oxford Dictionary 1998, 306. "Character".

¹⁸⁰ SC 62.

¹⁸¹ COL 310. White describes justification from the point of view of spirituality: "It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour." COL 330. "All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes." DA 468. "He whose heart has responded to the divine touch

In addition to its imputing to the sinner Christ's righteousness, White sees justification by faith as impacting the mental and moral qualities and preconditions which comprise the basis for a person's conduct and performance. However, she does not speak here about a life-long process of gradual change and growth but an instant, radical and exhaustive feat where the character of Christ replaces the person's own character.¹⁸² One could suggest an interpretation based on modern psychological theories in terms of growth and natural development for her concept of character, but no such application of strictly psychological interpretation can produce a satisfactory explanation. Arguments like this can only be understood in ontological terms: there is a fundamental change as a result of Christ's ontological presence. McGrath argues that justification as a theological term is to be understood as a forensic concept. Yet White's wording in SC 62 refers to an ontological union between the inner person and Christ. Even if justification as a doctrinal term were understood in terms of a legal transaction, it is absurd to think that White would promote the idea of a sinner becoming covered by Christ's righteousness without Christ being present.¹⁸³ Moreover, the saving divine presence is a direct consequence of Christ's incarnation. She suggests that there could not be any real saving connection between a person and Christ had not Christ entered our human realm and overcome sin.¹⁸⁴

Nevertheless, White does not promote a purely ontological solution either. Christ's presence can be understood in ontological terms as argued above, but such an understanding would by itself make freedom from the burden of guilt a theoretical concept with no real experiential component, and so frustrate its spiritual meaning and significance for a person. As presented above, the justifying righteousness of Christ has, in White's view, been made available in the form of

will be seeking for that which will increase his knowledge of God, and will refine and elevate the character. As a flower turns to the sun, that the bright rays may touch it with tints of beauty, so will the soul turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may beautify the character with the graces of the character of Christ."

¹⁸² COL 310. "It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour." See also COL 271.

¹⁸³ McGrath 1996/1999, 476–478.

¹⁸⁴ DA 762. Note that White speaks about the justifying righteousness also as a spiritual quality that can be possessed: "The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can 'be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Rom. 3:26."

his own person. The acceptance or reception of him means the establishment of a union with him, and that in turn means justification.¹⁸⁵ That union is primarily ontological, but paradoxically it is also perceivable, effective and interactive.¹⁸⁶

In White's thinking, the doctrine of justification by faith is played out as a fundamental reform at the centre of one's being, a rearrangement at the level of character. In the sight of God, righteousness and holiness are no longer absent, because Christ himself is present as the result of the "amazing exchange" which has just occurred in justification: The offender gives his/her sins to Jesus and Jesus gives his righteousness to the sinner, and what is more, the sinner surrenders him/herself to Jesus and Jesus in turn donates himself to the person who is hopelessly engulfed by evil.¹⁸⁷

It seems that the sinner obtaining Christ's character in place of his/her own is another expression for becoming one with Christ, which in turn means entering into an ontological union with him. But since that union becomes experiential and concrete in the Christian life through prayer, worship, discipleship, witnessing, moral choices, etc, character must also have empirical relevance, in terms of relational attitudes and ways of social interaction, for instance. White sees the union with Christ as a practical and experiential reality.¹⁸⁸

When speaking about righteousness in this context, White does not mean imputation, pardon or acquittal at all; instead she refers to practical principles of vigorous religious activity, including social responsibility. Having studied White's ideas as she expresses them throughout her writings, I would like to suggest that her understanding of the concept of righteousness is diverse. Reading the Old Testament equally along with the New is an integral part of White's religious setting. Hence the Old Testament way of understanding certain key concepts must be taken into consideration in any attempt to define her views on those issues. Particularly for Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Amos,

¹⁸⁵ MB 18. "The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him." See also COL 223.

¹⁸⁶ COL 311. White also explains what it means to be made righteous in experiential terms: "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."

¹⁸⁷ Vainio 2004, 15; McCormack 2004, 81–117. The terms "an amazing exchange" or "a wondrous exchange" or "*commercium admirale*" were used both by Luther and Calvin in their descriptions and definitions of certain aspects of justification. See also MB 8–9.

¹⁸⁸ MH 136. "Righteousness has its root in godliness. No man can steadily maintain before his fellow men a pure, forceful life unless his life is hid with Christ in God. The greater the activity among men, the closer must be the communion of the heart with heaven."

Hosea and Micah, but also in a number of Psalms, righteousness has social and ethical significance: concern for justice and equality, resoluteness on right action, care for the helpless, and fairness. These aspects lie behind White's understanding of righteousness as a practical principle to be followed in the relationships of everyday life.

Most significant here is the emphasis on the interactive and communicative connection to Christ. "He [she, a believer] is to live in hourly contact and conscious communion with the principles of truth, righteousness, and mercy that reveal God's attributes within the soul." MH 136. This passage indicates that White understands the union in a holistic way, as containing all those things which Christ represents, not only his person and the ontological union with him.

It has been pointed out above that White speaks about character in conjunction with justification by faith. It thus appears that the concept of character has to do with the inner person and spiritual processes rather than the relational or forensic aspects of justification.¹⁸⁹ An interpretation of the union of humanity with divinity as a solely ontological state is not supported by the textual context of her writings. However, if we approach the concept of union from the point of view of spiritual interaction between the person and God, the idea becomes comprehensible. Within the realm of spirituality it is possible for the total human being to be in relation with the divine reality in such a way that the core of being, the character, is radically affected.¹⁹⁰

But imputation is not ruled out nor replaced by a spiritual process. A few pages later White speaks in distinctly forensic terms: "Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul." COL 311. However, her next idea expands the concept beyond the traditional definition of justification: "This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us." COL 311. This makes it plain that no spiritual exercise or inward process is capable of producing a righteousness which God can accept. Moreover, this also means that

¹⁸⁹ SC 62.

¹⁹⁰ COL 307. Commenting on the parable of the wedding banquet in Matt. 22:1-14 she writes: "By the marriage is represented the union of humanity with divinity; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding."

the perfection of character of which White speaks is not a product of a person's spiritual activity.¹⁹¹

The discussion above concerning White's ideas on self-examination has indicated that a realistic view of oneself is one of the key elements in an authentic spiritual experience.¹⁹² Treating oneself truthfully includes the understanding that attaining righteousness is not possible for anyone, and therefore all prospects are negative due to personal sinfulness and guilt. Striving for frank and sincere self-awareness is a task which mainly involves the human spirit. This kind of spiritual activity will enhance humility, quietness, repentance and readiness to receive help from outside of oneself.

White guides people who find themselves in guilt-induced perplexity and bewilderment towards a solution. Her suggestion for the way out of this impasse is practical: the guilt-ridden person should yield him/herself to Christ. Meanwhile, the actual solution is a great divine mystery: the person becomes simultaneously accepted and acquitted. While the change of standing in relation to God is an abstract occurrence to be assessed from the point of view of Christian theology, giving oneself to Christ is in her view a simple experience, a turning within.¹⁹³ This event completely changes the meaning of everything, because the person who is totally accepted by God and counted as righteous is now given a new perspective, an opposite point of view. The very essence of Christ's person, i.e. his character, is now the reality and the foundation for the believer's new way of being.

White also warns against groundless trust in justification in a situation where the person should be honestly scrutinising his/her own conduct and conscience. In addition to a person placing full confidence in imputation, that person ought to place his/her whole self into a meaningful and rewarding relation to God. Her concept for this is "a vital connection" with God.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ DA 123. "He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character."

¹⁹² Confronting one's helplessness and sinfulness, in particular, is referred to here.

¹⁹³ SC 62. "If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous."

¹⁹⁴ DA 555–556. In White's thinking, justification is connected to spiritual praxis but at the same time she warns against religious formalism: "The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven." See also DA 310.

It can be concluded that in White's teaching justification by faith is integrated into one's personal spirituality both in terms of reorientation towards corresponding practices and an inner sensitising to God. Although she emphasises the practical and experiential aspects linked to the mystery of becoming justified in the sight of God, she nevertheless maintains that there is nothing sinners can do to earn the justifying righteousness.¹⁹⁵

3.3.5. Sanctification and Holiness

Even though White's religious roots were in New England Methodism, the emphasis on sanctification so typical for Wesleyan thinking cannot be found in the material of this study. Similarly, her spirituality cannot be defined as an outgrowth of the Wesleyan tradition. In fact, her approach to Christian spirituality cannot be interpreted and defined within the framework of any one tradition.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, the spiritual guide book SC does not even use the term sanctification though the term is used elsewhere in the material. On that basis sanctification appears not to be a central spiritual issue of White's spiritual teaching.

The term sanctification has been used by White within the material in various ways, but two main categories of meaning can be identified and defined. One of these refers to the opposite of life in sin, impenitence and alienation from God, and the other, which has to do with absolute divine holiness, is described as totally unobtainable through human efforts and means, and as something only God by his grace can bestow on a believing Christian. The second meaning has elements corresponding to the traditional doctrinal understanding of sanctification within Protestantism. Both sets of meanings of sanctification relate to spirituality, but their respective substances call for dissimilar spiritual reactions and activities.

The first level of meaning has to do with devoted, practical living according to the best Christian ideals. White states: "True holiness is wholeness in the service of God" COL 48. This seems to contain the idea of a systematic, uncompromising approach towards all things related to God and total commitment to all religious principles and values.¹⁹⁷ If inspired by freedom and a sincere

¹⁹⁵ MB 115–116. "Forgiveness, reconciliation with God, comes to us, not as a reward for our works, it is not bestowed because of the merit of sinful men, but it is a gift unto us, having in the spotless righteousness of Christ its foundation for bestowal."

¹⁹⁶ For the context and background see the introduction, sections 1.1. and 1.3.

¹⁹⁷ DA 556. As White here speaks about wholeness for God, her ideas seem to be linked with some of her other favourite expressions such as consecration, surrender, yieldedness, submission etc.

personal desire to experience closeness with God, a life-style moulded along these lines may compose a happy, balanced and well-ordered life, in which Christianity materialises in practical godliness. On the other hand, if accompanied by external force, a comprehensive, strict observance of all religious ideals will probably constitute a confining and artificial system which produces fake Christian commitment and performance.¹⁹⁸

White shies away from propagating a Christian life-style which is impeccable in regard to outward appearances, but may be wanting in internal quality. She systematically confirms a spiritual praxis which is obviously faithful to the highest Christian norms and standards, but she does not fail to state in definite terms the only durable basis for practical holiness: the presence of Christ. Indeed, full commitment to Christian values, ideals and principles must have God's imparted power as its starting point, source of motivation and means of empowerment.¹⁹⁹

Even if sanctification and holiness are understood in White's terms as "practical godliness", "wholeness for God" or "unreserved consecration", they are not a product of human decision and endeavour. Her position is that sanctification has to do first of all with the Holy Spirit performing the radical renewing work from within. Furthermore it can be regarded as an ontological mystery, and the sanctification of an individual is thus not a process capable of thorough analysis, assessment and definition. However, the results of the active divine presence can be detected and appreciated. In fact, her expressions do not leave any room at all for speculation or optimism about human possibilities for reaching God-approved holiness by the employment of human willpower, wholehearted effort or purposeful striving.²⁰⁰

Chapter 3 will deal more closely with these terms, and the whole topic of undeserved belonging to God. In SC 43 White writes: "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness."

¹⁹⁸ In MH 88 White speaks about the hypocritical accusers of the woman caught in adultery as having only "their robes of pretended holiness" and even that is being torn from them "in the presence of infinite purity" i.e. of Christ. In DA 173 she describes Jews who "gave evidence that they were not fitted by the grace of God to participate in the sacred services of the temple. They were zealous to maintain an appearance of holiness, but they neglected holiness of heart." See also DA 461.

¹⁹⁹ SC 18: "There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness."

²⁰⁰ COL 384; COL 98; SC 59. "He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy." Later on in SC 68 she

There is yet one spiritual activity promoted by White, which links with the divine work within, resulting in sanctification. This is a sustained interest in the Bible as the source of divine truth, instruction, and inspiration. In her view, the Bible offers the means for contact with God. The study of biblical ideas and narratives, as well as the application of its moral principles in one's own decision-making, will have a sanctifying effect on the student of the holy writings.²⁰¹ Moreover White appears to maintain a sacramental view of the Scriptures, i.e. the sacred word passes God's grace and blessings on to those who hear it. This can be inferred from the way she writes about the Bible in conjunction with a description of another sacramental resource, namely the last supper of Jesus with his disciples. She goes as far as to say that the saving presence of Christ is received through the reception of "His word".²⁰²

In most cases White does not use the term sanctification in a purely soteriological sense at all. Her use of it can equally well be interpreted from the psychological point of view, as a cognitive process. This is particularly true concerning the sanctifying effect of biblical truth. The content of the sacred texts must to be understood and espoused, and thus their ideas may direct the thinking, the opinions, the attitudes, and the formation of value systems. But ultimately she regards the canonised writings as a resource which is meant to be applied, experienced, and lived by. She recognises as sanctification the positive behavioural and psychological change which is produced by extensive involvement with the Scriptures when the Holy Spirit is allowed to interact and influence.²⁰³

affirms: "Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness."

²⁰¹ COL 101. "The word of God is to have a sanctifying effect on our association with every member of the human family." In COL 51 White does not approve mere profession of Christians to believe the gospel; "unless they are sanctified by the gospel their profession is of no avail."

²⁰² DA 660. One notices the way in which White interprets the words of Jesus: "And how much more are Christ's words true of our spiritual nature. He declares, 'Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.' It is by receiving the life for us poured out on Calvary's cross, that we can live the life of holiness. And this life we receive by receiving His word, by doing those things which He has commanded. Thus we become one with Him." White's enthusiasm about the Bible and her numerous recommendations and instructions concerning the importance of systematic Bible study led to the establishment of the Sabbath School as a lasting Adventist institution. It has had a wide influence on the spirituality of the SDA church and it continues to impact the church as a whole, its individual members as well as others who attend. See CSW for further information on her views on the Sabbath School and systematic Bible study. Lehtinen 2002. In his doctoral dissertation Esa Lehtinen has studied the interactive Bible study discussions at the Tampere SDA church.

²⁰³ COL 43.

Ellen White speaks about holiness in yet another sense, which appears to be less concrete and practical, and more of a supernaturally granted, objective quality. References to this meaning of holiness, i.e. absolute, divine holiness, are not very frequent, but they are relevant for understanding her teaching on spirituality. She encourages her readers to observe Christ's decisive role in making divine holiness available to humans, and the superb quality of that holiness, which is so great that the heart of a Christian will be filled with "[t]he beauty of holiness".²⁰⁴

On the basis of the above, I argue first of all that, for White, holiness is an attribute or concept attached solely to divinity. That being the case, it is the super-human, admirable and awe-inspiring qualities of this holiness on which the Christian should fix his/her attention. Even though holiness may be an attribute totally beyond the human realm, its beauty may paradoxically still "fill the hearts of God's children", as White put it. This means that the observation and contemplation of Christ's human personality is the method by which the excellence of the divine Christ may work from within.

Secondly, the objective White presents is an individual awareness of the divine holiness, not an adequate intellectual comprehension of holiness as a concept. It can be assumed that the holiness of Christ is somehow constantly present and would be experientially perceivable only when an affective alertness to it takes place within. The idea of holiness as an inseparable attribute of Christ is presented as a resource for inspiration to produce insight, motivation and hope. Thus it seems obvious that the "beauty of holiness" can be appreciated if it is understood to be embodied in Christ. In fact, there is no holiness apart from him who is the Holy One.

Taking into consideration White's overall thinking, her design for spirituality is that the source of all good things is to be found in Christ, not in abstract conceptual entities. Her argument can be expressed as follows: As a result of a person's union with Christ and Christ's presence within, all his divine qualities are present as well. As a consequence, it is absolute holiness as a divine attribute has been brought within the range of humanity through the lives of the followers of Christ. Indeed, White sees "wholeness for God" as an admirable goal for all Christians: such believers would be recognised and appreciated as

²⁰⁴ SC 99. "We need to have more distinct views of Jesus and a fuller comprehension of the value of eternal realities. The beauty of holiness is to fill the hearts of God's children; and that this may be accomplished, we should seek for divine disclosures of heavenly things."

followers of Jesus within society. However, as far as ultimate holiness is concerned, God himself is its only source.

The primary sources indicate that the focus in Ellen White's spirituality is on God, the Holy One, and not on holiness as a human endeavour. She leaves no room for speculation as to where the source of holiness is to be found. For her "[s]anctification is the work of a lifetime", but although humans are actively involved in that process, it is still God's work, and human beings are invited to adjust themselves to it.²⁰⁵ In the presence of the holy God all human attempts are found wanting, and people are caused to acknowledge their unworthiness. Referring to the apostle Peter, White states that his encounter with the authentic holiness of Christ "led [him] to self-renunciation and dependence upon divine power that he received the call to his work for Christ."²⁰⁶

It is God who is willing and able to transform sinners so that they become holy. This seems to be the supposition from which White regards also the Sabbath as an indicator of sanctification, an essentially divine accomplishment – just as creation, of which the Sabbath is a memorial, was an act of God.²⁰⁷ In addition to reminding humanity of Christ's sanctifying power, Sabbath-keeping offers a perpetually repeated opportunity for spending time in the presence of the holy God in simple rest, but also in prayer, thanksgiving and worship.²⁰⁸

Sanctification, in the way White uses the word, is a helpful term for describing some aspects of spirituality. It is a relevant concept in the attempt to identify certain essential features of spirituality, but these elements, as has been outlined here, must be separated and understood correctly. The understanding of sanctification as a totally human enterprise is capable of spoiling Christian spirituality and changing it into a systematic slavery where no rest is to be found. It is significant to note, however, that a quest for holiness is, in White's view, not entirely beyond the human realm of experience. But because the ultimate human

²⁰⁵ COL 65. "Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase. We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges." Forde 1988, 13. Interestingly Gerhard O. Forde defines the Lutheran view of sanctification by saying: "Sanctification is thus simply *the art of getting used to justification* (original italics)."

²⁰⁶ DA 246. She deals here with the story of Jesus' calling of his first disciples. Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11

²⁰⁷ DA 288. "Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ's power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God."

²⁰⁸ Section 5.5. below will discuss the Sabbath in detail.

response to holiness is trepidation, wonder and awe, sanctification must not be considered in exclusively empirical terms.²⁰⁹

3.3.6. Transformation and Spiritual Growth

From Ellen White's writings emerges a spiritual teaching and praxis²¹⁰ intended to lead to an ultimate, radical transformation of the whole person into the image of God. It is the Holy Spirit who will perform the change, while the human responsibility is to apply the ideals of truth into everyday life. However, the person must first be aware of who God is and of his expectations. "The experimental knowledge of God", which acts as an agent of change, consists of personal acquaintance with God through Jesus Christ.²¹¹ The actual methods for the transforming association with divinity are, for White, continuous attachment to the Scriptures and putting into practice its principles and teachings. Transformation is, in consequence, not an automatic effect of simple academic involvement with the religious texts, but it also requires the person's conscious consent and collaboration at a deep individual level.²¹²

This implies that the precise manner and the full extent of the transformation cannot be grasped within the scope of the earthly life. White suggests that the whole content of the Bible will impact the reader's mind in ways which go beyond its intellectual, aesthetic or psychological impact. The full restoration of sinners into the divine likeness will not be completed while living in

²⁰⁹ SC 105. "It is impossible for finite minds fully to comprehend the character or the works of the Infinite One. To the keenest intellect, the most highly educated mind, that holy Being must ever remain clothed in mystery."

²¹⁰ These include a number of activities such as Bible-reading, prayer, meditation/contemplation, obedience to the law of Ten Commandments but also faithfulness to the teachings of the entire Bible, etc. Choice and maintenance of certain attitudes such as yieldedness, compassion, gratefulness, etc. are also an essential part of this praxis.

²¹¹ COL 114. For White the spiritual transformation is also connected with the concept of education which will be explored in detail below in section 6.6.1: "In His prayer to the Father, Christ gave to the world a lesson which should be graven on mind and soul. 'This is life eternal,' He said, 'that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' John 17:3. This is true education. It imparts power. The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind. It makes its possessor a son of God and an heir of heaven. It brings him into communion with the mind of the Infinite, and opens to him the rich treasures of the universe." See also COL 42-43, 48; MH 461.

²¹² DA 294. The only condition for an inner transformation is a human spirit which does not resist the divine work: "God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image."

this world of sin, but the fundamental inner change will still be performed by the Holy Spirit in this life. She argues that the attributes of God will be developed in those who are objects of the divine work.²¹³ Although people may always increase and intensify their Bible-reading, they are yet incapable of contributing to the actual transformation.²¹⁴

For White, Christian experience inevitably means “growth”, “development” and “continuous advancement”, because these are elements inseparable from all life. Thus she refers to spiritual growth as a process which is “silent and imperceptible”, and therefore cannot be analysed, described or defined in detail. The essential issue in her view seems to be the invigorating and vivifying contact with Christ, who is the source of life. Spiritual growth takes place as a result of forgetting self and receiving from God all that is required for growth. However, the eventual purpose of spiritual growth is bearing the fruit of the Spirit, those listed in Gal. 5:22, 23 as well as increased faith, deepened convictions and perfected love.²¹⁵

It appears that in White’s spiritual programme, people are active participants in promoting spiritual growth because, in her view, such growth is not just received but it “is attained through co-operation with divine agencies.” Ed 106. However, the textual context shows that the human involvement here is not predominantly active and participatory, but rather focused on permitting the transforming divine presence. In another passage White mentions a number of spiritual activities in conjunction with transformation. These include taking deep root in Christ, constantly relying upon Christ as our personal Saviour, accepting him as a personal Redeemer, forgetting self, trying to help others, talking of the love of Christ, telling of His goodness. Elsewhere she also suggests that the performance of daily duties, looking to Jesus, the right use of talents and obedience promote spiritual growth. The same is true about Bible study, meditation and the concentration of thought on God.²¹⁶

²¹³ COL 414. For White the transformation is radical: “Through the Holy Spirit, God’s word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God.”

²¹⁴ MB 36. “It is not the power of the man himself, but the power of the Holy Spirit that does the transforming work.”

²¹⁵ COL 65–69. See also COL 335; Ed 105–106.

²¹⁶ Ed 106; COL 67, 360. White’s ideas concerning the devotional praxis will be discussed in section 5.4. However, one notices here the way in which she connects it with the inner transformation. “God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of

On the basis of these passages it cannot be successfully argued that White promotes self-affected transformation.²¹⁷ Admittedly, she does not indisputably indicate who does what in the process of producing spiritual growth or inner transformation, but on the other hand, there is sufficient evidence reported in the general literature on the theology of spirituality to support understanding White's view also to be that through human involvement in spirituality and active cooperation in its practice, transformation and growth may be enhanced.²¹⁸ Human involvement does not overrule the absolute assertion that all transformation is a product of God's sovereign grace.²¹⁹

Active spiritual praxis and a right inner attitude are necessary premises for the presence of transforming spirituality, but human effort and involvement will produce mere religiosity unless God does the crucial part of the work. Inner transformation or spiritual growth does not take place unless the individual is seriously engaged in the process, at the same time allowing God to perform what he alone is capable of performing.²²⁰

The interactive and cooperative nature of White's transforming spirituality requires careful treatment for its delicate balance to be understood. The human activity and experience, which are necessary for spirituality to be regarded as genuine, are reaction and response to the divine initiative and intervention.

The holy Watcher from heaven is present at this season [the Lord's Supper] to make it one of soul searching, of conviction of sin, and of the blessed assurance of sins forgiven. Christ in the fullness of His grace is there to change the current of the thoughts that have been running in selfish channels. The Holy Spirit quickens the sensibilities of those who follow the example of their Lord. As the Saviour's humiliation for us is remembered, thought links with thought; a chain of memories

heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures."

²¹⁷ Davis 1975/1976. Thomas Davis's book *How to Be a Victorious Christian* is just one example of an emphasis on the human role and responsibility in bringing about a change in the Christian life. The overall thrust in the book seems to be that the inner transformation for the better is left in the hands of the person him/herself. God will do his part in the process of change after the individual has first fulfilled the conditions for it. If viewed in this way, transformation does, indeed, become a self-affected development.

²¹⁸ Shults 2006, 90–93. Shults writes about transforming prayer. Räsänen 2006, 132–150. Räsänen writes about the development of faith and explores the spiritual growth and the role of the human activity in it from a psychological point of view.

²¹⁹ Ed 80. "In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in "the beauty of the Lord our God." Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith." DA 407 "The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle." See also COL 96–97; DA 294, 309; MB 118, 127–128, 143; MH 37.

²²⁰ DA 671.

is called up, memories of God's great goodness and of the favor and tenderness of earthly friends.²²¹

White does not see potential problems in the amount or intensity of human activity, but rather in its possible wrong purpose and motivation. She warns against “legal religion and a form of godliness”, the adherents of which aim solely at outward appropriateness, as well as attempting to themselves modify or improve the “old being”. In her view that is not enough, and the person must instead be made altogether new through the inner working of the Holy Spirit.²²²

Within the context of spiritual transformation, LeRon Shults and Steven Sandage write:

[F]irst-order change or *assimilation* of new information into existing structures of meaning (original Italics). By itself first-order change does not bring healing and mature integrity to the person, although it may help prevent more severe problems or even foster the process of further change that can be profoundly transformative.²²³

The more profound change, or “systematic transformation” in White’s language, refers to the transformation of character.²²⁴ By that she appears to mean a profound and broad restoration and reordering of relationships at the core level of being, which alters the very conditions of a person’s existence. It is significant that she sees the changes as on the one hand instant and at once complete, while on the other hand she seems to indicate that the transformation is

²²¹ DA 650–651. In DA 309 she writes: “Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.”

²²² DA 172. “The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.” DA 173 gives an idea of what the nature of the human role is in the spiritual process, and what causes it to occur: “When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.”

²²³ Shults & Sandage, 2006, 20.

²²⁴ Shults & Sandage 2006, 20–21. Shults and Sandage speak about second-order change which they also “call *systematic* transformation [which] is more explicitly concerned with healing or disorder of the broader relations in which a person’s spirituality is embedded (original italics). In this use of the concept, the focus is on the health and wholeness of the human spirit in all its relational contexts, not simply the alteration of behavior or even the improvement of assimilative capacities.”

an ongoing process.²²⁵ Through engagement in spiritual exercise people themselves influence the possibility of Christ's constant presence in the heart, which causes the transformation. The Holy Spirit is at work for human benefit regardless of religious interest levels, but spirituality becomes more meaningful and real through conscientious contemplative activity.²²⁶

3.4. Faith

Ellen White generally deals with the relationship between God and humanity from a practical and holistic point of view. She believes that God not only wishes to save people from this mortal life into the never-ending life to come, but his divine purpose also includes all aspects of present human life, so as to make these plans realised on this earth. This affects her approach to faith, too, because it is faith that unites human beings with God.²²⁷

As White also urges her readers to make a total commitment to God, there is no room in her thinking for an idea consisting of soteriological aspects only.²²⁸ This means that the God-human relationship, as she introduces it, cannot be defined in such a way that personal salvation is its only goal and concern. Consequently faith, too, has to be understood primarily in this context: as a term defining a spiritual relationship rather than a mere precondition for an altered

²²⁵ SC 73. "The regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit renewed his heart. The power of the love of Christ wrought a transformation of character. This is the sure result of union with Jesus. When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven." Concerning character transformation see also COL 67, 100, 250; MB 53.

²²⁶ COL. 355. "Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed." Regarding contemplative beholding of Jesus see also COL 250, 360; MB 118.

²²⁷ DA 675. "By faith in Him as a personal Saviour the union is formed. The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ. The humanity of Christ has touched our humanity, and our humanity has touched divinity. Thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is accepted in the Beloved."

²²⁸ Chapter 4 will deal in detail with White's views on commitment. The role of the human will, and particularly yielding the will to God, has a central role in her thinking. The role of faith in conjunction with her ideas on consecration, surrender and yieldedness will also be discussed there.

juridical standing, i.e. justification.²²⁹ Therefore, such aspects as “trust”²³⁰, “confidence”²³¹ and “reliance”²³² emerge from the texts which deal with faith.

White frequently uses expressions indicating an active and practical approach to faith. For her, faith is an instrument, a connecting link between human beings and God, as well as a productive element within the Christian life.²³³ An element of “relationality” also seems to be included in her conception of faith.²³⁴ It is not of a human origin. She describes its beginning inside the heart as inspired of God²³⁵ and as a gift²³⁶. The following definition effectively represents her approach to faith: “Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin.” DA 175.

Although this description of faith expresses White’s dominant understanding of it in terms of mainline Protestantism, there are passages which seem to allude to believing as a form of human activity which paves the way to a saving union with Jesus.²³⁷ Despite the fact that her view of faith deals with active human participation, her writings do not support any notion that it is possible for a

²²⁹ DA 126. ”

²³⁰ DA 200. “He desires us to renounce the selfishness that leads us to seek Him. Confessing our helplessness and bitter need, we are to trust ourselves wholly to His love.” DA 483. See also DA 209, 363, 403; MB 101, 133; COL 19, 58, 145, 146, 160, 260; MH 127.

²³¹ DA 369. See also COL 141–142, 146, 168–169, 172.

²³² COL 67. “By constantly relying upon Christ as our personal Saviour, we shall grow up into Him in all things who is our head.” See also DA 371.

²³³ MH 84. She here uses the lame man by the pool in Bethesda as an illustration of the way in which the use of one’s will and the integrity of faith do not rule out each other, White writes in SC 50: “Jesus bade him, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.’ The sick man might have said, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt make me whole, I will obey Thy word.’ But, no, he believed Christ’s word, believed that he was made whole, and he made the effort at once; he *willed* to walk, and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole (original italics).” See also DA 203–210.

²³⁴ MH 62. “Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God.” “Relationality” as a term is taken from Shults, 2006, 24.

²³⁵ MH 465. “All the philosophies of human nature have led to confusion and shame when God has not been recognized as all in all. But the precious faith inspired of God imparts strength and nobility of character.”

²³⁶ Ed 253. “Faith that enables us to receive God’s gifts is itself a gift, of which some measure is imparted to every human being.” PP 431 also deals with the same topic. As far as the demarcation line between faith and works, she is quite clear: “Faith is the gift of God, but the power to exercise it is ours. Faith is the hand by which the soul takes hold upon the divine offers of grace and mercy. Nothing but the righteousness of Christ can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. There are many who have long desired and tried to obtain these blessings, but have not received them, because they have cherished the idea that they could do something to make themselves worthy of them. They have not looked away from self, believing that Jesus is an all-sufficient Saviour. We must not think that our own merits will save us; Christ is our only hope of salvation.” See also SC 60–61.

²³⁷ SC 49. “You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him, and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart. Then believe that He does this *because He has promised* (original italics).”

person to earn merit by his/her contribution. The human activity is a result of the faith-relationship with Jesus, not the precondition for it. According to her, the first step on the path of faith is a realisation that the state of despair in which the person finds themselves is due to sin. A desire for God's peace and forgiveness comes to the heart before it actually grasps hold in faith of what is being offered.²³⁸

White speaks of faith in terms of decidedly and purposefully placing one's trust in God.²³⁹ Appealing to God's promises is one of the issues where resolute trust and determined leaning on what God has said can be considered to be the appropriate stance. She suggests an even stronger mind-set and a more straightforward manner of approach in responding to human despair with sin: that of immediately claiming God's blessing. Faith may thus appear as stubbornness and unyielding insistence in one's approach to God, although the reality of one's sinfulness seems to suggest that such an approach cannot succeed. Faith is not an attitude which bends to observance of one's personal unworthiness and lack of merits. It is, indeed, only through faith that the perspective of hope can shine through into misery and gloom.²⁴⁰

White warns against those who tend too easily to follow the promptings of their feelings and emotions. She implies that the only impulses to be acted upon are those which originate in God. She asserts that the attitude of faith can be created only through divine effort.²⁴¹

What is also significant to realise about White's view of faith is that she considers it to be the means made available to humans for responding to all indications of divine love, goodness and mercy. It can be concluded, therefore, that she sees faith as a medium – an instrument – through which humanity can

²³⁸ SC 49 gives the sequence of the stages from the state of sin to forgiveness through faith: Because of the work of the Holy Spirit "you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence." But at once White introduces a true diagnosis of the condition and the actual need: "It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul." And the invitation to reach out for the remedy follows: "It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it."

²³⁹ SC 96; Ed 253.

²⁴⁰ SC 52, 53.

SC 52. "Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity." See also DA 429

²⁴¹ SC 51, 54. Comparing sinning human beings to the prodigal son she writes: "While the sinner is yet far from the Father's house, wasting his substance in a strange country, the Father's heart is yearning over him; and every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father's heart of love."

catch hold of the divine. Further, love is seen in her writings as a fundamental quality of God's character. Thus a formula emerges: God loves humanity and through their faith people are able to receive and perceive it, even become instruments and channels of that love towards others. Lack of faith naturally has contrary results. In fact, White presents faith as the only channel through which all the blessings of God's love can come to benefit humans.²⁴²

In describing the essence of faith White writes: "Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God." DA 347. This definition is presented in opposition to the idea of faith as an opinion or an intellectual assent to orthodoxy. White holds that a nominal faith of this kind is insufficient for salvation. In addition to faith being a driving force for inner transformation, it is also regarded as a connecting and uniting substance between the person and Christ.²⁴³

Another of White's characterisations of faith links it to a number of elements of spirituality such as discernment, repentance and transformation. She also emphasises the vital connection between faith and its consequent obligations. She shows a constant interest in making faith a practical reality for each Christian through obedience and deference to the revealed will of God. Yet the requirement to obey God's law does not, as she understands it, rest on human ability or human willingness to render it, but instead faith makes the rendering possible.²⁴⁴

The proactive quality and role of faith must also be taken into consideration in any attempt to construct an understanding of White's theology of spirituality. An analysis of a number of relevant passages makes apparent that in her view faith also functions as the component which motivates, moves, guides and produces new things within the spiritual experience, making it spring up from

²⁴² DA 326; SC 52. "Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son." See also DA 825; SC 55.

²⁴³ MH 62. "Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which, through the grace of Christ, the soul becomes a conquering power." COL 262. According to White, believers will be resurrected "for their faith in God was not a mere theory, but a reality." See also SC 62–63; MB 53; DA 123, 608, 675

²⁴⁴ COL 112; DA 126; SC 60. "Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience." MB 146–147 White elaborates on what obedience is composed of, and on its connection to faith: "Obedience is the test of discipleship. It is the keeping of the commandments that proves the sincerity of our professions of love. When the doctrine we accept kills sin in the heart, purifies the soul from defilement, bears fruit unto holiness, we may know that it is the truth of God. When benevolence, kindness, tenderheartedness, sympathy, are manifest in our lives; when the joy of right doing is in our hearts; when we exalt Christ, and not self, we may know that our faith is of the right order."

the inside out.²⁴⁵ Thus faith composes a precondition to full and authentic spirituality.

White offers several suggestions for how to maintain or strengthen faith. The use of the Bible in multiple ways is mentioned as an effective method for successful faith reinforcement.²⁴⁶ According to her, faith, along with other spiritual qualities, is a result of life-long loyalty to high moral principles as well as of purposeful effort. Such essential elements of spirituality as prayer, meditation on Christ's words, fasting, humility of heart and emptying of self are also mentioned as means in the process of faith fortification.²⁴⁷

In the context of the Genesis story of the first human couple falling into Satan's temptations, White mentions Eve's distrust in God's wisdom as one of the central reasons for the unhappy outcome. This suggests that a more positive outcome would have called for faith, because it is "the key of knowledge." This seems to indicate that knowing God and having faith in him are parallel inner processes which cannot be separated on the level of experience, though their relationship as philosophical concepts might be debated. In her view, contrition, faith and love compose the cluster which is necessary for the reception of the heavenly wisdom. This implies that in addition to having a relational contact with God, the human spirit must also be cultivated and moulded accordingly so that it becomes capable of love.²⁴⁸

The dimensions of knowing seem to extend into the interactive communion between human beings and God. Knowledge in that context is not of a factual or conceptual character, but has to do with the intimate and loving acquaintance between the believing Christian and God. In addition to signifying

²⁴⁵ In many passages White forms her sentences in such a way that *faith* is the grammatical subject of the sentence accompanied by a verb in active voice. Faith according to Ed 253 *leads to choose* God's way instead of one's own; *acknowledges* God's ownership and *accepts* its blessings; *receives* from God; *enables* us to receive God's gifts; MB 53 *purifies* the soul; *transforms* the character; DA 409 *destroys* selfishness and pretense [*sic.*]; leads us to seek God's glory: DA 126 *brings forth* fruit is obedience; *leads* to trust the love of God; *leads* to obey God's commandments; MH 62 *receives* Christ as a personal Saviour; SC 63 *works* by love and *purifies* the soul; DA 431 *leads* to entire dependence on God; *brings* the Holy Spirit's aid in the battle against evil; DA 336 *makes* the sea of life smooth; MH 456 *imparts* strength and nobility of character; Ed 151 *lifts* up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God; COL 159 *renounces* all self-trust; MH 153 *gives* strength and steadfastness; MH 488 *endures* trial, *resists* temptation, *bears up* under disappointment. Italics supplied.

²⁴⁶ DA 429. "Faith comes by the word of God." See also Ed 253–254; SC 107.

²⁴⁷ MH 454; DA 431.

²⁴⁸ Ed 24. The idea by St Anselm of Canterbury, "*Credo ut intelligam*", suggests that within the realm of religion, intellectual knowledge is neither the key nor the precondition for faith in God, but rather faith provides the point of view through which it is possible to perceive God intelligently. DA 139.

intellectual conviction of claims to truth, faith points to the interactive and caring relationship between the human person and God. In other words, White links faith directly to prayer and thus regards it as an essential part of the spiritual praxis, while it simultaneously remains an inner process.²⁴⁹ The following passage effectively but concisely summarises her ideas regarding faith:

Faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer calls for an acknowledgment of the enlightened intellect controlled by a heart that can discern and appreciate the heavenly treasure. This faith is inseparable from repentance and transformation of character. To have faith means to find and accept the gospel treasure, with all the obligations which it imposes.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Ed 257. "Prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. In the prayer of faith there is a divine science; it is a science that everyone who would make his lifework a success must understand."

²⁵⁰ COL 112.

4. Yielding to the Persuasion and Coaxing of God's Love

4.1. The Will, the Power of Choice and Faith

It is generally recognised within Christianity that a meaningful and authentic spirituality cannot truly exist without a personal and factual experience with the love of God.¹ This statement also applies to Ellen White's spiritual teaching. She presents God as the initiating, active and intervening person, whose concern, care and love attempt to impress, persuade and even woo people into finding purpose and meaning for their existence through his love and in union with it. She claims that connection with the loving God is not genuine if it exists only on a nominal and formal level, i.e. as a mere concept, but instead the encounter with God's love means a profound reorientation of interests, intentions and desires, as well as of the mechanism by which a person's will and capability to make decisions is managed.²

However, White speaks also in definite terms about God's grace as a free gift and about salvation which cannot be earned by any human merit, effort or involvement.³ How does this fit in with her ideas regarding the will? This chapter

¹ Raunio 2003 b, 145–164. "Spiritual life is the life of love in a person and the life of a person in love. We can say this, because the author and maintainer of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit of love." See also Raunio 2001, 154–180; McIntosh, 2005, 177–189; Yarnold 1986/2004, 9–17.

² DA 504. "Selfishness and cold formality have well-nigh extinguished the fire of love, and dispelled the graces that should make fragrant the character. Many who profess His name have lost sight of the fact that Christians are to represent Christ. Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians." See also DA 453–454; SC 9–15, 20–21, COL 202; MB 58.

³ COL 246. "So there are many who hope by their own works to merit God's favor. They do not realize their helplessness. They do not accept the grace of God as a free gift, but are trying to build themselves up in self-righteousness. Their own hearts are not broken and humbled on account of sin, and they are exacting and unforgiving toward others." See also COL 250; DA 300. Maddox 1994, 29, 75, 159–160. It is interesting to note that White does not use the term 'prevenient grace' even once in her entire production. This is significant because of her Methodist roots. For John Wesley, prevenient grace is a key theological concept. There are several ideas and points of emphasis in White's thinking which can be traced back to her Methodist background, but on the other hand, she also distances herself from the Wesleyan way of thinking in relation to key issues.

is about the role of the human will and the power of choice as part of White's thinking regarding spirituality. I will discover the spiritual challenge in relation to the human will which she invites her readers to embrace.

Ellen White does not deal with the conceptual discrepancy between faith on the one hand and freedom and power of choice on the other. Instead, her purpose seems to be to guide her readers to a satisfying and fulfilling spiritual life in which faith is put to action and applied in everyday life. In fact, there is an apparent ease in her way of dealing with the issues of faith and will which have caused unsolvable disagreements within Christianity. It is her conviction that the love of God as an absolute reality underlying all existence calls for a recurring response which happens by faith, but that also the person as a whole reacts to God's love of which it is the object. This is, however, not so simple because of the unreliable and unpredictable nature of the human will. Its constant endeavour for independence seems to be a real challenge.

White's ideas regarding the will and power of choice appear in a broader ideological setting when set within an early Adventism characterised by tension. In fact, there is also a sharp and long-lasting distinction within Christianity as a whole between opposing doctrinal views regarding the fallenness of human nature and the role of the human will in obtaining salvation.⁴

While different ways of understanding the role of the human will have created primarily doctrinal differences in understanding, these divergent views also represent corresponding approaches to spirituality. A major section of the current evangelical movement, with its insistence on decisions and emphasis on experience as an indication of the acquisition of saving grace, seems to follow a semi-Pelagian line of thinking.⁵ In contrast, within other parts of Protestant

⁴ McGrath 1994, 371–377; Pokki 2005, 32–47. The traditional concept of will initiated by St Augustine and promoted by Luther and others, gives the human will no role in salvation. The opposing view, which emphasised the idea of freedom of choice, became prominent through the influence of Pelagius, a contemporary of Augustine. This approach places considerable importance on the assumption that humans possess the ability to exercise their will in matters of salvation. Gassmann & Hendrix 2005, 180–196. During the time of the Lutheran Reformation the doctrinal discussion concentrated, among other things, on the role of the human will and the freedom of the will in salvation. Consequently, the way these issues have been understood and expressed in doctrinal confessions, for example, has definitely affected the guidelines and the expectations set by religious communities for the spirituality of their adherents. Lutheranism followed the Augustinian line of thought. These ideas and tensions must be kept in mind as we define and assess White's spirituality. She did not attempt to add to the doctrinal discussion regarding the free will, yet her ideas do not appear in a theological vacuum either.

⁵ McGrath 1999, 44. McGrath points out that John Wesley through his doctrine of "entire sanctification" gave a cautious welcome to Pelagius's argument that spiritual development is primarily a human achievement. Pokki 2005, 95–281. Pokki mentions a number of other

Christendom the assertion that the human will is incapable of assuming any function in salvation affirms the role of the sacraments as the principal means of obtaining God's saving grace.⁶

On the one hand White's religious background within Methodism gives some indication of her sympathy for an emphasis on making personalised spiritual decisions and for the central role of the freedom of the will. On the other hand, the increasing prominence of justification by faith in her teaching suggests the opposite. Therefore, we must ask: Where does White stand in relation to this great divide?

Firstly, it is essential to scrutinise carefully all the passages where she alludes to the human will in order to establish a sound basis for an evaluation of her spirituality. Secondly, these findings must be evaluated in the light of her comprehensive argumentation regarding spirituality, which means establishing and defining the role and position of the will as part of the structure of her thought regarding spirituality. This structure is found in SC, the book in which she presents a full sequence of steps to a saving relationship with Jesus and the commencement of a satisfactory spiritual life.

Only a full understanding of her views on the freedom of choice or lack of it, as well as of human nature – inseparably linked to each other – will indicate her standing as far as the ruling principle for spirituality is concerned. The findings of the present study will expose these aspects of her spirituality and their theological grounds.

4.1.1. The Role of the Human Will

In White's spiritual teaching the issue of the human will composes a crucial theme on which she expresses her views a number of times. What then does she say about the will and its role in the process of entering the realm of Christian spirituality and in its continuance? Is grace obtained by deliberate decisions and choices, effects of a free will? Do White's numerous references to the will indicate that she maintains a synergic view of salvation, which includes human participation and cooperation in the attainment of salvation?

prominent Protestant personalities who have maintained and promoted a positive view of humanity and their possibilities for obtaining saving grace by means of one's own choices.

⁶ Raunio 2003 a, 19–21. Raunio argues that an emphasis on the role of the human will in spirituality may easily lead to synergism, a notion that there is a role for the human element in the accomplishment of salvation.

First of all, nowhere within the primary sources does White mention the concept of a free will, and it seems that neither does she believe in any such thing as a basic human quality.⁷ Consequently, if there is, indeed, no such agent as a perfectly free human will, there can also be no synergy in matters of salvation. Though White's lack of support for the idea of a free will rules out the option of synergy, it is still necessary to deal with the human will as seen in her thinking. On the basis of her writings it can be concluded that since the will is not free, then it is subject to some power greater than itself. She assumes that humans are free to reject God, but they are not free by nature to belong to him. The resistance of the will must thus be conquered, because God must ultimately have full control of the person. Only as the human will is yielded to the divine will can the purpose of God prevail.⁸

In White's thinking, the importance of the human will is not in its ability to mobilise or accomplish, nor does it contribute in any way towards genuine spirituality, let alone the beginning of a saving relationship with God. Instead, the human will can merely reject, prevent or hinder divine intentions.⁹ It appears that the objective in White's teaching is an attitude where the resistance of the will has been ruled out by a gentle, divine influence, and consequently the potential which the will power entails, can be directed toward fruitful purposes.

⁷ In GC 493 she writes about free will, as she describes the origin of evil. "The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service." In her view the freedom of will is granted by God as a gift of grace, and thus it cannot be a natural human quality. In PP 36 she refers to the final outcome of Christ's mission, "who would have the will of all His creatures free" on the basis of what he is to perform. Shults 2006, 123–128. Shults points out that the Bible does not deal with the issue of the freedom of the will, but instead the emphasis is on the holistic freedom discovered in a relationship with God. White's ideas seem to be in harmony with that biblical teaching. More important than the modern concern for the freedom of the will is the inclination towards a liberating fellowship with Christ, who is capable of setting free from sin and all its consequences.

⁸ SC 34. "Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love." It is significant to observe Luther's notion on the freedom of the human will, which is described by Raunio 2003 c, 154, in the following way: "A free will of one's own is not at all an ability or quality which belongs to human beings. If we keep our will as our own, we have taken into our own possession something which belongs to God." Meanwhile, as has already been pointed out in the introduction, White's whole philosophy of history, expressed in her massive *Conflict of the Ages* series (PP, PK, DA, AA and GC) is about the two opposing superhuman forces which are in a constant controversy with each other. While this cosmic battle is going on, no human being is in a position to claim absolute freedom apart from these powers.

⁹ SC 27. "The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son."

She does not speak about the human ability to exercise will power as an active, independent and initiative force, but rather emphasises in a number of passages that a person must consent, either to the gracious invitation of God or to the temptations and inducements of Satan.¹⁰

White does not speak about the decision-making process as the act of a human operating as an independent and free agent. Without the work of Christ within the heart, there would be no true obedience, which she regards as the outward consequence of the inner reality. Unless refined and sanctified by Christ's presence, the will would not produce favourable results. In fact, a person is only required to grant permission for Christ to blend the heart and mind "into conformity to His will".¹¹ She also asserts that "man cannot transform himself by the exercise of his will. He possesses no power by which this change can be effected." COL 96. She thus confirms the limitations of the human will, and as a result, its actual role and significance must be evaluated from this premise.¹²

The fact that both the scope and potential of the human will are restricted does not rule out the option that every person has been granted a will of his/her own as a basic quality, and an integral part of his/her very essence as a person. In fact, God's love would not really make sense if the human will were totally unable to either accept or reject the divine initiative. Neither would human life be happy, meaningful or fulfilling without a certain amount of freedom of the will.¹³ White's definition of the sin of Adam and Eve in one of the relevant passages is connected to their ability to make choices, and thus to the use of the will. In White's view, Adam and Eve were granted the power of choice at creation, but they misused the trust and having said this, she does not later speak about the power of choice in a positive sense. She does not regard human beings at creation

¹⁰ MH 93. "Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature." DA 125. "The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can exercise his power upon us." See also DA 181; MB 141, 142.

¹¹ DA 668. "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us."

¹² COL 404. "Not in our learning, not in our position, not in our numbers or entrusted talents, not in the will of man, is to be found the secret of success. Feeling our inefficiency we are to contemplate Christ, and through Him who is the strength of all strength, the thought of all thought, the willing and obedient will gain victory after victory."

¹³ SC 43-44. "God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton."

as having had only limited power to transgress. Their relationship and service to God was to rise from voluntary trust, faith, loyalty and love. In the case of any human being, temptations and sin threaten the integrity of the will, and conversely it is an act of the will assisted by God's power which leads to overcoming them.¹⁴

White characterises God's love as compelling him into a passionate and persistent search for people with the purpose of saving them. She seems convinced that God does not crush the human will; neither does he disregard it. Instead, the human will is approached and gently confronted by the appeal of God's tender love, with the option that the will either yield or refuse. At the same time, this caring divine plea demonstrates how the human will is not left to find its way alone and unassisted to God and a happy, meaningful existence.¹⁵ White hereby also indicates that human beings in their sinful state cannot find their way back to God unless God intervenes at the most fundamental level of their individual decision processes.¹⁶

As the resistance of the human will gives in to the persuasion and coaxing of God's grace, the consequences according to White are crucial: discernment and a sense of God's holiness, which are a product of the loving divine influence within, i.e. authentic spirituality.¹⁷ Unfortunately, it is also possible that this desired entering into stability and balance with oneself and God, as well as the formation of a meaningful spirituality, are prevented by an unyielding will. Still, submission of the innermost being means removal of the only obstacle able to foil the divine objective.¹⁸

¹⁴ MH 85. "Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver."

¹⁵ SC 35. "He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor." Perrin 2005, 443. At this point we may pay attention to the way Perrin describes the mystical encounter with God's love. It seems that both Perrin and White are describing the same thing: "I suggest that the core of mysticism is the radical surrender of self to the loving embrace of the Other who is at the foundation of life, the One to whom we owe our very existence... [T]o enter into the depth of the human experience known as mysticism is to enter onto the story of the passionate love affair between humanity and the divinity."

¹⁶ On this point White's understanding of the human lack of freedom in the exercise of the will is parallel to that expressed by Luther (1525) in his pamphlet *The Enslaved Will* (or *The Bondage of the Will*), a refutation of Erasmus's (1524) more positive view on the freedom of the will, introduced in his *On Free Will*.

¹⁷ SC 24. "But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth."

¹⁸ SC 32. "The love and suffering and death of the Son of God all testify to the terrible enormity of sin and declare that there is no escape from its power, no hope of the higher life, but through the submission of the soul to Christ." Pokki 2005, 101–112. Pokki argues that within the Anabaptist

When speaking about the struggle against sin, temptations and the powers of evil, Ellen White introduces the concept of an even more active role of the will in relation to this facet of the spiritual experience. However, God remains the sovereign source of rescue and deliverance.

We cannot, of ourselves, conquer the evil desires and habits that strive for the mastery. We cannot overcome the mighty foe who holds us in his thrall. God alone can give us the victory. He desires us to have the mastery over ourselves, our own will and ways. But He cannot work in us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the faculties and powers given to man. Our energies are required to co-operate with God.¹⁹

The idea of cooperation might suggest a notion of synergy unless the context of the spiritual striving is carefully observed. White seems to assume that the struggle against sinful tendencies and desires takes place primarily within the capacity of the human will. But success does not depend on the quality and condition of the individual will, nor on the power and sternness of the human resistance. The will can resist successfully only if it is united with Christ and thus subdued under his control, which in turn requires repeated and complete surrender of the will to God.²⁰

The involvement of the human will does not add anything to the fullness of God's saving acts, but rather God's work of delivering humanity from sin includes even the innermost core of the person, the will. It seems that in White's thinking, the will represents the essence and fundamental integrity of humanness, as well as the unique individuality of each person. Thus it also has to do with the most intimate level of identity: through one's will a person interposes him/herself among others as an inimitable and valuable individual, as who he/she really is.

tradition saving faith is regarded as a person's own, conscious choice. White seems to represent an opposite approach, as she is not dealing with the human will in relation to salvation but to spirituality. In addition, she does not give a central role to the human will or the power of choice. Ball 1981, 58–59, 79–80. Describing the Puritan roots of Adventism, Ball points out that the English Puritans did not confirm the freedom of the human will, but believed that the will is made free through divine intervention.

¹⁹ MH 142.

²⁰ SC 48. "Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith." Ferguson 1988, 60–63. It seems that warfare against sin and temptations has not been emphasised in a similar way throughout Christianity. When describing Reformed spirituality, Ferguson regards spiritual warfare as one of its essential features.

But White's notion of the will also composes a paradox, as she maintains that in the final analysis, not even God can force the will, yet the will must be completely under God's guidance and control.²¹ At the same time she further suggests that "[e]verything depends on the right action of the will."²² Thus the giving of one's will to God, i.e. abstaining from using one's will independently and the surrender of one's whole life, composes a vital element of inwardness and spirituality as a process which reaches to the centre of human existence, out of which authentic and meaningful life flows. While this development means a reaching out and a movement towards God, it thus also constitutes an act signifying unification with him. In White's thinking union with God is a relational reality, part of a person's lived experience.

For White, the yielding of the will to God, in other words, yielding oneself totally to him and refraining from manifesting one's individual will, seems to mean more than timid subordination to a superior will. The fact that it is presented as part of a profound spiritual process alludes to a progression of becoming and change, rather than to a hierarchy of power. The act of submission coincides with the divine presence and its transforming influence in a person, the restoration of the divine image inside.²³ The emphasis is on the supremacy of the divine action, and God's ability to accomplish a complete change—a process which only the aggressively contrary action of the un-surrendered human will is capable of preventing.²⁴

The human will which is submitted to God does not become impaired or inactive. On the contrary, the restoration of God's image within seems to point towards a refinement and an empowerment of the capacity of the will. As a result, obedience flows naturally and without reluctance out of the core of one's being, and furthermore, unification and blending of the human essence and the agency of God takes place. Significantly, White equates this process with justification, but the forensic dimension is not the central issue here either –

²¹ MB 142. "Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted."

²² SC 47. Häyrynen & Kotila 2003, 37–38. "According to Augustine the will is the basis for human existence, in fact, he equalled the will with the essence of human being. The fundamental motive or mover of the will is love."

²³ COL 96. "None are so vile, none have fallen so low, as to be beyond the working of this power. In all who will submit themselves to the Holy Spirit a new principle of life is to be implanted; the lost image of God is to be restored in humanity."

²⁴ Vainio 2003, 82. "In faith a person yields to God to be led and gives up his/her demands."

instead the union with Christ, i.e. the relationship, and its results, a willingness and ability to fulfil God's will, compose the relevant experiential aspect.²⁵

White describes the yielding of the will to God as akin to the idea of a marriage of two loving persons, rather than as an enforced subordination of one mind under servitude to another. Likewise this merger, in which the will is submitted to God, does not take place only at the beginning of the spiritual journey, but rather each step of the walk with God is essentially a part of it. This makes the submission of the will to the will of God a continuous experience, through which fellowship with him becomes experiential reality.²⁶

For the sake of gaining the full picture, it must be noted that the issue of White's view on the human will is inseparably linked to her ideas concerning the will of God. God's will includes the overall purpose which God has for humanity, and thus its meaning must not be limited to ethical considerations only.²⁷ This means that whoever attempts to proceed in spiritual development must consider not only those aspects of God's will which are known, but also those which remain in obscurity.

On this basis White's emphasis on the submission of the human will to God's will is not defined as a relationship of enforcement and limitation, but instead as a relationship of liberating and energising love. The will of God is therefore nothing to be feared in the spiritual experience, since the fulfilment of his will and the actualisation of his resolve is arguably always the best that can

²⁵ COL 312. "By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah." Mannermaa 2002, 320–333. As Mannermaa writes under the title "Becoming changed into the likeness of the image of Christ" about Luther's ideas regarding this spiritual transformation and justification, we are able to detect similarities; the union between Christ and a Christian, the presence of Christ within a Christian and Christian action prompted and motivated by love. See also DA 668; MH 131.

²⁶ MB 142–143. See also Ed. 289; SC 62–63, 70.

²⁷ Ed 13. What she says about education certainly applies to the purpose of God's will, as well as to spirituality by and large: "Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come."

happen to a person. The element which intimidates the human mind lies in the fact that the full reasoning and purpose of God's will remain largely un-revealed.²⁸

As the will of God is understood to be ultimately a mystery, since all God's purposes cannot be fully known or comprehended, yielding to it means entering into an existential and ontological union with him and with the love which is inseparable from the divine being. Seeking to do God's will through obedience is one of its principal aspects – thus the union is primarily relational by nature, and it eventually means connection to God in relation to one's value systems, purpose, desire and endeavour.

Yielding to God's will presupposes a genuinely internalised understanding of God's will as implicit in the very nature and character of God, in love. Thus the submission of one's will to God is the fruit of a personal trust in God who has only loving purposes for the individual. The allusion is to an intimate connectedness to God and an individual perception of the goodness and love which are at the core of divinity.²⁹

As the human will is made subordinate to the will of God, this unification process leads to cooperative action, and as a consequence, it results in the fulfilment of the will of God in the world. By involvement in the implementation of the divine plans and purpose, it is possible for humans to find a deeper sense of meaning for their existence. But clinging to the pursuit of the actualisation of one's own will means utter selfishness and alienates such a person from fellowship with others, even isolating him/her from the human community at large. The unification of one's will to God's will and the attempt to follow a consequent course of action constitutes, in White's view, the realisation of God's love.³⁰ Subsequently, the scope is still wider and more comprehensive: "Only through the surrender of our will to God is it possible for Him to impart life to us." MB 61.

²⁸ For a more profound understanding of her ideas, a comparison to Antti Rainio's statement may add some insight. Rainio 2003 c. 154. "If I keep my will as my own, I cannot unite with God's will and will what he wills. It is not until the human will is united with God's will that it is free, indeed, in other words, free from everything which makes the person to seek for their own and prevents from loving disinterestedly and serving others."

²⁹ MB 109. Commenting on Matthew 6:10 White combines the notion of God's will with the law of the Ten Commandments. It is love, in her view, which makes obedience to the will of God a privilege and a joy, creating a sense of unity within the family of God.

³⁰ DA 329. See also MB 143; Raunio 2003 a, 33. "According to Luther God's Commandments demand a ready, joyful, spontaneous and self-giving will. He expresses this in conjunction with Psalm 1 by saying that such a will 'is in the law of God', in other words, it loves the will of God expressed in the law and fulfils its demands. 'The own will' of the person belongs to the divine characteristics which must 'be returned' to God. By keeping the will 'as one's own' a human being has robbed for themselves something which belongs to God."

As these points of view are taken into consideration, the passages in which Ellen White is emphatic about the possibilities and abilities of the human will can also be understood better. Against the background of surrender and yielding imbedded in her writings regarding the use of the will, synergism can be ruled out.³¹ Moreover, as noted, she generally writes not to define the preconditions for salvation but rather to outline central features of spirituality and to guide her readers to a more meaningful relationship with God.

I can conclude that the main emphasis in White's spiritual guidance on the issue of human will is on the continuous, daily submission of the control of the will to God. Her attention to the right use of the power and capacity of the human will come only second to this. Such use must also be regarded as a fruit of the submission, linked and subordinated to it. Furthermore, submission flows naturally from a heart overwhelmed by "the sweetness of God's matchless love", as she puts it.³²

4.1.2. Freedom of Choice or Power of Choice

Martin Luther's notion of the bondage of the will may also provide a plausible point of reference for attempts to understand some of Ellen White's ideas concerning the bonded state of the human will, because her ideas appear to be similar. She says, for instance: "God does not control our minds without our consent; but every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him." MH 93. According to Luther, sin incapacitates human beings from working out their own salvation. They are completely unable to bring themselves to God. Unredeemed human beings are dominated by Satan, who never lets go of what he considers his own unless he is overpowered by a stronger power, i.e. God. When God redeems a person, he redeems the entire person, including the will, which then is liberated to serve God.³³ White maintains that despite evident freedom on the one hand, there is always one ruling superhuman power or another above the person: good or evil, God or Satan. Thus there is no option for people to be absolutely independent and free from the influences of these superior powers. She suggests that mere indifference towards God's offer of love means subjection and

³¹ COL 331; MH 246; COL 333. See also SC 47–48; MH 176.

³² DA 172; DA 331.

³³ Luther 1525/2005. For further comments by White see DA 258–259.

allegiance to the powers of evil.³⁴ But this implies of course, that as people allow themselves to be overwhelmed by God's love and goodness, they thereby choose the divine power as the ruling and controlling power for their lives and being.

White makes her stand in regard to human freedom very clear by unambiguously stating: "The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ." However, this does not mean compulsion from the side of God either, although the influence of the Holy Spirit is present to impact the decision processes within the human mind. Each individual is still "left free to choose whom he [or she] will serve."³⁵ Consequently this means that no absolute freedom of choice is available to human beings. This human condition is due to the fact that, by their natural inheritance, they are subject to the dire forces of evil.³⁶

It is against this understanding of the limited scope of human freedom that White still lauds the power of choice which has been entrusted to all:

What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.³⁷

The only real, positive choice left for the individual is the giving of one's will to be controlled by Christ, which in practical terms means totally refraining from using it for selfish purposes. White argues that even for this, the motivating "impulses" originate from him.³⁸ These impulses refer to internal and personal desires and inclinations being developed through an on-going spiritual

³⁴ DA 324. "It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness."

³⁵ DA 466. She writes on the same page also: "Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul."

³⁶ SC 43. "By nature we are alienated from God." SC 18. "It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them."

³⁷ SC 47.

³⁸ SC 26.

process, through a constant, intimate interaction with Christ. The active and effective presence of Christ within the subjective core of being is the source of all aspirations to be united with Jesus. Therefore White urges her readers to care for this transforming and motivating connection by faith, not least by continuous surrender.³⁹

On the basis of these views, I conclude that White is also concerned with the consequences of the determined use of the individual power of choice. There is, indeed, a solemn responsibility attached to choices. People are free enough to exercise their will power for accomplishing numerous good things, behaving lovingly and constructively, acting responsibly to improve other people's lives, and alleviating the undesirable, negative effects of evil. But people are also granted the basic freedom to choose a destructive way of life, which will ultimately bring its due consequences.⁴⁰

White suggests that discouragement due to a lack of will power, as well as perceived confidence in one's own power and sufficiency in this regard, are equally hazardous. Only if the will is yielded and submitted to Christ, and the power of choice controlled by him, can the results be positive. For her the submission of the will is thus essential, because it can be assumed that even worship, service for others or obedience to God's commandments can be consequences of a well-tempered human will and power of choice, and so expressions of natural, sin-contaminated human capacity. Authentic Christian virtues and action presuppose the connection of the will to Christ as one of their most indispensable elements.⁴¹

Other passages add fuller aspects to the definition of White's thinking on the role of the power of choice. In one similar passage her actual words are of particular interest, since she seems to write about the matter in relation to a soteriological framework: "The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker

³⁹ SC 62.

⁴⁰ DA 764. "The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life." According to White this means total extinction in the consuming fires of hell.

⁴¹ SC 72. Although White acknowledges the limitations of the human will, at the same time she believes in its possibilities as she writes: "We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears... Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him that has loved you."

of the promise in Christ by the gospel” AT 403. This indicates that White believes choice can, indeed, be a decisive element for salvation and all its blessings, yet not a method of securing them.⁴² There is nothing here to suggest a human participation in salvation. On the contrary, the primary sources indicate that the basic potential of the power of choice is negative: choosing not to belong to God.

People face a number of choices in regard to both secular and religious issues, but those to do with their personal relationship with and knowledge of Christ are the truly essential issues of constant choice and decision. However, all choices which people must make in relation to mundane issues of life also carry a spiritual significance: how to relate to money and material wealth, for example.⁴³

White believes that within the human power of choice there lies hidden a great positive potential. Her urge is therefore to make full use of that capacity.⁴⁴ If this potential is regarded as God’s gift, and the task of caring for it is seen as an indication of trust, a stewardship responsibility is attached to the power of choice. Responding to that trust and the related challenge places the person in a direct relationship with God. It is also essential to notice that in this case the power to choose and to decide is under God’s influence and control because of the preceding human surrender.

4.1.3. Belonging to God through Consecration

Ellen White does not within the primary sources introduce a precise order according to which the experience of salvation, or the spiritual journey, should take place for everyone, something that is in dogmatics called *ordo salutis*.⁴⁵ Responding to God’s saving grace may emerge as one stage of the experience of becoming saved – as just one step taken toward salvation. “Consecration”⁴⁶ is one feature of White’s agenda for spiritual formation. Consecration may be regarded

⁴² DA 483. “He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast.”

⁴³ DA 523, 587.

⁴⁴ SC 47. White’s ideas concerning the human will and the power of choice are related to her understanding of humanity as totally dependent on God’s grace and help. See also: <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/wesleyanconnectionSDA.htm> Downloaded 30.10.2009.

⁴⁵ A superficial reading of SC may give the idea that White is there presenting a step-by-step list of actions by performance of which people may establish a saving relation with God on a do-it-yourself –basis. A deeper study refutes this idea.

⁴⁶ SC 43–48. One chapter in SC is entitled *Consecration*, yet it is not the only source of references in this regard.

as a single act by some, but White sees it as a vital characteristic defining the whole spiritual pilgrimage, something to be considered and sought throughout the journey. The term consecration has to do with the private and primarily inward process through which a person gives himself or herself to God.

In addition to consecration, White refers to the concept of giving in or bending to the persuasion of the Holy Spirit in terms such as “giving oneself” SC 44, “to yield” SC 24, “to surrender” SC 48, “to submit” SC 31, “to commit” SC 71, “putting one’s will on the side of Christ” MH 85 and “to dedicate” SC 126.⁴⁷ The experience of consecration therefore refers to more than a stage, to be followed by something else. In her version of Christian spirituality it points to an aspect which cuts through the whole expanse of life. Her linear understanding of the notion of consecration becomes clear in the following passage. In addition to confirming the meaning of the term, this passage also defines how she feels consecration should take place in the daily Christian praxis:

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.⁴⁸

White’s use of the term consecration in this statement shows that the word is not to be defined in soteriological terms and hence strictly adjusted to fit into traditional doctrinal structure, but it must instead be seen as a spiritual concept pointing to the process of directing the believer’s everyday life as a Christian.⁴⁹ Submission or commitment to God is the practical consequence taking place in the lives of those who have received the grace of being saved through God’s actions.

The experience of consecration is rudimentary in the sense that it is, in White’s view, expected to occur right at the first instance of conviction in the person’s heart of God’s invitation for him/her. In fact, in White’s thinking consecration has to do with the initial stage of the spiritual experience rather than

⁴⁷ Further passages which use some of these expressions include: DA 483; MH 176; SC 48; COL 96–97, 312; MB 94, 142; DA 407.

⁴⁸ SC 70; Wikström 1995, 134. Owe Wikström writes in a similar way: “Decide to commit yourself into God’s hands and dissociate from everything that is not his own.”

⁴⁹ MH 159. See also DA 273, 431; MB 37.

with the consummation of it, as maintained by several other classical spiritual teachers.⁵⁰ But it is also a part of everyone's spiritual experience, because it happens as a result of the confidence that God will not reject anyone who comes to Him for any reason or motive. Reliance and trust are consequently a result of an encounter with and knowledge of the God of love.

Because ideas of consecration are central in White's approach to Christian spirituality, the concept must be carefully analysed and its role within her structure of spirituality defined. Though the term has its root in the concept of sacredness, it is misleading to suppose that consecration constitutes a method of making people themselves sacred or holy in relation to God.

It needs to be affirmed here that White does, indeed, believe that the expiation of sin took place on the cross of Jesus, when he died as a substitute for sinners. Everything is finished and fully completed as far as the work of reconciliation is concerned, because Christ died, was resurrected and ascended to Heaven. But she suggests that the application of this truth causes a life-long tumult of battle, which means continuous attempts to direct and control all selfishly motivated behaviour. Actually, her concept of consecration has to do with this, with the preconditions for success in this battle.⁵¹

Self, which in White's language seems to stand for all negative selfishness and egocentricity, is not an agent which automatically joins the divine forces to attempt some commendable accomplishment. The same applies to her concept of human power. In fact, self easily attempts to have its own way in every situation. Even in a religious setting, and with high moral ideals and goals present, self can subject all personal facilities under its control, and the outcome can be self-righteousness and complacency. In the case of evil things, the self naturally captures them as means for self-satisfaction and self-centred pleasure. Therefore,

⁵⁰ Snyder 2004, 65. Snyder sees *Gelassenheit* (understood as the yieldedness of one's will to God) as a central theme or attitude of Anabaptist spirituality. Heikkinen 2003, 235–241. However, Heikkinen describes the approach of medieval German mysticism to *Gelassenheit* as the total surrender of oneself to God as the consummation of life approaches. If *Gelassenheit* points to the art of dying, *ars moriendi*, its meaning does not correspond to the meaning of White's concept of consecration. Caussade 1751/1975, 72–85. In comparison, the 18th century French Jesuit and mystic Jean-Pierre de Caussade, on the other hand, seems to refer to the same type of experience as White by employing the term *abandonment*. In his view, complete surrender to the will of God is, in fact, the essence of spirituality. Raitt 2005, 126. Raitt mentions that for Joannes Teuler and Menno Simons also the handing over of one's will to God was a central part of their spiritual thinking. See also McGrath 1999, 46–47.

⁵¹ DA 769; SC 43. "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness."

in the privacy of the heart of each individual, the self must be submitted to the control of God.⁵²

But how to interpret the idea of holiness, which White referred to as the final goal to be accomplished by struggle and submission? Does she mean that by successfully completing these exercises the Christian can attain a status of holiness, which will entitle him/her to be more acceptable to God than before? It is important to note that she does not speak about sanctification here at all, nor does she use the term sanctification once in SC, a book containing a whole chapter on consecration. Instead, practical holiness is the focus here. A holy life refers to the kind of life that is not ruled by selfishness, but which is united with Jesus and controlled by him. The aim of both consecration and holiness is a human existence in harmony with God and his will. God himself through Christ provides that holiness which makes people fit for heaven, and neither consecration nor the struggle with the selfish powers of the human heart have anything to do with it.⁵³

However, statements such as this: “The whole heart must be yielded to God” SC 43 can be expected to bring discomfort and apprehension to the modern mind. It sounds as if nothing will be left of individuality, freedom, and self-fulfilment if this is done. But in White’s view, the purpose of God in extending this invitation to people is not to ruin their lives, rather the contrary. The will of God may be fulfilled in our lives all the time, but it also goes far beyond our present realm of experience, stretching out to the eternal purpose of salvation. The human will must yield and submit, so that God is able to execute his intention.⁵⁴

The chains of sin have to do with the life which a person lives here. Breaking free from the grip of sin is not within one’s own ability or power. But White encourages a person who senses this present reality to join in a partnership with Christ. The experience of consecration is composed of a certain element of purposefulness and decisiveness, but equally of trust and faith in Christ, that he will not turn the desperate sinner away.⁵⁵

⁵² MH 480–481.

⁵³ SC 51.

⁵⁴ SC 44; DA 330. “Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.”

⁵⁵ SC 48. “By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.”

White maintains that consecration does not threaten meaningful human existence, but conversely, surrender constitutes the way to its achievement. Neither do sinners really lose anything significant when they yield everything to God; as a matter of fact, what they give up is worth nothing. White holds that renouncing the sin-polluted self is no sacrifice. As there is no risk involved, total submission to God is presented as an opportunity and a privilege.⁵⁶

In addition to practical and relational aspects, the sinner's surrender to God further reflects White's theological understanding of the nature of God's grace and how to obtain it. The grace of God is constantly extended to sinners, because it is available through the incarnation, ministry and passion of Christ. It continually appeals to them for a personal response, application and appreciation. Consecration to Christ is part of the reaction that God's grace calls for, because it composes a holistic, direct and interactive method of contact with the one who is the embodiment of that grace.⁵⁷

In fact, the manifestation of God's love through the committed life and ministry of Jesus is the starting point for a life-long process of consecration. In order to motivate an attitude of simultaneous surrender and struggle, White suggests a reasoning which is directly connected to the grace of God realised in the incarnation of Christ. Christ's self-sacrificing attitude calls for a similar commitment. The partakers of God's grace, in White's view, yield to him, because the foundation for their independent existence has been broken. She insists that it is not possible to maintain autonomy of will and a self-sufficient identity and still build one's life and being on the grace of God. Furthermore, a voluntary submission and surrender are the only way, because God's grace cannot coexist with compulsion and force.⁵⁸

As mentioned above, White saw surrender and submission as the practical application of the teaching of grace, but also of justification by faith. In that context she also speaks of the union with Christ as its key element, not only as ontological reality but as an interactive development of dedication within the human spirit toward God. She seems to be concerned about spirituality shrinking

⁵⁶ DA 331. "Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest." SC 46.

⁵⁷ SC 68.

⁵⁸ SC 45; DA 523. One notices the emphatic way in which White writes about the topic of yieldedness: "Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained, will demoralize the whole being."

to nothing but an empty formality if it were to mean only the regarding of a certain belief system as true. In her thinking, belief in God will be accompanied by attitudes and actions which flow out of the belief. She regards consecration, which includes submission of the will and yielding of the heart, as one of those things.⁵⁹

White's way of understanding consecration and yieldedness is linked with some further positive aspects which I will consider. As everything is given to God, the responsibility for the outcome – the ultimate result – is also in his hands. Consecration is not an end in itself, but rather bears consequences that become part of God's great system to bless the world and all the people in it. Thus consecration seems to mean, in White's language, the process by which love directed toward self is substituted by love which originates in God and is aimed at the things of God.⁶⁰

It is White's firm understanding that consecration, too, is part of the operation which God initiates and accomplishes within, a gradual transformation process of feelings, values, attitudes and motivation. It is essential to have Christ as the ruler of the heart, because he alone can bring about its renewal, expel self-centredness and create a readiness and capability to love.⁶¹ She writes: "Subjection to God is restoration to one's self, – to the true glory and dignity of man" DA 466.

The yielding of the human will to the will of God holds a vital role in the proper understanding of White's conception of consecration. In her thinking, outward obedience is insufficient, because it can be pharisaic hypocrisy unless it flows out of a surrendered heart and a yielded will. Consecration must involve the human spirit comprehensively, and in her thinking it also profoundly affects the human will. White describes the role of self-surrender as an integral part of a person's relationship with God and its role in the experience through which salvation becomes real:

God is the fountain of life, and we can have life only as we are in communion with Him. Separated from God, existence may be ours for a little time, but we do not

⁵⁹ COL 312; SC 63. White connects the concept of surrender to emotional attachment to God: "Where there is not only a belief in God's word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith – faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God."

⁶⁰ SC 72; SC 59. "Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action."

⁶¹ DA 324.

possess life. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." 1 Timothy 5:6. Only through the surrender of our will to God is it possible for Him to impart life to us. Only by receiving His life through self-surrender is it possible, said Jesus, for these hidden sins, which I have pointed out, to be overcome. It is possible that you may bury them in your hearts and conceal them from human eyes, but how will you stand in God's presence?

God does not design that our will should be destroyed, for it is only through its exercise that we can accomplish what He would have us do. Our will is to be yielded to Him, that we may receive it again, purified and refined, and so linked in sympathy with the Divine that He can pour through us the tides of His love and power. However bitter and painful this surrender may appear to the willful, wayward heart, yet "it is profitable for thee".⁶²

Ellen White's idea of the surrender or yielding of the will to God may also be understood in terms of realisation, action, implementation and praxis. God's will is mostly perceived as something which will happen, or which is followed or fulfilled. White evaluates the concept also from an ontological point of view. For her the will of God has to do with what humans are, as much as with what they do. When the ontological understanding of the term is taken into account, the pursuit for personal identity as well as the maturation process toward full personhood may equally be regarded as components of the fulfilment of God's will. In the positive sense, this leads to a realisation of one's full potential as a unique person, but the negative aspect directs the person into confrontation with his/her individual fallenness with all the attached limitations. For White, an awareness and acceptance of one's fallen condition compose the way to an authentic encounter with Christ.⁶³

Consequently, the interpretation of the ideas contained in White's concept of character should similarly include the ontological aspect.⁶⁴ Character may refer to the qualities attached to the individual foundations of a person's behaviour, attitude or motivation, but only an ontological understanding can provide a point of view from which her teaching may be fully appreciated. The assuming of Christ's character in the place of one's own character does not refer to psychological change, but to an alteration in the state of being in terms of a new standing in relation to God. An intimate union with Christ has been thereby established, and due to this, the very foundations of personal existence have been dramatically changed.

⁶² MB 61–62.

⁶³ SC 65. "A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power."

⁶⁴ The concept of character will be discussed in detail later in chapter 7.

As a person yields the will to God, White has him/her actually saying at the core of his/her being: “As I surrender my will to God, I give up my selfhood and self-determination. I turn over the control of my being to God.” On the other hand, the surrender of the will is a cry for help from the inmost part of the being. It contains the realisation that the person is a sinner and needs help. Sin is not a separate problem which can be fixed apart from the person concerned. However, White’s idea is still a positive one, as it leads to participation in the plan of God and to finding one’s purpose in life through the fulfilment of God’s will.⁶⁵

White’s thinking is immersed in hope-inspiring encouragement and purposefulness. The surrender to God does not lead the soul into meaninglessness and oblivion. On the contrary, there is a course which the person is invited to be part of and for which he/she can live. Good works are not something to be squeezed out of the exhausted soul, but they rather compose a restful purpose, the purpose of being a tool in God’s hands, through which even closer intimacy with God can be experienced. In fact, the will of God is not actualised by human obedience to it; instead human yieldedness removes the obstacles to divine intervention.⁶⁶

It can be said that as the surrender to the will of God has once again emerged into such a prominent position, it must, indeed, be regarded as one of the essential elements of the Christian spirituality introduced by White. For the sake of clarity, the following may be said about differing orientations regarding the divine will. In Christendom there are two approaches to the will of God, assuming, of course, that the concept in general is accepted and appreciated as part of the Christian system of faith and practice:

Firstly, the will of God may be regarded as something which can be known mainly through the Scriptures, thereafter comes the obligation to follow it conscientiously. This leads to a strict obedience to the expressed will of God, which is mostly understood as the Ten Commandments of the Bible. Secondly, although this first proposition may be accepted in principle, the other approach also takes into account the observation that, for the most part, the will of God is

⁶⁵ SC 63.

⁶⁶ SC 64. Powell 2005, 78–83. Powell clarifies the seeming contradiction between the following two points: we are saved by God’s grace and not by our works (Titus 3:4-5) and we are to abound in good works (Titus 2:14). He argues that good works are expressions of love but they are also a form of faith; the practice of Christian life is itself the exercise of faith. Sound doctrine in his view is not only a matter of having right cognitive beliefs, but it pertains to right living as well. Good works have nothing to do with the preconditions of salvation, and within the realm of Christian spirituality the role of good works can be defined in a more satisfactory way.

unknown to humanity, and remains a mystery. According to this view, humble obedience is the human response as far as God's will is known, but for the rest, the appropriate human reaction can best be expressed by terms such as waiting, wonder, submission, openness to guidance, humility, trust in God, patience, quietness, willingness to adjust and the like.

White's insistence on the surrender of the will to the will of God leads to a spirituality where the human effort is in focus if we define her teaching by the first approach. On the other hand, if following the second option, the surrender of one's will to God's will, even though not fully known or knowable, leads to a spirituality where human effort is drastically subdued. In principle, the yieldedness of the human will prevents any self-righteous attempts to do good or even to earn merit in God's sight merely on the basis of personal good intentions.

Consecration is, indeed, one of the key concepts in the form of spirituality presented by White. It is a term which defines the nature of the devotional attitude to be maintained by all who progress on the spiritual journey. It is a name for action that is to be repeated throughout the life of those involved in Christian spirituality. Because it has to do with things such as will, heart and soul, consecration is a strictly private matter, and cannot be evaluated by anyone but God. In White's teaching I also find no standardised criteria for consecration. But it is still a process intended to enrich the spirituality of Christians.⁶⁷ Its meaning will be more widely elucidated by other features of her spirituality which will be introduced later and to which consecration is inseparably linked.

4.1.4. The Relationship between Faith and Yieldedness

It seems that Ellen White has no difficulties in combining her ideas on surrender or yieldedness with other elements of the spiritual praxis. In reference to the lame man by the pool at Bethesda, she concludes that the use of one's will and the integrity of faith do not rule each other out, because the human decision to act is a reaction to divine invitation.⁶⁸ This implies that action of the will apart from a divine call or commandment would be blasphemous, but as a response to the word from Christ it can be considered as faith in action. On the other hand, faith

⁶⁷ DA 324.

⁶⁸ SC 50.

without a response in the form of an act of will would, in her thinking, be insufficient.

Moreover, in conjunction with faith White frequently expresses the idea of giving oneself to God or yielding to God. For her the concepts of faith and consecration appear to be linked together in such a way that both actions seem simultaneous and substitutive: you give your heart to God and God gives you a new heart. But another way of looking at the relationship is to suggest that the actions are synchronised and parallel.⁶⁹ The rationale behind this is the following: In the centre of our being there is an area which can be occupied and controlled by only those agencies which the individual's own will chooses to obey. Thus faith in Jesus is not merely a conviction about a set of ideas, but it actually means an opening up of one's whole being to the presence of the divine Christ. Through surrender the person makes room within for Christ, if understood in the substitutive sense; or the person turns his/her full attention from self to Christ, if understood in the parallel sense.

In White's writings the idea of giving oneself to God appears closely connected with faith and believing: "As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him" SC 52. If commitment and surrender were not linked with faith there would be no other option but to connect them solely to obedience, the keeping of the commandments, faithfulness to the law of God and the following of God's will. The results of this appear less than desirable. If people assume on the basis of their study that they fully know the will and purpose of God, and proceed to follow it using their own will power, they may not accomplish the desired result. Complacent self-trust and pompous self-confidence produce hypocrisy, not humble obedience. In contrast, the conclusions are different if consecration and the giving of self to God are seen as practical reflections of faith in Christ. As an act of faith, the surrender of self to God may form an integral part of authentic Christian spirituality, since God is, after all, invisible and unapproachable, a mystery.

I conclude that for White, consecration, submission, yielding and surrender are terms for actions and ways of relating to God that express an attitude of faith in him. White describes the direction of such actions as well as the results

⁶⁹ SC 62. "More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure."

of such a state of mind in terms of confident rest and a sense of safety.⁷⁰ By committing oneself to God, a person indicates that he/she is unable to provide for his/her needs, which makes the turning to God of one's innermost centre of being an absolute necessity.

According to White, the first step on the path of faith is a realisation of the state of despair in which one is due to sin. Because of the work of the Holy Spirit "you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence." Then she immediately introduces her diagnosis of the condition, and the actual resulting need: "It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul." And the invitation to reach out for the remedy follows: "It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it" SC 49.

White speaks of faith in terms of putting one's trust in God decidedly and purposefully. Appealing to God's promises is one of those things where resolute trust and determined leaning on what God has said are the appropriate stance. She suggests an even stronger mind-set and a more straightforward manner of approach in responding to human desperation with sin: one of boldness, non-deference and non-hesitance.⁷¹ Faith may thus appear as stubbornness and unyielding insistence in one's approach to God, despite the fact that the awareness of one's sinfulness suggests otherwise.

Under the torment of guilt and shame, the transgressor may lose hold of his/her faith due to the overwhelming pressure experienced. But White boldly suggests that it is in fact Christ's delight to welcome sinners and solve their dilemma of sin.⁷² Faith is not an attitude which bends to a prolonged observation of one's personal unworthiness and lack of merits. It is, indeed, only through faith that the perspective of hope can open up for people in misery and gloom.⁷³

White has a word of warning to those who tend to follow easily the promptings of their emotions: they should not to be misguided by them, but

⁷⁰ SC 72. White speaks about resting as a spiritual function: "Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him that has loved you."

⁷¹ SC 52.

⁷² SC 52. "Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity." Mannermaa 1983, 38. There seems to be a resemblance to Luther's idea of God's love which is directed downwards towards that which is sinful, unjust, unworthy and filthy.

⁷³ SC 53. "None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them. He is waiting to strip them of their garments stained and polluted with sin, and to put upon them the white robes of righteousness; He bids them live and not die."

instead claim God's promises.⁷⁴ The impulses which are to be put in action are those which originate in God. She asserts that an attitude of faith can be created only through divine effort when she writes: "every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father's heart of love" SC 54.

Finally, it is significant to realise that in White's view nothing besides faith can make available for humanity the means to respond to divine love, grace and goodness. As has been pointed out, she sees faith as a medium – an instrument – through which humanity can catch hold of divine things. Further, in her writings love shines out as a fundamental quality of God's character. The formula is clear: God loves and by their faith people are able to receive and perceive this love. At the same time, there is in the faith in God's love an element of surrender, the absolutely helpless one yielding to the mercies of complete and unconditional goodness, the only option for survival.⁷⁵

Faith is also the only channel through which all the blessings of God's love can benefit humanity. It seems that in the experience of being surrounded and overwhelmed by divine love, goodness and grace, both faith and surrender represent responses to these elements, and so they are presented as inseparably intertwined. White describes God's love as such an overpowering characteristic that once a person becomes fully aware of it, the only thing he or she can do is to either run from it or surrender to its inexpressible sweetness.⁷⁶

In White's view, faith in this context does not appear as the development of a conviction about certain factual features regarding God and his existence, but rather as a grace-filled encounter with absolute goodness, the result of which is the giving up of mental resistance. Thus surrender emerges as an aspect of faith rather than a separate, autonomous human activity. It seems that White is aiming to describe the experience of giving in to faith in a way which reduces to utter insignificance the role of the human decision-making process as an active contributor to faith and belief.

⁷⁴ SC 51. "Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, 'I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised (original italics).'"

⁷⁵ SC 52; DA 429 "But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ."

⁷⁶ SC 55. "As you read the promises, remember they are the expression of unutterable love and pity. The great heart of Infinite Love is drawn toward the sinner with boundless compassion... Yes, only believe that God is your helper."

4.2. Dealing with Self – Egocentricity

Ellen White's spirituality aims equally to realise the effective value of each believer for the wider fulfilment of God's will and purpose in the world and to bring to them personal spiritual blessings and rewards. She argues, in other words, that only spiritual people are qualified as useful instruments in God's hands. So according to her, spirituality is not only an end in itself but also a means towards gaining other goals. It is presented as either a preparatory or a parallel process to participation in the work which God is performing in the world.⁷⁷

The will of God is not just a divine opinion of how to live, i.e. the ethics summarised primarily in the Ten Commandments. Nor is it only an unavoidable destiny or indisputable fate under which human beings must humbly succumb. Instead, God's will is presented first and foremost as an active and positive concept. Hence its primary objective is that sinners find forgiveness, a living union with Christ and are saved into eternal life. In consequence, the idea of God's saving grace and the whole plan of salvation are to be seen as expressions of God's will. If God's will is fulfilled as people find blessing and salvation, it calls for the human participation of those people whose spirit is in tune with this divine intention.

In White's thinking this leads to the spiritual process on the level of the human spirit being inseparable from the ministry and missionary framework. She assumes that every believer is designed to be a witness and an ambassador of God's good news for the humankind. The material points out that her approach to spirituality has unselfish action for others under the direct leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit as its definite goal.

For White, spirituality is not really a private matter meant only for individual spiritual formation and reward. Instead, being God's commissioned ministers and representatives, each believer's inward process will unavoidably demonstrate itself through corresponding behaviour. How to relate to self, i.e. selfishness and egoism, is thus White's concern in a number of her writings, but

⁷⁷ In section 6.3. I will discuss the topic of usefulness as an integral aspect of White's view of Christian spirituality more comprehensively.

that intention is perhaps most precisely stated in the following passage: “He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.” DA 250

The point of this paragraph can be expressed plainly as follows: not just any “putting self aside” will do, but the critical attitude toward self must be the working of the Holy Spirit within. White seems to claim that since the working of the divine Spirit cannot be predicted nor directed, and its movements cannot even be observed, the person’s inner attitude and action regarding self must be fashioned in such a way that God’s purpose is fulfilled. However, the person does not really know what it is that he/she needs to put aside, neither is there any suggestion for how to accomplish it. How does one put self aside? In the end, is it possible to achieve anything like that at all?

One must conclude that only as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit can such a process take place within. Because of the innate human preservation instinct, no putting aside of self can occur naturally without active divine intervention. The traditional understanding of original sin entails the notion of an inborn tendency towards selfishness rather than service. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit cannot alter the role and position of self as the ruling agent within the individual self-government without the explicit consent of the person. This “putting self aside” must therefore be seen as a cooperative accomplishment in which the initiative and the moving impulse come from the divine Spirit. Furthermore, it appears to be a struggle rather than an orderly and tranquil activity where the roles of the divine and human actions can be precisely defined.⁷⁸

The subsequent lines in DA reveal something of how White understands the process of putting self aside. This life-long task contains, among other things, “the enduring of the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way and removing the obstructions.” White states further that there is a potential for inner transformation and thus for an increase of usefulness and positive action but there are “restraining hands” which “repress the zeal.” It

⁷⁸ GW 477. “Day by day and year by year we shall conquer self, and grow into a noble heroism. This is our allotted task; but it cannot be accomplished without help from Jesus, resolute decision, unwavering purpose, continual watchfulness, and unceasing prayer. Each one has a personal battle to fight. Not even God can make our characters noble or our lives useful, unless we become co-workers with Him. Those who decline the struggle lose the strength and joy of victory.” COL 331.

becomes evident that she is here describing a typical spiritual struggle that takes place within as well as in response to external influences and impulses.⁷⁹

The demand to put self aside as part of the attempt to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with God may appear to the person as an element which threatens one's personal integrity and individuality. But the divine claims do not impose themselves against a person's unique selfhood as such. The conflict arises as soon as a person realises that there are impulses and desires emerging from within which are not in harmony with the ideals and standards of God. Either God is perceived as one who challenges the person by his disapproval of the inner impulses, or these impulses are seen as a threat to full existence, which includes a harmonious relationship with God. White's spiritual teaching presupposes an understanding in which God is seen as friend and defender. Thus the struggle is waged against self and all its tendencies, impulses and attitudes: "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness." SC 43.⁸⁰

White's vocabulary in describing the course of action which is intended to reduce the role, influence and power of self is not exclusively military. In the context of total yieldedness to divine education and moulding, she speaks about "devotion of the mind to God", which is to be both "unreserved" and "continual". Such attachment and commitment establishes a close interactive connection and a restorative relationship characterised by affection, which in turn brings about an inner transformation so that harmony, steadfastness and strength are developed within. These qualities are required in effective service. In White's way of speaking, devotion has to do with the way a person relates to self, and it is expressed by an active involvement in ministry rather than by vigorous external devotional participation alone. Devotion signifies holistic, sincere surrender to

⁷⁹ DA 250–251. Powell 2005, 122–123. The inner struggle or striving is often discussed in terms of self-discipline or self-control. Powell points out that Christianity is not only about the capacity to love, but is also concerned with self-discernment and the practice of love.

⁸⁰ In this conjunction it is relevant to notice also what White writes in AA 565: "The reason many in this age of the world make no greater advancement in the divine life is because they interpret the will of God to be just what they will to do. While following their own desires, they flatter themselves that they are conforming to God's will. These have no conflicts with self. There are others who for a time are successful in the struggle against their selfish desire for pleasure and ease. They are sincere and earnest, but grow weary of protracted effort, of daily death, of ceaseless turmoil. Indolence seems inviting, death to self repulsive; and they close their drowsy eyes and fall under the power of temptation instead of resisting it."

Christ through dynamic, determined action, but it also indicates a person's wish for intimacy with Christ.⁸¹

In relation to justification, White mentions "self-sufficiency" as the one single element capable of preventing it. The same applies to spiritual growth unless all self-sufficiency is totally stripped off. Self-sufficiency represents a wrong perception of and an incorrect attitude towards oneself because it prevents people from being persuaded of their own weakness and limitation. Immoderate self-reliance averts vital attention from God, the only being who can be safely turned to in matters of spiritual advancement.⁸² Her estimation leaves no room for speculation in regard to the harmfulness of self-sufficiency, as she states: "There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable." COL 154.⁸³

According to Anke Bisschops, ego is always an important concept in both Christian and non-Christian spiritual traditions. He explains the negative attitude to ego within all spirituality: "It refers to an egocentric and egoistic mentality of concentration on self-interest, which is seen as the cause of blindness, coldness and hardheartedness towards fellow human beings." Therefore specific disciplines have been adopted for becoming free from this self-centred perception of the world. Within traditional Christian spirituality the term "ego-crucifixion" is used for such a transcending of the ego which includes the realisation of openness, detachment and compassion.⁸⁴

On the basis of the sources it becomes evident that White also saw self, i.e. self-seeking and egoism, as one of the primary risks to flourishing spiritual existence and to a satisfactory relationship with God.⁸⁵ Therefore daily "self-

⁸¹ DA 251; DA 278; DA 297.

⁸² DA 300. "The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells."

⁸³ MH 455. "Man's great danger is in being self-deceived, indulging self-sufficiency, and thus separating from God, the source of his strength. Our natural tendencies, unless corrected by the Holy Spirit of God, have in them the seeds of moral death. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we cannot resist the unhallowed effects of self-indulgence, self-love, and temptation to sin." See also COL 161–162; MB 143.

⁸⁴ Bisschops 2009, 1.1.

⁸⁵ MH 485. "We cannot afford to let our spirits chafe over any real or supposed wrong done to ourselves. Self is the enemy we most need to fear. No form of vice has a more baleful effect upon the character than has human passion not under the control of the Holy Spirit. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self."

surrender” is seen as an essential undertaking.⁸⁶ Another term used by her with identical meaning is “self-sacrifice”.⁸⁷ She sees no hope for reform or recovery in regard to self, and thus she writes: “Let self be put out of sight.”⁸⁸ Other expressions which convey the same idea of putting self aside are “emptying oneself of self”⁸⁹ and “renunciation of self” MB 110.⁹⁰ She states also in specific terms that it is a work which can only be accomplished by Christ.⁹¹

4.3. Dependence and Obedience

4.3.1. Yieldedness through Dependence on God

On the basis of what has been said above, it has become evident that for Ellen White the core issue in the problem of sin is intimately related to the human tendency towards self-centeredness and love of self. It is egoism which makes people cherish disproportionate assumptions concerning their own abilities and rights but at the same time to despise, disregard and downgrade others. Since the real threat posed by sin lies within, the measures against it also have to do with the inner processes. These must involve the human spirit, the individual spiritual attitude and praxis. White writes: “Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ.” COL 155.

In this section I will examine White’s idea of yieldedness in terms of dependence on God. Dependence as a term has shades of meaning alluding to passivity and helplessness, and for some it may sound quite patronising. The concept relates to a development by which some essential features of the relational dynamics between creaturely human beings and the transcendent God

⁸⁶ DA 523. “Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ.” See also COL 403; DA 416, 535 and MB 144.

⁸⁷ DA 623. “And the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation.” See also DA 504, 549, 677; COL 350.

⁸⁸ COL 162. The same idea is expressed in stronger terms in DA 417. “Love for souls for whom Christ died means crucifixion of self.” COL 48. “Many feel a sense of estrangement from God, a realization of their bondage to self and sin; they make efforts for reform; but they do not crucify self. They do not give themselves entirely into the hands of Christ, seeking for divine power to do His will.” See also COL 118.

⁸⁹ See e.g. DA 181, 280, 431; COL 420; MB 15.

⁹⁰ DA 280. “Man must be emptied of self before he can be, in the fullest sense, a believer in Jesus. When self is renounced, then the Lord can make man a new creature. New bottles can contain the new wine. The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. In him who looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith the character of Christ will be manifest.” See also DA 302.

⁹¹ COL 159–160.

are defined. However, in her view, dependence on God does not mean that one's basic command of life is diminished or meaningful existence is spoiled.⁹²

The way in which White employs the concept of dependence on God implies a constant investigation and evaluation of a person's own views, ideas and attitudes regarding oneself and one's relation to God. It specifies the nature of this basic relatedness and the quality of the attitudes connected to it. But it also refers to a person's approach to life and life's fundamental epistemological and ethical challenges.⁹³ In addition, dependence on God as a state of being and a manner of behaving is concerned with a person's self-image, motivation and individual preconditions for pursuing various goals in life.⁹⁴ Dependence on God is the ultimate point of reference and the basis for all existence. White is concerned primarily with the measure of one's awareness of it.

Dependence on God is possible only in presence of a pessimistic view of the ability of humanity to control and overcome the power of sin.⁹⁵ For White an awareness of human limitations on the one hand and God's recourse as well as his willingness to respond positively to human need on the other, compose the conditions in which the relationship between a person and God can be characterised in terms of dependence. So it is possible to speak about dependence on God only if one's view of him permits that – dependence refers to a reciprocal relationship in which there must be a certain readiness on the side of both parties to participate.

White's relentless hold on the idea of God's love for humanity, presupposes a constant readiness from God's side to invite human beings to depend on him and to maintain that condition. However, on the human side White sees a basic reluctance and in some cases even inability to acknowledge the fact that humanity is, in fact, totally dependent on God and his provision at all times. She urges even those who believe they are maintaining a relationship of

⁹² MH 242–243.

⁹³ Ed 231. "The power to discriminate between right and wrong we can possess only through individual dependence upon God. Each for himself is to learn from Him through His word. Our reasoning powers were given us for use, and God desires them to be exercised."

⁹⁴ MH 212. "In the valley of humiliation, where men feel their need and depend on God to guide their steps, there is comparative safety. But the men who stand, as it were, on a lofty pinnacle, and who, because of their position, are supposed to possess great wisdom—these are in greatest peril. Unless such men make God their dependence, they will surely fall."

⁹⁵ DA 382. "Those who fail to realize their constant dependence upon God will be overcome by temptation."

dependence on God to examine whether they have, after all, fallen into independence and self-sufficiency.⁹⁶

According to White, a believer's reliance and dependence on God is linked to his/her experience of yieldedness and self-renunciation.⁹⁷ This means attempting to control all selfish tendencies of behaviour and distancing oneself from egocentric impulses and urges. However, this can happen only through a continuous contact with Christ and receiving from him strength, spiritual insight and sustenance. This close association with him takes the form of prayer, Bible study, contemplation and participating in the holy ordinances, i.e. the Communion.⁹⁸

It is White's conviction that a continuous awareness of dependence on God is vital for believers because not only do all human beings lack the power to perform or accomplish anything good independently, they are also unable to resist the negative impulses and influences of sin.⁹⁹ The relationship of dependence on God involves for White more than mere actions or deeds; it has to do with the wider plan and purpose which God has for human beings, which God alone is capable of knowing and which only he can ultimately actualise. In this conjunction White refers to Christ's way of relating to God as an example for Christians of how they, too, should live in dependence on God. Indeed, incarnation demanded of Christ a total dependence on God.

But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent upon His power. So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will.¹⁰⁰

White claims that a real sense of dependence on God is a result of candidly facing one's own condition as a weak human being. Conversely, one

⁹⁶ DA 369; COL 82. "There is great necessity for us to realize our dependence on God. Too much confidence is placed in man, too much reliance on human inventions. There is too little confidence in the power which God stands ready to give."

⁹⁷ DA 431. "Earnest, persevering supplication to God in faith—faith that leads to entire dependence upon God, and unreserved consecration to His work—can alone avail to bring men the Holy Spirit's aid in the battle against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places." See also COL 159–160; MH 455; DA 246.

⁹⁸ MB 19; DA 661. "As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every Communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God." See also Ed 258.

⁹⁹ DA 362.

¹⁰⁰ DA 208. See also MH 479.

could argue that the inclination towards autonomy and self-sufficiency is both natural for human beings and a fundamental quality of human sinfulness.¹⁰¹ White's writings also provide an opportunity to comprehend how God actively and purposefully leads human beings in such a way that they may more readily realise their situation and so prompted may be motivated to work for a fellowship with God.¹⁰²

It can be concluded that in White's view a dependent and even reliant relationship with God is necessary for a healthy spiritual existence and a thriving Christian life. She maintains that yieldedness to God and willingness to surrender one's whole life to him mean accepting the fact that faith in God is inseparable from a constant awareness of one's dependence on God.

4.3.2. Yieldedness as Obedience to God

Reflecting the general inclination of her religious setting within early Adventism, obedience also appears to be one of Ellen White's favourite themes, at least it looms large in all of her writings.¹⁰³ In this conjunction there is no reason to try to prove otherwise. An evaluation of the content of her references to obedience and the intention of her ideas in that regard will indicate the actual role and significance of obedience in the structure of her thinking, the discovery of which is the objective of this section.

Although obedience as a term commonly refers to compliance with set expectations, rules or commands, for White its object appears to be "joy" and it is connected with "grateful thanksgiving". However, she maintains that these positive sentiments are results of God's grace and his saving actions. Since for her "[t]rue obedience is the outworking of a principle within" COL 97, it is to be seen more as an indication of a genuine spirituality than as its essence. She endorses

¹⁰¹ DA 493. "When we have a realization of our weakness, we learn to depend upon a power not inherent."

¹⁰² MH 48–49. "The providence of God had placed Jesus where He was, and He depended on His heavenly Father for means to relieve the necessity. When we are brought into strait places, we are to depend on God. In every emergency we are to seek help from Him who has infinite resources at His command."

¹⁰³ Veloso 2000, 491. According to Veloso the law and obedience to it have been strongly endorsed by the SDA church ever since the formulation of the principal doctrines in the 1848 Bible Conferences. Knight 1989, 45–55. As the new emphasis on justification by faith emerged at the Minneapolis Session in 1888, it was initially regarded as a threat to the original Adventist approach. According to Knight, obedience is a key word for Adventist traditionalists.

personal connectedness to God so that the Holy Spirit may generate obedience as its outgrowth.¹⁰⁴

White's ideas regarding obedience point to an intrinsic religious mind-set where sacred ideas and values influence all aspects of life.¹⁰⁵ She refers to obedience as a holistic orientation and a thrust toward high standards and ideals, which takes place in connection with, but also as a result of a believer's surrendering totally to Christ.¹⁰⁶ Thus for her, obedience has meaning beyond outward deeds and actions which are in harmony with religious laws or principles. It has to do with the inner identity and character, and entails an intimate and entire joining together with Christ through submission.¹⁰⁷

White emphasises the inner, individual dimension of a person to the extent that it must be taken as the point of departure for an attempt to conceptualise obedience as well as the source of motivation for rendering it. Obedience is a reaction to and a result of what the divine power is performing within, although there seems to be an interactive aspect to it as well.¹⁰⁸ Even though obedience is a human action and reaction based on individual decision and conviction, external and divine causes can also be detected. For White, obedience appears to come as the result of a reciprocal and interactive relationship. People are both subjects as they obey and at the same time objects of divine activity.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ COL 97, 299; DA 189. "In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit." George 2003, 6. White's emphasis seems to differ somewhat from the evangelical approach to obedience. According to George, Christian spirituality is, among other things, about obedience which is a consequence of discipleship and motivated by social concern.

¹⁰⁵ Swinton 2001/2003, 30–32. Swinton speaks about intrinsic religiosity "as a meaning-endowing framework", where people expand "their religion beyond the boundaries of a specific service of worship into every aspect of their life... Their religious orientation is thus seen to be foundational to their concept of self."

¹⁰⁶ While introducing her ideas on Matt. 13:45, 46 she writes in COL 116: "In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price."

¹⁰⁷ DA 523; COL 311.

¹⁰⁸ DA 668. "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."

¹⁰⁹ COL 283. "If we surrender the will to God, we shall not work in order to earn God's love. His love as a free gift will be received into the soul, and from love to Him we shall delight to obey His commandments." See also MB 101.

Furthermore, White stresses that the essence of obedience is not be seen as “a mere outward compliance, but the service of love” SC 60.

Christianity without unreserved obedience is not possible in White’s thinking. She suggests that it is obedience which makes visible and observable one’s inner values, attitudes and ideas. Similarly, obedience demonstrates in action the essential features of Christianity by putting a halt to that which is egoistic and self-serving. Obedience is also a form of continual appreciative response to the saving love of Christ, and it signifies one’s allegiance with him.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ DA 523; MB 146–147; COL 117. “The gospel of Christ is a blessing that all may possess. The poorest are as well able as the richest to purchase salvation; for no amount of worldly wealth can secure it. It is obtained by willing obedience, by giving ourselves to Christ as His own purchased possession.”

5. The Connection between the Human Spirit and Christ

The commencing chapters of *Steps to Christ* as well as *The Desire of Ages* set the starting point for evaluating Ellen White's thinking on God's love as a basic existential reality for the human race but equally as the basis for a meaningful spiritual existence. Divine love is portrayed as the agent behind all divine activity to bless and save humanity. White describes the inner encounter with the God of love on the level of the human spirit in terms of total surrender to the rule of that love as well as adjusting and subduing one's will and individual power of choice to that love. The recognition of God's supremacy to such an extent on the one hand and allowing God's will to rule even in the most personal decisions on the other, make a person's intimate connectedness with God and oneness with him an actuality.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in detail White's ideas on the union with God as a concept which defines some of the essential features of her approach to spirituality. She claims that becoming "vitaly connected with God" is a relational and interactive perception of the transcending reality, which can be understood only in a way which appears to me as ontological. In addition to the relational and interactive connectedness, the ontological aspect is also essential in her thinking.¹ Since the concept of union with God refers to the daily experience of those who believe in God, such intimate, interactive connection with him can be regarded as a primary goal of all spiritual search and exercise. In White's thinking, the close contact with God as such is not the ultimate objective of the spiritual quest, but instead this vital connectedness seems to compose the

¹ DA 324. "Unless we become vitaly connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end." See also MH 455.

precondition for individual usefulness in the cooperation of the believer with God.²

In White's view, the negative effects of self-centeredness and egoism can be averted only through a close bond with God, which means maintaining a personal acquaintance with Christ through personal dialogue and interaction with him. It is thus evident that without a spiritual union with God on the level of personal contact, there is no real protection against the devastating consequences of sin. Thus it becomes apparent that the connection with God is, indeed, vital for spiritual health in the first place, and it also bears relation to one's ultimate salvation. White describes the power of sin as something which is beyond human ability to resist and overcome. Within that context, the connection to Christ does not merely bring a comforting presence to encourage people in their struggle, but also his power in concrete defence against sin and the powers of evil.³

Sinful people "can become righteous only as they have faith in God and maintain a vital connection with Him." White thus suggests that Christ himself is the justifying righteousness which God made available to humankind. Christ is ontologically present through faith, but apparently also in a more actual and relational way through interactive connectedness in terms of a person's total orientation towards God's expectations. She states that we may participate in the very life of God, which equals sharing a saving relationship with him. Through faith, i.e. trust in the love of God, and through relational association and connection even justification, an abstract concept, thus becomes an experienced reality.⁴

White proposes a constant, active association and conversational relationship with Christ through devotion, prayer, meditation and Bible study for maintaining the union with him. She describes this union in terms of a life-giving, sustaining and strengthening bond between Christ and the person. She compares this connectedness to the mutual and vital attachment which exists within living organisms, such as the bond between branch and tree trunk. This analogue describes one of the key aspects of her spirituality, namely how to experience God

² MH 159.

³ DA 324.

⁴ DA 310. "The righteousness which Christ taught is conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God. Sinful men can become righteous only as they have faith in God and maintain a vital connection with Him. Then true godliness will elevate the thoughts and ennoble the life. Then the external forms of religion accord with the Christian's internal purity." See also COL 142.

in a personal and meaningful way. The relationship has its grounds in the love of God, which becomes a transforming and vitalising reality through faith.⁵

As it is White's purpose as a spiritual guide to introduce the way to a fuller religious existence, she explores the relational significance of such essential institutions within Adventism as the Sabbath, which she regards as the God-given day of rest. She also sees the Sabbath as a confirming symbol and sign of the union between God and his people, as they by faith receive Christ's righteousness to form the basis of their individual holiness, and also as a precondition for the hallowing of that day. The Sabbath is thus an instrument in bringing humanity into communion with God; it is composed of a time, which is set apart, i.e. sanctified by God, to render possible peaceful and restful fellowship with God.⁶

White makes clear what she regards as the foundation for the vital union with God: "There can be no union between our souls and God except through Christ."⁷ The Communion constitutes another opportunity for people to be affirmed in their essential connection with God. Interestingly, her wording in that context does not rule out either a Zwinglian or a Lutheran approach to the sacrament:

As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every Communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God.⁸

Because the contemplation of Christ's sacrifice as an integral part of the Communion experience is seen here as a means of assimilating with Christ, the argument seems to allude only vaguely to Zwingli's view of the Communion as a memorial.⁹ Meanwhile her reference to the Communion service as forming a connection to God appears to reflect some aspects of Luther's emphasis on the topic.¹⁰ While avoiding a distinct doctrinal position in her expression, White

⁵ DA 676; COL 419. "It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables him to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely, to shine out again in good works, in real, heartfelt service for God." The central role of faith in connectedness is referred to also in DA 310, 602, 661, 825.

⁶ DA 282, 286. Section 5.5. below discusses the spiritual significance of the Sabbath in detail.

⁷ DA 660. See also DA 493.

⁸ DA 661.

⁹ Neal 2000, 58–61, 91–97; Snyder 2004, 90–104.

¹⁰ Jolkkonen 2002, 273. Explaining the Lutheran understanding of the Communion, Jolkkonen emphasises that in this view the essence of the sacrament in terms of the real presence of Christ as

presents the Communion as a way to experience union with Christ. On the one hand she is referring to the event as such being a uniting element with Christ, on the other hand she is pointing simultaneously to the ontological aspect of the union with Christ which the Communion affirms. Thus for her the actual connectedness to God is the most important thing and the intellectual understanding or the doctrinal explanation of it seems to serve a merely theoretical purpose.¹¹

Worship, Bible study, prayer and meditation are the methods which White proposes for establishing and maintaining a vital connection with God. Elaborating on her idea regarding the quality of the relationship with God as interactive, she consequently equals unceasing prayer with an unbroken union with God. Moreover, she sees the use of the Bible as the way to a communicative and an interactive connection with God. Interestingly, this contact with God is viewed as an intellectually challenging and mentally demanding learning process. She seems to say that the spiritual quest includes some hard questions concerning God and the mysteries of life.¹²

In White's thinking, education is integrally linked to fulfilling spirituality and the spiritual search for authentic connectedness with God. Therefore, in order to get a full picture of her understanding about connectedness with God, her ideas on education also need to be touched on briefly, although a more extensive analysis of that aspect will be presented below. In this context her terminology also seems to reflect an interactive connotation in relation to the union with God. "Personal association", "communion" and "communication" are concepts which include ideas such as concern, personal regard, mutual sharing, and reciprocal involvement. There is also an aspect of intense intimacy and candid encounter present in these expressions. In White's view, true education reaches to the very essence of spirituality, the experience of meeting God uniquely and genuinely.¹³

well as its effect in terms of actual participation of Christ are equally central aspects. McGrath 1999, 115–116. McGrath sees the point of the sacraments as an attempt to visualize God. In that argument the appeal to the senses is essential. Loades 2005, 245–268. Loades has a still broader and more general approach to the sacraments as she explores sacramental spirituality.

¹¹ Section 6.5.2. discusses further the role of the Communion in spirituality.

¹² SC 98; COL 334.

¹³ Ed 231. "In all true teaching the personal element is essential. Christ in His teaching dealt with men individually. It was by personal contact and association that He trained the Twelve." See also DA 152, 488, Ed 84.

Finally, connectedness with God also includes face-to-face contact with other members of humankind. The divine love which reaches out to and persuades a person, transforms him/her into an instrument of the same love. The manifestation of sincere compassion in the form of caring human beings, who have been transformed through a fellowship with compassionate God into sympathetic and kind people, enables others to come into contact with the divine and ultimately to enter into the same connectedness.¹⁴

5.1. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality

Perrin maintains that Christian spirituality “is dependent on the dynamic relationship between the Spirit of God and the human spirit.”¹⁵ Ellen White’s approach to the Holy Spirit’s indispensable role in spirituality does not differ in basic principle from this understanding, which is also shared by a number of Christians who have searched for meaningful spiritual existence and which is presented by those who have studied Christian spirituality.¹⁶

In accordance with the traditional Christian understanding of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is also for White one of the divine persons of the Holy Trinity.¹⁷ She refers to the Holy Spirit in terms of a transcendent and divine reality constantly approaching the common human experiential reality and acting within that realm.¹⁸ Her active and functional vocabulary in this relation also seems to

¹⁴ COL 384–385. In White’s view a spiritual union has its consequences: “It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity; for in Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, divinity and humanity are combined. Connected with Christ, we are connected with our fellow men by the golden links of the chain of love. Then the pity and compassion of Christ will be manifest in our life. We shall not wait to have the needy and unfortunate brought to us. We shall not need to be entreated to feel for the woes of others. It will be as natural for us to minister to the needy and suffering as it was for Christ to go about doing good.” Raunio 2003 a, 35. “Participation in God’s goodness and love leads us to the neighbour and meeting and serving of the neighbour deepens the fellowship with God.”

¹⁵ Perrin 2007, 26.

¹⁶ Holder 2005, 1–2; Hughes 2005, 207; Shults 2006, 136–140; Juntunen 2003 a, 56–58; Cross 2007, 100–104.

¹⁷ White writes in Ev 617: “The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. ‘For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.’”

¹⁸ DA 671. “Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.” Shults 2006, 39–66. The central role of the Holy Spirit in Christian spirituality through the

indicate that she understands the Holy Spirit as an initiating, intervening, influencing and dynamic divine person or agency.¹⁹ Using Christ's imagery of the wind, she describes the Spirit's movement as predominantly unobservable to the physical senses, though his work within a person is real and effective. But at the same time she maintains that it usually requires a long development before a person can perceive and appreciate this dimension of internal divine effect, which surpasses the ordinary, every-day realm. This means that some people recognise and respond to the work of the Holy Spirit only after the passing of many years.²⁰

White takes care to point out that it is impossible for human beings to make the first move towards spiritual recovery from the state of sin without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. In most cases the Spirit's persuasion will not remain unnoticed, but will be manifested in a person's behaviour.²¹ Before any results, however, the Holy Spirit is there to "yearn" tenderly for the person who does not yet know the goodness and grace of God. He is the one who "appeals" to them and "woos" them to accept the offer of salvation.²² In fact, White describes this aspect of the Spirit's work in terms of passion, determination and loving care for its objects: "The Holy Spirit is presenting every inducement to constrain you to come." COL 237.

It is White's conviction that people sensing the divine persuasion must give their own consent before the Holy Spirit can accomplish his life-changing work, i.e. he does not overrule the autonomy of the human will. Since no amount of sin or guilt prevents his success in helping people in their dire need, his power knows no limit.²³ The divine Spirit is made available in order to assist willing persons in the inner quest for answers to the most fundamental questions

history of the Christian church has been pointed out by a number of scholars. Shults's approach to spirituality is based on the notion of transformation as the leading idea and the Holy Spirit as its performing agent. Surprisingly, there are also a number of scholars who hardly deal with Pneumatological considerations as part of the spiritual experience.

¹⁹ DA 172, 300, 377, 671, 805; COL 96-97, 298 and 384 use the term 'work' in connection with the Holy Spirit's activity. DA 353, 672, 827; COL 88; SC 24, 30-31 describe the Holy Spirit in terms of influence.

²⁰ John 3:8; DA 172.

²¹ SC 57. "If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us." DA 322 indicates that the movement of the Holy Spirit within can also be resisted and his work and influence can even be rejected.

²² COL 226; DA 172. "Suddenly, as the Spirit comes with more direct appeal, the soul gladly surrenders itself to Jesus. By many this is called sudden conversion; but it is the result of long wooing by the Spirit of God, - a patient, protracted process." See also COL 281.

²³ COL 96. "None are so vile, none have fallen so low, as to be beyond the working of this power. In all who will submit themselves to the Holy Spirit a new principle of life is to be implanted; the lost image of God is to be restored in humanity."

of life and their striving for a fuller understanding of God's ethical guidelines.²⁴ On these grounds it can be concluded that White regards the Holy Spirit as the origin of a full Christian spirituality and that his role is essential in its maintenance.

It is also the Holy Spirit who causes contrition and turning away from sin.²⁵ White understands transformation as a radical change of the whole being, as an alteration of human nature. She speaks about a development which, during a person's lifetime, brings about a transformation which can be viewed both ontologically and from a psychological point of view, in terms of changed attitudes. She also describes the remarkable mental, intellectual and behavioural changes which are influenced by the working of the Holy Spirit: unreserved devotion, new steadfastness, better comprehension and more penetrative discernment. In harmony with this she calls the Holy Spirit "a regenerating agent."²⁶

White identifies the Holy Spirit as "the Comforter"²⁷, as Christ's representative²⁸ but more often as a teacher and a guide.²⁹ That capacity is related to the Holy Spirit's role in helping to enlighten the mind in the study of the Scriptures.³⁰ However, the Spirit's assistance in finding and understanding biblical or religious truth cannot be perceived intellectually but rather as a divine movement within a person.³¹ The work of the Holy Spirit comprises a comprehensive, spiritual process in which the intellectual comprehension of religious concepts and their meaning is only one aspect. White describes this in such a way that it becomes evident that she is speaking about a multifaceted and multidimensional spiritual process:

²⁴ SC 24. "But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth."

²⁵ DA 300. "Real sorrow for sin is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals the ingratitude of the heart that has slighted and grieved the Saviour, and brings us in contrition to the foot of the cross."

²⁶ DA 172; DA 251; DA 671; DA 407. "The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son."

²⁷ DA 277, 671.

²⁸ DA 277; MB 132

²⁹ SC 91. See also SC 110; MB 132; MH 358; DA 251.

³⁰ COL 36. "Those who study the word of God with hearts open to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, will not remain in darkness as to the meaning of the word." See also COL 113; SC 91.

³¹ DA 671-672. See also MB 20, 26.

As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction that logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word are impressed on the heart.³²

The way White uses the concept of truth indicates that it has a meaning beyond the intellectual and that it calls for a spiritual development where the person adopts a new ethical sensitivity, an altered attitude toward self and God and a transformed way of life. The truth alone does not achieve all this, which is actually caused and performed by the Holy Spirit. Thus rational involvement with religious truth without the input of the Holy Spirit is not fully productive.³³

In accord with the majority Christian understanding White, too, sees the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to human spirituality as decisive.³⁴ People are objects of divine activity which alone can generate faith and construct a meaningful contact with God. The task of the Holy Spirit is to actualise and make real within the personal realm the fullness of salvation, which has been accomplished outside of the human sphere. According to White this transformation is both radical and essentially spiritual: “Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature.” The effect reaches the level of decision making and the behaviour of the believer, since Christ gives to all the “Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil.”³⁵

White also suggests that the ability to resist sin and temptations is not the ultimate goal of the Holy Spirit’s ministry for human beings; instead usefulness as an instrument in God’s service as well as the divine-human cooperation are prominent themes in her thinking. The gift of the Holy Spirit is accompanied with talents, skills and abilities which are not available to human beings otherwise. The presence of the Spirit means power and efficiency which exceed natural human resources.³⁶ White also states that the work of the Holy Spirit is expressed in the attitude and spirit of a softened heart, which means

³² COL 24. See also MB 26.

³³ DA 671–672; COL 408.

³⁴ Hughes 2005, 206–207; Shults 2006, 39–66; Wood 2003, 110–115.

³⁵ DA 671; MH 159; COL 384. “The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity.”

³⁶ COL 328; DA 827. “All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life.” See also COL 232; COL 121; COL 149; COL 414; MH 94, 159

willingness to show sympathy and tenderness to others.³⁷ Moreover the Holy Spirit arbitrates in such a way that a person may obtain love as a precious gift from Christ and so be made capable of acting out of true love.³⁸

I will explore White's understanding of usefulness and cooperation in detail in section 6.3. below. Here, however, this aspect is important to notice because it indicates the tendency in White's spiritual thinking to shun all human-centeredness and any focus on self. Both human activity and cooperation with God as well as spirituality as a whole are for her initiated and empowered only by God. I draw the conclusion, therefore, that she urges all who are interested in caring for their spiritual well-being to involve themselves deeply in God and in those things God immerses himself in – showing selfless love to humanity.

5.2. Union with Christ

At the heart of Christian spirituality in Ellen White's view lies connectedness to the transcendent dimension, i.e. fellowship with the divine, which she speaks about in terms such as “a vital connection” and “a real union” with Christ.³⁹ This individual and personal relationship primarily concerns the human spirit and is the basis for a person's identity and behaviour.⁴⁰ This association with Christ is not the result of a person's ability to achieve self-transcendence through religious exercises but it is composed of a person's awaking to the actual divine presence and a willingness to open up the private inner realm to its constant transforming and empowering activity.⁴¹

³⁷ MB 23. “The Holy Spirit that abides in the soul and is manifest in the life will soften hard hearts and awaken sympathy and tenderness.”

³⁸ MH 358. “Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love are neither unreasonable nor blind. Taught by the Holy Spirit, they love God supremely, and their neighbor as themselves.”

³⁹ Peura 1998 a, 53–56. Peura points out that the notion of union with Christ (*Unio cum Christo*) occupies a central role in Luther's teaching. This concept is important in regard to attempts to understand Luther's teaching of justification. Juntunen 2003 b, 143. Juntunen points out the spiritual significance of this idea of Luther's. Carpenter 2002, 363–386 describes the role of the union with Christ concept in Calvin's teaching and its significance in his theology, too. It thus appears that White is using one of the central concepts through which the Christian gospel has been explained within Protestantism. However, her use of the term is limited to the description of only certain aspects of spirituality.

⁴⁰ DA 676.

⁴¹ DA 565. “The self-examination, the confession of sin, the reconciling of differences, has all been done. Now they come to meet with Christ. They are not to stand in the shadow of the cross, but in its saving light. They are to open the soul to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. With hearts cleansed by Christ's most precious blood, in full consciousness of His presence,

White sees faith as the essential connecting link and the life-line between a human being and Christ. Yet she does not refer to the union with Christ as the ultimate and only goal in the spiritual pursuit but also regards it as a means to sustain spirituality. So it seems that in White's view, Christ not only attempts to create an ontological bond to a person but also to achieve something substantial through this relationship. This means that the fellowship with Christ will lead further and accomplish growth. In addition, this seems to indicate that both the union with Christ as well as human spirituality are equally threatened by deterioration and therefore need to be cared for. This makes the quest for intimacy with Christ an important endeavour. However, it is the active divine presence which is essential and mere unilateral attachment to him in terms of fervent religious practice is not sufficient.⁴²

The doctrine of Christ's incarnation seems to be at the foundation of White's teaching about the union with Christ, so that it is the incarnation that becomes the justification for that relationship.⁴³ Understanding this principle is also a part of the spiritual quest, since Christ's becoming human creates the grounds for the hope of the future resurrection from the dead. Christ's becoming one with humanity is the basis for "His life becoming ours." It is the actual divine presence, and not only Christ's identification with humanity, which brings spiritual blessings and, ultimately, salvation.⁴⁴

This suggests that entering into a spiritual union with Christ is not a matter of human choice since the initiative has come from God in the form of Christ's incarnation. It is by and in his humanity that the connection between divinity and humanity was originally constituted. Here we can see how closely spiritual ideas and doctrinal understanding are linked together. White's teaching in regard to the union with Christ would not make much sense unless it was based on orthodox Christological doctrine. On the basis of the primary sources I find sufficient reason to maintain that her spiritual teaching has its grounds, generally speaking, in the traditional view of Christology.⁴⁵

although unseen, they are to hear His words, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' John 14:27."

⁴² COL 47; COL 162. "But Christ dwelling in the soul is a wellspring of joy. For all who receive Him, the very keynote of the word of God is rejoicing."

⁴³ Perrin 2007, 212. "Christian spirituality is generally described as a spirituality of the Incarnation because Jesus took on human flesh."

⁴⁴ DA 388.

⁴⁵ White places herself in opposition to the early Adventist understanding regarding Christ's divinity. Dederen 2000, 198–199. Dederen points out that White was one of those whose influence

White suggests that the spiritual union between Christ and his disciples was not essentially affected even though he ascended to heaven, and that in the same way believers of all times may equally enter into and enjoy the benefits of intimacy with him, despite the fact that Christ is not physically present. It is the sinner for whom the invigorating and energising connection has been made possible, and it is also the sinner who is invited to use this opportunity for spiritual well-being so that through this union with Christ all may “become partakers of the divine nature.”⁴⁶

White understands the union with Christ ontologically in terms of Christ dwelling within, but also as an interactive relationship consisting of mutual, active involvement by Christ as well as by the human spirit.⁴⁷ This dynamic presence of Christ within is spoken of in terms of the Holy Spirit’s work and influence which causes transforming, stimulating and vitalising effects in a person’s life. Thus the divine presence calls for human response and participation. White therefore recommends “continual devotion” so that this relationship can be intensified and maintained. Prayer also seems to affect a person’s perception of the closeness and familiarity of the fellowship with Christ.⁴⁸

The consequences of an intimate union with Christ will be demonstrated in the way a person regards self, his/her attitudes towards others and courses of action. White suggests that through this fellowship the divine presence and its positive influence will be demonstrated in the midst of all people. The divine qualities such as grace, love and goodness are expressed and become observable in everyday secular life. Therefore, it seems to be her conviction that interactive spiritual connectedness with Christ is the precondition and the inexhaustible source of motivation for successful witness and ministry.

brought about an acceptance of the traditional Christological views into the denomination. Tugwell 1986/2004, 108. Tugwell states that the union of Christ’s divinity and humanity has been the basis for Christian spirituality since the time of the early church fathers such as Ireneus (died c. 200).

⁴⁶ DA 675. See also DA 391; MB 50.

⁴⁷ SC 69. “Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness, –all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly, –by abiding in Him, –that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith.” Bray 2003, 109–115. In his description of evangelical spirituality Bray uses exclusively relational language; he sees the gospel presenting an invitation to join the fellowship of heaven. This union and communion is based on people being adopted by God, the bond of love characterizing their attitudes and the fellowship emerging from the assurance of God’s love. See also SC 71.

⁴⁸ SC 74; DA 251; COL 146. “Our prayers are to be as earnest and persistent as was the petition of the needy friend who asked for the loaves at midnight. The more earnestly and steadfastly we ask, the closer will be our spiritual union with Christ.”

Fellowship with Christ in service, in turn, will function as a process of preparation and adjustment for future coexistence in God's kingdom.⁴⁹

White also refers to a transcendental element in everyday human relationships. What is significant is that connectedness to Christ in her thinking has to do with the common human need to love and be loved. According to her, spirituality includes not only the sweetness of being the object of divine love but also being touched by the needs of humanity.⁵⁰

The maintenance of such a union is one of White's concerns. While the initiative for the establishment of the connection comes from God, as do all the first steps in terms of divine salvation, the care and preservation of the union depends considerably on human participation. This constitutes one of the reasons and motives for the spiritual praxis, but paradoxically it is Christ himself who brings meaning and vigour to this activity and through it to the person engaged in such practice.⁵¹ White also describes this relational contact in affective terms: through the union with Christ a person's emotional needs are met and assimilation with people in need through compassion and sympathy strengthens the attachment to Christ.⁵²

Ultimately, the union with Christ and thus Christian spirituality on the whole is, in White's thinking, to a large extent concerned with spiritual transformation.⁵³ Her transformative emphasis is in harmony with the way Christian spirituality has been defined and described by a number of scholars.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ NB 83; MB 44; MH 163; Ed. 264. "Those who reject the privilege of fellowship with Christ in service, reject the only training that imparts a fitness for participation with Him in His glory."

⁵⁰ COL 384.

⁵¹ DA 676. "This union with Christ, once formed, must be maintained... This is no casual touch, no off-and-on connection. The branch becomes a part of the living vine. The communication of life, strength, and fruitfulness from the root to the branches is unobstructed and constant. Separated from the vine, the branch cannot live." Juntunen 2003 b, 143. Referring to Luther's ideas, Juntunen writes: "Christ is present in faith. Through his presence he creates the Christian as the subject of a prayer-life and good works, a co-operator with God. The new existence is not, however, a new feature caused by grace or a state of sanctification, awareness of feeling. It is actualised only in the union with Christ, as a branch of the vine. A Christian viewed apart from the union with Christ is always merely a dead twig. (See John 15:5-6)"

⁵² MH 163. "How little do we enter into sympathy with Christ on that which should be the strongest bond of union between us and Him—compassion for depraved, guilty, suffering souls, dead in trespasses and sins!"

⁵³ SC 73.

⁵⁴ Shults & Sandage 2006, 18–22. Shults and Sandage refer to the second-order change by the term 'transformation' and regard spirituality as an essential component in it. Shults 2006, 61. "Christian spirituality therefore has to do with the transformation of the life of human persons through spiritual union with God in Christ." Cottingham 2005, 5. For Cottingham the process of internal transformation seems fundamental to understanding the nature of spirituality. McGrath 2003, 13. "Spirituality is all about the way in which we encounter and experience God, and the transformation of our lives as a result of that encounter and experience." Spohn 2005, 271;

As far as the recent discussion on transformation in the context of Christian spirituality is concerned, Sandage in particular describes the spiritual transformation with relational language. This is a relevant point in regard to White, since her portrayals of spiritual transformation also refer to relational causes.⁵⁵

The issue of receiving Christ is complex and even controversial in relation to what the human role is in finding faith or commencing an individual spiritual life.⁵⁶ But even more importantly, the issue is intricate because it can be regarded as having to do with the change of a person's standing in relation to God, i.e. becoming justified.⁵⁷ Therefore it is significant to notice that White does not speak about the reception of Christ in distinctly sacramental terms, but more as a response to Christ's spiritual influence within.⁵⁸ However, her language does include allusions to the Lord's Supper and some of her expressions seem to be closely related to it. Her point in this connection is not the doctrinal technicality regarding the means by which Christ is received but instead the spiritual significance of receiving him inwardly.⁵⁹

With regard to the means through which Christ is individually received, White also writes more specifically. In her view, the reception of Christ cannot be separated from a thorough acquaintance with the Bible and its message speaking to the human spirit in a deep and transforming way. She suggests that the encounter with God occurs particularly through Christ's words, which form the essence of the divine message.⁶⁰

Willard 2003, 47–48. Willard, contrary to White, emphasises the role and responsibility of the individual in transformation.

⁵⁵ Sandage 2006, 163. "I am defining spiritual transformation as *a process of profound, qualitative change in the self in relationship to the sacred* (original italics)."

⁵⁶ If the birth of faith in Christ is understood in psychological terms as an intellectual conviction or altered state of consciousness, the human role is decisive. Vainio 2003, 73–76. Discussing Lutheran attempts to understand the essence of faith, Vainio writes, however: "Faith is thus not about emotions or different states of awareness, but about a hidden unification with Christ."

⁵⁷ COL 310. "It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour."

⁵⁸ Jolkkonen 2002, 272–273; Pihkala 2003, 221–232. It is interesting to compare White's view to Luther's ideas. According to Luther, Christ's real presence in the elements makes the Communion a means of grace and thus the reception of Christ takes place in conjunction with the sacrament. Jolkkonen 2002, 271. "The Spirit does not affect salvation apart from the visible reality, but by means of physical signs, the word and the sacraments."

⁵⁹ DA 389. "To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated." See also COL 125.

⁶⁰ MB 148–149. "The great principles of the law, of the very nature of God, are embodied in the words of Christ on the mount. Whoever builds upon them is building upon Christ, the Rock of

White describes the reception of Christ as supremely important because it equals salvation and results in the person obtaining a fundamentally new perspective of hope, purpose and meaning for the whole of one's existence; consequently everything will be seen from a different point of view than before.⁶¹ In addition, she sees this experience as an inner transformation which changes a person ontologically as well as enables attitudes and behaviour to be changed.⁶² Thereby the person may obtain divine attributes. However, this must be understood spiritually because the believer is not granted an escape from humanness and all of its accompanying weakness. But even if this is the case, the idea of receiving Christ opens breath-taking perspectives.⁶³ Therefore White's advice is plain: "Let your life be knit by hidden links to the life of Jesus." COL 149.

It is, indeed, the inviting of Christ into one's life and the allowing of him to dwell within which White recommends as the constant spiritual exercise for a believer.⁶⁴ But she also urges a constant awareness of the indwelling of Christ, because this consciousness brings meaning to each moment of one's life, to every task and to every meeting with other people. By such knowledge it is possible for the believer to understand the purpose of life better, and to experience hope personally, as well as live out this positive view of life.⁶⁵

The search for the sense of divine presence is generally regarded within the study of Christian spirituality as a part of spiritual practice.⁶⁶ On the basis of Ellen White's references to this issue, it can be concluded that she follows this tradition too. For her it seems primarily to mean a constant acknowledgement of Christ's presence as a present reality everywhere. She sees nature as an especially important means through which Christ makes his presence real and

Ages. In receiving the word, we receive Christ. And only those who thus receive His words are building upon Him." Raunio 2003 b, 107–124. White follows the Protestant tradition where God's word is regarded as the central agent in bringing about and maintaining spiritual wellbeing. While describing the essential features of Lutheran spirituality, Raunio, for instance, emphasizes the central role of the word as the foundation for spiritual life. He suggests that meditation on the word gives birth to Christ in the human heart, and that it is the word that leads people to Christ. See also DA 320.

⁶¹ DA 556. "It is when Christ is received as a personal Saviour that salvation comes to the soul."

⁶² MB 50; MH 131.

⁶³ COL 330. "All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes." See also COL 149.

⁶⁴ MB 65. "Let Christ, the divine Life, dwell in you and through you reveal the heaven-born love that will inspire hope in the hopeless and bring heaven's peace to the sin-stricken heart." MB 129.

⁶⁵ MH 156.

⁶⁶ See e.g.: Wikström 1995, 134–136; Shults 2006, 125–126, 128–129.

perceivable, even a vehicle by which he is able to communicate his peace and love more effectively than by many other means.⁶⁷

White sees Christ's presence as a consequence of the close attachment which is achieved through prayer in the form of a friendly conversation. She believes that human beings are invited to approach Christ as they are and address him using verbal expressions which are entirely their own. It seems that such conversations would be characterised by frankness, openness and authenticity, elements which typically enhance the perception of the presence of Christ as more real, meaningful and effective. In any case, the results, according to her, include such Christian virtues as simplicity, humility, meekness and lowliness of heart.⁶⁸ It can thus be concluded that for her the presence of Christ is not an abstract and ethereal concept, but more like a meeting of good friends.

When speaking about Christ's presence, White states that it "has healing virtue for the sinner." DA 266. This claim contains the assumption that Christ's presence is, indeed, real, and nothing to be afraid of. On the contrary, it is something to be sought for with pleasure and anticipation.⁶⁹ The abiding presence of Christ means that he reigns in the soul. Freedom from guilt and sin seem to be the primary benefits, but this freedom also means that now there is an opportunity to discover one's real identity as a child of God. In this state people reach harmony with themselves, with God and with the entire environment. It also means finding emotional stability and a fully approved way of relating to others.⁷⁰

What is significant too is that the presence of Christ is not a matter for the individual alone, even though the personal experience of Christ's presence within is the starting point for all further development, in terms of living responsibly, engaging in service, etc. It is White's conviction that the presence of Christ can be experienced communally and its positive consequences may thus benefit a whole congregation, when there exists the necessary readiness and

⁶⁷ COL 25. "As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love." See also SC 9.

⁶⁸ COL 129-130.

⁶⁹ MH 85. "Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. Seek Him as One who desires to be found of you. He desires you not only to touch His garments, but to walk with Him in constant communion."

⁷⁰ COL 419. "The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour."

sensitivity. It is Christ himself who is the only security and safeguard for the church – and not only for the church as an institution and an administrative structure, but primarily for the individuals it is made up of, who, when tested by his presence, are all found equally wanting and in need of his grace. Furthermore, the presence of Christ is made manifest through God’s word wherever it is preached or presented through reading, song, drama, art or study, and Christ is always personally present when people pray or worship.⁷¹

5.3. The Human Spirit in Interactive Union with Christ

One needs to establish first of all that Ellen White refers to an interactive union between humanity and the divine by her relational and communicative language even though she does not use the term ‘interaction’. I also find it necessary to describe her conception of the qualitative features of the actual interaction in order to clarify its essence and thus its significance for Christian spirituality. It is therefore the purpose of this section to analyse the interactive quality of the relationship between a human being and God and the effect of this idea of an interactive relationship on White’s view of Christian spirituality.

There needs to be an element of reciprocal communication in a relationship before it can be portrayed as interactive. The way White describes the union between a Christian and Christ indicates that a communicative element is an essential dimension of it. The interaction is coloured by emotional impressions which are typical of an affectionate attachment between two persons. She claims that in addition to information, elevating, transforming, refining and edifying influences are also transmitted to the human counterpart in the bilateral union. The interaction takes place in the form of a conversation through Bible reading and contemplative processing of its content. Her terminology alludes to the sight and visual perception, but she presumably uses such terms in a spiritual sense. She describes the contact with Christ as a profound exchange as well as an

⁷¹ DA 136; DA 414; DA 442. “But we are not to bear this great responsibility alone. Wherever His word is obeyed with a sincere heart, there Christ abides. Not only is He present in the assemblies of the church, but wherever disciples, however few, meet in His name, there also He will be.”

immediately effective touch, even though the experience takes place for the most part on a spiritual level.⁷²

White's conception of the union with Christ can be regarded as interactive because there is a common set of values and purposes between these persons: self-forgetfulness and concern for others. This entails shared work and actual cooperation in ministry and service, which make up one of the crucial elements of the spiritual fellowship between God and people. The aspect of cooperation with Christ in terms of service and ministry will be further explored in section 6.4. below.⁷³

One component in White's view of the interactive communion with Christ is the emotional attachment a believer experiences and the accompanying feelings, such as joy and a sense of being loved. The fellowship is meaningful mainly because of the deep individual impact caused by the affective components involved in such a relationship.⁷⁴ It can also be assumed that since the divine operation within is holistic, it also engages a person's feelings, creating a sense of inspiration and a re-orientation of thinking, values and behavioural patterns, as well as a corresponding inner motivation.⁷⁵ Consequently the union with Christ is also described in terms of friendship and intimacy, which are possible only in conjunction with joint, cordial interaction.⁷⁶ "The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite." Ed 14.

White's writings also indicate, however, that the believer's union with Christ is in any case fundamentally ontological by nature. Without this characteristic as its foundation, the interactive elements and features would not be feasible nor could a union even exist. It is on the basis of Christ's incarnation that

⁷² MB 85; Ed 127; Ed 84. "Only by such communion—the communion of mind with mind and heart with heart, of the human with the divine—can be communicated that vitalizing energy which it is the work of true education to impart. It is only life that begets life."

⁷³ COL 326. "Christ's followers have been redeemed for service. Our Lord teaches that the true object of life is ministry. Christ Himself was a worker, and to all His followers He gives the law of service—service to God and to their fellow men. Here Christ has presented to the world a higher conception of life than they had ever known. By living to minister for others, man is brought into connection with Christ. The law of service becomes the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men." DA 417.

⁷⁴ SC 45. "When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action. Those who feel the constraining love of God, do not ask how little may be given to meet the requirements of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer." DA 70.

⁷⁵ MH 36.

⁷⁶ COL 421; Ed 84.

the union with humankind has been established. It is on this basis that the interactive communion may occur.⁷⁷

What can be concluded from the above is that for White the essence of spirituality does not consist of spiritual praxis or faithfulness to a set of doctrinal beliefs. Instead, she seems to view Christian spirituality above all as a function of the human spirit, as a fundamental and meaningful connectedness to the divine and as a self-transcendence with the divinity through actual contact and interaction.

5.3.1 The Knowledge of God as a Precondition for Interaction

As has been pointed out above, in section 3.3.6. Ellen White, in accordance with the common Christian understanding, sees transformation as a fundamental part of spiritual development. Here I will discuss the role of the knowledge of God as constituting the precondition and the premise for this profound change. Furthermore, the knowledge of God also functions as the means for instigating and performing transformation.⁷⁸ White suggests that knowledge of God is possible for a human being because of God's own initiative, such knowledge being a result of Christ identifying himself with human thoughts and aims. Knowing God is also the starting point for a meaningful and profitable relationship with him because the experience of learning to know God consists of intimacy with him, and such an experience produces a genuine inner willingness to obey him and to distance oneself from wrong ways of behaving and living.⁷⁹

It thus appears that for White the knowledge of God goes beyond individual familiarity with divine ideas or being thoroughly informed of the facts about God as a divine person. Knowing God also has to do with the unification of the divine with the human at the core level of being, which means God's transformative involvement with the human spirit. For White, obtaining knowledge of God is not an ordinary learning process which can be measured and

⁷⁷ Ed 33. "In the divine plan of education as adapted to man's condition after the Fall, Christ stands as the representative of the Father, the connecting link between God and man; He is the great teacher of mankind. And He ordained that men and women should be His representatives." It appears that White uses the term union in reference to the ontological fellowship to Christ while the term communion seems to refer to the interactive and mutual connectedness.

⁷⁸ MH 425. "The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It is the knowledge that works transformation of character. This knowledge, received, will re-create the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine." See also: Ed 76; MH 419.

⁷⁹ DA 668.

studied by using methods of psychology and other human sciences. At its essence, the encounter with knowledge of God can instead be described as a mystical and spiritual experience which transcends the ordinary realm of perception.⁸⁰

However, for White even this unidentifiable and mystical experience, of which some elements cannot be classified according to any of the logically defined categories, is not the only facet of knowing God. She also describes the course of action by which people obtain the knowledge of God in terms of a typical learning experience:

So through the creation we are to become acquainted with the Creator. The book of nature is a great lesson book, which in connection with the Scriptures we are to use in teaching others of His character, and guiding lost sheep back to the fold of God. As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction that logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word are impressed on the heart.⁸¹

One is able to see here that obtaining knowledge of God is not a result of logical reasoning, instead faith in God results primarily from the inner human spirit being touched by the Holy Spirit.⁸² White speaks about “the experimental [i.e. experiential] knowledge of God”, which appears to contain the idea of real experience with God as its basis. The incarnation of Christ and his human existence on earth as well as the subsequent written account of his life make it possible for people to learn to know Christ by studying about him. On this basis an actual acquaintance with him can be achieved. But if this information is received on the intellectual level only, it will not make the knowledge of God experiential. Therefore, a practical application of the biblical teaching must be regarded as the main prerequisite for the knowledge of God to become experiential. In addition to this, an openness and sensitivity to all divine activity now and in the past is included in the process of learning to know God, because in God there is always more to learn about and to know.⁸³

⁸⁰ DA 668. “If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised.”

⁸¹ COL 24.

⁸² Bayer 2003, 42–57. At this point it is significant to notice that Bayer describes Luther’s emphasis of the biblical notion of faith as coming from hearing (Rom. 10:17). He argues that the word of God takes the form of deeds and actions as well as words in a purely linguistic sense.

⁸³ COL 114; MB 150; MH 460.

Consequently White also speaks in this context about a number of spiritual practices. Even though Bible reading and thoughtful study constitute a basis for the quest to obtain knowledge of God, prayer and meditation are inseparable parts of that programme as well. Expressions such as “looking unto Jesus” give an idea of what is meant by the methods through which knowledge is gained regarding Christ.⁸⁴

White seems to say that by knowing God, a continuous communion with him now, but also for ever more, becomes possible. Yet at the same time she is saying that this communion with God constitutes the way by which one may come to know him, whereas formal religion, void of actual personal contact with God and functioning interaction with him, cannot provide real knowledge of him.⁸⁵

It is also significant to notice that the most important thing to know about God in White’s view is his grace, his forgiving love.⁸⁶ She also argues that this love can be experienced and known only through a vital connectedness with Christ.⁸⁷ So it appears that she does not maintain that knowledge of God is the exclusive prerequisite for fellowship with him, as she also says that a living contact with Christ composes one of the essential ways of obtaining spiritually relevant knowledge of God. It seems, therefore, appropriate to define her approach to the spiritual union as interactive, since both the divine and the human party are described as obviously active yet their reciprocal roles cannot be distinctly depicted or defined.⁸⁸

So White’s idea of “the experiential knowledge of God” refers to a person’s individual experience of God’s love, which God himself extends to humanity by various means and ways, but in a special way through Christ. The

⁸⁴ COL 355. “Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity.”

⁸⁵ MH 457; COL 411.

⁸⁶ MB 115. “The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is to know and believe the love that He has to us.”

⁸⁷ MB 119. “Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan.”

⁸⁸ MB 20; COL 354–355. “The value of man is estimated in heaven according to the capacity of the heart to know God. This knowledge is the spring from which flows all power. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind; and He is ever seeking to bring the human mind into association with the divine. He offers us the privilege of co-operation with Christ in revealing His grace to the world, that we may receive increased knowledge of heavenly things.”

experience and the perception of that love are essentially deepened through the integration of that same love into one's own actions and behaviour and one's relations to others.⁸⁹

The point here is, however, that a person's interactive connectedness and experienced fellowship with God are relevantly linked to the human prospects of obtaining knowledge of God. For this reason White introduces a spiritual practice by means of which this knowledge can be experientially acquired:

All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10.⁹⁰

White appears to describe the human longing for a clearer knowledge of God and the process of obtaining that knowledge, as a spiritual event which takes place on the level of the human spirit rather than as a concrete experience to be observed, examined, evaluated and comprehended. There is an intriguing tension within her text between the concepts of knowing and mystery. Knowing seems to be possible to a certain degree, yet the process by which knowledge can be obtained is a spiritual one.⁹¹ At the same time, however, she seems to argue that there is an element of intellectual understanding and perception as well as active mental consciousness involved in knowing God.⁹²

White's way of understanding the knowledge of God does not primarily concern the human intellectual capacity but rather a person's attitudes,

⁸⁹ MB 104–105; MB 34; DA 22. "The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known." MB 25. "Unless you accept in your own life the principle of self-sacrificing love, which is the principle of His character, you cannot know God." See also MH 409.

⁹⁰ MH 58.

⁹¹ COL 35. "All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path."

⁹² COL 333. "God requires the training of the mental faculties. He designs that His servants shall possess more intelligence and clearer discernment than the worldling, and He is displeased with those who are too careless or too indolent to become efficient, well-informed workers. The Lord bids us love Him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind. This lays upon us the obligation of developing the intellect to its fullest capacity, that with all the mind we may know and love our Creator."

i.e. his/her willingness to relate adequately to the unknown. A measure of humility is required, since God is not fully knowable or comprehensible to the human mind.⁹³

The only key to the mysteries that surround us is to acknowledge in them all the presence and power of God. Men need to recognize God as the Creator of the universe, One who commands and executes all things. They need a broader view of His character, and of the mystery of His agencies.⁹⁴

The element of mystery is an interesting issue in relation to White as a spiritual guide, since within Adventism she is also referred to as an “authoritative source of truth”.⁹⁵ This statement had best be understood in the light of her own attitude concerning the divine truth, which seems to contain aspects of uncertainty, limited comprehension and humility in the presence of the transcendent and unknowable God. Thus it appears that religious truth should, in her opinion, be handled primarily in a spiritual way rather than intellectually and rationally alone. This spiritual approach to divine matters includes elements such as wonder, ambiguity and mystery, which are received principally through faith.⁹⁶

White advocates a practical approach to the issues of Christian spirituality instead of attempting to comprehend things intellectually which are beyond human scope and ability. Her advice is that a person must apply to his/her personal life and put into practice the teachings of the Bible. In fact, this is the way in which the relevance and value of biblical wisdom can best be verified. She seems, indeed, to imply a paradoxical approach to religious teaching, an attitude which seems destined to provoke people who have adopted a modern, rational mind-set: the truth is boundless and un-comprehensible, yet it should be obeyed.⁹⁷

There are theoretical models, however, which may substantiate White’s way of approaching religious truth claims through experience constituted by obedience. William James’s argument in his attempt to explain religious or

⁹³ Perrin 2007, 111–114. Certain features in White’s ideas seem to reflect an apophatic approach to spirituality, but at the same time there are elements which are clearly kataphatic.

⁹⁴ DA 605.

⁹⁵ Fundamental beliefs, Article 18. “One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.”

⁹⁶ Ed 169–170.

⁹⁷ DA 494; COL 128.

spiritual experience is built on the notion of the primacy of experience in relation to any rationally conceived doctrinal structures.⁹⁸

But coming back to the concept of mystery and its relationship to truth in White's thinking, there are further aspects which need to be pointed out. Along with a humble appreciation of the mysterious nature of truth, she also speaks of constant learning and an increase of the knowledge of truth. There exists in her thinking an intrinsic tension between the concepts of mystery and truth which seems to indicate that both of them must be understood within this relation.⁹⁹ But more importantly, this relationship is held together in the person of Christ. It is therefore in an open and dynamic fellowship with Christ that this tension-loaded relation between the concepts of truth and mystery can have a productive interface. The communion with Christ is experiential perception in cases where it is genuinely interactive, but this interchange of ideas and feelings takes place on the spiritual level.¹⁰⁰

All in all, White appears to acknowledge the value and significance of mystery as an integral part of religion and as an agent which makes spiritual development possible.¹⁰¹ In fact, complete knowledge and exhaustive comprehension of the Godhead and all matters divine would render faith meaningless. On the other hand, she regards the divine mystery as a challenge, and hence she urges her readers to explore diligently in order to know and to understand as much as possible of it. As new aspects are understood and applied to life, at least some portion of the mystery will unfold and be comprehended.¹⁰²

So I conclude that for White the method of dealing with such elements as knowing God, truth and mystery primarily involves the experiential and spiritual dimensions rather than the rational and intellectual human capacity.

⁹⁸ James 1902/1985, 296–301. James argues that encounters with sacred and mystical experiences are highly personal and cannot be transferred to another person. Even though there are similarities in the emotional aspects of experiences, there is also a factual quality attached to them. Despite the extraordinary and short-lived nature of religious experiences, James regards them as valuable sources of knowledge concerning matters of faith. See also Schneider 2006, 55–58.

⁹⁹ Within the Apophatic and the Mystic traditions the emphasis has mainly been on the incomprehensibility of God and the element of “unknowing” in religion. On the other hand, there seems to be hardly any room at all for mystery, awe and wonder in modern Evangelical thinking. There the emphasis tends to be in religious knowledge which can be obtained, and on those things which can be understood.

¹⁰⁰ COL 35; COL 129.

¹⁰¹ Ed 172.

¹⁰² COL 114; DA 605.

Instead of logical reasoning, White suggests contemplation as the course of action to take in order to perceive and identify divine activity.¹⁰³

Finally, it needs to be emphasised that White was confident that anyone can understand the Bible and learn from it all that is needed for salvation and genuine spiritual experience. Even some essential elements of the divine mysteries can be revealed to anyone who searches diligently and with the correct attitude.¹⁰⁴

5.3.2. The Consequences of the Interactive Communion with Christ

It can be expected that surrender to a God, who is invisible, unknowable in the ordinary sense and transcendent, may cause hesitation and even be frightening. The yielding of one's will to God, may at first sound like a passage to purposelessness, loss of identity and a threat to the individual's control of life. However, according to Ellen White, the meaning of surrender is the opposite. She suggests that through surrender to God the believer finds the very foundation of human existence, since apart from the Creator-God there is no life at all. But through that connection, personal meaningfulness and purpose may be reached. The union with Christ is a relationship in which mutual interaction is possible, and it occurs in such an attachment where the integrity of the personal identity of both parties is mutually recognised and appreciated. Furthermore, a sense of a firm grip on life is more easily obtainable in a supportive union with the God whom one believes to hold control of the entire universe.¹⁰⁵

White uses the term rest in reference to a meaning and purpose which is beyond simple physical rest and relaxation. It is not found in inactivity, idleness or withdrawal to unattached separateness, but instead it can be experienced through meaningful activity and action directed by God. The plan of salvation offers the greatest context which an individual can join and of which be

¹⁰³ COL 125. "As we contemplate the beauty of nature, as we study its lessons in the cultivation of the soil, in the growth of the trees, in all the wonders of earth and sea and sky, there will come to us a new perception of truth. And the mysteries connected with God's dealings with men, the depths of His wisdom and judgment as seen in human life—these are found to be a storehouse rich in treasure."

¹⁰⁴ COL 133. See also Ed 170; SC 107–108.

¹⁰⁵ COL 173. "If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us."

a part through personal contribution. As a matter of fact, God is able to carry out His purpose in this world only through those people who are willing to work for Him.¹⁰⁶

White's view of Christian spirituality is based on a broad understanding of ministry, which includes an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. In fact, her overall approach to spirituality seems to include all positive ways of outreach to people, all that is intended to serve, help or bless. Her praxis-oriented approach to Christianity becomes particularly noticeable in this connection. As soon as the love of God has been accepted, i.e. as soon as the bond with Christ has been established, the believing Christian is willing to share the good news about the goodness of God with others. In White's thinking, the spirituality which is directed toward the maintenance of the relationship with God cannot be separated from ministry, mission and service.¹⁰⁷

According to White, Christian spirituality is not limited to a secluded, internal and private activity of the soul, but it runs freely and naturally outwards to others in positive words and actions. She visualises the love of Christ within the heart surging out in a manner which cannot be hindered; the assurance of His love is the "sweet fragrance, it cannot be hidden". The impact of such an outburst is life-giving and refreshing like spring water for the thirsty in the desert.¹⁰⁸

The starting point for such a strategy for practical spirituality appears to be the following: All people need constant encouragement, comfort, acceptance, support and various indications of love and concern from the people around them. Thus relational and interactive spirituality is not restricted to the relationship with God but can construct a channel by which God can reach people with His mercy, goodness and love.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ SC 71; COL 417. "Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this. The wants of the soul, only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed."

¹⁰⁷ COL 339. "Individually we are connected with our fellow men, a part of God's great whole, and we stand under mutual obligations. No man can be independent of his fellow men; for the well-being of each affects others. It is God's purpose that each shall feel himself necessary to others' welfare, and seek to promote their happiness."

¹⁰⁸ SC 77.

¹⁰⁹ SC 79. "And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow

Ministry and service for others do not, in White's thinking, form the ultimate goal for spirituality but rather one of the essential avenues through which God's presence and its blessings can be obtained and experienced. Ultimately the union with Christ is realised through attitudes and acts of self-denial and unselfishness.¹¹⁰

I conclude in section 5.1. above that, according to White, spirituality as such is not the ultimate goal but only a means for higher goals such as unselfishness, usefulness and cooperation. Here I note that White does not recognise altruism in terms of ministry and service as the final goals either, pointing out instead that they are a necessary way for still closer union with Jesus. Based on this, I suggest merging these opposing points of view to create a paradoxical entirety, a symbiosis where simple causality does not work, but where there is instead a multiple network of effects. What appears to emerge as an outcome of spirituality turns out to be the root for further spiritual development.

White shows obvious determination in expressing her opinion on the benefits of various activities in ministry, service and witnessing. In her view, the way to spiritual growth is through participation in the work which was assigned by Christ himself for his followers. Her opinion is that all spiritual progress is dependent on active involvement in service for others, according to individual giftedness and ability, and how needs and demand indicate.¹¹¹

5.3.3. The Fellowship with Christ through Prayer

Concerning the essential areas of the spiritual praxis, Ellen White has several insights about prayer, as her ideas underline the relational and interactive nature of the relationship between God and people. She also identifies the conditions on the basis of which this interactive connection may exist and function. For her, prayer is an expression of any genuine personal ideas or feelings, which may exist within, even the most stirring and most emotionally intense matters. As a consequence, in

upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator.”

¹¹⁰ SC 79.

¹¹¹ SC 80. “The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us—to engage, to the extent of our ability, in helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them.” See also SC 81–82.

order to know what to pray about, the praying person is invited to confront the self and to listen to it attentively.¹¹²

One of White's definitions of prayer is concise, but it underlines the intimate and personal nature of the essence of private prayer: "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend." The aim of prayer is not just to inform God of one's desires, wants and needs, but instead it is a part of the act of receiving him. At the same time she expresses an idea of the upward movement of prayer in terms of approaching God directly and speaking to him personally. She regards this uplifting and unifying quality in prayer as intrinsic.¹¹³

Prayer is not depicted as a task intended to convince God to do or give something which he would not do and give otherwise. According to White, the case is quite the opposite: God does not have a reluctant or hesitant attitude to people, rather they are too slow to approach him. She concludes that it is the lack of faith that makes people unwilling to commune with God. People are deficient in faith because they are not fully persuaded of the absolute goodness of God.¹¹⁴

Conversely, White presents a list of conditions for prayers to be heard and answered. It seems that they point to a desired state of mind and they are intended to enhance an optimal attitude. Thus the essence of prayer is not found in the correctness of wording but in the stance of heart. The prerequisites are:

1. Recognising one's need.
2. The necessity to ask.
3. No un-repented sin on the conscience.
4. Faith and trust in God.
5. Sense of humility, helplessness and dependence on God.
6. Willingness to forgive others and a loving attitude.
7. Perseverance in prayer.¹¹⁵

¹¹² MH 513; MB 84; SC 93. "Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with our heavenly Father. Our minds may be drawn out toward Him; we may meditate upon His works, His mercies, His blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life."

¹¹³ SC 93. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him." Stewart 2005, 79–87; Merton 1969/1996; Willard 1998, 257–296; Jokkonen 2003 a, 97–111; Perrin 2007, 276–279; Hennell 1986/2004, 459–463; Snyder 2004, 126–132; deWaal 1996/2003; Barrington-Ward 1998. A lot has been said about prayer during the history of the Christian church. In comparison with some of these ideas, White's thoughts appear to be somewhat similar or convergent, but she still seems to construct her own approach to prayer.

¹¹⁴ SC 94.

¹¹⁵ SC 95–97.

For White, prayer means connectedness with the transcendent God and personal communication with him, which includes an element of receiving vital things from him.¹¹⁶ Therefore she urges the reader to “make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your own soul.” She suggests that the union with God is composed of a mutual bond of communication and that individual involvement and input will be noticed by God even though the world that he cares for is immense. She speaks of prayer as a privilege which humans should do their utmost to take full advantage of. This indicates that she sees spirituality as a practice where human beings attempt to optimise their prospects and ability to receive and to obtain God’s goodness.¹¹⁷

White’s ideas concerning prayer also express the paradox of the union with Christ as well as that of the religious experience. Union with Christ seems to overrule all human weakness and imperfection. In addition, it appears that she sees both the human and the divine party as being in action in the event of prayer, which seems to indicate that the mutual involvement in interactive contact constitutes the essence of prayer.¹¹⁸

According to White, prayer is more than mere words or an exercise of thought in God’s presence. Instead, she presents a thought which is akin to the traditional idea of contemplation.¹¹⁹ She also sees secret prayer as “the life of the soul.” In this context of secret prayer and contemplative solitude, which is reached through faith, she claims that the real spiritual welfare and security are to be found.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ COL 250. “Prayer brings Jesus to our side, and gives to the fainting, perplexed soul new strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan.” S

¹¹⁷ SC 98. “There is necessity for diligence in prayer; let nothing hinder you. Make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your own soul. Seek every opportunity to go where prayer is wont to be made. Those who are really seeking for communion with God will be seen in the prayer meeting, faithful to do their duty and earnest and anxious to reap all the benefits they can gain. They will improve every opportunity of placing themselves where they can receive the rays of light from heaven.”

¹¹⁸ MH 182. “Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go.”

¹¹⁹ McGrath 1999, 182. Contemplation is seen as a “form of prayer, distinguished from meditation, in which the individual avoids or minimizes the use of words or images in order to experience the presence of God directly.”

¹²⁰ SC 98. “In solitude let the soul be laid open to the inspecting eye of God. Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God. No curious ear is to receive the burden of such petitions. In secret prayer the soul is free from surrounding influences, free from excitement. Calmly, yet fervently, will it reach out after God. Sweet and abiding will be the influence emanating from Him who seeth in secret, whose ear is open to hear the prayer arising from the heart. By calm, simple faith the soul holds communion with God and gathers to itself rays of divine light to strengthen and sustain it in the conflict with Satan. God is our tower of strength.”

As far as personal spiritual experience is concerned, prayer seems to present the climax of spirituality in White's teaching. Her thought structure concerning the union with God reaches its culmination in this contemplative openness to God. There is the greatest possible closeness and highest possible exposure involved in such a connectedness. Yet a person who treads on that ground is perfectly protected.¹²¹

Even here, at the climax of her composition for Christian spirituality, White's realism, practicality and her closeness to the demands of every-day life can be detected. Although human beings have access even to the heart of the infinite God, the matters which can be presented to Him are quite ordinary. The things which matter to people might seem commonplace and insignificant, but in her view, it is by bringing all things to God that the presence of God can be experienced. No mediation is needed, and no requirements are presented as far as the place for prayer is concerned. It is through such prayer, where people bring their real needs, concerns and feelings to God in a straightforward and simple way, that the intimacy and uniqueness of each connection between individual persons and God will come true.¹²²

On the basis of this, the ultimate encounter with the divine will take place as all things of life are surrendered to God in the midst of the ordinary and routine flow of life. Christian spirituality, according to White, thus leads to a candid and honest facing of the full range of issues which life brings to all people. Even the most problematic things become manageable when they can be brought to God.¹²³

There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest.¹²⁴

¹²¹ MB 85; SC 99; COL 129. "Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend." SC 97.

¹²² SC 100.

¹²³ COL 172. "He invites us to present to Him our perplexities and necessities, and our need of divine help. He bids us be instant in prayer. As soon as difficulties arise, we are to offer to Him our sincere, earnest petitions. By our importunate prayers we give evidence of our strong confidence in God. The sense of our need leads us to pray earnestly, and our heavenly Father is moved by our supplications."

¹²⁴ SC 100.

It is White's intention that the whole life would be shaped by prayer. Still she did not speak in favour of separating oneself from the circle of daily life with the purpose of devoting one's life totally to prayer. An active prayer life leads the Christian into close contact with the people around him/her. Prayer can thus be a tool in caring for the people with whom the Christian comes in contact. In addition, praise and thanksgiving are included in White's philosophy of prayer, as is active involvement in loving service for others and in the ministry of the gospel. These are activities which bring pleasure and cheer to the participants and thereby increase the inclination to gratitude.¹²⁵

Prayer as communication with God has, as White sees it, a transformative quality and a power to enhance spiritual, mental as well as moral development.¹²⁶ Prayer is also mentioned in connection with spiritual transformation, which she describes by using the term education. But prayer is also part of the sequence of life as it unfolds, and new experiences and challenges are encountered. Even a well-ordered life is a mystery which can be best appreciated as it is seen from the vantage-point of prayer.¹²⁷

Prayerful Christian life contains much more than frequently repeated seasons of prayer. In White's thinking, prayer is only a vehicle or instrument in a person's attempt to reach that which is essential, i.e. God through Christ. Prayer is but one element in a devotional practice where the concentration is always on Christ. Paradoxically the basis for the interactive focus of prayer is in the fact that it is Christ as a divine-human person who connects humankind to the Godhead.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ SC 101; SC 103. "Our God is a tender, merciful Father. His service should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work." SC 104. "The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise."

¹²⁶ DA 70. "Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things."

¹²⁷ MB 85; MH 509. "We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish. We are seldom, in all respects, placed in the same position twice. We continually have new scenes and new trials to pass through, where past experience cannot be a sufficient guide. We must have the continual light that comes from God."

¹²⁸ SC 104. "We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us." DA 363.

5.3.4. Doubt as a Threat to Personal Fellowship with God

The God-human relationship as defined by Ellen White is interactive at its core, as far as it is possible for people to perceive it. The relationship may be in danger of becoming invalid, if the intercourse and interaction are exposed to elements which may obstruct them. All that may potentially endanger or harm faith and spiritual wellbeing composes a threat to a successful fellowship with God.

One of the most common of such dangers is doubt, well known to all Christians.¹²⁹ As far as doubt is concerned, it does not consist only of a lack of intellectual certainty about God. Doubt is equally a result of a lack of trust. Conversely, only trust can make intimate and fruitful interaction possible. White does not attempt to rule out all possibility of doubt; she only presents basic counsel on how to face it. She suggests that through persistently and systematically maintaining a cheerful and positive approach to life, to self and to inner feelings, no room will remain for doubtful feelings and thoughts to gain ground within the mind. The attention should be turned away from the negativity of the present reality to the possibility that God represents.¹³⁰

White seems to assume that peaceful trust, and thus an interactive relationship, is feasible if certain elements of harmony exist between faith and understanding. On the one hand, she suggests that God has provided sufficient evidence on which to base one's faith. She also insists that the "faith must rest on evidence, not demonstration", that enough evidence is available to satisfy the desire to understand the foundations of faith. Yet she acknowledges that absolute proof of validity and verification are not possible.¹³¹

White believes that intelligent faith is possible on the basis of the abundant evidence which indicates that God is good and loving but also

¹²⁹ Zagzebski 2007, 25–99; Eskola 2003; Puolimatka 2005. The question of doubt is in general regarded as a philosophical problem having to do with epistemology rather than as a spiritual challenge. At least the research literature dealing with Christian spirituality hardly touches the issue of doubt. Kierkegaard 1850/2000, 80. According to Kierkegaard, doubt is the middle ground between faith and taking offence. He does not view doubt as an enemy of faith but rather as an unavoidable aspect of believing. Doubt is not the really serious problem, but despair is. Shults 2006, 68–81. Shults deals with the challenge of knowing from the point of view of spiritual growth and wellbeing.

¹³⁰ DA 808. "Those who educate themselves to look on the dark side, and murmur and complain, know not what they do. They are sowing the seeds of doubt, and they will have a harvest of doubt to reap. At a time when faith and confidence are most essential, many will thus find themselves powerless to hope and believe." MH 249. "We are to look away from self to Jesus."

¹³¹ SC 105.

omnipotent. She emphasises the fact that God is a mystery that can be approached only by faith. We can understand God only so far, and ultimately there comes a time in our quest to know God beyond which one can only trust “the hand that is omnipotent”, as well as “the heart that is full of love.” Although the intellect may not be fully convinced in terms of having received proof adequate for comprehension, experience-based evidence can still aid human faith and trust to hold onto God, because such evidence points to the goodness and mercy of God.¹³²

Even the Bible contains material which, according to White, cannot be easily understood. That has a humbling effect on a person and causes him/her to request the guidance of the Holy Spirit to assist in the process of their investigation. All in all, it is necessary to acknowledge the human limitations of comprehending an omnipotent and infinite God. Due to the limitations of the human intellectual capacity, it is thus only thanks to the availability of the instruction of the Holy Spirit that people can gain sufficient knowledge and understanding of the divinity as revealed in the Bible.¹³³

In White’s view, it is up to people themselves to adopt a teachable and open-minded approach toward divine knowledge. She advises her readers to be satisfied with an attitude of simple faith and a meek mind-set rather than insisting on understanding as the way to approach the mystery of God.¹³⁴ While this may have been an acceptable way of giving advice for believers engulfed with doubt in the end of the nineteenth century, her ideas hardly help those in our time who struggle with intellectual challenges created by contradictory religious and scientific ideas.

Once again White arrives at the practical nature of Christian spirituality. Her approach to the struggle between doubt and trust includes the application of faith into a person’s own life situation as the ultimate test. No idea

¹³² Ed 170. “We have no reason to doubt God’s word because we cannot understand the mysteries of His providence. In the natural world we are constantly surrounded with wonders beyond our comprehension. Should we then be surprised to find in the spiritual world also mysteries that we cannot fathom? The difficulty lies solely in the weakness and narrowness of the human mind.” SC 106–107; DA 297.

¹³³ SC 109.

¹³⁴ SC 110. Shults 2006, 81–90. According to Shults, knowing God requires relational intimacy and fellowship in the Spirit rather than intellectual comprehension. Trust is an essential characteristic of this fellowship. The goal in the attempt to know God better is not really to increase knowledge but to become wise.

is valid unless it can stand that test.¹³⁵ On this basis she suggests: “By the grace of Christ, perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding, and you will be enabled to understand and perform those of which you are now in doubt.” SC 112.

She argues that since God’s promises never fail, they can, therefore, be tested and found firm, and thus the grounds for doubt will be destroyed. Instead of attempting to concentrate on comprehending God’s mysteries intelligently, it is more profitable to seek a fuller perception of his love.¹³⁶

But White also introduces an eschatological aspect to disperse fear and doubt. The prospect of the union with Christ becoming more firmly established and the interaction growing more intimate can be expected to be comforting and encouraging to all believers. By supporting hope for the future, White seeks to banish doubt.¹³⁷

4.3.5. The Spiritual Struggle at the Interface of the Dialogical Communion with God

Ellen White views temptations and trials as threats to a profitable interaction with God. This is true especially in cases where people under such an attack are unable to stand against them successfully.¹³⁸ On the other hand, it is only through union with Christ that one is able to resist the power which pulls him/her towards morally and spiritually wrong behaviours. However, the ability to resist the power of evil is beyond human capability. The emphasis in White’s thinking, therefore, is not on the threat temptations and trials pose to our spiritual welfare, but on those spiritual opportunities which are available to enable us to be prepared for

¹³⁵ SC 111. “There is an evidence that is open to all, – the most highly educated, and the most illiterate, – the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises. He bids us ‘taste and see that the Lord is good.’ Psalm 34:8. Instead of depending upon the word of another, we are to taste for ourselves.”

¹³⁶ SC 112.

¹³⁷ SC 112–113. “By faith we may look to the hereafter and grasp the pledge of God for a growth of intellect, the human faculties uniting with the divine, and every power of the soul being brought into direct contact with the Source of light. We may rejoice that all which has perplexed us in the providences of God will then be made plain, things hard to be understood will then find an explanation; and where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken purposes, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony.”

¹³⁸ COL 175. “There is no danger that the Lord will neglect the prayers of His people. The danger is that in temptation and trial they will become discouraged, and fail to persevere in prayer.”

such trials and to confront them effectively. It is Christ's presence that makes these divine resources available for people in scenes of struggle.¹³⁹

White suggests that an active, individual involvement in the spiritual struggle is an inevitable part of any developing Christian experience.¹⁴⁰ Yet this struggle against the power of temptations is neither hopeless nor devoid of purpose, because these challenges may contribute decidedly to a person's spiritual development.¹⁴¹ Therefore, it appears that she regards these experiences as beneficial, and even as necessary opportunities for growth towards a more thriving spirituality.¹⁴² She also argues that trials and tribulations do not take place randomly, but instead God allows and even designs them with the purpose of bringing about positive results for the believer.¹⁴³ She consoles her readers by reaffirming that Christ "measures every trial, He watches the furnace fire that must test every soul." MB 121.

God in His great love is seeking to develop in us the precious graces of His Spirit. He permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience and advances us in the work of character building. The soul that through divine power resists temptation reveals to the world and to the heavenly universe the efficiency of the grace of Christ.¹⁴⁴

Concerning the topic of spiritual struggle in White's thinking, it is important to be aware of its wider theoretical context. I refer here to the theme of the great controversy, which is one of the key ideas in her thinking. She describes this conflict between Christ and Satan elsewhere in terms of historical

¹³⁹ DA 599. "Without the life of Christ in us, we cannot withstand the storms of temptation. Our eternal safety depends upon our building upon the sure foundation."

¹⁴⁰ MH 453. "No one will be borne upward without stern, persevering effort in his own behalf. All must engage in this warfare for themselves; no one else can fight our battles. Individually we are responsible for the issues of the struggle." McGrath 2000, 94–96. There seem to be certain elements in White's ideas on the spiritual struggle against sin which are akin to those of Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) introduced in *The Interior Castle*. Moreover, John Owen (1616–1683), a Puritan writer, writes about the struggle which is brought by the presence of sin into the Christian's life along the same lines.

¹⁴¹ DA 528. "From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience." Sheldrake 2001. In his book Sheldrake leads the reader to reflect on the nature of sexuality and human desire and to discover his/her relationship to prayer and spiritual growth. On the basis of his argumentation, temptations may conceal within them an opportunity for a spiritual experience.

¹⁴² COL 61. "Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness." DA 72.

¹⁴³ DA 126. "Yet we should not lose courage when assailed by temptation. Often when placed in a trying situation we doubt that the Spirit of God has been leading us. But it was the Spirit's leading that brought Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. When God brings us into trial, He has a purpose to accomplish for our good." COL 175.

¹⁴⁴ MB 117.

development throughout the ages. Her philosophy of history appears to be founded on the idea that through the course of historical events and developments, it is possible to detect traces of a superhuman battle for universal supremacy between good and evil.¹⁴⁵ While this cosmic struggle takes place at the level of politics, ideology, Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical administration, it also involves every individual personally. Moreover, the spiritual struggle is being fought over each individual, making everyone an active participant in this universal controversy. Thus the cosmic struggle constitutes the framework within which individual Christians are fighting their individual inner spiritual battles.¹⁴⁶

It is because of the utter human helplessness to resist the pull of wrong behaviours that superhuman assistance is needed. In addition to natural human weakness, White here sees the reality of the tempter, Satan, in action. It impacts humankind at all levels of existence. Thus the spiritual struggle takes the form of both an inner battle of the mind and an invisible confrontation of cosmic forces in the universe. In other words, White sees the struggle as something which cannot be defined in merely psychological terms. Since the struggle also involves superhuman powers, she sees it as vital for a person to ally with God.¹⁴⁷

White seems to imply that all struggles against sin are significant for the collective controversy against sin, while on the personal level they function as tests of faith and patience. Even though a person may feel lonely and abandoned in the midst of trials, she assures the reader that this is never the case. Despite the emotional burden and strain, the moral battle against wrong attitudes and behaviours may offer an opportunity for achieving a still closer connectedness with the divine realm.¹⁴⁸

White further emphasises that the pull toward the undesirable does not come only from an outside source. Instead, natural human selfishness constitutes one of the most challenging opponents. Heavenly agencies are present for support for anyone requesting them, though the struggle takes place within, on a purely individual level. She claims that the fiercest battle is fought over resistance to egoistic tendencies and for personal surrender leading one to be

¹⁴⁵ Holbrook 2000, 1000–1003.

¹⁴⁶ DA 116.

¹⁴⁷ DA 122–123.

¹⁴⁸ DA 306. In addition to the dimension of tests, White sees the struggle as fulfilling several purposes: “Each fiery trial is God’s agent for their refining. Each is fitting them for their work as collaborators with Him. Each conflict has its place in the great battle for righteousness, and each will add to the joy of their final triumph. Having this in view, the test of their faith and patience will be cheerfully accepted rather than dreaded and avoided.”

governed by love. In practical terms, this means self-discipline and a willingness to resign from all harmful and selfishly motivated ways of relating and behaving.¹⁴⁹

White appears convinced that, even in the midst of the tumult and perplexity of this struggle, there can be a rest and peace found in fellowship with Christ through faith. She suggests that Christ's love composes a security zone where it is possible, in colloquial terms, to calm down and take it easy. While temptations may represent a threat to emotional stability and to one's sense of safety, these experiences still conceal an opportunity for obtaining an unparalleled awareness of Christ's love. However, divine love does not protect people from temptations unless it is adopted as the guiding principle of action. Conversely, constant spiritual contact with the love of Christ has a strong impact on one's inner being, the character. This can take place only in an interactive communion with Christ, i.e. a dialogue, where Christ's love touches us and transforms us starting from the person within.¹⁵⁰

It is White's conviction that only through a union with Christ is it possible to resist temptations successfully. She claims that resistance to the powers of evil requires "supernatural work" and "bringing a supernatural element into human nature." The whole issue of struggle and temptations is therefore an ontological and existential one, which in turn requires intimate, active and incessant spiritual connectedness with the divine. For White, the ability to resist temptations is not primarily a matter of psychological skills or mental strength, but of spiritually acquired facilities.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ DA 440; MB 141. "The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle which we have to fight—the greatest battle that was ever fought by man—is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love. The old nature, born of blood and of the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up."

¹⁵⁰ MH 250; COL 49. "Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation."

¹⁵¹ DA 324. "When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one."

It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ.¹⁵²

However, the struggle does not take place in the spiritual realm only but involves the whole person. Therefore, White suggests mental and physical activity as measures which may temper or even prevent the attack of temptation. Somewhat surprisingly, she points out the spiritual benefits of physical labour in the pursuit for welfare and happiness. She also mentions other measures related to what she terms as mental hygiene and cherished attitudes. She suggests that it is maintaining a constant trust in God that is the paramount safeguard against temptations. She further mentions the Bible as a resource through which help may be obtained at a crucial moment of temptation.¹⁵³

It is White's perception that though temptations may be hazardous for the spiritual sensitivity, they have no power to separate a person from God, even when they become overwhelming.¹⁵⁴ The struggle should not cause anyone to be overtaken by apprehension or discouragement, because the presence of Christ is a constant aid.¹⁵⁵ In everyday situations of life, much needed help, strength, and courage for the tempted person struggling to withstand may come in the form of the kind and sympathetic words or gestures of another person.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² DA 429.

¹⁵³ MH 177; Ed 214; MB 92; MH 459. MH 181.

¹⁵⁴ MB 118. "Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life." Ed 113.

¹⁵⁵ DA 483. "Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you." See also DA 203.

¹⁵⁶ DA 483; DA 203; MH 354–355; MB 23; MB 23. "There are many to whom life is a painful struggle; they feel their deficiencies and are miserable and unbelieving; they think they have nothing for which to be grateful. Kind words, looks of sympathy, expressions of appreciation, would be to many a struggling and lonely one as the cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of sympathy, an act of kindness, would lift burdens that rest heavily upon weary shoulders. And every word or deed of unselfish kindness is an expression of the love of Christ for lost humanity."

5.4. Fellowship with God through Devotional Praxis

Keeping in mind what has already been suggested above about fundamental devotional attitudes and practices such as prayer, which are essential for the maintenance of a flourishing relationship with God, White also promotes other spiritual practices which demand our attention. She frequently refers to the importance of Bible study in caring for one's spiritual well-being, and she also often mentions meditation and contemplation. Her attitude to nature as a channel of meaningful spiritual experience is characterised by a certain tension and even a dichotomy; she sees great spiritual potential there, but she also stands in opposition to the pantheistic understanding of nature common in her time.

Bible Study

Ellen White emphasises that in caring for one's spiritual welfare, a varied use of the Bible is essential because, in her view, it is the source of "life from God." Bible study requires attentiveness in order that one may catch the vital points in each verse, and it should also lead to careful assessment of the ideas presented and consideration of their application to one's individual situation.¹⁵⁷ It seems that in her opinion not only is spiritual development possible by virtue of the impact of God's word, but the same is also true of fellowship with God.¹⁵⁸ In fact, it is the Holy Spirit which functions as the actual agent of change in the word, achieving his purpose by employing Scriptural ideas as a means of touching and moving the person from within.¹⁵⁹ Thus White does not advise her readers to study the Bible so much to acquire factual knowledge, but more importantly, in order to experience spiritual transformation and establish a satisfying spiritual existence.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ DA 390. Stinissen 1998. Stinissen introduces a comprehensive approach to using the Bible as a source for spiritual inspiration and nourishment.

¹⁵⁸ Ed 124–125.

¹⁵⁹ DA 671.

¹⁶⁰ COL 38.

Meditation

Meditation on biblical themes is one of the methods suggested by Ellen White for exploring the full meaning of individual texts and finding suitable applications for one's own life situation.¹⁶¹ She sees following biblical teachings and putting their principles into practice as the primary task, but she also regards meditation on God's word as an important part of the process by which its teaching becomes an integral element of the value system out of which personal application arises. Meditation on the Bible is thus recommended as an ongoing spiritual praxis.¹⁶²

White also has several things to say about meditation more generally. She speaks about it in connection with prayer, emphasising the aspect of seeking a dialogue and viewing it as readiness for a joint connectedness with God. However, meditation is not presented as an attempt to escape reality into an inner sphere, but it is instead tied to the actual situations and circumstances of life. It is seen as part of the defence system which safeguards us against any threat to individual spirituality.¹⁶³

It appears that White sees meditation also as a conscious, dynamic effort to fill one's mind with thoughts tending to a positive impact, an increased level of motivation, encouragement or joy.¹⁶⁴ She states that concentrated thought is necessary for central Christian practices, as well as for the gospel themes at the

¹⁶¹ Ed 252. "Meditation on the themes thus suggested will open to the student treasures of which he has never dreamed. He will prove in his own life the reality of the experience described in the scripture." Perrin 2007, 10, 275. Meditation is generally regarded as an essential part of Christian prayer life. It is also believed to enhance spiritual growth. David Perrin writes: "Our bodies participate equally in the advancement of this heart knowledge [i.e. mindfulness of God's love], because it is through our bodies that we interact with and know our world. During times of quiet reflection or silent meditation, people not only listen to what is happening in their thoughts and feelings, but also listen attentively to their bodies and to their experiences in order to gain insights. People's physical senses are as tied to their belief and knowledge as are their thoughts, feelings, and imaginative wanderings."

¹⁶² DA 612; Ed 191. "Let the student keep his Bible always with him. As you have opportunity, read a text and meditate upon it. While walking the streets, waiting at a railway station, waiting to meet an engagement, improve the opportunity to gain some precious thought from the treasure house of truth."

¹⁶³ MH 509; DA 126. "Meditation and prayer would keep us from rushing unbidden into the way of danger, and thus we should be saved from many a defeat." Finley 2004. Finley's step-by-step guide-book on the practice of Christian meditation represents one approach to this essential dimension of the maintenance of one's relationship with God. Much has been written on this topic as it has been always regarded as an inseparable part of Christian spirituality and a way of caring for its wellbeing.

¹⁶⁴ MH 514. "Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible."

focus of such functions. Communion, for instance, should provoke careful consideration of the atonement and the self-sacrificing love which made it possible. Consequently, it is the thinking process which makes both the dogma and the praxis meaningful, and thereby brings about the desired spiritual benefit.¹⁶⁵

For White, meditation means filling and activating the mind with spiritually and emotionally beneficial ideas and impressions. It is related to the believer's attempt to mentally attune him/herself with God in order to find encouragement, comfort, motivation and hope. Meditation, in her opinion, will not only help one to better perceive essential religious concepts, but will also contribute to inner transformation.¹⁶⁶

In connection with a Christian's attempt to obtain a more distinct conception of Christ, White mentions the use of the imagination as a method of catching a glimpse of the transcendent dimension. She appears to feel that even a mentally perceived image of the unseen reality may support the spiritual experience in moments of struggle.¹⁶⁷ She sees the imagination as a useful means of experiencing a sense of reality and actuality in regard to the abstract. She suggests, for instance, that by placing oneself by means of one's imagination into a biblical situation, such as the passion of Christ, it is possible to create a mental frame of reference which can strengthen one's connection to the unseen realm by making it more real and evocative. This, in turn, will enhance spiritual growth.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ DA 571.

¹⁶⁶ White's advice about the spiritual practice is quite specific here and the quotations in the following footnotes: COL 59–60. "Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought he must learn the meaning of the words of truth, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles.

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures."

¹⁶⁷ MH 488. "If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not talk of your feelings. Cast no shadow upon the lives of others. A cold, sunless religion never draws souls to Christ. It drives them away from Him into the nets that Satan has spread for the feet of the straying. Instead of thinking of your discouragements, think of the power you can claim in Christ's name. Let your imagination take hold upon things unseen. Let your thoughts be directed to the evidences of the great love of God for you. Faith can endure trial, resist temptation, bear up under disappointment. Jesus lives as our advocate. All is ours that His mediation secures."

¹⁶⁸ DA 661. "As we receive the bread and wine symbolizing Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we in imagination join in the scene of Communion in the upper chamber. We seem to be passing through the garden consecrated by the agony of Him who bore the sins of the world. We witness the struggle by which our reconciliation with God was obtained. Christ is set forth crucified among us."

She is aware, though, of the limitations of the imagination in mentally depicting the full meaning of divine mysteries such as God's saving grace.¹⁶⁹

Looking to Jesus

“Looking to Jesus”, together with other similar expressions used by Ellen White, refers to the process of establishing a mental link with Christ. It conveys a constant, deep awareness of God and an inner sense of dependence on him. The spiritual quest and the search for power and motivation are here described in terms of directing one's full attention to God. These expressions are thus used as analogies for connectedness to God through faith. White goes as far as to present looking to the cross of Christ as an actual indication or application of faith, which has eternal consequences. By constantly directing one's attention and admiration to Christ, the believer may strengthen and vitalise faith and confidence in him.¹⁷⁰

White goes on to suggest that by looking to Christ a person can more fully comprehend and appreciate the significance of his self-sacrifice and suffering, and thus have “living and sacred emotions.” This means achieving an altered outlook on life as well as an invigorated motivational frame of reference characterised by sincere admiration and humility. Her ideas also suggest that an understanding of Christ's person and his actions can be reached through a holistic process involving human affective sensitivity on a par with one's intellectual abilities. She sees looking to Christ as an activity taking place at the profoundest level of the human spirit, which is nevertheless not totally separate from the intellectual and the emotional spheres.¹⁷¹

White connects the concept of looking to Christ to learning from the example which Christ presented in his humble and self-sacrificing conduct. In this way a Christian can learn spiritually valuable virtues such as empathy, patience, restraint and forgiveness, behavioural ideals also linked to one's affective

¹⁶⁹ COL 129. “The truth as it is in Jesus can be experienced, but never explained. Its height and breadth and depth pass our knowledge. We may task our imagination to the utmost, and then we shall see only dimly the outlines of a love that is unexplainable, that is as high as heaven, but that stooped to the earth to stamp the image of God on all mankind.”

¹⁷⁰ DA 362; DA 660; COL 147; MH 153.

¹⁷¹ DA 661. “Looking upon the crucified Redeemer, we more fully comprehend the magnitude and meaning of the sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven. The plan of salvation is glorified before us, and the thought of Calvary awakens living and sacred emotions in our hearts. Praise to God and the Lamb will be in our hearts and on our lips; for pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary.” DA 507; COL 129.

dimension.¹⁷² This does not indicate that these aspects in White's teaching regarding spirituality can be effectively evaluated from a psychological point of view, however. The level of the human spirit is where one can expect to meet the divine.

Looking to Christ is a concept which White introduces as a method for second-order change related to the transformation of character.¹⁷³ "By beholding Christ, they became transformed in character."¹⁷⁴ She emphasises that perfection is found only in Christ, which is why observing him is a vital activity for spiritual development and health. She argues that if Christ is not the focal point of consideration, the person's attention will be on something else, which may enable the rule of selfish impulses and create undesirable thoughts, feelings or action. Thus undivided concentration on the perfect example, i.e. Christ, is indispensable for inner transformation.¹⁷⁵

White sees the practice of looking to Christ as a way of experiencing hope, and also as a basis for viewing life with a positive and hopeful attitude. She therefore regards the affective as an integral part of the spiritual. Related emotions include joy, serenity, harmony and trust. It can be concluded, however, that her emphasis is not on an attempt to reach certain emotions as a primary goal, but she sees them instead as a natural result of a flourishing spiritual contact with Christ.¹⁷⁶

White urges her readers to look to Christ in order to resist the effect of sin in their lives. When a person turns wholeheartedly towards Christ, he/she simultaneously turns away from selfishness and sin. Looking to Christ makes people examine themselves and become more clearly aware of their faults. This,

¹⁷² Ed 257.

¹⁷³ DA 661. "He who beholds the Saviour's matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character. He will go forth to be a light to the world, to reflect in some degree this mysterious love." Character will be discussed in detail as a separate topic in chapter 7 below.

¹⁷⁴ DA 296. Dealing with one's selfishness is presented also as one aspect of looking to Christ. DA 280.

¹⁷⁵ DA 816. "How many today are like Peter! They are interested in the affairs of others, and anxious to know their duty, while they are in danger of neglecting their own. It is our work to look to Christ and follow Him. We shall see mistakes in the lives of others, and defects in their character. Humanity is encompassed with infirmity. But in Christ we shall find perfection. Beholding Him, we shall become transformed." COL 355.

¹⁷⁶ DA 152–153. "We should never give to the world the false impression that Christians are a gloomy, unhappy people. If our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we shall see a compassionate Redeemer, and shall catch light from His countenance. Wherever His Spirit reigns, there peace abides. And there will be joy also, for there is a calm, holy trust in God."

in turn, leads to repentance. Looking to Christ is also a source of power against sin and the way to safety under his protection.¹⁷⁷

Nature

Ellen White sees nature as having significance for spiritual development beyond its role as an environment for solitude, prayer and meditation. She regards natural things as “the medium for the spiritual.” Particularly in her discussion of Christ’s parables, she refers to natural objects and phenomena as things connected to Christ’s own words which function as vehicles of God’s love, grace, blessing and truth. She also claims that connectedness to the supernatural world, i.e. the transcendental sphere, can take place by contact with natural things.¹⁷⁸

According to White, nature provides an opportunity for people to hear God speak to them, to see his work and for their inner being to be touched by him.¹⁷⁹ The natural environment is an essential part of God’s revelation, which may be perceived through all the senses and identified intellectually.¹⁸⁰ Thus she claims that “through the creation we are to become acquainted with the Creator.”¹⁸¹

It is significant to remember here that within early Adventism spiritual thought concerning nature was seriously challenged by tendencies to overemphasise its importance while disregarding God as a personal being. By his books and his general influence as a prominent leader within the denomination’s health ministry, Kellogg was a powerful force in trying to pull both the teaching

¹⁷⁷ DA 300; DA 317; DA 439–440; DA 391. “By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus.” DA 382.

¹⁷⁸ COL 18. “Natural things were the medium for the spiritual; the things of nature and the life-experience of His hearers were connected with the truths of the written word. Leading thus from the natural to the spiritual kingdom, Christ’s parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God, and earth with heaven.” Burton-Christie 2005, 478–495. It seems that our relationship to nature is not a major issue of interest for academics who study Christian spirituality. However, Burton-Christie explores the relationship between nature and Christian spirituality.

¹⁷⁹ MH 411. “Nature testifies that One infinite in power, great in goodness, mercy, and love, created the earth, and filled it with life and gladness. Even in their blighted state, all things reveal the handiwork of the great Master Artist. Wherever we turn, we may hear the voice of God, and see evidences of His goodness.” MB 96–97; COL 19.

¹⁸⁰ Ed 100; COL 19.

¹⁸¹ COL 24. Also in DA 516 she urges Christians to “*study the lessons that God has given in nature*” and even “*to see Christ in nature* (Original italics).” Russell 2005, 332–333. Russell speaks about the immanence of God in nature but his point of view is primarily that of natural sciences.

and the spiritual practice of the church towards pantheism.¹⁸² Waggoner became another outstanding adherent to and promoter of pantheistic ideas within Adventism.¹⁸³

This background of pantheism seems to constitute part of the motivation behind some of White's passages about the role of nature in spiritual practice.¹⁸⁴ She takes care to make it clear that a correct understanding of God lies at the heart of the spirituality she advocates. Her thinking is based on the assumption that an orthodox doctrinal notion of God should always guide and direct spirituality. But in terms of everyday spirituality, she turns the reader's attention from the physical environment to transcendental reality and introduces this reality as the point of reference from which one ought to seek meaning for the natural world.¹⁸⁵

An analysis of the primary sources shows that White makes a systematic attempt to combat the distortion of Adventist spirituality towards pantheism, but also to guide denominational thought on nature in the direction of the Christian mainstream. If the pantheistic twist had taken the upper hand, it might have destroyed the essentially Christian elements of Adventist spirituality.¹⁸⁶

White sees nature also as a spiritual challenge, since the natural environment everywhere contains a multitude of philosophically puzzling details and confusing contradictions. It is her conviction, however, that "nature still speaks to us of God's goodness." This calls for sharp-eyed attentiveness and consideration in observation, but more importantly, inner sensitivity to the divine influence. So White advocates that the things of nature should be approached with an awareness of the fact that all are part of God's creation and relate to him.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Kellogg 1903. Kellogg's book *The Living Temple* contained strong pantheistic tendencies. The publication of this book was part of a development which ultimately led to major rearrangement within the denomination and changes in its administrative strategy.

¹⁸³ White 1983, 402; GCDB March 6, 1899. The dispute over pantheistic ideas and theories led White to present her views on the topic at the General Conference session under the title *The True Relation of God and Nature*, which was published in the Daily Bulletins. Some years later she wrote several Testimonies regarding the issues of pantheism. See 8T 255–328; Knight 1987, 146. In addition to his pantheistic ideas, Waggoner also maintained Christological views which differed from the mainline Adventist and also general Protestant beliefs.

¹⁸⁴ MH 428–429. White gives a direct warning against pantheistic theories. However, the wider doctrinal and spiritual context of preserving a theistic view of God also has relevance to the issue of pantheism within 19th century Adventism. See MH 409–438; Ed 99–101.

¹⁸⁵ MH 413.

¹⁸⁶ White 1981, 292–293. A. White indicates that the threat of pantheism to doctrinal orthodoxy and the spiritual well-being of the denomination was real. He also describes the centrality of White's decisive role in the corrective measures to avert the danger.

¹⁸⁷ Ed 99.

Despite the problems some early SDA believers experienced in their spiritual relationship with nature, White still sees the great potential of nature for spiritual development and welfare. In her view the impact of nature is not primarily intellectual but emotional. More importantly, it profoundly moves and revitalises the human spirit.

As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God. While the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things.¹⁸⁸

This notion constitutes the premise from which White's suggestion "to commune with Christ, with nature, and with their own hearts" is to be interpreted. She sees hidden in nature a spiritually significant element, which makes a meaningful connectedness with the natural world, as vital for spirituality as are other forms of fellowship with the divine for the inner life.¹⁸⁹ She even says: "As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love."¹⁹⁰

White also speaks in an appreciative way about the aesthetic value of the things of nature, but at the same time she points to an entity beyond what can be perceived through the senses. She seems to allude to a meaning and a reason within that beauty, as well as in everything that exists. That which is beautiful and enjoyable in the natural environment provides, in her view, an opportunity for a person to touch another dimension where something of the meaning and purpose of existence can be better perceived.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ DA 70.

¹⁸⁹ DA 360. "Like Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, like David among the hills of Judea, or Elijah by the brook Cherith, the disciples needed to come apart from the scenes of their busy activity, to commune with Christ, with nature, and with their own hearts." DA 361–363. On these pages White describes how the natural environment significantly enhances the intensity of the interactive connectedness with God by eliminating disturbing stimuli and providing ideal circumstances for a fruitful spiritual experience.

¹⁹⁰ COL 25. See also COL 24–25.

¹⁹¹ MB 97. "God's law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love."

Contemplation

McGrath defines Christian contemplation in the following way: “A form of prayer, distinguished from meditation, in which the individual avoids or minimizes the use of words or images in order to experience the presence of God.”¹⁹² This definition does not quite harmonise with Ellen White’s use of the term contemplation, at least as far as the use of images is concerned. Moreover, the difference between meditation and contemplation in her usage is rather vague, and the meaning of these terms may at times overlap. For White they appear to be much of the same thing.

For White, contemplation means a concentration of one’s thoughts on abstract themes with a power to bring about significant spiritual benefit. She thus uses the term contemplation for a more active mental exercise than the traditional sense of the word suggests. In this conjunction she also speaks, for instance, about the imagination, which indicates that the use of mental images is a part of her understanding of contemplation. One gains the impression that she uses the term to refer to an attempt to experience something emotionally which is transcendent and unattainable through ordinary human means, but which may yield vital spiritual benefits.¹⁹³

While White’s conception of contemplation does not fully concur with the modern definition of the term, it is a form of spiritual practice closely connected to one of the essential features of her spiritual thinking. She seems to be aware of the classic tradition of contemplation, i.e. the Catholic praxis of contemplative prayer, though the approach she takes to it is an independent one. Her use of the term contemplation allows us to assume that she has seen it in use and come to some understanding of it.¹⁹⁴ Her frequent references to contemplation

¹⁹² McGrath 1999, 182.

¹⁹³ DA 83. “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”

¹⁹⁴ White’s *The Great Controversy* is one indication of her profound acquaintance with various Christian movements and their approaches to spirituality. There she examines religious movements and various developments within Christianity. She read a number of books written by writers representing diverse Christian traditions. Also the fact that she travelled extensively, not only in the United States but also in Europe and in Australia, gave her personal insight into different ways of worshiping and seeking for individual spiritual wellbeing.

indicate that she wants her readers to include it as an integral part of their spiritual practice. She is thus a follower, if from afar, of the contemplative tradition, even though she cannot be regarded as an actual contemplative spiritual guide.¹⁹⁵

When speaking of contemplation, White always mentions an object to which it is directed. The primary matter of contemplative concern appears to be Christ, his love, his sacrifice and his suffering. She connects the contemplation of Christ to the inner processing of one's own humanity and weakness. Thus it is related to repentance, the struggle against the power of sin at work within, and the search for identity and wholeness. As these things create a certain degree of anxiety and pressure, contemplation provides an opportunity for connectedness with the divine and consequently an escape from such strain. On the other hand, contemplation on the promised future rewards for the repentant may bring comfort, harmony and hope in moments of discouragement.¹⁹⁶

White sees the Communion service as an opportune time for engagement in the contemplation of Christ's sacrifice. It is especially significant to notice here how she advocates contemplation as part of the formation of a vitalising contact with Christ. It seems that by contemplation Christians can be actively present in this moment where Christ, too, is present and bonds himself personally with them.¹⁹⁷

Both the idea of seeking solitude and privacy in nature on the one hand, and the idea of creating distance from the common and ordinary realm of life on the other, seem to be included in White's conception of contemplation. In her thinking, contemplation appears to denote the eternal dimension and to be part of the pursuit of it. However, contemplation is not an intellectual procedure but is instead to do with the attempt to capture at the level of the human spirit something

¹⁹⁵ SC 21, 70–71, 89, 103–104, 118. Since there are several references to contemplation in SC alone, it seems that a contemplative approach to spirituality constitutes an integral part of White's spiritual agenda. Woods 1989/2006, 134–135, 178–179, 206. Woods sees contemplation primarily as part of the mediaeval mystical tradition, mostly related to several streams of monastic spirituality. He also regards it as an opposite counterpart of action. For him, contemplative spirituality deals with the dimension of the spirit and does not involve thinking, doing or feeling.

¹⁹⁶ COL 404; COL 159; COL 190.

¹⁹⁷ DA 661. "'He that eateth My flesh,' He says, 'and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.' John 6:54, 56, 57. To the holy Communion this scripture in a special sense applies. As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every Communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God."

of the mystical elements of divinity, and also with the process of becoming aware of the gripping mystery of God's saving love.¹⁹⁸

Ellen White speaks about contemplation even in conjunction with the most vital points of salvation, since she seems to see it as the means by which transforming grace pervades the whole person from within. We can thus conclude that for her contemplation is not only one option among many for executing spiritual praxis, but is rather an essential means of evocatively experiencing God's invigorating presence and establishing a constant connectedness with him.¹⁹⁹

Finally, White introduces contemplation as a way to catch a real glimpse of divine love, which is beyond the description of human language. Thus contemplation is an activity which takes place at the spiritual level. She states that though contemplation has no transforming virtue in itself, it is still a channel by which the mystery of divine love can become personally meaningful, which in turn results in an inner transformation of the contemplator by God's grace. On this basis she insists that contemplation be regarded as a key spiritual practice.²⁰⁰

5.5. The Sabbath

Since 1846 the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest had occupied a central position in Ellen White's thinking as well as in her spiritual practice, in the same way as it became the identifying mark of the entire SDA church.²⁰¹ The issue of the Sabbath throughout its history within Adventism has been perceived mainly in two related and interdependent ways. Firstly, it is an essential doctrinal

¹⁹⁸ Ed 258; DA 623; COL 125.

¹⁹⁹ DA 478. "It is the gospel of the grace of God alone that can uplift the soul. The contemplation of the love of God manifested in His Son will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else can. Christ came that He might re-create the image of God in man; and whoever turns men away from Christ is turning them away from the source of true development; he is defrauding them of the hope and purpose and glory of life. He is a thief and a robber."

²⁰⁰ MB 43; Bryant 1986/1992, 567. Bryant points out that contemplation as a concept is given varying meanings in different traditions. Thus its exact content in White's writings cannot be definitely determined. By speaking about contemplation – which she does a number of times – she does not automatically qualify as a follower of the contemplative tradition which was represented in particular by Teutonic mysticism, the English mystics, St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. However, certain elements of that approach are also to be found in her spirituality.

²⁰¹ LS 95–96. White learned about the idea of Sabbath-keeping through acquaintance with Joseph Bates in the 1840s. While becoming convinced of the biblical reasons for the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest, she also realized its spiritual significance, which she explored in writing soon after in EW 33, 42–43, 68–70. Along with her husband James White and Joseph Bates, she used her influence to establish Sabbath-keeping in the emerging SDA church. Maxwell 1982, 352–363; See Fundamental Beliefs, article 20; Strand 2000, 493–537.

point, which has led to extensive theological and church historical research on the meaning and validity of the Sabbath.²⁰² Secondly, the question of how to keep the Sabbath holy has not been answered in a way to satisfy all Sabbath-keepers in differing circumstances. Therefore, the whole issue has also been approached with the purpose of establishing appropriate ways and standards for keeping the Sabbath holy. This means that it has been seen mostly from the viewpoint of formulating guidelines for a generally acceptable Christian praxis regarding the day of rest.²⁰³

In addition to these two perceptions (i.e. the doctrinal and the practical) regarding the Sabbath, White seems to relate to it, particularly in her later production, as yet another issue with the potential of contributing considerably to the spiritual development and welfare of Christian believers. She sees the Sabbath rest as a special opportunity for the restless human being to come into contact not only with God himself, but also with the environment and with oneself. God has provided this possibility for human benefit, and also for enjoyment and pleasure. However, it is connectedness with God and his saving love which comprises the quintessence of the Sabbath rest. It appears thus that the ontological element of the Sabbath rest, i.e. the state of mere being, emerges as fundamental, also in the sense of returning to the original human state, being in a peaceful relationship with God, who is the very source and essence of all being.²⁰⁴

White speaks about the Sabbath as “the memorial of God’s creative power.” Thereby the issue of resting on the Sabbath is, for her, not only about the experience of rest, but also about establishing links back to the very foundations of human existence. The Sabbath rest should therefore be understood as a mode of being rather than as a kind of human activity, let alone as inactivity. Not only does the Sabbath bring to mind what happened at a point in history, but it primarily reminds humanity of their origin and identity, i.e. the starting point of their existence. White’s ideas suggest that the blessedness of the Sabbath is found not

²⁰² Andrews 1887/1987. In this classic work Andrews argues in favour of the Sabbath, using biblical exegesis and history, laying the foundation for an Adventist Sabbath theology. Bacchiocchi 1977/1989. Bacchiocchi attempts to prove the validity of Sabbath-keeping by showing how historical developments and the active role of the Roman Catholic Church led to Sunday observance replacing Sabbath observance without proper biblical grounds. Strand 1982. Leading Adventist scholars discuss the Sabbath from the point of view of biblical exegesis and church history but also attempt to create a plausible Sabbath theology.

²⁰³ 6T 349–368; RH March 18, 1884; RH June 1, 1897; RH June 8, 1897. White discusses the principles of proper Sabbath-keeping, thus giving guidelines for the spiritual praxis.

²⁰⁴ Ed 251. “God’s love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.”

only in the pleasure of holistic rest, but rather in the fact that rest is the ultimate mode of being for human beings who have their origin and the substance of their being in the God of absolute love.²⁰⁵

At this point it is significant to note that White discusses abstract spiritual concepts in connection with the simple spiritual practice of Sabbath-keeping. She explains the meaning of the Sabbath in practical terms as an alertness and sensitivity to the natural environment and its individual details. The Sabbath should not be perceived only in terms of ontological and existential philosophy, but also as relatedness, interactivity and connectedness with the entirety of God's creation and with God himself.²⁰⁶

In White's thinking, the concept of rest is also connected to the theme of redemption. She sees significance in the fact that Christ completed his work of reconciliation by dying on the cross on Friday, just before the beginning of the Sabbath, and resting in the tomb throughout the holy day. Thus it appears to her that the Sabbath is not only a memorial of the divine work of creation, but also a sign of the atonement, and it thus signifies the divine act of returning to humanity the lost state of its being. It can thus be concluded that for her, resting does not just mean a cessation of work, but it refers primarily to an inner, spiritual experience through which humanity may perceive something of its identity. In Christ a person is reinstated to authentic humanness and the original human state of being. In other words, confident trust in God's love makes possible a tranquil and secure rest which permeates the whole being.²⁰⁷

White also speaks of the Sabbath as a sign which God repeatedly gives to humankind and which a person may individually receive over and over again. She claims that this creates positive emotions in the mind of the receiver, feelings such as delight, peace and rest. Yet the emphasis is not on the affective impact, but on faith-based connectedness with Christ. Indeed, White presents Christ as the actual source of peace, rest and harmony, whereas the Sabbath as a day of rest is only an outward, experientially perceivable indicator of the more

²⁰⁵ DA 281.

²⁰⁶ COL 25–26; Ed 251.

²⁰⁷ DA 769; Ed 250; DA 286; Allen 1991, 18–36. Much of the Adventist literature regarding the Sabbath takes a biblical or doctrinal approach to this issue. Allen, however, sees the spiritual potential of the day of rest. In his discussion of the meaning of the Sabbath, he regards rest as one of the spiritual disciplines.

essential spiritual reality, which is to be found and obtained only in Christ himself.²⁰⁸

It is important here to appreciate the fact that also within Christianity in general, the sanctification of time is recognised as a spiritually significant issue.²⁰⁹ However, the contribution of the SDA church and White on this subject matter is presented in a more intensive manner and is permeated by a particular emphasis on the biblical frame of reference which is somewhat different from that appropriated by most other Christians. Within Adventism, teaching about the Sabbath as a sanctified day of rest is closely linked to the Ten Commandments. Consequently this makes the keeping of the Sabbath also a matter of law-abidance and obedience to God.²¹⁰

Unlike strictly legalistic approaches to Sabbath observance, such as the notion that the keeping of the Sabbath indicates a person's level of sanctification, White dwells primarily on its meaning, which she considers to be deeper than simple outward faithfulness to the Commandment. Besides, her focal point is not the day as such, but the holiness attached to it. As a divine quality, holiness can be attached to a day only by God himself, who alone is holy.²¹¹ But more importantly, by separating a day of the week as blessed and holy, God aims

²⁰⁸ DA 289.

²⁰⁹ A number of scholars explore the sanctification of time from a premise which is different from that of White. Subsequently there are also diverse meanings attached to it. Kotila 2003 b, 235–243. Kotila, for example, discusses the issue in the context of Lutheran spirituality and therefore he does not really deal with points of view relevant to White's ideas or the SDA setting. Hayward 2003, 141–167. For Hayward the theme appears in relation to OT Sabbatarian Judaism, but holiness is the actual issue in his article. Strand 1982, 215–228. Strand shows that seventh-day Sabbath observance became important for a number of Christians during the Reformation Era. Ball 1981, 138–158. Douglass 1982, 229–243. Ball and Douglass discuss the role of the Sabbath within English Puritanism. Dawn 1989. Writing as a non-Adventist author, Dawn presents the Sabbath, however, as a special, God-given opportunity to experience wholeness (*Shalom*) and joy which are the consequences of observing God's order for life. Baab 2005. Baab is another writer who discusses the Sabbath outside Seventh-day Adventism, which is the usual setting for such observations. She explores the positive opportunities which the Sabbath may offer for a Christian to experience a more meaningful connectedness with God through celebration and primarily by reserving time for rest despite one's busy pace of life.

²¹⁰ Exodus 20:8–11. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." KJV. Rice 1985/1997, 398–399. Rice argues that the most distinctive feature of the Sabbath is its inclusion in the law of Ten Commandments. This makes Sabbath keeping a primarily moral issue.

²¹¹ Genesis 1: 2:2,3. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." KJV.

to extend his holiness to humanity, with the ultimate purpose of making them also holy.²¹²

In her discussion of the Sabbath, White's emphasis is on divine activity and intervention as well as on God's unique attributes, i.e. his holiness, his sanctifying power and his love. Ceasing from work and every-day activities only constitute an external base for experiencing the Sabbath; opportunity to adjust one's inner sensibility to the presence of a holy God and to spiritually connect with him.²¹³

Finally, White calls our attention to the spiritual nature of Sabbath-observance by defining it as belonging primarily to those made righteous by faith and through grace. Hence the Sabbath is one of the means of maintaining and caring for that vigorous, meaningful connection with God which is a direct result of justification by faith. Consequently, she sees the Sabbath as a central issue in a life-long spiritual praxis, which delivers its true significance in the inner realm, but which is partially realised through the external form of observing the day of rest.²¹⁴

5.6. Functional Connectedness to God

Ellen White depicts and defines the spiritual connectedness between human beings and God in primarily relational terms, but an ontological element also lies at the foundation of the notion of communion with Christ in her thinking, and it constitutes an important component of it. This means that interaction with God does not alone compose or construct the preconditions for a lasting contact or form the actual connection between a human being and the divine. Even though dialectic union with Christ may appear as a prominent identifying feature of this relationship, it does not compose its essence. Instead, it must be instituted by God. This connection was actualised through the Incarnation of Christ and exists in his

²¹² DA 288. "Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ's power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God."

²¹³ DA 288.

²¹⁴ DA 283. St Augustine regarded the Sabbath as a reminder and a preceding sign of the eternal Sabbath rest in the Kingdom of God. White, on the other hand, deals with the issues related to the Sabbath in a practical way, and she regards it mainly as a reminder of the creation and a sign of God's sanctifying power. For her, the keeping of the Sabbath constitutes the essence of the holy day, and perceiving the Sabbath in a symbolic way would make the actual observing less important.

person. Therefore it appears that White's spiritual ideas are inseparably linked with some of the crucial doctrinal concepts of the Christian faith. Furthermore, the doctrinal framework seems to be a facilitating factor for her spirituality in terms of making it intellectually plausible and rationally appealing.²¹⁵

White describes a spiritual union with Christ that presupposes an active consciousness in those who allow an intimacy with the divine. This engages the mind and its capacities and so transforms them, a development which is inaugurated and completed by God alone. However, in an optimal situation this has an impact on the whole person and on the entire span of human life. If this is so, it also indicates that the most profound meaning of human existence is spiritual in nature.²¹⁶

White's view of communion with God, i.e. spirituality, supports the uniqueness of each person, their identity and individuality. As a matter of fact, her spirituality seems to aim at the internalisation of values and the apprehension of individual responsibility. There appears to be a tension between experiencing personal separateness and self-determination on the one hand, and absolute dependence on and bonding with God on the other. This tension is not resolved. On the contrary, it seems that within lie the prerequisites for spiritual existence.²¹⁷

As has been pointed out above, the dynamic nature of White's spirituality is a central feature which seems to constitute one of its leading ideas in her thinking. However, the inner spiritual processes are not a goal as such, but instead they constitute only the preconditions for one's work as a Christian, a life of service, operation as God's representative, cooperation with him and an

²¹⁵ DA 296; DA 325.

²¹⁶ Ed 14. "In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In this communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development."

²¹⁷ MH 242–243. "It is not God's purpose that any human being should yield his mind and will to the control of another, becoming a passive instrument in his hands. No one is to merge his individuality in that of another. He is not to look to any human being as the source of healing. His dependence must be in God. In the dignity of his God-given manhood he is to be controlled by God Himself, not by any human intelligence.

God desires to bring men into direct relation with Himself. In all His dealings with human beings He recognizes the principle of personal responsibility. He seeks to encourage a sense of personal dependence and to impress the need of personal guidance. He desires to bring the human into association with the divine, that men may be transformed into the divine likeness. Satan works to thwart this purpose. He seeks to encourage dependence upon men. When minds are turned away from God, the tempter can bring them under his rule. He can control humanity."

effective practice of God's ideals.²¹⁸ All this is what we will study more closely in the next chapter.

The following passage expresses the essence of this chapter, but in addition to that it introduces some of the main themes of the next:

It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity; for in Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, divinity and humanity are combined. Connected with Christ, we are connected with our fellow men by the golden links of the chain of love. Then the pity and compassion of Christ will be manifest in our life. We shall not wait to have the needy and unfortunate brought to us. We shall not need to be entreated to feel for the woes of others. It will be as natural for us to minister to the needy and suffering as it was for Christ to go about doing good.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ DA 296–297.

²¹⁹ COL 384.

6. Living out and Reflecting God's Love

6.1. Love as the Basis for Christian Action

Since a large part of Ellen White's literary production deals with various practical and functional dimensions of religious life, I find grounds for making my analysis and evaluation of her approach to spirituality from that point of view.¹ In order to understand the role and significance of the practical and operational features in White's spiritual thinking, we must first be reminded of the fundamental presuppositions of her overall religious thoughts. As has been shown in chapter 3 above, God's love is the primary initiating component in the structure of her spiritual thought. Thus the whole Christian experience and praxis has its foundation in the love of God, and is inspired and motivated by it. Consequently all individual participation in religious activity, in terms of witnessing or service, is a result of the presence of Christ within.²

As I examine and evaluate the aspect of cooperation, other practical and relational dimensions of White's spirituality are also included in her holistic emphasis. Cooperation with God has, generally speaking, been regarded within Christendom as a characteristic of authentic Christian spirituality. It means human involvement and participation in activities and work which is understood to be designed, initiated and directed by God. Furthermore, this cooperation is a result of a person's union with Christ and thus a consequence of God's grace and a

¹ In SC there are more than 200 pieces of advice, counsel and exhortation in imperative form indicating what the reader should do. This signifies the presence of a certain practical tendency in White's writing and thus also her thinking. For example, Ed and MH are written with the practical, action-oriented frame of reference in mind. Looking at her whole literary production, there are a number of writings where the focus is on practical religious matters. Most of the Testimonies, for example, belong in this category.

² MB 114. "Let Christ, the divine Life, dwell in you and through you reveal the heaven-born love that will inspire hope in the hopeless and bring heaven's peace to the sin-stricken heart."

reaction to divine love. Subsequently, an abundance of scholarly opinion is available for reference in relation to this study.³

White's conviction of the Christian's need to have "the love of Christ in the heart" seems to be pivotal in the attempt to form an over-all view of her spiritual thinking. Because she connects human activity to the divine influence, and, more importantly, sees the former as a consequence of the latter, the cooperation between the believer and God must also be examined and interpreted out of this frame of reference. Cooperation with God, if it takes place primarily as an outward activity, cannot, as such, be regarded as spiritual. However, if cooperation is triggered and motivated by a human spirit which has been touched and transformed by the Holy Spirit, and if it flows out from within, all the consequent deeds, activities and functions also belong in the spiritual realm. This motivation and moving is a result of a spiritual connectedness to God, in other words, the source of selfless love is solely in divinity.⁴

At this point, it is significant to note that White describes the indwelling of the love of Christ as an active and positive entity which functions as a motivating, empowering feature in one's life, and without which a full Christian life is not possible. One may presume that we are in actual fact speaking about an awareness and assurance of this love, because it is depicted as something which not only directs a person's behaviour and attitudes, but also monitors and controls his/her undesirable urges and impulses. Yet this love becomes true and real only through expression, when its existence is demonstrated and realised through corresponding action and behaviour. Subsequently, love within spirituality cannot be spoken of in a real sense without direct reference to praxis.⁵

³ McGrath 1999, 44. McGrath, referring to Augustine's slogan, "God operates without us, and cooperates without us", notes that it is common within Christianity that the Christian life and spirituality take the form of collaboration between the believer and God. Raunio 1998, 114, 115; Juntunen 1998, 156. Raunio and Juntunen point out that cooperation has a role in the Christian life as a fruit of justification by faith in Luther's thinking also. Peura 1998 a, 58. Viewing cooperation from the point of view of dogmatics, Peura notes the danger of synergy, i.e. human beings themselves contributing to the preconditions of their salvation. Kärkkäinen 2004, 21, 30–32. Kärkkäinen reminds us that there is reason to be cautious about the danger of synergy, but he still admits that there is an element of divine-human cooperation in the Christian faith. Forde 1988, 119; McGrath 1999, 44. Forde and McGrath see Pelagian tendencies in Wesley's emphasis on sanctification. This means that salvation is not regarded as purely a gift of God's grace, but it is, instead, achieved partly by human effort in sanctification. Paxton 1978, 77. Paxton argues that certain semi-Pelagian traits can also be detected within Adventism, as the role of human activity has sometimes been emphasised at the expense of God's grace.

⁴ COL 384.

⁵ MB 58.

Ellen White speaks of love as “the principle of action”. Love is not reduced in its essential meaning to a theoretical principle, but rather it is seen as an active, driving force which transforms a person from within and takes command of one’s emotions and inclinations. This does not rule out the presence of an affective element in love; on the contrary, love is linked to emotional skills, sensitivity and stability. It seems that Daniel Coleman’s term “emotional intelligence” is a suitable expression to describe White’s basic idea of empathetic relational encounters.⁶ However, her idea of love includes not only acting it out but also nurturing it, which appears to imply an active spiritual experience and praxis in terms of fellowship with God.⁷

However, the principal nature of divine love must also be realised and applied in the spiritual formation. While love is made alive and real through Christian action, it must also be allowed to touch, move and transform within, and it must be perpetually processed and perceived on the level of the human spirit.⁸ White’s understanding of Christ’s Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) as presented in MB 134–137 seems to express some of the essential elements of her thinking about love for one’s neighbour. Love for oneself should never be the point of departure in our lives, instead, our willingness and ability to identify with another person’s situation forms the foundation for Christian love and is the starting point for all loving action. For White, empathy is one of the principal forms love takes, because love becomes actualised in every-day human interaction through compassionate and empathetic attitudes.⁹

When describing close human relationships White refers to love as a gift from God which extends beyond the limitations of emotion. Love is not a product of any human capacity or competence, nor is it a separate element apart from the giver of the gift, i.e. the God of love. She appears to say that even if actual loving, i.e. showing love and loving actions, can be regarded as an essential part of spirituality; it also presupposes spirituality in terms of intimacy with the loving God and a need to be transformed by that fellowship. In addition, White

⁶ Coleman 1995/2005, 96–110.

⁷ MB 38.

⁸ COL 49; MH 358.

⁹ MB 134.

suggests that love must be an identifying and defining agent, instead of being characterised and described in merely psychological or emotional terms.¹⁰

On the other hand, love in White's thinking also has to do with the most altruistic human emotions and relational attitudes, such as "sympathy", "compassion" and "tenderness". She refers to entering "the sympathy with Christ as the strongest bond of union between us and Him". This consideration, however, has disadvantaged individuals at its focus. In other words, the union with Christ is inseparably linked with the Christian attitude and practice of concern, care and service for the needy. White regards emotional vulnerability to the misfortune of others as a vital factor in the person's spiritual connectedness to God and to humanity at large. This leads one to realise the functional correlation and interdependence between the following three elements: emotional intelligence and skill, relational attitudes, and loving actions.¹¹

White mentions one further dimension in which love is an essential factor, namely education. The relationship between spirituality and education will be elaborated below in section 6.6.1., but as far as love is concerned, White's view of its developmental capacity also deserves attention here. The continuous act of living out love towards God and one's fellow human beings constitutes a transformative and renewing element, with a definite spiritual benefit for the people themselves: the restoration of their whole being back to the image of God. Thus, for White, love is not only the object of the spiritual quest but also an agent for change in one's spiritual development.¹²

6.2. Christian Spirituality as a Cooperative Union with Christ

The primary context within which Ellen White speaks about cooperation deals with mission, Christian witness, evangelism and service, but its chief goal for the individual is spiritual development in the lives of those who practice it.¹³ Equal

¹⁰ MH 358. "Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love are neither unreasonable nor blind. Taught by the Holy Spirit, they love God supremely, and their neighbor as themselves."

¹¹ MH 163; COL 385; MH 164.

¹² Ed 16.

¹³ Modras 2004, 37–49. Spirituality is mostly discussed from an individual point of view, but Ignatian spirituality is an example of how the aspect of service and mission is an essential part of spirituality. The literature dealing with spiritual guidance also typically speaks about spirituality in connection with ministry and caring for others.

spiritual benefit can be expected for those who are the target of this cooperative activity.¹⁴ In other words, cooperation occurs not only between the human being and God, but there also appears to be a third party, the object for whose benefit the cooperative activity takes place. It can thus be concluded that in White's thinking, cooperation is, among other things, a communal concept.¹⁵

Ellen White claims that cooperation can be spoken of in terms of connectedness, as a response to and an acting out of divine love, but also as a responsibility of Christ's true representative. She regards cooperation as an essential part of the Christian life of all believers, not only those who are involved in full-time, paid ministry. Furthermore, it is related to the whole course of life and the fundamental, over-all orientation of behaviour, not only to individual deeds or actions.¹⁶

However, for White the cooperation between a person and God has a distinctly spiritual point of origin, and it is profoundly spiritual in essence. Moreover, it cannot be seen as a human endeavour but as a facet of God's creative and saving activity. Cooperation is initiated and carried out by the Holy Spirit, a feature which hallmarks it as explicitly spiritual.¹⁷

White suggests that cooperation is a consequence of the fact that human beings are, by nature, totally dependent on God's enabling power in all their work and accomplishments. Thus they must be regarded primarily as instruments in their involvement in working together with God, rather than entirely autonomous actors.¹⁸ This, in turn, means that the cooperating person must be humble and selfless. Subsequently, these are qualities which develop as a result of the divine working within a spiritual fellowship with God. Human beings

¹⁴ Davis 1975/1976, 13–14. Contrary to White's missionary context of cooperation, Davis sees cooperation as part of the process of gaining salvation. For him, salvation is the result of a purposeful, decided effort by the Christian. Maddox 1994, 147–148. In relation to Wesley's theological ideas, Maddox speaks about "the co-operant character of salvation". It may be necessary here to point out that we are here describing and defining the cooperative aspects of White's spirituality, which does not imply that she holds co-operant views of salvation.

¹⁵ COL 236. "Through human agents who co-operate with the divine, many a poor outcast will be reclaimed, and in his turn will seek to restore the image of God in man."

¹⁶ COL 383; MH 476. "Every man has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Whether we fill that place depends upon our own faithfulness in co-operating with God." Lossky 1976, 198. It seems that Lossky's observation may bring clarity or at least a point of reference to our present discussion, as he writes the following when he was addressing the Pelagian or *synergy* accusations: "Grace is a presence of God within us which demands constant effort on our part; these efforts, however, in no way determine grace, nor does grace act upon our liberty as if it were external or foreign to."

¹⁷ COL 66–67.

¹⁸ COL 82.

do not and cannot reach out for a cooperative union with God; the joint activity is purely result of a divine initiative and achievement.¹⁹

For Ellen White, cooperation is a natural and inseparable component of spirituality. According to her thinking, God's work of grace treats human beings as more than objects, and does not leave them in a passive state. The work of the Holy Spirit empowers them to join in the divine work for the betterment of humanity. However, this cooperative union with God presupposes an individual spiritual processing of the inner motives and values as well as one's conception of identity, a process which in her language is described as "crucifixion of pride and self-sufficiency".²⁰

White implies that the spiritual benefit comes first to those who engage themselves in cooperation with God, though this cooperation may sometimes only take the form of allowing or giving consent to God's work within. On the other hand, even resisting the power of sin and temptation can be successful only by God's assistance. So is the case also with the human attempt to gain "mastery over oneself." It can thus be concluded that the work of saving grace takes the form of cooperation because God respects human autonomy and freedom of will even in these, most personal matters.²¹

Elsewhere White uses terms taken from gardening and soil preparation to describe the spiritual development and transformation in which a person is involved together with God. One must note, however, that while honest, frank and wholehearted personal participation is called for on the human side, White emphasises that it is God who brings about the individually perceived spiritual blessings and benefits. Thus it seems that White uses cooperation as another term for an intimate, holistic and transforming interaction with God in which both parties engage actively and in a state of full awareness.²²

White further asserts that cooperation with God is a privilege. As she speaks about cooperation, she does not refer so much to the aspect of working together as much as the actual closeness of this contact and the dialogue-like nature of this connectedness between the human and the divine in terms of reflection, meditation, prayer and other devotional means. Indeed, it is clear that there can be no functioning cooperation without feasible communicative contact.

¹⁹ DA 436.

²⁰ DA 827; MB 143; COL 402; DA 623.

²¹ MB 141.

²² COL 56.

In addition to bringing a spiritual advantage to the collaborating person, this dynamic union is a means through which God can touch other people.²³

White also demonstrates how the life of cooperation with God offers opportunities to perceive meaning and purpose in existence, particularly participation in God's activity to save, serve and bless humanity, where a person may thus enjoy a working relationship with God. She claims that even if this work may be toilsome and demanding, its transcending dimension will bring great satisfaction and significance.²⁴

Ellen White's optimistic view of humankind is evident throughout the material selected for this study, but it is especially in relation to the topic of cooperation where she appeals to the resources hidden in humanity. Her understanding of humanity can be expressed as follows: Since we are created by God, we are thereby equipped and full of possibilities for good. She sees virtue in our humanness and regards us as vehicles of God's attempt to reach, touch and transform people. Yet she makes it clear that it is "the power outside of and beyond" that is needed for the accomplishment of good. The capacity for positive accomplishment is released and becomes realised only through cooperation in an interactive and vitally connected union with God.²⁵

In White's thinking, the progression of cooperation functions as a pathway to a real and meaningful perception of the transcendental, i.e. as an opportunity for coming closer to the divine realm. She sees contact with the heavenly world as often accomplished by angels and other heavenly beings penetrating into the sphere of human operation and adding their contribution to the common venture. It seems, however, that she still regards human involvement as a valuable element of God's over-all endeavour to rescue and bless humanity. The divine presence in the life and activity of a person must thus be defined in terms of activity: divine influence acts through the human agent, but God is the source of power and motivation.²⁶

White also emphasises the aspect of duty in relation to cooperation; God will not do that which is the human responsibility. In other words, it is God's intention to avoid intervening unnecessarily in what lies within human power and capability, or in things which can be considered assigned to individuals as their

²³ COL 355.

²⁴ COL 403. See also DA 634.

²⁵ DA 296–297.

²⁶ COL 197.

task and obligation. As a consequence, duty calls us to find our individual strengths and skills and also to discover our place, role and mission within God's creation. This requires profound self-knowledge, which in turn is a product of inner, spiritual processing and genuine social connections. Thus the aspect of cooperation offers an opportunity for people to grow to their full potential as persons.²⁷

The focal point seems not to be the actual cooperation *per se* as a form of spirituality, but rather the spiritual development, which White believes will become increasingly apparent as the cooperating Christian gradually becomes ever more useful to God. This becomes evident as cooperation continues, ultimately through the spiritual development seen in the lives of the human partner of the joint activity.²⁸ White puts it this way:

Heavenly intelligences are waiting to co-operate with human instrumentalities, that they may reveal to the world what human beings may become, and what, through union with the Divine, may be accomplished for the saving of souls that are ready to perish. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.²⁹

Even though evangelistic and missionary aspects are central to White's thought on cooperation, the cooperative involvement of heavenly beings in human lives is also vital for receiving the necessary divine assistance in one's struggle against the forces of temptation and sin. Therefore, this bipolar focus must be kept in mind when attempting to form an understanding of her ideas on this topic. While she speaks about human participation in the divine ministry to the world, she also emphasises God's willingness to come to our assistance when we battle against selfish impulses.³⁰

As the concept of purpose is integrated in the principal definition of spirituality which I employ in this study, Ellen White's statement in this respect must also be noticed. She claims that though the splendour of God's purpose may not be fully perceived, yet through cooperation we still fulfil it. Since God's purpose for his children has to do with his ways of leading them, the issue of trust also arises here. It appears that according to White, trust in God's direction and providence is one of the primary grounds for cooperation. Indeed, it can be argued

²⁷ DA 535.

²⁸ EGW's notion of usefulness and its role in Christian spirituality will be discussed in detail below in chapter 6.3.

²⁹ MH 159.

³⁰ DA 440.

that without confidence and reliance on God's good intentions, there is no human-divine cooperation – only human endeavour.³¹

White's concept of cooperation is also related to obedience. In fact, she appears to speak about both of these concepts in such a way as to have them define and explain each other. She seems to understand obedience in terms of cooperation, which entails the idea of actively and intentionally accomplishing things which are desirable, right, good and noble. Thus sharing a mutual task with God constitutes a different approach to obedience than does the mere keeping of the commandments, which may, in the worst case, mean remaining passive and only avoiding what is regarded as bad. In opposition to that, this active cooperative outlook on obedience necessitates such attitudes as humility and trust as its basis for motivation.³²

It is possible to express the thrust of White's thinking in the following way: a refusal to cooperate is the same as disobedience as far as consequences go. The point in cooperation is not the extent of what is accomplished, but rather its spiritual and motivational basis. This turns the attention away from the activity as such to its spiritual starting point.³³

Ellen White's conception of both cooperation and obedience can be described in terms of participation and a sharing of all things. This seems to point beyond action and behaviour to a way of being meaningfully and holistically connected to God. Yet, the actual term 'cooperation' does not primarily suggest a way of being; cooperation means activity, which in turn makes the connectedness to God actual and experiential. This demonstrates the fact that in White's understanding spirituality cannot be separated from the world of reality and the ordinary realm of human activity. Moreover, it appears that her ideas demand coherence and consistency between ways of being and doing.³⁴

In conclusion, it can be said that certain ontological presuppositions are inevitably translated into corresponding works and actions. For example, the claim of union with Christ cannot be separated from consequent obedience and cooperation. As a matter of fact, White's ideas seem to suggest that on the level of everyday spiritual experience, the ways of being and doing merge. Likewise, the

³¹ MH 479.

³² COL 279.

³³ COL 280.

³⁴ DA 523.

way of being is portrayed in terms of being in a relationship with God where the initiative is God's, and this, as a consequence, produces all cooperative doing.³⁵

6.3. Christian Spirituality and Human Usefulness

Ellen White's concept of usefulness, which I have already touched upon briefly in the previous section, may at first appear to be an issue unrelated to Christian spirituality.³⁶ Therefore, it needs to be defined and discussed in further detail. In this section I will examine its role, as well as its relationship to some other features of White's spirituality.

In White's thinking on spirituality, personal spiritual well-being is inseparably linked to its wider consequences, i.e. its effects on others, on the actualisation of God's plan in this world and on the community. Therefore, usefulness is one of the terms which seem to define, but also objectify, her understanding of flourishing spirituality, although she expresses her ideas as a series of conditional presumptions: spiritual health and consequently usefulness require love for Jesus, but also selflessness, humility and surrender. Again, the constant working of the Holy Spirit within is a crucial component in the progression of becoming equipped and empowered for use by God. White does not consider possible any such thing as a thriving spirituality devoid of usefulness to God's purposes.³⁷

In connection with speaking about usefulness and its prerequisites, White also refers to the accompanying spiritual measures, interchangeably in personal and communal terms. She suggests that in the attempt to maintain a positive attitude to God's disciplinary actions, for instance, an individual Christian is helped by keeping in mind his/her membership in a community that also encounters similar hardships, and is endeavouring towards the same goal, and is therefore able and ready to lend its support. Hence, individuals can presumably

³⁵ MH 159.

³⁶ Usefulness is a term which White uses frequently (1562 times in the published material), but this concept is quite rare in spiritual literature in general. However, certain features in spiritualities which emphasise discipleship as an essential element appear somewhat similar to her approach. See e.g. Willard 1998, 297–339; Snyder 2004, 111–158. Some scholars who speak about involvement in the world, social responsibility, issues of justice and equality express some of the ideas present in White's concept of usefulness. See e.g. Chan 1998, 172–189; Powell 2005, 168–187. In addition, there are writers who view Christian spirituality in relation to pastoral issues and deal with some of the same aspects. See e.g. Liebert 2005, 496–514; Elenius 2003, 113–128.

³⁷ DA 250.

maintain a constructive approach to adversities if they may simultaneously appeal to a commonly held point of view, i.e. if they have a reason to believe that they are not alone in their attempts to cope with their challenges and hardships. Likewise, communally expressed encouragement and a supportive motivation within the group may be decisive factors in the actualisation of the potential of each of its members.³⁸

White's concept of usefulness can be better understood in light of DA 250 where she speaks about the divine endeavour to find such people "who will become unobstructed channels for the communication of His grace". Such a state must be regarded as a divine accomplishment, but the learning of "the lesson of self-distrust" can only be an experience which profoundly involves the human spirit and people themselves as individuals. Yet the roles of the divine and human parties cannot be precisely distinguished in this transformation, rather the focus appears to be on the intimacy of the connectedness of the two. From the viewpoint of spirituality, participation in the divine communication of grace is also of importance because of its potential for bringing particular meaning and purpose to one's existence and of adding new impetus to the performance of every single act through which God's grace may touch humanity.³⁹

White states that only by a constant "partaking of Christ's love" can the person become God's useful "instrument" and in that capacity achieve his goals. She emphasises the essential role of faith as the means of connecting with God and of thereby obtaining the healing power of Christ's love. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the person who is an instrument of Christ's love cannot remain passive, but is expected to be able to actually love, i.e. to show love in a real and active way. Thus, being an instrument contains an element of cooperation and active involvement. She even claims that it is the lack of belief in Christ's love which causes problems in the spiritual welfare of the church and hinders its usefulness. Thus, faith-based connectedness is not limited to internally perceived

³⁸ DA 250. The same sentence regarding usefulness without limit appears also in MH 159, but there it precedes ideas which emphasise one's personal surrender. There the role of the Holy Spirit is distinctly portrayed. It should be noted that both passages seem to suggest that one's usefulness may be limited by egoistic motives and selfish attitudes, while unlimited usefulness is a result of the unhindered working of the Holy Spirit. However, the double use of the sentence indicates that the idea of unlimited usefulness is important to White. Sandage 2006, 261. In this connection it is relevant to notice Sandage's remark about fruitfulness as one of the results of spiritual maturity. "Ephesians 4:14–16 is one of many biblical texts suggesting that growing in spiritual maturity entails every part of the body contributing toward building the community. Contemporary psychologists in the developmental tradition of Erik Erikson call this generativity, the commitment to contribute to the well-being of others, particularly the next generation."

³⁹ DA 249–250.

spirituality, but is, instead, a vital component in the development of the person on the road to becoming an effective instrument for God.⁴⁰

6.3.1. The Use of Talents and the Motivation behind Usefulness

For Ellen White, talents refer to personal abilities, and skills which are simultaneously inherited, God-given and multipliable. This seems to imply that through awareness of our personal talents we may both become conscious of our individual identity and also perceive something of the potential we have for development. Through finding our strengths and capabilities, we may apprehend a new, positive perspective for the future, a vibrant hope. Meanwhile, in White's thought, talents seem to require intimate association with God's ways and purposes as well as increasing self-knowledge and inner transformation as a precondition for their actualisation. Thus the effective use of one's God-given talents is a fruit of individual spirituality and one's individual and private turning toward the transcendent dimension of our lives.⁴¹

White's references to talents and their effective use appear also to be linked with her overall approach to holistic spirituality. This means that the exercise of talents is not limited to the external and functional dimension of Christian life but is instead connected closely with faith in Christ and with one's love for him. Connectedness with Christ is not only a matter of interior orientation but includes involvement in activity at all levels of every-day life, which links the individual with the higher world. From this perspective, her identification of the use of talents as the "true sanctification" can be understood, not soteriologically, but rather in terms of one enjoying a vital union with Christ and transforming spirituality.⁴²

As White assumes that we are given talents by God to be used to the maximum, conversely their waste and misuse is an indication of inability to

⁴⁰ DA 825.

COL 419. White emphasizes the fact that every Christian has the opportunity to be an instrument in God's hand. It seems thus that the church is a channel of God's goodness and grace because of the fact that its individual members have assumed that role. "It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts." See also SC 69 and MH 169.

⁴¹ COL 353-354.

⁴² COL 360.

adequately assume the individual responsibility attached to the reception of these gifts. While the benefit for others is lost, so also the opportunity for becoming what God desires one to be will not be realised. White appears to suggest that we may contribute to our own transformation by realising the value and the seriousness which the reception of God's gifts entails. Thus, for White, transforming spirituality presupposes full, active and determined personal involvement.⁴³

While this may be true on the one hand, on the other White warns against depending too heavily on human initiative, capability or achievement. She affirms that a person's full reliance must be on God alone. It is earnest, dependent faith that occupies the decisive role in matters of spirituality, despite the fact that active, whole-hearted and diligent human activity is strongly encouraged.⁴⁴

It appears that, according to White, the incentive and motivation for an action are, on the whole, the factors determining individual usefulness, since usefulness does not depend on one's skills but is instead the result of a spiritual dynamic.⁴⁵ She states: "It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth" DA 615. It is therefore important to understand first the mechanism which causes or creates the motivation behind all active Christian behaviour.

White names God as the origin of the motivation which generates authentic Christian life and service. Along with the implantation of new motives, feelings and thoughts, there is a thorough process of transformation taking place within the new Christian.⁴⁶ At the opposite end of the spectrum, she mentions self-seeking and hypocrisy as driving forces of purely human origin. In her discussion of the starting points for motivation, she emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit as the effective agent for change. Thus even a zeal for God's glory, which she regards as one of the primary motivating factors for Christian life and action, is given by the divine representative.⁴⁷

It appears that, for White, motivation is intimately linked with influences and factors that are spiritual by nature. The best Christian motives are

⁴³ COL 362.

⁴⁴ DA 370.

⁴⁵ MB 79–101. An entire chapter, entitled 'The True Motive in Service', discusses the motivational basis for all Christian action. Motives are seen as the inner factors which lie behind worship, prayer, good works and service, but also the attitudes to money and possessions, to the poor, the challenges of life and temptations.

⁴⁶ COL 98–99.

⁴⁷ DA 409. "COL 350.

engendered as a result of divine, i.e. spiritual, influence, so it follows that the locus of motivation is to be found within the sphere of the human spirit.

It is necessary to point out that White sees prior repentance at the root of the motives which move people to perform good works. But though the process of penitence and sorrow for sin may constitute an indispensable component in the creation of motivation, she still sees Christ living his life in us as the actual moving and upholding force.⁴⁸ Moreover, White affirms that all that is good and noble in intention, action and behaviour in the life of a Christian originates from the grace of Christ.⁴⁹

Instead of the ultimate, eternal reward in the future kingdom of God, White emphasises the abiding presence of Christ within as the Christian's motivating element. According to her, the motivating factors for desired Christian behaviour are related to immediate circumstances, the needs of fellow human beings and love for God and other people, but also include a sense of ethical responsibility.⁵⁰

There seems to be a certain ambiguity about human motivation: only God can thoroughly and exactly know all the motivating factors behind the person's actions. Hence White states emphatically that no human individual is capable of judging the motives of other people. However, in her view, at the final judgment where all actions and deeds are brought up to be evaluated by God, the conclusions regarding their rightness will be based on the motives behind them.⁵¹ On that basis it seems that it is a vital spiritual challenge to nurture one's connectedness to Christ, because without a vital union with him, one's motivation does not originate with divinity, but stems instead from human nature stained by sin.

6.3.2. Being a Representative of Christ

Ellen White's ideas about the maximum usefulness of believers as God's instruments define their relationship to other members of society as well as their role in it. This becomes evident when she portrays Christians standing for Christ, as an embodiment of his character and ideals as one of the aspects of practical

⁴⁸ MB 87.

⁴⁹ MB 82. "The grace of Christ in the soul is developing traits of character that are the opposite of selfishness,—traits that will refine, ennoble, and enrich the life."

⁵⁰ COL 398–399.

⁵¹ COL 316.

spirituality. Her idea of Christians as representatives of Christ can be seen as a way of exploring and perceiving a wider purpose for their lives. By belonging to such a realm of divine influence and action, they may also as individuals have a positive effect on the spirituality of other people and even contribute to their salvation. On this basis it is possible for all to realise that there is a reason for their existence, a role to play and a task to perform.⁵²

The idea of the believer acting as Christ's representative again affirms the existence of a dimension which transcends the ordinary, because the basis for this role is a divine commission. Though awareness of holding such a position adds something to person's spirituality, White does emphasise that spirituality must permeate the whole life and the essence of being before a person can successfully represent Christ.⁵³ In other words, Christ must be present before he can be represented. This role involves showing in a practical way that God is good and loving and that he is worthy of love and trust.⁵⁴ In fact, a Christian among the secular people of the world constitutes a channel through whom Christ himself can make known his character, his ways of dealing with people and his essential qualities. Consequently, the church is also collectively such an expression and representation of Christ.⁵⁵

By the idea of Christians as representatives of Christ, White implies that our whole life is spiritual and that it must be taken seriously. Furthermore, this suggests that the Christian religion is not represented most successfully in an everyday life situation by spoken ideas or convictions, but rather by the quality of the performance of ordinary tasks. Formal religious behaviour does not constitute an ideal representation of Christ. Authentic indications of selfless love, love like the love of Christ, are a better introduction to God than is the performance of religious rituals. The quality of our relationships is an indicator of our discipleship. Thus White's ideas of spirituality can be identified in Hay's terms as "relational consciousness".⁵⁶

⁵² COL 67.

⁵³ MB 107.

⁵⁴ SC 115.

⁵⁵ COL 296. "Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom." COL 69.

⁵⁶ COL 359–360; DA 504; Hey 2007, 14. "Relational consciousness has two components (a) an altered state of awareness as compared with other kinds of consciousness, more intense, more serious and more values and (b) the experience of being in relationship – with other people, with the environment and with God, and in an important sense, in touch with oneself."

For White, the representing of Christ occurs naturally as a result of a person's assurance of the love of Christ. However, the awareness of one's position as Christ's representative gives impetus and direction to spirituality both as an inner dimension and as a way of relating to others.⁵⁷ This is a further indication that Hay's notion of spirituality as relational consciousness is a valid way of describing and defining White's approach to spirituality.

As my final point here, I want to identify the preconditions White describes for the prospect of Christians representing Christ in the midst of a secular world. This life-long task is a result of one's enduring fellowship with Christ.⁵⁸ There can be no effective representation of Christ without a constant observation of his ways and a diligent following of his example.⁵⁹ In the final analysis, Christians can stand for Christ and embody the essence of his being by their personality and their actions only if they engage themselves in spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer, since these practices constitute and maintain a vivifying and empowering bond with Christ.⁶⁰ Ultimately, in White's view, people around us will inevitably be affected by our spirituality, which is apparently God's intention in calling us as individuals to interact with others, to be his representatives.⁶¹

6.4. Ministry

6.4.1. Co-workers with Christ in Ministry and Mission

The topic of ministry is hardly ever included in academic discussions of Christian spirituality.⁶² The reason why this issue also needs to be addressed in connection

⁵⁷ MH 489.

⁵⁸ COL 129–130. Describing first the union with Christ, White states: “This experience gives every teacher of truth the very qualifications that will make him a representative of Christ. The spirit of Christ's teaching will give a force and directness to his communications and to his prayers. His witness to Christ will not be a narrow, lifeless testimony. The minister will not preach over and over the same set discourses. His mind will be open to the constant illumination of the Holy Spirit.”

⁵⁹ MH 493.

⁶⁰ SC 89; MB 107.

⁶¹ MB 128.

⁶² The way in which White uses the term ‘ministry’ indicates that it must not be understood as a professional term but instead as something which is an essential dimension in the life of all believers. Rice 2004, 15–36. Inspired by White's holistic view of humankind, Rice outlines a theological model for a ministry with reference to caring for the needs of the whole person. Thus ministry, in a broad sense, is not limited only to religious professionals.

with Ellen White's spirituality arises from the fact that she sees ministry as an inseparable element of Christian experience, and therefore, too, of genuine spirituality. She suggests that a share in ministry is somehow offered to all Christians, and what is more significant, for every believer, service and witnessing are a natural outgrowth of personal spirituality.⁶³ Through acts of kindness, all participate in divine activity.⁶⁴

In addition to what has been said above about White's ideas on cooperation, her thinking on Christian ministry also seems to grow out of this concept of cooperation with God. She suggests that individual Christians function as God's channels of communication, thereby fulfilling the divine intention of reaching humanity. Thus connectedness with God also entails connectedness with other human beings, and this fellowship is interactive, dynamic and functional by nature. Only through a profound merge of our humanness with the divine can this communication take place successfully and effectively.⁶⁵ What is more, for her, becoming a co-worker with Christ is invariably an essential element of one's relationship with Christ.⁶⁶

Hence, for White, Christian ministry can be perceived only in terms of a cooperative union between divine and human agencies. She claims that, in fact, the heavenly hosts constantly and fervently try to find opportunities for functioning together with people. Thus Christian activity, together with the divine counterpart, is a result of God's initiative and can never be started nor pursued by the human party alone. Of course this union is hardly possible without a person's involvement and activity, but on the other hand, the establishment of this connection automatically leads to a functioning working relationship. Faith-union with Christ seems inevitably to include service, but the work of service, in turn, will result in a still closer and more meaningful connectedness with God.⁶⁷

White describes the gospel ministry in exclusively spiritual terms: not primarily as activity or work as such, but instead, as an empowering connectedness to and an enabling participation with God.⁶⁸ In contrast, she regards the entire Christian experience as ministry, in the sense that active

⁶³ DA 822.

⁶⁴ DA 638; COL 191; MH 102; DA 195.

⁶⁵ DA 297.

⁶⁶ DA 329.

⁶⁷ MH 159; COL 326–327.

⁶⁸ DA 442. "The heavenly intelligences unite with men in sympathy and labor for the saving of that which was lost. And all the power of heaven is brought to combine with human ability in drawing souls to Christ."

involvement in service for others and a personal contribution to unselfish ministry constitute an inevitable hallmark of genuine Christian existence.⁶⁹ Furthermore, she sees doing the work of ministry as a learning and transformation process taking place under direct divine influence and direction. This development is necessary because of persistent human selfishness and self-sufficiency.⁷⁰ These are the unfortunate, spiritually unhealthy human qualities which she regards as some of the main spiritually negative characteristics to be overcome and done away with.

Christ's unselfish love is the attitudinal point of reference, as well as the primary motivating influence, out of which Ellen White desires all Christian ministries to be performed. Such love may be possible for human beings only as a result of Christ's perpetual personal presence within. This means that personal spirituality, in terms of connectedness with the transcendent, constitutes an essential foundation and a crucial element for all Christian service and ministry. White regards love for other people as the primary characteristic of ministry. Unselfish love reveals the intention as well as the objective of any Christian involvement or work which takes place within the immediate human community, but also in the world at large.⁷¹ However, she insists that people themselves must first be objects of the divine love and experience it in a profound way before becoming truly capable of a genuinely loving service.⁷²

According to White, unselfishness entails the holistic orientation of a person, and it is a way of being which comprises an avenue for individual spiritual development, leading to a still closer relationship with God. However, it is significant to note that she does not refer to unselfishness as an inner quality alone, let alone a natural propensity, but instead, true altruism gradually becomes alive, real and effective through actual deeds of service. Such activity will also enhance spiritual progress and the person becomes "a partaker of the divine nature".⁷³ Furthermore, in White's view, service for others offers an effective way of controlling one's own impulses and desires, as it helps to focus on matters outside of one's own, narrow circle.⁷⁴ Thus she seems to regard service, which

⁶⁹ COL 282–283; COL 326.

⁷⁰ COL 388–389.

⁷¹ MH 162; DA 641.

⁷² Ed 268. "Love and loyalty to Christ are the spring of all true service. In the heart touched by His love, there is begotten a desire to work for Him." DA 815.

⁷³ Ed 16.

⁷⁴ COL 354.

requires self-denial and self-sacrifice, as a spiritual exercise necessary for all progressing Christians.

Christian service is also suggested as a way of finding meaning in life, as well as a way of discovering its fulfilment and inner rationale. Through personal involvement in the ministry and church activity, one may gradually perceive the purpose of one's existence. Participation in the work of the church may become a significant matter for a person's perception of the meaningfulness of their life. Again White takes care to imply that a personal knowledge of God is the starting point for service and ministry. But surprisingly, the opposite also seems to be true: a closer acquaintance with God is possible through activities which are meant to benefit and help others.⁷⁵

According to White, service also gives meaning and reason to the existence of the Christian church. It appears that the challenge of the church is not limited merely to what are commonly perceived as standard Christian activities, to liturgy and to ministry, but instead the church is to form its functions and perceive its mission in such a way that it becomes a training centre for abilities and skills required in ministry and service. In order to truly benefit humanity, the church is constantly called to implement and to apply to real life situations the ideas of religion.⁷⁶

Through Christian service and ministry, personal spirituality becomes a real and visible influence: a healing, encouraging, comforting, reforming and empowering force in the lives of those who come in touch with it. White also claims that an interest and susceptibility to spirituality are awakened as a result of unselfish service authentically manifesting Christian love. Most importantly, this spiritually saturated service will help people to find relief from guilt and other burdens caused by sin. The benefits of a caring ministry are naturally not limited to spirituality alone, but will also affect people's social standing within the community, their health and overall welfare.⁷⁷

White sees guilt and wrongdoing as the primary issues which may be alleviated and cared for through Christian ministry, in this case its professional ministers in particular. However, such challenges demand spiritual qualifications in addition to the professional skills and preparedness acquired in academic ministerial training. The negative effects of sin compose a challenge which all

⁷⁵ MH 409; MH 102–103.

⁷⁶ MH 148–149.

⁷⁷ DA 350–351.

Christian workers should be prepared to confront.⁷⁸ White's ideas suggest that the benefits of personally perceived Christian spirituality should somehow be made available for those who are not acquainted with this kind of inner life, but who appear to need its rewards. It is the "sin-sick souls" who need the assistance of a minister the most. Judging by all that has been said above, vibrant personal spiritual welfare is also the foundation for a successful professional pastoral ministry.⁷⁹

Concerning the spiritual premise for successful ministry White writes: "When we eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood, the element of eternal life will be found in the ministry." DA 130. However, it appears that she does not refer here to the reception of Christ so much by sacramental means as to receiving him through personal interaction in prayer. She maintains that repeated interaction and fellowship with Christ will considerably shape and tune the preconditions for ministry. She indicates that it is the inner, spiritual qualities which are essential for all ministerial advancement and success. The concrete results of such work, but also its abstract, internal effects, will be positive, provided that these preconditions are met.⁸⁰

6.4.2. Human Relations and Social Interaction

Ellen White teaches that spiritually-minded people should be aware of the fact that their social relationships and interactive situations with others function as channels through which their spirituality impacts the environment in various constructive and uplifting ways. Through personal associations, their spirituality becomes visible to all, and they thereby have a common point of reference with other people, by which they may enrich and augment their spirituality and its wellbeing.⁸¹ White clearly sees the evangelistic and redemptive potential present in kind and concerned social interaction, which spiritually benefits those participating in it. In her view, authentic Christian spirituality radically impacts the way people are encountered and treated.⁸²

⁷⁸ Jolkkonen 2003 b, 85–106. Jolkkonen discusses the challenge for Christian spirituality which the doctrine of sin imposes. He warns against an overly superficial view of sin, and he points out the relationship between spirituality and the way in which sin is understood theologically.

⁷⁹ DA 822.

⁸⁰ COL 130–131.

⁸¹ DA 152.

⁸² DA 641; COL 386.

White regards human relations and social interaction as potential methods for ministry and gospel outreach. Christian spirituality, even though perceived inwardly in the first place, is channelled outwards in order to enrich the life of others. The sole purpose of spiritual praxis should not be to enhance the spirituality of those who are already spiritual. Instead, the primary orientation of White's spiritual philosophy is directed towards augmenting the spiritual benefits of those who have not yet gained a meaningful grip on Christian spirituality. Human relations are ultimately about reaching all of humanity with the message of God's love and grace. White seems to believe that even though all humankind should be reached, the best way of accomplishing it is through personal contacts and individual efforts. Therefore, the focus of attention is on individuals.⁸³

A high regard of the value of each human being appears to be one of the key features of White's spirituality, i.e. her primary perspective for perceiving meaning in life and finding significance in each person's existence. Hence the appreciation of human worth is also the starting point for her view of the Christian ministry for others. On the other hand, her ideas indicate that only a spirituality which accomplishes inner transformation can produce the ministry which she describes in these terms. For her, spirituality is linked to a ministry which is, in practice, comprised of human fellowship on an individual basis, characterised by intimate, personal connectedness and real, loving contact.⁸⁴

In comparison with conventional approaches to gospel ministry, Ellen White's ideas seem somewhat revolutionary and idealistic. Instead of "sermonizing", she claims there should be constant involvement in personal ministry. She hints here at major problematic social issues, such as poverty and poor education. In preference to public policy adjustment, political action or social reform on the level of the entire society, she speaks in favour of personal intervention and individual responsibility. In the American tradition, she prefers dealing with even major issues of justice in society on the level of the individual. Personal ministry is primarily about providing care, support and comfort. Her

⁸³ COL 229; Annala 2006, 42–69; Häyrynen 2006, 153–169; Kotila 2006; Stinissen 1997; Wikström 1995; Moon & Benner 2004. The Christian tradition has always included spiritual guides, directors and mentors.

⁸⁴ COL 57.

approach can only be possible if arising from strong personal convictions and well-developed spirituality.⁸⁵

White's spirituality has to do with identifying with Christ and following his example in ministry as well his way of relating to people. It is about living out Christ's manner of coming in touch with the people. Thus a constant interaction with Christ in terms of meditative consideration of him and his ways of dealing with people is part of her approach.⁸⁶ Moreover, the social interaction she refers to is not composed of interchange between only the individuals involved, but in her view Christ is also present, and a Christian in a relational situation functions in the role of an intermediary. Ultimately her spirituality is about a constant receiving from God, and then passing on and communicating what is received to others.⁸⁷

Social relationships in Christian spirituality have to do with witnessing for Christ in an individual manner and style. In White's thinking, witnessing is about assessing one's life experience and outlining it, interactively with another individual. This seems to mean that those who give witness for Christ should not attempt to persuade others, but should instead just humbly share their personal perspectives on the essential matters of life. Honest sharing may create an avenue between individuals for meaningful encounter and beneficial exchange of vital insights.⁸⁸

Instead of attempting to convince others about one religious idea or another, personal contacts should focus on a genuine interest for the wellbeing and happiness of others, while their personal integrity is respected and protected. White states that as people meet, there is a strong spiritual element present, regardless of how strong a religious flavour the discussion carries. So an open encounter of a spiritual Christian with other individuals is always spiritually meaningful, even if the subject matter of the discussions is of a secular nature. White seems to refer to the importance of a sense of unity and belonging as essential features in situations of social interaction, thus underlining the spiritual nature of such occasions.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ MH 143–144; Elenius 2003, 113–128; Laulaja 1981. Both Elenius and Laulaja present an outlook into Christian thought which is helpful in the attempt to understand White's spiritual thinking.

⁸⁶ MH 143.

⁸⁷ DA 370.

⁸⁸ DA 340; COL 321.

⁸⁹ MH 152; MH 165.

It is White's conviction that all Christians have a task to bring encouragement, hope and cheer to people around them. For that to happen, there must be a willingness to view life from the vantage point of hope provided by God's goodness and grace. This means that those who witness should be prepared to pursue interpretations of their life experience which are based on a trust that there is a God constantly protecting, caring and providing for them. These are the aspects which may establish a positive and hopeful perception of life. White feels that faith in God produces contagious hope and confidence.⁹⁰

6.5. Church Fellowship and Communal Spirituality

One of the paradoxical features of Christian spirituality is that it is profoundly individual in essence, but at the same time also strongly collective and communal. In most cases, personal spirituality is born and nourished by communal spirituality, and consequently, the collective is more or less the sum of the personal. The church is an essential manifestation of Christian spirituality but also its necessary source of sustenance.

For Ellen White, the church as the spiritual community grows out of the transcendental reality and lives by Christ's living presence. Although the church as a human community is obviously characterised by insufficiency and imperfection, the divine providence still emerges as its genuine actuality.⁹¹ Individuals have not been brought together and joined intimately by a human scheme or arrangement, but as an alternative to it. A new spiritual awareness has been brought in as a result of God's intervention. In White's view, it is the constant awareness and assurance of Christ's love, together with its many blessings, which forms the bond binding church members together as a spiritual family.⁹²

White emphasises the closeness of the connectedness between the church and Christ.⁹³ On the basis of this unity and oneness, i.e. a reality which transcends all human limitations, the church is truly a spiritual community. A major challenge for the church is to transmit this bond with Christ into the reality

⁹⁰ SC 119–120.

⁹¹ DA 414.

⁹² DA 638.

⁹³ ED 268.

of the human relations within the church. The membership is bound together by love, which has been awakened by an awareness of Christ's love and grace.⁹⁴

6.5.1. Worship, Rejoicing and Thanksgiving

Ellen White regards the church as a community transcending the commonness of a mere group of people. She describes it as “a transformed body”, which constantly receives provisions from God in order to make it more capable of impacting its surroundings. Its competence for positive influence is, however, based on the spiritual vigour and wellbeing of its individual members.⁹⁵ Consequently, she suggests, this personal welfare and happiness becomes naturally translated into praise and thanksgiving – something that can also be seen as a positive and courageous attitude to life. Such an approach to life is needed to lift up the spirits and to create in the mind a prospect of hope and confidence for the future in the midst of every-day challenges and burdens.⁹⁶

White thinks that joyfulness as such is not spiritual, but rather a natural result of one's spirituality. The presence of the indwelling Christ is the origin and the reason of joy and cheer.⁹⁷ However, this joy does not always, and in all situations, spring up naturally and without impediment. Therefore, people need to educate themselves to express their joy, praise and thanks to God. White equals this with a constant opening up of oneself, the inner part of one's being, to the assurance of Christ's love. Maintenance of the union with Christ and repeated conviction of the certainty of Christ's love are the spiritual challenges, and at the same time the blessings, which call Christians to worship and praise God.⁹⁸

White claims, however, that conviction of divine benevolence and grace cannot be obtained by human enterprise or even as a result of spiritual exercise. Instead, all blessings and gifts are bestowed by Christ, and thus also the resulting joy, the praise, the thanksgiving and the worship are instigated and inspired by him.⁹⁹ The individual is to perform a part in the cooperative and interactive relationship, but God is the *primus motor* in that relationship.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ DA 678.

⁹⁵ COL 419.

⁹⁶ MH 100.

⁹⁷ COL 162. “But Christ dwelling in the soul is a wellspring of joy. For all who receive Him, the very keynote of the word of God is rejoicing.” COL 129–130.

⁹⁸ MH 253. See also MH 492.

⁹⁹ MB 80–81.

¹⁰⁰ MH 481.

Thus, in White's view, spiritual experience is composed of multiple directions, multiple actions and multiple activities by both God and the believer. Spirituality means dynamic, multifaceted and often paradoxical activity in which the roles and the subjects of various actions cannot be exactly defined. In addition, it seems primarily to concern the interpretation of one's life experience from God's point of view, which involves awareness of the fact that one is constantly an object of God's actions, both observable and unobservable.

Ultimately, White points out benefits for total wellbeing and happiness which will arise from continuously and diversely executed positive spirituality.¹⁰¹ Yet the same spirituality which is carried out and experienced in private, even in the hidden inner sphere, also includes the principal component of collective spirituality which finds its expression in public worship. Then this public worship in turn feeds the worshiper's personal spirituality and total happiness and welfare.¹⁰²

Some passages make it clear that White regards the worship services of the church as very important for spiritual wellbeing.¹⁰³ She believes that it is not so much the aesthetic, the objective quality of the performances in the service that matter, but instead it is the inner, spiritual worth, i.e. the possessing of "the principles of the character of Christ", which comprise the core element in worship. It is this divine component which is essential for worship, a quality which a person may possess only as a gift from God and as his accomplishment.¹⁰⁴

In worship, people enter an occasion, a space, where they approach God, the Holy One, face to face, even if they do not always perceive it. They stand in the presence of the one who is "the Unseen", the transcendent or "wholly other", "*ganz andere*", as Rudolf Otto puts it.¹⁰⁵ One of the essential elements of worship is an acknowledgement of God's holiness and showing reverence for it. However, this reverence is possible only if that holiness and otherness has been by

¹⁰¹ MH 251. "Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father's house?" MH 253.

¹⁰² SC 103.

¹⁰³ MH 511.

¹⁰⁴ COL 298.

¹⁰⁵ Otto 1936, 28. According to Rudolf Otto, the numinous or *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* is the central characteristic of God from the human perspective. See also Wikström 2004, 59–65.

some means anticipated or even comprehended and its presence somehow felt or perceived. This is something which, in White's view, even a child is capable of.¹⁰⁶

White suggests that the reason, the grounds and the motivation for worshipping and praising God are not found within human experience. Thanksgiving to God is due solely because he is God. He is always worthy of praise and thanksgiving. Whatever our own situation, we are always obliged to express our gratitude and homage to him because of his greatness, goodness and power. Yet it is God's spirit which creates the inner willingness and desire to worship, in the same way as all spirituality is awakened by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it is our sinfulness which should compel us to seek God, the only one who can deliver us from sin. For White, the cross of Christ and the saving grace which it represents are the main cause and basis for thanksgiving, worship and praise.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, White sees worship as a time of expressing happiness, joy and praise to God. It should be an occasion for a lot of singing, which she regards as an equally important part of worship as prayer. She claims that song may form a link to the transcendent. It is not only an external expression in the art of music, but it may also move and shape, nourish and comfort our inner person.¹⁰⁸

6.5.2. Sacramental Spirituality

I do not here discuss sacramental spirituality in exactly the same sense in which the term is commonly used, in connection with the celebration of the sacraments as a means of grace and God's presence.¹⁰⁹ In Ellen White's spiritual thinking about the holy ordinances, there are certain differences but also several similarities, as compared to the Anabaptist views as introduced by Arnold Snyder.¹¹⁰

White does not promote the observance of religious rituals and ceremonies as mere external performances or customs. Not satisfied with simply

¹⁰⁶ Ed 242–243.

¹⁰⁷ DA 189; Jolkkonen 2003 a, 97–111. Interestingly, Jolkkonen points out Luther's idea that prayer and worship to God should be viewed as acts of obedience to the first commandments of the Decalogue. However, human need and emergency also constitute legitimate reasons for approaching God. SC 103–104.

¹⁰⁸ Ed 168–169; SC 104.

¹⁰⁹ Sheldrake 1998 b, 184–186; McGrath 1999, 115–116.

¹¹⁰ Snyder 2004, 67–110.

outwardly or superficially fulfilling the sacred requirement, she advocates further measures leading to a personal, saving relationship with Christ. She applies this hesitant attitude towards formality in all forms of religious life, including Sabbath-keeping, which she otherwise regards as an important part of authentic spirituality. As far as religious rites and forms are concerned, she insists that for them to have meaning, they must be properly understood and participation in them should take place out of sincerity, pure motives and good intentions.¹¹¹

White regards the sacraments—or ordinances as she prefers to call them—as a vital part of perceiving Christian spirituality and as one of the main ways of expressing it. But she does not believe that the performance of any religious ritual can in itself generate spirituality within a person. She seems to think that though spirituality needs a connection to external, concrete practices to fully exist and flourish, it is primarily an inner dimension or quality. Religious externals, whatever their nature, do not in themselves necessarily represent authentic spiritual existence.¹¹²

White presents fairly harsh criticism against the hypocrisy of the Judaism of the time of Jesus, and at the same time assumes that there lies a similar danger for modern Christians too. By her warnings against the kind of superficial connection that the ancient Jews as a group had, and her calls to heartfelt religion and a “from-the-inside-out spirituality”, she, in fact, encourages an honest and sincere attitude toward essential religious ideas and the voice of God within.¹¹³

White still distinctly indicates that the connection between the Christian ordinances and Christ must be appreciated.¹¹⁴ This is one of the few things that she says in relation to baptism, beyond which she does not really address that particular topic in any spiritually relevant manner within the material of this study. However, she does once mention the fact that the baptism of Christ marks his total identification with sinful humanity, in spite of being sinless himself. She suggests that if we as human beings follow his example into the baptismal waters, we may accordingly identify ourselves with Christ and his death, thus establishing an ontological unifying bond linking us inseparably with Christ.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ DA 286. See also DA 189.

¹¹² SC 44–45.

¹¹³ DA 28.

¹¹⁴ DA 181. “It is the grace of Christ that gives life to the soul. Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form.”

¹¹⁵ DA 111. See also 6T 91–99 for more on White’s ideas regarding baptism.

Foot washing is an ordinance which Ellen White promotes but which is not generally practiced within Protestantism. However, it applies directly to the present investigation of her spirituality.¹¹⁶ Within the Adventist spiritual tradition, Christ's act of washing the feet of the disciples is regarded as a binding example for the church. It is subsequently followed and practiced regularly in SDA churches, immediately prior to celebration of Communion.¹¹⁷ White's comments in relation to the foot-washing ceremony emphasise its spiritual meaning and significance.

White describes the importance of foot-washing by referring to the need for humility and readiness for service as desirable attitudes and an optimal mind-set to be attained and maintained by the followers of Christ.¹¹⁸ She appears to think that serious attitudinal distortions such as pride, strife for supremacy, "evil surmising", i.e. evil assumptions about others, bitterness and self-exaltation require decisive and concrete action in order to be rectified. The foot washing ceremony as a corrective measure is seen as necessary before entry into fellowship with Christ is possible. It creates an opportunity and a circumstance where therapeutic reconciliation and a settling of differences can take place. It is humbling and concrete enough to touch "the heart", the inner realm of the human spirit. She suggests, thereby, that attitudinal rectification can take place only as a result of conscious personal consent indicated by definite actions. These actions may typically include confession of sins or clearing of mutual tension, and asking for forgiveness. The washing of feet is made up of traditional expressions of repentance, literally bowing down in front of the other person, and kneeling to wash another's feet and accepting a similar service for oneself.¹¹⁹

By her distinct references to Christ's washing of his disciples' feet White attempts to highlight Christ's position as an exemplary servant of all. She suggests that Christ's humble mind-set and his empowering and uplifting approach to people stand at the core of this ceremony. White believes that an internal transformation of attitudes way of regarding others is bound to happen as a person wholeheartedly engages in the performance of such an intimate action as

¹¹⁶ Snyder 2004, 104–108. According to Snyder, the washing of the feet was practiced by the Anabaptists. That is obviously the source from which the Adventist practice also comes.

¹¹⁷ John 13:1–17.

¹¹⁸ DA 650. The emphasis on attitude seems to indicate that the point in the washing of the feet is not sacramental, not in the full sense at least, because there is no reference to the ceremony being a means of grace. Instead, it seems that its role is that of a spiritual exercise.

¹¹⁹ DA 650.

washing another person's feet. In addition, her ideas also seem to indicate that flourishing spirituality is inevitably united with multilateral relational happiness within the Christian community.¹²⁰

I also want to point out that White considers the foot-washing ceremony to be an occasion where Christ himself is the active and performing agent. It is, indeed, only Christ who can transform from within, bring about a change in attitude and create a genuinely new sense of kindness and fellowship. Moreover, the rite of foot washing depicts spiritual cleansing, which can only be brought about by the efficacy of Christ. Only in this sense can the ordinance be seen as having a sacramental function, i.e. Christ is the actual active executor of the saving work in it, while people are primarily objects of the divine act.¹²¹

The Lord's Supper is described by White primarily in terms of a commemoration of the divine act of delivering humanity from the bondage of sin through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. The remembrance of his saving work is a fixed point of reference, indispensable for every person in the quest to find one's true identity, to become rid of sin and guilt, to discover hope and purpose for life and the future, to perceive meaning in existence and to experience real fellowship with God.¹²²

For Ellen White, Communion is a memorial of what happened once and for all in terms of Christ's atoning death on behalf of all who are guilty and under the burden of sin. The essential divine act took place in the past, but this ceremony brings its benefits and blessings to the present, and offers them for the participant to obtain and apply.¹²³ On the other hand, White also emphasises the actual and active presence of Christ at the time when the ordinance is celebrated. Christ himself is there in a real way to "convict and soften the heart". She clearly does not see how the ceremony could attain its full spiritual impact without the direct divine presence.¹²⁴

White proposes that having Communion is, for the congregation, Christ's "own appointment" with his children, a special occasion when he "meets his people, and energises them with his presence". She does not mention the

¹²⁰ DA 650; DA 646.

¹²¹ DA 646–649.

¹²² DA 652–653.

¹²³ DA 652.

¹²⁴ DA 656. Lutheran Catechism Articles 37–39. Gassmann & Hendrix 2005, 145–149. In the Lutheran understanding of the communion, the real presence of Christ in the elements as well as in the actual celebration is one of the fundamental points of the sacrament. See also Pihkala 2003, 221–232.

divine ontological presence in the bread or in the wine, but she speaks of Christ as the one who serves. Her emphasis is on Christ's activity and influence rather than on his presence as such. Consequently, it can be assumed that in accordance with this line of thought, the experience of Christ's stimulating and revitalising presence for the one receiving the sacrament is always spiritually relevant, notwithstanding any academic problems regarding the way in which that presence occurs.¹²⁵

An analysis of Ellen White's ideas about the Lord's Supper reveals, however, that she sees in the celebration more than a mere commemorating of ancient events. The elements at the Communion table are Christ's specific pledge that he is, indeed, the redeemer of those who receive the bread and the wine. This seems to mean that all participants obtain a divine promise of the forgiveness of their sins, and a guarantee of their full and unconditional acceptance as children of God.¹²⁶

It is natural also that the aspect of fellowship and union emerges as prominent in White's understanding of Communion. She states that the sacrament was instituted so "that it may speak to our senses of the love of God". In addition to the union with the God of grace, she also mentions the affectionate fellowship and interaction that Communion gives an opportunity for between members of God's family and among the Christian community. This togetherness is presented as one of the vital features visible in the ceremony and affirmed by it. Communion makes the abstract notion of connectedness and union among Christians visible, experiential and concrete.¹²⁷

Finally, Ellen White regards the Communion service as an opportunity for several spiritually enriching and rewarding inner processes. It is a time for praise; it suggests topics and themes for contemplation and meditation, and it offers various positive emotional stimuli. The Communion service and the preparatory time preceding the actual celebration call for heartfelt self-examination, repentance and assessment of relational attitudes. White sees the Communion service as an occasion when we are taken to a special vantage point

¹²⁵ DA 656.

¹²⁶ DA 656. "In partaking with His disciples of the bread and wine, Christ pledged Himself to them as their Redeemer."

¹²⁷ DA 660–661. Raitt 2005, 125. Ellen White's views here about Communion have a similar thrust to what can be found in Raitt's description of Zwingli's Eucharistic theology: "It is the community, not the bread and wine, that is transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a service of remembering, of gratitude, and of joy, a necessary symbol of the union of believers."

which enables us evaluate our whole life and to consider its meaning and purpose in relation to the reference point of the saving acts of God. She believes that the Lord's Supper sets us in a direct relationship with Jesus Christ, inviting us to observe his willing self-sacrifice and to examine his submission to his expiating death for each of us personally as well as for all humankind.¹²⁸

6.5.3. Ministry of Reconciliation

It is useful first to examine what Ellen White says about Christ's attitude to the erring before viewing her spiritual approach to ministering for those who stray into sin. She describes Christ as a deeply concerned, loving and welcoming friend to those who have done wrong, and introduces him as the model for all those who counsel the fallible. She states that Christ allows his innermost being and his deepest emotions to be touched by the overall unhappy situation and bewilderment in which an individual may be after he/she has committed a sin. This perspective produces two points for consideration: 1. the awareness of Christ's compassion for sinners gives hope and encouragement for all human beings who share the same weakness and propensity for evil. 2. Christ's way of relating to and dealing with erring people sets an example and a point of reference to be considered in all attempts to construct a spiritual approach to human imperfection.¹²⁹

White suggests that a successful approach for helping the wrongdoer is composed of a forgiving, supportive attitude and a compassionate, kind emotional mood. With cordial tenderness and gentleness, it is possible to accomplish what is unachievable by criticism or rebuke. She implies that this can be done effectively by close contact with Christ, together with a humble compliance to the mediatory and instrumental role the Christian can have between Christ and the sinner. This appears to indicate that a thriving ministry for the erring is mostly a product of thriving, personal spirituality in terms of intimate interface with Christ.¹³⁰

White insists that sin must not be dealt with lightly or hesitantly.¹³¹ On the other hand, she makes it clear that there must be an overwhelming

¹²⁸ DA 661.

¹²⁹ Ed 294. See also DA 517.

¹³⁰ MB 128–129; COL 251.

¹³¹ COL 248. See also DA 441, 805–806.

presence of love, concern and sympathy whenever attempts are made to help those who live in sin and error. Yet human love is insufficient, and the love of Christ must be expressed to bring about its healing results. This indicates that such moments distinctly surpass the field of human relations into the transcendental and superhuman sphere.¹³²

White describes ministry for the erring in terms of leading these people to understand the reality of the spiritual world and the assistance and support available there. It also means helping them to view their whole life experience from an alternative, i.e. divine position, including the possibility of receiving forgiveness, liberation, transformation, empowerment, etc. Thus spirituality functions as a healing, transforming, comforting, hope-inspiring and security-enhancing element in such situations. In fact, one can conclude that White here speaks about spiritual guidance. According to her, prayer has an essential role in this process of providing effective spiritual care. This is because she regards prayer as a unifying bond, among people as well as in its primary role between people and God.¹³³ In addition to prayer, she elsewhere mentions the foot-washing ceremony as another method for dealing with inner spiritual hindrances, such as sin, which block the free flow of a person's inner life but also disturb human relationships.¹³⁴

The relational dimension, and hence also relational skills, emerges as prominent in White's approach to a spiritually motivated ministry for the erring. Such a ministry calls for empathy and emotional sensitivity, but also love, kindness, mercy, patience, concern, humility and tenderness. All these qualities, along with a number of other positive Christian virtues, should be included in and set the tone for all confrontation of the erring with their sins. From such premises, the guidance of these people to a more constructive behaviour and life-style can be successful.¹³⁵

White emphasises that dealings with people's sins and weaknesses must take place discreetly, confidentially and privately. Yet it is not primarily the sins and wrong actions which require these steps to be taken, but rather the purpose is to secure a caring and concerned encounter with the person. It is the person who is in need of ministry, and an encounter with him/her may bring help

¹³² Ed 113–114; COL 149.

¹³³ COL 250.

¹³⁴ DA 655–656.

¹³⁵ DA 440; DA 462. See also Ed 90.

and lead to solutions. Therefore, constant awareness of one's own imperfection is helpful, because it makes for a healthy point of reference in all dealings with behavioural and moral failures and weakness. Shared relatedness is established as soon as a common point of reference is mutually acknowledged.¹³⁶

Considering what White says about the qualities of relational attitudes and affective strategies, her ideas have a certain resemblance to what Daniel Coleman says in introducing terms such as 'emotional intelligence' and 'social intelligence'. Not only do terms often used by White, such as sympathy, compassion or pity, indicate a similarity, but primarily the overall intention of her ideas on emotional and relational skill. A particular reference must be made here to her counsel to ministers doing reconciling work as recorded in her book *Gospel Workers*.¹³⁷

White's advice for the spiritual restoration of those who suffer from sin and error includes a warning against condemning and criticising attitudes and behaviours. It must be kept in mind that one may react to or evaluate only the behavioural distortions of another person, but not the persons themselves or their interior baseline. Indeed, she is adamant that no human being is able to evaluate another person's inner state, their motivation, their attitudinal standing or the whole range of reasons behind individual actions. She says that judging the heart, the motives and the character must be left to God alone.¹³⁸ Accordingly, she admonishes her readers to take every care in dealing with weak and erring individuals. "Every soul has cost an infinite price, and how terrible is the sin of turning one soul away from Christ, so that for him the Saviour's love and humiliation and agony shall have been in vain." DA 438.

6.6. Formation for Wellbeing

The profusion of Ellen White's literary material on education and health is in itself a strong indication of her holistic approach to spirituality. In addition to

¹³⁶ DA 441.

¹³⁷ Coleman 1995/2005; Coleman 2006. Coleman's concepts 'emotional intelligence' and 'social intelligence' are useful and appropriate modern terms which seem to capture the essence of White's idea. She speaks about the same issues in terms of compassion, sympathy and pity. GW 117–132, 140–145, 181–195, 207–221, 473–480. These are some examples of White's texts which reveal her thoughts on emotional and relational skills and attitudes.

¹³⁸ COL 71–72. See also MB 123–124.

Education and *The Ministry of Healing*, she has published a number of other books and articles dealing with educational and health issues. The books mentioned effectively complement her later production, and therefore they belong in the domain of this analytic study, and they also expose some essential dimensions of her spiritual thinking. Hence these books, as well as their topics, must be included in this study as we attempt to explore and describe the spirituality of her mature years. However, space limitations allow only a general overview of these aspects of her holistic approach to human happiness and welfare.¹³⁹

The general orientation of White's thinking indicates a deep interest for the spiritual formation of her readers, but also for their all-inclusive life development, happiness and wellness. All matters related to education and total health are included in her philosophy of formation for well-being, which comprises improvement and growth within all dimensions and functions of the person. In fact, her spirituality cannot be comprehensively described without specific reference to her philosophy of education and health, and conversely her ideas in these fields really make sense only if interpreted within the framework of her spirituality.¹⁴⁰

6.6.1. Education

Ellen White's educational ideas can be more easily understood after first taking a broad-spectrum overview of her definition of education and her account of its purposes. My supposition will become clearer and more focused as my analysis continues, but for the start, some basic observations will be necessary. First of all, for White, education has to do with all stages of life and is not limited to the early part of life and the initial phase of growth. Instead, she regards education as a never-ending development which continues all the way through life, even throughout eternity. By education she refers to a holistic and all-inclusive progress, which thus encompasses also spiritual development.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ 1913/1943 Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students. 1923/1957 Counsels on Health. 1923 Fundamentals of Christian Education. 1932/1963 Medical Ministry. 1938/1976 Counsels on Diet and Foods. 1949 Temperance. 1954 Child Guidance. 1970 The Health Food Ministry. In addition to these books, White has presented various aspects of her educational and health-related thinking in a number of articles and testimonies.

¹⁴⁰ COL 330.

¹⁴¹ Ed 13.

Another special feature in White's educational philosophy is the idea that spirituality is an essential aspect of the actual concept of education, not only one feature among many in the wide-ranging educational programme. This means that White's educational ideas, and what she sees as prerequisites for an education that is effectively carried out, can be described only in terms of intrinsic spirituality.¹⁴² In the final analysis, it seems that God himself is the educator who leads the process of learning, development and transformation. All these things seem to take place primarily on the level of the human spirit, rather than only the mind being filled with knowledge or the memory and understanding expanded. For White, the goal of education lies deeper than a mere leaning of new intellectual skills or an improving of some other mental capacity. Education, in her view, has to do with becoming connected with God for service and cooperation, as well as with obtaining divine qualities and features.¹⁴³

White's way of understanding education can be perceived also from her profoundly religious or perhaps even theological premises. This is because she refers to some of the wide-range existential dimensions of God's plan in creation, the existence of evil, and the ultimate purpose of God for humanity as the frame of reference to be used when exploring the meaning and purpose of education as she sees it. Thus education, in her opinion, is a fully Christian task, with its intended effects quite comparable to the commission for gospel ministry, evangelism or pastoral work.¹⁴⁴

White also describes education as an experience in which an individual, empowering and energising contact emerges as the central feature. The disciples of Jesus, in particular, were able to enjoy such an education while being in touch with him on a daily basis. White apparently suggests that a similar relationship should prevail on every educational occasion. She argues that it is this union with God which is most urgently needed. She proposes that it is the task of Christian educational endeavours to attempt to create optimal preconditions and opportune circumstances for individuals to experience this.¹⁴⁵

It is also important to identify and define Ellen White's notion of knowledge, because knowledge for her goes beyond a correct understanding or a

¹⁴² Swinton 2001/2003, 29–32. Swinton speaks about intrinsic and extrinsic religion with the purpose of differentiating religiosity, which is motivated from within, from that which is motivated by outside sources and things.

¹⁴³ DA 251.

¹⁴⁴ Ed 14–15.

¹⁴⁵ DA 250; COL 114.

cluster of correctly perceived pieces of information and facts. Indeed, she appears to regard a fellowship or a communion with the mind of God as an essential component in the pursuit of true knowledge. Therefore, personal willingness to enter into this kind of fellowship is vitally important. This means that there must be a certain level of assent and readiness for, or perhaps inclination to, spirituality as a prerequisite for reaching knowledge. And what is more, she seems to imply again that this may happen as a result of a conversational interface with God through continuous devotional praxis.¹⁴⁶

This means that, in White's thinking, education in the full sense of the word is actually a matter of a close association between a person and God. It concerns a spiritual relationship which generates development and growth of the whole person. This is what she writes about this fellowship: "In this communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development." Ed 14.

White argues that Christ's earthly ministry as a human being was chiefly a work of education, at least in relation to his disciples. It was not so much about passing on information or training his followers to master new skills and working methods, but according to her, his purpose was to instil relational attitudes, including a constructive position for self, but also helpful emotional moods and ways of relating and reacting. She seems to consider self-centredness and egoistic narrow-mindedness as the most avoidable stances. As an antithesis to human selfhood and selfishness stands Christ's self-sacrificing, generous and absolutely altruistic attitude and personality. The adoption and implementation of Christ's selfless approach and mind-set is clearly one of the principal objectives of White's educational programme, in the same way as it can be seen as the goal of her spiritual thinking.¹⁴⁷

The instruction of children emerges as the primary target of White's educational ideas. She suggests that even little children are truly spiritual beings, and their readiness to accept and absorb spirituality should be appreciated, and meeting their spiritual needs should therefore be a primary goal in education.¹⁴⁸ Subsequently, it is the spirituality of parents, teachers and other educators which sets the preconditions and foundation for approaching children in a spiritually edifying and supportive way. Love and care spring from within, from a person's

¹⁴⁶ Ed 14.

¹⁴⁷ DA 249–250. See also Ed 225–226.

¹⁴⁸ COL 84. See also DA 515–516.

own inner perceptions of receiving love from the loving God and from affectionate people.¹⁴⁹

My analysis indicates that the concentration in White's philosophy of education is predominantly on dimensions which pertain to affective aspects and relational attitudes. Learning emotional and relational skills seems thus to be a primary target of education in her view. However, these are abilities and dispositions which can be identified as external indicators of the inner satisfaction of basic emotional and relational needs in terms of meaningful, mutual and lasting bonding with others.¹⁵⁰

“Experimental knowledge” is one of the methodological concepts which White uses in her explanation of the fundamentals of Christian education. Such knowledge is based on a deep conviction resulting from Bible study and the inner working of the Holy Spirit. This seems to indicate that the educator functions first and foremost in the role of a spiritual counsellor or guide rather than simply a provider of pieces of information on religious and theological matters. The latter kind of knowledge appeals to the intellect, while spiritual guidance attempts to satisfy the inner longing with a sense of assurance, peace and joy. In White's words “[s]uch an education will restore the image of God in the soul”.¹⁵¹

The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ expressed in character is an exaltation above everything else that is esteemed on earth or in heaven. It is the very highest education. It is the key that opens the portals of the heavenly city. This knowledge it is God's purpose that all who put on Christ shall possess.¹⁵²

For White's educational thinking, the concept of character is central but it also embodies many of her leading spiritual ideas and themes. We will examine her usage of the term ‘character’, its scope, meaning and significance in her entire philosophy of spirituality more closely below, in section 6.7. In education she sees the moulding of a student's character as one of the tasks of teachers and educators. It may here suffice to say that the purpose of this character moulding is to impact the human spirit, rather than just helping the students to know and understand certain subject matter or to behave in a desirable way.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ DA 752.

¹⁵⁰ DA 516; DA 517.

¹⁵¹ COL 42–43; COL 48. See also MH 461; Ed 17; COL 114.

¹⁵² MH 457.

¹⁵³ Ed 19.

White's view of humanity is pessimistic and negative due to the general power and domination of sin in the human nature. Yet she seems to believe that there is a potential, inborn readiness and a latent reserve for growth hidden in each individual. Therefore, it is the task of education, understood as she does as a thoroughly Christian and spiritual undertaking, to release these possibilities and to channel that potential into growth and bloom. She emphasises "individuality, the power to think and to do" as qualities which are comparable to divine abilities, and thus crucial for impending transformation and development.¹⁵⁴

This is how Ellen White describes the spiritual path incorporated in education and the prospects it opens to view:

Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness – godlikeness – is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth.¹⁵⁵

This means that White sees education as a spiritual development rather than a mere learning process. While obtaining knowledge is something she strongly promotes, she sees the pursuit for purely spiritual goals as an integral part of other goals and in harmony with them. In this sense education is not limited to the educational efforts which take place in homes and schools.

6.6.2. Total Health and Healing

The healing miracles of Jesus may serve as a starting point for our discussion on the topic of health in relation to spirituality in Ellen White's thinking. In conjunction with the description of these messianic wonders, she stresses the interrelationship between physical and spiritual healing. She proposes that it was the spiritual healing where Christ always began his therapeutic ministry, implying that the spiritual healing is primary and may function as a precondition for a fully physical healing. Positive changes in the human spirit within, such as the

¹⁵⁴ Ed 17–18.

¹⁵⁵ Ed 18–19.

experience of forgiveness, for instance, will also impact physical, mental and social wellbeing and happiness.¹⁵⁶

White can be regarded as a promoter of holistic wellbeing and wholeness in addition to her role as a religious opinion leader.¹⁵⁷ This means that she considered the endorsement of healthful living as well as ministry aimed at physical healing and the care of physical health as an integral part of religious obligations, along with the fostering of personal spirituality.¹⁵⁸

Total health is a term which can be justifiably called a key expression in the endeavour to describe and define White's comprehensive health ideology, which is thoroughly penetrated by Christian spirituality. She is concerned with all aspects of human wellbeing, and she urges her readers to take care of themselves in the best possible way as a part of their God-given responsibility. It seems to be her conviction that even medical information may serve a useful purpose in an attempt to reach spiritual goals.¹⁵⁹ She does not idealise the human body or the physical aspect of our being, but she sees no reason to neglect its optimal welfare, either. "Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body, and it must be kept in the best condition physically and under the most spiritual influences in order that our talents may be put to the highest use." COL 346.

White sees the good physical condition of the body as an indispensable asset in our fight against those negative tendencies and influences which typically harm or destroy our spiritual happiness and vitality. The same is true of moments when ethically crucial choices must be made. This seems to imply, therefore, that our struggle in opposing sin, temptation and our natural human weakness is a holistic undertaking, in which all dimensions of our being should constantly participate.¹⁶⁰

In White's thinking, total health has implications beyond personal happiness and satisfaction. She refers to health also from the perspective of

¹⁵⁶ DA 270; Maddox 1994, 145–146. Maddox argues that it was part of Wesley's teaching to stress "the interrelation between physical health or disease and spiritual wholeness." Thus it seems that the initial interest in the importance of hygiene, diet and exercise was inherited by Adventism from Methodism. Ball 1981, 173–177. Ball suggests that the Adventist health philosophy seems have its roots as far back as 17th century English Puritanism.

¹⁵⁷ Sorajjakool & Lamberton 2004. Several of the writers of the book edited by Sorajjakool and Lamberton use the word wholeness in connection with health and wellbeing. As the opposite of brokenness and loss of integrity, it seems to be related primarily to mental health issues.

¹⁵⁸ COL 348; COL 233–234.

¹⁵⁹ Ed 195.

¹⁶⁰ COL 346.

ministry. This means a call to serve those who have problems with their health.¹⁶¹ A distinctly Christian spirituality is the starting point for such a work. It is also the guiding principle in her approach to this health ministry at large. It seems to be her desire to prevent church-related medical work from becoming encounters with people only within the framework of nursing and medical sciences. Her health emphasis invariably entails an intentional attempt to satisfy the spiritual needs also of those in need of medical attention. She sees this as an integral part of the therapeutic endeavours of the entire medical personnel.¹⁶² She claims: “We are to be workers together with God for the restoration of health to the body as well as to the soul.” DA 824.

Such an approach to therapeutic or medical practice calls for a personal spirituality strong enough to function unwaveringly as the foundation for the ministry and also as a source of the strength and motivation needed in such work. Once again White refers to the vital connection with Christ as the only invigorating resource.¹⁶³

White lists eight natural remedies which encapsulate much of her ideology regarding healthful living and its preconditions: “Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power – these are the true remedies.” An examination of this list from a spiritual point of view shows that, as she sees it, we should attempt to perceive our existence and the basis of our wellbeing in reference to the natural world. God has provided us with good things sufficient for our health and prosperity. It is our responsibility to make diligent and wise use of them. The fact that we are living in God’s world should not mean that we lose touch with the concrete reality in favour of exclusive otherworldliness and an excited search for miracles. We are expected to do what we can to help ourselves, while being constantly aware of the fact that there is a God to whom we may turn in all matters beyond our capability.¹⁶⁴

White encourages her readers to seek a holistic harmony with God, which means observance of both moral and natural laws as guiding principles for a full and happy life. She seems to refer here to the simple rule of cause and effect as the fundamental fact which sets the preconditions and limitations for all existence. It is within this reality that we are to search for significance and

¹⁶¹ Rice 2004, 15–36. In harmony with White’s ideas, Rice introduces a modern approach to wholeness and hence he presents a tentative model of whole person care.

¹⁶² DA 350–351.

¹⁶³ DA 825.

¹⁶⁴ MH 127.

purpose for our lives. Thus, in her spiritual ideas, she advocates an appreciation of simple obedience as the basis for the discovery of a full life in this world which God has created for us.¹⁶⁵

In addition to their being spiritually virtuous in terms of an active devotional life, White regards self-discipline and self-control as necessary attitudinal qualities and practical means in the prevention of diseases and other threats to health and happiness. As she uses the term temperance as a synonym for them, she sees total abstinence from all intoxicants as another form of well-ordered and disciplined behaviour that carries significance in the spiritual journey towards a still closer joining together with God.¹⁶⁶

While active self-control and restraint are part of White's spirituality a certain level of inactivity and passivity can also be detected, described by words such as rest, peace and quietude. However, a specific paradoxical element is attached to these concepts: rest can be obtained as a result of taking the yoke of Christ, and peace and quietude may be the result of surrendering one's soul to Christ's keeping. In any case, she claims that there are specific, definable factors essential for over-all wellbeing and happiness. They are fundamentally spiritual by nature, but at the same time these aspects can hardly be experienced in full without corresponding physical and holistic consequences.¹⁶⁷

Peace and rest are also concepts related to several dimensions of human wellbeing and happiness; the circumstantial, the internal, the social, the communal. But peace or rest is never self-evident because White regards God's grace as the sole grounds for a lasting experience of peace. It seems that peace is both the result of the inner process of connection with God's goodness and love, and simultaneously also the starting point for bringing peace to others and for creating the kind of circumstances and conditions where enduring peace prevails for all.¹⁶⁸ Peace is something which can be received in its truest sense as a spiritual experience in the private, internal realm of the individual human spirit.¹⁶⁹ White assures the reader that "[i]t is our privilege to rest in His love." DA 331.

Ellen White addresses a number of psychological issues which have an effect on the way we perceive our lives. She explains how this perception is shaped by our ideas, affections and deep inner attitudes. Yet she seems to believe

¹⁶⁵ DA 824.

¹⁶⁶ DA 101; Ed 197. See also MH 172.

¹⁶⁷ DA 329; DA 331.

¹⁶⁸ MB 27–28.

¹⁶⁹ DA 363.

that we are capable of decisively affecting the way our mind works, and what kind of ideas, thoughts and feelings are cherished. It is interesting to note the method which she introduces for controlling our thinking. Instead of trying to stop unwanted thoughts and sensations from flooding into our minds, she says we should actively and determinedly direct our attention and our thinking towards God's love and mercy. By so doing, a need and desire to praise God is ignited. So by encouraging positive, constructive thoughts, a change in the mood as well as in thinking patterns may be accomplished.¹⁷⁰

One indispensable aspect of our thinking is the way in which we relate to ourselves and the kind of ideas we have about who we are. Guarding one's individuality and independence seems to be an important matter for White, and hence she challenges her readers to give it special attention. She regards our personal and unique way of witnessing and praising God as an especially valuable and powerful asset.¹⁷¹

White accentuates the discovery and preservation of one's distinctiveness as a responsibility which God has given to all. She indicates that one can truly come into contact with one's real self and individuality only as one realises the total dependence all have on God and submits to his control. This seems to indicate that personal uniqueness can never be of one's own making, but it is a gift from God. The search for individuality is therefore a spiritual undertaking, because it leads one to turn to God as the source and foundation of the essence of one's being. As one turns away from oneself, one paradoxically turns in a profound way towards one's true self.¹⁷² Ultimately, a direct relationship with God means finding one's true humanness, as one is thereby entrusted with individual responsibility and accountability.¹⁷³ White urges: "Stand in your God-given personality. Be no other person's shadow." MH 499.

Finally, in relation to the topic of health and happiness, I also note that White sees all work as a means of obtaining and maintaining wellbeing. She regards labour as a blessing which God has appointed for human benefit. Indeed, work is an important source of meaning and significance. It makes a person truly present in the human community and integrates one into its common happiness. White believes that by work one is interactively linked to a network without

¹⁷⁰ MH 491–492.

¹⁷¹ MH 100.

¹⁷² MH 242.

¹⁷³ MH 242–243.

which one cannot perceive the welfare of human society nor all its benefits and services. A person's occupational careers connect him/her with other people in a real and concrete way, which means that there are a number of spiritual dimensions attached to work.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Ed 214.

7. Character

Ellen White's thinking regarding Christian spirituality cannot be properly and comprehensively discussed or understood without exploring her usage of the concept of character. In fact, this term seems to summarise and crystallise most of the essential features of her spiritual ideas. In the context of her writings, character must be understood in reference to spirituality, even though there are also certain moral and psychological elements present. I will argue that the framework of her spirituality does not really become intelligible without a comprehensive understanding of this term. We must understand how she uses this concept, be aware of the variety of meanings which she attaches to it, and perceive its role in the entirety of her spiritual thinking.

White appoints the obtaining of a Christ-like character as the primary goal of the spiritual journey and the purpose of living as a Christian. This means that she understands character formation to be a spiritual pursuit and a development which takes place primarily within. An analysis of the material shows that her understanding of the concept of human character is not clear, nor is it without contradiction. However, one can still detect without major difficulty the main tendencies in her thinking on this key concept. In general terms, I conclude that it has to do with God's work within us and its results.¹

7.1. Defining the Human Character

Character is one of Ellen White's favourite terms, one which she uses frequently and in a variety of contexts, but nowhere does she define it even roughly. When using it, she seems to refer to an inner quality which can be developed and which

¹ MB 97.

has to do with the human capability for knowing God, with acting right and with doing good works. She appears to use it with reference to the growth of our relational acquaintance with God, based on a personal fellowship with him, as well as to the process of achieving a restful familiarity with God. Her idea of the increase of one's ability to do good must be understood in terms of a holistic improvement of the entire person, while the emphasis is yet on the inner preconditions for action that is morally, relationally and emotionally justifiable. Accordingly, our character is that which our spirituality typically awakens and accomplishes within us.²

In addition to the inner qualities, for White the concept of human character is invariably connected with actual behaviours and concrete practices. It has to do with our attempts to benefit the welfare of others, as well as with our caring actions, motivated by love and mercy.³ Besides, in her view there is a certain permanence to the inner reality, i.e. the essence of our inmost being. This stability becomes actualised by a consistency and continuity in the corresponding features in our behaviour. This constancy in behaviour is a result of an equal constancy in the human spirit. Hence a Christian character, as she describes it, can be seen, among other things, as the enduring substrate and basis for a Christian life and action.⁴

This long-term qualitative essence of our inner being is, in White's opinion, a radically altered ontological state rather than a humanly constructed external feature in our behaviour or attitude. In actual fact, she equals the transformation of character to justification by faith on account of the righteousness of Christ.⁵ With the purpose of replacing our own character, we are gifted with the character of Christ. This total change in our being and our new standing in front of God grant us absolute acceptance and an unconditional welcome to his fellowship. Here White apparently refers to an instantaneous alteration in the person's ontological status and identity. In other words, the

² COL 23; COL 355.

³ DA 614.

⁴ SC 57–58; Powell 2005, 4–5. Even though Powell speaks about Christian character in connection with spirituality, he does not define its meaning. It seems that a comparison of his ideas to White's ideas does not prove very helpful, because for him the Christian character is connected to virtuous life and the "term that comes closest to describing spirituality is *piety* (original italics)." Such characterisation of Christian spirituality is far too narrow in relation to White's way of approaching it.

⁵ COL 310.

transformation of character means the same as sinners becoming saints as a result of gracious divine action.⁶

Because Ellen White speaks about justification in terms of character change, she indicates thereby that for her a sinner becoming righteous is not just an alteration in status and standing before God, but also an inner transformation, affecting the emotions, moods, attitudes and motives. The union with Christ is the basis for this change within. Thus it is his grace which alone performs this radical reformation of character. Furthermore, this transformation accordingly produces an unselfish life and the ability to love and to receive affection.⁷

White clearly states that lasting, desirable changes in character are the result of a divine work within. Yet character formation is also connected with spiritual practice and a determined reaching out towards God. Character transformation may take place for those who do not resist it, and who long for union with God. This means a gradual change in terms of growth, development or maturing.⁸

The fact that White equates the reception of Christ's righteousness for justification to the reception of his character seems to indicate, therefore, that she does not separate sanctification from justification. The righteousness of Christ is not just an external robe to be put on, but it also refers to an internal qualitative makeover in terms of receiving the character of Christ to replace one's own. This calls for constant vigilance and alertness on the human part, as well as openness to the divine influence. Such a radical alteration on the level of the human spirit does not take place without human consent.⁹

But there are also passages where White says that it is the task of each believer to reach the high ideal which Christ himself has set, so that their characters should perfectly resemble the unblemished character of Christ.¹⁰ In addition she says that Christians are to be perfect and blameless.¹¹ But soon after saying this, she states that it is Christ and his grace which alone can form

⁶ SC 62; COL 311; Knight 1992, 171–172. It seems that in the Adventist debate on White's view of character, very little, if any, attention has been paid to the fact that character change, in her view, is connected with justification. Knight, for instance, speaks about this radical transformation within in terms of character perfection, which according to him is "the goal of sanctification" or "the goal of Christian life".

⁷ MH 470. See also SC 62; DA 468; COL 310, 330.

⁸ MH 37; MH 512.

⁹ COL 330; COL 316, 319.

¹⁰ COL 330.

¹¹ DA 311; Zurcher 2002, 77–84. Discussing White's ideas regarding Christian perfection, Zurcher observes that the perfection of Christian character is a work centred on Christ and that it refers to a completely relative perfection, which is a work of God's grace.

characters into such perfection. As Christians engage themselves in a personal fellowship with God and care for their spiritual praxis, the Holy Spirit is able to affect them inwardly through these means and mould the character according to the divine pattern.¹²

The foundation for character formation and spiritual welfare which White assumes is still connectedness with Christ. In fact, the perfection of Christ's character becomes ours. The Christian owes everything to his grace as far as character is concerned. However, White also sees character formation as something in which human beings themselves are actively involved. Consequently, it means struggle and hardship for them. It demands one's full effort and continuous activity. This implies that character development can be seen as spiritual formation. Still another way of describing character, and character growth in particular, would be in terms of cooperation between the Christian and God.¹³

White also speaks about the human character as a relational and affective concept. According to her, God's impact on the character is seen as positive behavioural features, such as courtesy, unselfishness, gentleness, sweetness, tenderness and politeness. Affectionate and considerate conduct can thus be regarded as an outward manifestation of the character, of a harmony and balance of the inner realm.¹⁴

Despite the fact that White sees the transformation and perfection of the human character as a divine accomplishment, she does not condone passive and detached attitudes on the human side to the development of matters which concern them so deeply. There is an element of moral sensitivity and alertness involved on our part. It seems that character, in her terminology, includes moral firmness, faithfulness and uprightness. This is not pedantic behaviour, but instead

¹² DA 312; MH 36. See also MB 76; Knight 1992, 179–182. Discussing White's views on character perfection, Knight argues that her fundamental idea when she speaks about Christian perfection is "a right attitude and allegiance". The right action will flow naturally from this, but right action can never be the starting point in the endeavour for character perfection. Bebbington 2003, 305–308; Maddox 1994, 179–187; Neal 2000, 41–42; Young 2002, 165. Keeping in mind White's Methodist roots, it is appropriate to recall that the Wesleyan approach to Christian perfection often appears within the concept of sanctification. An obvious example of this is John Wesley's book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* from the year 1766. However, White did not address the issue in terms of sanctification.

¹³ DA 676; MB 90; MH 452; COL 340. "Character is power. The silent witness of a true, unselfish, godly life carries an almost irresistible influence. By revealing in our own life the character of Christ we co-operate with Him in the work of saving souls. It is only by revealing in our life His character that we can co-operate with Him."

¹⁴ COL 49; Ed 241.

it seems to point to an approach to God's will where the divine principles are constantly internalised, incorporated into one's life and sensibly applied.¹⁵

7.2. Character Development

It is important to note that Ellen White does not distinctly signify the contributing factors and their roles in the spiritual development which, in a number of cases, she speaks about in terms of character development. There are passages where she specifically emphasises the divine influence as the essential element and even describes the method by which this effect is achieved. Consequently it seems that the transformation of character is a result of a series of causes. Initially, there is "the divine touch", which can be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit. But this alone does not accomplish development without a complying response from the human side. This is followed by a process in which the person's knowledge of God increases, and it is this acquaintance and familiarity with him, as well as an awareness of God and his characteristics, which will ultimately, in her view, "refine and elevate the character".¹⁶

The knowledge of God also includes, in White's thinking, a certain way of life, an attitude toward others and consequent action. Christian service is one of the methods for contributing to character development, while it is also a major indicator of its ongoing presence. Selfless action, similar to that of Christ, impacts the person from within.¹⁷

White does not emphasise awareness and perception in conjunction with the internal divine influence. The change taking place seems to be an individual and subconscious one. Yet we need to notice that she refers to the divine truth as the cause of the inner development. We may assume that she is alluding to meditation and reflection on biblical texts and their content, as well as a thorough acquaintance with them. If this is so, the truth she speaks about cannot be seen mainly as a system of intellectual concepts and ideas, but also as images and stories touching the imagination and the affections as Bible stories do. It seems that the emotional components, along with an increased sensitivity to ethical expectations, compose the basis for the character White sees the Christian

¹⁵ Ed 228. See also MB 55; COL 312.

¹⁶ DA 468; MH 457.

¹⁷ MH 409.

developing – an inner state externalised in a compassionate Christian life of service.¹⁸

Ellen White appreciates the word of God as a change agent in character development, and her ideas assume a multiple usage of biblical texts as a source of spiritual insight and inspiration. She states that the impact of divine truth on the character means a profound psychological makeover, which is accompanied by a constant spiritual practice, in which the Bible is included as an integral part.¹⁹

At this point I will discuss the role of faith in the transformation of character as White describes it. She writes: “Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.” Ed 257. In her view it is faith, expressed in love and through love, which actually transforms the character. While she regards faith as a gift from God, it is yet inseparably connected with individually performed reflective and meditative practices. On the one hand, faith is depicted as a God-given gift which “imparts strength and nobility of character”; on the other hand, the transformation of character is the result of a constant elevation of the thoughts to God’s pure atmosphere.²⁰

In relation to the issue of faith, there are passages in White’s writings which tend to link several dimensions of spirituality together and thus form a kind of synthesis. She seems to regard faith and the human intellect as constructively related to each other. But she also insists that the human intellect be placed under the control of intrinsic spirituality, which she speaks about in terms of the heart. Moreover, she sees a connection between faith, repentance and character development or even refers to them as one and the same. All this indicates that the transformation of character, as she sees it, cannot be regarded as a separate or independent enterprise but rather as an integral part of the overall spiritual life.²¹

From the vantage point of this premise I now examine the topic of cooperation and its role, according to White, in character development. Once

¹⁸ COL 98–99. See also Ed 105.

¹⁹ DA 390–391; COL 314; Perrin 2007, 281. It seems appropriate to recall how Bible reading or *lectio divina* has been part of the Christian spiritual practice since early Christian times. Benedict of Nursia (c.480–c.547) included it in the in the Rule of Benedict. In several points White’s emphasis is similar. Snyder 2004, 116. Snyder points out the importance of *lectio divina* as an essential part of Anabaptist spirituality.

²⁰ MB 53; MH 465–466.

²¹ COL 112.

again, the immediate conclusion seems to be that one cannot unquestionably define and distinguish the roles of the divine and the human counterpart in accomplishing the growth of the character; they are intertwined and mutually preconditioned. This may just signify the mystical and paradoxical nature of White's approach to spirituality; it has to do with an unceasing search and untiring involvement from the human side, while the actual result is always brought about by God. That is the case also with character development. One cannot deny that it is an accomplishment of diligent striving and endeavour, while it is also simultaneously a sublime gift of God's grace alone. On the one hand, we may be fully aware of the various aspects of our spiritual journey, while we are at the same time totally unaware of God's hidden work within us and all its consequences.²²

As I have already discovered in earlier chapters, the idea of cooperation or concurrence is one of White's central themes, and so it is also in the case of character development.²³ Yet on one theme her stance is clear: the human counterpart cannot do what God alone can accomplish, and God does not perform those tasks or duties assigned to human responsibility. Without human participation and the accompanying responsibility, the concept of character development would be logically flawed. In White's thinking, cooperation both relates to endeavour in spiritual practices, and also includes active involvement in unselfish ministry and service efforts. Hence it seems that in certain cases, character development refers to a change in attitudes and ways of relating to oneself and to others.²⁴

On the basis of what we have discovered this far about White's spirituality, it is no surprise that the idea of interactive union with the Godhead also emerges in connection with character development. Her vocabulary indicates that she has a mainly Trinitarian view of God in mind, and that the object of development is the whole person. She states: "His Spirit will develop in man all that will ennoble the character and dignify the nature. It will build man up for the glory of God in body and soul and spirit." DA 341. While referring to character growth as a holistic process, she gives full credit for it to the Holy Spirit at all times. The essential role of the Holy Spirit in character development is further elaborated elsewhere in terms of his making the content of the Scripture

²² COL 50; COL 331.

²³ COL 82.

²⁴ COL 82; COL 58; MB 149; MB 83

meaningful for the human spirit, and also showing ways in which it can be appropriately applied in every-day situations.²⁵

As I have pointed out, in some passages of her writings, Ellen White uses the term cooperation in connection with character growth. Thereby she seems to highlight the human involvement and responsibility. While it seems justifiable to point out the aspect of human accountability as part of the spiritual quest, certain other aspects are also equally important. Spirituality is not merely about activity, but also has to do with being, in terms of pointing out ontological significance. One of the expressions she uses to suggest this is “the partaking of Christ’s nature”, which in her view is simultaneous with the reception of Christ. Even if certain experiential elements are connected to the personal reception of Christ, it is ultimately something which takes place on the level of the human spirit. It is significant that she presents the partaking of Christ’s nature as identical with the process of being conformed to Christ’s character. Along with this deeply spiritual development, she mentions a number of practical, attitudinal and relational aspects. Hence spirituality can be perceived holistically, in the sense of including the whole person within its realm, but it also refers to a certain unity and inclusiveness of various elements of spirituality. Ontological and functional elements as well as concurrent contributions from both the divine and the human side, are equally part of genuine spirituality. Accordingly, separating character development from the complex entirety of spirituality would do the issue serious injustice.²⁶

Ellen White distinctly points out that character development is an internal, spiritual process while still combining it with practical, behavioural and attitudinal indications which can be verified and observed from without.²⁷ While the growth of character is inspired and motivated by God-given principles, such as truth, obedience, honour, integrity and purity, it is at once a product of a relational connectedness and personal acquaintance with Christ.²⁸ She also emphasises that the renewal of character can only be accomplished by Christ, because the key question to solve is that of the sin and evil within, which are obstacles of such seriousness and magnitude that humanity is totally helpless at combating them.²⁹

²⁵ COL 412; COL 408–411. See also DA 605.

²⁶ DA 391.

²⁷ DA 307.

²⁸ Ed 30. See also Ed 28–30.

²⁹ DA 37–38; COL 157; MB 118. See also DA 762.

It logically follows that the grace of God is also an inseparable element in White's teaching about the process of human character development. While grace may be regarded as a fundamental factor in character formation, this does not diminish the seriousness of human responsibility in meeting the divine expectations God has for the Christian as his representative. However piously one manages to live and behave, it is yet only on the basis of God's sovereign grace that a person can be connected to God and his absolute holiness.³⁰

White's advice to her readers when writing about character development is simple: one should turn away from one's human imperfection and engage oneself in observing the beauty of Christ. This seems to entail a reflective, meditative and contemplative beholding of Christ. Character formation will take care of itself if one persists in directing the attention constantly and exclusively towards Christ and filling one's mind with thoughts directly related to him. Spirituality is all about perceiving the presence of Christ in life as it is lived.³¹

7.3. Everyday Spirituality and Christian Character

Spiritual wellbeing and securing optimal preconditions for it to develop, things which Ellen White refers to with her ideas concerning character, should, in her view, be objects of nurture and care from early childhood on, throughout the person's entire life. Her conviction is that the early years, starting from early infancy, are the most important ones as far as character formation is concerned. If that is the case, then her concept of character seems to be related to the human spirit, to the process of becoming, and thus her ideas can be estimated from the point of view of Christian spirituality. Early childhood, when emotional and relational skills are learned, is, indeed, the time when the foundations for individual spirituality, i.e. for the character, are laid.³²

In accordance with her holistic thinking White claims that by taking care of one's physical fitness, the person, in so doing, cultivates his/her spirituality too, which means promoting character formation.³³ While White's spiritual philosophy is quite incarnated and practical, she also warns against

³⁰ MB 107; DA 826.

³¹ COL 250; COL 271.

³² Ed 283; DA 101, 516.

³³ Ed 195.

dangers connected to the human body and its inclinations, needs and desires. Hence it is the task of the person's spiritual powers to control these internal forces. Moreover, she seems to view the Christian character as an upper category which includes the body, the mind and the soul under it. It can be argued that the term character means virtually the same as the essence of being, personhood or even the entire human individual. Interestingly, she sees the human body as a vehicle of character formation and spiritual growth, instead of regarding it as something evil, to be despised, or at the very least ignored, in a religious setting.³⁴

White states that character growth also demands full human effort. Ruling over our selfishness and tendencies for egocentricity is a vital feature, as is controlling physical inclinations and desires. Self-discipline is the term she uses for the internal management of all self-seeking attractions and impulses to please self. However, this term also includes a simultaneous comprehensive orientation towards God. It is such an inner process that, in her view, leads to character development.³⁵ Ultimately, the human involvement in character formation has to do with self-denial and sacrifice as a substitute for achieving or accomplishing nobility of character ourselves.³⁶

White does not speak only about self-denial or advise her readers to devote themselves to asceticism. In her view, such a concentration would lead to a rather negative approach to life, to withdrawal and passiveness instead of active, responsible involvement. She therefore urges people to give themselves to God and to work for him and with him. She speaks about character development in a positive tone, even to the point of alluding to a shared sympathy with God, a close partnership and sharing between the person and God. She promotes involvement and contribution. In fact, character transformation is all about vigorous participation in ministry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit while, on the other hand, he is the one who accomplishes the change within.³⁷

One also notices that Ellen White repeatedly goes beyond the external and what is actualised in external behaviour. For her, obedience to God's will and cooperation with God in ministry are integrally connected with the inner reality on the level of the human spirit. This means that compliance with the divine standards, as well as involvement in religious activity, have their basis in

³⁴ MH 130.

³⁵ Ed 57.

³⁶ MH 198.

³⁷ COL 373, 58.

personal spirituality.³⁸ Yet she regards the actual work in cooperation with God as crucial, because spirituality otherwise withers into mere wishful thinking, a concept without substance.³⁹

In White's thinking, the affective element which is reflected through action, seems to be one of the central components of character. She expresses her belief in the power of tenderness and gentleness as transforming forces of character as she writes:

No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have thus been driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact. Let Christ be daily made manifest in you, and He will reveal through you the creative energy of His word—a gentle, persuasive, yet mighty influence to re-create other souls in the beauty of the Lord our God.⁴⁰

It seems, in fact, that according to her, the manifestation of Christian character is essentially about emotional skills, about the way in which the basic Christian values shape relational connections and interactions. It must be acknowledged that her concept of character has a distinct relational aspect to it.⁴¹

The Christian character touches the entire Christian person and his/her whole life, as well as representing the divine presence in the world. In White's thinking, character is about the quality of the spirituality of Christian people. Furthermore, the Christian character seems to refer to a collective challenge involving all Christians, so that all who wish to belong to Christ would also wish to imitate his way of treating people and relating to them in terms of goodness, mercy and truthfulness.⁴²

Ultimately, the issue of character seems to constitute a climactic point in White's teaching on spirituality. This is because, for her, the Christian character is not about what Christians themselves are able to do or reach, but what Christ is accomplishing in them by his great mission. Subsequently, this calls for a still closer spiritual union with Christ. She writes: "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of

³⁸ DA 523; COL 315.

³⁹ DA 142; COL 361, 338.

⁴⁰ MB 129.

⁴¹ MB 135; COL 150–151; Powell 2005, 136–138. While the issue of Christian character is very seldom discussed within the discourse of spirituality, Powell writes plainly: "Christian character is formed in and through human relationships in which the pattern of Christian living is given concrete and imitable form." In addition, he also emphasizes the role of the church and the clergy in spiritual formation.

⁴² DA 313; COL 415.

Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.” COL 69. It is Christ who manifests himself, but our willingness to enter into a spiritual connectedness with him is the premise for such a manifestation.

On this basis, it is possible to understand the sense of concern with which Ellen White speaks about character development.⁴³ In her view, this spiritual task is more important than any other task Christians may undertake. It constitutes the foundation for all other spiritual undertakings. She consequently promotes spiritual formation, i.e. character building, as a topic for the most diligent study.⁴⁴

⁴³ COL 74; COL 332.

⁴⁴ Ed 225.

8. Conclusion

Ellen White's spirituality can primarily be defined by using purely Christian and religious language and imagery, simply because Christianity is both the context and the subject matter of all her writings. Only an analysis of her religious ideas exposes the holistic nature of her spirituality and its multifaceted structure. Among the numerous religious topics about which she wrote, five central themes can be identified. These themes compose a thematic framework of her spiritual thinking, a unified body of interrelated ideas. This means that her favourite Christian topics express the predominantly religious substance of her spirituality. However, the essence of White's spirituality can best be perceived in consequence of a thorough understanding of her overall spiritual thinking.

First, the theme of God's love towards humanity is central for White. It can be seen as the leading motive throughout the sources. The results of the study suggest that she promotes a spirituality which focuses on experiencing the divine love, on exploring its meaning for each person and on applying its consequences individually, which means, for example, receiving forgiveness or becoming totally accepted by God. Ultimately the concept of God's love includes all that God is and what he does, but also all that a believer is and what he/she does as an object of this love.

Secondly, according to White, selfishness generally directs each person's will, and on that account she sees no other solution but the submission of one's will to the will of God. But she does not urge a person to silence or crush his/her will, because she sees great potential in the human will when under God's rule. God does not force anyone under his leadership and guidance, instead, in White's view, God invites a person voluntarily to submit his/her will to God and his will. No one else can yield a person's will to be directed by God; paradoxically, by such surrender to God, a person becomes truly free. Submitting one's will to God is a continuous, internal, spiritual process, for which each

individual is personally responsible. This spiritual course of action is possible only when a person remains fully aware of God's goodness, grace and love. Consequently, the surrender of one's will to God is one of the focal points in White's spiritual teaching, and the starting point of what is to follow in a person's spiritual existence.

Thirdly, as a person surrenders his/her will to God, a constitutional fellowship is established between humanity and divinity on a personal level. White mostly speaks about this fellowship in terms of a union with Christ. Through his incarnation and life as a human being, Christ identified with humanity and made this union possible. In her view, the union is there to be celebrated because of God's graciousness and goodness. It must also to be nurtured, because we as human counterparts cannot permanently hold on to the union with Christ without constantly tending our side of the relationship. White sees the person's union with Christ as an interactive experience which is primarily actualised by personal dialogue and intimate contact.

Fourthly, White depicts the relationship between a person and Christ in primarily dynamic and functional terms; she sees the believer as an active participator in fulfilling God's will and purpose in the world. Cooperation is a term she uses frequently as she speaks about the consequences of God's saving acts for an individual Christian. She sees witnessing, ministry, employment, daily activities, and even care for one's over-all wellbeing, as integral parts of a person's connectedness with Christ. Spirituality, for her, is a comprehensive concept, connected to the whole being and to all of life. All our experiences, and all the feelings, ideas and relationships we connect to them, have a spiritual significance and value. Because of the all-encompassing involvement throughout one's whole life in the cooperative partnership with God, the transcendent dimension can be present everywhere.

Fifthly, White uses the term 'character' to describe what a person really is, what one's actual identity is, i.e. the core of one's being and its ruling moral qualities and abilities. It is a concept which stands for the essential spiritual quality of a person. When speaking about character, she deals with the inner, deeper human dimension of an individual. Even though her concept of character refers to the same subject matter as spirituality and overlaps with it in meaning, character, as she understands it, is an essential human quality which provides the starting point and motivation for the whole being as well as for all life and action.

Without genuine personal spiritual development, there would be no character change or any of the growth necessary for individual development and advancement to maturity.

Christian spirituality as presented by White can be defined primarily as holistic on the basis that it concerns all dimensions of humanity. Because these dimensions are combined into one operational entity, a pervasive description goes on beyond the wholeness of being to the way in which spirituality functions in a person's life and personality. By constructing a structure of integrated spirituality which takes into account the holistic view of humanity but also a wide-ranging manner of operations, we are able to obtain a frame of reference for a more comprehensive understanding of White's spirituality.

While it is possible to speak about Ellen White's spiritual ideas in exclusively religious language and to be satisfied with explanations related to typically theological concepts and ideas, there is the problem that such an approach is limited partly to the subject matter of traditional spirituality and partly to the established religious practices used in the search for spiritual wellbeing. Although this study deals with the religious content, there is, however, another way to define and explain spirituality. Academic studies on spirituality offer approaches which are helpful in the exploration of White's spirituality. On the basis of both these approaches and the results of my analysis I will now outline a definition of her spirituality.

White refers to spiritual needs and wants, which in my view are perceived at the level of the human spirit, i.e. the individual inner realm, and which drive a person to seek for spiritual answers and solutions. In the primary sources of this study, I detected five specific spiritual needs which constitute the reason and precondition for Christian spirituality. In them can be perceived a starting point and a fundamental component for spirituality. The central spiritual needs and wants White records are as follows:

1. Longing or yearning
2. Desolation or helplessness
3. Guilt
4. Anxiety
5. Insecurity

The common human condition caused by sin, i.e. fallenness, creates our inner state of yearning for God and his grace. In addition, one's spiritual needs

and wants are a result of unfortunate life experiences. Guilt, for instance, is normally a result of one's own mistakes or shortcomings. However, an inner longing and sense of desolation or insecurity are caused by the lack of appropriate experience offering connectedness, meaning or hope. Therefore, it is this inwardly perceived void and purposelessness which is the starting point as well as the basis for all spiritual exercise and activity. However, it is Ellen White's view that spiritual needs must not be interpreted as consequences of natural causes alone, but also as a result of the influence of the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality responds to actual human needs and attempts to fulfil them. Hence the human predicament in the midst of grave spiritual questions constitutes the justification for Christian spirituality.

Moreover, Ellen White's spiritual thinking pertains to a view of humanity according to which our being and existence are composed of the following experiential and functional dimensions:

1. Thinking

Christian spirituality occurs in connection with knowledge, concepts, notions, ideas, paradigms, thought patterns, theories, etc. We thereby refer to abstract, theoretical issues which are rationally perceived and which demand understanding. This aspect concerns what can be known and comprehended, and what makes rational sense to us. More specifically, spirituality is concerned with ethical and doctrinal ideas and views, but it is also sustained, directed and delineated by them. This means that as an integral part of Christian spirituality there is always a corresponding theology of spirituality with a logical structure which appeals to the human intellect.

The main concepts in the theology of White's spiritual thinking are the following: the love of God, the surrender of one's will to God, the notion of union with Christ, and cooperation. In addition, her thinking can be described by using such theological attributes as for example biblical, Trinitarian, Christ-centred or gospel-oriented. Therefore, a discourse on Christian spirituality is not possible without religious and theological language.

Christian spirituality does not function solely within the realm of religion, even as far as the intellectual elements are concerned. Instead, all concepts, facts and information are part of a whole, in which spirituality is the combining element. Hence, spirituality refers to those interpretive, inner processes through which the meaning and significance of all intellectual elements is sought.

Spirituality can be defined as a quest with the prospect of establishing the role and function of the intellectual elements as part of the entirety of our lives.

2. Doing

Christian spirituality occurs in conjunction with the various functions, actions, work and practices which we are engaged in. This means that spirituality is experiential and embodied, and for the most part it is sensory too. In White's case, this practical aspect includes for example Sabbath-keeping, healthful living, Bible study, prayer, worship, acts of love, enjoying nature and various forms of ministry. In addition to these activities, which can be perceived as religious, she also includes secular activities among those with spiritual significance, for instance, physical labour, recreation or engagement in social interaction. The notion of a demarcation between spiritual and secular activities can hardly be supported from her point of view; instead the continuous, inner, spiritual functions will point towards and clarify the value and significance of ordinary activities for spirituality.

3. Feeling

Christian spirituality occurs in conjunction with characteristic affective elements such as moods, feelings, emotions and relational attitudes. As far as White's spirituality is concerned, the affective features she frequently refers to include peace, joy, trust, hopefulness, gratitude, "rest", sympathy, humility, faithfulness, compassion and love. In her view, feelings may enhance spirituality; by directing one's feelings towards Christ, as she suggests, the relationship with him can grow closer and more meaningful. On the other hand, perceived spirituality may help a person to reach and maintain an emotional balance. She also refers to the spiritual basis of emotional intelligence and skills, in speaking about the character and describing its qualities.

4. Relating

Christian spirituality occurs in conjunction with common relational and social elements. The natural and built-up environment, society, communal association, social contacts and personal relations have a bearing on our spirituality and conversely, our spirituality has an effect on the way we relate to others as well as on the quality of our relationships. White's writings recurrently touch on relational issues which concern the family, local congregations, institutional or denominational working communities, nature, friendships, marriage and church membership issues.

5. Being

Christian spirituality occurs in conjunction with certain ontological and existential ideas, notions and assumptions. These are issues related to life and death, time, place and space, identity and freedom. Spirituality is therefore related to these philosophical issues, but lacking as she was in formal education, White did not directly address them. However, there are allusions to and reflections of major existential and ontological issues in her thinking as she deals with prophetic and eschatological topics, soteriological ideas such as the theme of union with Christ, the human will and its freedom, human nature and the essence of being, to mention just a few.

As all of these five experiential dimensions are included in White's spiritual thinking, we can justifiably speak about a holistic spirituality. Having identified these dimensions, there are still certain other elements included in the framework of spirituality which must also be identified.

As we endeavour to capture the essential features of Ellen White's spiritual thinking, it is necessary to consider the concept of spirit. Even though the realm of the human spirit has not been distinctly defined in White's writings, its presence can still be easily detected. The list of its central features drafted by John Swinton is particularly helpful in the attempt to capture an idea of what the concept of the spirit means, i.e. the inner quest for transformation, meaning, purpose, transcendence, sense of safety and security, connectedness, value, and hope. However, I would argue that it is only the inner level of the human spirit to which the functions mentioned in Swinton's list are related. In addition to his list of the central features, there is also the outer, experiential circle which is the realm of perceived spirituality. Features of this realm are listed above as the experiential dimensions.

Swinton's list provides an important starting point for further considerations. I suggest that a concept of the human spirit is, indeed, essential for general academic discourse on spirituality. The operational, experiential and external spiritual functions compose the necessary context within which spirituality can occur. Such things as sense of significance, purpose, value, transcendence, belonging, transformation, security or hope are perceived primarily on the level of the spirit, in the internal realm.

The human spirit is also a helpful term in the attempt to understand and define the meaning of one of White's favourite concepts, the character. There

are some aspects, which she expresses by using the term “character”, which are also included in the concept of spirit. She was not happy with formal religion and the observance of external requirements, unless they are an expression and a fruit of an inner reality. Hence “character” refers to this inner, spiritual essence, which seems to be the same as that referred to by the concept of the spirit.

The spiritual significance of White’s ideas in terms of union with Christ and cooperation can be understood only in reference to the human spirit. Connection with Christ remains only a theological notion unless the connectedness is a reality at the level of the person’s individual spirit. The same also applies to cooperation. Cooperation as a collective word for intrinsic religious involvement belongs to the sphere of operational spiritual functions. The engagement of the spirit makes cooperation a truly spiritual activity.

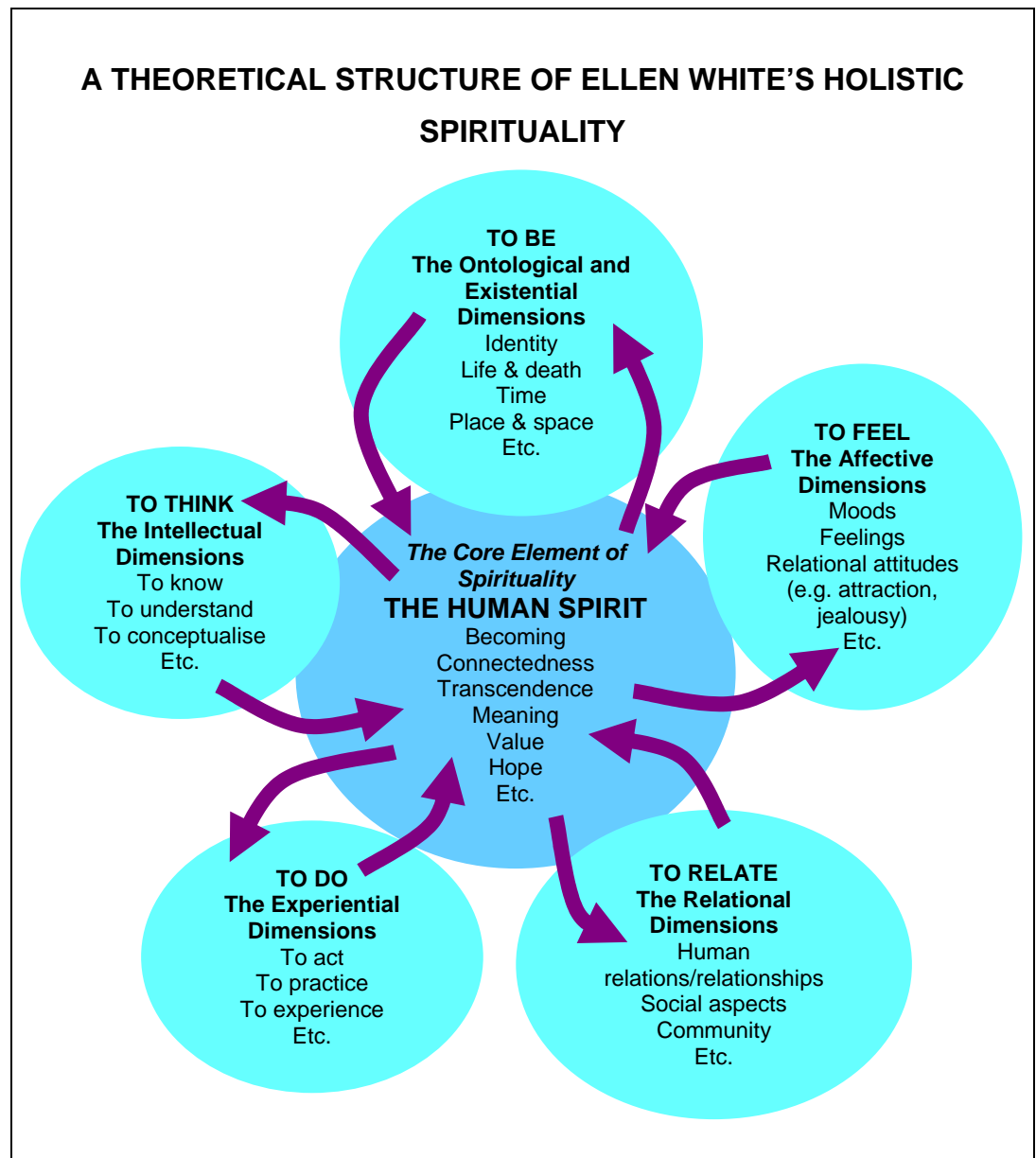
Furthermore, the active spirituality that Ellen White introduces presupposes an interactive link of dialogue between the operational spiritual functions and the inner realm of the human spirit. This relationship is, for the most part, interpretive in nature and it is realised in mental functions that are predominantly conscious and only partly subconscious. The subconscious element may include, for example, intuitions and even occasional supernatural visions, which are unintentional or even beyond human control, but which are yet somehow perceived. It can be assumed that there are also internal spiritual influences and movements of which one is unaware, and which one cannot refer to or speak about.

Perceived spirituality is realised by various forms of thinking, i.e. personal, mental activity of which the person is fully aware, or by such relatively continuous activities of mind as, for example, the following hierarchy of mental activities from conscious to more subconscious ones:

1. Awareness
2. Attentiveness
3. Thought
4. Consideration
5. Pondering
6. Observation
7. Reflection
8. Wonder, awe
9. Ruminating
10. Imagination
11. Identification with Christ
12. Meditation
13. Contemplation

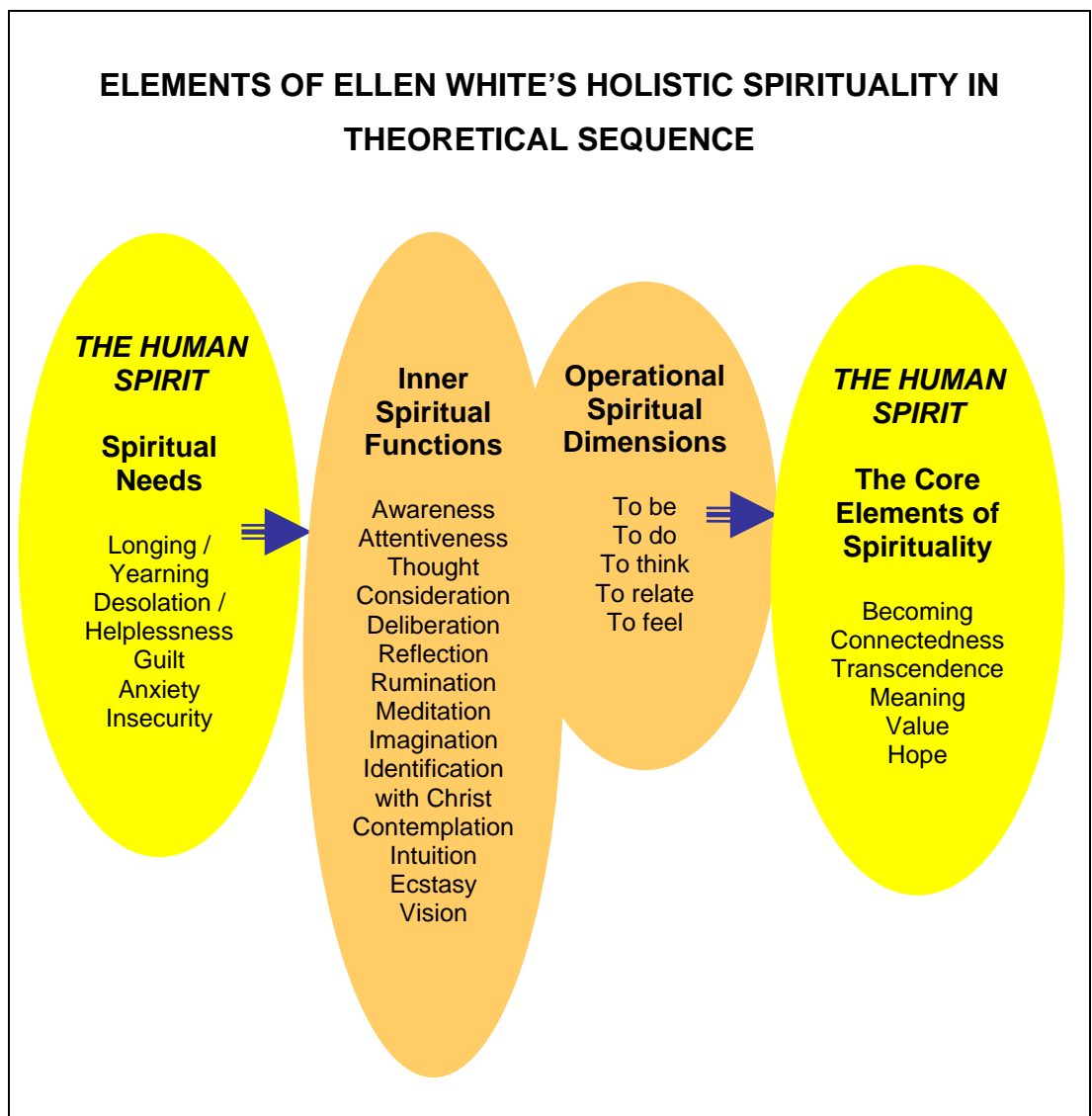
- 14. Intuition (spontaneous insight)
- 15. Ecstasy/mystical experience
- 16. Supernatural vision

This list attempts to specify the levels of consciousness which are involved in a range of mental activities. In functioning spirituality, a person uses all of these different operations of mind, and there should be involvement on most of these levels on a continuous basis. However, intuition, ecstasy or vision are the kind of activities where the person is mostly a mere recipient, i.e. these are not results of human initiative or activity, and they are beyond conscious human control. A theoretical structure of Ellen White’s spirituality can be constructed as all the elements identified above are taken into account. The interconnectedness of the various elements of White’s spirituality can be depicted in the following way:



The arrows in this graph represent inner processes and mental interconnections in terms of awareness between the different elements composing spirituality as a whole. It is my view that spirituality is comprised of multiple and multi-directional circles of continuous thinking processes or unconscious mental functions moving between the operational dimensions and the human spirit.

The following diagram also includes the spiritual needs and wants which constitute the reason and precondition for an authentic spirituality.



Ultimately, a structure of holistic spirituality has thus emerged on the basis of an analysis of White's writings from her mature years. In addition to the religious content, i.e. the basic themes of her spirituality, White's

comprehensive approach to spirituality has here also become an object of evaluation and estimation. While it is the real life in the real world which is the best testing ground for the kind of practical and all-encompassing spirituality that White represents, her spiritual approach as a whole, her view of holistic Christian spirituality, should be placed under further critical scrutiny and study. Her ideas about spirituality should also be brought into a closer interface with other Christian approaches to spirituality for mutual benefit.

The comprehensive structure of spirituality introduced in this study may benefit scholars attempting to understand different spiritualities – not only their theoretical premises and individual features but the full picture of which the particular spiritualities form an integral part. It is my view that a wide-ranging understanding of spirituality, including its connections to essential human activities, will help those who strive for fuller spiritual existence. A thriving spirituality does not rise or fall with one idea or a single practice but it is the result of a balanced approach to all the essential dimensions which constitute human life. Moreover, I believe that a more analytic understanding of White's whole-life-encompassing spirituality will inspire and enrich those who appreciate her writings as the source of their spiritual guidance and nurture. It seems to me that while dealing with spirituality, there is a common ground where her spiritual ideas can be better understood and, hopefully even appreciated also by those who are not familiar with her religious thinking.

An intimate fellowship and interaction is at the heart of Ellen White's spirituality. This quality is reflected in the way she views the church as a Christian community consisting of members who are capable of genuine empathy and selfless care for others. For her, spirituality is also a relational matter which is materialised within family and among friends, neighbours and colleagues. On this basis, her favourite term, "character", makes sense only as a communal concept, which means that the inner actuality, i.e. a person's individual spirituality, must become concrete in the way a person participates in the common life and interests of the community. Her focus on the character is balanced by her attention to the action and the practical elements of Christian life, but also, as I see it, by the actual presence of other elements which compose a Christian spiritual existence and experience.

9. Abbreviations

AA	<i>The Acts of the Apostles.</i>
AUCR	Australasian Record.
BC	<i>The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary.</i>
CD	<i>Counsels on Diet and Foods.</i>
CG	<i>Child Guidance.</i>
CET	<i>Christian Experiences and Teachings of Ellen G. White.</i>
COL	<i>Christ's Object Lessons.</i>
ChL	<i>Christian Leadership.</i>
ChS	<i>Christian Service.</i>
CH	<i>Counsels of Health.</i>
CSW	<i>Counsels on Sabbath School Work.</i>
CS	<i>Counsels on Stewardship.</i>
CT	<i>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students.</i>
CW	<i>Counsels to Writers and Editors.</i>
DA	<i>The Desire of Ages.</i>
DS	The Day-Star.
Ed	<i>Education.</i>
Ev	<i>Evangelism.</i>
EW	<i>Early Writings of Ellen G. White.</i>
FE	<i>Fundamentals of Christian Education.</i>
GC	General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

GCDB	The General Conference Daily Bulletin.
GC	<i>The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan.</i>
GW	<i>Gospel Workers.</i>
HFM	<i>The Health Food Ministry.</i>
KJV	<i>King James Version.</i>
LS	<i>Life Sketches of Ellen G. White.</i>
MB	<i>Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings.</i>
MH	<i>The Ministry of Healing.</i>
MR	<i>Manuscript Releases.</i>
MM	<i>Medical Ministry.</i>
PK	<i>Prophets and Kings.</i>
PM	<i>The Publishing Ministry.</i>
PP	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets.</i>
RH	The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald. Later: Review and Herald. At the present: Adventist Review.
SC	<i>Steps to Christ.</i>
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SG	<i>Spiritual Gifts.</i>
SP	<i>The Spirit of Prophecy.</i>
ST	The Signs of the Times.
T	<i>Testimonies for the Church.</i>
TA	Teologinen aikakauskirja.
TE	<i>Temperance.</i>
TT	<i>Testimony Treasures.</i>
1888	<i>The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials.</i>
WM	<i>Welfare Ministry.</i>

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