

John Harvey Kellogg rejects being a pantheist

By Doctor John Harvey Kellogg

Note: Ever since Doctor Kellogg wrote his book, *The Living Temple*, the Seventh-day Adventist prophet, Ellen G. White, has labeled him a pantheist, and Adventism has followed her lead in defaming him. In this letter, Kellogg denies that he believes in pantheism. [Original page numbers are in brackets.]

February 21, 1904
Eld. G. I. Butler,
Nashville, Tenn.

Dear Brother:

I have your good letter written away out in Kansas, I feel as though I ought not to write you letters when you are so far off and have no stenographer to help you, but I want if possible to relieve your mind.

First, let me tell you that Elder Brunson has not been trying to convert me to his errors or heresies. He has said scarcely a word about nothing, in fact, except in answer to one or two questions which I asked him. I inquired of him his views respecting predestination, etc., and I could not discover that he believed any such ridiculous doctrines and you tell me the Baptists hold in the South. It is difficult to see how any intelligent person can believe any such nonsense. I hope sincerely that you do not imagine that I hold any doctrine tending in that way. Truth and error often lie very near together, but there is just difference enough between them to make one true and the other false.

If I understand Elder Brunson rightly, and I am quite, sure I do, and I questioned him about the matter quite closely two or three times, the whole difference between him and you is due to the fact that you have different definitions for the word "tare." When you talk of tares, you mean one thing, and when he talks about tares, he means another thing. You consider a man who acts badly a tare; he would say that man may be a tare and he may be wheat. The Lord only knows. The Lord knows whether he will sometime repent so that he will be finally [2] saved. If hes going to repent, he will finally be saved in the kingdom of God. Then he is wheat no matter how badly he may act today.

This idea seems to me the more reasonable when one recalls the fact that plants of different species are not interchangeable. Wheat cannot become tares nor tares wheat in the vegetable world; why should they in the spiritual world? This whole question seems to me to be of little practical importance, so little it is hardly worth discussing. That man you mentioned who came to meeting and got the idea that he did not need to keep the Sabbath because he was justified, has not come to the end of his experience, If that man is really truly wheat, and has really and truly been justified, he will some day

discover that, he cannot retain his peace of mind without surrendering to the conviction that the seventh day is the Sabbath and he must keep it. The Lord will follow him up until he comes to terms.

I do not believe that all men will ever be able to look at some of these questions exactly alike. In my mind things harmonize themselves better to believe that there are tares and wheat. Tares have just as good a chance as the wheat but they refuse to accept, the offer of salvation. This fact makes them tares. Every man that does this is a tare. God knows in advance just what position every man is going to take; hence He knows who are tares and who are wheat.

Now, in your mind things harmonize better by looking upon good men as wheat and bad men tares; that is, men are classified as wheat and tares by their conduct, purely a matter of definition, you see. Your definition is based upon the ultimate result of the man's life, what he turns out to be at the bar of God, no matter how he looked in this world. From a practical standpoint this question of wheat and tares is not worth talking about. I seldom, if ever, mention the thing at all. So long as we do not know who are wheat and who are tare we must labor on for everybody indiscriminately, leaving the whole thing to the Lord to settle in his own way.

Elder Brunson has been preaching very spiritual sermons since he has been here, and he has been a real help to a good many. His labors are really very much appreciated. I know he believes in the soon coming of the Lord, for he tells me so, and he talks it; and I know he believes the seventh day is the Sabbath for he keeps it, and he told me that this was an insurmountable obstacle to his working with the Baptists. In many respects he seems to be just the sort of man to help sick folks.

I wish I could disabuse your mind of the idea that we have a lot of fashionable aristocrats here at the Sanitarium who want to hear honeyed words. We have got our standard so high at the Sanitarium that really nobody comes but people who are very sick. Rich aristocrats, tourists, and pleasure-seekers give us a wide berth. Do not for pity's sake, make us out any worse than we are. We are not catering to worldliness nor to fashion. You never caught me traveling along that road yet. When I have spent all my life standing up against popular follies and foibles, even risking my reputation in attacking such a popular thing as salt, and jeopardizing the good will of my best friends—who happen to be great lovers of salt; when I have been fighting everything in sight which I thought was bad [4] and making myself as unpopular as possible,—why should I now, when my hair is, beginning to turn white, and when some of the reforms for which I have labored are beginning to triumph why I ask, should I at this late hour begin turning somersaults in the opposite direction. It would be just as reasonable to expect you to go preaching the seventh part of time theory in order to gather together big churches so as to have a big, tithe with which to carry on your work. Let us have an end of these foolish surmising. Let us get down to business and work for the truth the Lord has given us and stop this cantankerous bickering. I am not yet "flabbergasted," but I confess five years more of this sort, of thing I have been subjected to for the last five

years may "flabbergast" me, "knock me off my base" "send me up the spout," "katzenjammer" me (see Modern Mysteries page 95. Pacific Press Publishing Co, Price fifteen cents.) Why cannot we act like men and spend our energies in saving our fellows instead of tearing one another to pieces.

You speak of making a public confession of some kind or something. Please do not imagine for I an instant that I am going to do any such thing. I am willing to renounce all the awful doctrines you and others attribute to me. I am willing to confess that I am not a pantheist nor a spiritualist, and that I believe none of the doctrines taught by these people or by pantheistic or spiritualistic writings. I never read a pantheistic book in my life. I never read a book on "New Thought," or anything of that kind. Anybody who will read carefully the "Living Temple" from the first page right straight through to the last, and will give the matter fair and consistent consideration, ought to see very clearly that I have no [5] accord whatever with these pantheistic and spiritualistic theories.

Now let us get down to business for a few minutes and talk straight. I know it is risky business for a man to say I what is in his heart nowadays. If a man is slandered, misrepresented, the only proper thing for him to do is to sit quietly still and let the thing go on. You have talked frankly and like an honest man to me, and have trusted me, and I am going to treat you in just the same way.

What is a pantheist? First, he is a man who believes that everything is God. To him every tree is a god; every pig is a God; and in a real sense so that they are proper objects of worship. Second, the pantheist believes that the real man is not the thing we see, but a soul or a spirit, which lives in the body and which at death moves into some other body, it may be of some beast or it may be another man, and finally attains perfect happiness by being absorbed into the great mind or over soul or something else having no body at all.

Now, I ask you to put your finger on a line or on a word in my book, "The Living Temple," which endorses any such notions or which even gives countenance to any such notions. I will be exceedingly thankful if you will show me one single instance. This has been charged upon me, and I have waited patiently now for several months for some one to come forward and point out wherein I have taught these things, in what words or what sentences. For the sake of peace and in order that I might not do harm to those whom I respect and those in whom I believe, I have remained quiet while wrong ideas respecting me and my work have been widely promulgated, and I do not now [6] propose to take any different course in this matter. I am only writing this to you so that you may know the inside of my heart.

I abhor pantheism as much as you do. I have endeavored in my book to simply teach the fact that man is dependent upon God for everything, and that without the divine power working in him the Spirit of God operating upon the elements which compose his body, he would be dust. God, the fountain of all life, is man's life; that is, the Spirit of God is man's life. You will find clear statement of this in the preface of the "Living

Temple" on the third page. I have also stated clearly in the preface of "The Living Temple" that my whole discussion relates only to the operation of the Spirit of God in the body in a physiological sense. Now, those who say I am in error in this must come forward and present some theory by which they can account for the marvelous manifestations of creative power and intelligence within the body, far transcending the human intelligence and entirely outside of the human will. I have been waiting for someone to do this. I say, reverently, that human life is momentarily dependent upon God's care; that man is not self-existent; but that every man has been created by God and maintained by God, and when sick is healed by God. I believe this Spirit of God to be a personality, you don't. But this is purely a question of definition. I believe the Spirit of God is a personality; you say, No, it is not a personality. Now the only reason why we differ is because we differ in our ideas as to what, a personality is. Your idea of personality is perhaps that of semblance to a person or a human being. This is not the scientific conception of personality and that is not the sense in which I use the word. The [7] scientific test for personality is the exercise, of will, volition, purpose, without any reference to form or material being. When a frog with his head cut off is made to hop and jump around by pinching his skin, the physiologist says, Here is proof of personality residing in the spinal cord of the frog. In the same way I say, when I see a manifestation of intelligence in the tree, in the flower, in the human body, This is not the result of the operation of the human brain; here is an evidence of the work of a Personality which is independent of man, and which is above man, which is wiser and greater; which has power to, create, power to maintain, power to restore. I am not alone in this way of thinking; every scientist who is a Christian is compelled to think the same way. One cannot study the anatomy and physiology of the human body without being driven to accept the facts which are, brought to his attention continually as evidence of the power of an ever-present God. Sister White has clearly taken the same position with reference to this matter which I have taken. You will find it, in her little work on Education in the chapters "God in Nature" and "Science and the Bible." You will find it all through "Desire of Ages," and "Patriarchs and Prophets." Mrs. Henry's book presents the same views which I present in "Living Temple," only much more emphatically. To say these things are not true; to call them pantheistic and spiritualistic and heap other opprobrious titles on these views does not change the facts. I am not a pantheist; I am no spiritualist. I hold nothing in common with the teachings of these isms. I believe the Bible, I believe in God; I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation; I believe all the fundamental doctrines [8] of the Christian religion. I believe in the third angel's message; I believe the health movement is a part of it; and I have spent all my life working for it, and I expect to spend the rest of my life working for it. If the men who have been working with it, and who have sometimes preached and practiced the whole of the message, and sometimes only part of it, have come to the point where they want to spew me out, all right; they can push me out of their machine, but they cannot separate me from the Lord which I know and which I love.

A spirit of intolerance has come in; and a thirst for power and a determination to rule or ruin is manifested: I am not the only one that sees this, but I am determined not to be the one to fight it. I am going to sit still. If God wants me to live the rest of my life

and die under the cloud which has been thrown over me, I am willing to do it, and I will never perjure myself to get out from under it; neither will I ever confess things to be true which I know are not true; nor will I deny what I know to be true. Whatever may be my other faults or weaknesses, I am not a coward; I will stand for what I know is right as long as I have power to stand at all. I am sitting down quietly and praying the Lord to give me the meekness and patience to bear the injustice heaped upon me and to help to purify my heart so that it may be possible for Him to bring victory out of my mistakes, and to save the cause of truth from the injury and discredit which my faults or errors might otherwise bring upon it. You have been through the same sort of experience I am going through, and you know more about it than any other one. You had one advantage over me. You were able to get up and get out of the way to a beautiful little tropical [9] paradise, and manage your own affairs, and have peace and quiet in your own home, and hold communion with God. I am compelled by circumstances beyond my control, to stand at my post and try to hold up the things which others, who ought to be as much interested as I, are doing their best to tear down. I must sit quietly still and see thousands of persons whom I counted my friends and who have had confidence in me, led to believe that I am a teacher of doctrines which I abhor, that I have been a promoter of schemes of which I never dreamed. Every day I have to study and plan, and every night I have to toil, to unravel the tangles which are made by those who ought to be helping us.

At the last General Conference in Oakland I agreed publicly that if the Sanitarium ought not to be in Battle Creek we would sell it and go elsewhere. It was not yet dedicated. A company could have been organized to take this institution and float it for more than enough to pay its debts so that we could go out without any debts to harass and embarrass us. If we had left right away after the fire we should not have had enough to pay our debts. The loss, if we had quit business, would have been surely five hundred thousand dollars, with an insurance of one hundred and fifty thousand, leaving us insolvent to the amount of" three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. I and my colleagues have made a life and death struggle to keep the work going, and save it. We have had no assistance and cooperation. We did the best we could, but have only been denounced for it. Other men who took the responsibility of advising us to do what we have done are the ones most active in condemning us for following their advice. Sister White said the Sanitarium should not have been rebuilt in Battle Creek. I said Very well, let us sell it. We have enough to pay our debts. [10]

Sister White arose and stated publicly, "it has been proposed to sell the Battle Creek Sanitarium. No, This should not be done; let not the light of the Sanitarium go out in Battle Creek; let us all take hold and make the institution a success."

Let me ask you what thing has been done by anybody outside of those who are carrying the burdens here, to help make this philanthropic work a success. Men profess to believe that the Lord speaks to them through Sister White. I should like to see some evidence of downright, through-going sincerity on the part of some of them.

I said in Oakland and at Washington everything I have to say by way of apology. I am never going to confess that I have for a moment believed or countenanced such doctrines as are attributed to "The Living Temple." I never intended to teach any such doctrine when I wrote the book. It is charged that the book teaches these things. I asked Prof. Prescott to point out where these doctrines are taught. I asked Elder Haskell to do the same thing, and he has failed to do it. Both promised to do it, but both failed to carry out their promise. I told both of them I would like to have them mark out of my book everything which seemed to teach these wicked doctrines attributed to me. They failed to do this. I have never intended to teach anything except what Sister White teaches in the books have named, and everything which you or anybody else will point out to me which is not in harmony with what Sister White has written in the chapters "God in Nature" and "Science and the Bible" in her work on Education, I will immediately repudiate as error.

Prof. Prescott says "Sister White says the same thing you say, but does not mean the same thing you mean when she [11] says it.! How does he know this? Is he a mind reader? Can he see into my heart and find something there which is not in my head, of which I am myself unconscious? Does he know better than I what I believe, or what I mean?

We have not reached the end of this thing by a long ways. I am sitting quietly and waiting, and I am willing to wait as long as the Lord wants me to wait. I am afraid I have been too impetuous and impatient. I have got to learn some lessons. I have been willing to believe that I had in my book some expressions that did not clearly express my meaning, and that this has led to misunderstanding, and so I readily consented to drop out anything which could by any possibility be so misunderstood; and I have thoroughly revised my book with this thought in mind, with the help of several persons who are as anxious as myself that we may have peace.

I could make a bitter war if I chose, but I have never had it in my heart to do such a thing, and have been most earnestly desirous to do everything possible in the interests of peace. This is the reason why I have taken the attitude I have now, but I have gone as far as I can go. I am patiently waiting to know what the Lord wants me to do. Whatever his will may be, I trust I shall be reconciled to it. I have not apostatized, and I am not going to apostatize, and there is no spirit of apostasy in the air at the Sanitarium. You will not find a larger number of people anywhere on earth who love truth and who are earnestly seeking it.

Enough of this. With reference to Elder Brunson I have only to say this: He wrote me stating he was sick and discouraged. I invited him to come and make us a little visit, [12] just as I would invite a beggar who was cold and hungry to come into my house to be fed and warmed. My house it full of those who have no other claims upon me than that they were Christ's little ones, and were in need of neighborly kindness. May be I committed a crime in this, If I did, I am willing to suffer the consequences.

Elder Brunson has been waiting patiently for a few weeks at the Sanitarium to see what shall be done with him. He seems a Christian Godly man. I cannot turn a cold shoulder upon him, and ask him to find "roost" somewhere else. I can not believe that anybody who loves him and loves his soul can do such a thing. I think it possible that sectarian zeal may sometimes chill the milk of human kindness to the congealing point. If no other opening is made for Elder Brunson, it is quite likely we shall invite him to stay at the Sanitarium temporarily, so that he may not feel that he is compelled to separate from the work which he loves and for which he has made noble sacrifices.

I am going to do the best I can to be a brother to this good man, and I will trust the Lord to take care of his heterodoxy. The thing which concerns me most, is not whether he is orthodox in his doctrines, but whether he is the sort of man that fears God and whose daily life is such as God approves. Doctrines do not save men, do they? I have had one or two good talks with Elder Brunson since he came to the Sanitarium. I have been so busy I could not find the time for more. He is a scholastic and theological to the last degree. He has a lot of subtle fine spun philosophies which I never could swallow in the world, but he is a good man. He has a sweet spirit; he loves souls, he is a man of faith, he prays earnest prayers; he [13] helps our sick folks to have faith in God. I can not help but feel that a man who in his personal life and in all his conduct is holding up Christian standards in a dignified way must be one who may be so blessed in his ministrations that though he makes mistakes, though he may be unsound in doctrine and too fine-spun in philosophy, nevertheless the Lord can spread his and over his errors so that they shall not be seen, and permit the light of the gospel to shine him into the hearts of men and women who are hungering for truth and thirsting for salvation.

There will not be much occasion for Elder Brunson bring forward his objectionable doctrines here. The gospel is the thing we need at the Sanitarium,--a live, pungent, saving gospel. I can not see any reason that Elder Brunson could have for discussing the subject of predestination, or to any great extent the sanctuary question, in his ministrations to patients. There are themes of more immediate importance which will fully occupy his time. If he stays with us I shall ask him to hold in abeyance and not prorogate those doctrines which you feel are subversive of orthodox S.D.A teachings, and he has already written you that he will do so.

I let Hiley read your letter, and told him he was free to act in any way that he thought was proper; that whatever his duty was he must do it. I have no idea how we can get along without him, but he belongs to the Lord and must obey his call.

As ever,
Your friend and brother,
Signed, J. H. Kellogg