

Who is the third person of the Godhead?



Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

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Who is the third person of the Godhead?

The following passage is a regularly quoted "third person of the Godhead" passage from the Desire of Ages. Please note in the original it was written as above in lower case. Ellen White never wrote the term, "third person" in capitals. Since her death it has been reprinted in capitals by the publishers.

"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. 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. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church." DA 671.

So who is the third person of the Godhead?

Short answer;

The last three lines of the statement tell us who the third person of the Godhead is, "Christ has given His Spirit". No need for any guess work, the prophet tells us who the third person of the Godhead is. It is Christ's Spirit, 'His Spirit'. And why would Christ give His Spirit? "...to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church."

The passage also said, "*Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.*" DA 671.

Now notice this statement, "*Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, who was to take his place. This Comforter is the Holy Spirit,--the soul of his life, the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin.*" RH May 19, 1904 - (after DA)

The Spirit is His life, the prophet calls the Comforter, "the soul of His life" and with His Spirit (His life) we receive the power to overcome sin (all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil).

Harmony between SOP and Bible;

The Spirit is "the mind of the Lord". Isa 40:13; Ro 11:34.

The Spirit is the Spirit of God and Christ. Rom 8:9

"The Lord is that Spirit". 2Cor 3:17.

God sends "forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts"

Gal 4:6.

Scripture even compares what our Spirit (mind, personality, character etc) is to us "even so" is the 'Spirit of God' to God. 1Cor 2:11.

*1 Cor 2:11 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.*

The last text really dispels any doubts one could have regarding the Holy Spirit. *The Spirit of God* mentioned here is as the verse says, the mind of God. (Spirit 4151, + 5590 the rational soul or mind). The only way to get around this text is to claim that the Holy Spirit is someone else, someone separate from God the Father. But notice what the Scripture teaches, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph 4:30.

No friends, the "*Spirit of God*" and the Holy Spirit is the same Spirit. Scripture tells us in Eph 4:4 there is "*one Spirit*" see also *1Thess 4:8* "*his holy Spirit.*" (God's)

And many other passages from the SOP can be quoted;

"The Saviour is our Comforter" {19MR 293.3}

"Jesus the Comforter" {19MR 296,297}

"The Holy Spirit is Himself" (Jesus). This statement is absolutely unanswerable and has converted many to the truth. {14MR 23.3}

"The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only begotten Son of God" {RH April 5, 1906}

Compare *John 20:22* "*And when He had said this He breathed upon them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*".

Notice where the Holy Spirit comes from? Inside of Jesus, His very breath, His life. Friends when you stop breathing you die. Jesus was illustrating in breathing upon them His breath, He was giving them HIS LIFE, His Holy Spirit!

Just like the prophet states, "The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only begotten Son of God".

When you accept the truth, everything fits, you have perfect harmony. You don't have to try and change the meaning of words, or use metaphors to escape plain passages. The truth becomes a perfect chain, with one passage shedding light upon another. And the Scriptures begin to reveal deeper and richer truths which were obscured by your previous unfounded beliefs.

So if the SOP and Scripture are perfectly clear on the personality of the Holy Spirit, why does Sister White use the term "third person of the Godhead"?

Since we cannot ask her personally, we must examine her writings and find a consistent theme without any contradictions.

For example the following statements are just a small sample of how Sister White defines the Spirit.

"The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ." {DA 805.3}

"The holy Spirit is the comforter, as the personal presence of Christ to the soul." {RH, November 29, 1892 par. 3}

"Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, who was to take his place. This Comforter is the Holy Spirit,-- the soul of his life...." {RH, May 19, 1904 par. 1}

Here we see the prophet calls the Spirit "the life", "the personal presence", and "soul of his life". It is the life and presence of Christ.

And in the following statement, we read; "*By the Spirit the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with you*" {*BEcho, January 15, 1893 par. 8*}

Here we see the Spirit is the personal presence of the Father and the Son. We could quote dozens more, but from these we see perfect consistency with each other and more importantly with Scripture.

Now if we interpret "*the third person of the Godhead*" statement, to mean a third individual God being, called God the Holy Spirit. All these statements and many Scriptures will lose their consistency. And the SOP would be made to contradict itself. Also keep in mind the "*third person of the Godhead*" statement was not a statement she wrote frequently. The majority of times it appears is in compilations published after her death.

Obviously sister White could not mean the Spirit is a third individual member of a trinity or Godhead and at the same time frequently write the Spirit is Christ Himself, His life...etc. the two views are diametrically opposed to each other.

If you take the trinity view, apart from the blatant contradictions that surface in her writings, you have the added problem of explaining why didn't the prophet correct the church? Why didn't she correct her husband? Why did her sons die non-trinitarian? Why didn't she write even one testimony telling the church they were in error over our non trinitarian position? A position which was held over the course of her whole ministry.

How is it that on something far less important like meat eating the prophet wrote clear testimonies on the new direction God was showing her regarding food and health? And yet on the most important foundational pillar in Scripture, the doctrine of who God is, she never wrote a single word of correction? A correction much needed if the whole SDA church was in error? And what is worse, she wrote many testimonies regarding how God had led us in the past and all the pillar truths were firmly established by the Holy Spirit and how any new truths would not contradict the old but only reinforce the established truths!

(Please see the book "The Living Voice of the Lord's Witnesses)

And why did she continually declare by voice and pen to always print the articles of the pioneers even after their death. Why did she write in 1905:

"And the standard bearers who have fallen in death, are to speak through the reprinting of their writings. I am instructed that thus their voices are to be heard. They are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time." {2NL 157.3}

Friends, those "standard bearers" were all non trinitarian, and the prophet was "instructed" to say that they are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time! And she said this in 1905, a time when many try to tell us she was trinitarian!

Let us return to the passage quoted in the lesson;

*"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. 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. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. **Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome** all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church." {DA 671.2}*

As we noted earlier the context tells us who the "third person of the Godhead" is, she writes **"Christ has given His Spirit"**

We also noted earlier from another statement that "By the Spirit the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with you"

But the term "third person" seems to indicate someone else apart from the Father and Son. This of course would contradict the previous statement and an abundance of others.

Nonetheless, the Spirit is in some way "a *distinct personality*". And this is what I believe the prophet means by the term "third person".

You see if you interpret this term to mean a third co-equal, co-eternal Divine being of the Godhead, as many do. then it would be reasonable to expect this term or similar ones such as "*heavenly trio*" to be found in her writings in other areas, such as in heaven before sin, in the heavenly councils, in the new earth...etc. but in all these important subjects regarding the Father and Son in heaven before sin, or in the new earth after sin, the term third person, or trio, or three powers... etc in never used!

She always, as does the Bible, speak of two. In fact regarding the counsels the prophet states "*Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,--one in nature, in character, and in purpose,--the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.*" {GC 493.1}

And again "*The only being who was one with God*" {ST, October 14, 1897 par. 3} If she believed the Holy Spirit was a third co-equal and co-eternal member of the Godhead, how could she say of the Son "*the only being who was one with God*"?

And why did she write that before the rebellion, Lucifer was next in honor to God's dear Son 4BC 1163, FLB 67. Surely if the Holy Spirit is the third person, he would be next in honour after the Father and Son? And even after the fall she writes Gabriel is next in honour to God's dear Son. DA 99. {TA 241.3} Again no mention of a third person called the Holy Spirit.

Can you see a pattern developing? You see if Ellen White believed in God the Holy Spirit, and if this is what she meant by the term third person, then she would have consistently used this term or similar in other areas regarding God and His Son. You cannot say this is an argument from silence, because when the prophet states of the Son, that He is "the only being who was one with God" it means there is no one else! You would have to charge Ellen White with the same reasoning.

It is not an argument from silence to ask how can an angel be next in honor to God's dear Son, when the Holy Spirit is supposed to be an equal member of the Godhead. In fact it would be blasphemy to place an angel, a created being, before a God being! It would be the same as **placing the angel Gabriel next in honour to the Father**, before the Son! This third person is mysteriously absent from heaven before sin and in the new earth after the end of sin! In fact the third person is absent from the rebellion in heaven. Think about it "**war in heaven**", all of heaven was involved, Michael and His angels fought, and the devil and his angels. The Father calling the entire heavenly host before Him ordaining that His Son "should be equal with Himself". In all these climactic scenes, someone who is supposed to be part of the Godhead is missing?

Read these words from Sister White: "*There are ever to be found those who will sympathize with those who are wrong. Satan had sympathizers in heaven, and took large numbers of the angels with him. **God and Christ and heavenly angels** were on one side, and Satan on the other.*" {3T 328.1}

Friends, the reason the third person is missing is because he doesn't exist! The only other being who wanted to be part of the councils of the Father and Son was Lucifer. Read the early chapters of Early writings, Story of Redemption, and Patriarchs and Prophets, and you will notice what started the rebellion was Lucifer being envious of the Son's exalted position. Lucifer and his rebels "rebelled against the authority of the Son". Now if God was a trinity, if there was a third person in heaven, wouldn't the third person be the target of Lucifer's complaints before the Son? You see Lucifer targeted the One who was next in honour to the throne. There was no One else in his way; we already noted that he (Lucifer) was "next in honour to God's dear Son"

Clearly there was no "third person" (as an individual being) in heaven, that is why the prophet never mentions one. But the Spirit was certainly there, it was the Spirit of God, the Spirit of His Son. It was the Spirit of the Father and Son that united the loyal angels, and strove with the rebellious ones.

If you do a study of every time Ellen White used the term third person, three agencies, or three powers, etc, you will see a consistent pattern as we have noted, she never used these statements before or after sin.

We can illustrate it like this:

Heaven before sin:

Always 2 beings
Father & Son
(Zech 6:13)
“Christ the word
the only begotten
of God ... the only
being in all the
universe that could
enter into all the
counsels and
purposes of God”
GC 493

The Fall

Every “third
person”, trio,
“three great
powers”, etc fit in
this category!
For example “sin
could be resisted
and overcome only
through the mighty
agency of the third
person of the
Godhead” DA 671

Heaven & new
earth after sin

Always 2 Beings
Father & Son
(Rev 22:3)
*Story of
Redemption* p. 432
“the people of God
are privileged to
hold open
communion with
the Father and Son.”

It should be clearly noted that every reference to the Spirit as the third person has to do with overcoming sin.

We also noted that Ellen White called the Spirit, “*the Spirit of Christ*”, “*the soul of His life*” and “*the life of Christ in the soul*”.

Now it’s simple when we understand what life she is talking about. Obviously it’s the life He lived in humanity, for that is the life we need in order to overcome.

Notice – “*The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity..*” {DA 786.4}

Now please understand this next point.

This life Christ lived, (and is seeking to impart to His people) is a different life to any life that has ever been lived!

This life did not exist before the incarnation. And was not available to give to man until after the cross.

It was not available to give before, because Jesus offers us through the Spirit His very life, His victories, His faith. He had to '*build the temple of the Lord*'. He must first live this life, overcome, and perfect it. Then our Saviour could offer a perfect sacrifice and impart this life to those who believe '*on His name*'.

This life is unique, through the incarnation; Jesus was the only man in whom the Spirit of God could dwell for every moment of His life. A Holy God dwelling in fallen humanity.

Notice this statement. *"What love! What amazing condescension! The King of glory proposed to humble Himself to fallen humanity! He would place His feet in Adam's steps. He would take man's fallen nature, and engage to cope with the strong foe who triumphed over Adam. He would overcome Satan, and in thus doing He would open the way for the redemption from the disgrace of Adam's failure and fall, of all those who would believe on Him (Redemption; or the Temptation of Christ, p. 15). {1BC 1085.3}*

That 'way' Christ opened for us, was through living a perfect life in the same nature as ours. And this life He imparts to "*those who would believe on Him*". This is what Heb 10:20 is saying. ("*by a new and living way*")

This is the third person of the Godhead, the divine human nature of Christ. It is a distinct personality. It is a life that was unknown in heaven and earth until it was lived, perfected and glorified! Unknown to Satan.

This is why Jesus had to first present Himself to the Father, and hear from Him that His sacrifice was 'ample' before He could impart this life to the believers on earth.

Notice how this point is explained in the following inspired statements.

"Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us." FLB 113

Could Christ impart this character to us before He had formed it? No. Notice the sequence, He had to first *"wrought out a perfect character"* before He could impart it.

The next statement enforces this point even more fully.

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

This last statement really clarifies the point. While Jesus was living on earth, the spirit could not come in all its fullness. But if He went away it would come.

Why must Jesus go away before He could send the Spirit? Because *"it was a representation of Himself"* in other words, it's His life. *"and after He was glorified"* (after this life was perfected & glorified) *"it was manifest"* (made available.)

This is why you will never read about the third person of the Godhead before or after sin. This life was *"manifested"* to destroy sin. This word *'manifested'* means "to appear", "to show", or "make."

Our Savior had to come in fallen humanity and manifest a righteous life. Hundreds of years before the incarnation the Father declared of His Son, *"by his knowledge [knowledge of righteousness] shall my righteous servant justify many"* Isaiah 53:11.

The prophet Joel prophesied *"he hath given you the former rain moderately"*. The margin reads *"a teacher of righteousness"*! *"according to righteousness"* (His righteousness) Joel 2:23

This is exactly what we have been studying/ when the early rain was poured out, it was Christ himself bringing His righteousness, His perfect life, to His people. As the prophet stated; *"The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only begotten Son of God, binds the human agent, body, soul, and spirit, to the perfect, divine-human nature of Christ."* {RH, April 5, 1906 par. 16}

And the latter rain will be the same. *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you"* Acts 3;19, 20

With this understanding let us read The Desire of Ages statement again:

“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. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.” {DA 671}

"Who would come?"	——	Jesus promised "I will come to you" and in Acts 3:20 we read " <u>he shall send Jesus Christ</u> "
"With no modified energy"	——	Jesus declared " <i>all power is given unto me</i> " Matt 28:18
"but in the fullness of divine power"	——	Whose fullness? " <i>of His fullness have all we received</i> " John 1:16
"The spirit makes <u>effectual</u> (imparts) what has been <u>wrought out by the world's Redeemer</u> "	——	"Christ in His humanity <u>wrought out a perfect character</u> and this character [life] <u>He offers to impart to us</u> " {ST, November 22, 1905}
"It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure"	——	Hebrews 9:13, 14
"Christ has given His Spirit as a <u>divine power</u> "	——	Note how the prophet stated the third person of the Godhead would <u>come in the fullness of divine power</u> . And a few lines later she states " <i>Christ has given His Spirit as a <u>divine power</u></i> " Clearly the third person of the Godhead is the "Spirit of Jesus Christ"
"to overcome all hereditary and <u>cultivated tendencies to evil</u> and to impress <u>His own character</u> upon His church"	——	"This Comforter is the Holy Spirit, -- <u>the soul of his life, the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin.</u> " {RH, May 19, 1904 par. 1}

Dear Friends, the third person of the Godhead is the fullness of the life of Christ wrought out in His humanity. And through His Spirit He is seeking to impart this life to His church. This life did not exist before the incarnation, our Lord had to first live this life and be made perfect, offer this life for our justification and impart this life to us for our sanctification. Romans 5:9, 10 (*much more*)

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" Heb 5:9

It is truly a new and divine life that Jesus built; it was unknown in heaven and the entire universe until Bethlehem. Divinity dwelling in fallen flesh.

This is the mystery of Godliness.

Read this text carefully: *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Timothy 3:16.*

"The work of redemption is called a mystery, and it is indeed the mystery by which everlasting righteousness is brought to all who believe. The race in consequence of sin was at enmity with God. Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity. Hiding His divinity, laying aside His glory, He was born a babe in Bethlehem. In human flesh He lived the law of God, that He might condemn sin in the flesh, and bear witness to heavenly intelligences that the law was ordained to life and to ensure the happiness, peace, and eternal good of all who obey. (MS 29, 1899)."
{7BC 915.3}

Dear Friends, can you see, before sin you have the Father and Son. After sin is destroyed, you have the Father and Son, only two! Because of sin, the Son of God became a human being. The Godhead now had a new person, someone who never existed before!

Notice what the prophet says: "*Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity.*" {MS 29,1899}

Notice it was mysterious to angels and men. It was mysterious because it was unknown!

You could say, the angels were beholding a new person! It was a mystery to them, Michael their Divine Commander became a human being, born a helpless babe in Bethlehem. The Son of God became the Son of man!

Notice this statement: "*He would leave all His glory in heaven, appear upon earth as a man, humble himself as a man, become acquainted by His own experience with the various temptations with which man would be beset, that He might know how to succor those who should be tempted;*" {SR 43.1}

This is the third person of the Godhead, the Divine human nature of the Son of God. This life was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. And after the resurrection this life in all its fullness was available to fallen man. It truly is a third person, a third life!

Before sin, you had God the Father, and the Divine Son of God, (*the brightness of His glory*), and at the incarnation you also have the divine human nature of Christ.

When sin is destroyed and the Son has *"delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father."* 1 Corinthians 15:24
Then God will once again be all in all. Vs 28.

That's why you never read of a third person or a trio etc, in the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Sin will have been destroyed! And "the mighty agency of the third person of the Godhead" Will no longer be needed!

You see, Christ's life will have become ours.
Notice how Paul puts it:

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Col 3:3,4

Plainly put this is the third person E. G. White believed in.

"They have one God and one Saviour, and one Spirit – the Spirit of Christ." 9T 189

'Amazing love,
how can it be,
that Jesus Christ
should die for me'