

A sunset over the ocean with the sun low on the horizon, creating a bright reflection on the water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange.

WHO
is the *third*
PERSON of the
GODHEAD?

AN EXAMINATION OF THE
PHRASE AS FOUND IN THE
SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Who is the third person of the Godhead?

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Who is the third person of the Godhead?

The following passage is a regularly quoted “third person of the Godhead” statement from *The Desire of Ages*. Please note that in the original manuscript the word “third” was written as above, in lower case. Ellen White never wrote the term “third person” in capitals. Since her death however, 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?

The last three lines of the statement provides the answer itself: “Christ has given His Spirit”. Here, the prophet tells us exactly who the third person of the Godhead is. It is Christ’s Spirit; “His Spirit”.

Why would Christ give us His Spirit? Once again, the very same passage contains the answer: “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.**”

Now notice the following statement written after *The Desire of Ages* was published.

“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 May19, 1904

The Spirit is His life, just as the prophet calls the Comforter, “the soul of His life”. Furthermore, it’s with His Spirit (His life) that we receive the power to overcome sin (all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil).

The Spirit of Prophecy is in perfect harmony with the Bible. From the Word of God we read:

- The Spirit is “the mind of the Lord”. (Isaiah 40:13; Romans 11:34)
- The Spirit is the Spirit of God and Christ. (Romans 8:9)
- “The Lord is that Spirit”. (2 Corinthians 3:17)
- God sends “forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6)

Scripture even states that what our spirit is to us (our mind, personality and character), “even so” is the “Spirit of God” to 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. 1 Corinthians 2:11

This text truly 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 and Spirit 5590 in the Greek both refer to 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 declares about the Holy Spirit.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30

The “Spirit of God” and the “Holy Spirit” is the same Spirit. Scripture tells us in Ephesians 4:4 that there is “one Spirit”. See also 1 Thessalonians 4:8 which describes it as “his [God’s] holy Spirit”.

Many other passages from the Spirit of Prophecy can also be quoted in support of this truth.

“The Saviour is our Comforter”. {19MR 293.3}

“Jesus the Comforter”. {19MR 296,297}

“The Holy Spirit is Himself [Jesus]”. {14MR 23.3}

This statement is absolutely unanswerable and has converted many to the truth.

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

“We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ.” {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}

“Jesus imbues the believer with his spiritual life, which is the Holy Ghost.” {3SP 242.2}

Compare these statements with the Word of God:

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

Notice where the Holy Spirit comes from? It comes from inside of Jesus. It's His very breath; His life.

Friends, when you stop breathing, you die. Therefore, in breathing His breath upon the disciples, Jesus was illustrating that He was giving them His life; His Holy Spirit! Just like the prophet states: “Jesus imbues the believer with his spiritual life, which is the Holy Ghost.” {3SP 242.2}

When you accept this truth, you find perfect harmony across the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. You don't have to 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 once obscured by previous unfounded beliefs.

Nevertheless, if Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy are perfectly clear on the identity 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. Let us begin with the following statements which 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 that the prophet calls the Spirit “the life of Christ”; “the personal presence of Christ”, and “the 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 that the Spirit is the personal presence of the Father and the Son. We could quote dozens of statements in addition to these, but from these alone we see perfect consistency with each other and more importantly with Scripture.

Now, if we interpret “the third person of the Godhead” to mean a third individual God being (called God the Holy Spirit), all these statements and many verses from Scripture would lose their consistency. And the Spirit of Prophecy would be made to contradict

itself. Furthermore, keep in mind that the “third person of the Godhead” statement was not a statement Sister White wrote frequently. In the majority of cases it is found in compilations published after her death.

Obviously, Sister White could not mean that the Spirit is a third individual member of a trinity or Godhead while at the same time frequently write that the Spirit is Christ Himself. These two views are diametrically opposed to each other.

If one takes the trinity view - apart from the blatant contradictions that surface in her writings - they have the added problem of explaining why the prophet didn't correct the church of her time. 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 that they were in error over their non-trinitarian position? A position which was held over the entire course of her 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 which would be much needed if the entire SDA church was in error. And what is worse, she wrote many testimonies emphasising how God had led us in the past, and how 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* for further evidence.

Finally, why did she continually instruct 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 falsley claim that she had become trinitarian!

Let us return to the passage quoted at the beginning of this booklet.

“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 from another statement that “by the Spirit the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with you”

Yet 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 time periods, such as in heaven before sin, in the heavenly councils, or in the new earth etc. Yet for all these important events involving the Father and Son in heaven before sin, or in the new earth after sin, the terms “third person”, “trio”, or “three powers” are never used!

Rather, just like the Bible, Sister White always speaks of two. In fact, regarding the counsels in heaven 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 Sister White believed that the Holy Spirit was a third co-equal and co-eternal member of the Godhead, how could she call 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? {See 4BC 1163 & FLB 67}. Surely if the Holy Spirit is the third co-equal, co-eternal person, he would be next in honour after the Father and Son. Yet even after the fall she writes that Gabriel is next in honour to God's dear Son. {See DA 99 & TA 241.3}. Once again, there is no mention of a third person called the Holy Spirit.

Can you see a pattern developing? 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 time periods involving God and His Son. You cannot say that this is an argument from silence, because when the prophet calls the Son: "the only being who was one with God", it means there is no one else!

It is not an argument from silence to ask how an angel could 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 even absent from the rebellion in heaven. Think about the "war in heaven". All of heaven was involved, Michael and His angels fought, and the devil and his angels. The Father calls the entire heavenly host before Him and ordains that His Son "should be equal with Himself". In all these climactic scenes, does it make sense that someone who is supposed to be part of the Godhead is missing?

Consider 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 why the third person is missing from these events 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, The Story of Redemption, and Patriarchs and Prophets*, and you will notice that 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 study every time Ellen White uses the terms “third person”, “three agencies”, or “three powers” etc, you will find a consistent pattern. As we have noted, she never used these statements before or after sin.

Notice the table on the following page.

Heaven Before Sin	The Fall	Heaven and the New Earth after Sin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only two beings mentioned (the Father and Son). • “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} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All statements using terms such as: “third person”, “trio”, “three great powers” etc. • E.g: “Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the third person of the Godhead.” {DA 671} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only two beings mentioned (the Father and Son). Revelation 22:3. • “the people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and Son.” {SR 432}

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

We also saw that Ellen White calls the Spirit: “the Spirit of Christ”, “the soul of His life”, “his spiritual life”, and “the life of Christ in the soul”.

It all comes together when we understand what life she is talking about. Obviously it’s the life Jesus lived in humanity, for that is the life we need in order to overcome. Consider the following statement which proves this point.

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

This life which 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 it was not available to give to

man until after the cross.

It was not available to give before the cross for the very fact that Jesus offers us (through the Spirit) His life, victories, and faith. Before the crucifixion, Jesus had to “build the temple of the Lord”. He had to first live that life, overcome, and perfect it. Only then could our Saviour offer to us a perfect sacrifice and impart this life to those who believe on His name.

This life is unique. Throughout the incarnation, Jesus was the only man in whom the Spirit of God could dwell every moment of His life. A Holy God dwelling in fallen humanity. Notice the following 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” which Christ opened for us was made by 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 Hebrews 10:20 is saying when Paul describes “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! It was unknown to Satan.

This is why Jesus had to first present Himself to the Father, and hear

from Him that His sacrifice was sufficient 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 to us.

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.

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 and glorified) “it was manifest” (made available for all).

This is why you will never read about the third person of the God-head before or after sin. This life was “manifested” to destroy sin. The word manifested means to appear, 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.

When the early rain was poured out, it was Christ Himself bringing His righteousness, His perfect life, to His people. As the prophet states:

“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 exactly 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 once more.

“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}

Quote from DA Statement	Fulfillment
“who would come”	Jesus promised: “I will come to you” and in Acts 13:20 we read: “he shall send Jesus Christ” .
“with no modified energy”	Jesus declared: “all power is given unto me”. Matthew 28:18.
“but in the fullness of divine power”	“of His fullness have all we received”. John 1:16.
“The Spirit makes effectual [imparts] what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer. ”	“Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character and this character [life] He offers to impart to us. ” {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 divine power ”	The prophet states that the third person of the Godhead would come in the fullness of divine power , and a few lines later writes: “Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power ”. Clearly the third person of the Godhead is the “Spirit of Jesus Christ”.
“ to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress His own character upon His church.”	“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 9, 1904}

Dear Friends, the third person of the Godhead is the fullness of the life 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, then offer this life for our justification, before He could impart this life to us for our sanctification. Romans 5:9, 10.

“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 following 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.

Now consider Sister White’s commentary.

“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}

Before sin, there existed the Father and Son. After sin is destroyed, there is once again the Father and Son. There's 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 has to say:

“Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity.” {MS 29, 1899}

The process was mysterious to angels and men. It was mysterious because it was unknown. You could say that the angels were beholding a new person! It was a mystery to them that Michael their Divine Commander had become a human being, born a helpless babe in Bethlehem. The Son of God became the Son of man!

Consider this next 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!

Remember that before sin, there is God the Father, and the Divine Son of God, (the brightness of His glory). And at the incarnation there is 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 (verse 28).

That’s why you never read of a third person or trio in the new heavens and 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 explains 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

This is the third person Ellen 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!*

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2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

What did Sister White really mean by the phrase “third person of the Godhead”?

Is it a separate god-being?

Or is it the Divine-human life of Christ which did not exist until it was lived, perfected and glorified?