Chapter 4 – **The Third Person of the Godhead**

It amazes me how smart we think we are, and yet we are so willing to settle for a deception, thinking we understand truth. Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” Unfortunately, he did not wait around for an answer. We read Sister White’s statements on the third person of the Godhead, and use human reasoning to explain God. For example, Mrs. White wrote, “The prince of the power of evil can only be held in check by the power of God in *the third person of the Godhead*, the Holy Spirit.” **(**SpTA 37 [1897]) We conclude that since the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead, then the Father must be the first Person of the Godhead and the Son, the second Person of the Godhead. We also know Father and Son are divine Beings, so we automatically decide that the Holy Spirit must be a third divine Being. In spite of evidence to the contrary, we close our minds to any other explanation, much to the pleasure of the arch-deceiver. In this chapter, therefore, we will take out our spiritual microscope and examine the evidence.

First, we need to understand what the word “person” means when talking about the Spirit. I want to bring this down to a human level first, in order to clarify an important principle. We all have a visible physical body and an invisible spirit. When someone says cruel and unjust things about us, are they inflicting physical pain on any part of our body? The answer, of course, is No, but we suffer deep emotional pain. Where does this suffering take place? Deep down in our spirit. Man’s spirit is his mind, his personality—everything non-physical that makes him who he is. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” (1 Cor 2:11) Don’t miss this point. Our spirit is as much our person as our physical body is our person. Our spirit is not another human being. It is our mind. Christ’s Spirit in us has to do with our mind; what our mind processes is then reflected in what we think, say, and do. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Rom 8:16) Our physical and mental powers are to be used to God’s glory: “We are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are His.” (CG 399) This understanding will make our study easier to understand.

Who is the Holy Spirit, referred to as the “third person of the Godhead”? We need God’s **GPS** to help us get to our destination. God’s **GPS** will help us clearly understand who the third person of the Godhead is. The following are many **GPS** statements to help us in our search for the truth.

**G**od’s **P**rophet **S**ays,“Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, ‘the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in My name.’ …This refers to the *omnipresence* of the *Spirit of Christ,* called the *Comforter.”* (14MR 179)

That explicit, definitive statement, by itself, speaks volumes. Ellen White was inspired to write that the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, is the omnipresence of the Spirit of whom? Christ. He couldn’t be everywhere physically with His growing church, but His invisible Spirit is *in* every believer, meaning in our minds/hearts. He will dwell where He is welcomed. Is a person’s spirit—his mind or personality—part of him, or separate from him? We know the commonsense answer to that, because we just discussed it. Now let us read a similar statement from Ellen White’s pen with more context around it:

**G**od’s **P**rophet **S**ays,“The Spirit was given as a regenerating agency, 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 man 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 the church.” (RH May 19, 1904)

Christ’s Spirit is a divine power. It is “His own character” (His own mind, His own life), not a different person from Him. In that quotation were several references to the same Spirit; Ellen White called it “the” Spirit and well as “his” Spirit. The principle of letting her writings interpret themselves tells us that “the” Spirit, without the possessive pronoun, nonetheless is the same as “His” Spirit. And the possessive indicates ownership, not independence from Christ.

“Our condition through sin has become preternatural [outside the ordinary course of nature], 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*.” (8T291)

And how does that power of God in Christ break the hold of evil in us? “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.” (SC18) The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the *only* power that can break the hold of evil from our hearts!

God’s prophet wrote, “The divine Spirit that the world's Redeemer promised to send is the *presence* and *power* of God.” (ST November 23, 1891) Now, come—let us reason together. If the “power of God” is “in Christ Jesus,” as quoted from Ellen White above, and if the “divine Spirit” is “the presence and power of God,” as the quote just above stated, and if that’s the “only power” that can break the hold of evil from us, then we can praise God for His revelation that the “divine Spirit,” the “presence and power of God,” is none other than the “indwelling Spirit of Christ.” Ellen White’s inspired pen said explicitly: “That power is Christ.” Once the scales fall from our eyes, it seems so obvious and easy to understand. What wonderful light God has given us about the third person of the Godhead. Christ omnipresent is the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

 “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) This quotation makes it plain that the Comforter that Christ promised to send “is the Holy Spirit,” which is “his Spirit,” meaning Christ’s Spirit, with all the power and blessings needed for our deliverance.

In confirmation, Ellen White wrote, first quoting Jesus’ words to His disciples, “‘I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.’ (John 14:16, 17.) This refers to the *omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ*, called the Comforter….” (Letter 7, 1891)

 “The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness.” (DA 324)

 “Not until the life of Christ becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and from without.” (MH 130)

 “The Holy Spirit**,** which proceeds from theonly begotten Son of God, binds the human agent, body, soul, and spirit, to the perfect, divine-human nature of Christ.” (RH April 5, 1906)

 “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Gal 4:6) That fact—“Christ in us”—gives us “union with the divine.” (RH Jan. 5, 1911) So that we may know the incomprehensible value of the Spirit of the Son of God given to believers to dwell in us, transforming us and fitting us for service to God, we have these words from Inspiration:

 “Heavenly intelligences are waiting to co-operate with human instrumentalities, that the world may see what human beings may become through a union with the divine. Those who consecrate body, soul and spirit to God’s service will constantly receive a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the life of his life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in mind and heart. Through the grace given us, we may achieve victories which, because of our defects of character and the smallness of our faith, may have seemed to us impossible. To every one who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding nothing, is given power for the attainment of measureless results.” (RH Jan. 5, 1911)

 Thank you, Father, for raising up your faithful prophet who gives us clarity and understanding. Her writings are a **GPS** that lifts the fog as to who the third person of the Godhead is.

Chapter 5 – **Life, Original, Unborrowed, Underived**

“Jesus declared, ‘I am the resurrection, and the life.’ In Christ is *life, original, unborrowed, underived*. ‘He that hath the Son hath life.’ The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life.” (DA 530 [1898]; Ev 616)

Based on the above quotation in Ellen White’s 1898 publication *The Desire of Ages,* some scholars claim that Ellen White was initially non-trinitarian, but later became a Trinitarian. They say, “Here is evidence. Christ’s life is original; therefore, He has always been and, therefore, He is co-eternal with the Father. Also, His life is unborrowed and underived. Therefore, He could not have been begotten of the Father in eternity. Rather, He is self-existent and has always existed.”

The problem with their reasoning is this: Trinitarians have read statements such as the one above and immediately formed opinions and reached conclusions that can be proven wrong by other inspired statements related to the topic—sometimes statements from the very same article or book. Their conclusions are both hasty and incorrect, which other readily-available documentation can show. The Spirit of prophecy will explain itself very clearly. So what does that statement above from *Desire of Ages* really ~~t~~ell us? It’s always wise to read a quotation in question in its original context.

“‘In him was life; and the life was the light of men’ (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. ‘I lay it down of myself’(John 10: 18), He said. In Him was *life, original, unborrowed, underived.* This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world.” (ST April 8, 1897; 1SM 296-297)

From the full context we plainly learn that “original, unborrowed, underived” life can be GIVEN. It will be given to all those who believe. This is in harmony with the words of Christ, when He said that God the Father had given Him life: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he *given* to the Son to have life in himself.” (John 5:26) What life would the Son have been given? Thd life which was the Father’s own original, unborrowed, underived life.

We know that in the above Scripture, Christ is talking about eternal life. To ascertain this fact, all we need to do is ask ourselves the question, “What kind of life does God the Father have in Himself?” Reason tell us it certainly cannot be mortal life; it can only be immortal life. Scripture states as much about the Father in 1 Timothy 6:16: “…Who only hath immortality.…”

As human offspring receive mortal life from their parents, so this immortal life was given to Christ by virtue of His divine birth (having been begotten with that life). The Father’s life is also the Son’s life, through inheritance. God the Father is the “source of all life” (MH 397; 9T 44; 21MR 272), “of whom are all things.” (1 Cor 8:6) Christ inherited the Father’s life by birth: “I came forth from the Father….” (John 16:28) The one true God is both the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Being the Father’s only begotten Son, Christ naturally is the only one who has the same life as God His Father, whose life is rightly described as “original, unborrowed, underived.” Christ inherited that same “original, unborrowed, underived” life that the Source of all life had to give Him.

Indeed, Christ received *all* things from the Father. He received the Father’s life as His own, and it is the Father’s life that flows through Christ to all those who believe in the Son. It is the Father’s life that we receive through Christ. “All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings:through the beloved Son, *the Father's life flows out to all;*through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all.” (DA 21)

“‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,**’** Christ declares; ‘no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.’ Christ is invested with power to give life to all creatures.” (RH April 5, 1906) So what kind of life does He have the authority to give to all of His redeemed ones? The Father’s “original, unborrowed, underived,” which flows from the Father to us—a life which is immortal. Wonderful reality!

“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” (John 17:2)

 “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life….” (1 John 5:13)

The true explanation of that quotation from *Desire of Ages* does not cast doubt or confusion on other passages in the writings of Ellen White or the Bible, but, instead, each one clarifies and complements the other to lead to an understanding that inspires faith, that we may “believe on the name of the Son of God,” and have the assurance that we have eternal life. Nothing on earth can compare to the riches of that promise to us.

“The Word of God contains our life assurance policy. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God means to study the Word and to carry that Word into the life in obedience to all its precepts. Those who thus partake of the Son of God become partakers of the divine nature, one with Christ. They breathe a holy atmosphere, in which only the soul can truly live. They carry in their lives an assurance of the holy principles received from the Word—their lives are worked by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they have an earnest of the *immortality that will be theirs* through the death and resurrection of Christ. Should the earthly body decay, the principles of their faith sustain them, for they are partakers of the divine nature. Because Christ was raised from the dead, they grasp the pledge of their resurrection, and eternal life is their reward.

“This truth is an eternal truth, because Christ Himself taught it. He has engaged to raise the righteous dead, for He gave His life for the life of the world. “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 6:57)….” (UL 78)