

Godhead or Trinity?

At the present time, the Adventist church has adopted the teaching of the Trinity or Three- in-One God. Few Adventists, however, realize that **this was not the original teaching about God held by our church.**

In **1872** the SDA church put out a statement of Doctrinal Beliefs which showed that **the Pioneers opposed the idea of the Trinity:**

“1. That **there is one God, a personal, spiritual being**, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and **everywhere present by His representative the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139:7**

2. That there is one **Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father**, the one by whom he created all things, and by whom they do consist.” Issues p. 437

There was no mention of a different person – God the Holy Spirit.

It is a well known fact, that **all of the founding fathers of Adventism were not Trinitarians.** As a matter of fact they had some very strong words to speak **against** this teaching. Some of the more notable men you may be familiar with are: Ellen G. White (nowhere did she even mention the word “trinity” though it was widely used), E. J. Waggoner, R.F. Cottrell, Sr., and Jr., D.T. Bordeau, D.M. Canright, J.N. Andrews, Loughborough, John Matteson, A.C. Bordeau, A.T. Jones, W.W. Prescott, James White and Uriah Smith, A. J. Dennis and others were all in agreement. For example:

"The greatest fault we can find in the Reformation is, the Reformers stopped reforming. Had they gone on, and onward, till they had left the last vestige of Papacy behind, such as natural immortality, sprinkling, **the trinity**, and Sunday-keeping, the church would now be free from **her unscriptural errors.**" (James White, Review & Herald, Feb. 7, 1856)

"The doctrine of **the Trinity was established in the church by the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325. This doctrine destroys the personality of God, and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** The infamous, measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history **might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.**" (J. N. Andrews, Review & Herald, March 6, 1855)

"The Scriptures abundantly teach the pre-existence of Christ and his divinity,

but they are entirely silent in regard to a Trinity." (J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement*, p. 173)

"Thus the remark is just, that **the doctrine of a trinity degrades the Atonement...**" (JH. Waggoner, *The Atonement*, p. 166)

"But to hold **the doctrine of the Trinity is not so much an evidence of evil intention as of intoxication from that wine of which all the nations have drunk.** The fact that this was one of the leading doctrines, if not the very chief, upon which the bishop of Rome was exalted to popedom, does not say much in its favor." (R. F. Cottrell, *Review & Herald*, July 6, 1869)

This church teaching remained unchanged until **1931**, some **16 years after EG White's death**, when an unofficial statement came out 3 years after a Trinitarian book by LE Froom called, "Coming of the Comforter" was published. The new Doctrinal Statement read:

"That **the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of** the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; The Lord Jesus Christ, The Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption." Issues p. 444

In **1980**, almost 50 years later, at the General Conference session, the church officially adopted the Trinity into its 27 Doctrinal Beliefs. So, **this doctrine filtered into and taken shape in our church by degrees.**

Today's Trinity defined: "...the Godhead consists of **God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit**, a unity of **three co-eternal persons** having a unique and mysterious relationship." *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 23

"While **no single Scripture passage states the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact... only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.**" — (*Adventist Review*, Vol. 158, No. 31, p. 4) Note: There is **no** conclusive Bible or SOP evidence for the accepted Trinity doctrine, it is "assumed."

But, **WHO does the Bible clearly and repeatedly say God is?**

Mark 12:28-32 "...Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; **The Lord our God is**

one Lord...And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, **thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:**"

1 Corinthians 8:6 "**But to us there is but one God, the Father**, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Ephesians 4:6 "**One God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

1 Timothy 2:5 "**For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.**"

John 17:3 "And this is life eternal, that they might know **thee the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

EG White says: "Let them be thankful to God for His manifold mercies and be kind to one another. **They have one God and one Saviour; and one Spirit--the Spirit of Christ** - is to bring unity into their ranks." (Testimonies Vol. 9, p. 189)

The One God is the Father. There is **no statement** in the Bible or SOP reading "God the Son," or "God the Holy Spirit." If this were the Truth we would expect it to exist. Instead we read "there is but one God, **the Father.**"

If God is the Father, **WHO does the Bible say Jesus is?**

John 3:16 "For **God** so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

1 John 4:9 "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that **God sent his only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through him."

John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father,**) full of grace and truth."

Please note: God sent the only Son He already had. It **does not** say that Jesus **became** the begotten Son when born on earth. **He was the begotten Son who was sent.**

Begotten: "monogenes" means "only born" - some lexicons say this word

could mean "unique", thus the Trinitarian would state that it must apply to His birth in Bethlehem. However, we have to **remember that the word begotten is used to describe the Son's existence in Heaven before He ever came to this earth. Ellen White also calls Jesus the begotten Son prior to His birth in Bethlehem.** His existence surely is unique since He is the only Son of God.

John 8:42 " Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: **for I proceeded forth and came from God**; neither came I of myself, but he sent me."

Note: Jesus proceeded forth **and** came from God- two separate actions. God gave Jesus the life He has, just as any son receives life from their father.

John 5:26 "For as the Father hath life in himself; **so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;**"

The Scriptures are clear that Jesus is **truly** God's Son, not a member of the Godhead **playing the role** of the Son as the Trinity teaches. To say that Jesus was only 'called' the Son because of His anticipated birth in Bethlehem, as Trinitarians do, is **pure conjecture**, nowhere substantiated by Scripture.

EGW says: "And **the Son of God declares concerning Himself:** "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. **I was set up from everlasting...**When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22-30." (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34)

The Scriptures also declare to us that God is not only the father of Jesus, but is His God as well.

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...**"

2 Corinthians 11:31 "**The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...**"

John 20:17 "... Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and **to my God, and your God.**"

Mark 15:34 "... **My God, my God,** why hast thou forsaken me?"

Revelation 3:12 "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of **my**

God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of **my God**, and the name of the city of **my God**, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from **my God**..."

1 Corinthians 11:3 "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and **the head of Christ is God.**"

Hebrews 1:8, 9 "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, **O God**, is for ever and ever...**therefore God, even thy God**, hath anointed thee ..."

The Father calls the Son, God. Jesus is truly Divinity because He comes from the very being of God. **Therefore He possesses by inheritance all the names and attributes of the Father.** Notice also that God calls Himself the God of the Son. However, because Jesus is truly Divinity, He is to be worshiped as is the Father. "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Hebrews 1:6

John 5: 22, 23 "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That **all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.** He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

1 Corinthians 15:23-28 "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; ...For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet... And when all things shall be subdued unto him, **then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.**"

These verses are simply stating to us the same idea as was expressed earlier - that **all things proceed from the Father.** The Father is the one true God of Heaven and Jesus, the Son, the exact image of the Father, acknowledges that fact.

So, if God is the Father of Jesus, and Jesus is the Son of God – then **WHO does the Bible say is the Holy Spirit?**

The early Adventist pioneers taught that the Holy Spirit was **the personal presence of God with us, His personality.** They also believed the Spirit to be termed a 'person' in the sense that it was the personality of the Father and the Son with us **but never with the view that the Holy Spirit was a separate and different individual** from the Father or the Son.

John 15:26 "But when **the Comforter** is come, whom I will send unto you **from the Father**, even the Spirit of truth, **which proceedeth from the Father**, he shall testify of me."

Galatians 4:6 "And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts**, crying, Abba, Father."

Romans 8:9-11 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that **the Spirit of God** dwell in you. Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his. And if **Christ [be] in you**, the body [is] dead because of sin; but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness. But if **the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus** from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by **his Spirit** that dwelleth in you."

Philippians 1:19 "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of **the Spirit of Jesus Christ**,"

Please note that the Spirit of the Father and the Son are used interchangeably. **That is because there is only one Spirit which they share.** Within that truth is a most beautiful knowledge that Christ Himself will come to us to comfort us!

There is one Spirit – Eph. 4:4

The Comforter is the Spirit – John 14:26

The Spirit is the Lord – 2 Cor. 3:17, 18

The Lord is Jesus – 1 Cor. 8:6

John 17:21 "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How are Jesus and the Father "in" each other? **It is because they share the same Spirit.**

In summary, we may conclude the following.

1. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9).
2. God sends forth "the Spirit of his Son into your hearts". It's not somebody else (Galatians 4:6).
3. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Father (Mark 13:11, Matthew 10:19-20).
4. The Holy Spirit that inspired the prophets is the Spirit of Christ (2 Peter 1:21, 1 Peter 1:10-11).
5. The Holy Spirit comes direct from Christ. It's his very breath, character, and life (John 20:22).

EG White Statements:

“The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate--a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." John 1:1, 2. **Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father--one in nature, in character, in purpose--the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.**” {PP 34.1} Note: In the Beginning there were TWO, NOT THREE. And Jesus was the only co-worker, the only begotten of God before the world was. He was “**THE ONLY BEING** that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” Therefore, there was and is NO OTHER “coeternal” being, or separate person – God the Holy Spirit.

"The **Father** and the **Son alone** are to be exalted." (Sons and Daughters, p. 58)

“Cumbered with humanity, **Christ could not be in every place personally**; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth. **The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity** and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places **by His Holy Spirit**, as the Omnipresent." (Manuscript Release, No. 1084)

"When God's people take the position that they are the temple of **the Holy Ghost, Christ Himself abiding within**, they will so clearly reveal Him in spirit, words, and actions, that there will be an unmistakable distinction between them and Satan's followers." (Notebook Leaflets Vol. 1, p. 79)

"**The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ.**" (The Desire of Ages, p. 805)

"The reason why the churches are weak and sickly and ready to die, is that **the enemy** has brought influences of a discouraging nature to bear upon trembling souls. He **has sought to shut Jesus from their view as the Comforter**, as one who reproves, who warns, who admonishes them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."" (Review & Herald, August 26, 1890)

"As by faith we look to Jesus, our **faith pierces the shadow, and we adore God for His wondrous love in giving us Jesus the Comforter.**" (Manuscript Releases Vol. 19, pp. 297, 298)

1. Why are we never told to pray to or worship the Holy Spirit?
2. Where is the Holy Spirit in the councils of Heaven when the plan of salvation was being laid out and when Lucifer was rebelling? Inspiration never mentions the Holy Spirit but only the Father and the Son.
3. Where is the Holy Spirit mentioned when talking of Heaven? We only see the Father and the Son.
4. Why did Ellen White say that Christ was the only being in all the universe who could enter into God's councils? Surely the Holy Spirit would have been included if there was a Trinity.



W: www.acts321.org
E: info@acts321.org
P: +61 (02) 4374 1802