



2 Cor. 3:18

Open Face

One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others. Christ our Righteousness

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Who Is A Christian?

David Clayton



As soon as people find out that I am a Christian, one of the first questions that I am often asked, is, “which church do you belong to?” Many years ago I, along with most of those who are a part of the Open Face Fellowship, stopped identifying ourselves with any denomination and just preferred to tell people that we were Christians – period. This answer was not acceptable to most people and it was interesting to see how many insisted that this was a position that was almost sinful and that we could not be Christians without belonging to a recognized denomination. It was somewhat amusing but also sad to see how deeply traditional ideas had taken root in the thinking of people so that they were completely confused about what it means to be a Christian.

On the other hand, I have met people who take a different position and refuse

to identify themselves as Christians, preferring to call themselves, “believers,” “disciples,” or some such thing because they insist that Christians today have given the name a bad meaning.

THE NAME

We cannot find any record of the apostles or any members of the early church giving themselves or their organization any name, they did not seem to think it was something important. This is because their message was not focused on their religious organization or on themselves, they had one message, one exclusive focus and it was the preaching of Christ and his kingdom. Their mission was to exalt him, to proclaim his name to all the world and this was their whole emphasis.

It appears that the disciples at some point referred to themselves as being of “The Way (Acts 19:9; 19:23; 9:2),” But it does not seem that this was a name they called themselves, rather, it seems that it was just a way of stating what they believed, that is, those who belonged to this particular way of serving God. It was a descriptive phrase, not a nominative phrase.

The first place that a name became associated with the believers was in Antioch.

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. (Acts 11:26)

It appears that it was the people of Antioch who attached this name to the believers and it is not difficult to understand why. Christ was all the people heard them speaking about, he was their constant theme, the focus of their lives. So whether they referred to them in this way as a means of mockery, or whether it was simply a way of distinguishing them from other people, the name stuck and it seems to have been accepted by all those who believed in Jesus. So the name “Christian” stuck and it became a badge of honor that Jesus’ followers in all ages were proud to bear. Later on we find James embracing it in his epistle:

Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? (Jas 2:7)

This name has persevered over the ages and for 2000 years the followers of Christ have worn it. Even though with the passing of the years many different denominations have arisen, the names and labels of these groups have only served to divert attention from the primary message, Jesus Christ. Instead we have titles focused on particular pet doctrines, biases and people: Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Seventh-day Adventists, Pentecostals etc. With such a confusing multiplicity of groups all claiming to be Christians, but with so many focuses apart from

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion and the restoration of apostolic Christianity. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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Christ, that the question needs to be asked, who really is a Christian?

CHRISTIANS ARE BELIEVERS

As I pointed out earlier, the believers were called “Christians,” because of their single-minded focus on Christ, but it is evident that simply speaking about Christ does not make one a Christian. The story of the Seven sons of Sceva illustrates this graphically. These men tried to cast a demon out of a man and demanded that he depart in the name of Jesus. However, the devil replied, “Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? (Acts 19:14-16)” Then the devil possessed man leaped on them and gave the seven of them a proper beating. While Christians certainly call upon the name of Christ and are constantly focused on him, there is more to the identity of a Christian than that.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those

that believe. (1Tim 4:10)

These sons of Sceva were men for whom Christ died. As the verse says, God is the Saviour of all men, they included, but let us note the additional statement – “specially of those that believe.” There is a level to the relationship which goes far beyond the simple label of Christian and it is ONLY those who believe, that can enter into, and experience that privileged place. It is very important that this point should be thoroughly understood because there are many multitudes who are under the illusion that because they belong to a certain denomination or a certain group and they have head knowledge of Christ and the Christian way, this makes them a part of the family of Christ and qualifies them for salvation. This terrible deception will result in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth on the day when Christ separates the sheep from the goats.

.... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Rom 10:9)

Sceva’s sons fulfilled the first part of the verse, they confessed Jesus with the mouth, but they did not believe in their hearts, their lives were not committed to him. It is always disastrous in one way or another when people take the name of the Lord, but do not know him, and do not believe in him in their hearts.

The most vital element in the experience of a Christian is the element of belief, or of faith in Christ. Anybody can use the name, but only a believer may experience what it really means to be a Christian. Of course, when we speak of believing, or having faith, this is more than simply a superficial intellectual acknowledgement. As James tells us, even the devils believe in God (James 2:19), and this kind of belief does nothing for them except to make them afraid of God. Many who call upon the name of Christ are also little better off than the devils, because their belief is only an intellectual one which creates fear instead of a relationship of

love and trust.

True faith, however makes a person devote his life to the service of Christ, it makes the name of Christ his constant theme, it causes him to admire, love and reverence God and his Son.

THE VITAL ELEMENT

But there is more to it; Calling upon the name of Jesus and believing in him entitles a person to salvation, But there is still another ingredient to Christianity, something which follows when we believe in Christ. This other element is the most important of all:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (Eph 1:13)

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Rom 8:14)

It is important that we call on the name of Christ, it is essential that we truly believe in him and commit ourselves to him completely. However, neither of these things is the vital element in a genuine Christian experience. The central component in Christianity is what God does in us, not the words of our confession or the faith we exercise. The human involvement is important, yes, we believe and we confess, but we cannot change ourselves, our faith is only the means by which we open the door so that God can transform us into genuine Christians. The gift of the holy spirit is the life of Christ imparted to the believer, it is the key element which transforms a person from simply one who believes a theory, to a born again child of God. Notice, this is what the apostle Paul emphasizes in Eph 1:13:

“... after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (Eph 1:13)”

THE SEQUENCE

In Acts chapter 3 we find the experience of Peter and John healing a lame man at the “Gate Beautiful” of the temple. As the people gathered around in wonderment at this amazing act that had

been done, Peter preached to them and explained the process by which they could become followers of Jesus (Christians) and obtain eternal life. Notice the formula that he presented:

“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; (Acts 3:19 - NASB)

So we see that the formula for becoming a Christian is,

1. Hear the word
2. Believe
3. Repent
4. Be converted
5. Receive the holy spirit

HEAR AND BELIEVE

Each of these steps is specific and one follows the other. It is not possible to turn to God unless one first “hears” the word, that is, information must come to the person concerning God and Christ. Sometimes this information comes by reading, or by conversing with a person, sometimes by meditating on the things of nature or some other way, maybe even in a dream or a vision, but the bottom line is that knowledge of God and Jesus comes to an individual and having “heard,” he or she believes. In the case of these people at the temple, they heard the word through the preaching of Peter.

REPENT

When the person believes, this leads to repentance. Repentance is a word that indicates that there is a sorrow for his or her condition, and a sense of need for a better life. People will often apply “repentance” strictly to regret for one’s bad actions, but many times a man will come to Christ not really focusing on individual acts of sin, but simply with a sense of needing somebody to take over his life because he senses that he is incapable and needs help. This is repentance, a recognition and regret for my own state, my own inabilities, my hopeless condition.

BE CONVERTED

Conversion follows. Conversion really

is a change of direction. Up to this point in his life a person has been living his own life as he pleased, but now, having repented and recognized his need of something better and more capable than himself, he changes the direction of his life. Instead of focusing on himself, he turns his focus to Christ, he turns around and starts walking the opposite way to how he has walked all his life. This is conversion. We should notice that up to this point, all of these steps are steps that depend on the individual. Even though it is obvious that the spirit of God has been working on his heart and pleading with him, these steps depend heavily on a person’s own input. The final step in becoming a Christian, however, is completely different, it is entirely the work of God and is really, the truly vital element in salvation.



RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

This final step is the impartation of the holy spirit. What does a person have to do in order to receive it? What is his personal involvement? Having believed in Jesus, having repented of his condition, having been converted to Christ, there is nothing else that a person can do. At this point, according to the word of God, he is given the gift of the holy spirit, this is God’s seal of approval, his indication that this person belongs to him and has become his son or daughter.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

LED OR BORN?

At this point we need to emphasize a very important fact: There is a significant distinction between being “led” by the spirit, and being “born” of the spirit. In Romans 8:14, Paul says that those who are led by the spirit, they are the sons of God, but when we examine the relationship of the Christian to the holy spirit more closely, we see that more is involved than simply the leading of the spirit and Paul himself teaches that very clearly. There are many instances in the Bible of the spirit leading people and directing them when in actual fact, those people were not born of the spirit. For example, we have the case of Cornelius who was led of the spirit to send for Peter to come and direct him in the way of the gospel. At that time Cornelius had not yet heard of Jesus, neither had he received the holy spirit. He was not yet born again. Being led by the spirit indicates that the spirit is influencing a person’s life and directing him in a certain path and this is certainly true of those who are born of the spirit, but there is more to it than that.

A person who is born of the spirit is somebody whose spirit has been united with the spirit of God in a very literal sense. When I say “literal,” I mean it is a reality, it is not something figurative or just a way of speaking. The spirit of God is a real aspect of God, an element of his being and his spirit comes to unite with my spirit in a living relationship when I am born again. The reality of this experience was often demonstrated – especially during the early church – when supernatural signs often accompanied the reception of the holy spirit, demonstrating that this was not simply a change of mind, not simply an intellectual or emotional experience, but was in fact a union of the human spirit with the mind and abilities of God. People spoke in languages they had never studied, they had visions, they prophesied, they performed miracles. It was not simply the leading of the spirit, it

was the indwelling of the spirit of God in such a literal way that God was able to exercise his presence and his power through those who were thus born of the spirit.

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. (Rom 8:9)

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2Cor 13:5)

This is the true hallmark of Christianity, it is the identifying element and it is the only thing which sets a Christian apart from all other persons and makes him a part of the family of God.

THE BENEFITS

This is why genuine Christianity can never be equated with any other religion. All other religions are focused on the idea that if we exercise enough discipline and put in enough effort we can improve ourselves and eventually become good enough so that God will reward us with eternal life. These religions focus on morality, self-improvement, human ability etc. but true Christianity is not based on the efforts of man to improve himself, but on the miraculous transformation which takes place in a person when he surrenders to Christ and receives him. It is based on the receiving of life, it is focused on the reality that Christ gives us his own spirit and in this way changes our natures, recreates us in his spiritual image, changing us from the inside by his own miraculous act. The apostle John describes this change in the following verse:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1John 3:9)

Paul also speaks of this change and he makes it clear that this change is a not a consequence of human effort, but of the indwelling spirit of Christ:

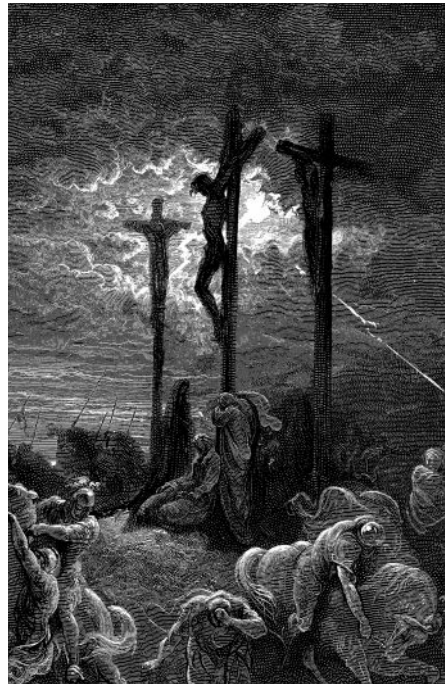
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:2)

POWER OF CHOICE

Of course, when a person is born again, this does not mean that God takes away the person's ability to make choices. Such a person is still faced with temptations and he still possesses a physical



body with all the inherent tendencies that he was born with, as well as those which he developed during his lifetime. What has changed is his spirit, his spirit is now united with the spirit of Christ and this gives him a completely different attitude to life. His desires are different, his perspectives are different, his intentions are different and he now possesses a strength of spirit which enables him to master his physical tendencies and to bring all his weaknesses under control through the new spirit within him.

Yet, he still has the power to choose, this is something that God will never take away from a person. Living the life of victory still involves our choice and though we are born again, we are still very much involved in how the

spirit lives and operates in our lives from moment to moment. This is why even in the New Testament there are many places where born again Christians are counseled to continue to make the right choices. Though we have a new nature, it is still possible to act contrary to that nature. The Corinthians were one set of Christians who seem to have become confused on this reality and so, several unchristlike behaviors became prominent in their church. The apostle Paul rebuke them sharply and also to remind them of their responsibility to make the right choices and to remember that they were now no longer their own property.

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1Cor 6:20)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1Cor 10:31)

THE COUNTERFEITS

I suppose it is true today, that the predominance of fake Christianity makes it really a challenge for us to identify ourselves as Christians, but then, by what other name should we choose to be known? There has never been a time in the history of the Christian church that there have not been false disciples who brought dishonor upon the fellowship. This began with the little flock of Jesus himself which had Judas walking among them, identifying as one of them. God is not surprised by the presence of the many wolves among the sheep and we were informed right from the beginning that this is how it would be:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. (Matt 13:24-25)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt 7:21-23)

The presence of false disciples in the body is no reason to change our identity. The kingdom is still the kingdom in spite of the tares growing among the wheat, it is still the body of Christ. Of course a purging needs to take place, but the Lord has promised us that he will do this purging himself and in the meantime, we are still all Christians and it is still a noble, worthy name that we should be proud to bear.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (Matt 13:30)

KNOWING MY IDENTITY

There is a phrase which is frequently used today to refer to the confused condition of those who are uncertain of who they are, this phrase is, “identity crisis.” This provides a good description of the state of those believers who feel that they must reject the name of “Christian.” Should the behavior of others cause me to deny my identity? When it comes to my connection to a denomination, to a social club, to a human institution, then I agree – if the behavior of such a group compromises my reputation then I don’t want to be connected with it, I don’t want other people to judge me because of what somebody else does. It is still true that “birds of a feather flock together” and “a man is known by the company that he keeps.” When the behavior (or beliefs) of a group does not reflect my values, then I have every reason to separate myself from such a group and no longer to identify with them and whatever name they bear.

However, when it comes to membership in a family, it is not so easy to lose one’s identity. The credentials which make a person a member of a family cannot be eliminated simply by changing a

name. A family identity involves the physical features which members have in common, the genetic heritage which gives them outward and inward similarities. Even if a person changes his name, he will still possess his family identity until he dies, it is not possible to divorce himself from this.

This is why a Christian cannot stop being a Christian just by changing his label. A person becomes a Christian by being born again, he receives the spirit of Christ and is thereby born into the family of God. He receives a new identity, but this is based on the life which he now possesses, it is not merely the adopting of a label. In order to lose his identity, he has to do more than just say, “I don’t refer to myself as a “Christian.” He has to outrightly reject and deny Christ, he has to reject the holy spirit and go back to the service of Satan.

You see, the word “Christian” is more than simply a denominational label. It centers on a person and that person is Jesus Christ. Every time the word is used, Christ is always there in the background, the word makes people think of him, and whether people dishonor or glorify that name by their behavior, there is no escaping the reality that the name itself always focuses attention on Christ. This is why it is a name that every believer should continue to embrace.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Phil 1:15-18)

There are many names which have been carefully formulated to draw attention to the ideals of a person or an institution. Among Christian groups I can think of names such as “Lutheran,” “Wesleyan Methodist,” “Jehovah’s Witness,” “Roman Catholic,” “Seventh-Day Adven-

tist,” “Pentecostal,” “Baptist,” and myriads of others. Just consider those labels and consider what comes to mind when you hear them. None of these names really makes me focus on the one who saved me from my sin. Each one draws attention to the founder of that particular group, or to a particular doctrinal belief. Is this what our religion is based on?

The name, “Christian,” is focused on the only person apart from God the Father, who should be the center of our attention, our adoration, our appreciation, our glorification, our exaltation. This is a name that we should wear with honor and pride and never, ever deny, no matter how many may dishonor it.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9-11)



What They Learned

I’ve learned that if someone says something unkind about me, I must live so that no one will believe it. - Age 39

I’ve learned that even when I have pains, I don’t have to be one. - Age 82

I’ve learned that the greater a person’s sense of guilt, the greater his need to cast blame on others. - Age 46

I’ve learned that if you want to cheer yourself up, you should try cheering someone else up. - Age 13

I’ve learned that although it’s hard to admit it, I’m secretly glad my parents are strict with me. - Age 15

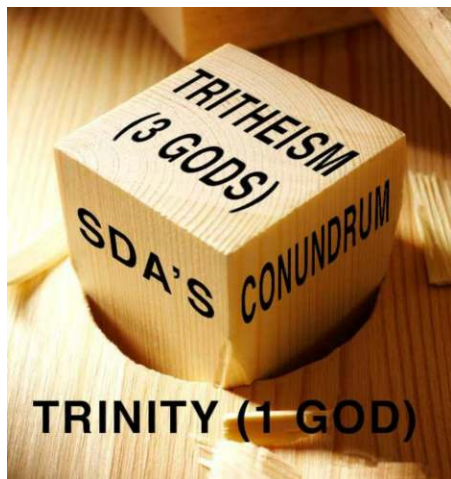
I’ve learned that if you want to do something positive for your children, try to improve your marriage. - Age 61

I’ve learned that I still have a lot to learn. - Age 92

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Escaping the Chains (part 2)

Howard Williams



A CLOSER LOOK

I now recognize that what I had stumbled upon was something the church was afraid of and could not deal with. I want you to examine, first the church's position, then the Bible's position, so you can make a fair judgment in this case. I won't tell you what the SDA position is, I will allow them to tell you personally by their own writings:

THE SDA CHURCH POSITION

This is taken from the book, "Seventh Day Adventists Believe..." or on the web:

<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

Trinity:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

Father:

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sover-

eign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)

Son:

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)

Holy Spirit:

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms

into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

THE BIBLE POSITION

Now that you have viewed the SDA position, let us take a look at what the Bible says.

To begin, the word Trinity is not found in the Bible, neither is the idea of a Trinity taught there. According to the Bible there is One God. That One God is the Father exclusively. (See Mark 12:32; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5)

Jesus is not the One God but is the only begotten Son of the One God, neither is Jesus ever referred to as "God the Son," but always, "The Son of God." (See Matt 8:29; 14:33; 27:54; Jn 3:16-18)

The Holy Spirit is never called, "God the Spirit" but always "The Spirit of God." The Scripture teaches that man was made in the image of God (Gen 1:26). If God has a Spirit then man has a Spirit, so here is how the Bible put it, "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 Cor 2:11) Therefore man's spirit is to man as God's Spirit is to God. It is clear that man has a spirit, BUT none of us believes that man's spirit is another person; why then do we say God's Spirit is another person apart from God? (See Gen 1:2; 1 Cor 3:16) The Spirit has an owner. (See Gen 6:3; Matt 10:20)

Here is another very interesting thought

to consider. The New Testament is made up of twenty-seven books. Of these twenty-seven, fourteen were written by the Apostle Paul. In all these fourteen books, the salutation of Paul is like this, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal 1:3) Nowhere in these books does he mention a greeting from the Holy Spirit. Why? In fact, Jesus says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (Jn 17:3) He mentions no one else. Why?

Another often used thought is the baptism formula. According to Matthew Jesus says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt 28:19) But we see a remarkable contrast to what Jesus said: according to the record none of the disciples did what Jesus said; instead, they all baptized only in the name of Jesus. Why? There are three possible answers:

1. The disciples disobeyed Jesus.
2. Jesus never said it.
3. The disciples understood exactly what Jesus meant.

I am sure none of us would consider the first two points, but the third point does make sense; they understood what Jesus meant and did just what he said. I have never seen or heard anyone actually follow the direct command of Jesus, he said, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now what is the name of the Father? Jehovah. What is the name of the Son? Jesus. What is the name of the Holy Ghost? We cannot tell. If we realize that a name in scripture does not necessarily mean the sound or pronunciation of a word, then it may be helpful in understanding what Jesus meant. Name signifies authority and character.

Then also is the much-talked-about passage in 1Jo 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." The issue in this verse is the last line which says, "and

these three are one." One what? One God? One person? The verse clearly does not say, yet most people read this to be teaching one God. SDA's are famous for the proof text method. This means you use any two or three verses to prove your point regardless of the context. That is wrong, because upon examination of the facts your proof becomes faulty. The next verse speaks of three witnesses in the earth and, if we are consistent, we must say whatever the three in verse seven mean it must mean the same in verse eight, right? The truth of the passage is in the context. Jesus is the Son of God, and these are all witnesses to this truth. These witnesses are in Heaven and Earth. Go back and check it out! In fact, even the SDA Bible commentary states that this passage must not be used in defense of the Trinity. (see SDABC vol. 7a p.975)

Finally, in the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, it speaks of heaven and the new earth. John says God the Father has a throne and Jesus has a throne, but no other being is mentioned apart from the 24 elders. Why?

The answer to these "why" questions is that there is no such third person as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is, quite simply, the Spirit of the Father. It is amazing to me that with all the scriptures made reference to by the SDA church, not one of them teaches the Trinity. The irony is that I used to believe and accept it as a fact myself. Thank God for emancipation!

DISCOVERING HISTORY

To compound matters and make them even worse, my studying, which this debate was aroused, caused me to find out that the pioneers of the SDA church never believed in the Trinity and the SDA church actually admitted it.

Here is the evidence:

"Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of 'present truth.' Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Many of the pioneers, including James White,

J.N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and J.H. Waggoner, held to an Arian or semi-Arian view ... that is, the Son at some point in time before the Creation of our world was generated by the Father ... the Trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists. Even today a few do not subscribe to it." William G. Johnson (Adventist Review, Jan. 6, 1994 p.10)

"Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs. More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the trinity." George Knight (Ministry, October 1993 p.10)

"A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation. All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven. By accepting the roles that the plan entailed, the divine Beings lost none of the powers of Deity. With regard to their eternal existence and other attributes, they were one and equal. But with regard to the plan of salvation, there was, in a sense, a submission on the part of the Son to the Father." Gordon Jensen (Adventist Review, October 31, 1996, p.12) (Week of Prayer readings)

That the SDA church would become so brazen as to bring the plan of salvation down to theatrics was beyond my wildest imagination, and yet this Week of Prayer reading was read in every

SDA church world wide to over 12 million people and every one of them accepted it as a fact. To me, that is AMAZING!! Now I can see why in the Old Testament the Israelites would follow their king into apostasy or would return to God if their king did.

I am so glad for the day God lead me to see these truths. But now here we were, at home with three members in our home church. We would meet on Sabbath mornings and in the afternoon go to visit some old-age homes or go into the towns to meet people and hand out tracts. In a little while, our numbers increased to about seven. I had no thought as to what would become of us, but I knew that I would follow the truth as is revealed in the Bible, so we kept our focus.

GROWTH

It was only a few months later that Brother C started examining this subject very carefully. God had opened our understanding to these truths, and we soon started worshipping with his dis-fellowshipped group, after a while becoming integrated into it. I got more revelations into the wonderful truth about God and could see the entire plan of salvation more clearly through the lense of His love. My understanding was opened to what love meant as it shone brighter in Christ. As a group we went on into the subject, sharing it everywhere we went.

IMPLICATIONS

For most people, the importance of understanding the true position of God is not seen as necessary. It seems like a play on words which doesn't really affect our relationship with God. But is God a person or is he just a force or power? This is an important question which demands an answer that satisfies. Since we cannot see God in a literal, tangible way, we relate to him by faith. Often our belief is based on the testimonies of those who have met him personally and have past down their experiences through writings, and on evidences we see around us in nature which testify of a creator. If one is to have any greater knowledge of God

than hear-say, it must be by relating to Him directly. This is one of the reasons the it is important to know who He is, for if a person is not real then one cannot have a relationship.

There were once some people who used to worship with us. After a while they moved away to another country, eventually getting involved with the "black consciousness" movement, which is all about the black man and how terrible he has been treated over the centuries. Eventually they came to believe that the Bible was a fake, written to subdue people, and that Jesus never existed. They wrote to a friend, whom they were trying to convince of their new found belief. The friend wrote back, saying, "I can see you never knew Jesus!" They were very offended by this, protesting that he was judging them, but the friend said "I am not judging – how can you know somebody who, by your own admission, never existed?"

DISTINCT BEINGS

There are two distinct beings plainly spoken of in the Bible. They are made clear all through the scriptures, but here are some particular examples.

In addressing the issue of Christians eating food offered to idols, Paul said something very informative concerning this subject. He said that, although there are many gods and many Lords, for the Christian it is different because he knows better... *"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."* (1Cor 8:6) *Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge...* Christians know there is only one God whose Son is Lord: two distinct beings which are the Father and His Son. John verifies this by telling us with whom it is that we fellowship: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."* (1Jn 1:3)

God the Father spoke audibly only twice in the New Testament, both times for the purpose of declaring who Jesus was:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17) *"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."* (Matt 17:5)

Jesus declares himself to be the way to God, the truth about God, and life of God. (Jn 14:6) He also said that life eternal was based on knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom that true God sent. (Jn 17:3)

THE MISSING THIRD PERSON

If the Holy Spirit is, like the Father and the Son, a distinct individual being, then the scriptures would plainly speak in that way – as if the Holy Spirit were an actual person just like God and Jesus are. But when looking through the entire Bible, studying all the scriptures that reference the Holy Spirit, something becomes very clear: there is NEVER a reference to "God the Spirit" or any other individual title of identity! Instead, the scriptures always say "the Spirit of God"; in other words, God's Spirit, the Spirit which God has, the Spirit from God. Also (watch this now!) "the Spirit of Christ!" (Rom 8:9) This is very much different from "God, the Father," and "Christ, the Lord". Importantly, we learn from this that the Spirit is not a distinct, separate person from God, but is, instead, a part of God Himself. Just like our Spirit is not another person separate from us but is a part of us, so it is with God. We know this because we are created in His image, modelled after His likeness, though of course on a much more limited, human scale.

This has huge implications when it comes to who or what we worship. If we make the Holy Spirit another person, then we have created an idol or, even worse, may be worshipping the devil himself. Let us look at another example to understand better. The Bible speaks of the "hand of God" and the "finger of God" many times. What if we were to switch the words around and say "God the Hand" or "God the Finger"? And what if we began to worship and

pray to "God the Hand"? That would be wrong! God is God, and He does have a hand, but we do not have "God the Hand". Even so, God is God, and He does have a Spirit, but we do not have "God the Spirit". To do so and to worship "God the Spirit" is to take something that is of God, separate it from God, and worship it instead of God.

WHO IS WITH US?

The fact that we are dealing with a spirit makes worshiping "God the Spirit" even more dangerous. Satan's aim, from the moment he first sinned, was to make himself a god. He said "I will be like the Most High". (Isa 14:14) This could only refer to him receiving worship, because he could not get the qualities of God. He could not make himself be what he was not, but if he could trick people into believing that he is "God the Holy Spirit", then his purposes and ambitions could be realized.

The Bible tells us that without the Spirit of God living in us we do not belong to God. (Rom 8:9, 14) It is the Spirit of God that fills our bodies when we become Christians. Paul puts it this way: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1Cor 6:19)

If we have a different spirit living in us that is not God's own Spirit, then we may verily have a demon or an evil spirit living in us.

Is it any wonder that we see some alarming activities taking place when people proclaim they are filled with the "spirit"? Things like foaming at the mouth and wallowing on the ground, bodies convulsing, and all sorts of activities that were never seen in the record of the New Testament. Where did this come from? Could it be that demons have taken the place of "God the Spirit" and this is what we see taking control of the Christian churches who have added another god to the one true God?

POSSESSED

The truth is that our bodies can be possessed by a spirit. We have countless

examples of this in scriptures as well as evidences around us in our everyday lives. We see demon possessions on television, on the internet, and through social media outlets like Facebook, YouTube, and so on. If demons can possess a person, why can't God, with our permission, fill us with his own Spirit? If there is such a thing as demon possession, is there such a thing as God possession? Yes, "... ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2Cor 6:16)



MY FATHER AND I

In John, chapter 14, Jesus gave the promise of the Spirit that would come to us after he left the earth. His description has confused many careless readers, for he used the word "another". Yet if we will continue reading and look further in the passage, we see who this "another" is, and why he used that word. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (Jn 14:18) What we see is that the word "another" was referring to another form of himself, meaning his coming would not be physical as they saw him at that moment, but it would be a new spiritual coming, such as had never happened before.

The disciples were puzzled as to how he would come back and reveal himself to them and not to the world, so Jesus went on to explain: "...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my

Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (Jn 14:23)

Later, in his last prayer, Jesus explains, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and

that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (Jn 17:23) By

these words, we see that the coming of the Holy Spirit is the presence of both the Father and his Son, as they

enter our bodies and make their home within us.

PRACTICAL RESULTS

Spirit filled people will be living just like Jesus and the apostles lived. How did Jesus live and why did he live this way? "... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." (Acts 10:38) When any individual is filled with the Spirit of God, he does good, uplifting humanity and bringing people to the place of children of God.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Eventually, one afternoon, we were discussing these things in our capitol city and a brother brought a magazine to the meeting entitled, "No New Leaders, No New Gods." He said this magazine was given out by an offshoot group at the General Conference Session in Holland 1995, the same year we were discussing it. So it was that we found out this was being agitated in other places. I got a chance to write the phone number of the producers of this magazine and as soon as I got home I gave them a call. I expressed our appreciation for the literature and asked if I could get a few copies. I was told they had only one copy left but that they would send it along with some other literature. In a few days we received package and, from the one magazine, we made several photocopies and gave them out. The other booklet we received was entitled, "Did They Believe in the Trinity?" This

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Your Body, Brain and Caffeine

Lenworth Frankson



Each day millions of people start their day by drinking some type of caffeinated beverage. People have preferences for different types of caffeinated drinks and these affect our health in different ways, but coffee is one of the most popular. Many energy drinks have surprisingly high caffeine and sugar levels. Caffeine is found both naturally and as an additive in many food and drink items including coffee, tea, chocolate, and soft drinks. On its own, caffeine has no flavor and does not have any nutritional value.

Caffeine is an alkaloid found in a wide variety of plants including coffee beans, tea leaves, and cocoa beans. It is a stimulant with some positive and negative effects. It can affect some of the processes in our bodies, including our digestion, metabolism, and vision. It makes most people more alert, awake, and focused, and two recent, major studies have found evidence that people who drink a lot of coffee are less likely to die an early death.

Harvard neuroscientist Charles Czeisler has proposed that caffeine, combined with electricity, allows humans to escape natural patterns of sleep and wakefulness, breaking them free from the cycle of the sun. That change, he wrote in *National Geographic*, enabled the "great transformation of human economic endeavour from the farm to the factory."

But too much coffee can become a problem. One of the things rarely mentioned about caffeine is that it is, in fact, a drug. It is the most commonly used psychoactive drug (affecting the mind or behavior) in the world, which is probably why many people do not see it as a drug. Caffeine's psychoactive effects change the way we feel and interact with the world around us, causing many to feel that they cannot go through a day without it. Unlike many other psychoactive drugs, caffeine is legal and is one of the most widely used substances in the world.

ALERTNESS

It is normal to grow tired as the day progresses because our brains naturally produce more of a molecule called adenosine from the time we wake up until the time we go to sleep. Scientists believe that this helps us get to bed at night. Caffeine is believed to work by blocking the adenosine's receptors thereby increasing excitability in the brain. It latches onto the receptors designed for adenosine, pushing them out of the way and as a result, the person is left feeling more alert and awake. Over time, however, adenosine makes new receptors for the sleep-inducing molecule to start latching onto again. Some people will feel the need for more than one cup of coffee in the morning to feel alert because the more receptors you have, the more caffeine you need to become alert.

Not only does it improve alertness but it is reported to also improve your mood. This is due to the same adenosine-blocking effect that makes you feel alert. By blocking adenosine's relaxing effects, caffeine lets dopamine and glutamine (other natural stimulants produced by your brain) run wild, making you more alert, less bored, and providing a mood boost.

ADRENALINE LEVELS

Caffeine excites our brain cells, which tells our hormone control centre, the pituitary gland that there's an emergency. The pituitary tells the adrenal glands (located above the kidneys) to flood the body with adrenaline.

Adrenaline is the hormone behind the "fight or flight" response. Adrenaline prompts us to either stay and face a threatening situation or flee a scene. In this excited state, we tend to be more irritable, anxious, and far more emotionally charged. While that can be helpful for running from someone or defending ourselves in a fight, the aggressive hormone does little good in more delicate situations like negotiating in a meeting or responding to a text.

MEMORY

Caffeine has been shown to improve certain types of memory - especially the ability to remember lists of words and straightforward information in some studies. Some research shows that it helps those memories to stay in the brain as well, making it easier to recall that information later. This enhancement, however, seems to be strongest for people who are not already hooked on caffeine in the first place. Another recent study also indicates that extroverts get more of a working-memory boost from caffeine than introverts. This may explain why some studies have observed a more significant effect than others. Stephen Braun, the author of *The Science and Lore of Alcohol and Caffeine*, explains that individual's reactions to caffeine vary greatly. One person might thrive on a high level of caffeine, but on the other hand, it will make another person unable to get anything done. Too much caffeine can lead to a decrease in performance across the board.

HEART RATE:

Caffeine speeds up the heart rate, with

significant effects occurring after consuming 360 mg, the equivalent of about three and a half cups of brewed coffee. In higher doses, caffeine can cause more significant effects on the heart by changing the speed and regularity of your heartbeat. This is known as tachycardia or cardiac arrhythmia and can be serious.

BLOOD PRESSURE:

Caffeine consumption may raise blood pressure. This effect of caffeine, known as the "pressor effect," is evident across age and gender groups, and is particularly pronounced in people with hypertension (high blood pressure). When caffeine is consumed in large quantities, the side effects can range from unpleasant to severe, sometimes even resulting in caffeine overdose. Caffeine can also pose dangers when taken with other substances including alcohol. Caffeine use can result in excessive alcohol consumption since the stimulant effects of caffeine mask the depressant effects of alcohol. Caffeine stays in our body for a long time. It takes about 5 or 6 hours before half of the caffeine you have ingested wears off. Another way to look at it is like this. One cup of coffee at 4 p.m. could leave you still feeling half of its effects at 10 p.m.

HEARTBURN

While a warm cup of coffee might seem soothing if you're cold or tired, caffeine also raises acid levels in your stomach. This can lead to heartburn and can be especially bad if you suffer from ulcers.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

Caffeine can improve alertness, but it can also lead to a number of unpleasant side effects, including:

- Restlessness
- Nervousness
- Excitement
- Insomnia
- Flushed Face
- Excessive urination
- Gastrointestinal disturbances
- Muscle twitching
- Rambling speech
- Tachycardia or cardiac arrhythmia
- Periods of inexhaustibility
- Difficulty relaxing

IS COFFEE GOOD FOR YOU?

Studies show that people who drink coffee regularly may have an 11% lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes than non-drinkers, due to ingredients in coffee that can affect levels of hormones involved in metabolism. In a large study involving tens of thousands of people, researchers found that people who drank several cups a day, anywhere from two to four cups, actually had a lower risk of stroke. Heart experts say the benefits may come from coffee's effect on the blood vessels; by keeping vessels flexible and healthy, it may reduce the risk of arteriosclerosis, which can cause heart attacks.

Coffee is also high in antioxidants, which are known to fight the oxidative damage that can cause cancer. This may explain why some studies have found a lower risk of liver cancer among coffee drinkers.

Coffee may even help you live longer. A recent study involving more than 208,000 men and women found that people who drank coffee regularly were less likely to die prematurely than those who didn't drink coffee. Researchers believe that some of the chemicals in coffee may help reduce inflammation, which has been found to play a role in a number of aging-related health problems, including dementia and Alzheimer's. Some evidence also suggests that coffee may slow down some of the metabolic processes that drive aging.

The downside however is that people may become dependent on caffeine. Like so many foods and nutrients, too much coffee can cause problems, especially in the digestive tract. But studies have shown that drinking up to four 8-ounce cups of coffee per day is safe. Some say that moderation is key and sipping coffee in reasonable amounts just might be one of the healthiest things you can do. Is coffee good for you?

I leave you to be the judge of that!



Online Fellowship

In many places the Corona virus crisis has placed severe limitations on our opportunities for Christian fellowship. In some areas communal worship has been severely restricted or banned altogether. Here in Jamaica we are limited to no more than 15 people at a time, depending on the whims of the government at the moment. In addition, those few have to wear masks at all times, avoid singing and must have temperature checks and hand sanitization at the door.

This has been very irritating. However, we have resorted to having online meetings and this has turned out to be more of a blessing than we expected. We have been privileged to meet with far more believers than if we were still meeting face to face in our little chapel in Albion, Manchester. On Sabbaths we usually have close to a hundred people from all over the world worshipping with us.

For those of you who were not aware of this online fellowship, or who have been unable to get on to the meetings, here are the times and the location for the meetings:

All the meeting times are Eastern Standard time which synchronizes with Jamaica time:

- Prayer meeting* - Wednesday, 7pm
- Fellowship meeting* - Friday, 7pm
- Sabbath Worship* - Saturday, 10:30am
- Prophecy Study* - Saturday, 3:30pm

We use a program similar to Zoom called "GoToMeeting." You can download it to your phone or to your PC, or you can log in using the web interface. Here is the address for the meetings.

<https://www.gotomeet.me/DavidClayton1>

Access Code: 394-792-597

All the Sabbath meetings are recorded and the recordings can be accessed on Youtube. This is not the Open Face Youtube channel, but actually a second channel under the name of David Clay-

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Escaping The Chains

Continued from page 9

was a look at the SDA pioneers and, in their own writings, denied the Trinity. It was a compilation of writings recorded in SDA history. It was also evidence against the SDA church.

We kept in touch with these brethren, the following year inviting them as speakers to our Jamaican camp meeting, which is a form of convention where we get together for a few days and focus on a spiritual theme. After a few years brother C and I were invited to USA to speak at camp meetings, and that was where God led us to start traveling to foreign lands. Eventually I started working full time in our local ministry, which is named "Restoration Ministries." My personal travels as a speaker have brought me to countries I never dreamed I would go – countries like Africa, India,

Australia, Europe and many states in America.

Eventually we got a printing press donated by a brother in the USA and, after a one week printing course, I became printer and have been printing ever since. The ministry was divided between two homes – the printing and video part of it in my home and the other part in Brother C's home. We got a website built with the help of the brethren overseas through which we could now be viewed around the world, and our materials were soon being accessed by many people and translated into different languages.



Open Face

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Online Fellowship

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ton.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC75E7FiftFD6HIKq2XtHGXQ>

Of course our webinar continues on Thursday evenings at 3.30 pm:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPhkaxP_OBMXpDHYzyWtDjQ

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Mercy Call has also been organized by some of our young people as a virtual prayer band and you can link up with them on the following platforms:

Twitter: MercyCall1

Instagram: Mercy_call

Facebook: Mercy Call (search for "Mercy Call Jamaica", under the 'People' filter)

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