



Open Face

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

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God's Friendship

David Clayton



Almost every time we think about God and religion, the primary question is, what can I get out of it? What can God do for me? How can God bless me and make me happier? Not too long ago, while I was in prayer, the thought came to me; what is God getting out of this? This is a question we just never ask ourselves. I know that I want this relationship, I know that I am trying to make sacrifices to make it work. But when you are in a relationship which is one-sided, you begin to feel a little frustrated after a while. You begin to wonder, am I pushing hard enough? Am I overdoing this? Am I really making my point?

When we approach our religious experience in this way, we are constantly questioning, and always feel like we are not doing enough. Such a situation puts us under pressure, and so, it is very helpful if we know that the other person is also interested, that it is a mutual relationship. I am seeking this person,

and this person is also seeking me. Somehow this is a side of the religious equation that we seem to never talk about. And yet, the more I contemplate it, the more I realize that it is absolutely vital, if the relationship is to be really meaningful.

Isaiah 41:8 says:

“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.”

This is one of those verses in the Bible that stirred me from the moment I first became aware of it. Imagine the Mighty God saying something like that, “Abraham, my friend!” that the Ruler of heaven should look upon a human being, a man, a flesh and blood, a mere insect, and say, “my friend.” It burned me, because somehow, there is within me a hungering for that eternal relationship. There is a hungering for touching something greater than myself! I can find my meaning in life if I can interact with this greater person.

We have to think of this in contrast to the things that the people of the world become obsessed with. Some people are obsessed with their furniture, some people are obsessed with their car, others with their education and still others with the country that they live in. Some are preoccupied with their place in society... they are seeking for things that ultimately will vanish like a puff of wind. But in my heart, ever since I came to understand that there is a God, I have had a hungering for *eternal* value to my life. And I *know* that the only place I can find it, is in God.

So, statements like this really stir me deeply; “Abraham my friend.” That the God of the universe, the Creator of all things, the Almighty who made these billions of worlds, could look at a human being and refer to him as ‘my friend,’ is a thought beyond profound. This draws and appeals to my heart, and I want to find out, how God could speak of Abraham in this way. If I find out, I can get a clue as to maybe how I can also get to that place.

GOD WANTS IT TOO

So, I ask myself, what really makes God happy? The popular and most common answer is, **obedience**. That is usually the first thing that comes to mind and this is quite natural, because the religion of many started from a performance-based perspective. Our religion started with the idea that the whole purpose and reason for our existence is to please God, to live in perfect obedience to Him. Even when we transfer to the concept of righteousness by faith, for some it is still about trying to become something that will satisfy God. It is about trying to reach a mark, and when you get to that mark, finally, God will be happy.

But this approach suggests that God's happiness depends upon our condition, which is related to how we perform.

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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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This is a completely natural human perspective, and so, every time we come to God, in the back of our minds, there are always these questions; is my condition and my performance up to scratch? Am I qualified to be here? We are always on the back foot, and it seems that our religion is always centred around *me*, my readiness, *my* fitness, *my* acceptableness, *my* condition.

This is how we have been bred and taught to see religion, so I ask myself, what does God really want out of this? What does He get out of this? Is it possible to just come and sit beside Him, with no ulterior motive, with no desire to gain anything from Him, and be perfectly happy? Can it be like this, expecting nothing but friendship? Would your heart find this to be something that you want? As I was thinking about this, I was burning inside. Somehow, I felt like my mind was latching on to the greatest purpose in the universe, the greatest purpose of my existence.

The reason why this question is so important is because we become distracted and confused by the thousands of other

voices, we become perplexed because we have been conditioned for so long in the wrong way.

If you look at the Bible, it seems like God is always emphasizing *you* chasing after Him, *you* seeking after Him. He says, 'fear God and keep his commandments, this is the whole duty of man.' 'Seek me and find me, when you search with all your heart.' It is always about you chasing God, it is like He is sitting back at a little distance and He is saying, "try a little harder." It seems He is the goal, the mark and the reward, and your only task is to keep chasing. Somehow, if you meet all the conditions, then He will say, "alright, I will grant you some happiness. I give you my presence, and so now you can be happy."

But I put the shoe on the other foot and ask, what is He getting out of it, if anything at all? What is God's purpose in the universe? Is it just to try to find a way to make you fulfill the conditions, and thus satisfy *Him*? Something about that entire picture makes me feel a little bit as though I might be missing the point.



Isaiah 43:7 is an example of those verses which leave me hanging. It is a beautiful verse and is very meaningful. But in light of what we have been looking at, it did not really give me any satisfaction. It says:

"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

Everything in this verse focuses on me making the approach, me meeting the qualification. I have created him for *my* glory. The pressure is on me! I am to glorify God, I am made for this purpose. It seems like God is saying, I get something out of it because you glorify me. So, what is my value? What is my worth to God? Is it only because I can be used

to glorify Him? Is it because I can be used to preach to others, or because I can be used to reveal God to the world? Is there anything about me that has inherent value or worth?

Well, happily, the Bible does show us another side to the relationship in other places. There are a couple of parables that Jesus told which suggest that I am valuable in myself, just because I am me. In the parable of the lost son and the parable of the lost sheep, it talks about me going away, getting lost and God coming to look for me. Why does he come to look for me? Well, in the parable of the lost sheep, he comes because he values me, but it does not say why he values me. It could be because I am his property, because I can be useful in his mission field, or because I can represent him properly in the world. But why does he really want me?

I will tell you that in my experience (and I think the same can be said for most of us), one of the things that we really find distasteful in a relationship is when it seems like somebody only wants to find you because of what they can obtain from you. Their chief purpose is to benefit from you, and it seems they have no value for you otherwise. Why is it, that sometimes when we meet beggars on the street, we think twice before giving something to them? What is the psychological reason? The answer is that the only thing these beggars see in you is a means of getting something. They do not value you at all apart from when they can get something from you. Every time they interact with you, it is because they want to gain something.

This is very often the way most people relate to God. We want to be His friend, we want to be in a good relationship with Him, but many times the reason is because of what He can give to us. Even if we try to make that secondary, it is a major part of our relationship. But even more troubling is the question of whether or not there is a similar selfish reason in why God wants to be involved with us.

It is hard when you are in a relationship,

and the emphasis is always me, me, me. Just think how a man or woman feels being together, and all the other person thinks about is himself/herself. How does that union work? It is a formula that will undoubtedly lead to failure and the end of that relationship sooner or later.

THE KEY TO TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Now, I would like to make a distinction between love and friendship. You can love a person, and yet you are not friends with that person. This is obvious, because the Bible says so:

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

So God loves the world, but He is not friends with the world. And neither is the world a friend to Him. This is true even of many Christians - God loves them and has some kind of relationship with them, but it's not a relationship of friendship.

What is the first, and the greatest element of friendship? I am going to use a word which I think summarizes it best. I thought about it deeply, and it made an impression on my mind. The word is **appreciation**. Now, is there a difference between love and appreciation? God loves all of us but does he appreciate all of us? We love God, but do we appreciate God? I was thinking about what makes friendship unique and special, because I really want to be the friend of God. I am already His servant, I am already His son, but I want to be His *friend!*

Of necessity, you *have to* be with your son, and you *have to* interact with your servant. But being with your friend is *by choice*. My friend is somebody I choose to be with, because it makes me happy. I remember, I had a friend once, who today is no longer my friend. And sometimes I think back and wonder, why were we so close for so many years? Upon reflection, I realize that the friendship was something that I was very happy with. When we talked, it

was always natural and easy and I enjoyed this person's company. None of us wanted anything, and the only thing we benefitted from each other was that we enjoyed talking together, mostly about the Lord.

One of the main reasons things were so easy between us was that I admired this person's character, and he admired mine. I wanted his friendship only because of himself, and he wanted my friendship only because of myself. I had nothing to give him otherwise, and he had nothing to give to me, it was just friendship. I wondered, why it was so special for me, and I realize it was the fact that there were no demands in the relationship. I simply enjoyed his company for himself, and that was all. Because of his character, I found myself comfortable around him, and it was the same vice versa.

I also realize that when the friendship broke apart it was because that element



was no longer there. So, friendships are marked by people focusing not on the goods or the benefits, but on the person. Whenever a relationship is based upon what you have to give, whether it is a romantic relationship or otherwise, you are on shaky ground. Because the time will come when you cannot give, and then what happens? The time will come when you fail to meet the standard, when you no longer satisfy the person's requirements and then what happens? That kind of relationship is shaky, and that is why the religious experience for many people is tenuous and shaky. They understand God's religion, but they do not know God's *friendship*.

A TODDLER'S LEVEL

Remember that we are talking about

both sides of a relationship - for a friendship to really work, you need to have mutual respect, mutual admiration and a mutual desire. You know that you want to be God's friend, but the question is, does *He* want to be your friend? What do you have to offer to Him? What do you have to bring to the relationship? Most of the time we think that what we can contribute is our *performance* - I can be a good commandment keeper, I can learn to love, and if I do these things, my side of the relationship is fulfilled. We believe this is what He requires, and when He sees this in me, He will want to be my friend. But if you think about it, you will realize that this is a kind of conditional relationship, and it is based on my performance.

I always like to talk about my relationship with my family, especially with my grandchildren. My latest grandson is just a baby (a few months old now), and I have found a few lessons in him already. One of the things that I noticed was that I would be playing with this baby, smiling and trying to get his attention and he would look off to the side unconcernedly. I know that babies take a while to become aware and conscious, and this was true in this case. He would look off to the side and not pay any attention to me.

I would contort myself, and gesture animatedly trying to say, "hey look this way, here I am!" But it was like he was looking beyond me, over my head, not seeing me at all. Babies are fun but not so much when they are not responding to you. But he is now at the place where whenever he is around, his eyes light up when he sees me. He moves towards me, smiles at me, plays with me and touches me.

Oh what happiness this brings me! I feel like I want to play with him all day. Somehow, the fact that he is recognizing me, acknowledging me and reaching towards me does something to me. Even in that little scenario, I am learning a lot. I mean, I am 69 years old, getting to be an old man, and this baby is just a few months old, yet he can bring plea-

sure to me? Maybe I am just a sentimental, aging man or maybe I am foolish. But I do not think so.

I think God created us in ways that enable us to learn about Him, and in human experiences that are based on love and fellowship, He has placed lessons that help us to understand. I cannot see the face of God, I could not endure the sight of Him in my present form, so how can I learn? He puts lessons there. He makes me understand how somebody who is much older, much wiser, much bigger and much more mature, can find pleasure in a little cooking thing that can give nothing in return.

The lesson is, you do not have to be on the same level to be friends with somebody, you do not have to be of the same intellectual capacity to give joy to another. Is God able to find this kind of satisfaction in me? It is one thing for me to seek Him, but my heart longs to have the assurance that He is happy to be with me, to know that if I do not seek Him, he misses my company and association. He misses the joy that comes to His heart when I am smiling in His face, and I am reaching out and bouncing towards Him. I considered it and thought, "God you have got eight billion people dealing with on earth, along with a whole universe. Who am I for you to have pleasure in me? Who am I for You to want to be friends with me?"

If I have a car, does my friend want me because the car is available? If I have a little money which I can share, does my friend want me because I have it, or am I appreciated for myself? This is a crucial element in determining what a relationship is like, because in this world, people are not usually like this. We grow up with the idea that we are valued based on what we can offer, but it is wonderful to know that I am appreciated just for me, even when I have nothing to give. It is very satisfying to have this kind of knowledge, and it is most valuable when we know that it comes from God.

LOVE VS. FRIENDSHIP

My other grandson Cayde always likes

to be around me, and I appreciate that. Sometimes I am in my office working, and he just comes and sits in the corner, reading or watching something. He does not have to be there, but he wants to be. And even though he may say nothing, it warms my heart just having him there. I am glad that he wants to be around me because it is an age when young people have no time for older people like me.

Sometimes he comes and says he wants to stay overnight, and once I agree, I know it is going to be a hard night. Because I am going to have to put him to bed when I want to be sleeping, I am going to have to read stories to him before he goes to sleep, and he is going to keep me up maybe a little later than I would want to be up. So I know a rough night is looming.

One morning I was praying, and something touched me in the dark. Naturally I was startled, and when I looked up it was him. I just drew him over and started to pray with him, even though I knew



it was going to be a little more difficult with him around. I did not feel disappointed or upset, because it made me happy knowing he enjoyed being around me. It really meant a lot to me.

So, I learn from these things and I keep asking myself, does God, The Almighty, really feel like this? How can we look at this great being and bring Him down to the human level? The answer is, we need to remember, we were made in the image of this Person. Our best relationships, our most moving experiences are the reflection of what God wants to teach us about Himself!

When I think about this, I realize we love a lot of people, but we do not really

appreciate them. The ones we appreciate, and who return the sentiment are the ones we become good friends with. Love expresses itself in doing things, in being kind and in being nice, But friendship is on a different level completely. Friendship requires *appreciation*.

And so, I ask the question, does God appreciate me? I know He wants my services, and that is what many of the statements in the Bible talk about; we must serve Him, we must be faithful and committed. But does God appreciate me? What do I have to offer him? What does He get out of it? Well, when you look at Genesis 3:8, you see the first place in the Bible where there is any record of God interacting with human beings. And look at what it says:

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

This is a very familiar verse. I do not know if God was singing or speaking, but they heard his voice. Clearly, this was something that God had done regularly up to this point, as they knew His voice well. So, why did He come down to talk to Adam and Eve? Did he want them to be His witnesses? They had nobody to witness to. Did he want them to represent him aright in the world among other people? There was nobody else in the world. So what did God come down to the garden for? It must have been that the great God Almighty just enjoyed their *company*. All He wanted was to be with them!

So He came to them in the garden, and you ask yourself, what was he coming for? Adam and Eve probably thought, He is coming to judge us because we took the fruit. But the truth is that God was just coming for some more fellowship, He was just coming to be with His friends, but they in turn ran to hide from Him! Something had drastically changed, and it was not God! This was a tragic story, but the truth is, God still has the same heart towards us today.

Even though there are eight billion people on this planet, *my heart and my space* are precious to Him, my fellowship is precious to Him. When I go to meet with Him in the morning, He is waiting for me with a smile on his face, happy that I have come. He appreciates me! With all my faults, despite the things I have done, despite my many failures, He appreciates me and wants me just the same.

If you want your prayer life to be beautiful, if you want to really enjoy it, go to God with the right attitude. Go to Him for no reason other than just to enjoy Him, just to be with Him, and be happy with Him, and you will see what happens. When you are done, you will not want to move, because you enjoy the fellowship so much, and you are happy.

The *true* friends of God, the people who come closest to Him are the ones in whose lives He is ultimately able to do the greatest things. They are the ones who are not coming to Him looking for material possessions, or because He can grant them gain. They come to God because they want *Him*. Consequentially and paradoxically, they are the ones who will receive the greatest blessings, because He is so close to them, they belong to Him and He can do as He pleases in their lives.

GOD'S PLEASURE

Look at what it says in Psalms 149:4:

“For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.”

That is a beautiful verse! What does it mean to take pleasure? It means to make happy. God says, my people make me happy, I take pleasure in them! And what is the result? He will beautify the meek with salvation. They are given the amazing fringe benefits. God takes pleasure in you, and it is a reciprocal relationship - He beautifies you with salvation.

Jeremiah 9:23, 24 says:

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in

his might let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:23, 24)

Be happy that he knows your character, be happy that he knows the kind of person that you are, because those who know God are the ones who are closest to Him. Those who know Him best are the ones who trust Him most, are the ones who find their joy in Him. So let the people of God glory in that they have come to know Him, and that they have found out that He is the God who is happy in his people, that is, He takes pleasure in them.

In John 14:23 Jesus says:

“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.”

My father will love him! That is a deeply profound and astounding statement! God loves the entire world, but there is a special relationship for those who allow Him into their lives, for those who become His friends, for those who not only seek God, but respond to Him seeking them. Why do you choose to live where you live? Usually where you live is where you want to live. You choose to live there because you enjoy the experience. So God says, ‘I will make my abode with him’ because He enjoys being there!

It is not one-sided, it is not only what I want, desperately trying to find a way to break through, He wants it just as much. So, I know that I am valuable, I am wanted, I am appreciated, and it makes me more precious than anything in the world. The greatest Person in the universe is my friend, and He wants me. What does anything else matter? Always remember that your father appreciates you, and He wants you for yourself, not because of anything you can give. Let this rest in our minds, forever.

Remembering Sister Melba



We take this opportunity to acknowledge the life and faithfulness of a dear sister, a warrior for the truth who went to rest in the arms of Jesus a few months ago, on Sunday, November 28, 2021. The person to whom I refer is Melba Smith, late of Cane Creek in Tennessee.

She was a meek and gentle soul who seemed unable to hurt a fly, but her love for the Lord and his truth led her to be faithful in undertaking tasks that many, who were much younger and physically stronger would not have attempted.

I first met Melba some time between the years 2003 - 2005 at a campmeeting in West Virginia and we quickly struck up a friendship which was to last until she fell asleep last year. At the time she was already in her seventies, but her love for the Lord and for his truth was a flame burning in her soul which only seemed to grow stronger with the advancing of years.

She started organizing meetings every year in the little town of Lobelville at which Brother Howard Williams and I were invited to speak. She continued to organize these meeting each year and they became a fixed feature on the calendar of Lobelville, until the Covid pandemic put a stop to our ability to travel freely, so that for the last two years before she died there were no meetings.

She is sadly missed, not only by us, but by all the people who knew her. We know it was her time to rest and we accept the will of our Father, but we look forward to seeing her again soon, in the resurrection of the just.



Mongrel Trinities



The doctrine of the Trinity is an invention of the Roman Catholic Church which has been widely embraced within the ranks of Christendom. This doctrine teaches that the God of the Bible is one being who is made up three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, all of whom are absolutely equal in every respect and all of whom have no beginning. It is a deadly perversion of truth which effectively denies the Fatherhood of God, the sonship of Jesus Christ, and removes the reality that the Father and Son personally dwell with the believer.

Over the centuries variations of this perverted teaching have emerged among Christians, among them are the two referred to as 'Modalism' and 'Tritheism'. Modalism is the concept that there is one God who has three different identities manifested at different times. In one phase he manifests himself as the Father, in another phase he manifests himself as the son, and at another time he manifests himself as the holy spirit. The same person, but three different identities. Tritheism is the belief that there are really three Gods, separate and distinct beings who are absolutely equal in every way, but who function in such perfect unity that they are referred to as "one God." Many SDAs embrace this concept of Tritheism which they try to disguise by referring to their belief as "the godhead," but when examined closely, it is clear that

it is nothing but straight polytheism, the belief in not one, but multiple gods.

In this category are those who label themselves as "historic Adventists." These people are focused on reformation and revival, but that reformation does not include the restoration of the truth about God. They label their understanding of God as "the godhead," and claim that they reject the Trinity, but what they embrace is the concept that there are three co-equal, co-eternal Gods, working together in harmony, labeled as "one God," though they are really three.

The mainstream SDA Church has come to recognize the danger of tritheism and in recent times, has turned away from this concept of three Gods and embraced more fully the original, Roman Catholic, version of the Trinity.

ANOTHER MOVEMENT

Several decades ago a movement emerged within the ranks of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which focused on the issue of the identity of God. This grassroots movement began through the dedicated work of men and women whose names are mostly forgotten amid the surge of new believers and leaders in the movement. Some of the names which come to mind are Edward Edstrom, Marty Wold, Fred Allaback, Doug Goslin, Scott Stanley, Bill Stringfellow and even some who are still around such as Allen Stump and Lynford Beachy. The early understanding of some of these men was a bit primitive and sometimes accompanied by other strange beliefs, but by and large, what they all shared in common was a settled conviction that there is only ONE GOD and that Jesus Christ is the literally begotten son of this God, brought forth from God himself in the distant ages of eternity past.

This movement rejected the doctrine of the three-in-one god in all its forms and became focused on the reality that

the only beings to be worshiped are the One God, the Father, and His literally begotten Son, Jesus Christ. There was some variation in how the holy spirit was understood, but one common conclusion was that the holy spirit was not an individual person to be acknowledged or worshiped in any sense, but was rather, the invisible, omnipresence of the Father and His Son. This movement expanded and grew over the years until today, it exists in almost every country in the world and has had a huge impact on people, influencing many to re-examine former ideas about God and to come to a more Scriptural and reasonable understanding of Him.

As time has passed and the movement has grown, there has naturally been the infusion of new insights and concepts. Some of these have been good and helpful, others not so good, and some positively harmful. Among those which I consider to be harmful are the teaching that when the Bible refers to the work of the holy spirit, it is really referring to the work of the angels so that effectively, the angels are really the holy spirit, or the holy spirit only operates through the ministry of the angels. Another equally harmful distortion of the truth is the concept that the holy spirit comes to us only through the written words of the Scriptures.

More recently, another alarming idea has been gaining momentum and it is the idea that there actually is a trio of three persons who make up God. If this sounds to you like the Trinity, then you are right, it sounds dangerously like the Trinity. This has always been the position of many persons within the ranks of Seventh day Adventism and particularly among those who like to refer to themselves as "historic Adventists." The reason why I speak of this as a new development however, is because this teaching is coming from people who profess to be non-trinitarians, and who claim to embrace the concept of the one

God and his Son. This perversion of truth has progressed to the place where some are now ready to accept and to teach that there are actually three beings who are God, and that it is acceptable to fall down and worship all three. I even saw where one such person declared that his belief can be described by the word, "Triotheism," which obviously, literally means, belief in a trio of gods. The problem is that those embracing this belief profess to be non-Trinitarians and identify themselves with the One God movement. This association gives them some leverage and influence which enable them to mislead and draw people away to an acceptance of this belief which can only be described as a mongrelized version of the Trinity.

Whether we label it as Heavenly trio, Three persons, Three beings, the 3-person-godhead – or Triotheism, these ideas are all poor cousins of the Trinity, hybrids of the Trinity, all embraced because of the effort to accommodate revelations outside of the Bible. All originating in the same place as the Trinity, in human traditions. The words of Jesus are strikingly appropriate as commentary on this development.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (Matt 23:24)

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. (Mark 7:9)

THE ROOT OF HERESIES

The greatest enemies of the truth in all ages have been those who were looked up to as the leaders of the Church. Chief among them have been the "theologians," those who obtained their training in the institutions established by the churches and who were trained in the sophistries of manipulating words to make them say exactly what the churches wanted the people to hear. Why did these people go to the schools to study "theology?" Obviously it is because they believed in these institutions, they admired the approach and the knowledge of those who passed through these

institutions and desired to be like them.

Of course, there are many would-be theologians who never passed through these institutions, but who, in admiration of their appearance of knowledge, adopt the same principles and approaches to understanding the word of God.

These "doctors and lawyers," were always the source of all the abominable doctrines of the Church of Rome and when other denominations emerged, the same obsession with "scholarship" and the same admiration for the education of the institutions inevitably led to these new churches following steadily in the footsteps trodden by Rome. The sophistries of the schools teach the students to take the mindset of Rome. How can it be otherwise when the teachers in these institutions have themselves been educated by those who were educated by Rome?

The schoolmen have always admired each other, you can hear it coming out when speakers are introduced at their worship sessions and convocations. The emphasis is on a how many degrees a person has, how lettered he is. It is inevitable that those who are most lettered are most admired and most emulated. When these people hold to the abominable doctrines of the Trinity, eternal burning hell, immortality of the soul, it is natural that those who admire such persons will make efforts to find common ground with those they admire. Consequently, their energies have been bent to the task of manipulating the teachings of the Scriptures in such a way that they are able to find an acceptable middle ground with these purveyors of error. The goal was not primarily the defense of pure, unadulterated truth, but moreso, the presentation of doctrines in such a way that they received the approval of those they admired, while still trying to maintain some connection with the beliefs of their church. This is the perfect formula for the perverting of truth and the travelling of the path back to Rome.

This was the goal to which SDA leaders and theologians bent their energies for decades until they finally achieved their

purpose. The evangelical world had labeled the SDA church as a cult for more than a hundred years, because the SDA Church did not accept the doctrine of the Trinity. This label rankled with the Church's theologians and the Church hierarchy and they longed for acceptance among those whom they admired and considered their intellectual counterparts. They never stopped manipulating the SDA belief about God until eventually they created a hybrid which the evangelical world, more or less accepted and they were welcomed into the fold. The hybridized SDA concept of God which emerged was so fluid and confusing that even today, many SDA teachers and church leaders are not quite sure of what their Church really believes. Some think that there are three Gods united in purpose and so labeled as "one God," while others think that there is one being called God who has three expressions of himself. Still others are lost, uncertain what to think, but clinging to the label, "Trinity," because the Church says it is so.

MANIPULATING WORDS

One method of the promoters of the three-in-one god, has been the same in all ages: Take simple words and manipulate them in such a way that error is accepted as truth. For example, the Bible teaches very plainly that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. Since Trinitarians cannot accept that this is something which is literally true, they have manipulated the Greek word which is translated as "only begotten (Monogenes)", and distorted the meaning to suggest that it really means, "unique." This is a perversion of the word and is a lie, yet because it comes from the "theologians," most people simply accept that it is so and reject the simple Bible truth that Jesus truly was begotten by God.

There are other examples of this manipulation of words and I have listed a few below:

- One means three
- Godhead means three Gods
- Son of God means God Himself

- A person's spirit is a different person than the person

Unfortunately, the same manipulative methods have now taken root in the One True God movement. The same desire to lessen the distance between the movement and those who embrace the Trinity, has led to two things: On the one hand there are some who reject the doctrine of the Trinity, but insist that it is not all that important what one believes on this issue and they want to suggest that we should all just drop the subject and not make it a matter for division. On the other hand there are those who have been busy finding ways to redefine the doctrine of the one God and his Son, to make room for a third person, and they have been using the same age-old method of manipulating and changing the meaning of words to achieve this end. Here are some examples of what I mean:

- Two individuals can be a trio
- Third person in the godhead can refer to the angels
- A being can be simply an aspect of a person

A TABERNACLE FOR ELLEN WHITE

I have been amazed beyond words to discover that there are those who claim to believe in the One True God and his Son, yet who embrace the idea that there are THREE BEINGS in a godhead made up of a TRIO!!! Furthermore, these brethren are willing to worship not only the Father and the Son, but the supposed THIRD BEING, the holy spirit!!! Such incomprehensible blindness becomes slightly understandable when we remember the words of the Lord:

“. . . if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Matt 15:14)

These brethren are now on basically the same ground as the Tritheists in the “historical SDA movement” – people such as Vance Ferrell, Andrew Henriques, John Grosboll, etc. who say they don't believe in the Trinity, but in the “godhead,” meaning three Gods. The common denominator between these

Tritheists and those in the OTG movement who are basically embracing the same beliefs, is the blind dependence on statements credited to Ellen White. The following statements have appeared in the most recently released manuscripts of writings, credited to Ellen White:

*“You are baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. You are raised up out of the water to live henceforth in newness of life--to live a new life. You are born unto God, and you stand under the sanction and the power of the **three holiest beings in heaven**, who are able to keep you from falling. {7MR 267.2} “*

“As the saints in the kingdom of God are accepted in the beloved, they hear: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” And then the golden



*harps are touched, and the music flows all through the heavenly host, and they **fall down and worship the Father and the Son and the holy spirit.** (Ms 139, 1906)”*

Somehow, these brethren must find a way to move heaven and earth, to prove that these statements are ok, because of course, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ELLEN WHITE TO BE WRONG!! So, wonder of wonders, it is alright to worship the holy spirit, to worship not only the Father and his Son but also the third BEING in the TRIO, because Ellen White says so!! If heaven must be moved then let us move heaven because, God forbid that we should in any way disturb the pedestal where Ellen White has been lifted up to the place of pre-eminence above even the personal presence of Christ!!

The curse of the Jews was that they knew the writings of Moses, but they did not know the God of Moses, therefore they were blind to any further revelation of truth, they were closed to the idea that Moses' teachings might have been limited and incomplete. They thought Moses was the end of God's revelation and therefore they were ready to murder his son because his revelations of truth were far in advance of Moses. The same tragedy is being repeated again, people are fixated on Ellen White's statements and they have used these to substitute for the reality of the living God. Their relationship with him is through dead statements so they cannot hear from the living God or his Son, as much as they like to speak of them. Obsessed with dead words while they do not know the living word - how else can one explain such slavish conformity to the words of a dead woman to the point where people are willing to WORSHIP A THIRD ENTITY IN THE GODHEAD, while they profess to believe in the One True God and His only-begotten Son? They do not know him, but only have theoretical knowledge about him. The words of Jesus are finding a fulfillment in the lives of these blinded brethren:

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” (Matt 15:8)

When the disciples of Jesus were afflicted with the same blindness, God Himself had to speak from heaven to straighten them out. On the Mount of Transfiguration, poor Peter, blinded by his Jewish indoctrination was so thrilled to see Moses and Elijah, that he proposed building, not ONE, but THREE tabernacles. He clearly had his focus badly distorted and God had to straighten him out:

“. . . Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into

the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. (Luke 9:33-35)”

These men had the unspeakable privilege of personal communion with the Son of God, yet they still had eyes on Moses and Elijah, they were still thinking that Moses’ revelation was important enough to merit him getting a tabernacle on an equal footing with Christ. God’s rebuke was unmistakable and uncompromising: “This is my beloved Son: HEAR HIM!!” Jesus is God’s ultimate messenger – nobody is to be equated with him, nobody’s word is to be put on the same level as his personal communication with a believer. It is evident that today, many well-meaning, but blinded SDAs are intent on building not three tabernacles, but four, to include Ellen White!

People depend on Ellen White’s statements because they do not themselves know Christ, therefore they cannot hear the voice of Christ, and do not have his spirit living within them. There are tremendous, reassuring promises for those who know God and his Son and who truly have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, promises which can never be claimed or experienced by those who only know the words of Moses . . . or, Ellen White.

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isa 30:21)”

“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (1John 2:27)”

Thank God, our fellowship is not with Ellen White who is dead, but with the LIVING, Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)



Blessings In Christ

Zdravko Vucinic

- God’s love for us is unconditional, there is nothing that can stand in the way of his love for us. This love is the reason why He made the amazing sacrifice of giving his only begotten Son for us, even while we were His enemies. Our enmity did not stand in the way of his love, but He gave this incredible gift to prove his love to us and to draw us and reconcile us to Himself. So Jesus became the channel through which all of God’s blessings flow, to benefit those who were his greatest enemies. (*John 3:16, Ephesians 1:5, Jeremiah 31:3, Luke 15:11-24, 1 John 4:8, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, Romans 8:38-39, Ephesians 3:19, Romans 8:32, Isaiah 49:15, Romans 5:6-11, Romans 3:25, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, 1 John 4:10, 1 Peter 3:18, John 12:32-33*)
- In Christ, we are fully accepted by God. In Him, we are completely saved. (*Ephesians 1:5-7, Ephesians 2:4-8, Revelation 12:10*)
- In Christ, everything has been forgiven. Even before we committed a sin it was already forgiven in advance! In Him, we are justified. (*Ephesians 1:3-14, Psalm 103:12, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Romans 3:23-24, Acts 13:39*)
- In Christ, We are freed from judgment and the final consequences of sin which is eternal death. (*John 3:18, John 5:24, Revelation 20:4-9*)
- In Christ, we have become new creatures through the new birth, we have a new identity, we are cleansed, the old man is dead, we are no longer sinners, we are now perfect and holy. (*2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Romans 6:3-11, Romans 8:2, Ephesians 2:5, Hebrews 10:14, 2 Corinthians 1:1-2*)
- In Christ, we have been born again as sons and daughters of God fully members of his family, just as Christ is. We possess God's and Christ's eternal life, we are now members of God's family in which Christ is the firstborn. (*John 1:12-13, Galatians 3:26, Galatians 4:6, John 3:36, 1 John 5:11-13, 1 John 1:1-3, Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 2:9*)
- In Christ, we have become one with God as well as Christ, we have become heirs of God, we possess everything that Christ possesses. (*Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 2:9*)
- In Christ, we have become temples of God like Christ, God lives in us as He lives in Christ. (*1 Corinthians 6:17.19, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16*)
- In Christ, we have become partakers of Christ's Divine nature, which is the Father's nature. (*2 Peter 1:2-4, 1 John 1:1-3*)
- In Christ we possess the righteousness of God. (*Romans 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Philippians 3:8-9*)
- In Christ, we are the beneficiaries of the fullness of God's grace. All of God’s goodness is directed towards us as he is constantly pouring out his gifts upon us so that all things are working out for our good. (*John 1:17, Romans 16:20, 2 Timothy 4:22, Rom 8:28*)
- In Christ, we have become partakers of God’s spiritual kingdom on an earth ruled by Christ, we are now part of the body of Christ. (*Colossians 1:13-14, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 5:30-32*)
- In Christ, Jesus has become our personal Lord, Comforter and High

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Walking For Exercise

Lenworth Frankson



When God created us, He designed humans to be upright, having the ability to jump, walk, skip, sprint and run great distances without fatigue or discomfort. We were made in such a remarkable way that even after sin we are able to survive changing climates, difficult environments and landscapes. Over the years countless scientific studies have revealed that the simple ability to move our feet, transporting our bodies from one place to another can provide a number of health benefits and help us live longer. I am referring specifically to having the ability to walk. Today however, due to our modern lifestyles we are walking less than previous generations.

Walking is much more than just transportation. Walking happens to be very good for us. In fact a walking routine, if done properly, might just be the only aerobic exercise people need. Megan Schmidt, a writer for Discover Magazine explains that *“Regular walking has all the standard benefits of aerobic exercise, such as improvements in the heart and circulatory systems, better blood glucose control, normalization of blood pressure and reduction of anxiety and depression”*

One recent Harvard study involving

more than 16,000 older women is a good example. The study found that those who got at least 4,400 steps a day greatly reduced their risk of dying prematurely when compared with less active women. The study also noted that the longevity benefits continued up to 7,500 steps but leveled off after that number. Put simply, 7,500 is also an ideal daily goal with comparable benefits to 10,000 steps. Walking is the suggested workout over running for many people especially those with knee, ankle and back problems and also for people who are overweight to obese. Walking is a lower impact exercise and can be done for longer periods of time. There is no shortage of scientific research to back up the effectiveness of adding walking to one's fitness routine.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

Going for a half an hour or even an hour walk at a moderate pace on a treadmill or outside in the fresh air can help build strength in your lower body and core. If you walk on a hill or increase the incline on the treadmill your legs, core and back muscles get a serious workout. Walking actually uses a lot of muscles. Your hamstrings, glutes, quads, calves, hips and core all become active as you move. You might not notice it but even the muscles that help curl your toes are used when walking. Because walking is a movement we do each day, it makes it an easy exercise to start. It is highly recommended because, unlike lifting weights or cycling, you don't need any equipment or extensive training to learn how to walk properly. Apart from those who are in pain, injured or disabled it is easier to start walking when compared with other methods of physical fitness. There is no minimum effective dose as long as you are able. The more you move, the better off you will be!

Mayo Clinic website describes some of the benefits we can experience from

a regular brisk walking routine:

- Maintain a healthy weight and lose body fat
- Prevent or manage various conditions, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer and type 2 diabetes
- Improve cardiovascular fitness
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Improve muscle endurance
- Increase energy levels
- Improve your mood, cognition, memory and sleep
- Improve your balance and coordination
- Strengthen immune system
- Reduce stress and tension

Physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can help you live a longer healthier life.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

The physical benefits are great but additionally the mental boost that can be gained from adding a walk to our daily routine may be more immediate. A Stanford University study found that walking increased creative output by an average of 60 percent. The researchers called this type of creativity *“divergent thinking,”* which they define as a thought process used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions. According to the study, *“walking opens up the free flow of ideas, and it is a simple and robust solution to the goals of increasing creativity and increasing physical activity.”*

In addition to the generation of creative ideas the act of walking is also a proven mood booster. Another study found that just 12 minutes of walking resulted in an increase in cheerfulness, vigor, attentiveness and self-confidence versus the same time spent sitting. Walking

in nature, specifically, was found to reduce pondering over negative experiences, which increases activity in the brain associated with negative emotions and raises risk of depression.

Ease dull angry feelings

Have you ever had an intense argument with someone and felt so angry you had to just leave the room or building and start walking? Well, it turns out that getting away from that type of situation by walking is actually calming. One study had the participants on a four-week daily walking plan. Not everybody actually walked as much as they were supposed to, however, the participants' heart rates slowed, and they were feeling less anger and hostility by the end of the fourth week.

Less depressed

Walking not only reduces upset feelings but increases happier moods, too. A study of ethnic minority women encouraged participants to go walking however much they could handle. After just two months, those who walked more felt significantly less depressed. Not only does walking give you time out to think, it also helps you to reflect and clear your mind. Exercise including walking helps to release endorphins and serotonin, which are your body's natural mood and self-esteem enhancers. Studies have suggested regular walking can also be a great natural way to manage and prevent depression and anxiety.

Less tired

This might seem odd but walking does make us less tired. Brisk walking, which is an excellent way to exercise, boosts endorphins, which make us feel more energized, and increases oxygen levels in the blood. Some of the best exercises to overcome fatigue are aerobic exercises, which are most effective at increasing oxygen in the blood and boosting energy levels. Aerobic exercises are really the key to building up oxygen levels in the blood. Let's keep in mind that feeling tired is sometimes from being too sedentary, lazy and bored. Many times when people are fatigued, the last thing they want to do is exercise, but if you're physically in-

active and fatigued, going for a 20 minute brisk walk can change that.

In a study, published in Psychological Bulletin, the researchers analyzed 70 studies on exercise and fatigue involving more than 6,800 people. More than 90% of the studies showed that sedentary people who completed a regular exercise program reported improved fatigue compared to groups that did not exercise.

Researchers say that nearly every group studied from healthy adults, to cancer patients, and those with chronic conditions including diabetes and heart disease, benefited from exercise. The less you move, the more tired you may feel but walking is a simple way to get recharged.

Good for sleep

In a group of older women, walking on the treadmill for 50 minutes one time led to better quality sleep for at least the next two nights. If we make a habit of walking, there are even bigger benefits. Some studies suggest that young adults who walked for about an hour per day for four weeks slept significantly more, had better quality sleep, had fewer sleep problems, and even used fewer sleep medications. According to WebMD exercise will help insomnia, especially morning exercise. The source states that *"an hour of stretching and walking daily can help relieve many sleep problems. Women are plagued more by sleep problems, especially women who are overweight and who don't take hormones after menopause begins"*

Several other studies that have looked at the effect of exercise on sleep problems, found that exercise does help older people fall asleep and stay asleep. How much exercise should we get? What time of day, morning or evening, work best? Walking early in the day, for an hour each time, worked wonders in relieving insomnia, according to a new study by The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

QUOTES FROM ELLEN WHITE

"There is no exercise that can take

the place of walking. by it the circulation of the blood is greatly improved. Walking, in all cases where it is possible, is the best remedy for the diseased bodies, because in this, all of the organs of the body are brought into use"

"Morning exercise, walking in the free, invigorating air of heaven, or cultivating flowers, small fruits, and vegetables, is the surest safeguard against colds, coughs, congestion of the brain, inflammation of the liver, the kidneys, and the lungs, and a hundred other diseases"

"Moderate exercise every day will impart strength to the muscles, which without exercise become flabby and enfeebled"

"Exercise will aid in the work of digestion. Take a walk after a meal; but no violent exercise after a full meal."

Mankind has been walking for over six thousand years. Some have walked much longer than others but the fact is that we have had a lot of time to practice and improve our walk physically and spiritually. What we do to our bodies physically is just as important as what we do spiritually- we walk by faith, not by sight.

Over the years we have done ourselves a disservice by walking less. We have deprived ourselves of the benefits of walking and our obesity rates have skyrocketed due to poor diets and sedentary lifestyles. Walking is a proven effective way to improve our health and quality of life. Research shows that the more people walk the greater the benefits. Try walking 8,000-10,000 steps a day but if that's too much to start then start out at 4,000. If this is too much, just do the best you can. If you think it's too late for you to reap the benefits of walking, know this: A study published in the International Journal of Stroke showed that those who became fit later in life cut their risk of a potentially deadly stroke in half. Now, more than ever is the perfect time to start a walking program.



Blessings In Christ

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Priest. (*1 Corinthians 1:9, John 14:16-19, Hebrews 4:15-16, 1 John 2:1*)

- In Christ, we are no longer under the government of the Law but under the government of grace. (*Luke 16:16, Galatians 5:18, Galatians 3:24-25, 2 Corinthians 3:5-11, Romans 6:14*)
- In Christ, we possess Jesus's faith, mind, heart, wisdom, strength. (*Hebrews 12:1-2, Galatians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 2:16, Ephesians 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:2-4, 1 John 2:27, Ephesians 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Philippians 4:13*)
- In Christ, we are created for good works, we are sanctified, we have victory. (*Ephesians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:10, 1 Cor-*

inthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 15:57)

- In Christ, we possess the gifts of the spirit. (*Ephesians 4:7-13, 1 Corinthians 2:7-11, Romans 12:4-8*)
- In Christ, we have the answers to our prayers. (*John 14:13-14*)
- In Christ, we have peace and rest for our souls. (*John 14:27, Romans 5:1, Matthew 11:28-30*)
- In Christ, we have a clear conscience, we are free from the awareness and consciousness of sin. We are no longer living under a sense of being guilty and unworthy before God. (*Hebrews 9:8-14, Hebrews 10:19-22*)
- In Christ, we are free from all fears, including the fear of death. (*2 Timothy 1:7, Hebrews 2:14-15*)
- In Christ, we have been completely healed. (*1 Peter 2:24*)
- In Christ we have power over all evil spirits. (*Matthew 8:16-17, 1*

John 4:4)

- In Christ, we are guaranteed an immortal body. We will be resurrected from the dead in an immortal body, and if we remain alive until his coming, our bodies will be transformed into an immortal body. (*1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, 1 Corinthians 15:22-23, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54*)
- Do we believe God's Word? Is it all absolutely true, just like we read? "*For we walk by faith, not by sight:*" (*2Cor 5:7*)
- Praises be to God for this glorious Gospel.



Open Face

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