



2 Cor. 5:18

Open Face

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

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A Point of Contact

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Many of the things which I have come to learn are born out of my own frustrations and needs and desires. Sometimes we meet upon walls and dead-ends in our experience which leave us totally frustrated. I was thinking at one such point, “Dear God, I wish I knew some place where I could guarantee that when I go there I will meet you, and will get an answer from you – I wish there was some place that I was absolutely sure that when I encounter you there, I will get a response from You – I wish I knew of some Bethel, some Mount Sinai, some tabernacle, some Ark of the Covenant which was readily available to me.”

The truth is, no matter how true it is that I have been born again, the undeniable fact is that I was born in a physical body, I interact with reality through my eyes, and my ears and my hands – through my five senses. It is still true

that these are the avenues by which I interact with reality and something inside my poor limited human soul says “God, I wish I could touch you. I realize that the limitation is me, but I wish I could talk to you in open communication and you could meet with me on my level! God, speak to me, God touch me, don’t keep me at a distance!” The truth is that we are still human – we talk about our privileges in Christ but we are still human. Our humanity limits us to the visible and the tangible and so our souls cry out for a meeting place on our level, some thing, some event, some means by which we may interact with God on our level.

At times when we ask God for something and we actually see Him answer, we can’t stop talking about it, because it really satisfies a need in our souls when God actually responds to us in a way which we can discern through our physical senses. Of course we believe He exists somewhere out there in the infinite, but we would like Him to enter our finitude - our little realm where we can understand Him on our level.

God’s Provision for our Need

God knows our frame, and He remembers that we are dust, He knows our circumstances, He understands those aching and yearnings and those frustrations. He knows that we could never go up to His level, but He is the kind of Person, who is always coming down to ours. If our souls cry out for some way to interact with Him – the truth is before we were aware of that need, God had already made provision to

satisfy it.

In the Old Testament there are many examples of God catering to this need of man. Perhaps this is an idea that we have resisted and even rejected to some extent, but God continues to open our understanding day by day.

First of all, it tells us early in the Bible, shortly after man sinned, that Abel brought a sacrifice to God. Where did he meet with God on that occasion? It was at the altar. As we read the Old Testament account of the lives of the patriarchs, we find that as these men went from place to place, they built altars in each location where they pitched their tents. The Bible mentions Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as examples of these men who set up altars everywhere they settled down.

What would be the point of using some stones to make a heap behind my home, right now today? Why would I set aside a pile of stones as a meeting place with God? Yet these men did it! What were they looking for, what made them do this? It seems a little strange, yet it was a part of the whole effort of man to reach out for a place where he could interact with eternity, a point where divinity and humanity could meet. What is interesting is, we find as we study the Bible that God catered for this need

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion of the truths committed to the Advent movement, as believed and taught by the early Adventist pioneers. 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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in man, this reaching out for a meeting place in the physical realm. It was not just man reaching out, but it was also God reaching down and meeting man at this physical meeting place. There are myriad examples of this in the Bible.

Consider Bethel, where Jacob had his dream. We know that God is the God who dwells in all places. God is everywhere at the same time, He is here, He is there, He is everywhere, but Jacob came to Bethel, running from his brother and he went to sleep that night in this place. There, in a dream, he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven and angels of God coming down and going up on this ladder. He heard the voice of God speaking to him and assuring him that He would be with him and bless him. When he awakened in the morning he said, "what a fearful place is this, this is nothing but the house of God." So he took the stones that he had used for his pillow and used them to make an altar. He anointed these stones and called the place, "Bethel," which means, "the house of God."

Let us look at another example: As the children of Israel were traveling through the wilderness they murmured against God and He permitted them to be attacked by poisonous serpents. As many of them were bitten and began to die, what did God tell Moses to do? He instructed him to make a snake out of brass and set it up on a pole. God Himself told them to build this thing. There is no power in an image of a serpent, yet God told them, "look at the serpent and you will live!" If somebody got bitten by a snake on one side of his tent and the brazen snake was on the other side, he could stay right there and die. He actually had to step around the tent and go to where he could see the snake, look at the snake and he would be healed.

A meeting place for faith

God was the One who commanded that this snake should be set up, God gave man a point of contact where, in the snake, the faith of man could meet the power of God. There is a principle inherent in what happened here, in this



situation, which I, personally, have resisted in the past. I know that God is almighty, and God is omnipresent, and my thought has been, "I don't need things like that, true religion does not need things like that. These things happened because of the primitiveness of man's understanding. It was man's limited understanding which made him think that God's power could be channeled through a brazen snake or through an altar made of stones." But I have discovered that in thinking this way, I was not wholly correct. Sometimes the distinction between the truth

and error is a very fine one, and sometimes we go too far left and at other times we go too far right, and in our going back and forth we shoot right past the truth.

What benefit was there in such a point of contact? The Bible tells us the story of Elijah the great man of God, the great man of faith. God manifested Himself to him marvelously on more than one occasion. One day God used Elijah to bring down fire on top of Mount Carmel and to prove who is the true God. That day was a day of great victory for the cause of God. Four-hundred and eighty false prophets died that day, and Elijah was so charged with zeal and the power of God that he ran in front of Ahab's chariot all the way back to the city where he lay down outside the walls until the morning. But when morning dawned a message came from the idolatrous queen, Jezebel, saying,

"... So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." (1 Ki 19:2)

Then this man of faith who had just called down fire on the mountain, and who had just caused the destruction of the enemies of God, got up and ran like a frightened baby. It is hard to understand but we have to look at it in the context of Elijah's expectation. He had believed that there was going to be a great revival in Israel, he had believed that Jezebel and her idolatry would be done with forever, and so he had great expectation that there would be a great revival in Israel with the complete overthrow of false worship. Jezebel's message made him realize that things had not really changed much and he was filled with discouragement.

What interests me is not the fact that Elijah ran, but rather, where he ran to. Where did he go? He went to Mount Sinai. He traveled for forty days until he came to Mount Sinai, but why Mount Sinai? In this time when he felt all alone, discouraged and hopeless, Elijah felt the need of God's presence. He felt the need of a direct interview

with God! When Elijah asked himself the question, “where can I guarantee that I will find God?” he remembered one place where he knew God had come down to earth and spoken to man face to face, and he headed for that place.

The amazing thing is that God catered for that limitation, that’s the amazing thing. When Elijah got to the mountain, God was waiting there because God remembers that we are only dust and that we need help on our level. God was with Elijah every step of the way as he traveled without food for forty days, heading for Mount Sinai, but God never revealed Himself and never spoke to Elijah along the journey. He waited until he arrived at the mountain, he worked in harmony with Elijah’s faith. When he arrived there Elijah had his interaction with God. God respected Elijah’s faith and met with him at this point of contact.

When David was fleeing from Saul and he did not know what to do, he said, “bring the Priest, bring the Ephod.” The Ephod was a garment worn by the Priest which had two precious stones embedded in it. When a person enquired of the Lord, one stone would glow with a bright light if the answer was “yes,” and the other stone would glow if the answer was “no.” Doesn’t it seem like it would be a wonderful thing if we had something like that today? These points of contact, often established by God, sometimes by man, but always respected by God, were critical in helping people in their relationship with God. In fact, God not only catered to this need in humanity, but God institutionalized this system. In Exodus 25: 8 God says,

*“Let them make me a sanctuary,
that I may dwell among them.”
(Ex. 25:8)*

We cannot deny that God respected that institution which He had set up. It might have been just a tent made of animal skins and board and linen cloth, but there was a supernatural light which was always shining there in the Most Holy place between the cherubim

above the ark, a symbol of God’s literal presence. If you as an Israelite wanted to interact with God, you came close to that building with awe and reverence.

Today, we know that God is everywhere, He cannot be confined to a room in a building, even if we claim that the building is holy. Yet, even today, if the Ark of the Covenant were to be found, I believe that most of us would be afraid to go and touch it! With all our present day enlightenment, there is still that sense of awe when we come to the place where God actually manifested His presence. If we could go to Mount Sinai today, it would be unusual if we did not feel a sense of holy fear and reverence! Even though it is just a place covered with rocks and dirt, we would be stirred in our souls when we remember that God once actually touched this place! It is the natural response of humanity.

Does God remember that I am dust and does He cater for the fact that I am still in a human body with a human mind, does God take that into consideration? It is true that I have been born again, it is true that I dwell in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, but I am still limited by my human senses and I believe God takes this into consideration. This is what He was doing here with the Israelites when He gave them the sanctuary. When they committed sin, they could know that they could go to this place and bring a lamb. They would watch the Priest take that blood and their worship would follow him into that sanctuary, and they could know that their request had gone in to God. They could leave with the assurance that they had been heard.

Danger in the system

God came down to man’s level and dealt with him there because God understands our need. Understandably, these objects or these places took on a sacred aura, sometimes fortunately, sometimes unfortunately. What do I mean by “sacred aura?” We will recall that when Jacob was going back to Bethel he said his wives, “take out

your earrings, put away the strange gods among you because I am going back to Bethel where I met God.” The problem was, when they were not at Bethel, they thought it was acceptable to have the strange gods, they thought it was acceptable to have the ear rings. It encouraged the concept of a limited God who was only available at certain times and places. God worked with them on this level, but it was not satisfactory, because it opened the door for a kind of idolatry. We find a striking example of this danger in 2 Kings 18:4. It is the passage which speaks of the great revival instituted by king Hezekiah. It says,

He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. (2 Ki 18:4)

Nehushtan means “thing of brass.” Even though it was just a thing of brass they burned incense to this lifeless image. Four hundred years after Moses had set it up they were still burning incense to it! Amazing! But cases like this enable us to see that there were dangers in this kind of relationship. Even though God was catering to their limitations, it opened the door for abuse, it opened the door for idolatry;

In the book of Judges we are told about a man named Micah. Micah stole some money from his mother, and finally when his conscience smote him, he brought back the money to his mother. She said, “God bless you my son, I dedicated the money to God,” and so she took the money and made a little image. Micah dedicated a young levite to be his priest and he set up the image in his house and burned incense to this image (Micah chapter 17).

This is pitiful, isn’t it? And yet it is a reflection of something which is deep inside the hearts of human beings, the desire for a place where we can interact with God. What wouldn’t I give to have a place in my home where, when-

ever I need to touch God I can go to that little corner and know that He is there! But that desire is the foundation of idolatry and it leads to people making images and worshiping them. To some extent God has catered to this need in us, because God Himself has established certain places or things and called them holy. But there is danger when we mistake the means of faith, for the object of faith. We come to confuse the instrument that helps our faith, with the reality on which our faith should be focused. God said that the Ark of the Covenant was a holy thing, but the Israelites put it in the place of God. On one occasion they went to war and were beaten by their enemies, so they said, “we know what we need, we need the Ark of the Covenant!” So they went for the Ark of the Covenant and took it to battle, but the enemy beat them again and took it away from them. There was no power in the ark itself, all the power was in God. The ark was only intended to direct their faith to God.

All of these things were intended to serve the same purpose. The brazen snake was never intended to be a god, was it? God used it as a meeting place where the power of God could meet the faith of the people, but the power was not in the snake, it was simply a meeting place where man’s faith and God’s power could interact. Likewise, an altar was not an object where there was special power, it was a place where faith could interact with the power of God, but people became devoted to the channel, to the instrument and they lost sight of the reality, and that is why it became dangerous, it became wrong. It led to a kind of religion where people interacted with God only at certain places or in association with certain objects or at certain times, and where they came to believe that there was supernatural power embedded in places and objects and rituals..

I am reminded of the worship of people today. Many interact with God at church, they interact with God when its time for worship, and the rest of the time they either ignore Him entirely, or

they kind of shut Him out. We may condemn these people in Old Testament times but in many ways the same instinct surfaces in us today. Humanity doesn’t change, and if we examine ourselves closely we find the same kind of attitude prevailing. We limit God to times and places and situations.

The true meeting place

All of these objects which were used of God to focus the faith of the people, were all representative of some greater reality. For example, When Jacob saw the angels of God at Bethel ascending and descending on a ladder, Jacob said, “this is the house of God?” What did Jacob mean? Jacob believed that at this spot there was a doorway, an opening between heaven and earth, a place which was used by angels to travel between heaven and earth. In today’s science fiction terminology, it would be referred to as, a “portal” a place where there is an opening between two worlds, or two dimensions. But this meeting place, this, “portal,” was only a representation of a much greater reality. In John 1:51 Jesus said,

“...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (John 1:51)

What was Jesus saying here? It is plain that He was making reference to Jacob’s dream and representing Himself as the ladder which Jacob saw. What He was really saying was that there is a portal, a meeting place between heaven and earth. Where is it? It is Jesus Christ Himself. There is a place where heaven interacts with earth; there is a meeting place where God is guaranteed to meet with humanity, and Jesus says, “it is me, I am the place where angels go up and come down, I am the place where God meets with man. I am the place where divinity and humanity are guaranteed to meet, I’m the place where, when you come, every time you are guaranteed to have an audience with God.

In fact, Jesus is, the lamb on the altar,

and He is also the altar itself. Was the sanctuary sacred? Jesus is the sanctuary, He is the dwelling place of God. Jesus is the Ark of the Covenant, He is the living law of God, He is the uplifted serpent. Everything which represented a meeting place between man and God, in the Old Testament, finds its fulfillment in Christ. This tells me that all of that system of worship finds its true place in Christ. So we may conclude that God has abolished that old system. He no longer interacts with man by means of these lifeless things. Now His meeting place is in Christ. With the coming of Christ the old way is no longer necessary.

However, this is not the end of the story.

The Problem Remains

The reality is, as long as we remain limited by humanity in this earth, a problem still remains. The truth that all these things represented Jesus, is a beautiful truth, but in spite of this, the original problem still remains. Why did God institute these sacred places and things from the beginning? It was because mankind could not discern God with their physical senses, God was helping man’s limitations. Now, today we know that the true point of contact between God and man, is Christ. But can we see or touch Christ? Are we able to discern Him or to interact with Him using any of our senses? The answer is, no, we still exist in physical, limited bodies. We still need a point of contact on our level, even though we are Christians and our worship is spiritual.

So, in this respect, we are in the same exact place as those Old Testament believers. Because they could neither see nor touch God, He gave them things that were not sacred in themselves, but upon which their humanity could lay hold as a point of contact between heaven and earth. Don’t we need the same help today?

“But,” you may say, “isn’t Jesus my point of contact now?. Well, if I had lived two thousand years ago that would have meant something because I could

have actually laid hold on him.” I could have put my head on his bosom, eaten the bread out of his plate and I would have felt no need for anything else. But the reality is that He left us behind, and He is gone. I am two thousand years down the road, I have never seen his shape nor his form. I am in the same position as those Old Testament people where, I have heard of God and I have heard of His Son, but I don’t know where to go if I want to touch him in a tangible way. I only sit in my room in the dark and I cry into the darkness.

Present Points of Contact

But has God continued to provide for this need in man? Is He the same God, ever reaching down to meet us on our level? Thank God, He still knows that we are dust and remembers that we sometimes need help. I have discovered that God has made provision for our limited humanity and He has established points of contact, similar to those which existed in the Old Testament. Let us see what these points of contact are. The first one is found in John 3:5.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5)

What is it that he gives us here that is visible and tangible? Jesus says that if a man is to be saved he must be born again of water and the Spirit. We understand the work of the spirit and understand the need for it, but why is the water necessary? Can water wash away sins? Can water make anyone into a new creature? Why is it that those who believe need to be immersed in water? But Jesus said it should be done, why?

It is a point of contact! It is an event where the faith of humanity can meet the power of divinity. Water is nothing in itself, but Jesus has linked our new birth with water, something that our faith can lay hold on at this point, and if we believe, we may in that very moment interact with divinity. God chooses that at this point He will interact with us on our level. I don’t think anymore that

baptism is just a ritualistic symbol. Why is it so emphasized in the Bible? Why do the apostles emphasize it and talk so much about it and practice it so unrelentingly? God has given it to us as a point of contact – an event on our level where our faith may lay hold on what our senses cannot discern.

In 1 Cor 11:23-25 we find another one of these points of contact:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (1 Cor 11:23-25)

What was Christ’s intention when He instructed us that ever so often we should gather together and get a little piece of bread and some wine and sit down and drink and eat? Why do we do this over and over again? Did He instruct us to go through a meaningless, pointless ritual? Why didn’t He just instruct us to read our Bibles and remember His death? why do we have to go through the actual representation? The fact is, God intends that there shall be more in this ceremony than we have given it credit for. It is a place where Jesus gives us an opportunity that in this ceremony His power will meet our faith. The fact is, God is still catering for our humanity! We can’t explain these ceremonies in the New Testament age, unless we understand this principle. God is not relating to men on the basis of ritual and ceremony anymore. That kind of worship was good for primitive children, but now we are living in the light of the New Testament, why still give us rituals and ceremonies? The answer is that they are more than mere rituals and ceremonies, they

are *meeting places* for our faith and the power of God. Let us consider Paul’s further comments on the communion service in 1 Cor. 11:27:

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. (30) For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (1 Cor 11:27-30)

This is an amazing passage! Paul says that just by eating or drinking unworthily a person will bring damnation upon himself. But what does it mean to eat or drink unworthily? Paul explains that this unworthiness consists of, “not discerning the Lord’s body!” In other words, if you don’t understand that you are actually receiving Christ (by faith) at the very moment that you receive of the bread then the ceremony is useless and will actually be destructive to you. The effect of this meaningless participation is so deadly that some even grow sickly and die, because they do not discern Christ’s body in the taking of the bread and wine! This passage tells the simple truth and should make us consider that this was not intended to be just a meaningless ritual. It is very important and is a vital part of the Christian experience which should be a source of much power in our lives.

We can approach the communion table in such a way that we may leave, filled with the life of Christ if we discern the Lord’s body. Can we deny what the word of the Lord says? God has given us help because we need help. He says, “I am not asking you to throw your faith out into the invisible – I’ve made it possible for you to have a physical meeting place where you can come and know, that I, your Lord, Jesus, am there in a special way.

This principle is not only true of how Christ relates to His people, but it is interesting to note that evil spirits also associate themselves with places and with things which are dedicated to them. Consider the principle which Paul teaches in the following passage:

What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (1Cor. 10:19,20)

When you associate yourself with an object which is devoted to devils, the object is nothing, but in associating with it, you actually come into fellowship with devils, because devils associate themselves with objects which are devoted to their worship. This is the principle which Paul is teaching. The object is nothing, the sacrifice is nothing, the altar is nothing, but devils are associated with the altar and the sacrifice. The problem is not the altar or the sacrifice, it is the devils who are associated with it that are the problem. In the same way, the communion bread is nothing, the communion wine is nothing, but the Lord has chosen to associate himself with these things and they present vital opportunities where his power can meet our faith.

A misunderstood Principle

The next point of contact which we will examine, concerns something which most of us have never understood and therefore, have never participated in. In Hebrews 6:1,2 we read,

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, (2) instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (Heb 6:1-2)

Most of us could agree with everything

on that list except the laying on of hands, but Paul includes it in the list as a foundational tenet of the faith, as a principle of the faith. Maybe we don't understand why, but if baptism is one of the foundational things in the Christian experience, so is the laying on of hands, if we accept the teaching of this verse. The word of the Lord says so, what are we to do with it? I am not saying that any of these points of contact is a magic formula, I am saying that God has chosen to help our humanity by giving us places in the physical realm where it is easier for our faith to meet his divine power.

Jesus often placed His hand on persons when He healed them. Did He need to do this in order to heal them? Was the healing power dependent on the impact of His hand upon the person? Of course not – others were healed who received no touch. But many people were weak in faith and Jesus was helping their unbelief. When they felt the hand touch them, something inside of them leaped up like when Elisha saw Elijah going up to heaven. The touch helped them to believe. When they felt Jesus' hand touch them, something inside of them responded.

The case of a certain Centurion who came to Jesus is unusual. This man came to Jesus and said, "Lord, my servant is sick at home, I beg of you, please heal him." Jesus' response was, "I will come and heal him." But the man's response was, "you don't need to come, only speak the word, I understand how this thing works, I also have people under me, and when I tell them something they have to obey, so you just speak and I know, it will be as you say." These words amazed Jesus. He was led to exclaim, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!" This man did not need help for his faith – the word of Jesus alone was enough for him. But it is not so with most people, most of us need some support to help our faith.

The truth is, we can recognize the fact that these points of contact are not

absolutely necessary. It is not as though God has made it an inflexible requirement with which all must comply, but God is merciful and remembers that we are dust. No doubt we would all want to be like the centurion, but we don't all have that kind of faith. We should be willing to grab on to any help provided and to acknowledge that our faith needs the help. I am willing to take such help because God provided it for people like me. We know that the laying on of hands has no power in itself, but God has given it to us as a focal point where our faith may meet the reality of the gift of the spirit of God.

The evidence in the Scriptures give us strong reason for accepting that this ordinance is a part of God's plan for New Testament believers. Consider the case of Phillip: He went down to Samaria and preached to the people who were subsequently converted. They accepted Christ and were baptized, evidently by Phillip. But after this baptism, Peter and John came down to Samaria, having heard of what had happened there. What was their reason for coming? They came for one purpose only, and that was to lay hands on these Samaritans so that they could receive the holy spirit. Was there power in Peter's hands? had Peter's hands become divine? No, of course not! But God had chosen that Peter should become a point of contact whereby his power could be imparted to these people.

The New Testament testifies in several places of incidents where this same thing happened; hands were laid on new believers who were already baptized and as a result, these people were baptized with the holy spirit. The laying on of hands was a point of contact where heaven and earth could intersect, where God's gift could be taken hold of by the faith of the believers, because they had something tangible on which to focus their faith.

A Chain of Transference

Let us notice something here: In giving a point of contact to mankind, there seems to have often been a visible or

physical means, a chain of transference whereby the power or authority was transferred from one point of contact to another. Let me explain what I mean:

Jesus Christ knew the Father face to face. He left heaven and came to earth as one who knew the Father personally, face to face. We on earth don't see the Father, but the disciples knew Jesus face to face. In Him, they had a point of contact by which they could interact with God. When Jesus left this earth that point of contact was gone and the people saw Jesus no more, but they saw the disciples who had known Jesus face to face, and the disciples passed on the gift of the life of God which they had received from Christ which Christ received from the Father. Through these disciples it was passed on to the people. There was a direct chain in this point of contact from the disciples back to God.

Unfortunately, today we are two thousand years down the road. We seem to be just a little bit too late. We have never seen the Father, we have never seen Jesus, we have never seen the apostles. What do we have? It is true that we have the Holy Spirit, but the holy spirit is invisible and intangible, the holy spirit is not something I can interact with by means of my physical senses. Where is my point of contact? What do I have? Well, you may say, "we have faith." This is true, but faith is not a point of contact, faith is still something intangible and invisible. The fact that the New Testament church had faith did not stop God from giving them points of contact. Has God forgotten us in this age of the world's history?

The Body of Christ

No, thank God, He has not forgotten us and He still remembers that we are only dust and that we need help. He has provided that help as He always does. Consider the implication of the following verse:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that

filleth all in all." Eph. 1:22,23.

What is my point of contact today? In the verse above God teaches us that the Church is the body of Christ. Let us consider what this really implies. Jesus is not gone altogether, a part of him is here, still very much present upon the world today, still very visible and physically present – something I may interact with by means of my physical senses! I may still find Christ, physically, through interaction with his body, the church! This is a truth which is wonderful to realize. The church is my meeting place, my point of contact between heaven and earth, God ordained it to be so. Jesus has left his body behind, He is still very much here, wherever His true people exist. Understanding this, we should never down play the importance of Christian fellowship, we should come to each meeting with the expectation to see the manifestation of the presence of Christ. This is what God intended the church to be about. Jesus says, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them."

Jesus' presence among His people, in His true church is very strong, this is what He is emphasizing when He says, "if two of you will agree as touching anything that you will ask, it will be done of my Father, which is in heaven." I have the privilege of praying to God personally, on a one to one basis. This is true, but according to Jesus, there is more power when two or three of us meet and agree in prayer. So if I ask you to pray with me, don't think that I am nagging, I am simply looking for more power in prayer, I am seeking to lay hold on the power inherent in Jesus' promise to bless when two or three are gathered together (His body) in His name.

The Lord says, "I am going to manifest myself to you," that's His promise. Manifestation suggests something we can discern and interact with on the sensual level - on the level where we human beings can discern with our physical abilities, that's what a manifestation is, and he says, "I will do it." When I understand this, I am eager to

go to the next worship session, I am eager to go the place where I know Jesus is going to manifest his presence.

Satan has taken denominationalism and he has attempted to destroy our blessings. He has used man to turn these things into meaningless rituals and associated them with institutions where there is no power or meaning. They have become implements to maintain the power of a hierarchy, they have become implements for keeping people under subjugation and so most of us who are seeking a true Christian experience have tended to downplay the importance of meeting with other Christians on a regular basis. But we can't deny the fact that Jesus taught us that in true Christian fellowship there is a greater manifestation of His presence and power than when we are alone.

I hope this thrills your soul as much as it does mine. In the past I have not respected the fellowship of believers, as much as I should have. At times I have thought, "oh, this brother only comes to sleep, this one talks too long," and sometimes when I thought of all the faults of the brethren, there was the temptation to stay home and pray by myself. What an attitude! The word of God says that those who are most feeble should be given the most attention, they are still a part of the body. Perhaps my finger is not as strong as my leg, so am I going to cut it off? Is it not still a part of the body?

The weak, and the strong, we are all in the body of Christ and He is coming among us to bless us and to manifest himself to us. Let us lay hold on this truth and grasp it by faith. Let us come with expectation that our Lord will work in our gatherings to draw us closer to Himself and with this confidence, let us present our petitions two or three of us united together. Praise his name for his blessings. May we not forget them, but continue to build on the wonderful truths which He is restoring to us day by day.



Get The Facts Straight

In a recent video production Bill Pinto from *Restitution Ministries* in Australia, levelled some public accusations against me (David Clayton). Among other misrepresentations it was claimed that I teach the Catholic doctrine of original sin. These misrepresentations were accompanied by extracts from some articles published in a previous edition of this paper.

The accusations are direct, public and false and cannot be ignored (this video is readily available on the *Restitution Ministries* website and is, apparently being happily distributed by several individuals), but until we make an appropriate response,

those who would like to know the facts concerning the false teachings which are presented as truth on that video, may get a good grasp of the issue involved by reading again from *Open Face* no.45. All the extracts from my writings which are quoted in the video are taken from that particular issue of *Open Face*. You may get a more balanced view of the facts by reading what has been presented there. You may be able to assess for yourselves whether or not the claims made by this speaker are the truth.

The fallacies inherent in the positions taken by brother Pinto are exposed also in our DVD video presentation entitled,

“The Three Gospels,” or in *Open Face* no. 57, where the same material is covered as on the DVD.

These materials may be found on our website, the video available for live watching or download (also available as mp3 audio), and the newsletters for reading online or for download in pdf format. If you have difficulty in accessing these materials on the internet, then by all means write to us or call and we will be happy to send you hard copies of any of them which you require.

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The Seed of the Woman

When Adam chose to be independent of God, he separated humanity from God. To put it mildly, this was the greatest disaster which ever came upon the human race. In order to be restored to the place where he was again capable of living a righteous life, man had to be reunited with God, but this had to be by his own free choice. God could not arbitrarily unite His life with that of fallen man outside of man’s voluntary decision, for God is fair and just and can only accept the service which is freely given. If God had reunited Himself with man against man’s will, then what He would have done is turn man into His unwilling slave.

The problem was this: Man could not choose God while he was completely separated from God. In such a condition he was the enemy of God (Rom. 8:7) and had no desire for God. It was impossible for him to choose God. This is where the first part of the great plan of salvation came into play.

God provided, in Christ, somebody who could make this choice on behalf of mankind. One who was from the very beginning, united to God. One who was in Himself both human and divine. He was human, of the race of Adam, so He could represent humanity and

choose on behalf of humanity, yet He was divine, for He was the Son of God, and thus, in Him, humanity and divinity were again united. Since no son of Adam, separated from God, could choose God, God had to find a way to introduce this new element of divine life into the life-stream of Adam’s race, yet He had to do it legally. He had to do it in such a way that He did not take away man’s freedom to choose.

In the garden of Eden, God foretold of the coming of a seed who would destroy the principle of Satan:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Gen 3:15)

Notice that it was the seed of the **woman** who was to bruise Satan’s head – not the seed of the man. It is very interesting and highly significant that God expressly declared that the coming Messiah would be the “seed of the woman”. The Bible, and especially the Old Testament is very male oriented. This gives us reason to believe that God described the Messiah as the “**woman’s** seed,” (rather than the man’s seed) for a very specific reason. What was this reason?

It is true that Jesus often referred to Himself as, “the Son of man,” but we have to understand that He meant, “the Son of mankind,” for it was impossible that He should have been the Son of a man. In order for Jesus to reunite humanity with divinity in Himself, He had to be the Son of mankind (fallen humanity) and the Son of God (divinity).

Jesus could not have had a human father, or else He could not have been the Son of God. There would have been no way for Him to receive the divine component. He would have been a completely new being, but only a human one, if His mother and father had been both human. But of course it is obvious that in order to be a human being, He had to have a human mother. To enter humanity, He had to have been born. Since males cannot give birth, He could not have received His humanity from a man, it had to be through a woman.

What about His divinity?

Could God have filled a man with His holy spirit, then arranged for that man to be Mary’s husband and then pass on the life of God (the holy spirit) to her seed? Would this not have made

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The Healing Power of Touch

Lenworth Frankson



The Scriptures record that throughout the life of Jesus thousands of people were blessed and healed by his touch. There are also recorded accounts of many individuals being healed by touching him. The following Bible passages are just a few that support this truth.

(Mat 14:34-36) And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. (35) And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; (36) And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

(Mark 8:22-25) And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. (23) And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. (24) And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. (25) After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

(Mark 1:40-42) And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and

saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. (41) And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. (42) And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

(Mark 10:13-16) And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. (14) But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. (15) Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. (16) And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Ellen White also commented on this issue:

From Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole. The Saviour's work was not restricted to any time or place. His compassion knew no limit. On so large a scale did He conduct His work of healing and teaching that there was no building in Palestine large enough to receive the multitudes that thronged to Him. On the green hill slopes of Galilee, in the thoroughfares of travel, by the seashore, in the synagogues, and **in every place where the sick could be brought to Him** was to be found His hospital. **In every city, every town, every village through which He passed, He laid His hands upon the afflicted ones, and healed them.** *Gospel Workers p. 41.3*

Why was it that Christ, in so many cases, touched those who came to him

for help? Why also where the seekers, who sought him, so eager to touch him? I am not sure what the right answers are but I had challenging thoughts that needed answers so I started looking for answers to these questions. My quest led me to some interesting discoveries on the healing power of touch.

I discovered that during the first few months of life the element of touch is vitally involved in our mental and emotional development. Research shows that babies who are not hugged and held during these first months will not thrive and grow like their cuddled peers. In fact, a study by Rush University Medical Center in Chicago found that infants, who were held, snuggled and touched had better mental and motor skills than those who were not. Physical touch is so important that the Medical Center actively recruits volunteer they call "cuddlers" to help give the critically ill newborns regular hugs and snuggles. Dr. Robert Kimura who is the chairman of neonatology had this to say "We know the importance of tactile stimulation to an infant's overall health and well-being. These folks (cuddlers) are invaluable members of the healthcare team."

Other studies show that it is not only babies who need physical touch but adults need it as well. It is true that there are some people who do not like to be touched but I am not referring to just any type of touch. These researches have shown that therapeutic touch benefits adults in the following ways:

- Reduces stress (touching releases two feel-good brain chemicals, serotonin and dopamine)
- Lessens pain
- Reduces symptoms of Alzheimer's disease such as restlessness, pacing, vocalization, searching and tapping

This is interesting and certainly appears to be true at least to some degree. I personally have experienced the reduction of pain and stress by touching..

One study found that women's anxiety about potentially receiving a mild electric shock lessened significantly when they touched their husband's hand, and also lessened to some degree by touching a stranger's hand. I find this very interesting too because it appears that receiving a reassuring touch from even someone you might not know could lessen pain and stress.

Other studies also found that young rats and monkeys tended to grow more slowly and develop weaker immune systems when deprived of touch. They were also much less likely to be inquisitive as they grew older, rarely venturing far from the nest to learn about the outside world. For the monkeys it seems that the importance of touch is absolutely essential when it comes to establishing social bonds. Rhesus monkeys that were deprived of touch tended to be extremely aggressive toward other monkeys and displayed behaviors consistent with the human emotions of anger and depression. In addition to this, it was discovered that monkeys that were deprived of touch when young went on to raise their own offspring in a similarly distant manner. There appears to be a strong correlation between young animals and humans being raised without touch, and poor socialization.

For the most part, animals, including human beings are social creatures. They grow and thrive much better when associated with a group as opposed to living alone. The scripture tells us that at "the creation" the Lord said "It is not good that man should be alone" and "male and female created he them". God does not live by himself; he is with his beloved Son, "which is in the bosom of the Father." Millions of angels are also a part of his heavenly family. What is equally true is that "we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with

the saints, and the household of God." God loves companionship. The socialization process in our lives in many ways involves touching. It is worth noting that during creation the Creator spoke into existence every living thing with the exception of man. We are told that God formed them (male and female) from the earth. I am sure that He could have spoken man into existence but instead He chose to form (touch) Adam and Eve during their creation. We were created by the hands of God touching us, therefore it seems reasonable to believe that our need for touch has been programmed into every fiber of our bodies. Touching therefore is a natural and necessary part of our life experience.

Powerful Communication

Whether we pat someone on the shoulder or give a "high-five", we express in this simple act, our feelings and emotions far better than words could say. According to Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, touch, is actually "our richest means of emotional expression." Even brief periods of touch can communicate a wide variety of powerful emotions, emotions that have a significant impact on other people. If we stop and think about it, much of our expressions of emotions like love, kindness, gentleness, anger and sympathy are communicated through the act of touch. Professor Keltner views are that:

- Students whose teacher gave them a supportive touch on the back or arm were nearly twice as likely to volunteer in class.
- A sympathetic touch from a doctor gives patients the impression that their appointment lasted twice as long.
- A massage from a loved one can ease pain and depression while strengthening the relationship.

A different research found that hugging and handholding reduces the effects of stress. Two groups of couples were asked to talk about an angry

event, but one group had previously held hands and hugged, while the others sat alone. It was found that:

- Blood pressure increased significantly more among the no-contact group as compared to the huggers.
- Heart rate among those without contact increased 10 beats a minute, compared to five beats a minute for huggers.

What's more interesting is the suggestion that warm contact such as hugs and handholding before the start of a rough day could have a reassuring and comforting effect throughout the day.

Reduction of pain

It should come as no surprise to us to hear that touch can reduce pain. Even if we do not know this to be absolutely true, there appears to be some evidence that supports this. One way in which this is demonstrated is by the automatic grabbing of a knee or an elbow that we bump against a table. The sensation of the pain immediately causes us to hold or rub the injured area. The most common explanation for this is an interaction between the touch and the nerve signals whereby the pain signal is thought to be suppressed by mechanical stimulation. Rubbing the area where the pain is, seems to reduce the pain when you do it yourself or even when someone else does the rubbing. Why are we nonetheless usually reluctant to let someone else touch the pain stricken area? Self-touch has a very specific character: We are both delivering and receiving the touch at the same time. This makes the touching as well as the being touched predictable. This predictability is often used as an explanation for why we cannot tickle ourselves. Furthermore, it might also explain why the same touch is perceived to be less intense when it is self-applied than when it is applied by someone else.

Massages

Getting a massage from either a loved one or a professional massage therapist can be therapeutic. Research in-

dicates that massage therapy decreases stress hormones in your body and, according to the Touch Research Institute: Getting regular massages is a simple way to take advantage of the healing power of touch. Massages can:

- Facilitate weight gain in preterm infants.
- Enhance attentiveness.
- Alleviate depressive symptoms.
- Reduce pain.
- Reduce stress hormones.
- Improve immune function.

Staying “in Touch” Mentally

Physical touch is definitely important, but equally true and beneficial is staying mentally in touch with those around us. Often we remain isolated, even when we are surrounded by countless people each day. Reaching out with a smile, friendly hello and deeper, meaningful conversations will add much fulfillment to one’s life.

If you find it difficult to stay in touch with those around you, including your friends and family, don’t be hesitant to take advantage of technology. E-mails, text messaging and of course phone calls are simple but efficient and effective ways we can use to stay in touch with friends and relatives. For those living with family members, relatives or close friends engage in meaningful activities that can strengthen your emotional bond and enhance your health as well. Taking walks and exercising together is a great way to accomplish this. Also take advantage of meal times, rides in the car, even trips to the grocery store to catch up and share the little details of your day with each other. You may also benefit immensely by setting aside time each week specifically to chat with your significant other, even if it is a challenge for you. During this dialogue try not to be defensive or accusing whatever the issues might be but rather listen keenly to what the other person is saying, apologizing where necessary. You can adjust this exercise to use with your children, parents, siblings and close

friends. Use it regularly to stay in touch with those around you, especially the ones whom you love. Ideally, you will embrace a combination of physical touch and mental closeness with those in your life.

Staying “in touch” with God.

As humans we have all at some point, experienced, discouragement, frustration, failure and loss. We are, and live among, imperfect people in a sinful and corrupt world and at times we lose our focus. Self becomes our focus and we stop abiding in Christ. We forget that even in trying and difficult times we must believe in God’s promises “...for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Deuteronomy 31:6) and “...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). The psalmist writes “My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” (Psalm 73:26). He also says in verse 23, “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: **thou hast holden (held) me by my right hand**”

In this psalm, the author struggles with the evils of humanity and with his own folly. Then he makes the statement that begins with, “Nevertheless” which is so important. “Nevertheless” implies, “in spite of everything,”

We should never forget the basics of faith. As we mature, God is refining those basics. We begin to see what God is showing and doing in our lives. One is that he is “**continually**” (*always*) with us. “Continually” refers to time, and there is no time or place or circumstance left out of continually. No event can make the “continually” null and void. Only my sin, my separation from God, will rob me of the joy of knowing the *continuance* of his presence.

Continually is only half of the thought, it is incomplete without “**with.**” With is the idea of together; with, shows a side by side experience, not apart. Wherever I am the “with,” of “*God with me*” will always be true. In the

darkest day and most difficult places I must remember the “with”. It is an issue of trust.

The last part of the verse clarifies and adds to the full meaning of the writer’s thoughts; “**thou hast holden (held) me by my right hand**”. God not only touches, but he holds. He touches our hearts and holds our lives together. His touch heals. Think about the millions of lives that God through Christ has touched. He is always, continually, reaching out to hold our hand. He initiates and he reaches out. We may let go but not God. He continues to hold even when we feel dirty, weak and sinful. God is the one who holds, and letting go is not an option with God. We may wander but since God holds our hand He keeps us next to him.

For some the “**right hand**” is paramount. It implies strength and skill. The right hand speaks of acceptance and God holds our right hand to say he accepts us; and to say we are dear and cherished by him. It is one thing to say I am with you, but if I am holding your hand you **know** I am with you. The touch is felt. When he is holding my hand, my struggles are his struggles and my weakness is his strength. Holding hands with God is a public demonstration for all to see. God is not ashamed to be seen holding your hand. There is comfort in holding hands, sometimes words are inadequate and empty so he knows we need that holding touch; it communicates more than words ever can.

Have you put your hands in his hand? When you feel that God is far from you, remember his words, “***I will never leave thee or forsake thee.***” Believe it because **he cannot lie** (Hebrew 6:18). Reach out to him and tell him you accept his hand and welcome his touch and presence. When we do, we will be able to say with surety and confidence

“He leadeth me! O blessed thought! O words with heavenly comfort fraught! Wha-e’er I do, wher-e’er I be, still ‘tis God’s hand that leadeth me”

The Seed of the Woman

I cannot fully explain why Jesus touched most of those whom he healed or why so many who sought him for healing wanted to touch him. What I do know is that there was and still is healing in the touch of faith and anyone who wants to be touched by him will be. I am also aware that ***“from Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole”***. I also know that what was true then is also true today. My prayer is that as we are touched and held by the Master’s hand, we will reach out, touch someone else’s hand, and share our experience.

“Reach out and touch somebody’s hand, make this world a better place if you can” Jesus did; he is our example. Think about this. Healing truly prevails when we are literally touched and are in-touch.

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Jesus the seed of the man, and still a divine being? But this was not possible. The holy spirit cannot be transmitted from one person to another by human birth, only God can give the holy spirit.

Furthermore, if Jesus had been divine only in the sense that He was filled with the holy spirit, rather than being Himself divine in His own nature, He could not have resisted the demands of self-preservation and the temptations of Satan at the cross when the holy spirit was taken from Him. In addition to this, if we view Jesus as being divine, only because He was filled with the holy spirit, then it would mean that every person who has ever been filled with the holy spirit was also divine in

the same sense that Christ was divine.

So in Jesus, there was no input of any earthly father. He was of necessity, exclusively, “the seed of the woman,” as far as His human connections went. However, His Father was God and this is where His divinity had its origin. So with the divinity obtained by being the Son of God, plus the humanity derived from being the seed of the woman, Jesus united divinity and humanity and by this means, bridged the gap which had separated man from God.



Open Face

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