

## “Who concerning the truth have misaimed”—2 Tim. 2:18

### Misaiming concerning Forming Multiracial “Churches” versus Entering into the Reality of the One New Man Created on the Cross

**Misaiming:** “Anyone who takes Scripture seriously must also embrace its promise of a coming multiethnic community comprising ‘every nation, tribe, people and worship language’ (Rev. 7:9). In the meanwhile, multiethnic churches will be messy, will often be difficult, and for some today, may even feel impossible. *But done right* [emphasis added], they offer an environment like none other to model the ways God’s love for his people transcend social status, power structures, and credentials” (Andy Olsen, “When Church Is Not ‘Home’: In Praise of Uncomfortable Worship,” Editor’s Note, *Christianity Today*, vol. 65, no. 2, March 2021, p. 7).

**Truth:** The above quotation, citing a brief portion from Revelation 7:9, implies that there will be multiethnic distinctions among believers in the coming new heaven and new earth. In his opening editorial note, Olsen endorses current social trends that promote the recognition of diversity as a means for inclusion; there is, however, nothing more inclusive than the gospel of peace, which breaks down every middle wall of partition between groups formed based on social and ethnic distinctions. It is significant to note that verse 9 speaks of “out of”—so, although the verse refers to the different backgrounds of the believers prior to their believing, these ethnic backgrounds are not the ultimate status of the believers. If there are no Greeks and Jews in the Body of Christ today (Gal. 3:28), how can there be such distinctions in the future?

The Greek preposition ἐκ, “out of,” is rich and multi-layered in meaning. It speaks of the condition, or state, out of which one comes, exits, or separates from the depth of one’s source, whether it be race, culture, tribe, or language. Revelation 5:9-10 says, “You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.” Through the experience of the redemption accomplished by Christ on the cross and through cooperation with the subjective application of the operation of the Triune God as the eternal life, believers experience the reality of being brought out of their heritage in

Adam and being given a new inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). They are graced (Eph. 1:6), redeemed, forgiven (v. 7), and bought—purchased by God’s own blood from their vain manner of life (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), from the earth, and from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb (Rev. 14:3-5). Revelation 7:9-17 refers to the repentant and believing Gentiles in Romans 11:25: men “out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” are those chosen from the Gentiles to be given to God; they are the church (Acts 15:14-19), the redeemed ones from the nations throughout all the generations.

In Acts the Head of the Body baptized all His believers, both Jews (1:1—3:26; 28:17-31) and Gentiles (10:1—11:18), once for all into His one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). In the Epistles Paul unveils the revelation that in the church—composed of Jews and Gentiles—all distinctions, differences, cultural or otherwise, and, most remarkably, the hostility between peoples, have been eradicated through the cross (Eph. 2:14-22) and that through Christ all things have been reconciled to Christ Himself, who made peace through His blood on the cross (Col. 1:20).

The revelation that all differences and distinctions have been abolished is clearly revealed in the Word of God. On the cross Christ has reconciled people in one Body and called us to practice this reality together: “Let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful” (Col. 3:15).

First Corinthians 12:13 says, “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.” All believers were baptized into one Body. All are now drinking one Spirit. Galatians 3:27-28 says, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There cannot be Jew or Greek, there cannot be slave nor free man, there cannot be male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” We were all baptized into Christ and have all put on Christ. As such, there cannot be Jew or Greek, slave or free man, male and female, for in Christ we all have become one. Our oneness in Christ has abolished all our former ethnic distinctions: “There cannot be.” There cannot be distinctions, because we have put on the one new man. We have received and

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been incorporated into the one new man, which was created according to the image of God. In this image there cannot be Greeks or Jews, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian or Scythian, slave or free man, for all are one in Christ Jesus. All the believers are one; they have become a single, collective entity, a corporate entity—the one new man. Colossians 3:10-11 also unveils that there are no more distinctions among believers: “Have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.”

These three portions of the Word show that all believers are one in Christ and that all their distinctions have been abolished. This is the basis upon which the church is built. If we bring multiethnic, earthly distinctions back into the church, we will corrupt the church with our heritage in the flesh and ruin the relationships among the believers by nullifying the peace that Christ created on the cross. If we remain in our unrenewed mind and celebrate our distinctions and differences, which belong to the old man, we will make the one new man old. When we come to the church, which is His Body, we must see that there cannot be anything of our heritage in Adam, for we have all been put into Christ and have also put on Christ.

We have all been made one in Christ. Our past distinctions are no longer manifested if we are truly in Christ; this is the case from the standpoint of both truth and experience. There are no distinctions in the one new man and in the Body of Christ. At least five distinctions are spoken of in the above-mentioned verses, but according to Paul, no matter what outward differences exist among men, we all have been made one in Christ.

Today there is nothing more inclusive than the gospel of peace, which breaks down all barriers between everyone. The gospel of peace concerns only Christ Himself, because it is He who broke down the separations, the hostilities, which prevent us from being one. It is He Himself who joins us all together, issuing in a wholeness, a oneness, a corporate entity that is pervaded by harmony and concord (Eph. 2:14). By calling us into one Body and reconciling us to Himself in His one Body, Christ has made peace (vv. 15-16). Then He came and announced peace as the gospel to everyone—to the Jews, who were near to God, and to the Gentiles, who were far off (v. 17; John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 26; Acts 10:36). As members in the Body of Christ, we are in a continual state of being reconciled to God and to each other. Reconciliation is activated through our cooperation with the peace of Christ that arbitrates in our hearts. This sense of peace is Christ Himself within each member acting as an umpire,

the final authority resolving conflicts between contending forces (Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15; 1 Thes. 5:13). Paul therefore gives Him a unique title—the *God of peace*. As the God of peace, He is actively sanctifying us, shepherding us, and perfecting us in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 13:20).

As members of Christ’s Body, we have the glorious privilege of bringing this good news to people (Isa. 40:9; Eph. 6:15). Today all people need to hear the good news of Christ’s work on the cross. The very Christ who died on the cross did so not only to accomplish judicial redemption but also to crucify the old man (Rom. 6:6), slaying the distinctions, the hostilities, the differences, between all peoples, opening the way for Him to create in Himself a new item in the universe, a new creation of God—the one new man. We should herald this gospel of peace rather than seek to recognize and reinstate the multiethnic distinctions that were abolished on the cross. We were created by God in Christ through regeneration to be His new creation, not only individually but, even more notably, as a corporate entity wherein Christ is all and in all and wherein we practice and live out the life of Christ as the one new man to accomplish His eternal purpose on the earth today (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10-11). We should celebrate the gathering of people out of every nation, tribe, people, and language, as this shows the expansiveness of God’s heart for all humanity, but we should not celebrate or promote the continuance of these natural distinctions in the church as His one Body, for this shows the narrowness and divisiveness of the natural human heart.

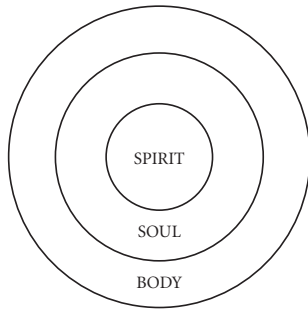
### Misaiming concerning Being Born Again

**Misaiming:** “The new birth gives the life of God—*divine* life, *eternal* life, *supernatural* life—to a previously empty, lifeless soul. Where once there was only a hollow existence, divine life was created in the soul—*real* life, *new* life, *abundant* life...Simply put, being born of God is divine life within the soul...Our heart, spiritually speaking, encompasses our whole innermost being. Our heart is our real self. It includes our mind, emotions, and will. It is where we think, feel, and choose. Our heart is the seat of our human personality, and it is synonymous with our soul” (Steven J. Lawson, *New Life in Christ: What Really Happens When You’re Born Again and Why It Matters*, Baker Books, 2020, pp. 17, 77).

**Truth:** *New Life in Christ* is correct in its statement that “the new birth gives the life of God—*divine* life, *eternal* life, *supernatural* life.” However, it then misaims by stating that this new life is given to the soul. This error has serious implications related to a Christian’s experience

of salvation based on an accurate understanding of God's purpose with redeemed humanity. According to the Scriptures, the regeneration of a believer with the life of God occurs in the God-created human spirit. Humans are tripartite beings who have a spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). See "Three Parts of Man" diagram.

### Three Parts of Man



Commenting on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Witness Lee says,

Man is of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. The spirit as our innermost part is the inner organ, possessing God-consciousness, that we may contact God (John 4:24; Rom. 1:9). The soul is our very self (cf. Matt. 16:26; Luke 9:25), a medium between our

spirit and our body, possessing self-consciousness, that we may have our personality. The body as our external part is the outer organ, possessing world-consciousness, that we may contact the material world. The body contains the soul, and the soul is the vessel that contains the spirit. In the spirit, God as the Spirit dwells; in the soul, our self dwells; and in the body, the physical senses dwell. God sanctifies us, first, by taking possession of our spirit through regeneration (John 3:5-6); second, by spreading Himself as the life-giving Spirit from our spirit into our soul to saturate and transform our soul (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18); and last, by enlivening our mortal body through our soul (Rom. 8:11, 13) and transfiguring our body by His life power (Phil. 3:21). (*Recovery Version*, 1 Thes. 5:23, note 5)

The truth in the New Testament concerning humanity's tripartite being is supported by the Old Testament account in Genesis 2:7 of the creation of human beings as tripartite vessels: "Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." In this verse *formed man from the dust of the ground* speaks of the creation of the body, *breathed into his nostrils the*

*breath of life* speaks of the creation of the human spirit, and *became a living soul* speaks of the creation and emergence of the soul. In a footnote on the phrase *breath of life*, Witness Lee writes,

Heb. *neshamah*, translated *spirit* in Prov. 20:27, indicating that the breath of life breathed into man's body became the spirit of man, the human spirit (cf. Job 32:8). Man's spirit is his inward organ to contact God, receive God, contain God, and assimilate God into his entire being as his life and his everything. It was specifically formed by God and is ranked in importance with the heavens and the earth in God's holy Word (Zech. 12:1). The spirit of man is for man to worship God (John 4:24), to be regenerated by God (John 3:6b), and to be joined to God (1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Tim. 4:22) that man may walk and live in an organic union with God (Rom. 8:4b) to fulfill God's purpose. (*Recovery Version*, Gen. 2:7, note 5)

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*New Life in Christ's* focus on the soul comes from the teaching that there are but two parts to humanity, with these two parts being body and soul. The Gospel of John emphatically states that being born of God does not involve blood or the will of the flesh (1:13), both of which are related to the body. Consequently,

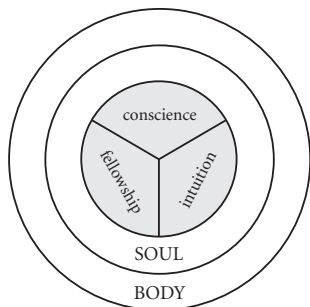
a committed dichotomist, who truly believes that the eternal life of God is imparted into a redeemed sinner through regeneration, must teach that regeneration occurs within the soul. When a dichotomous view of humanity is advanced, the Bible's distinct references to soul and spirit, which even appear as separate terms in the same verse, must be ignored or explained away. The most common explanation is that *soul* and *spirit* are synonymous terms, referring to the same organ; any difference is ascribed to different inclinations—the term *soul* being used when the activity of the soul is directed toward earthly things and the term *spirit* being used when the activity of the soul is directed toward heavenly things. This explanatory attempt fails to hold up. For example, in Luke 1:46-47, Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior." Mary's soul and spirit evidenced different responses, but both responses were inclined toward heavenly things—the Lord and God her Savior. If *soul* and *spirit* in this verse are synonymous, save for inclination, then *soul*, as used in this verse, is unnecessary. It is unnecessary because magnifying the Lord is clearly a heaven-oriented exercise. Witness Lee writes,

Her [Mary's] spirit was filled with joy in God her Savior, and her soul manifested that joy for the magnifying of the Lord. She lived and acted in her spirit, which directed her soul. Her spirit's exulting in God was due to her enjoyment of God as her Savior, and her soul's magnifying of the Lord was due to her exalting of the Lord, who is Jehovah, the great To Be. (*Recovery Version*, Luke 1:47, note 1).

Philippians 1:27, which speaks of standing "firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel," also shows that there is a difference between the two terms. In this verse both spirit and soul are directed toward the faith of the gospel, which is a heavenly inclination. If *soul* and *spirit* are truly synonymous, save for inclination, then *with one soul* is unnecessary in this verse.

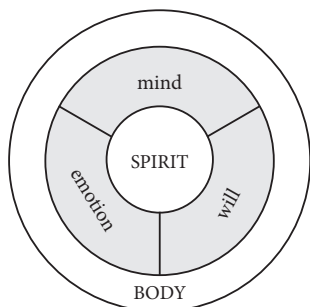
The Bible reveals that the human spirit functions in matters related to conscience (Rom. 9:1; cf. 8:16; Psa. 34:18; 51:10, KJV; Deut. 2:30), intuition (1 Cor. 2:11; Mark 2:8; 8:12; John 11:33), and fellowship (4:24; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 8:16; Eph. 6:18; Luke 1:47; 1 Cor. 6:17). See "Three Parts of the Spirit" diagram.

### Three Parts of the Spirit



The Bible reveals that the soul expresses the function of the mind (Prov. 2:10; Psa. 13:2; 139:14; Lam. 3:20), emotion (1 Sam. 18:1; 20:3; S. S. 1:7; 2 Sam. 5:8; Psa. 107:18; Ezek. 24:25; 36:5; Deut. 14:26; Jer. 44:14), and will (Job 6:7; 7:15; 1 Chron. 22:19; Psa. 27:12; 41:2; Ezek. 16:27). See "Three Parts of the Soul" diagram.

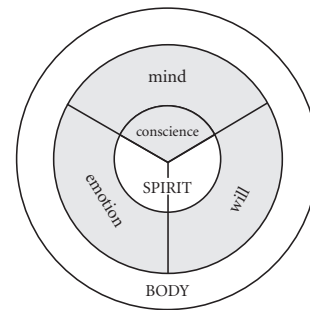
### Three Parts of the Soul



Finally, the Bible reveals that *heart* is not a synonym for

*soul* and *spirit*; rather, the heart consists of the three functions of the soul—mind (Matt. 9:4; Gen. 6:5; Heb. 4:12), emotion (John 16:6, 22), and will (Acts 11:23; Heb. 4:12)—and one of the functions of the spirit—the conscience (10:22; 1 John 3:20). See "The Human Heart" diagram.

### The Human Heart



That human beings are tripartite vessels is not an essential item of the faith, and neither is the teaching that humans are of just two parts. There is, however, a deleterious effect upon those who accept a dichotomous anthropology; for experiencing the divine life received at regeneration and needed for growth unto maturity, it is important for every believer to know the location of God's life as the sanctifying and transforming element that causes them to mature. Seeking to experience the divine life in the soul that the Lord calls us to deny is a counterintuitive proposition. Efforts to produce a truly sanctifying and transformative change through experiencing the divine life in the soul that is itself in need of sanctification and transformation is a counterproductive work of the self. If *soul* and *spirit* are synonymous terms, then Romans 8:6, which says, "The mind set on the spirit is life and peace," is redundantly and foolishly saying, "The mind set on the mind is life and peace." A mind that is directed toward the mind, both to curb negative thoughts and to maintain holy thoughts, involves self-effort and is doomed to being filled with thoughts of our wretchedness that will arise when failures inevitably come. *New Life in Christ* states, "You must cut out the things in your life that tempt you to sin and cause you to glory in yourself" (95). Many believers can temporarily cut out negative things through self-determination and striving, but the passions and lusts of our flesh still linger beneath the surface of our self-efforts, waiting to rush back into our lives and damage our faith in God's saving grace that permanently resides in our regenerated human spirit. When we exercise to turn to the Lord in our regenerated human spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Cor. 3:16), His life will spread into our heart, bringing the spontaneous power of life that enables Christ to make His home in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17).

by the Editors