
The Unity of the Spirit

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"In the Bond of Peace"

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Dear Fellow-Believers:

One of the most well known and important verses of the Bible is set forth in the very first Book of the Old Testament:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1, NIV).

Though this verse is often thought to be out of date by today's modern secular world, in actuality it sets forth the foundation for understanding life and for understanding mankind's relationship to his creator, God. In short, the central and foundational truth for both understanding the Bible and for living life successfully is to know that there is a personal and sovereign God who created the heavens and earth, along with all its inhabitants, with a godly and loving purpose in mind.

To ignore this central truth of life is to doom oneself and one's society to a meaningless existence with all the consequences that inevitably result from such a point of view. In fact, the Books of Psalms and Proverbs are clear in their characterization of those who reject this central truth set forth in Genesis 1:1:

The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God.' (Psalms 14:1)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Prov. 1:7)

According to the Bible, all true life is built on belief in the one true God of the Bible and all meaning in life is derived from a reverence for that

God. In short, apart from a knowledge and reverence for the one God of the Bible a person is destined for a life of confusion, discontentment, and ultimate destruction. It would, therefore, be the height of foolishness to choose any other path than to live one's life in a proper faith relationship with God.

Since the created world itself testifies to God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Rom. 1:19-20), the most "rational" of all thinking is to build and frame one's life on faith in God and to seek to know and live for him. The apostle Paul set forth this plain and simple truth in his testimony to the "very religious" - yet skeptical - citizens of ancient Athens in Acts 17.

"Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an Unknown God.' Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live

and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

There are several interesting points in Paul’s argument to the ancient Athenians that are still very relevant for us today. As Christian believers we live in the midst of a world dominated by pagan religious belief on the one hand, or by evolutionary and scientific naturalistic philosophy – i.e., modernism - on the other. Anyone who has had to deal with the politically and religiously “correct” idea that “all religions of the world are good and equal”; or on the other hand, the so-called rationalistic idea that “there is no God, and the world evolved out of nothing,” should take note of what Paul had to say on these subjects.

First, from Paul’s perspective all religions of the world not built on the knowledge and reverence for the one true God are perversions of the truth and lead to a downward spiral of idolatry, spiritual blindness, sin, and finally, destruction. These truths are not only plainly evident in the history of the world they all stare us the face at the beginning of the 21st century. This understanding of the spiritual roots of the problems of the world – beginning with a refusal to acknowledge and live for the one true God – are repeated over and over in the Bible and are crystal clear from Paul’s teaching as set forth in Romans chapter one:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been seen, being understood

from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.” (Rom. 1:18-25).

Second, even apart from having a knowledge of the Scriptures a truly rational person should realize from God’s created order that there *must* be a God and then, logically, he would *seek* to know that God in a personal way. Paul says that God has made this knowledge “plain” to mankind and failure to acknowledge this is willful “ignorance.” Those who go down any other path are simply “fools” – self-deluded and deceived - and are on the road to idolatry of self, of nature, of possessions, or, of other gods.

It is almost startling to see the simplicity with which Paul views this subject. He cuts right to the heart of the matter and allows for “no excuse” on the part of mankind. The knowledge of God is available for those who choose to acknowledge the “plain” truth that all of God’s creation testifies to. God’s creation demands that we “seek him” and, as Christ himself stated, “those who seek will find.” The Book of Ecclesiastes sums up these truths:

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” (Eccl. 12:13-14)

Richie Temple

The Fear of God

By Chuck LaMattina
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Nothing brings about greater satisfaction in life than being totally devoted to God. Nothing is as enriching, as a true and vital relationship with our Heavenly Father. For us as Christians, being totally devoted to God is the essence of life. When we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice we experience fullness of life.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2; all Scripture citations are from the NKJV).

This is what God desires: our full devotion to Him. In the process we are able to experience the good will of God. We can then be transformed, enabled to experience real life.

But we will never make a full offering of ourselves to God unless we learn to fear Him. We may make attempts to sacrifice parts of our lives, we may make attempts to have our mind renewed in order to escape a problem, but without a deep and profound reverence for God, there will be no full sacrifice.

The fear of God begins with a feeling of dread or terror over judgment for sin (e.g. Ex. 20:18-20). Sin must be dealt with. If society has the right to punish criminals, if countries have the right to execute traitors, then surely God has the right to let men suffer the consequences of their rebelliousness.

But the fear of God must not end there. True godly fear should soon turn into a deep and profound reverence and respect and awe of God because of what He has done with the problem of sin. God has righteously and mercifully dealt with sin.

If you LORD should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is

forgiveness with You, That you may be feared (Psalm 130:3-4).

God has dealt with the problem of sin, not by letting all of us suffer its consequences, but by delivering us from our unrighteousness.

For He [God] made him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21).

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

And not only that, but we also rejoice in god through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (Rom. 5:6-11).

Mercifully and with complete righteousness, God placed the sins of the whole world on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ lived in perfect obedience to God, then died for our sins to bring honor to God and to save our lives. In Jesus Christ we are saved from wrath and saved, or made whole, in Christ. In what God has accomplished through our Lord Jesus Christ we can again reign in life.

For if by the one man's [Adam's] offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17).

We can again experience life as it was meant to be lived; we can again live life with God.

Mankind was originally created to bear the image of God, to be the exact representation of His

glorious life. Mankind, originally, (in Adam and Eve) was God's greatest masterpiece. The greatest thing God could do to show His "God-head" was to create a race of "god-like" creatures. This is what he did in Adam and Eve. But man rebelled.

God was extremely clear as to what the consequences were to be if man disobeyed - death. But Adam went for the forbidden fruit. God would have been legally right to let man suffer the penalty for sin. But His mercy compelled Him to redeem His creation. So justice and mercy collided at the cross of Christ. As 2 Corinthians declares, Christ became sin for us, so we could become the righteousness of God and again bear His awesome image in all of its fullness.

Who would not fear such a God? Who would not stand in awe of such righteousness, such compassion, and love? Who would not fear to once again bring honor and shame to His name? Only a fool!

Coming now to the New Testament, we see that the discovery of the new life we Christians have in Christ leads to recovery of the fear of God.

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

And they continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles (Acts 2:41-43).

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of holy spirit was poured out upon those who believed in Christ. The apostles manifested the spirit of God, speaking in tongues the wonderful works of God. People gathered together to see what was going on and Peter preached to them of the deliverance God was offering them in Christ. Those who accepted his word devoted themselves to learning and experiencing their new life. As they did, fear came upon every soul and miracles happened.

When believers had their eyes opened to see what they had been saved from and the glorious life to which they were called, they stood in fear, or awe of God. They realized the foolishness and stupidity

of trying to live life outside God's will. And they feared God who had in His mercy regained life for them through Christ. The result of their fear is summarized in the remaining verses of Acts 2.

Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47).

Soon though, persecution hit the church. The thief, Satan, attempted to rob believers of their new relationship with God. The leaders of the church were hounded and threatened for teaching in the name of Jesus Christ. Within the church there were some who lied about their love for God, and a man by the name of Saul sought to capture and kill or imprison the believers. But the power of God was manifested and believers stood their ground and even Saul was converted, having been witnessed to by the Lord Jesus Christ himself! The result of all of this is summarized in Acts chapter 9.

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit they were multiplied (Acts 9:31).

Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy spirit the church flourished! To walk in the fear of the Lord is to think and act only from the principle of being devoted to God. It is to live by God's will alone. The comfort of the holy spirit is associated with walking in the fear of the Lord. We so often strive after the comfort of the holy spirit, the fruit that it can bring to our life. But without respect for God, without doing His will (i.e., walking in the fear of the Lord) there is no comfort.

We have been called to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to make known

the glory of our Father God. How are we doing?
Are we experiencing the comfort of the holy spirit?
Is the church multiplying?

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ... (II Cor. 5:9-11a).

All of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. All of us! Have we been well pleasing to him? Have we brought honor to his name and to the name of our God? Have we manifested the life that has been so graciously given to us? Do we want to forfeit joy in the presence of the Lord? Knowing, therefore, the terror (or fear) of the Lord we should persuade and encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ to do the will of God.

We have been redeemed, saved from the wrath of God that will come upon the ungodly. The Bible tells us that we were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. Why should we who are redeemed live like we are still bound by sin?

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God, And they shall be my people."

Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."

"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD almighty."

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of

the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

The Scriptures are so clear. Since we are now the temple of the living God, since we have His life in us, His holiness, let us bring this holiness, this life to perfection. Let us manifest and experience all that God has made us in Christ, in the fear of God. Let us live in His will, seeing the wonderful transformation of our lives, and let us do it with the deep reverence and respect and awe of God.

The fear of God is the first step in cultivating a life of devotion to God. As I Timothy 4:8 told us, godliness or total devotion to God, is profitable for the life we live now and for the one to come. Since we are called to experience the holy life, real life, let us press on to perfection. Let us press on towards a full relationship with God and experience a full joy.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you ... (I Peter 1:3-4).

Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

As obedient children, not conforming to yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

Because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear [my emphasis];

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from

your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb with blemish and without spot (I Peter 1:13-19).

We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Do we wish to bring shame and dishonor to his sacrifice? In our day and time, if the Christian church is ever to present the truth of God's Word in the right manner, if we are ever to experience the joys of godliness, we must begin to cultivate a profound fear and reverence for God and our Lord Jesus Christ. We must begin to view God and our Lord in the infinite majesty that belongs to them alone. God is the Creator and Supreme ruler of the universe. Jesus Christ is our Lord!

Words often fail to fully describe the glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. What we can now see and understand is only a small reflection of the full glory. But one day we will see it face to face! Then we will fear in the fullest sense of the word. Ultimate joy in life comes from full devotion to God.

I have set the LORD always before me; Because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.

For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

You will show me the path of life; In your presence is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:8-11).

To "set the Lord always before" us is total devotion. It begins with the fear of God, but it quickly expands as we come to understand the precious love of God. This we shall see in the next chapter.

Jesus Christ said in John 10:10 that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. Satan's great purpose for the Christian is to rob us of the joy of having a real and vital relationship with God. The fear of God keeps us guarded against him.

So many times in life it may seem like the ungodly are ones who prosper and get the most out of life. But there is more to life than the 70 or 80 years we have on this earth in its present form.

Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all day;

For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off (Proverbs 23:17-18).

As Christians our hope is to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to become heirs of God and to enjoy fellowship with Him forever. The fear of God shows us that there is someone to be reckoned with, someone upon whom we can rely, in whom we can rejoice. If we are unhappy it is because we have not found our joy in the Lord God Almighty, the only source of total satisfaction.

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Books in Review

Darwin on Trial by Phillip E. Johnson
and

Shattering the Myths of Darwinism by Richard Milton

There are few, if any, philosophies that have caused more confusion, destruction and harm over the last two centuries than that of the Darwinian theory of evolution. This theory has provided the foundation for most of this century's destructive movements and remains the underlying assumption of today's relativistic Western society in education, law, and culture. Phillip E. Johnson, who has been a Professor of Law at the University of California Berkeley for the past thirty years, has devoted much of the last decade to exposing the myths associated with Darwinism and showing their influence on society. His most important book is *Darwin on Trial*. In it he focuses on the one crucial and primary issue: Is the natural world the product of the *intelligent design* of a loving God who has a godly purpose and plan for his creation; or, is it the product of *pure chance* and a corresponding evolutionary scheme based on the Darwinian theory of natural selection?

Johnson is an excellent and entertaining writer and his arguments against the Darwinian idea of evolution penetrate right to the heart of the issues involved. First, he shows time after time - with merciless and consistent logic - the fallacies of the arguments of a scientific community that promotes evolution as “fact” rather than “theory.” Equally important, Johnson shows that the real issue in this debate is the *a priori* assumption by scientists that there is no God. Lest it be thought that evolution as promoted by scientists is not opposed to belief in a personal God, consider the following quotation by the National Association of Biology Teachers in 1995:

The diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution: an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments.

This statement is highly revealing. Since there are relatively few scientists who have chosen to believe in a personal God, scientists have simply chosen to define science in a way that excludes any possibility of allowing God into the scientific debate about life’s origins. The paradox of such logic is that though all of nature itself seems to indicate that there *is* the intelligent design of a personal God behind it (Rom. 1:18-20), science has declared that such an answer is simply *unacceptable* because it is beyond “scientific proof.” Thus, mankind is left to find the best naturalistic, or materialistic, solution possible. So far the best alternative answer that has been formulated is the Darwinian theory of evolution. However, Johnson shows this theory to be built upon an unproved, illogical, and inconsistent system of ideas that promote atheism, cynicism, and the immorality that always follows.

Richard Milton’s book, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, is equally well written and in some ways even more valuable than Johnson’s book since Milton is not a creationist. Milton is a British science journalist who, as the title indicates, shatters the myths of Darwinism one by one. His book is fascinating reading and covers everything from A to Z in this debate including the flawed assumptions and methodology of evolutionary science and the deceptive ways in which its myths are promoted. For those interested, I highly recommend each of these books!

Raising up New Generations for God

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The history of humankind starts with an important commission, to multiply and fill the earth:

GE 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

Interestingly, a history of the Church also starts with a similar command, to go and increase in numbers:

*MT 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" (Emphasis here and below are mine)*

*Ac 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, **and to the ends of the earth.**"*

God not only commands us to multiply and to fill the earth, but He also gives us the authority to do so and the power to achieve this task under His guidance. Yet, bringing up a child for God is a difficult and ongoing process, full of responsibilities and unselfish sacrifice. Drawing people to God and helping them to be a part of His body *that grows and builds itself up in love* (Eph 4:16) is also a long process with its own problems and rewards.

In the following, we will look at some important aspects of raising up children and will draw parallels between the ‘natural’ realm and the ‘spiritual’ one. We will also look at some examples from the Bible. God has chosen to reveal in His Word true stories of real people. We can easily

identify with Biblical families, their successes and failures, and learn from their faith and perseverance. Examples show us how important it is that children are hoped for and prayed for, given birth to and seen as a blessing, and raised up and trained up properly in loving and caring families. The same applies to 'spiritual children', as they are witnessed to, brought to God, cared for and guided to become mature members of the Church.

The first thing to realize is that we are all children of God. It is not only the greatest and most fantastic privilege and the source of our joy. It also means that as He brings us to life and continues in our upbringing and training, he teaches us how to fulfill our duty as parents and guardians. This is the key element of our commission, without which our life and its activities become aimless and confused (Ecc 1:2-4).

*IJN 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called **children of God!** And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Dear friends, now **we are children of God**, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

In the family of God, He is our Father. Human families also need parents. God did not choose to create the whole mankind in one single act – instead He created a man and a woman and entrusted them with the commission to fill and subdue the earth. They need to work together - as one flesh (Ge 2:23-24). Just as families cannot grow, love, care for members, and follow God's way without devoted parents, so the Church cannot grow without spiritual helpers, *as each part does its work* (Eph 4:16). Each one of us has his own call. There are those who are called to a ministry of bearing and training children, those who minister to other people's children and those who work with adult children of God (Mt 19:12).

1 TH 2:11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, [12] encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1CO 4:14 I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. [15] Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. [16] Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

Children are a gift from God (Ps 127:4), yet this gift does not always come easily. Both the Bible and the everyday experience show that our faith in this realm is often tested by long periods of waiting upon the God. Sarah and Abraham waited for many years (Rom 4:18-22), so long that they nearly lost their confidence, as did Elizabeth and Zechariah (Lk 1:5-7). Rebecca and Lea kept praying for babies over many years, and God rewarded them with 12 sons (Gen 30:6, 17, 20, 22). My favourite family story comes from 1Sam 1:10-12. It is one very few examples of a caring family life in a difficult period of Israel's history *when everyone did as he saw fit* (Jdg 21:25). This makes it even more relevant for our times when there is so much devaluation of traditional family and moral values (2 Ti 4:3-4).

The family of Elkana portrayed in this chapter was not entirely a happy one – there was a lot of animosity between his two wives. Yet, this imperfection makes the story even more realistic and appealing to our often-troubled life. In the opening scenes, we meet Hannah, a barren yet much-loved wife of Elkana, pouring out her heart to God in the sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Sa 1:10-12).

ISA 1:15 "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. (...) [17] Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." (...) [20] So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

It comes as no surprise to see that the greatest increase in the numbers of new believers in the first-century Church also came in the midst of prayers:

*AC 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (...). [44] All the believers were together and had everything in common. [45] Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. [46] Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, [47] praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.***

Every time a baby is born, there is a rejoicing in the heart of his mother and his family. There is even more rejoicing in Christian homes, as each new baby means a new helper, a new future member of the Church, and a new witness able and willing to take the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. Similarly, a new birth of somebody who turns away from sins is also greeted by great rejoicing in Heaven (Lk 15:7; Jn 3:1-9).

Prayers do not stop at birth, they must continue throughout the whole life of a new child and then adult. Just as Manoah prayed to the Lord to give him wisdom to bring up Samson (Jdg 13:8), so Job (Job 1:5) continued to pray for his children when they were older. Paul, who considered his children those whom he helped to become Christians, also continued to pray for them.

*COL 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we **have not stopped praying for you** and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. [10] And we **pray** this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,*

The prayer is not the only requirement for a successful growth of children. They need lots of love, cuddle and care. They need to be well fed with a food appropriate for their age and requirements. They need to be clothed and protected in a physical

and emotional realm. This care must not stop at any time.

*ISA 1:23 "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So **the woman stayed at home and nursed her son** until she had weaned him.*

*ISA 2:18 But Samuel was ministering before the LORD--a boy wearing a linen ephod. [19] **Each year his mother made him a little robe** and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. (...) [26] And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men.*

Adult Christians also have physical and emotional needs – they need love and an occasional cuddle too! We have already seen in Acts 2:44-46 (see also Ac 6:1-4) that the Church must also be concerned with the well-being of her members in every possible way. It is best done through the families but if there is a need, the whole Church must be involved. They need both the physical food and the spiritual food as well. Paul in his instructions to churches was taking care of both – and like a loving father he always remembered to add a personal touch to his letters.

*1Ti 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of **all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family** and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. (...) [8] **If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith** and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Above all, however, the children need to be educated and trained in respect, self-control, perseverance, submission, honesty and courtesy. They need constant attention and a continuous long-lasting training. Such training requires time, effort and sacrifice. Yet, in God's eyes it is a matter of an utmost importance. When Israel was on a verge of leaving Egypt, God gave Moses some instructions on how to prepare for the night of trial when His

angel was killing the first-born. But even more than about the preparations, freedom, the end of suffering, the journey ahead and the destination, He talked about children and about education. It looks like the primary meaning of the Passover was to instruct future generations in the ways of the Lord!

EX 12:24 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. [25] When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. [26] And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' [27] then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' "

The Bible places the ultimate responsibility for children's education with parents. It is they who must teach, instruct, rebuke and punish bad, as well as reward good behavior. They need to protect their children from bad influences and bad company and only in a controlled way expose them to the outside world. The education by teaching and example must be an everyday, every-minute exercise. We cannot lightly delegate this responsibility to others or absolve ourselves from it. Eventually, God as well as other people will judge us according to the way we trained our children.

Dt 6:6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. [7] Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 1CO 15:33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character".

PR 13:24 He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

PR 29:15 The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.

EPH 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

PR 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

PR 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.

The last two quotations are especially interesting. They were written by Solomon who was one of the wisest people ever (1 Ki 4:29-33): *Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.* (1 Ki 4:34). Solomon's wisdom came from God (1 Ki 3:7-9), yet he himself credits his own father, David, with a proper upbringing (see also Pr 1:7).

Pr 4: 3 When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, [4] he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. [5] Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. (...)."

Solomon learned a good lesson from his father, yet failed to pass it on to his son, Rehoboam. When Rehoboam succeeded him as a king, he was challenged by Israelites who asked him to relieve them from their burden (1 Ki 12:13-14). He had many wise words of his own father that he could learn from and use in the time of trial. Yet, Rehoboam did not follow his father's guidance. *Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men* (1 Ki 12:13-14). These 'young' men, who had grown up with him and were serving him, were in fact his own age. According to 1 Ki 14:21 he was forty-one when he became the king. The Bible calls them 'young' using a word meaning 'young boys' or even 'children' – they were still children in their behavior and knowledge (1 Co 3:1-3, 14:20). He followed the advice that contradicted his father's teaching that,

A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless (Pr 14:16).

And,

It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel (Pr 20:3).

The result was a reckless action leading to strife, quarrel, war and split between Israel and Judah.

Why did Solomon fail in bringing up a godly wise son? Was it because he forgot his children while selfishly pursuing his career or pleasures? It was certainly not the lack of wisdom, nor the lack of material conveniences that lead to his failure. Time, devotion and strict following of God's ways are the required characteristics. Paul with his busy missionary schedule could not really take care of his own children – and had none of his own. Yet he always found time and effort to preach and admonish his 'spiritual' children – his letters are full of personal greetings and concern. He also could rely on other people's children, like Timothy, who had been raised up by godly mother and grandmother and given an excellent upbringing and learning.

2TI 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. [4] Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. [5] I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. (...) [14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, [15] and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

How can we learn about the ways of being best parents and guardians of God's children? God has not left us without guidance. In fact, He gave us the best possible manual of child upbringing – the holy Scriptures. He also provided us with the best possible example of a relationship between a father and his son – by giving us His Son, Jesus Christ.

In our everyday struggle and rejoicing it is easy to lose the feeling of importance of what we are doing, to feel that we are undervalued and that our

work is not recognized, valued and rewarded. Then we need to keep in mind rich rewards for those who faithfully keep raising up and training new generations:

PS 127:3 Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children **a reward** from him. [4] Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. [5] Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

1 Th 2:19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? [20] Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

1CO 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

However, we also need to see our work in the right perspective. Neither a big and well-fed, well-clothed and well-behaved family, nor a big church where everybody is feeling well, is the goal in itself.

'We are called to be soldiers in the army of the living God. Raising up young, new recruits of our children is an exciting sideline. Children raised up seeing God in action, saving souls and changing lives, are seeing something real, something eternal. The missionary family does not see their family as the "purpose". The family is a blessing along the way. The children do not grow up thinking they are the end. Going into all the world preaching the gospel is the purpose of the Christian life. (...) Children actively involved in a family that is serving God become servants of God.' (**To Train up a Child**, by Michael and Debi Pearl)

As people of God are raised up in godly families and given proper upbringing, they can subsequently assume responsibilities as parents in their own families and overseers in the Church,

raising up new generations for God and thus fulfilling His double commission in this dark hour of the world's history.

2TI 1:2 To Timothy my dear son (...) 4:1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: [2] Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. [3] For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. [4] They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. [5] But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

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Report

The Unity of the Spirit

This issue of *The Unity of the Spirit* marks the beginning of our 7th year of publication. Editing *The Unity of the Spirit* has been a great joy for me over these last six years. I personally spend one to two hundred hours on each issue and generally agonize over every word, comma, and editorial decision. That said, no one knows better than myself how many editorial errors go unnoticed until it is actually in print. I could blame it on the inadequacy of spell-checks but ultimately the responsibility resides with myself alone.

There are of course many others that have assisted in the publication of this newsletter over the years and I would like to thank them all. First, let me thank my wife, Dorota, for her personal and spiritual support and for her proofreading and technical expertise – without which many of these issues would never have appeared. Second, I would like to thank some of the members of our Cary, NC Bible Fellowship. Without the spiritual and financial help of these people – David and Pam Hahn, David and Mary Seed, Scot and Kristi Hahn, John and Tanya Stauffer, and Rick, Della, and Sarah

Waite, this newsletter would long since have ceased to be published. I can only say that it's a great joy and blessing to be a part of the lives of such wonderful and godly people. I am sure that for many believers who receive this newsletter a small note from a Pam Hahn or a Mary Seed on the back-cover – as they address and put stamps on them - is as much of a blessing as the entire issue of the newsletter itself.

Next, I would like to thank Chuck LaMattina, president of Grace Ministry USA, who has helped edit *The Unity of the Spirit* for the last two years and has proved invaluable to me in this respect as well as in his friendship over the years. Unfortunately, the demands of Chuck's own ministry have grown so much that he no longer will be able to help in the editing process, though thankfully, he will continue to contribute his much-loved articles. I would also like to thank all of the members of Grace Ministry for their prayerful support of this publication.

I'd also like to thank my friend and brother in Christ, Adam Kleczkowski for continuing to do such an excellent job administering our web-site at:

www.unity-of-spirit.org

Adam is a very busy man with a professional job at Cambridge University in England and with a wife, Marta, and their four children who are home-schooled – plus, another child on the way! Adam has also developed his own web-site on the proper education of Christian children. This web-site can be accessed through our web-site above.

Finally, I would like to thank the many readers and fellowships who send postcards, letters, e-mails, and contributions to us to help support the newsletter and foundation. Please accept my thanks and know that every communication and, especially, every prayer on our behalf is greatly appreciated. Any help that our newsletter offers to individuals or fellowships in helping the body of Christ to grow together in knowledge and love makes all the effort worthwhile. As time moves onward toward our Lord's return our mission continues to be the same: to help God's people to grow in understanding the truth of God's Word as well as to grow together as God's family in "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Richie Temple

Notes & Quotes on the Bible

In the Beginning

There are few more controversial chapters in the entire Bible than the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis. However, if one reads the Bible from the perspective that it is indeed inspired by God, it should be possible to find broad agreement amongst Christians on the fundamental, or first, principles that these chapters set forth. Most Bible believing Christians would agree that the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis set forth the foundational truths for understanding the rest of the Bible. In fact, the truths taught in these chapters are confirmed over and over again both in the pages of the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures, including by Christ himself. In short, to understand the origins of life, the universe, and God's purposes for both mankind and his entire creation we simply *must* have a firm understanding of the creation account of Genesis chapters one through three.

Having been a student of the Bible for some 30 years now I would like to offer my own views on the proper understanding of these chapters. At the same time, I would also like to invite our readers to send articles and letters about what they have learned about these chapters in Genesis for possible publication in a future issue of *The Unity of the Spirit* devoted entirely to this subject.

Fundamental Principles of Interpretation

Let me begin by stating a few basic and fundamental principles of biblical interpretation that should be kept in the forefront of our minds whenever we read the Bible:

1. All Scripture is **inspired by God**, including Genesis 1-3. This truth is first set forth in the Old Testament and then later confirmed by Christ himself and the NT writers.
2. All biblical writings must be understood according to the **original intent** of the biblical writer and should not be changed in order to fit modern conceptions of either science, archeology, history, or any other field of learning. A biblical text means what the writer meant for it to mean, plain and simple. The best way to begin to understand any

section of scripture is to read it over and over and many times so as to gain an overall feel of the big picture and of the main ideas that are being conveyed.

3. All languages and literature express ideas in a combination of both **literal and figurative** language. Where the language is literal the meaning is to be taken plainly as set forth. However, figurative language must be understood according the literary conceptions or imagery of the time of the writer. Figurative language, however, is no less true than literal language. It emphasizes or calls attention to facts or truths that would otherwise be much less meaningful to us, or else, could even be beyond our understanding in a literal sense. We use figurative language every day and we do so in order to express truths or facts in ways that are more vivid or expressive than the literal statement or facts themselves would be understood. G.B. Caird's book *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* is extremely helpful in understanding the usage of figurative language in the Bible. I highly recommend it.

4. No one particular biblical passage necessarily presents **all the truth** concerning any biblical event or topic. As with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, any one particular biblical passage only presents that particular narrative or truth from one perspective. A fuller perspective can be gained from other biblical passages relating to the same topic. This is true when comparing Genesis one and two with each other and is also true when many other biblical passages about creation are compared.

5. Biblical revelation is **progressive**. It begins with an ancient understanding about God and his purposes and progresses throughout the Old Testament until the Word is made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ as recorded in the pages of the New Testament. Only with the coming of Jesus Christ is the invisible God and his true and ultimate purposes for mankind fully revealed. It is "in Christ" that the Old Testament "shadow" is removed and the true "reality" revealed in its fullest sense.

First Principles of Genesis Chapters 1-3

On the basis of these fundamental principles of biblical interpretation I will now set forth what I believe to be some first principles, or fundamental beliefs, that Genesis sets forth. These are broad

principles which I believe that most Christians can, and do, agree on:

1. There is one and only one true God.
2. God is a sovereign God who existed before the creation of the heavens and the earth and before the creation of all other forms of life: animal or human.
3. God created the heavens and earth and all that is within them according to his own divine purpose and plan – not arbitrarily, capriciously, or through chance.
4. God’s creative acts were carried out through his spoken Word.
5. The crowning event of God’s creation was the creation of mankind - created in God’s own image and given the responsibility of ruling over the earth in accordance with God’s will.
6. God’s original creation was very good.
7. God’s creation and God’s relationship with mankind was corrupted by sin and its consequences, including death.

I will stop here because I think that these basic truths are pretty much all-inclusive of the first principles that could be, and are, agreed on by most Christian believers. In any interpretation or study of Genesis chapters 1-3 these truths should be fundamental. Most other truths could be characterized as details which may, to some degree, depend on how much of the language of these chapters is meant to be understood literally or figuratively.

Pictorial Language and Figurative Expressions in Genesis Chapters One through Three

As with most Christians who have been students of the Bible for many years I am well aware of the controversies amongst sincere Christian believers about literal vs. figurative language in the Bible. However, I will only remind our readers that all languages consist of both literal and figurative language. To say that any particular expression in a language is figurative does not lessen the truth that it conveys; on the contrary, figurative language can, at times, make truth more vivid or real than literal language. I list below some examples that I believe

indicate the usage of figurative language or imagery in the first three chapters of Genesis:

1. The first two verses of Gen. 1 have quite a few features in them that could be intended to be a pictorial presentation of God’s preparation for creating the heavens and earth in six days. First, Gen. 1:1-2 can be translated in at least three different ways and can also be understood in at least three different ways. The traditional rendering as reflected in the KJV, NKJV, etc. states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void ...” The second possible translation which is reflected in many modern translations such as the NRSV and the NAB says, “In the beginning *when* God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void ...” These two translations leave open the possibility of two possible understandings of Gen. 1:1-2. The first is that Gen. 1:1 be taken as God’s first creative act. Verse 2 would be the result of that creative act – an earth that is formless and void. Then verses 3ff would be the setting in order of God’s creation through forming and filling the heavens and earth. The second option would be that 1:1-2 is a preface to the entire account of creation in six days and that the creation account begins with an already existing earth, though formless and void. The NIV translation is a third option and it reads, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty...” This translation could be interpreted either way as the NIV translators acknowledge. If Gen. 1:1-2 *is* a preface – which most scholars believe is likely - then verses 1-2 may show God’s creative activity beginning with an earth that is already formless and void existing before the creation of the heavens and earth in six days beginning with verse 3. This would fit with the picture of the Spirit of God “hovering” or “brooding” over the waters – in apparent anticipation of God’s creative acts beginning at verse 3. This would also mean that the earth existing in a formless and void state would be unexplained and thus leave the origins of the earth to an indeterminate past. In other words, when Gen. 1:1-2 begins both God and the earth already exist. This doesn’t mean that God did not create the earth – that would contradict other

biblical passages – but it does leave that original creation of the earth to an indeterminate past. This imagery is similar in some respects to other ancient creation stories – though with many important differences as well, especially, the truth of a personal, loving, and caring God bringing his creation into existence according a godly and orderly plan. The vivid imagery of Genesis 1-3 would have fit well in the thought world of the ancient world and it would have been well understood by the people of Israel who first read this account. Readers are urged to compare the different Bible versions of Gen. 1:1-2 and the comments in study Bibles and commentaries for further details.

2. Genesis chapter one teaches that God created the heavens and earth in six days and rested on the seventh. I believe this record to be true and it is confirmed at other places in the Bible (e.g. Ex. 20:11). These seven days of Genesis may certainly be literal days of 24 hours each; however, they also may simply be representative of a larger pictorial presentation of the whole of God's creative work. This is especially indicated by the correspondence of days 1 with 3, 2 with 5, and 3 with 6 where the initial creative acts "form" and the corresponding days "fill." There are also problems with having a solar 24-hour day before the fourth day in which the sun is created. At any rate, such a possible figurative understanding would not mean that it is untrue to say that the world was created in 6 days and on the 7th God rested. There simply may be more behind this language than originally meets the eye, i.e., it may in some sense be expressing truth in a figurative or pictorial manner according to the understanding of the people to whom this was originally written.
3. Genesis 1:6 speaks of an "expanse" or "dome" which God called "heaven" or "sky". This seems to portray a primitive understanding of the universe in a way in which it would be viewed from a human perspective and thus understood by ancient man.
4. God seems to announce major decisions to his heavenly council of angels ("let us" Gen. 1:26, 3:22). Though there are other possible interpretations of these verses the heavenly

council interpretation seems most likely. This seems to emphasize the solemnity of these decisions and presents a picture of God being surrounded by his heavenly council – a heavenly council that *already* exists when God creates the heavens and earth in six days (Cf. Prov. 8 "wisdom" and Job 38:7 "angels" or "sons of God" being present at creation). The point here is that God's creative activity of Gen. 1 *presupposes* the existence of angels before the 6 days of creation, and possibly presupposes the existence of the earth as well, though without form and void and covered by waters.

5. The word "man" (Heb. adam) seems to be a word play all the way through Genesis 1-3. In fact, it seems to represent a possible blending of a historical "first man" with a symbolic "the [representative] man" or "everyman" – a fact brought out by many Bible scholars through the years. (There are also plays on words of other biblical names throughout Genesis and the Bible). In addition, after "the man's" expulsion from the Garden of Eden in Gen. 3, chapter 4 seems to relate the account of Adam's children as though there are other people present already on the earth – e.g., the land of Nod (Gen. 4:16-17). This type of literary device would fit well in the literature of the ancient world. It should be emphasized, however, that the NT regards Adam both as a *real* man, the *first* man, and the *representative* man.
6. Genesis 3:8 depicts God as "walking in the garden in the cool of the day". Once again, this must be figurative language because it does not accord well with what the New Testament teaches us about the true nature of God – that is, that he is spirit, invisible, and without form. In fact, though the Old Testament speaks several times of seeing God, the New Testament insists that in reality God is a God "whom no one has seen or can see" (I Tim. 6).
7. The serpent of Genesis three is almost certainly imagery behind which Satan stands as the New Testament specifically points out. In fact, Gen. 3 is simply loaded with figurative expressions and language throughout.
8. Finally, according to Gen. 3:23-24, God drove man out of the Garden of Eden and "placed on east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a

flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” This passage is loaded with imagery and if we were to take it literally we would have to conclude that the Garden of Eden still exists somewhere on earth today (modern Iraq?!) - being guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth. This is not likely, nor is there any evidence that any believer in the Bible – Old Testament or New – considered that to be the case.

I will stop listing possible figurative elements of Gen. 1-3 here since I’m simply endeavoring to set forth in this article both *first principles* and *possibilities* of figurative language in Gen. 1-3 based on the biblical text itself. I will leave those interested with a few suggestions for Study Bibles and commentaries to consult on Gen.

Chapters 1-3:

1. Study Bibles:

The NIV Study Bible and *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, based on the NRSV, have excellent and both somewhat complimentary and contrasting notes on Gen. 1-3. In addition, I also highly recommend the Roman Catholic *The New Jerusalem Study Bible*. All of these Study Bibles are loaded with helpful and insightful information based on the original Hebrew text. The scholars who made these Study Bibles are amongst the leading Old Testament scholars in the world and there is much to be gained by studying and comparing their comments. An honest student of the Bible should not be afraid of exploring the truths set forth in Genesis from varying points of view.

2. Commentaries:

The best commentaries I know of on Genesis are the superb *Jewish Publications Society (JPS) Commentary on Genesis*, by Nahum Sarna, and *The New International Commentary of the Old Testament, Genesis, Vol. I* by Victor Hamilton. The first of these is extremely well done and, though expensive, is well worth the money for anyone who is interested in the details of Genesis. Sarna is a renowned Old Testament scholar and the structure of the commentary based on the Hebrew text is extremely unique, enlightening, and interesting. On a simpler level I would recommend the commentary on Genesis in the Tyndale Old Testament series which is not as detailed as the others but offers sane commentary and good background information by its author Derek Kidner. But there are lots of other commentaries as well and the student of the Bible interested in this topic can either browse in bookstores or browse on-line at CBD, for example, to decide about these commentaries.

Finally, I invite all comment and articles on this very important subject and hope to be able to publish some of the best of them in a future issue of this newsletter.

Richie Temple

[All books mentioned in this issue are available from CBD at www.Christianbooks.com or other on-line book sellers]

Note: All articles in *The Unity of the Spirit* may be copied or translated. To republish in other forms write the foundation. Comments, letters and manuscripts are encouraged.

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