

IN RESPONSE – THE DIVINE DYNAMIC, PART ONE

by Dennis Prutow

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Over the years, folks within congregations I've had the privilege of serving have inevitably expressed appreciation for sermons where they plainly saw the connection between the Old and New Testaments. Sermons based on texts in Deuteronomy quoted in the New Testament are no exception. My own family eagerly anticipated getting back to these sermons and ones like them.

At the same time, along with the special interest in messages connecting the Old and New Testaments, there seems to be a special power attending such messages. As mentioned in our series last month on Ephesians 4:4-6, John Eadie comments,

Seven times does he [Paul] use the epithet "One." The church is one body, having one Spirit in it, and one Lord over it; then its inner relations and outer ordinances are one too; its calling has attached to it one hope; its means of union to Him is one faith; its dedication is one baptism: and all this unity is but the impress of the great primal unity—one God. His unity stamps an image of itself on that scheme which originated in Him, and issues in His glory.¹

God Himself impresses the image of His unity on the scheme, the proclamation and confirmation of the gospel, coming from Him and issuing in His glory.

There is therefore, resident in the hermeneutic, not only direction in interpreting Scripture, there is a dynamic powered by God for His glory. It is this dynamic that interests us more fully in this short series. It is a dynamic rooted in the unity of the Trinity, expressed in the one faith we preach, and manifested in unity of the one body of Christ.

Here are our objectives. *First*, we shall see that unity is at the center and core of the faith because sin manifests itself with discord and disunity. *Second*, we shall see that the answer to sin, Jesus Christ, exemplifies the biblical hermeneutic, the unity of the Testaments and thus the unity of the faith. *Third*, we shall also

see that the work of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection was accomplished in order to produce a unity and love within God's people comparable to the unity that exists within the Trinity. *Fourth*, and finally, we shall see that this unity of the Spirit is the principle witness of the church to a lost world that the Father did indeed send Jesus Christ into the world for sinners.

In all of this, we might receive the criticism that we want to sacrifice truth for the sake of unity. This is certainly not the case. We are dealing with the truth of Scripture. We are laying out the biblical hermeneutic. God manifested this truth and designed this hermeneutic to *produce unity*. To have the truth, to live the truth, and to teach the truth is essential to unity. Paul puts it plainly. "Pastors and teachers [exist], for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Unity of the faith is coordinate to a proper "knowledge of the Son of God" which leads the church into being "a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

The obverse is the discord and disunity of the world born of sin that looks back to the garden. God said to the serpent, "I will put *enmity* between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed"² (Genesis 3:15). The word used in the Septuagint and translated *enmity* is often used in the New Testament. This *enmity* is a deed of the flesh.³ The work of Christ removes this *enmity*, hostility, and discord.

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; having abolished in his flesh the *enmity*..., that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the en-

mity thereby: and He came and preached peace...."⁴ (Ephesians 2:14-17). God introduces *enmity*. Christ slays *enmity* and hostility. He brings peace and unity.

Witness the confusion of language God brought upon humankind.

The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city (Genesis 11:6-8).

There was essential unity among the people of the world. "They are one people." This unity was sustained because, as Scripture says, "They all have one language" (Authorized Version).

God confounded this unity because the bent of human hearts was in opposition to Him. God introduced disunity among those at *enmity* against Him. How? "Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Disunity ensues when there is lack of communication and lack of understanding.

Pentecost bridges the communications gap and brings people together. The apostles preached and "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). Unity is restored as we learn and speak the language of the gospel.

In these two ways we plainly see that overthrowing hostility and establishing unity is at the center of Christianity.

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¹ John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: James and Clock Christian Publishing Company, 1977), 275.

² Italics added. Septuagint: kai. eqran qhsw aua. meson sou kai. aua. meson thj gunaikoj kai. aua. meson tou spermatoj sou kai. aua. meson tou spermatoj authj

³ GKNT: eidwolatRIA(fARNAKEIA(eqRAI(erij(zhloj(qumi(eriqeiAi(dicostasiai(aireseij(

⁴ GKNT: Autoj gar estin h' eirhnh hinh(o' poihsaj ta. anfotera ej kai. to. mesotoicon tou/ fragnou/ lusaj(thn eqran en th/ sarki. autou/... iha... kai. apokatalaxh touj anfoterouj en ehi. swmati tw/ qew/ dia. tou/ staurou/ apokteinaj thn eqran en autw/ kai. eqwn euhgelisato eirhnhn....

IN RESPONSE – THE DIVINE DYNAMIC, PART TWO

by Dennis Prutow

We now see that the answer to sin and disunity, Jesus Christ, exemplifies the biblical hermeneutic, the unity of the Testaments and thus the unity of the faith. We go to Leviticus 16 and the narrative outlining the procedures used on the Day of Atonement. Matthew Henry gives an outline of the chapter.

In this chapter we have the institution of the annual solemnity of the day of atonement, or expiation, which had as much gospel in it as perhaps any of the appointments of the ceremonial law, as appears by the reference the apostle make to it, Heb. ix. 7, &c.... The whole service of the day is committed to the high priest. I. He must never come into the most holy place but upon this day, ver. 1, 2. II. He must come dressed in linen garments, ver. 9. III. He must bring a sin-offering and a burnt-offering for himself (ver.3), offer his sin-offering (ver. 6-11), then go within the veil with some of the blood of his sin-offering, burn incense, and sprinkle the blood before the mercy-seat, ver. 12-14. IV. Two goats must be provided for the people, lots cast upon them, and, 1. One of them must be a sin-offering for the people (ver. 5, 7-9), and the blood of it must be sprinkled before the mercy-seat (ver. 15-17), and then some of the blood of both the sin-offerings must be sprinkled upon the altar, ver. 18, 19. 2. The other must be a scape-goat (ver. 10), the sins of Israel must be confessed over him, and then he must be sent away into the wilderness (ver. 20-22), and he that brought him away must be ceremonially unclean, ver. 26.¹

Note this sequence. “Aaron shall offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household” (Leviticus 16:6). First Aaron makes sacrifice for himself and for his household, that is the priests. “Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do

with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat” (Leviticus 16:15). Matthew Henry observes, “‘Now,’ say the Jews, ‘he must again put his hands on the head of the bullock, and repeat the confession and supplication he had before made, and kill the bullock with his own hands, to make atonement for himself first (for how could he make reconciliation for the sins of the people till he was himself first reconciled?)....’”²

Christ makes a significant statement along this line in John 17:19. Regarding the disciples He remarks, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”³ Literally this text says, “And for them I sanctify Myself in order that they may be and remain sanctified in truth.” As the high priest of Israel prepares himself for the work of making reconciliation for the people, so Christ also sanctifies Himself for the purpose of sanctifying others.

Calvin spells it out for us.

By these words He explains more clearly from what source that sanctification flows which is accomplished in us by the teaching of the gospel. It is because He consecrated Himself to the Father that His holiness might come to us. For as the blessing is spread to the whole harvest from the first-fruits, so God’s Spirit cleanses us by the holiness of Christ and makes us partakers of it.⁴

The writer to the Hebrews confirms this thought. Although Christ did not need to offer a sacrifice for sins for Himself, there was indeed a certain process of sanctification in preparation for His more specific priestly work. Note Hebrews 2:17. “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

² Ibid., p. 505.

³ GkNT, *kai. uper autwñ egw. agiazw emauton(iñh wsin kai. autoi. hgiasmnoi en athqeia*

⁴ John Calvin, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 2 vols., T. H. L. Parker, trans., Torrance and Torrance, Eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2:146.

As Aaron prepared himself to make propitiation for the people in making sacrifice for Himself, it was necessary for Christ to be made like us in every respect, including temptation, in order to be an adequate high priest.

Hebrews 5:8-9 adds this thought. “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” Christ was perfected as a proper sacrifice through His training in obedience.

Note again the similarities of description between Aaron and Christ. With regard to Aaron, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness” (Hebrews 5:1-2). With regard to Christ, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus Christ is the High Priest foreshadowed by Aaron.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11-12).

We see that Jesus Christ, the answer to sin, the answer to the hostility and disunity we reviewed in the last lesson, exemplifies the unity of the Testaments and therefore the unity of the faith we have been discussing. He is the unity of Jew and Gentile and the unity of the people of God. “He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” (Ephesians 2:14). He personifies the hermeneutic of one faith and one body.

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¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (Westwood, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 1:504.

IN RESPONSE – THE DIVINE DYNAMIC, PART THREE

by Dennis Prutow

We have seen a major outcome of the fall and sin is hostility and disunity. Christ is the remedy to sin and to the hostility of sin. Christ therefore personifies the oneness and unity of the gospel, the unity of the faith we preach, and the oneness of the body into which we are baptized. We move to our third point. The work of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection was accomplished in order to produce a unity and love within God's people comparable to the unity that exists within the Trinity. We've already made reference to John 17.

John 17:11 presents our theme. "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are."¹ Jesus Christ prays for His disciples that they would be one. This is "oneness of will and spirit"² as the Father and the Son are one in will and Spirit.

Calvin explains the text this way. "For those whom the heavenly Father has decreed to keep He collects into a holy unity of faith and the Spirit. But, because it is not enough for men to agree in general, He adds the phrase *even as we are*. Our unity will be truly happy when it bears the image of God the Father and of Christ, as the wax takes the form of the seal impressed upon it."³

This metaphor is similar to the idea John Eadie presents in his exposition of Ephesians 4:4-6. God's "unity stamps an image of itself on that scheme which originated in Him, and issues in His glory."⁴ A part of that scheme is the prayer of Christ for the unity of His people like that of the Trinity.

John 17:20-21 continues Christ's prayer. "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in

Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."⁵ As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are recipients of the words of the apostles. The prayer of Christ is for us.

Christ prays that we will also be one. "He again places the end of our happiness in unity, and justly. For the ruin of the human race is that, alienated from God, it is also broken and scattered in itself. Conversely, therefore, its restoration lies in its proper coalescence in one body...."⁶ This is the exact idea we presented in Part 1 of this series.

The unity for which Christ prays reflects the unity within the godhead.

To comprehend aright what is meant that Christ and the Father are one, take care not to deprive Christ of His person as a mediator. But consider Him as He is the head of the church, and join Him to His members. Thus the connexion will best be preserved; that, if the unity of the Son with the Father is not to be fruitless and useless, its power must be diffused through the whole body of believers. From this, too, we infer that we are one with Christ; not because He transfers His substance to us, but because by the power of His Spirit He communicates to us His life and all the blessing He has received from the Father.⁷

Christ prays, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me" (John 17:22-23).⁸ Part of this unity is indeed the im-

press of God's image upon humanity. "Our happiness lies in having God's image, which was blotted out by sin, restored and reformed in us. Christ is not only, as the eternal Word of God, His lively image (*imago*), but even on His human nature, which He has in common with us, the imprint (effigies) of the Father's glory has been engraved, that He might transform His members to it."⁹

We might pursue this further by looking in depth at Genesis 1:27. Here, unity within the human family is beyond doubt a part of the image of God impressed upon humanity. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Sin ruptures this unity. Redemption restores unity.

Christ sanctifies Himself in order to sanctify His people. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19). The truth is manifest. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).¹⁰

Christ personifies the unity of the faith and the oneness of the body. Christ's work in sanctifying Himself fulfills the precursory ministry of the high Priest in Israel and thus spans the Testaments. He is therefore the personification of the Divine method of biblical interpretation. He overthrows sin and restores the original union with the Father and unity among believers. His is the one body with which we are united through one faith on the basis His one sacrifice. *The main point in all of this is that the Divine dynamic resides in and manifests itself through the witness restored by divinely produced unity.*

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¹ GkNT, kai.ouketi eimi. en tw| kosmw| kai. autoi. en tw| kosmw| eisin(kagw. proj se. erconai Pater agie(thrhson autouj en tw| onomati, sou w| dedwkaj moi(iha wsin eh kaqwj hneijA

² A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1930), 4:75.

³ Calvin, 2:142.

⁴ Eadie, 275. See Part 1.

⁵ GkNT, Ouvperi. toutwn de. erwtw| monon(ayla. kai. peri. twh pisteuontwn dia. tou/ logou autwn eij eme(iha pantej eh wsin(kaqwj suf pater(en emoi. kagw. en soi(iha kai. autoi. en hinih wsin(iha o' kosmj pisteuh| ofi su, me apesteilajA

⁶ Calvin, 147-148.

⁷ Calvin, 148.

⁸ GkNT, kagw. thn doxan hjh dedwkaj moi dedwka autoij(iha wsin eh kaqwj hneij eh\ egw. en au toij kai. su. en emoi(iha wsin teteleiwmenoi eij

eh(iha ginwskh| o' kosmoj ofi su, me apesteilaj kai. hgaphsaj autouj kaqwj eme. hgaphsajA

⁹ Calvin, 149.

¹⁰ See "In Response," January, 2000 for our discussion of this text as the Divine hermeneutic infused with the Divine dynamic.

IN RESPONSE – THE DIVINE DYNAMIC, PART FOUR

by Dennis Prutow

Two points are before us in this lesson. First, we shall see the unity of the Spirit is the principle witness of the church to a lost world that the Father did indeed send Jesus Christ into the world for sinners. Second, we shall tie our argument together in order to see that, what we are calling the biblical and divine hermeneutic, is central to this witness. This is the case if we expect divine power or the Divine dynamic to attend the teaching and preaching of the Word.

Sin brings hostility and disunity. Jesus Christ is the answer to sin. He destroys hostility and restores unity. This unity is a powerful witness. Jesus prays for His immediate disciples and for those who follow them. “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21).¹

The disciples are to be one. The pattern of this unity is the Trinity. God restores His image within us. He does so through the preaching and teaching of the word of the apostles. When the impress of God’s image is upon the people, there is unity. The planned outcome of this unity is a witness to the world. The witness of unity comes about “so that [in order that], the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Here is a witness born of the Spirit. “When believers are united in the faith and present a common front to the world, they exert power and influence.”²

This influence is a witness for the truth and divine nature of the mission of Jesus Christ. We must not underestimate the impact, force, and power of this witness. After all, “the consequence of the spiritual unity of Christians, as indicated

in their common love for one another, is that the world will at last be convinced (cf. 16⁸) that the mission of Jesus was divine, and that He is ‘the Savior of the world’ (4⁴²).”³ As Matthew Henry says, “Now Christ shows...the good fruit of the church’s oneness; it will be an evidence of the truth of Christianity, and a means of bringing many to embrace it.”⁴

Our Lord continues His prayer. “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me” (John 17:22-23).⁵

Jesus gives the specific purpose of the unity impressed upon the church by the Divine image. It is “so that [in order that] the world may know You [the Father] sent Me.” “By this [unity] it will appear that Christ was sent of God, and that His doctrine was divine, in that his religion prevails to join so many of different capacities, tempers, and interests in other things, in one body by faith, with one heart of love.”⁶

We note *how* God places the impress of His Divine image upon the church. Christ tells us. “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20). It is through the word of the apostles presented by those sent to proclaim that word to men and women (Romans 10:14-15). The witness for which Jesus prays comes about when we proclaim the words of the apostles and prophets. This immediately brings us to the question of biblical interpretation and biblical preaching.

We maintain there is a biblical method of interpretation. There is also biblical preaching rooted in the framework of this

biblical methodology. If we proclaim the words of the apostles, we must follow their methodology in our proclamation. *First*, the Bible is bound together by one covenant, the covenant of grace. *Second*, because there is one covenant, there is also one gospel. *Third*, because there is one covenant of grace and one gospel, there is one church. *Fourth*, there is one covenant, one gospel, and one church, and most importantly, there is one God.⁷ We added to this framework for preaching, the declaration of Paul in Ephesians 4:4-6. “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*”⁸

We must self-consciously preach and teach the words of the apostles out of this framework. As we do so, God’s “unity stamps an image of itself on that scheme which originated in Him, and issues in His glory.”⁹ God impresses His unity upon the preaching and teaching itself, upon the church formed as an outcome of this preaching and teaching, and upon the leadership developed as a result of this preaching and teaching. God works in, over, and through all that is done within the church. A witness emerges. The church confirms the gospel in its life. The world knows the Father sent His Son into the world for sinners.

Here is a dynamic over which we easily skip. God speaks through His Word. Yet we miss a depth of power when we do not communicate the connection between Abraham, Paul, and our gospel. We miss a dynamic when we fail to connect the worship of Adam and Eve, Israel, the Church, and the New Jerusalem. The framework for preaching we have presented is the Divine dynamic. It produces unity leading to forceful witness to the world. This witness displays Jesus as the Savior sent by God. It does so in answer to the prayer of Christ, our advocate, mediator, and intercessor.

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⁷ See “In Response,” December, 1999.

⁸ See “In Response,” January, 2000.

⁹ Eadie.

¹ GkNT, Oupperi. toutwn de. erwtw/ monon(a)lla kai. peri. twh pisteuontwn dia. tou/ logou autwn eij emei(i)ha pantej eh wsin(kaqw) suf pater(en emoi. kagw. en soi(i)ha kai. autoi. en hini(wsin(i)ha o' kosmoj pisteuh) o)ti su, ne apesteilajA

² Willam Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 2:364.

³ J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 2:577.

⁴ Henry, 5:1165-1166.

⁵ GkNT, egw. en autoij kai. su. en emoi(i)ha wsin teteleiwmenoi eij eh(i)ha ginwskh) o' kosmoj o)ti su, ne apesteilaj kai. hgaphsaj autouj kaqw) emei. hgaphsajA

⁶ Henry, 5:1166.