

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 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.[\[1\]](#)[\[1\]](#)

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][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][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 enmity thereby: and He came and preached peace....”^{[4][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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^{[5][5]} GkNT, Ouv peri. tou,twn de. evrwtw/ mo,non(avlla. kai. peri. tw/n pisteuo,ntwn dia. tou/ lo,gou auvtw/n eivj evme,(i[na pa,ntej e]n w=sin(kaqw.j su,(pa,ter(evn evmoi. kavgw. evn soi,(i[na kai. auvtoi. evn h`mi/n w=sin(i[na o` ko,smoj pisteu,h] o[ti su, me avpe,steilajÅ

^{[6][6]} Calvin, 147-148.

^{[7][7]} Calvin, 148.

^{[8][8]} GkNT, kavgw. th.n do,xan h]n de,dwka,j moi de,dwka auvtoi/j(i[na w=sin e]n kaqw.j h`mei/j e[n\

evgw. evn auv toi/j kai. su. evn evmoi,(i[na w=sin teteleiwme,noi eivj e[n(i[na ginw,skh| o` ko,smoj o[ti su, me avpe,steilaj kai. hvga,phsaj auvtou.j kaqw.j evme. hvga,phsaj

[9][9] Calvin, 149.

[10][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

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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).[\[11\]](#)[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.”[\[12\]](#)[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).”[\[13\]](#)[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.”[\[14\]](#)[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).[\[15\]](#)[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.”[\[16\]](#)[\[6\]](#)

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 whom 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.[\[17\]](#)[\[7\]](#) We added to this framework for preaching, the declaration of the apostle 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.*”[\[18\]](#)[\[8\]](#)

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.”[\[19\]](#)[\[9\]](#) 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 comes to know the Father sent His Son into this lost 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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[1][1] John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneapolis: James and Clock Christian Publishing Company, 1977), 275.

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

[3][3] Calvin, 2:142.

[4][4] Eadie, 275. See Part 1.

[11][1] GkNT, Ouv peri. tou,twn de. evrwtw/ mo,non(avlla. kai. peri. tw/n pisteuo,ntwn dia. tou/ lo,gou auvtw/n eivj evme,(i[na pa,ntej e]n w=sin(kaqw.j su,(pa,ter(evn evmoi. kavgw. evn soi,(i[na kai. auvtoi. evn h`mi/n w=sin(i[na o` ko,smoj pisteu,h| o[ti su, me avpe,steilajÅ

[12][2] William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 2:364.

[13][3] J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 2:577.

[14][4] Henry, 5:1165-1166.

[15][5] GkNT, evgw. evn auvtoi/j kai. su. evn evmoi,(i[na w=sin teteleiwme,noi eivj e[n(i[na ginw,skh| o` ko,smoj o[ti su, me avpe,steilaj kai. hvga,phsaj auvtou.j kaqw..j evme. hvga,phsajÅ

[16][6] Henry, 5:1166.

[17][7] See "In Response," December, 1999.

[18][8] See "In Response," January, 2000.

[19][9] Eadie.