

Chapter II

Final Thoughts: A Plea for Unity

Ken Ham and Greg Hall

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (Jesus, in John 17:20–22; NIV).

We have taken a look at the state of Christian higher education in this book. The survey gave us dependable statistics to form logical conclusions. As a result, we have dared to question the very core and foundation of colleges functioning in the name of Christ. Reputation and pride is at stake. As often is the case, the first responses are accusations that we are being divisive, causing unnecessary conflict, and stirring waters that should be left alone. We are often told we should be concentrating on our unity in Christ alone. The accusations usually sound like this: “Only Christ should matter and those elements of the gospel message essential for salvation — and differing interpretations in Genesis should be acceptable and tolerated.”

But this view ignores a larger question — can we separate the centrality of Christ from the authority of His Word? Surely we would all agree that our unity should be centered in Christ. After all, it is only through faith in

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Jesus Christ that one can be saved. The question, however, is not whether we are saved, but what Christians should hold as being essential for Christian unity. The Christian Church can only know about Jesus Christ through His Word. If the Word of God is not an authoritative document, then how can we know that the message of Jesus and the gospel is reliable? It's easy to say wonderful statements about how Jesus is all we need for unity and quickly forget that Christ is not only the Christ of the Cross but also the giver of His Word. Shouldn't this then mean that we need to be united in the authority of the document He has given as His message?

What about the history that provides the foundational understanding for His gospel? Is it possible to de-unify the God of creation from the God of redemption by being willing to accept only one truth in the gospel while accepting the world's views in origins? The Bible tells us that the God of creation IS the God of redemption, so surely this means that unity in Jesus has much wider ramifications than many are realizing. Sadly, the modern Church has been very selective about what aspects of Jesus we are willing to be unified in. If the Church continues to go down a path that restricts Jesus simply to what we are willing to be unified in, we will end up with an undefined Christ.

Since the Apostles, the Church has increased in number and divided in doctrines and established denominational boundaries. America has over 20 Baptist denominations alone; each one is distinctive in its own emphases. Even within each of the evangelical denominations, we have numerous factions according to the persuasions of pastors, pew sitters, denominational leaders, and college faculties. Before any finger is pointed in the area of division, perhaps we should first admit to the distinctive characteristics we allow to divide us every day.

Many of those denominational differences disappear at Answers in Genesis (AiG) conferences. AiG staff routinely sees great cross-denominational unity as people are taught to defend their faith. People become excited when they can have increased confidence in His revealed Word, and greater understanding for His redemptive history recorded in His Word from the very first verse.

Answers in Genesis is a para-church ministry that has a specific calling to support the local church in defending the authority of the Word of God from the very first verse against the attacks of the world. Even when teaching people apologetics, AiG does so with the ultimate view of pointing to the person and work of Jesus Christ, and He can never be disjoined from the authority of His Word. Why teach people to defend the Bible simply for defense sake?

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After all, our only assurance and hope of salvation is in Jesus Christ. AiG's ultimate purpose and unifying factor is always Jesus, and He can never be disjoined from the authority of His Word.¹

It is Christ and His Word that uncovers the ugliness and consequences of our sin. Nobody likes to be exposed — because of the sinful nature within us. We desire to cling to our own foolishness rather than accept the truth that Christ has revealed to us in His Word. Every human struggles in this area and it really does expose the war we have with sin. It is this sin that we should struggle against as Paul does in Romans 7 and that we should be dead to as explained in Romans 6. Human pride often causes us to be greatly offended in the light of God's truth. This is why Christ Himself divided one against another (Luke 12:51). Nobody likes to be exposed.

One major and foundational area where God's Word is exposing the compromising positions of many Christian leaders today is in the area of biblical history in Genesis that relates to geology, astronomy, anthropology, biology, etc. This is also the area where the world's attack against the gospel of Jesus Christ is most heavily pointed.

A proper biblical defense of this attack will support and strengthen the Church to preach Christ and Him crucified. Our hearts should desire that the Church would preach the centrality of Christ with the strongest possible foundations, and not with a history that contradicts or causes someone to question the validity of the gospel message:

How do we know man is a sinner?

How do we know we are all sinners?

How do we know that death is the penalty for sin?

How do we know that God's Son became a man — the God/man,
Jesus Christ?

How do we know Jesus died and rose again physically?

How do we know Jesus paid the penalty for sin on the Cross?

We know because the Bible tells us so. Scripture is an accurate account of the redemptive history between God and His people. We know because we believe the *authority* in which this is revealed — the Bible. Biblical authority is therefore essential for Christian unity and foundational faith.

Jesus Himself teaches that He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Evangelical Christians should know this and rejoice in it. It wouldn't be difficult to get a room full of evangelical Christian leaders agreeing to and preaching the centrality of Jesus Christ in the message of Scripture. When it comes to accepting and preaching Jesus as the revealer and Creator, and

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everything that it means, unity starts to fray. Certainly the Bible testifies to Jesus being the revealer of truth. In John 1 we read that Jesus is the Word, is God, is light and life who created all things and became flesh. John 1 teaches us that Jesus is the revealer, the Creator, and the central point of redemption.

If Jesus is the pre-eminent, supreme revealer of truth, then the search for truth must start with His pre-eminence over man's philosophies. Our unity must come through Scriptures given to us by Jesus shedding light on this world, and not on man's interpretations of this world supposedly telling us what Jesus is saying. To do otherwise is essentially shifting the power of supremacy from Jesus to man. And this is something those committed to the centrality of Jesus cannot tolerate.

This begs a very important question: Is the Church today trying to find unity in Christ as the center of truth, without recognizing Him as the revealer of truth in the entirety of the biblical account — from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21?

Christ taught that truth is important. Today, however, one of the most common definitions of "Christian unity" revolves around a consensus of fallible man's opinion rather than the truth of God's infallible Word. Depending on which circles you are in, you will find varying levels of pressure to accept the consensus of opinion as truth. Particularly in today's academic circles, immense pressure is placed upon students to accept this consensus-centered view.

Every word of man must be viewed and scrutinized in the light of the revealed Word of God. While great respect should be given to our teachers, we must be careful that we are not placed in a situation similar to the time before the Reformation where it was proposed only "clergy" could understand the Bible. We must not allow the ideas of professors to become the final word. Nowhere in Scripture are we taught that unity comes through consensus of opinion. The truth of God trumps consensus every time.

It is in the biblical Book of John that we get the first key points of insight in answering these crucial issues. In John 17 Christ prays for the unity of the Church:

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

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I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified (John 17:11–19; NIV).

In verse 11, Jesus prays unity may be kept with the Apostles, as it is in the Trinity. The unity Jesus was looking for did not come from consensus. Jesus is talking about a unity that is already perfectly present in Christ; it is the *supremacy* of Christ.

In verses 17–19, He prays that we may be kept in the *truth* — *His* truth. Unity for the believer is full in Christ rather than something to be obtained by consensus of opinion. This unity is to be kept, not established. It is unity that is separate from this world, and maintained in the truth of Christ and His Word.

Is the division over the interpretation of Genesis a result of an earnest desire to be unified around the Word of God, or a desire to be unified around the words of sinful fallible human beings (regardless of whether they are highly qualified scientists or theologians)? Richard Baxter said:

Indeed, no truth is inconsistent with any other truth: but yet when two dark or doubtful points are compared together, it is hard to know which of them to reject. But here it is easy; nothing that contradicteth the true nature of God or man or any principle, must be held.²

Logic tells us that something cannot be both true and false at the same time, and truth is always consistent with itself. For the sake of unity, this logic particularly applies to the nature of God and man. God is holy, pure, and perfect. Man however has a heart that is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9; NKJV).

The only truth consistent with the nature of both God and man is the literal interpretation of the historical narrative in Genesis. Genesis tells us of a perfect and unblemished creation free of death, disease, or suffering. Scripture tells us that man is a creation of God. It tells us God’s creations were good. Therefore, evil and death cannot be a part of man’s beginning (or of any part of the creation for that matter), as it would contradict the truth of who God is.

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Death, thorns, carnivorous diet, a cursed ground, groaning physical creation, and eternal judgment are the consequences of sin. Such things were not in existence before the Fall. It is only this understanding that is consistent with the truth that Jesus came to physically die and then rise again to conquer the consequences of man's sin. Later Scripture also tells us that man is essentially evil, destined to die, and then face judgment for sin.

Back in chapter 1 we mentioned the theodicy of Dr. William Dembski (which is further elaborated on in the appendix). He comes up with what we consider to be a bizarre scenario to try to maintain "unity" on what God's Word teaches and "unity" on what fallible man teaches. In doing so, he creates division and undermines biblical authority. The question that must be answered is: Can that which contradicts God's Word really be considered truth?

Truth is important in unity; this is echoed and emphasized throughout Scripture. Consider Ephesians 4:11–13:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (NKJV).

It is the job of the officers in the Church to utilize the unity we have in the foundation of truth and lead us toward the fullness of Christ. This foundation is essential for Christian growth and Church leadership. We don't see that kind of unity today. Our survey certainly illustrates there is division, and sometimes division is actually necessary. But is it the right sort of division? Is it division for the sake of unity on God's Word? Or is it division for the sake of unity on man's word? Therein lies the issue. Sadly, the division we see in regard to Genesis really comes down to a unity many Christian academics want to have in regard to fallible man's word. This is the problem with the Church — and really has been the problem with man since Genesis 3 when the temptation was one of getting man to question God's Word, but decide truth for one's self (trusting man's word).

It is in Ephesians 4:14 that we find a very strong warning. We are to grow in the knowledge of Christ and His fullness "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (NKJV).

Unity is not only in Christ and His truth, but is maintained by committing to *that* truth and not being persuaded otherwise by men. In Colossians,

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a similar warning is given by Paul to a newly established church as he desires to keep a strong unity within:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ (Col. 2:8; NKJV).

You will not find millions of years or evolution anywhere in the text of Scripture. Nor can such teachings fit consistently into the text of Scripture. Yet those who have not allowed the intrusion of man's ideas of millions of years into the first chapter of Genesis are often accused of causing division. These beliefs are philosophies and "empty deceit" according to the "traditions of men." The Church is warned to be on the lookout for this and to shut the door to the compromise of human philosophies. Paul wrote to encourage them to keep the truth and maintain the unity.

To others, Paul wrote to rebuke them for divisions that were already among them. In 1 Corinthians we find a church that was full of contentions. Some were following Paul, others Apollos or Peter. There was in-fighting and factions and a general rebellion against God's truth. Paul spends considerable time discussing the difference between men and God when it comes to wisdom:

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1:20–25; NKJV).

Paul exhorts the Corinthians to come back to the essential truth of Christ and to unity within *that* truth, emphasizing that the true teaching of Christ was not compatible with the signs required by the Jews, or the man-centered philosophies of the Greeks.

To bring the unity of Christ to the Jews, Peter preached to them the gospel of Christ. We see a great example of this in the account of Pentecost in Acts 2. They already believed in one God and the history concerning Adam and Eve, the entrance of sin, and thus the need for a Savior and Messiah. The

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Jews, however, did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (there was division over this), but they had unity on all of the history that lead up to Jesus from creation (sin, the law, and the prophets foretelling the coming Messiah). The history was understood and the message of Jesus was consistent with the history. As a result of Peter's preaching, many were saved.

In Acts 17, Paul had a much more difficult challenge. Paul was preaching to the Greeks, with particular mention given to his encounter with the Epicureans and the Stoics. Neither group had any real understanding of the history as understood by the Jews. To offer unity in Christ, Paul first had to ground them in a new history (the same history the Jews understood). This was a new foundation of truth to enable them to understand who Jesus was and what He had done for them on the Cross.

The Epicureans must have found this to be a new revelation since they held to atheistic evolutionary philosophies. The Epicureans believed that all life came from the basic component of all matter and formed over long ages of time. Without a rewrite of their history, the Epicureans were lost to understand the truth of Christ. The message of Jesus made no sense to them without an understanding of what sin is and what it did to God's perfect creation — and thus their standing before a Holy Creator God as judge. As a result of Paul's foundational teaching on the true God and the true history of humanity as a lead up to the message of the Cross, some were saved.

How would Paul feel to see many in the Church today embracing a new version of Epicurean (Greek) philosophy and rewriting a history that undermines and contradicts the biblical truth of history within Genesis that points to Christ? Many Christian leaders and scholars are leading people in the Church back to the type of evolutionary philosophies of the Epicureans and compromising this with God's Word — a compromise with the very philosophies that were causing these Greeks to see the message of the Cross as mere foolishness.

In today's Church, the compromise with millions of years and evolution has undeniably increased the problem of division within the Church. It is time for the Church to again review the prayer of Christ in John 17 and commit to return to the keeping of the unity that is only in Christ. It is time to take heed of the warning in Colossians 2:8 and beware of the philosophies of men that keep us from the truth *that is in Christ*.

People have been persuaded into thinking that if they don't adhere to the consensus of the scientific and or theological establishment, they have checked their brains at the door. The many PhD scientists who do start with

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the truth of Scripture and use all of the principles of logic in operational science to confirm biblical history might have something to say about that.

In Christian academic settings today, there is a great appeal to experts as the authority. They say we need to follow Professor X, or Dr. Y on this point or that, seeking a unity around the words of an academic, instead of one based on the clear teaching of the Word of God. No matter the stature of a leader, the number of the consensus, or the multitude of letters in a title, our unity is not in man or his philosophies but in Christ and His truth. This is why Paul warned the Corinthians not to follow men even though he was one of them being mentioned with Cephas and Apollos.

This phenomenon of people following the teachings of so-called great men rather than Christ is not new. In studying the Puritan pastors of the 1600s, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones commented on the voluminous writings on Christian unity by John Owen. In relation to schisms in the Church, Dr. Lloyd-Jones offers the following in reference to Owen:

The trouble, as he points out repeatedly, over the whole question of schism is that people will defend the position that they are in. They shut their minds; they are not ready to listen, to be instructed, and to change.³

What Dr. Lloyd-Jones understood was that Owen in his day found that rather than being conformed to the truth that is in Christ and His Word, men were more likely to hold strong to their own belief. This is called pride.

The great divide in the Church today has its roots in this pride. Few people are able to admit error, even when it comes to biblical truth. Yet all want to rejoice and find unity in Christ. The Church is in need of those who will unite uncompromisingly on God's Word, because of the division caused by those who use man's fallible word to reinterpret Scripture. In doing such, we are really calling for a new reformation as it happened in the 16th century. Yes, we call for a new reformation in our churches and Christian academic institutions!

Our closing prayer echoes that of Christ. Throughout this book we have shown the division within the Body of Christ caused by the compromise of scriptural authority starting with the first verse. We see the division between the leadership of Christian colleges. We see it between the departments of respected Christian universities. And we see this division causing the same compromise that brought down once-strong institutions like Dartmouth and Princeton. Yes, we pray and strive not for division, but for unity, that we might all be one, in truth, as Jesus prayed we would be.

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God's grace to you all,
Ken Ham (with thanks to Steve Ham for his assistance in putting this chapter together)
Greg Hall

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (Jesus, in John 17:22–23; NIV).

Endnotes

1. It should be noted that Scripture, such as Romans 10:9, makes it clear that salvation is conditioned upon faith in Christ, not what a person believes about the age of the earth or evolution. Many born-again Christians do believe in millions of years and many also believe in evolution. AiG would not question their salvation when they testify to being born again as the Scripture defines, but challenge these people to understand that such acceptance of fallible man's ideas and reinterpreting parts of Scripture is an undermining of the authority of the Word of God. The consequences of this particularly show up in the next generation, who tend to open the door of undermining God's Word even further — until eventually generations arise who, by and large, reject biblical authority. This is what we observe across our Western world today.
2. Richard Baxter (1615–1691) *Christian Directory* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2008).
3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones discussing John Owen and his teaching on schisms, *Diversity in Unity* (London: A.G. Hasler and Co.), The Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference December 1963, p. 63.

Want to know which colleges were contacted as part of the ARG study? Visit www.creationcolleges.org and also find a growing list of Christian colleges we recommend you search out.

