

A Unifying Theory

It goes by several names, variously referred to as the Unified Field Theory or the Unification of Physics or The Ultimate Theory of the Universe. Albert Einstein spent the last 30 years of his life trying to prove it—and failed.

Just what is this grand Unification Theory?

Unified Field Theory, in physics, a theory that proposes to unify the four known interactions, or forces—the strong, electromagnetic, weak, and gravitational forces—by a simple set of general laws. Four distinct forces are known to control all the observed interactions in matter: gravitation, electromagnetism, the strong force (a short-range force that holds atomic nuclei together), and the weak force (the force responsible for slow nuclear processes, such as beta decay). The attempts to develop a unified field theory are grounded in the belief that all physical phenomena should ultimately be explainable by some underlying unity.

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This unification theory is, essentially, an attempt to explain the entirety of the universe—and everything that occurs within it—by one easily understandable law. A tall order, and, as the eminent theoretical physicist Professor Stephen W. Hawking points out, difficult to prove:

We could never be quite sure that we had indeed found the correct theory, since theories can't be proved. (*A Brief History of Time*, Bantam, 1988)

I would like to propose a different Grand Unification theory—one which can, by agreeable standards, be proved. That unifying theory would be this:

IN EVERYTHING,
GOD

This theory of mine (which, in truth, is not really a theory at all, since it can be backed up by Scripture and experience) is not animistic in nature, suggesting that God is actually *in* everything—as the animist might believe that a supreme being physically resides in every tree and rock and body of water.

But it is to say that for the Spiritual person, everything points to God. God is all in all, and if we so choose to seek Him, we will find Him wherever we look.



It isn't that we find ourselves bumping into God at every turn; it's not necessarily like running into an old friend we might happily meet on the street. Rather, it is like seeing and experiencing everything in our life as if through our own private "God Filter." The Spirit, in residence in our body, receives and translates every experience into a form that both glorifies God and illumines His character for us. So this "theory" has less to do with God's omnipresence, as it does His omni-influence.

Most people segment and segregate portions of their lives, ignoring the fact that everything points toward, or leads forward or back to, God. Most people would rather isolate the Spiritual part of their life—if it exists at all—literally restricting it to Sundays, or otherwise segregating it from their "secular" day-to-day activities.

If they spend forty hours during the week roofing houses, for example, that activity is, for them, separate from Sunday morning worship; like oil and water, cohabitating, but never mixing. That doesn't mean that for those forty hours they are despicable heathen, and on Sunday morning magically become sanctified saints. It is just that they see no obvious connection or relationship between what are to them disparate parts of their lives.

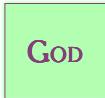
The Spiritual person, in contrast, welcomes into his life all that God is willing to reveal of Himself at any time. And what is that revelation? Oehler has said that this is

...the whole nature of God, by which He attests His personal presence in the relation into which He has entered with man, the divine self-manifestation, or the whole of that revealed side of the divine nature, which is turned towards man.

(*Commentary on the Old Testament* by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch)

This means then that the Spiritual person is always ready—even eager—to worship his or her God at any time. As God is revealed, He is worshipped: One cannot be illumined by the truth of God without, as a result, worshipping or praising the one just revealed. For what is revealed is not natural, but supernatural. The revelation of God—whether found inside a majestic cathedral or atop a roof littered with new shingles—should have the effect of bringing us to our knees in awe-struck adoration for the One who created not only us, but everything about us.

A new Unifying Theory?



The Fingerprint of God

GOD—THAT IS, GOD AS REPRESENTED BY any member of the Trinity of the Godhead—is an active participant in our lives. To imagine that one meets God only during weekly, corporate worship is a little like imagining that one is only bound by one's marriage vows once a year during the anniversary celebration; the rest of the year one is free to disregard the commitment to, or even the presence of, the marital partner.

It is easy in our present culture to practice a comfortable, reassuring arrogance about what God doesn't know. Many is the time I have been stumped by something my computer is doing—or not doing. Often I have wracked my brain, trying in vain to come up with the solution to a problem, for example, in the writing of a computer program. Why in the world won't the code segment

```
While P <> 0 do
  begin
    if P > 1 then
      WriteBit(copy(Str,1,pred(P)));
      Delete(Str,1,P);
      inc(X,pred(P));
      P := Pos('~',Str);
      Hi := not Hi;
    end;
```

do what I want? Why can't I get it to work properly?

Rarely, however, in the midst of my frustration over technical quandaries do I turn to my heavenly Father for help. Somewhere I, like many others, have picked up the arrogant concept that God, while useful for such things as emotional needs, interpersonal relationships or Scripture clarification, is surely befuddled by our

modern technology. I mean, how could some old man with a white beard, dressed in old-fashioned flowing robes, know anything about the modern computer and my misbehaving program? Well, He could, and He does, because *He's* the one who invented it.

"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things."

Acts 17:24-25

There is nothing in our world that God does not know, because there is nothing in our world that God did not create. Since He created it, everything in the world bears His fingerprints.

In the early eighteenth century, Antonio Stradivari created violins, violas and cellos that are still considered the very finest stringed instruments around. An accomplished musician, such as the violinist Itzhak Perlman, can hear and feel the tonal quality of a Stradivarius without even checking for the name of the manufacturer printed inside. The exquisite instrument itself bears the fingerprint—in this case, the sound—of the master craftsman. Likewise, the Spiritual person sees God all around, because everything bears His mark—the fingerprint of the creator...

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

We are free to disregard the signs of Him, but we do so by our own choice—and at our own risk. God has spread Himself around so liberally that we have no excuse not to discover Him.

He is in the breeze that cools us in the midst of summer heat. He is in the soft cooing of the baby, pleasant and content within its mother's arms. He is in the rhythmic lapping of small waves on the shore of the mountain lake, and the burbling song of the stream traveling over and around water-smoothed boulders. He is found in

the chatter and shared intimacies of old friends over a weathered picket fence. He is found in the crushing, incessant noise of the city, as well as in the bucolic stillness of the country glen.

God is near us in every tragedy and joy, every sorrow and ecstasy. His life surrounds our own, holding us up, nurturing, coaxing, chastising and encouraging. He is there when we are aware of Him, and He is there when we are not.

More than just a reassuring comfort, His presence actually describes God to us. He has left His fingerprint on everything about us—not just so that we would know that He is there, but that we might come to understand *who* is there. It is God's nature, His personality, His very essence that is there for the possessing, and we will remain something less than what we could be, until we avail ourselves of that knowledge.

The Eye of the Beholder

"...and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' "

Acts 17:26-28

GOD'S WORD, FILLED WITH MARVELOUS STORIES of men and women seeking after and finding Him, makes it clear that He desires close communion with His people. God wants to have a personal relationship with His children. To that end, He wants us to *look* for Him.

Last summer, Linda and I watched a young fawn grow out of his spots. At some time during most evenings the youngster would arrive with his mother in tow. They came for the saltlick, to drink from the pond, to munch fallen acorns, and to browse upon Linda's flowers and shrubs—but mostly they came because they knew that here they were safe.

The young fawn was a handful for his mother, always gamboling off, getting into trouble, and generally sticking his nose where it didn't belong. He hadn't the experience and maturity of his mother, so wasn't as cautious as he should be; he had not yet learned to be afraid. The young one was a little too eager to come snooping close to the house, not yet understanding that most people will not be his friend.

...if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us...

The doe was a good mother. She always kept at least one eye on her youngster and one eye out for danger. More experienced than her son, she heard potential danger in the snapping of twigs, in the flash of light-colored fabric through the windows of the house, in any sound she could not quickly identify.

The fawn's mother was a good protector. One evening Linda was out weeding her vegetable garden while I was in the house fixing dinner. Out the window I spied the doe and her fawn; they approached, rounded the corner of the pond, and headed through the woods toward the garden. There was no way for me to alert Linda to their presence without also alerting them, so I just waited to see what would happen.



The mother led the way toward the garden; soon I lost sight of her in the trees, but I could still see the fawn bringing up the rear. Suddenly the little one froze and his mother let loose with a loud snort—a clear sign that she had discovered my wife, and was expressing her displeasure over Linda's presence. After a few more indignant snorts from his mom, the fawn turned and ran back the way they had come, while his mother guarded his retreat.

When she made it back over the barbed-wire fence ahead of him, the little one faltered, not sure his legs would get him over the barrier. Hearing his frightened bleating, she returned to the fence, grunting encouragement, trying to convince him he could make it on his own. When the fawn decided he didn't even want to try, his mother leaped back over the fence and patiently led him to a place where he could get through without jumping over.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."

Matthew 10:29-31

We see what we will. Some may look upon that doe and fawn and see little more than pretty wildlife, a momentary amusement. Others may see a prime target through the sights of their shotgun. But I prefer to see God in the patient care and nurturing of that mother deer. I see how God watches over us, protects us—all the while trying to teach us lessons that will cause us to grow up healthy and strong.

Intimacy

THIRTY-TWO YEARS AGO, DURING THE WANING DAYS of my very young bachelorhood, I was stationed aboard the *U.S.S. Chicago*, just off the coast of Vietnam in the Tonkin Gulf. My even younger betrothed was back in Iowa, being distracted by college while she planned our impending nuptials.



It is true that I yearned for her, but I was nonetheless kept far from my beloved. She may have been constantly in my thoughts and dreams, but our moments together consisted entirely of written correspondence and, during the six-month period of the cruise, one aching brief phone call placed from the Philippines.

As a result of this and other periods of separation, by the time the ship finally docked in San Diego upon its return voyage, the young

God is indeed there. He is there as He is here and everywhere, not confined to a tree or stone, but free in the universe, near to everything, next to everyone, and through Jesus Christ immediately accessible to every loving heart. This truth is to the convinced Christian a source of deep comfort in sorrow and of steadfast assurance in all the varied experiences of his life. To him 'the practice of the presence of God' consists not of projecting an imaginary object from within his own mind and then seeking to realize its presence; it is rather to recognize the real presence of the One whom all sound theology declares to be already there, an objective entity, existing apart from any apprehension of Him on the part of His creatures. The resultant experience is not visionary but real.

(A.W. Tozer)

Our Father challenges us to learn His ways, so that we might know Him more intimately. But when we falter along the way, when we stumble—when we are too afraid to make that leap of faith—He patiently returns, takes us by the hand, and leads us to safety.

woman awaiting me on the pier was, in many respects, a stranger. We had dated for about a year prior to my entering the service, but since then had had only periodic visits to replenish the longing we felt for each other. So by the time our wedding date arrived, we had been mostly apart for more than a year.

Memories and photographs and hand-smudged letters written from the depths of a lonely heart cannot faithfully stand in for a loved one's physical presence. All that time apart meant that we had a lot of catching up to do. It meant that even though we loved each other deeply, there were still many things about each other that remained a mystery.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

Matthew 19:5-6

Linda and I have now been married thirty-two years. During those years the earlier pattern of separation has been mostly reversed: our almost constant time together has been only rarely interrupted by brief separations. As husband and wife, Linda and I have seen wondrous sights and have visited far-off lands; we have passed through times of great joy and withering sorrow; we have grown and shared and have faced side-by-side the many surprises that God has thrown our way. As a result, we now have a profound and intimate knowledge of each other. Where once there were mysteries, there is now a deep and abiding understanding. Distant longing has been replaced by the embodiment of God's mystical "oneness."

The Spiritual person longs for this same level of intimacy with the Lord. But, just as with Linda and me, such intimacy does not take place over great distances; one must draw near to the object of one's desire.

"For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart."

Jeremiah 24:6-7

Intimacy with the Father—and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit—is something that must be nurtured and cultivated, much like a boy and girl court, then begin building a lifetime relationship through shared experience. It does not happen overnight and it does not happen by accident. It is not naturally in the heart of man to see God in the objects, people and events which surround him.

Just as a man and woman do not necessarily become "one flesh" on their wedding night, the believer does not enjoy this level of intimacy with the Father on the day he or she accepts Christ. It comes into a life through practice and a deep-seated hunger to know this One who is at once Lord of the universe and keeper of the heart.

The Throbbing Heart of Religion

The doctrine of justification by faith—a biblical truth, and a blessed relief from sterile legalism and unavailing self-effort—has in our time fallen into evil company and been interpreted by many in such a manner as actually to bar men from the knowledge of God. The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless. Faith may now be exercised without a jar to the moral life and without embarrassment to the Adamic ego. Christ may be "received" without creating any special love for Him in the soul of the receiver. The man is "saved," but he is not hungry nor thirsty after God. In fact, he is specifically taught to be satisfied and is encouraged to be content with little.

The modern scientist has lost God amid the wonders of His world; we Christians are in real danger of losing God amid the wonders of His Word. We have almost forgotten that God is a person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can. It is inherent in personality to be able to know other personalities, but full knowledge of one personality by another cannot be achieved in one encounter. It is only after long and loving mental intercourse that the full possibilities of both can be explored.

All social intercourse between human beings is a response of personality to personality, grading upward from the most casual brush between man and man to the fullest, most intimate communion of which the

human soul is capable. Religion, so far as it is genuine, is in essence the response of created personalities to the creating personality, God. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

God is a person, and in the deep of His mighty nature He thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, desires, and suffers as any other person may. In making Himself known to us He stays by the familiar pattern of personality. He communicates with us through the avenues of our minds, our wills and our emotions. The continuous and unembarrassed interchange of love and thought between God and the soul of the redeemed man is the throbbing heart of New Testament religion.

This intercourse between God and the soul is known to us in conscious personal awareness. It is personal: it does not stay below the threshold of consciousness and work there unknown to the soul (as, for instance, infant baptism is thought by some to do), but comes within the field of awareness where the man can know it as he knows any other fact of experience.

You and I are in little (our sins excepted) what God is in large. Being made in His image we have within us the capacity to know Him.

(Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* [Christian Publications, 1982].)

*Speak, Lord, in the stillness, While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen, In expectancy.*

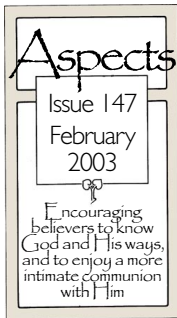
*Speak, O blessed Master, In this quiet hour;
Let me see Thy face, Lord, Feel Thy touch of Power.*

*For the words Thou speakest, They are life indeed;
Living bread from heaven, Now my spirit feed!*

*All to Thee is yielded, I am not my own;
Blissful, glad surrender, I am Thine alone.*

*Speak, Thy servant heareth, Be not silent, Lord;
Waits my soul upon Thee For the quickening word.*

*Fill me with the knowledge Of Thy glorious will;
All Thine own good pleasure In Thy child fulfill.
(E. May Grimes)*



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