

Let There Be Choice

By Christopher J. Patton

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Life constantly presents the necessity of making a choice. The paths of life are ever before us, and the flow of life forces a decision, since even making no decision leaves us with the one of default. This contrasting duality of yes and/or no, truth and/or lie, good and/or evil, old and/or new, left and/or right, black and/or white, light and/or darkness pervades the natural universe from the spin of an electron to life as we experience it in the flesh. This innate characteristic of life has been made necessary by God's gift to mankind of a free will.

Perhaps one of the more difficult aspects of living a spiritual life in the flesh is being able to spiritually discern the choices of our lives. Fortunately, this quandary is made clearer when we examine our lives through the dual perspectives of both the Torah and Testament. Like the dual hemispheres of our physical brains, effective spiritual thinking means using both the Old Covenant and the New Testament in order to understand the spiritual choices before us, and just like one hemisphere of the brain needs to dominate the other in order to avoid confusion of analysis and action, so the New Testament, being a commentary on the Old through the revelations of Christ's life and teaching, properly supersedes it as grace does the law and as love does discipline.

In Genesis we are introduced to the first Adam, who made the original choice for all mankind, and to a certain extent for the entirety of the natural creation (Genesis 1:28 & Romans 8:19-22). Paul writes that Jesus is the Second Adam who has restored to us the freedom to choose life because through Him we can receive the Holy Spirit, which is the Tree of Life and the promise of our resurrection from fleshly to spiritual body and life (I Corinthians 15:20-22, 42-49).

However, to most of the world spirituality consists of adjusting around to personal liking the fruit of the once chosen Tree (or Spirit) of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Remember this is one choice that was made for us by the First Adam. It is the default spirit all people are born with. It is the only one naturally accessed because it is the only one we can know without God's intervention. No mediator is required as all flesh are spiritually the sons of Adam and Eve, who surrendered their freedom of creation to Satan by listening to its (angels fallen and otherwise are asexual) lies, "You surely shall not die! . . . your eyes shall be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," (Genesis 3:4-5). Since Adam, Satan's lie of the divine spark born, and/or perhaps hidden, naturally within has pervaded the universal reach of the human race towards some need for spirituality. It appears as the immortal soul, as Chi or Gaia, or in the orient as the endless soul cycles of reincarnation.

Discovery, release, harnessing or coming into harmony with mankind's without exception inborn spirit of Good and Evil is the world's definition of spirituality. It focuses on the enhancement and/or control of the naturally cyclical spirit of mortal life and death. It is the false resurrection cycle worshipped by pagans from time immemorial. Paul calls it the worship of the creation instead of the Creator (Romans 1:20-25). The error lies in mistaking the image found in the physical creation for the spiritual reality of God.

Pervasive Spiritual Deception

Such a mistake of the ephemeral for the eternal is truly a matter of life or death. Let me illustrate with a few quotes taken from a pamphlet found in a local Protestant church entitled, "Talking With Your Kids About God and Faith" by Lisa O. Engelhardt and Dr. Lyn Sontag, Psy.D. On page three under a section titled, "Fear not" the authors write, "Rest assured, your child already has everything he needs for healthy spirituality. Like each of us, he has a divine spark within him, a kind of spiritual 'homing device' that calls him and leads him on a lifelong journey to the Sacred." Then they quote from Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick's book, Something More: Nurturing Your Child's Spiritual Growth. "Spirituality is not something we need to pump into our children . . . Like oxygen, it is freely available to each of us at every moment of life. Spirit is in every breath we draw; and so is spiritual nurture." Two paragraphs later Engelhardt and Sontag write, ". . . children are born earth worshippers. They enjoy a natural oneness with creation and have an innate love of nature."

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Salvation is found in the one doorway of Jesus only. Beware of secular messages subtly promoting environmental pantheism or spiritual self-help in the "release of the inner divinity" with the aid of "spirit guides" or angels. These messages pervade our "secular" world appearing in entertainment, self-help books and other psychological advice or counseling of many kinds, government school curricula, and all persuasions of political party planks and propaganda. The truth is that there is no such thing as "secular". Everyone is operating under the influence of a default spirit of error and arrogance.

In the Bible the natural spirit of man is called the breath (Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma*) of life (shared with animals). The original words for *spirit* are also translated *wind* or *breath* because they represent the unseen powers of atmospheric force and life force respectively. Obviously, there is a relationship between breath, the natural life force, and the mortal spirit of good and evil. The breath of life is like a stream of electromagnetic energy feeding our soul even as oxygen energizes our body. This spiritual force is defined by its unique modulation - equivalent to an electromagnetic field's frequency, wavelength, and speed of cycles.

Through Adam's choice, a permanent overlying presence of the spirit of the knowledge of good and evil has changed the neutral essence of God's original breath into Adam's nostrils to one that is an indivisible and shifting mixture of good and evil that always balances out in the end as death. It is the spirit of emptiness, the law of sin and death, the personally inherited and chosen old man ego or will of man. This is the mortal life of natural futility, the "vanity of vanities" (Ecclesiastes 1:2), which is fundamentally structured into the binary mathematics of creation. It is the zero option of the two choices given to all matter. The other option is, of course, one - the fullness of the Tree of Life.

The spirit of good and evil is at times alluded to as being the spirit or will of the flesh (John 1:13), the world (I Corinthians 2:12), or even of Satan. As "the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:1-3), the spirit of good and evil is the deadly legacy of Satan's original deception. It is a primary tool through which sin arises in the hearts of mankind. Satan and its demons are also powered by this spirit since their fall from the face of God. I believe that they selectively steal it from mortals in such a way as to shift winds of sin through the unstable and unfaithful, which is why the Bible calls mankind the "children of the devil" (I John 3:8-10) and sometimes attributes temptations of the flesh as coming from the devil.

This heritage from Adam and Eve is present in all men and women from birth's first breath. There is no escape: all are born to die. It is contrasted by the spirit of life eternal, which is the fullness of God, His presence, His Being, His Oneness, and we are not born with that. It comes from God who lives beyond the speed of light in the eternity beyond the realm of natural mortal existence born of woman, or even test tube, should it get that far. Indeed Jesus said that we must be "born again" (John 3:3-8), and He meant a spiritual birth sourced outside of ourselves.

We Shall Overcome in Christ

Christians are "born again" in God's forgiveness as a response to our repentance and mystical participation in the sacrifice of Jesus as our personal messiah (John 11:25-26; Romans 8:1-17). For the believer in Jesus, God's Holy Spirit is present as an eternal choice of becoming One with the Father and the Son (John 17:21), the new man decision that overcomes the born-with spirit of the flesh (Romans 7:14-8:28 & Ephesians 4:20-24).

Jesus is the only door to the earnest of eternal life, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also the way to the fullness of the abundant life that Jesus came to give us in the interim while we wait in hope. In contrast, the way of deception is one of fearful bondage to a demonic thief that promises life only to steal from us what mortal pleasure or existence we could enjoy, leaving us a certain heritage of death and destruction (John 10:9-10). Given the opportunity, the Holy Spirit will overpower through grace the constant

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modulation of the breath of life by the spirit of good and evil, thus replacing its influence over the physical life force to the healing of the body and to the attraction of physical blessings such as prosperity (James 5:14-16).

Therefore, the mortal spirituality of the world is an endless struggle between good and evil - both within the being of the individual as well as within a society, and/or between cultures or nations. But no matter how noble the cause, this struggle will always and can only, end in one way - the death of nothingness, also called nirvana in eastern religions.

This falsely eternal spirit is depicted everywhere in the natural religions and philosophies of man, all spawned by the Devil's original deception that in taking from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, mankind would take unto himself the spiritual nature of God. In fact this original sin imitated that of Lucifer fallen, the angel become the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4) that inspires men to become themselves the reflections of many false gods, rebellious human egos - each making a god after its own imaginations, picking and personally choosing its combination of what is good and what is evil rather than submitting to God's definition of the same by virtue of His divine nature. Its strategy is to get us so entangled in the world's struggle between relative goods and evils that we miss the humble way of escape in Christ towards the true revelation of the depths, heights, and mysteries of the goodness of God.

Contrary to the booklet written by sincere people trying to be helpful, the Bible teaches that children are not born with a divine spark within. The only thing divine about the natural life found in man animal and plant, is that God is the author, designer, Creator and Sustainer of all life. He is responsible for our opportunity to be born in the flesh, but He is also responsible for giving us in Jesus, our opportunity to re-make Adam and Eve's choice of trees for ourselves. In Jesus, the Second Adam, we can choose the Tree of Life, God's Holy Spirit, His divine Love as our own new identity. Instead of deciding what will be our good and evil, we create a new identity in how we exercise God's love in our lives.

The Holy Spirit will not be found naturally within. Our hearts are naturally rebellious and our minds veiled in independent arrogance from seeing God at work in the world, or even in our own lives (II Corinthians 3:10-4:11). Salvation or true spirituality is not innate, we must all seek repentance while it may be found and receive this divine gift of grace, undeserved, from God the Father through Jesus, our mediator. To believe otherwise is to be deceived, and we are counseled by Paul to "cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," (*ibid.* 7:1).

In applying Galatians 3:22-27, we teach our children the Law, the full Bible path towards Life until the time of their maturing separation in hopes for their Christian rebirth in repentance and baptism. We are to teach them that God is One, that we are to love Him with all our heart, soul and might in the protective culture of His word until Jesus comes to reveal Himself to them (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). We can't really pump it into them, but we can surround them with God's wisdom and love even as we lead them to Christ by the witness of our own lives and the community of the church.

Why has God allowed the world to be deceived? "For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all," (Romans 11:32). His mercy is for all, and "all" means "all", including the broadest definition of neighbor as well as you and me. Praise be to the Father of Mercies who has defeated the Father of Lies!