



# *The* Wonder Springs Chronicle

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## The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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## *The American Enigma*

Why did God put Adam and Eve in a garden?

Think about that as a deep metaphysical question of the ages.

Why not someplace else? It seems from the Genesis account that the whole world was not a garden. This garden in Eden was a special place on the surface of the newly created earth.

Before I answer that question, a little insight into this week's article. I have struggled with this concept since I was writing last week about origins. The title of this message is about an American enigma, it is also a world enigma, that points to a fault line in human understanding that perhaps goes back to that garden time. That fault, or chasm is much deeper today than it was back then, because the river of life on this planet has swept away, through floods and just plain aging, much of the fertile soil of human intellect concerning this planet we call home.

America is where this question has been asked however, and the United States is still the preeminent power in the world. So when Uncle Sam speaks, we all are obliged to listen. Right now this aged dude seems to have some sort of ailment. Contrary to the media spin doctors and pundits no one really knows how seriously sick he really is. Therefore, they all seem to report on what is happening in a way that suits their specific interests.

Is there any reality in these talking points? Perhaps, but there is a precedent to say that the cough is only a minor cold. However, there is something unknown or unusual about Sam's symptoms that we have not seen in our lifetime. There is no reason to panic, but we need to seriously look at the situation and propose a treatment scheme, or maybe just decide to let the disease run its course. But to just ignore the situation does not seem a prudent course of action.



Going back to the Edenic garden.

That original garden was a visible manifestation of God's glory. So? As we discussed last week, God is both the Great Singularity and the Great Diversity, the Trinity, or the Almighty Unity in Diversity. Only within the complexity of natural creation can we truly see the grand representation of this power and diversity represented as natural law and the beauty of common grace. That vision is the only way we can grasp this awesome majesty contrasted with our own finite standards.

Sin created that original fault line between God and man, but if you think about yourself, the world as we know it, and the nature of God, whether we believe in God or not, we have maintained that concept of the Great Singularity. We have lost however, the vision or revelation of God as the Great Diversity.

The illness that is now causing the economic symptoms we see in this country and are beginning to be manifest around the world, results from our entire focus upon ourselves. We have lost any true semblance of community, and our leaders are probably the worst offenders. They have lost touch with those with whom they desire to lead.

As a result the President of the United States, the most powerful human being on earth, has the lowest approval rating of any President in history. The Federal Congress' popularity, further lowers this dismal standard about a third less than the President. This is no way to run a country, and definitely can no longer be considered numbers satisfactory for the leadership of the free world.

It is easy to blame the President and the Congress for this situation, but again they are only individual pictures, or illustrations of this loss of the concept of the Great Diversity. The individual is so preeminent in our thinking, we really have no concept of true natural diversity, which God programmed into the whole genome of created life.

As a consequence, we can trace this trait of human self reliance alone, throughout history with just minor alterations of this slow slouching toward an individual Gomorrah. Some will point

to the Reformation as the last example of Godly community influence, as I probably would have done as late as last week. But the Reformation was really just a renewal of the church. It would take almost two centuries for these new Christian religious sects to bring the Reformation into the real world of natural law and common grace. This transformation didn't take place in Europe, but in the New World and with the emergence of the United States of America.

With the election of George W. Bush, we have heard a steady drumbeat or mantra from the leadership of the Christian right that America was founded as a Christian nation and that vision is about to be finally established. The President did nothing to dissuade this part of his political base, neither did the excursion into colonial nation building in Iraq alter that vision. It is really no wonder that people who do not share this worldview of national singularity, were and are not happy with the Bush doctrines.

When this utopian reality did not emerge out of the swamp of human degradation in either the United States or Iraq, weapons of mass destruction and a War on Terror were not topics that made easy reading for people more comfortable with upgrading their personal status as individual singularities, rather than making the world a better place for upcoming generations.

The great strategic blunder of the Bush presidency was either trying to fight a war in which the general population was not called upon to sacrifice, or thinking that the Iraq incursion would be so simple that we accomplish this mission without economic consequences at home.

Rather than Biblical Christianity, the Bush presidency is really just a manifestation of American evangelicalism's concept of Moral Therapeutic Deism. This deism is really just our current spin of a socially and religious concept of the great individual singularity of self, oblivious to the diversity of an existence of a naturally created great diversity of community, both domestic and foreign.

The United States however, and contrary to the spin of the religious right, was not founded as a Christian nation, but as a secular nation. This nation was formed in which religious diversity could exist within the constraints of God's natural law

and common grace, without the obstruction of a national church. This freedom of religious worship being a specific reason, that many if not most of America's pilgrims fled Europe for the new and bountiful garden across the Atlantic.

These concepts of natural law and common grace are enumerated in the Declaration of Independence penned by Thomas Jefferson, and definitely address this God created unity in diversity.

From what I have been able to discern, Jefferson claimed to be a Christian, however his piety and faith seem to be questioned by many modern evangelicals. This is especially true when it comes to the Jefferson Bible, as it is now called. This booklet which is available online from a number of sources is really a synopsis of the New Testament gospels with all the supernatural manifestations of Jesus' deity removed.

As the true title indicates, the book is about ethics rather than a gospel tract. Put simply, it is a natural law representation of the teaching of Jesus as a good moral teacher, rather than the Savior of mankind. In other words, it is not all that different than what passes for the gospel in most postmodern evangelical churches today.

Similarly in this postmodern era, it is not all that different than Benjamin Franklin's proverb, "Heaven helps those who help themselves." What we are really looking at in both cases is the roots of our current Moral Therapeutic Deism. The big difference between both Jefferson and Franklin and modern American Christians is that Jefferson and Franklin knew the difference between the specific gospel of grace offered in Jesus Christ alone and natural law and common grace. For the most part our post Christian world and its church do not. You can discuss whether either Jefferson or Franklin accepted that grace, but it is difficult to make a case that either man was not aware of the claims of Jesus as the propitiation of gospel reality.

In the context of the understanding of God as the Great Unity in Diversity, what we see taking place in the United States emergence as a nation, is that she represents both created natural law and common grace, and Biblical law

and grace realities. The United States of America is truly a unique gift of God's grace, both common and specific, to the whole world, for such a time as this.

This brings us forward to the current ailing problem of the American Enigma and its only solution. The specific solution flows from the grace of God alone. However, it will be more complex than either Reformation theology, or American revivalism, and will center upon the contrasting tensioned diversity within both the written revelation of the Bible and the spoken logos of creation. It must and it will encompass that true revelation of the Creator as both Great Singularity completely consistent and in harmony with Great Diversity. When the Bible speaks of mankind being created in the image of God, we did receive seeds of both these elements within our personality.

As stated at the beginning of this article, we all possess some understanding of the singularity of God, our problem relates to the concept of God's and our diversity. In the common grace arena this diversity is called community. Over the next couple of weeks we will look at how we try to create community either through egalitarian means or through libertarian freedoms and our unique two party political system.

In both parties we define diversity from the concept of our individuality. This is a very different conviction than what the founding fathers sought to create in this bountiful land. The strength that they did a decent job of creating in this nation was a strong statement of the true natural diversity of all humanity. It wasn't perfect at the onset and has never even come close to that Biblical standard of that first garden. Over time we have slowly set some of those initial limitations on a better course, the issue of human slavery comes to the front. Others remain essentially untouched; still others have degraded significantly, especially in recent years.

Just as diverse Christians were really responsible for creating this unique standard of human freedom, only diverse Christians are capable of setting an example again. This, like the founding fathers forged through a revolutionary war and long years of debate as to the context of a diverse union, found that what unites our cause is much more significant, than what divides us.

That is the vision we have currently lost, because, just like Old Testament Israel, it was not forsaken immediately, but slowly eroded over time through our inherited sinful nature. What this current economic situation can bring about is a focus on the nature of our Creator, and that we are created in His likeness, from all nations, tribes, and people groups. These distinctions are the basis for our diversity; they are the Biblical standard,

There are those who seek other divisions, essentially for their own personal gain at the expense of others. We must recognize they have that right, but we as a diverse community created in the image of God, have the right to marginalize their ambitions primarily through the rule of law, but also by force when necessary.

I suppose this is beginning to sound like a political speech. The problem is that there is not a politician with the character and the independent resources to take this stand. That is the way it should be; for the nature of change is that it always proceeds from the bottom upwards, because freedom, equality, and liberty are essentials of humanity, which remain when all the flotsam of stuff is swept away. The powers of stuff so blind our vision that we think we earn it, maintain it, and by some supernatural prayer can take it with us when we leave this world.

This of course is the error of our belief in our own significant individual singularity, at the expense of our understanding of our other unique significant diversity. This is the great enigma of America and the world at this period of time. What an opportunity God has given us, to truly change the course of history.