

GETTING IT RIGHT

For generations the Church has been populated by men and women who have seen the great importance of right doctrine and practice and have been keenly aware of the dangers of deviating from orthodoxy. Many have given up their whole lives and have died to defend the truth of the Bible, often against seemingly "Christian" opposition. Our heritage is valuable and has been paid for at great price.

Such a dedication to truth and the defence of truth has brought with it one of the greatest scourges of the Church of God. In their determination to stay true to the truth as they have seen it, brother has separated from brother and sister from sister. Doctrinal agreement has replaced spiritual unity and the boundaries of group orthodoxy have become identified with the demarcation of the family of God in Jesus. The result is that, broadly speaking, the closer to the Scriptures that Christians have striven to remain, the further we have separated from each other, divided by definitions and interpretations.

Some can actually revel in this separation, thinking that it only goes to prove that they (and they alone, though they might not admit the thought) are the really true Church. For these, such divisions as these are necessary so that the genuine may be seen and the counterfeit exposed. The zeal for correct teaching and Biblical practice is awesome and awful.

Most others seem to live in a sort of half-world, almost in a state of suspended animation. In this condition, seemingly common among believers, factual reality and spiritual truth are held in a kind of limbo, where neither is allowed to impinge on the other. Perhaps the virus of separation has invaded their consciousness and enables them to hold their lives in compartments, conveniently labelled and hermetically sealed.

The excuses are as numerous as the people, variations on the theme of "You surely can not expect me to do anything about it?" Each of us seems to think that we are powerless to do anything at all about the apparently inexorable march away from unity in obedience to our Lord.

The solution is devastatingly simple but demanding. We need to disregard any and all man-made boundaries and be satisfied to know people as either members of Christ or not. If another is joined to Jesus, he or she is joined to me "with cords that cannot be broken". No efforts at organisational "church unity" will do more than produce some external appearance of oneness but will in fact add to the problem by possibly producing yet another facade behind which more of us can hide.

What of "church activities"? Look at them again. Where did they start? What is their purpose? Do they contribute positively to the life of the body of Christ in the vicinity where we live? This is not to say that only 'spiritual' activities (whatever they are) should continue. On the contrary; some of the best and most valuable times are usually those when we are simply enjoying each other's company. What we are is so much more significant than what we do and what we say. What we do not need is more activities. What we desperately do need is more real people to whom Jesus is real taking the opportunity to share that reality with others.

Are we prepared to be radical? Jesus asked that we might all be one. He is still waiting.

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