

# The Basis of Unity

Neil Girard

“It doesn’t matter what you believe so long as you are sincere.” This motto belongs to the camp that some theologians call “indifferentism.” When one looks at all the variations of world-wide “Christianity” – most of which adhere to so-called “orthodox theology” (that is, they proclaim Father, Son and Spirit, etc.) – one is tempted to think this might be true, at least to some extent. But is it even partially true?

What this motto really shows is our inadequate understanding of God’s standard. God’s standard is not creedal and it has been rightly observed that “the whole course of church history, especially Protestant history, demonstrates that the attempt to provide a rigid and static creed, deviation from which constitutes heresy, leads to and encourages schism rather than unity.” (Charles Clayton Morrison, *The Unfinished Reformation*, 1951, p. 20) This is not say that the creeds are wrong or in error – indeed most are beautifully accurate restatements of Scriptural truths. But they are not to be the basis of our Christian unity.

One church historian wrote:

“Surely one of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few of those professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion. In an earlier age adherents of one faith seldom encountered adherents of another. Few were required to defend their religion against the criticisms of a rival faith. In our day, however, when mass media make the world our neighborhood, the ignorance of Christians is hard to justify.

The movement toward separation of church and state has all but removed religion from public education. That is true. But even ‘Christian education’ in many denominations has done little to give members any sort of adult understanding of the faith they profess to believe. Should we really be surprised, then, when today’s Christian so frequently blends gross errors with his orthodox confession or defends some pagan practice as ‘Christian’ conduct?” (Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 1982, p. 491)

Ignorance as to what the Bible really says and to the experiences of those who have gone before equates to near complete ignorance of the purposes of God and the schemes of the devil designed to thwart, divert or at least divert those purposes – the very central themes of and reasons for our faith in Christ and God. Though doomed to ultimate failure, Satan’s schemes still have the power to draw into his own destiny those individuals who separate themselves from the corporate structure and protections given to Christ’s ekklesia. (Mt. 25:41, 16:18)

Shelley uses a word in describing this ignorance:

“‘Christian education’ in many denominations has done little to give members any sort of *adult* understanding of the faith they profess to believe.” (Shelley, 491 – emphasis added)

Another way to say this is that the “churches” are not producing spiritual maturity in their members. Some – including this author – believe they dare not for then all their members would

leave, in search of the real ekklesia of Christ. But the reasons for the “church’s” failure to produce spiritual maturity are many but the main, primary causes behind this fault are that they try to “feed” the people rather than teach them to feed themselves. Because the “church” produces no real spiritual maturity, it has no true elders who are capable of *shepherding* or *tending* the flock or the “flock” is so huge no one can keep up with them all (see 1 Pet. 5:2) so it is held in a vicious cycle of reproducing only spiritually malnourished and deformed babes. (Heb. 5:13) The “church” has thus failed to utilize *God’s* methods of maturing the people (Eph. 4:11-13, 2 Pet. 1:5-7) even as they practice other sins that debilitate the people. They have practiced (for centuries) sectarian denominationalism (dissensions and heresies – Gal. 5:20) and Nicolaitan clergyism (delegated, representative authority – Rev. 2:6, 15, Mt. 20:25-26, 23:8-11, etc.). Being the most charitable, we have to say, at the very least the “church” is failing miserably in its mission to show the world and even the angels (see Eph. 3:10) the manifold wisdom, the loving mercy and the self-denying unity that is God. Being more realistic, we have to say that the “churches,” in the vast majority of cases, are the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith (Mt. 24:10, 2 Ths. 2:3), carrying and producing more apostasy than truth.

God promised through Isaiah,

“When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.” (Isa. 59:19)

The enemy has come in with a flood of deceptions, his usual weapons (Jn. 8:44, 2 Cor. 11:3), but the Lord has raised up a standard – Himself. (Jn. 3:14-15) It is only those who obediently look to, cling to and follow that standard who will be saved. (Heb. 5:9, Lk. 9:23-24, etc.) The “churches,” in part because the “pastor” sits as a bottleneck that prevents truths that would devastate his position (and paycheck!) from coming through his pulpit, truths which many in the audience wouldn’t want to hear anyway because it doesn’t scratch their ears but instead points out their own personal responsibility to walk in the light and truth. (see 2 Tim. 4:3-4, 1 Jn. 2:4)

Should we really be surprised when today’s “Christian” frequently blends gross error with his “orthodox confession”? No. The devil has worked long and hard to construct the institutional “church” which displaces and counterfeits genuine assembly and life in Christ. Should we really be surprised when today’s “Christian” defends some pagan practice as “Christian” conduct? No. Rather we are surprised when, by the grace of God, a “church”-ite begins to realize that nearly *everything* - the “pastor,” the “pulpit,” the “church” building, the choir, the “worship” music, etc. – traces its lineage to pagan roots and not to the pages of the New Testament. Today’s “Christian” is better evidence of the existence of the devil and of the effectiveness of his schemes than he is evidence of the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

The basis of our unity is the Person of Christ. The proof of our following after Him is our willingness and determination to set aside our own opinions and paradigms, to reject the traditions of mere men and the doctrines of demons (Mt. 15:3, 6, 1 Tim. 4:1) and follow after only the Spirit of truth who alone leads us into all truth. (Jn. 16:13, 1 Jn. 2:27)

But the standard set before each individual is not the sum total of all spiritual knowledge encapsulated in the Person of Christ. Rather the standard is whether we reject or retain what *He* has implanted within us.

James wrote:

“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness *the implanted word*, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (Jas. 1:21-22 - emphasis added)

John wrote:

“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. *If what you heard from the beginning abides in you*, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.” (1 Jn. 2:24- emphasis added)

Peter wrote:

“You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, *beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness*, being led away with the error of the wicked; but *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*.” (2 Pet. 3:17-18- emphasis added)

If the “church” we belong to or the man (teacher, “pastor,” “apostle,” whatever) we listen to interferes with our actively and actually listening to the Head through His Spirit – and most likely these do so – we need to choose whether we will follow men or God. There is a remnant who have chosen to follow only God, putting their fingers in their ears to block out the deceptive words of men and crying out, “Life! Life! Eternal life!” as they flee the city of destruction and the deceptive abominable prostitute who imitates, counterfeits and displaces the genuine life in Christ. (see John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Rev. 18:4, 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1)

Judgment day is all about what each man has done with the spiritual resources available to him. (Rev. 20:12-13, Lk. 19:26, Rom. 2:6-11) We will stand before God and give account for our response to God’s standard, Christ Jesus. If we have allowed our “church” or our “pastor” or our favorite “teacher” or “apostle” to lead us away from Him, the judgment is ultimately our own. If, on the other hand, we cling only to Him and obey His commands, reject the carnal teachings and counsel of mere men, we may yet hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Lk. 19:17)

The basis of our unity today is not to be found anywhere else but in Christ. Anyone who promotes anything other than personal union with Him – a union that will necessarily result in corporate unity with others in like unity with Christ – is preaching a false gospel.

Let he who has ears hear.

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