

## CHAPTER THREE

# Not Union--Unity!

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In one of her "Anne of Green Gables" novels, Lucy Maud Montgomery relates a story of an cranky old churchwoman named Aunt Atossa. At Sunday evening prayer services in Aunt Atossa's church, the members would stand and pray in turn or share a prayer need or praise report. It happened that one of these services was led by a visiting minister--a very kind and spiritual man, but also very deaf! He would lean toward each person who stood and spoke, and he would appear to be very attentive, but he could scarcely understand a word that was said!

At this service, cantankerous old Aunt Atossa--who had been storing up a trunkful of grievances and bitterness in her heart for years--finally decided to unload. After a few people stood to pray or share prayer requests, Aunt Atossa jumped to her feet and loudly raked the congregation up one side and down the other. She called out various parishioners by name and accused them of various sins. She castigated every church member with whom she had ever had a quarrel or disagreement (which was practically everyone). She ripped the lids off of several church scandals, causing several of the ladies in the surrounding pews to collapse in a swoon.

"I'm so disgusted with this church," she concluded fiercely, "that after I leave tonight, I intend to never darken its door again! May God bring a fearful judgment on all of you!" Then, finally out of breath and out of hateful words to say, she sat down.

At the pulpit, the kindly, hard-of-hearing minister smiled benignly, nodded gently, and said in a very pious voice, "Amen! The Lord grant our dear sister's prayer!"

There's no question that one of the most destructive forces in the church today is conflict between Christians. Division among brothers and sisters has destroyed churches, destroyed lives, and brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ into disrepute. So it is not surprising that we hear many voices today saying, "If the church is to fulfill its calling, Christians must live in union together. We can't change the world as long as we are fragmented and divided. In our disunity, we really have nothing to say to the world. Our disunity makes us weak, and causes us to be a laughingstock in our society. There is power in numbers, and if we can unite all of our different factions into a single Christian force, we can influence society as we were intended to do."

This philosophy has given rise to the ecumenical movement of the latter part of the twentieth century. The word "ecumenical" comes from the Greek word *oikumene*, which originally meant "the entire inhabited world," and it has come to mean "universal; of worldwide scope." The hope and dream of those in the modern ecumenical movement is to dissolve the differences among Christians, as represented by the variety of denominations we have today, and to bring about a truly ecumenical--that is, universal--church. Some have become so devoted to this ideal that they have been labelled "ecumaniacs," while others disdainfully suggest that the problem with the church is that it is passing through its "ecumenopause."

The words of the apostle Paul in Ephesians do stress the need for Christian unity. He exhorts the Ephesian Christians to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). This is one of a number of Scripture passages which underscore the need for Christian agreement. The ecumenicists say that when the churches unite in one organization it will be the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). "Why not welcome these modern efforts to produce that unity?" ask the one-world church advocates. "Surely the union of all Christians can only strengthen and help the cause of Christ!"

## A glorious mixture

What shall we make of this exhortation of Paul's to unity? One thing is clear: Paul explicitly recognizes the reality of friction among Christians. He would not urge Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit" if there were not differences existing among them. There were obviously forces at work in the early church to divide the Christian body. There were pressures among them to break up into splinter groups.

To counteract these pressures, the apostle urged them to be "eager to maintain the unity." The word "eager" is a bit too weak here. Eagerness implies mere willingness, but the original Greek word suggests willingness plus action. Paul is saying, "Be proactive! Take positive, aggressive action to maintain unity!" The King James translation is more accurate in this regard: "earnestly endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Certainly it is unrealistic for Christians to pretend there are no differences among them. There is no group in the world so gloriously diverse and heterogeneous as the church. The genius of the church is that it is made up of so many different kinds of people. In the true church of Christ, the rich and poor gather on the same footing, without distinction, without favoritism; in Christ, there is no distinction between Jews or gentiles, men or women, black, white, or any other color (see 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Jas. 2:1-6).

This, admittedly, is not the way the church has always behaved, but this is the way the church was meant to be and can be. The church crosses all the boundaries which men erect. It transcends all natural distinctions as well, gathering all people into a single body, without any exceptions or exclusions. No other body in the world attempts to unite people from such widely varied origins and backgrounds.

But we do not ignore these boundaries easily. Friction often arises over our differences in the body of Christ. It is clear from the Scriptures that friction has existed in the Christian community since the first century. There was the great disagreement over the relationship between Gentile believers and Jewish believers in the early church--a disagreement which directly led to the great Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15. In Paul's letter to the Philippians two ladies are mentioned who had difficulty getting along with each other. Their names were Euodia and Syntyche (or, as they have sometimes been rendered, Odious and Soon-Touchy). Disagreements and personality differences continue to be a source of friction in the church today--hence the anonymous lines:

To dwell above with saints we love,  
Oh that will be glory.

But to live below, with saints we know--  
Well, that's another story!

Besides differences of viewpoints and personalities, there are differences of gifts within the body of Christ. Let's be honest: We Christians have an unfortunate tendency to disparage the gifts of other believers and to exalt our own. We all feel that what we are contributing is more important and more valuable than what others are doing--and this, too, is no new wrinkle in the church. In 1 Corinthians 3, we see a division in the church of Corinth brought about as the followers of one teacher-leader take sides against the followers of another. Clearly, the church is fertile ground for friction over differences, distinctions, and diversity.

But also embedded in Paul's message to the Ephesian church is a powerful implication: Despite the differences between the early Christians, there is also a basic, underlying unity. It is not a unity that the believers themselves have produced. In fact, nowhere does the apostle tell the believers that they should strive to produce unity. Instead--and this is crucially important to understand--he tells them to *maintain the unity that is already there!*

The church is never told to create unity. There is a unity that exists in the church by virtue of the simple fact that the church exists. We human beings are incapable of producing this unity which is so essential to the life of the body. Where does this unity come from? It can only be produced by the Spirit of God. But once produced, it is the responsibility of Christians to *maintain* this unity. We maintain this unity through Christlike

love.

### Seven-fold unity

That's the problem with the modern ecumenical movement: It doesn't understand where unity comes from, or that the unity Paul talks about already exists! Instead, the ecumenicists try to manufacture a semblance of unity--not the true *unity* of the Spirit, but an external, organizational *union* of Christians. Unity is a spiritual, godly quality. Union is an institutional, worldly entity. Unity is something God produces and which we maintain. Union is something human beings construct out of their own efforts.

The tragedy of ecumenical unionism is that it ignores and attempts to supplant the true unity that God has already given to the church. That is why Paul takes such pains to make sure no one misunderstands the true nature of the unity of the Spirit, writing: "There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Here is the true unity of the body of Christ. Notice, first of all, that Paul here expresses a seven-fold unity: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. Notice, next, that this seven-fold unity gathers around the three Persons of the Trinity: Spirit, Son, and Father. It is a body indwelt by the Triune God. Here we clearly see the Father's answer to His Son's prayer in Gethsemane: "that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee" (John 17:21).

The church is not to be a conglomeration of individuals who happen to agree upon certain ideas. It is bound together as an organism in a bodily unity. It is true that a body is an organization but it is much more than an organization. The essence of a body is that it consists of thousands of cells with one mutually shared life.

We've all heard the words of the old spiritual:

The toe bone's connected to the  
foot bone,

The foot bone's connected to the  
ankle bone,

The ankle bone's connected to the  
shin bone,

Now hear the Word of the Lord!

It's a catchy song, but the theology is not quite correct. You don't produce a body by combining bits and pieces of anatomy together. A body is formed by the growth and multiplication of many cells from one original cell. The body grows cell by cell until a mature body grows--but every one of those cells shares the life of that one original cell, and the life of every other cell in the body. That is the secret of the body: all parts of the body share life together.

It is the sharing of life that makes a body different from an organization. An organization derives power from the association of individuals, but a body derives its power from the sharing of life. As Dr. Bernard Ramm observes,

When modernists deny... a supernatural connectedness of all believers by the mystical union of the Holy Spirit, they destroy the historic, orthodox Christian understanding of the Church. ...The Church becomes a society, a natural, human, non-supernatural religious community. It is bound together by purely natural ties, such as a common heritage in the Bible, a common belief in some sort of uniqueness in Jesus, a common belief in the historical continuity of Christians, and a common ethic of love. Now the church is a society. But this is secondary to its being the supernatural body of Christ. (2)

Anyone who has had the privilege of contacting Christians in widespread places around the earth soon learns to recognize the fundamental unity of the Spirit which already exists among all true Christians. Whatever the denominational, theological, political, geographical, or cultural differences between ourselves and another believer, the mutual life in Christ is immediately evident. There is a sense of belonging to each other. This unity is often discernible even when there is an official denial of it.

I once met with a Roman Catholic bishop in Mexico and spent an hour or two with him, talking about Christ. I was a Protestant and he a Catholic, and if we had gone into doctrinal areas we would have found many differences of outlook. But with this particular bishop I immediately sensed a oneness which we shared together in Christ. He knew the reality of the living Lord, just as I did. Our organizations and affiliations were not the same, yet we were one together because we had entered into that beautiful experience of the unity of the Spirit.

### **The power of the church**

This brings us to the next element in Paul's description of the unity of the church: one Spirit. This is the great, eternal, invisible Person who is the true power of the church. The strength of the church never derives from its numbers. The ecumenicists seek to create a unity of the flesh, an organizational unity which draws its power from the number of bodies which can be joined together, quite apart from conviction and spiritual agreement.

Someone has well described such a union as an attempt to put all corpses into one cemetery to prepare for a resurrection! But it will not work. The church is intended to be an instrument of life, and putting dead bodies together does not produce life. The power of the church to influence society does not derive from gathering together enough Christians to swing enough votes to sway a legislature. God's plan cannot be achieved by worldly power.

The prophet Zechariah was once confronted with a great mountain which God said would become a plain. When Zechariah began to look around to see how this would happen and where the power would come from to level that mountain to a plain, the word of the Lord came to him: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Impossible tasks require superhuman power. Since the role of the church in the world is far beyond the powers of mere men and women to fulfill, it is essential that the church rely on the only adequate power available. The Spirit is the true power of the church. There is only one Spirit. He is the same everywhere, no matter where the church exists, in every place and in every age. The Spirit does not change and that is why truth remains unchangeable. The passing of time does not affect it.

This is also why the church is not dependent on many or on few, or on the wisdom of its membership. The church is to trust and depend on one thing only: the Spirit of God. As we move deeper into the apostle's message to the Ephesian church, we shall learn more about how this amazing power works.

"There is one body, and one Spirit," says Paul in Eph. 4:4--and then he goes on to link the Spirit to the hope we have in Christ: "just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call." Do you see how these three factors of unity are all linked together? *One* body. *One* Spirit. *One* hope. What is that hope? It is expressed dozens of times throughout the Scriptures: the hope of the return of Jesus Christ to earth! The Spirit forms the body in order that the body may achieve its final and ultimate goal--its redemption, and the sharing of Christ's glory when He returns.

Perhaps the most succinct expression of this hope is found in Colossians, where Paul writes, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Glory is the hope of the church. As John puts it, "We know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2,3).

Everywhere I've traveled around the world, I've found this to be the hope of Christians. No matter what their denomination, their background, their race or their color this is always the one hope: that they will someday be

like Christ. There are many differences in understanding how this will work out. Some are pre-millennialists (believing that Christ will come before the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth). Others are postmillennialists (believing that Christ will return after the millennium). Still others do not believe in a millennium at all. But there is only one final expectation of Christians everywhere and that is they will share the glory of Christ.

### **No other name**

The apostle Paul next gathers up three more elements of unity around the second Person of the Trinity, the *one Lord*. He does not say "one Savior," though it is true there is only one Savior. Everywhere in Scripture, it is only when people acknowledge Jesus as Lord that He becomes their Savior. The fundamental issue which Paul centers on is that Jesus Christ is Lord. In writing to the Corinthians he says that no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

"Lord" means ultimate authority. To call Jesus "Lord" is to recognize that He is the supreme person in the universe. There is no other Lord and there never will be another Lord. Peter puts it bluntly in Acts 4:12: "There is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved." That is why the early Christians could not say "Caesar is Lord" as their Roman persecutors tried to force them to say. That is why modern Christians cannot say, "Buddha is Lord," or that any other person is Lord but Jesus.

The mystery and marvel of this man Christ Jesus--who lived and walked and loved and worked and died among men, whose life record is given to us in the Gospels--is also Lord of the Universe, the Supreme Being, Creator of all things, the God-man. The apostle John, in his first letter, says that anyone who denies this is not a Christian, but has the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:22).

And Paul declares, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

### **One faith**

Linked to this is the next element, *one faith*. This is a little more difficult to understand, but it seems clear that Paul does not refer to faith in general. That is, Paul is not talking here about the ability to believe, because all human beings have this. Sometimes people say, "I can't believe." But this is clearly untrue, because people are believing all the time. All action comes from belief. An atheist acts from belief, just as a Christian does. They both believe something and act accordingly.

Nor does Paul, in talking of *one faith*, mean the act of conversion when a person declares himself out and out for Christ--the initial step of believing and trusting in Him which we call "saving faith." Paul is not speaking of these kinds of faith here. He has in view that which is believed--that is, the body of truth which has been revealed. There is but one faith. This one faith is what Jude refers to in his letter when he exhorts Christians, "Contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

This one faith is associated with Jesus the Lord. It is the truth about him. Again, there may be differences of opinion among Christians of goodwill as to doctrinal details and biblical interpretations, but everywhere there is full agreement among true Christians that there is but one body of truth about Jesus Christ. There is only one set of facts, one faith. That body of truth is the Scripture.

There is not a faith for Jews and another set of facts for Gentiles; there is only one faith for all men everywhere. God has spoken through the seers, the prophets and the apostles, but it all forms one total picture, articulated and explaining itself. There is not, therefore, a God of the Old Testament versus a God of the New Testament, as we sometimes hear. Nor can we say, as some people say, "Well, I have my Christ and you have yours." No, there is only one Christ. There is but one historic Jesus. There is but one faith.

### **One baptism**

The next element of unity is the *one baptism* .

You may well wonder, "Unity--about *baptism* ?!" Nothing could seem farther from reality. All varieties of Baptists say, "This 'one baptism' surely refers to water baptism, which is by immersion only." The Presbyterians say, "No, the Baptists are all wet! Sprinkling is the only proper way." Some groups insist that baptism is for infants only while others say that it must be performed only upon adults who understand the meaning of faith and baptism. There seems to be anything but unity on the question of baptism!

But despite these obvious differences over the symbol of baptism, there is *one baptism* everywhere recognized and agreed upon by the church: the baptism of the Spirit, the real baptism, of which water baptism is the symbol. It is the means by which every true believer in Jesus Christ is made part of his living body, the church (see 1 Cor. 12:13). That baptism is here linked to Jesus Christ, the Lord, because it is baptism into His body. Romans 6.3 puts it this way: "We were all baptized into his death." The central idea is that each individual believer is made to be one with Jesus Christ, united with him in His death and His resurrection."

### **Our Father**

In Eph. 4:6, the apostle gives us the last of the seven elements of unity: "One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." Here is the ultimate aim of all the other unities. All of the rest exist, as Peter puts it, to "bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). He is the goal and the aim.

The sign that we have truly found God is that we recognize Him as Father, we sense his father-heart. As the apostle Paul puts it, "You have received the spirit of sonship when we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom. 8:15). John writes in his first letter that the unmistakable mark of a new-born babe in the family of God is that he immediately knows his father, and calls him Father (1 John 2:13).

What a far cry this is from some of the views of God which are abroad today. He is called The Ground of Being, The Ultimate Cause, The infinite Mind, and on and on. It is true that God is all these things. They are not wrong but they are very inadequate. Paul, too, agrees that God is above all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:6). He is the end and the beginning, the beginning and the end. All things exist because of him and all things lead back to him.

But God is so much more than a remote Mind, the first Cause, an infinite Being. He is a Person, and He wants to know us and be known by us. He wants to have a deep, eternal fellowship with us. He wants us to have as intimate a relationship with Him as a child's relationship to an earthly father--in fact, much more so. Once you truly know God the Father as He desires to be known, you find that the only adequate way to address Him is "Father." No, not even Father, but "Abba!" which is an Aramaic word which literally means, "Daddy" or "Da-da," the delighted, trusting sound a toddler makes when he's swept up in the arms of a proud, loving father. No other name expresses the intimate union with God which a true Christian experiences.

That is why Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, you who are in heaven." That is why, as He knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the very shadow of the cross, He called upon His Father, saying, "Abba, Father, ... take this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). That is why the apostle Paul tells us in two of his letters that the Spirit gives us the right to come before God, addressing Him even as Jesus did, "Abba, Father!" (see Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

### **Internal and external unity**

In these seven elements is found the nature of authentic Christian unity. It is not a union to be manufactured by our effort, but a unity which already exists, created in us, through us, and around us by the Spirit of God. These seven facets of unity are not, therefore, articles of theological agreement. They ought never to be put into a creedal statement as though agreement with these is what endorses someone as a Christian. No, it is the other way around: becoming a Christian ultimately brings agreement on these points. They are areas not just of doctrine, but of mutual experience. They are experiential truths which lay hold of us, not truths which we are to lay hold of.

The seven elements of our unity are not debatable. If anyone challenges or disagrees with these, he is simply manifesting the fact that he is not yet a Christian. When he becomes a Christian he will experience and therefore understand these things. He may not be able to articulate them clearly but he will recognize them when they are described, for they are immediately experienced by all who are in Christ. Therefore, the way to create unity is simply to bring men and women to Christ. The unity of the Spirit will be produced in them by the Spirit. It is impossible to achieve any meaningful or significant union apart from this unity which is produced only by the Spirit.

Putting it in another way, there are two kinds of unity: an *external unity* without internal agreement, and an *internal unity* which manifests occasional external disagreement. We have been calling the first, union. The very nature of those who seek external union rather than true internal unity is to attempt to impose union by control and direction. These are the "control freaks" or "church bosses" who have to be at the top of the pyramid, imposing their vision of how their "Christian union" should function from the top down. Their power is measured by how successful they are in getting the conglomerate to follow them.

I remember well the first time I ran into the second kind of unity, the true, Spirit-created, internal kind of unity. As a boy I had two friends who were brothers, only a year apart in age. One day we were out playing ("messing around," as kids say today) and these brothers began quarrelling. I thought that one was a bit sarcastic and unfair so I chimed in on behalf of the underdog. To my amazement he didn't welcome my help. In fact, he turned on me! And then his brother joined him and *both* jumped on me!

I discovered I had made a very shallow judgment. I felt the differences they were airing represented a fundamental disagreement between them--but I was wrong! Underneath the disagreement was a fundamental unity: their brotherhood. The moment I attacked one of them, that unity manifested itself and they closed ranks against the outsider--me! This incident illustrates the unity of the church--an internal unity with an occasional external disagreement.

Now there are certain practical conclusions which come from a passage like Ephesians 4:4-6. As we apply this great central truth of Christian unity to the outer areas of our lives--especially as we confront the problems of modern existence--there are certain facts that become evident. First, it is clear that Christians are to direct their efforts not at producing an outward union but toward maintaining peace within the body. That is clearly what Paul says: "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). It is absolutely crucial that Christians practice Christlike love and put an end to quarreling, harboring grudges, and struggling against one another.

In John 17, Jesus said that our love and unity would be a witness to the world. He prayed that all Christians "may be one ... [so] that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). The degree to which division and hostility reign in the church is the degree to which that church's effectiveness will be hindered in its community. Our witness is neutralized by our unwillingness to maintain the unity which the Spirit has already given us. When we are divided, there is nothing we can say to which the world will pay any attention.

### **Call to understand**

It is important that when Christians meet together they realize that they are called to understand one another. They are to forbear one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, be kind and tender-hearted, not holding grudges, not being bitter, resentful, or hateful toward each other. This is where the Spirit aims when He comes among us. He moves toward the healing of resentment and the restoring of relationships.

This is how we maintain the unity that the Spirit has given us. We must get below the surface, behind the differences, so that the fundamental unity rises to the surface. We must recognize that our relationships are more important than the transitory issues that divide us. If the grace of God is truly at work in our lives, transforming our hearts, then the marvelous, underlying, fundamental unity that is there will come welling up, rising above all the differences and hurts, expressing itself by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, through acts of love manifested even to the unlovely.

A second conclusion from this passage is that we cannot classify Christians by organizations. We cannot say

that all Catholics are Christians or that all Baptists are (nor can we write people off because they are Catholics or Baptists!). We cannot maintain that all who belong to the Independent Fundamental Churches of America are Christians while all those who belong to the World Council of Churches are not. God's Spirit always over-leaps human boundaries. The unity of the Spirit will be found in people of many different groups, and we must recognize that fact. We shall find true Christians everywhere--and it becomes our responsibility to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace wherever we find fellow believers in Christ.

As Paul says in Romans 14, "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions" (Rom. 14:1). We are not to cast him out but to receive him. Receive him even though he does not see as clearly as you do and perhaps has not graduated from the right school. Nevertheless, receive him. Recognize him as a brother if he manifests love for Jesus Christ, no matter what his label may be.

A third practical conclusion from this study is that true Christians may use the fact of basic internal unity to determine the area and kind of cooperation they can have with others, both Christian and non-Christian. After all, though we may not be one with everyone else as members of the body of Christ, we are one in sharing human life. We can join with anyone in the relief of human suffering, in establishing strong and just government, in the pursuit of better education and living conditions for our children, and in many other issues and enterprises in life. We are not to shut ourselves away from other human beings because they do not share the same life in Christ.

### **Opposite direction**

But there is also an area where we can cooperate with some Christians who share the life of Jesus Christ, but cannot join with others. That area is in the enterprise of proclaiming the great life-changing message of the church, in evangelizing the world. The reason for this is that many who regard themselves as Christians have an understanding of the Gospel that is entirely different from ours. What they are attempting to achieve is entirely different than what we seek to achieve. We and they go in opposite directions.

It is impossible, of course, to ride two horses going in opposite directions--to attempt it is to put a terrific strain upon the anatomy! The Israelites of old were taught this sane truth when they were told not to yoke an ox and a donkey together (see Deut. 22:10). Why not? Because they go at two different speeds and are two different heights. They would simply chafe one another all the time. It would be cruel and counterproductive to link them together. This is God's way of teaching symbolically that there are fundamental differences of gait and direction between people whose spiritual convictions are radically different. As Amos 3:3 tells us, two cannot walk together except they be agreed.

But someone may ask: "Can we worship together with others who do not share life in Jesus Christ?" The answer of the Bible is, clearly, *Yes*. God commands all people everywhere to worship him (Ps. 65:2; Phil. 2:10,11). Wherever anyone is worshipping God as supreme and not some lesser concept of him (as an idol) then Christians can join together with such in worship. The most elementary path for the approach of anyone to God is declared in Hebrews 11:6--"Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Cornelius, the Roman centurion, described in Acts 10, is an example of just such a person.

Having said all this, let us not forget the appeal of the apostle to the church to be faithful to its calling. The church does not have the right to chart its own course. Its purpose and goal has already been set, and even its function has been determined by its Lord. In the next section of Ephesians 4, the apostle turns to a detailed description of how the Lord has equipped His body to function effectively and with power in the world.

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