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A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

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We don't reach Christian unity by riding roughshod over sincere convictions and trying to create, with all possible speed, a superchurch to confront the Goliaths of the modern world.

DAVID H. READ

Unity in the New Testament sense is the goal of a living Church. And that means that the rediscovery of what the living Church is must come before we can go much further on the road to unity.

WILLEM ADOLF VISSER<sup>1</sup>T HOOFT

To strive for unity in diversity is a task we cannot evade and there are no shortcuts.

MERCY AMBA ODUYOYE, AFRICAN THEOLOGIAN

Whatever task God is calling us to, if it is yours it is mine, and if it is mine it is yours. We must do it together or be cast aside together.

HOWARD HEWLETT CLARK

## *That They May Be One: Facing Up to the Besetting Sin of Protestantism<sup>1</sup>*



T. M. Moore

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they may all be one, as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

—John 17:20-21

*All believers are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by His Spirit and by faith, and have fellowship with Him in His grace, suffering, death, resurrection, and glory. United to one another in love the saints have fellowship in each other's gifts and grace and are obliged to perform those public and private duties which nourish their mutual good, both spiritually and physically.*

—Westminster Confession of Faith, 26:1

*We owe to our fellow Christians a special love . . . a special care, which takes precedence over our duty to help unbelievers (Galatians 6:10). Is there a special love we owe only to members of our own denominations and not to other Christians? Although to ask such a question is virtually to answer it negatively, we often act as if it were true. Yes, there are legitimate obligations that we incur to our denominations in our membership vows. But the Christian philadelphia, brotherly love, is for the church, not for one denomination above another.*

—John Frame<sup>2</sup>

I had just finished a sermon exhorting our congregation to faith and boldness in taking up the challenge of a new stage in our ministry's development, a sermon which I ended by quoting a wonderful prayer which Robert Van de Meyer attributes to St. Brendan (fl. ca. A.D. 560), which, tradition tells us, he offered just prior to departing in a leather boat with sixteen companions for points west across the uncharted sea.

The first person to approach me at the door was a minister of my denomination, who was visiting with us that day. I held out my hand to greet him, but he declined, looking first at my outstretched hand, and then, coming very close to my face, saying, "Couldn't you find some worthy *Reformed* saint for your illustration? Did you have to use that *Catholic*?"

Note the emphasis: Not a *Protestant* saint, but a *Reformed* one. For this pastor it would not have been sufficient merely to draw on an example from the Protestant heritage; it had to be *Reformed*. This anecdote speaks to me of much that is wrong in Protestantism. Not only does it demonstrate a fixation on form over substance—the jots and tittles of doctrine rather than the heart of faith—but it witnesses to a problem endemic in Protestant churches from the earliest days of the Reformation: Protestants too easily become ensnared in denominationalism, with the result that, at least among many pastors and church leaders, we fail to nurture and express the love of Christ much beyond the confines of our own fellowships. We tend to clog the veins and arteries of the Body of Christ with the plaque of denominational distinctives—doctrinal, liturgical, traditional, and practical—and impede the free flow of the love of Christ among the communions and members of his Body. Here, more than in any single area, the sin of unbelief, which so easily besets the followers of Christ,<sup>3</sup> has attached itself to Protestantism, and is choking life from the Body and suffocating our witness to the watching world. I agree with Edmund Clowney when he writes, "Only as the Church binds together those whom selfishness and hate have cut apart will its message be heard and its ministry of hope to the friendless be received."<sup>4</sup> The failure of Protestant churches to achieve that binding among themselves is one of the pri-

mary reasons that our witness for Christ has not been more effective over the past several generations.

In the remarks that follow I hope to accomplish four things. First, I want to argue for the biblical imperative of unity in the Church, by summarizing the position that Christian theologians have taken for centuries. There is simply no avoiding or denying the repeated demands of Scripture for the Church to be one body, and for its members to do everything in their power to preserve and nurture that oneness. This will be familiar territory; however, the continuing state of *disunity* among Protestant churches, and with their Roman Catholic and Orthodox brethren, suggests that a review of this material might be worthwhile.

Second, I want to demonstrate that Protestants are and have always been aware of the importance of unity; have professed it eloquently; and then have consistently denied it in practice when doing so suited their particular purposes. Here is where the sin of unbelief enters. Protestants make grand profession of their commitment to "the communion of the saints," yet, when push comes to shove, we have too often rationalized separating from, indeed, even condemning, brethren in Christ with whom we find ourselves unable to reach agreement on important matters of faith. Thus we demonstrate that we do not really believe what we profess, at least, not strongly enough to devote ourselves to working hard for its preservation.

I want to pause here to emphasize the phrase, "brethren in Christ." This article should not be construed as a cry for a return to the worn-out and ill-fated ecumenism that characterized certain segments of Protestantism for much of the last century, and which was so ill-defined and wrong-headed that it finally sought to pitch a tent large enough to house anyone holding any religious beliefs whatsoever. The unity of the saints which the Scriptures require is based firmly on faith in Jesus Christ, the resurrected Lord and returning King, and is accomplished among those who believe by the work of the Holy Spirit. Where no such faith exists, there is no basis for the kind of unity which the Lord Jesus seeks for us; without

the Spirit working in and through us, no amount of sophisticated external means will accomplish what we seek.

Nor is this paper intended as a condemnation of denominations, or a call to one systemic or institutional Church. Given our sinfulness, together with the many cultural, historical, and practical differences and priorities that characterize the members of the body of Christ, something like denominations would seem to be inevitable. Yet they must not be allowed to contribute to the disunity of the Church at the expense of mere denominational self-interest. I agree with John Frame, who contends that our ability both to maintain and advance our denominational interests while, at the same time, furthering our unity with other believers, would be a stronger witness to that unity than were we all clothed in the same uniforms, marching lock-step across the pages of history.

Third, I want to suggest some ways that Protestant Christians can, without abandoning their denominational convictions or connections, begin to work more for the unity for which Christ prayed so fervently on the night he was betrayed. This section will be merely suggestive; hopefully, however, it will stimulate more active and creative minds to powerful, effective, and lasting works of oneness with others who share the faith of Jesus Christ.

Finally, given the context which provides the occasion of these remarks, it seems appropriate to offer some suggestions to believers in the Roman Catholic community concerning their responsibility for working toward greater oneness with Protestants, and to suggest some ways that participants in the movement known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" might begin to intensify and expand the unity of the faith which they have begun to experience in their times of discussion together over these past several years. These comments will be merely summary in nature, as the burden of this paper is directed toward Protestant responsibility for the communion of the saints. However, I would doubtless be remiss if I did not encourage believers in other communions to greater diligence in realizing our oneness, and offer some suggestions for their consideration.<sup>5</sup>

The Scriptures call us to lay aside the besetting sin of unbelief. We should do so wherever that dread affliction shows symptoms of vitality. But especially should we do so—whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox—when it has attached itself to the very life-streams of faith and is attacking our unity in Christ and our witness in the world. I write as a Protestant speaking *to* my fellow Protestants; I make no pretense of speaking *for* them all (otherwise, such an article would hardly be necessary). I call us to face up to our besetting sin of unbelief so that we might begin to repent of our divisiveness and commit ourselves afresh to the hard work of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

#### THE BIBLICAL BASIS AND MANDATE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

A Protestant theology of the communion of the saints begins with the Word of God. The Scriptures focus on three aspects as of central significance with respect to the unity of the Church—the importance of unity, its nature, and the necessity of laboring to preserve and advance it. In this section we will briefly examine representative passages of the Biblical evidence arguing for each of these.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

The unity of the Church is viewed as of central importance among Biblical writers, especially those of the New Testament, but in the Old Testament as well. David, perhaps during a festival of rejoicing at the end of Israel's civil wars, or on the occasion of one of her annual feasts, rhapsodized, "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!"<sup>6</sup> The communion enjoyed by the saints recalls the ordination of Aaron, when precious oil flowed—a symbol of the grace and election of God—and the glory of God was manifest in splendor and power in the midst of his people.<sup>7</sup> Such unity is a divine achievement, as when the dews of snow-capped Hermon might appear on the desert mountains surrounding Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> It is there, in the unity of the brethren, that God commands his blessings to flow

among his people.<sup>9</sup> The prophet Isaiah foresaw a day in which the people of God would enlarge their one tent—not throw up many and varied—lengthening their cords and strengthening their pegs to accommodate an ever-increasing influx from all the nations.<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah eagerly anticipated a time when, under one New Covenant, the scattered and disparate tribes would be constituted as one people identified chiefly by their having in common a true knowledge of the living God and the blessing of the forgiveness of sins.<sup>11</sup> Through the prophet Haggai the Lord encouraged the people of Israel, downcast at the spare, stark structure of the second temple, to look ahead to a day when the true Temple of the Lord—which Jesus identified with himself<sup>12</sup>—would be filled with the wealth of all the nations, and the glory of God would be greater than anything the people had seen before.<sup>13</sup>

The New Testament writers, building on such hints and hopes from their forebears, took care to elaborate these views and insist on their importance. At a time when the gospel was beginning to make inroads to the Gentile world, and when there was great concern and consternation on the part of some believing Jews, the Apostle Paul argued that, in Christ, the old barriers that separated these two peoples had been destroyed, and they were now constituted one new person—one new body—in Christ.<sup>14</sup> With Peter he insisted that faith in Christ was the defining attribute of true believers, not arcane or vulgar<sup>15</sup> cultural practices or theological nuances.<sup>16</sup> While new believers must not be expected or required to forsake their ancestral or local cultures, except insofar as these lead them to idolatry, immorality, or legalism, yet they must not allow these to be a source of division with the rest of the Church. Paul understood that union in Christ was an important testimony to the reality of the gospel, as Jesus himself indicated.<sup>17</sup> But such unity is also what one would expect among those who had entered together into a common kingdom, and were united under the rule of one sovereign Lord. Righteousness, joy, and peace should be allowed to banish jealousy and hostility on the part of those who stand together in this new sphere of transforming power.<sup>18</sup> Together, as one

race and people, the members of the body of Christ are called to proclaim the excellencies of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.<sup>19</sup>

Disunity, on the other hand, threatens the integrity of the gospel and calls into question the power of the Lord.<sup>20</sup> It indicates a body that has succumbed to weakness and is unable, or unwilling, to extend grace to all members equally.<sup>21</sup> Disunity, expressed as a failure to love one another as Christ loved the Church, may even indicate, according to the Apostle John, that members are wanting in that initial grace of salvation that leads them beyond mere self-interest into lives of mutual concern and edification.<sup>22</sup>

Thus the Scriptures urge the importance of unity on the followers of Christ. It is a matter of the utmost significance that the body of Christ should be seen to be one, in fellowship and love. The situation reported in Acts 6:1-7 bears dramatic witness to the power of Christian unity. Here was a problem that threatened to divide the fledgling Church—racially, economically, and perhaps theologically. However, under the leadership of the apostles, the people resolved their differences amicably and generously, so that the oneness of the body was preserved as the needs of all its members were met. We read immediately after this incident that “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (verse 7, emphasis added). These were undoubtedly many of the same priests who had seen the miracles of Jesus and heard his teaching. They had listened to the testimony of the apostles, and of those members of their synagogues who had defected to the Christian camp. None of this had persuaded them. But when they saw the way the body of Christ cared for itself, the able and selfless leadership of the apostles and the sacrificial service of Stephen and the others, they were persuaded that something more than mere words was at work there. As Christ had prophesied, the oneness of his body had proven to be a witness to his resurrection stronger than any of the preaching these priests had heard.

### THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

The unity for which Christ prayed is to be a unity like that which he enjoys with the Father, at once spiritual and tangible. Such unity is, in the first place, spiritual, effected by the Spirit of God and dedicated to seeing Christ exalted over all things.<sup>23</sup> This is a work of the Holy Spirit, who brings the grace of God to bear on his elect, giving them the gift of faith and salvation.<sup>24</sup> He indwells believers and constitutes them as one body in his presence, fruit, and gifts,<sup>25</sup> and lubricates all the working parts of the Church with the peace of Christ, preserving her in his care until he comes.<sup>26</sup>

Yet this is not to be a unity in spirit or in principle only. The unity believers enjoy is to be expressed in their life together in the Spirit of Christ, who is building his Church into a glorious temple unto the Lord.<sup>27</sup> The early Christians expressed this common life in a variety of ways: by partaking of common sacraments, worshiping together, sharing meals in one another's homes, sitting together under the teaching of the apostles, observing the hours of prayer, giving of their personal resources to care for the needy, and reaching out together with the message of the gospel.<sup>28</sup> The basis for their unity was the confession of faith in Christ which Peter declared and Paul confirmed.<sup>29</sup> The practical demands of unity required that an attitude of deference and mutual submission be maintained by all, thus forming in each one a conduit for the waters of grace to flow with the filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup> Wherever this unity was threatened, as, for example, in Corinth, believers were exhorted to put aside everything that tends to schism and concentrate on growing together in Christ according to the requirements of his cross.<sup>31</sup>

### WORKING TO MAINTAIN UNITY

Paul exhorted the Ephesians, a Church where incipient schism seemed to be appearing, to commit themselves to "working hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."<sup>32</sup> At other times he exhorted believers to set aside their personal differences and "live in harmony in the Lord";<sup>33</sup> to submit together in love for one another under the leadership

of proven pastors;<sup>34</sup> and to allow nothing—not spiritual gifts, doctrinal perspicacity, homiletical eloquence, or conspicuous good works—to take the place of dwelling and laboring together in love.<sup>35</sup> Such unity is obviously difficult to maintain, as Paul indicates by selecting the participle, *spoudazontes*, "working hard," to describe what this great undertaking requires of every believer as an ongoing, active vigilance. There are many things which war against the communion of the saints, including, factionalism;<sup>36</sup> false teaching (relative to the heart of the gospel, the basis of Christian unity);<sup>37</sup> persecution;<sup>38</sup> the allure of the world, the flesh, and the devil;<sup>39</sup> and spiritual arrogance.<sup>40</sup> All these the New Testament writers condemned as hostile to the gospel and the communion of the saints. By some means Christians must learn to keep their common profession as the basis of their oneness and make room for one another in areas of the faith that do not threaten the integrity of the gospel. No wonder this is such hard work.

### THE ELOQUENCE AND UNBELIEF OF PROTESTANTISM

From the earliest days of the Reformation, Protestant theologians have understood the importance of unity in Christ. For a time they strove mightily to achieve it; however, that time was all too brief. Lutherans and Reformed parted company over the interpretation of the Lord's Supper before 1530. Anabaptists split off over the issue of believer's baptism and Church autonomy at about the same time. A generation later Anglicans effectively walled themselves into an enclave of formalism and nationalism. Early seventeenth-century Puritans and Separatists condemned Anglican formalism and latitudinarianism; continental Reformers took up arms against recalcitrant sectarians; Scots Presbyterians hunted down dissenters and Reformers within their own communion; colonial Congregationalists banished Baptists and free-thinkers; and Roman Catholics were opposed and oppressed wherever they showed up in predominantly Protestant territory. Meanwhile, while all this dividing and condemning was proceeding apace, Protestant theologians wrote eloquently and at length about the importance of the unity of the body of Christ.

### CONFESSIONAL ELOQUENCE

The unity of the Church, established by and in the Spirit on the basis of faith in Christ alone, has been insisted on by Protestant theologians from the beginning. Luther wrote:

The Christian church is your mother, who gives birth to you and bears you through the Word. And this is done by the Holy Spirit who bears witness concerning Christ. . . . When you hear the word "church" understand that it means group . . . that is, a holy Christian group, assembly, or, in the German, holy, common church . . . a congregation of the saints, that is, a congregation made up only of saints. . . . And you too are in this church; the Holy Spirit leads you into it through the preaching of the gospel.<sup>41</sup>

Menno Simons, Luther's Anabaptist contemporary, wrote much the same:

In the first place it must be said that the community of God, or the church of Christ, is an assembly of the pious and a community of the saints, as also the Nicene symbol puts it, which from the beginning firmly trusted and believed in the promised Seed of the woman, which is the promised Prophet, Messiah, Shiloh, King, Prince, Immanuel, and Christ; the which will accept and believe to the end His Word in sincerity of heart, follow His example, be led by His Spirit, and trust in His promise, as the Scriptures teach.<sup>42</sup>

Calvin's comments are very much along the same line, insisting that, in the Church,

all the elect are so united in Christ [Ephesians 1:22-23] that as they are dependent on one Head, they also grow together into one body, being joined and knit together [Ephesians 4:16] as are the limbs of a body [Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12, 21]. They are made truly one since they live together in one faith, hope, and love, and in the same Spirit of God.<sup>43</sup>

Calvin adds, concerning this sacred community,

here we are not bidden to distinguish between reprobate and elect—that is for God alone, not for us, to do—but to establish with certainty in hearts that all those who, by the kindness of God the Father, through the working of the Holy Spirit, have entered into fellowship with Christ, are set apart as God's property and personal possession; that when we are of their number we share that great grace.<sup>44</sup>

Later generations of Reformers, from all four branches of the Reformation, wrote much the same, thus testifying together of their belief that (1) they are in the Church who have come by God's Spirit to saving faith in Christ; (2) that this Church owes its existence to God and his grace; and that (3) this Church is one and a unity, as the ancient fathers confessed. This is particularly observable in the Reformed tradition, with which I am most familiar. The Presbyterian, Thomas M'Crie, noted:

[W]hether the Church of Christ be viewed in its internal or external state, unity is still its attribute. All genuine saints are invisibly and vitally united to Christ, and to one another, by the indissoluble bond of the Spirit and of faith; and in virtue of this it is that they increase in love and holiness, and are at last made "perfect in one."<sup>45</sup>

While separation into distinct congregations is a historical and cultural necessity, James Bannerman observed:

The separation, then, of the congregations of this visible Church from each other by distance of place, by difference of language, by varieties of administration, by different modes of worship and different outward observations, is a separation accidental and not essential, and cannot affect the fact of that higher unity that belongs to them as knit together in one profession of faith in Christ, and included together in the bond of an external covenant. The local and accidental differences are merged in the higher and essential oneness that belongs to them, as equally the members of a society which Christ has sealed with the seal of outward privileges, and recognised as His kingdom in the world.<sup>46</sup>



Louis Berkhof elaborates the Protestant and Reformed view of the Church by saying,

The Church forms a spiritual unity of which Christ is the divine Head. It is animated by one Spirit, the Spirit of Christ; it professes one faith, shares one hope, and serves one King. It is the citadel of the truth and God's agency in communicating to believers all spiritual blessings. As the body of Christ it is destined to reflect the glory of God as manifested in the work of redemption.<sup>47</sup>

Contemporary Protestant theologians echo this ongoing conviction. Miroslav Wolf, for example, writes of the confession of faith that constitutes the Church as such, and the bond of the Spirit that unites all true Churches with one another.<sup>48</sup> Edmund Clowney, writing on the basis of similar assumptions, insists, "Christians in community must again show the world, not merely family values, but the bond of the love of Christ."<sup>49</sup> And generations of Protestants have echoed these convictions by singing such venerable hymns as "The Church's One Foundation":

*The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.  
She is His new creation by water and the Word.  
From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy Bride;  
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.*

*Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,  
And mystic sweet communion with those whose race is won.  
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,  
Like them the meek and lowly on high may dwell with Thee.*

Surely Robert E. Webber is correct when he calls the Church to a recovery of its essential unity:

[T]he challenge of the church in the postmodern world is to recover community within the local church and the community of the entire church throughout history. We must learn that we are members of the whole church, the living and the dead, who

constitute the fellowship in faith. Our calling is to deconstruct our sectarianism and to enter into dialogue with the *whole* church with the intent of recovering our relationship to the whole family of God—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. The more we experience the "fellowship in faith," the more deeply we will experience the church as the body of Christ, a body that will attract and hold the postmodern seeker.<sup>51</sup>

I want to examine somewhat more carefully one document relating to this important subject, as it is, in my mind at least, among the most eloquent, concise, and thorough of all Protestant statements on the unity of believers, the communion of the saints. That is chapter 26 of The Westminster Confession of Faith, titled, "The Fellowship of the Saints."<sup>52</sup> We will consider each of the three brief paragraphs of this chapter.

The first paragraph qualifies the nature of our fellowship and points in the direction of its obligations (as paragraph 1 introduces this article I will not repeat it here). Note again that the unity believers share is in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit; hence, it is a work of grace, realized through faith. God effects this unity, and, it would seem, Protestants would be well advised to take that unity very seriously, as our Lord warned against men bursting asunder that which God has brought together.<sup>52</sup> All in whom the Spirit has wrought saving faith—from the newest, simplest, most uninformed to the oldest and most theologically sophisticated—have fellowship together in Christ in the Church. Like members of a body the members of Christ's Church partake of and benefit from the many expressions of God's grace and goodness to one another, and are obligated to nourish one another—in public and private duties—both spiritually and physically.

The active nature of the fellowship implied in paragraph 1 is strengthened in paragraph 2:

By their profession of faith saints are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion with each other in the worship of God and in the performance of other spiritual services for their mutual improvement. They are also bound to help each other

in material things according to their abilities and needs. This fellowship is to be offered, as God gives the opportunity, to everyone in every place who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus.

Note again, in both the opening and closing sentences, the emphatic statement that they have unity together who profess faith in—call upon the name of—Jesus Christ as Lord. No other qualifier is prescribed. Faith in Christ is the sole determiner of whom we must regard as legitimate objects of our fellowship. Doctrinal clarity, liturgical, cultural, or practical conformity, racial or economic equivalence—none of these must be allowed to be the standards for determining who shall be the objects of our fellowship in Christ. None of these must stand in the way of our practicing the fellowship to which we have been called in Christ. In this the Confession echoes Calvin, who wrote:

What is more, some fault may creep into the administration of either doctrine or sacraments, but this ought not to estrange us from true communion with the church. For not all the articles of true doctrine are of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion. Such are: God is one; Christ is God and the Son of God; our salvation rests in God's mercy; and the like. Among the churches there are other articles of doctrine disputed which still do not break the unity of faith.<sup>53</sup>

Further, the Confession notes that our obligations to one another are to serve, to seek mutual improvement, and to meet spiritual and physical needs. The worship of God is the ground and basis for such fellowship, and provides the impetus for loving our neighbors as ourselves. We are to extend this fellowship as often as God gives us the opportunity, not merely when it is convenient, when it falls within our doctrinal or cultural tradition, or after all other differences of whatever kind have been finally resolved. Worshiping together we reinforce one another in love for God and gain strength from him to give ourselves sacrificially to the needs of others, beginning with the household of faith.<sup>54</sup>

Paragraph 3 reads:

This communion which the saints have with Christ in no way means that they share in His Godhead or are equal with Him in any respect—to affirm either is impious or blasphemous. Neither does their communion with each other take away or infringe the right each person has to own and possess goods and property.

These two final sentences provide safeguards against encroaching upon divine and human prerogatives. In the Church believers are one with each other *in the Spirit*; they are not one with God in any sense of equality of being. Nor may they make claims on the property of others because of some need on their part. Rather, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace depends on the free expression of sympathy and love from one person to the next, and respects the right of individuals as stewards of all that God has given them, whether that stewardship is proper or inappropriate. Each man to his own master stands or falls.<sup>55</sup>

While summary in nature, these sentences are lofty expressions of the Reformed and Protestant view of the unity of the Church. We can only imagine what such convictions, consistently lived out community-by-community would look like, and what impact they might have on onlookers and skeptics. Protestants profess a clear and consistent standard of the unity of the faith, the communion of the saints. Most would agree that congregations in denominations other than their own are true Churches of the Lord and, thus, share in the unity we have in Christ. However, in practice, there is precious little evidence that Protestants believe their definition of unity and its importance to be as significant as it might appear.

#### PROTESTANT UNBELIEF

The practice of Protestants, lofty common convictions regarding the communion of the saints notwithstanding, has been to fracture that unity for a variety of reasons rather than to work hard to maintain it at all costs. Few are the Protestant

Church leaders who can testify as Calvin did during the early years of his ministry:

This one thing I strove for, that they might not schismatically divide any Church whatsoever, which, however it may be very corrupt in morals, and infected with outlandish doctrine, had not cut itself off entirely from that doctrine, upon which Paul teaches the Church of Christ to be founded.<sup>56</sup>

For nearly 500 years now Protestants have routinely broken fellowship, refusing to worship together, competing for followers, casting aspersions on one another, and excluding members from the sacraments and good standing in the Church over matters of doctrine (Arminian or Calvinist? dispensational or covenantal?), liturgy (paedobaptist or believer's baptist? traditional or seeker-friendly? open or closed communion?), and practice (high church or low? elders or not?). There are today thousands and thousands of Protestant denominations, most of which rarely if ever have anything to do with one another, and which as often as not hold one another in suspicion.<sup>57</sup> We do not worship together; we rarely participate in joint ministry activities; we guard our flocks jealously against marauding shepherds from other folds. We publish our own curricula, sponsor our own missionaries, hold our own annual conventions, and ordain according to our own criteria and standards. We do not honor the exercise of church discipline among one another, nor, in many cases, the baptism. In my own denomination, which professes to believe in the unity of the Church as articulated in The Westminster Confession, our governing document, which is designed to enable churches to carry out the demands of our calling, mentions nothing whatsoever about other denominations or churches, offers no guidance in practicing the communion of the saints with them, and acts, for all intents and purposes, as if our own denomination is the only true Church.

Protestants simply do not believe what we profess. We do not believe that we have actual and vital unity with churches

from other denominations. We do not believe that the maintenance of that unity is a cause worth setting aside differences to achieve. We do not believe our Savior when he prayed that unity among his followers is the key to the lost world believing he has actually come in the flesh for the redemption of mankind. We do not believe that the priorities of unity among the churches of Christ are more important than our individual, congregational, or denominational priorities, whatever these may be. The besetting sin of unbelief has shattered the unity of the Church among Protestant Christians, who have grown so used to this scandalous situation that they accept it as normal.

My own view is that this practice of *de facto* segregation among the churches of Protestantism is a scandal, of which we must repent and begin to bring forth the fruits of renewed oneness before we can expect the Lord to pour out the blessings of revival among the churches of Christ once again.<sup>58</sup> This need not require either that we renounce our denominational affiliations or uncritically embrace any and every assembly that refers to itself as a church. What it will require is that we take seriously our most basic conviction regarding the Church—that a church consists of those who together confess faith in Christ as Savior and Lord—and that we discover new ways, in the power of Christ's Spirit, of overcoming our unbelief and beginning to actualize our oneness in love for God and one another once again. We must begin to recover and express the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, but we must be ready to admit that doing so will require much hard work.

#### PRACTICING CHRISTIAN UNITY: SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

In this concluding section I want to offer some thoughts concerning how members of the body of Christ, Protestants and Catholics, might begin to work more determinedly toward realizing our oneness in Christ. I will begin with the Protestant community, for, unless we are able to begin realizing a greater measure of oneness within our own household,

we shall hardly be able to begin reaching out to brethren in Christ in other communions. Moreover, while the remarks immediately following are intended to encourage Protestants to begin working for a greater measure of unity within our own corner of the vineyard of Christ, these suggestions may be applied equally as well (it seems to me) toward cultivating greater unity among Catholic and Orthodox churches in our communities as well. However, first things first.

### WORKING FOR GREATER ONENESS: PROTESTANTS

Over the past generation, a number of significant efforts have emerged involving leaders from Protestant denominations and ministries which have had the effect of helping to refocus Protestants on the core matters of faith that bind us together. The Lausanne Movement, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, the World Evangelical Fellowship, Concerts of Prayer International, and other such efforts have demonstrated that leaders from across the spectrum of Protestantism can come together for agreement and collaboration on issues central to Christian faith and life. For the most part, however, these ministries have not been able to enlist local congregations in the same kind of unity of spirit.

Further, individual believers have shown an eagerness to work together with evangelicals from other churches within the ministry parameters of various parachurch organizations. Indeed, were it not for the existence of parachurch organizations it is interesting to speculate whether Protestant Christians would ever discover means of joining together for the work of the kingdom. Parachurch organizations have been used of God to bring together members of a wide range of Protestant churches for prayer, social concern, theological study and expression, worship, evangelism, and missions. At the same time, congregations tend to be wary of parachurch organizations, seeing them as competing with the local church in key areas of ministry, and siphoning off leaders, participants, and resources from the church for their own distinctive activities.

The success of international movements and parachurch ministries at bringing individual believers together notwith-

standing, therefore, the current situation suggests that Protestant churches are, for the most part, quite willing to continue the path of ecclesiastical segregation. And it is at the level of local churches that Protestants are most visible as members of the body of Christ in their communities. Thus, as churches, they embody the continuing Protestant malady of unbelief which keeps them from becoming a community of people with a common confession who, in the bond of love, are able to overcome a wide range of differences to demonstrate their essential oneness in Christ. This is the scandal that Protestant church leaders and members must devote themselves to working hard to overcome.

I want to suggest that we may be able to discover some avenues for local churches to begin renewing unity in Christ by turning back to the earliest days of the Church. What can we learn from the apostles, and from that first generation of believers, to help us get back on track in the communion of the saints?<sup>59</sup>

### One in Mind

Of the first Christians we read that they were one in mind.<sup>60</sup> As they gathered in that upper room for ten days they focused on common memories, cherished common instruction, and eagerly looked forward to one great promise, the coming of God's Spirit. We can imagine that their hearts were knit together by love for Christ and a strong desire to be ready and willing to serve him in the task of making all the nations disciples. They united their minds together under the teaching of Scripture and in the discipline of prayer as they waited for the promise of the Father to descend. We see here no more of that jockeying for place that occurred while Christ was among them.<sup>61</sup> They were of one mind, one accord, and dedicated to one promise and purpose.

Surely here is a place for local evangelical churches to begin recovering the unity of the body of Christ. Beginning with local pastors and church leaders, by coming together to forge new relationships, extol the many virtues of Christ, and focus on our common mission, evangelicals might begin to

lay a foundation for a broader, more vital fellowship among the believers in our communities. Pastors might take the lead in seeking out their evangelical brethren in order to get to know them and to encourage one another in their walk with the Lord. Groups of pastors could meet for fellowship, prayer, the reading of the Gospels, and exhortations to consider him, who, as author and perfecter of our faith, has opened the way to heaven for all who believe.<sup>62</sup> At such times let all agree to avoid those distinctives of doctrine or practice which tend to separate us; instead, let us set our minds together on heavenly matters, on the glories of Christ in his threefold office and completed work, and on the wonders of our eternal home.<sup>63</sup> As such times become more frequent and regular, ministers and Church leaders may discover new friendships and find once again that common basis for unity in him who has broken down every wall that divides us one from another.<sup>64</sup>

Let Protestant pastors and church leaders cultivate the mindset that Calvin recommended, when, after quoting Philippians 3:15, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be of the same mind," wrote, "Does this not sufficiently indicate that a difference of opinion over these nonessential matters should in no wise be the basis of schism among Christians?"<sup>65</sup> One in mind, our determination set on honoring Christ and building his Church together, we shall then have a basis to proceed more fully to realize the unity of the faith.

### One in the prayers

The first Christians accepted the discipline of joining together at set times for prayer. It is important to note that, contrary to almost every translation, the relevant noun in Acts 2:42 is in the plural—*prayers*. As this, and the practice of the apostles suggests,<sup>66</sup> the first Christians appear to have carried over the Old Testament discipline of praying at set times of the day, whether together at a central place or individually in their homes or places of work. Observing the hours of prayer was a practice common to believers across the Roman Empire, and has continued among certain segments of the body of Christ to this day. Yet Protestants long ago abandoned this

practice, preferring to leave to each individual the determination of where and when it is best to pray. However, there being no mandate from Scripture allowing us to set aside this venerable practice, we ought to encourage and join one another in taking it up again. The recovery of hours of prayer, embraced by evangelical leaders and church members, may be useful in helping to create greater oneness community-by-community than currently exists.

Let the churches begin to call their people to prayer at set times each day, beginning with the evening office. This should be easy enough for many Protestants to adjust to, stopping by any participating church on their way home from work or just before dinner. On occasion during the evening office, let the churches open their doors to the community for prayer, perhaps with special community foci—families, health concerns, etc.—and moving the meetings around to different congregations week-to-week. Church leaders should begin to teach their people how to carve out time during the day—at home, school, or work—to observe the hours of prayer right where they are. And let us be guided during this time, as the first Christians seem to have been, by the prayers we find in Scripture, in particular, the Psalms.<sup>67</sup> Thus Protestants may nurture a common participation, common focus, common burden, and even a common language for our prayers, all according to the will of God in Scripture.

### One in worship

The pattern of Church life in the New Testament suggests that, in any given community, the Church existed at two levels. First, there was a common congregation that brought together all the believers in a given community for the worship of God—the Church in Corinth, Ephesus, etc. This fellowship seems to have met at least weekly and was presided over by all the elders of the city. But, at another level, the Church existed more locally—by neighborhoods, perhaps—in "households" or "house churches," as we see in Romans 16:4, 1 Corinthians 1:11ff, and Colossians 4:15. These "house churches" were equally churches with the larger community

congregation, in that they had the same leadership, sustained the same ministries, enjoyed the same privileges, and accepted the same discipline as the larger Church. In a house church one might expect to hear preaching, receive the sacraments, take up offerings for those in need, or come under church discipline—just as one might expect the same things in the larger, community-wide Church.

Protestants have maintained neither of these dynamics in their practice of building churches around denominational affiliation, style or emphasis of ministry, strategic location, or personalities. In so doing we have shattered the dynamic of the Church in both its macro- and microcosmic dimensions. Denominations are a poor substitute for the New Testament model of the Church; however, they may provide a platform for recovering that model.

Let evangelical Church leaders in particular communities, now becoming friends and learning to trust one another, begin to call their congregations together on a regular basis for services of worship, perhaps at a larger, public venue (civic arena, field house, etc.). In this context let them concentrate on the same kind of focus that they will have discovered effective in allowing them to develop more meaningful relationships among themselves. Let denominational, liturgical, and doctrinal differences be set aside, and let the ancient liturgy of the Church, and the true and spiritual worship of Jesus, establish the tone and content for their gathering. And let them divide their congregations up into neighborhood “house churches”, incorporating other believers from other churches in an effort to establish the visible presence of the Church more pervasively throughout the community. Let elders and church leaders share in the responsibility for exercising oversight of those neighborhood churches; let pastors share the duties of preaching and administering the sacraments at the larger gatherings. Such efforts might help to create a highly visible presence of the body of Christ in any community.

### One in Service

The first Christians were quick to offer themselves, their

abilities, and their resources to meet the needs of those in their communities. Whether the work involved helping widows, relieving the hungry, or reaching the lost, the churches in any given community came together to do whatever was needed.<sup>68</sup> As we have seen above, in the situation described in Acts 6:1-7, this aspect of the unity of the Church was particularly effective in speaking to lost onlookers about the reality of the gospel. Might not local Protestant churches explore ways of working together in relief efforts yet today? Joining together to reach the lost? To care for the homeless? To meet the pressing needs of people throughout the community? The effort would certainly be worth trying.

The time has come for Protestants to begin living up to their confessions of faith. It is gross hypocrisy to profess the unity of the Church and then studiously to avoid it, or merely to regard it as unworkable or impractical. To say that we believe one thing while we pursue a course which demonstrates something altogether different is not to believe at all. I agree with John Frame who insists “that we establish unity as our *goal*. Goals are not enough, but they are important. By meditating on them, longing for them, praying for them, we sometimes gain some wisdom on how to achieve them. May that be so in this case.”<sup>69</sup> Or, as Calvin put it:

We see indeed of how much importance that is, not only on our own account, but for the sake of the whole body of professing Christians everywhere, that all those on whom the Lord has laid any personal charge in the ordering of his Church, should agree together in a sincere and cordial understanding. Indeed, Satan himself perceives that very clearly, who while he plots, by every method he can devise, the ruin of Christ’s kingdom, plies none more earnestly with all his might, than to sow division and discord among us, or somehow at least to estrange the one from the other. For that very reason, therefore, it is our duty to oppose these sort of devices; and the more our adversary strives to rend asunder our connection, so much the more ought we to strive against him with more determined resolution and intense anxiety to cherish and uphold it. Since, therefore, it is our duty carefully to cultivate friendly fellowship with all the ministers

of Christ, so we must needs also endeavour by all the means we can, that the churches to which we faithfully minister the word of the Lord may agree among themselves.<sup>70</sup>

#### WORKING FOR GREATER ONENESS: ROMAN CATHOLICS

Modern Roman Catholics have demonstrated a growing sense of commitment to the communion of the saints. They confess, "In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this goal."<sup>71</sup> The movement known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" is merely one manifestation of how Roman Catholic leaders have taken their confession seriously and begun to explore ways of realizing greater unity with those who, like them, profess faith in Christ but "do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter."<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, it is not uncommon to find Roman Catholics and Protestants working hand-in-hand for the progress of the gospel in the context of various parachurch agencies. Ministries like Prison Fellowship, Habitat for Humanity, and a variety of pro-life causes have helped us to see that, when they agree to set aside their differences and focus on common objectives, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians can achieve a measure of oneness that creates great reserves of spiritual energy for the progress of God's kingdom.

However, the same problem that Protestants experience, that of achieving greater unity among their congregations, is even more difficult when we consider how Catholic and Protestant *churches* may begin working together for a greater and more consistent expression of the one body of Christ. I find it difficult, given the state of unity among Protestants, to make recommendations to my Catholic brethren, who will no doubt be (at least) thinking, "Physician, heal thyself." It may be that some of the suggestions outlined in the previous section can be put to use by Roman Catholic church leaders, both to build a greater and more visible unity among the several parishes of a given community, and to begin reaching out

to Protestant churches as well. More than this, however, it seems presumptuous for me to say.

#### WORKING FOR GREATER ONENESS: THE PARTICIPANTS IN ECT

My fellow participants in the dialogues which have come to be known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" will not object to my offering some suggestions concerning how we may perhaps hope to intensify the oneness our Lord has already begun to effect among us, and begin reaching out together to our individual communions in an effort to expand the communion of the saints that we have realized over the years in our times together. I will follow the same outline as in the section above on Protestants.

#### One in mind

How might we as members of ECT strengthen the oneness of mind and purpose which God has been pleased to effect among us over these past several years? Who of us does not find these times together richly stimulating, intellectually satisfying, and above all filled with hope for the realization of a greater measure of oneness among all the followers of Christ in these postmodern times? It would be to our advantage to seek ways of intensifying this oneness and making it available to others in whom the Lord may be similarly working. An ECT newsletter might help, even if only an eight-page quarterly. In it we could keep the history of the movement alive; give reports on discussions and projects; report responses received to ECT activities; share additional thoughts on the particular topic we are considering; communicate personal projects and concerns; provide summaries of books and papers by members; include a "travel journal" for prayer support; strengthen the bonds that exist between us; and have a tool for reaching out to others beyond the current participants. The creation of Protestant/Catholic "study teams" might also help to strengthen mind and purpose on whatever particular topic may be in our purview at any given time. Let two members of each communion be paired and charged with drafting a common

response to the initial papers submitted as part of our discussions. In such a situation members would have to talk with one another—at least by phone or e-mail—and exchange thoughts and ideas to prepare a statement expressing their own unity of mind concerning the discussions before us. From such brief statements we might begin to see more clearly emerging the ideas, themes, and statements which will ultimately comprise the position paper we draft on the topic before us. Such an exercise would also provide valuable experience in learning to focus on common convictions and ideals without allowing differences and distinctives beyond those which unite us in Christ to get in the way of our working for greater unity in him.

A final suggestion would be that we include in each of our times of meeting together observers from each community whose privilege it is to sit in on the discussions (although not participate), join in the fellowship, speak with the participants, and experience the reality of the Spirit of Christ as he makes himself known among us. Such observers might include other theologians, local pastors, or key leaders in each communion who are already working together as Evangelicals and Catholics in other ways.

### One in Prayer

Certainly there is room for more prayer during our discussions—prayer as a plenary group, in smaller groups, in our separate “caucuses,” and for a wide variety of subjects. I know that our time is at a premium when we are together; yet I believe we might make better use of the time at hand if we devoted a greater portion of that to prayer.

We might also consider establishing annual prayer partnerships, linking members of the two communions with one another for a year to pray for one another on a regular basis. Such an arrangement would require more active and consistent communication among the members of ECT, would foster stronger personal relationships and mutual love, and, over the years, lead to a greater appreciation and love among all the participants.

### One in worship

Here I can only suggest that we find a way to give some of our time together to praying, singing, and being ministered to from the Word of God. A period of devotions to begin and end the day might be a start. If we ever hope to see the congregations of our two communions worshiping together, we should begin to model that objective in our own times.

### One in service

I have only one suggestion for the members of ECT for reaching out together to the larger community. We should consider holding a larger conference for the Church, inviting members from throughout the body of Christ to come together to meet and hold discussions with the participants in this movement, be given opportunity to raise their questions and voice their concerns, hear presentations and participate in discussions on various subjects we have tackled, and be led in prayer and worship together as one cross-section of the body of Christ. What we experience in terms of mutual appreciation and love, intellectual and spiritual stimulation, and growing hope could be spread more broadly in such a context. Certainly naysayers and detractors would be present; however, the *experience* of Christ's presence at such meetings, and the opportunity to meet and get to know people from other communions, would, I believe, create such a sense of God's blessing and approval that the arguments of ECT's opponents would carry little weight.

God has called his people to work for the unity of the body of Christ, to recognize that this is hard work, but to accept it as of supreme importance for giving credence to our witness to the risen Christ. For Protestants, this is a work that must begin at home, between the leaders, members, and congregations of our various communions. We must begin to “put flesh” on our confessions, to show that we believe what we profess by discovering ways of setting aside our differences to concentrate on those things that make us one in Christ. Then we may hope to join Roman Catholic and Orthodox brethren in reaching out to one another, that we all may be



one, if not in structure, at least in spirit, before a watching and desperate world.

#### Author

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#### Notes

1. This paper was originally prepared as a contribution to the discussion of the subject, "The Communion of the Saints," the by project, Evangelicals and Catholics Together.
2. John M. Frame, *Evangelical Reunion: Denominations and the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 43.
3. On unbelief as the "besetting sin" see Donald A. Hagner, *New International Biblical Commentary: Hebrews* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 211-12.
4. Edmund Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1995), 16.
5. Thanks to Richard John Neuhaus for urging me to include this section.
6. Psalm 133:1.
7. Psalm 133:2, cf. Leviticus 8-9.
8. Stanley L. Jaki, *Praying the Psalms: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 221.
9. Brueggemann emphasizes that the experience of unity, rather than the location of Zion, is what is referred to: Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 47.
10. Isaiah 54:1-3.
11. Jeremiah 31:31-34.
12. John 2:19.
13. Haggai 2:6-9.
14. Ephesians 2:11-18; Galatians 3:26-29).
15. In the sense of common, not crude or coarse.
16. Cf. Acts 11:1-18; Acts 15.
17. John 17:20-21.
18. Romans 14:17.
19. 1 Peter 2:9.
20. 1 Corinthians 1:12-13.
21. 1 Corinthians 12:25-26.
22. 1 John 3:1-10.
23. John 17:20-21; Psalm 2:4-12.
24. Galatians 4:6.
25. John 14:16-17; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.
26. Ephesians 4:3; 1 Peter 1:3-5, where the Spirit is referred to as "the power of God" (cf. Acts 1:8).
27. Ephesians 2:19-22.
28. Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-7; 11:27-30; etc.
29. Acts 2:36-38; 16:31; 1 Corinthians 1:2.
30. Romans 12:3; Ephesians 5:18-21.
31. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.
32. Ephesians 4:3.
33. Philippians 4:2.
34. 1 Corinthians 15:14-15.
35. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.
36. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.
37. Galatians 1:6-9.
38. Hebrews 12:6-8.
39. 1 John 2:15-17.
40. 2 Corinthians 11:10-23.
41. Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Catechism" in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, edited by John Dillenberger. (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 212.
42. Menno Simons, "Reply to Gellius Faber," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, translated by Leonard Verduin and edited by J. C. Wenger (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1984), 734.
43. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 4:i:2:1014.
44. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:i:3:1015-16.
45. Thomas M'Crie, *The Unity of the Church* (Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1821, 1989).
46. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, Volume 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1869, 1974), 45.
47. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939,

- 1974), 564.
48. Miroslav Wolf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 154-55.
  49. Edmund Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1995), 16.
  50. Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 80-81.
  51. The version I am using in what follows is *The Westminster Confession of Faith: An Authentic Modern Version* (Signal Mountain, Tennessee: Summertown Texts, 2000).
  52. Matthew 19:6.
  53. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:1:12:1025-26.
  54. Galatians 6:10.
  55. Romans 14:4.
  56. John Calvin, Letter to Farel, March 15, 1539, in *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, Volume 4, edited by Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet and translated by David Constable (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 117.
  57. I recall some years ago teaching a seminar on evangelism among Free Will Baptists in North Carolina. During lunch a man said to me, "I sure am glad you came to speak to us about evangelism, because before I met you, I thought every Presbyterian minister was either a communist or a homosexual."
  58. The following comment regarding the Great Awakening from Iain Murray seems apposite at this point: "As was seen in the time of Edwards, Whitefield and Davies, one mark of an outpouring of the Spirit of God is the presence of a stronger catholicity of spirit among believers. Only when churches put adherence to Christ first can the world begin to recognize the real identity of those who bear his name." Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 88.
  59. For a more extensive list of suggestions see Frame, *Evangelical Reunion*, 165-169, but throughout as well.
  60. Acts 1:14.
  61. Cf. Mark 10:35-41.
  62. Hebrews 12:1-2.
  63. Colossians 3:1-3.
  64. Ephesians 2:14-15.
  65. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1026.
  66. Cf. Acts 3:1; 10:9.
  67. Cf. Acts 1:15-20; 4:23-31.
  68. Cf. Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 8:4; 11:19-21; 11:27-30; etc.

69. Frame, *Evangelical Reunion*, 39-40.
70. John Calvin, Letter to Bullinger, March 12, 1539, in *Selected Works of John Calvin: Reacts and Letters*, Volume 4:113.
71. Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, 2:15, in John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 467.
72. Leith, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, 2:14:466.