

Doctrine and Unity

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Romans 16:17 speaks concerning doctrine and unity:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them.

This passage states it plainly: where doctrines that are contrary to “**the** doctrine” are taught and received, not unity, but “divisions and occasions of stumbling” result.

Some say, “It is not doctrine that unites us, it is love.” Scriptural unity surely involves love between the parties concerned, but it requires far more. God loved the world immensely when He gave Christ for sinful men (John 3:16), but there was hardly any unity there. In light of Romans 16:17, there can be no Heaven-ordained unity in a climate of doctrinal diversity. This passage alone is sufficient to expose the insidious “unity in diversity” doctrine, first advocated by Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett in the 1960s and has lately been embraced by some who once rightly condemned them. Unity on any basis that ignores or forfeits doctrinal Truth is not Scriptural unity.

In the face of contrary, destructive doctrines, many yet cry for patience and tolerance toward their purveyors. Just how long can false teachers be allowed to ravish the bride of Christ? For example, how long must we wait to apply Paul's order to men who openly propagate divisive and contrary doctrines on marriage, divorce, and remarriage? These doctrines are leading thousands of saints to live in fornication. Already many congregations have been influenced by such teachers, becoming open havens for the unscripturally divorced and remarried. The fallout of this tragedy is already awful, but it will be many times worse in future generations, as these men in adulterous marriages are appointed as elders and deacons.

These doctrines have become the source of much division, even abroad. If now is not the time for faithful brethren to stand up and say, “We have taken note of these false teachers and we must turn away from them” (Rom. 16:18), when will the time be? How many more churches and families must be divided and how many more souls lost before we draw the line and say, “This far and no further”? (The same goes for the proponents of other heresies among us, such as the reaffirmation and reconfirmation of elders.)

As sad and difficult as the task is, can we any longer resist the instruction of the Holy Spirit? While it is not my place to decide for others on this matter, for my part I have “marked”

such men and congregations and turned away from them. I will not knowingly endorse, work with, encourage, or use them or their materials in a way that implies fellowship or agreement. If brethren would thus act as one, the influence of such men could be nullified almost overnight.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, October 11, 2015, of which I was editor.]

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