

THE TRUE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

1. GODLY UNITY

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. **3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.** 4 We write this to make our joy complete.

2. UNGODLY DISUNITY

Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be **no divisions** among you and that you may be **perfectly united** in mind and thought. 11 My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?

3. UNGODLY UNITY

Acts 4:23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers **gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.**' 27 **Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.**

4. GODLY DISUNITY

2 John 1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, **do not take him into your house or welcome him.** 11 Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

John 2:19 They went out from us, but they **did not really belong to us.** For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

Revelation 2:20 Nevertheless, I [Jesus] have this against you: **You tolerate** that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. **By her teaching she misleads my servants** into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

THE VICENTIAN CANON (AN ACIENT GUIDE TO TRUE CHURCH UNITY)

What then will the Christian do, if a small part of the Church has cut itself off from the communion of the universal Faith? The answer is sure. He will prefer the healthiness of the whole body to the morbid and corrupt limb. But what if some novel contagion tries to infect the whole Church, and not merely a tiny part of it? Then he will take care to cleave to antiquity, which cannot now be led astray by any deceit of novelty.

WOLFHART PANNENBERG ON THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

Here lies the boundary of a Christian church that knows itself to be bound by the authority of Scripture. Those who urge the church to change the norm of its teaching on this matter must know that they are promoting schism. If a church were to let itself be pushed to the point where it ceased to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step would cease to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

THE TRUE UNITY OF THE CHURCH – QUESTIONS FOR HOME GROUPS

1. Read Ephesians 4:3-6 What is the basis of the true unity of the church? In v 3 what does Paul encourage us to do ? How can we “maintain” unity?
2. Read 1 John 1:1-4. In vs 3-4, how can we have fellowship with God? What is the importance of the apostles’ teaching for true unity?
3. Read Acts 4:23-28. Who are united in v 27? What are they united in doing? What examples of “ungodly unity” can you think of?
4. Read 2 John 10-11. What action does John urge his readers to take? Why does John urge his readers to take this action (see 1 John 2:19)? When is it right to be disunited with false teachers for the sake of the gospel (see Galatians 1:6-9)?
5. Read Revelation 2:20-25. What does Jesus have against the church in v 20? Is tolerance always a Christian virtue? What action will Jesus take in vs 22-23? What does Jesus encourage faithful Christians to do in v 25?
6. Consider the following statement by the German theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg on the church’s teaching on human sexuality:
Here lies the boundary of a Christian church that knows itself to be bound by the authority of Scripture. Those who urge the church to change the norm of its teaching on this matter must know that they are promoting schism. If a church were to let itself be pushed to the point where it ceased to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step would cease to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

Do you think Pannenberg is right? How should we maintain true spiritual unity in 1. our home group? 2. In Christ Church? 3. In the Anglican Communion? Who is true bringing disunity to the Anglican Communion? Should GAFCON be really viewed as a movement to restore true spiritual unity?

7. If a church moved to bless same-sex unions would that church still believe in the true Gospel? Can we have true unity with those who believe a different gospel?