

UNITY IN DIRECTION AND ATTITUDE

"Let's go back to the Bible. Let's be just what the apostles taught the church of the first century to be." That has been the plea of many "reformers" or "restorers" across the centuries.

Some who have followed that ideal, even at great sacrifice, went wide of the mark. The Amish, for example, focused primarily on rejection of modern clothing and technology.

Others have come closer. We rightly honor certain pioneer preachers of the 19th century for their attempt to "restore the ancient order." I find myself in agreement with much of what they discovered. **It would be impossible, however, to profess agreement with all they taught, since so many of them had widely different emphases and practiced widely different things.**

Their unity did not consist in total agreement in everything they taught. It consisted in an attitude of humble submission to the word of God, which kept them moving in the direction of conformity to the will and way of Christ in all things.

We should not seek to be just like them, but we should seek what they sought. Where people are at a given moment is certainly important, but even more significant is, "What direction are they going?" "Where are they headed?"

There are some whose doctrinal positions are in almost every instance the same as mine. Their primary allegiance, however, seems to be to a particular "camp" within the church with whom they have cast their lot, and their spirit seems to be one of caustic criticism and total rejection of anyone who differs with any of **the selected views that define their camp.**

On the other hand, there are some whose practice is also largely the same as mine, but who seem **more concerned with "What do I want to do?" than with "What does the Bible say?"**

Robert F. Turner, in a lecture at Florida College, said, "Two men who do the same thing religiously—one because he sincerely believes God wants it that way and the other because he likes it that way and has no intention of changing regardless of God's word—may be less unified than two men whose practice is different, but who are both sincerely searching for truth and are willing to conform to all truth found. The first two will drift further apart; the second two will be drawn together in the paths of God."

Quoted in David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *The Churches of Christ in the 20th century*, University of Alabama Press, p. 363.

If we are in Christ, based on His gift of salvation which we receive by obedient faith, we can honor the fact that we are brothers. As we humbly and mutually submit to God's word, we will grow together in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

Two will not be as one for long if one seeks to please Christ and the other seeks primarily to please himself or to be **pronounced sound by his fellow "campers."** They are destined to drift further apart and end at opposite poles.

Two can be one in Christ if both are steadfastly set on learning and doing the will of the Lord, even if one of them is somewhat ahead of the other.

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