

From Politics to Reconciliation: *Healing the Body of Christ*

In the natural world, the battle for unity is between Liberals and Conservatives to determine who's correct. In the Body of Christ, it's between those who seek righteousness in being correct—whether politically or religiously—and those who find it in Jesus, and in Him alone.

by Gordon Dalbey

*Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name,
the name you gave me,
so that they may be one just as you and I are one (John 17:11).*

The recent political elections—fought so passionately, if not bitterly in our country—reflect a deep division among Americans which has infected the Body of Christ. Regardless of the “winners,” Christians face a daunting task ahead to reconcile our differences after so much fighting each other.

For the Body of Christ, however, reconciliation is not hopeless—because Jesus has been praying for that a long, long time. Before his Church began, in fact, he knew his Body would be broken apart more often from within than from outside forces. So he reminded us then—as now—that only he can take us back to the Father who created us all, and re-center us there in His love and destiny together.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life,” as Jesus declared just before his above opening prayer. “No one goes to the Father except by me” (John 14:6).

It's essential for us to know the way to the Father, because a host of self-centered impulses lives within and about us that would otherwise distract us from His calling and protection. In fact, these powers of the natural world are so seductive that, if not for the heritage and fellowship of others surrendered to Jesus, we're easily lured away from God by the enemy's lies—even as Adam and Eve by the snake (Heb. 12:1).

When sheep are busy fighting each other, they don't see the wolf.

For Jesus, Christian unity is about safety before it's about righteousness.

ENMITY AND DIVISION

Today, we in the Body of Christ have lacked the simple humility and faith that would save us from our self-centered desires so we can embrace our destiny in God's desires. From His greater-than-political view, our Father therefore grieves that His children have spurned His power to unite us and thereby, have fallen prey to His enemy's principalities of enmity and division (Ephes. 6:10-12).

Even as Jesus would lead us to the Father unto today, I would remind: *Men and women who have the same father are called brothers and sisters.*

The current animosity between Christians therefore demonstrates that we've allowed the enemy of God to alienate us not only from each other, but indeed, from our Father—who has ordained us together "to bring light" to others in the world who don't know Him (Isa. 42:6-7).

"The (early) Church was not merely a thermometer," as Martin Luther King Jr., reminded, "but a thermostat."^[1]

A divided fellowship cannot heal the division in the world, but can only succumb to it ourselves. "Satan cannot cast out Satan," Jesus put it bluntly (Matt. 12:26).

Even non-Believers know this. "The left wing and the right wing belong to the same bird," a recent online secular meme noted.

We can't presume to engage the world credibly in Jesus' behalf when we have so deliberately turned away from him ourselves. Throughout history, in fact, Jesus' Body has suffered from division so deep and vast that scoffers and seekers alike often dismiss Christians today as more focused on squabbling among ourselves than in healing a broken world.

ETERNAL RUB

Even if we're convicted and agree that's true, here's the eternal rub: It's not simply that we don't unite and fulfill God's calling, but that apart from Jesus, we can't.

"I know that good does not live in me—that is, in my human nature," as the Apostle Paul declared:

For even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it.... What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 7:18, 24,25)

In that place of ultimate surrender, Father God reveals our common need for Him to "rescue" us from our ingrown "human nature."

In fact, therein lies "the power of (God's) name which He gave (Jesus)"—that is, *Y'Shua* or Joshua in Hebrew, meaning "God Saves." Apart from the saving power of His Spirit, released through Jesus in the resurrection, we lack His gift of supernatural discernment (1 Corinth. 12:10). Unable to distinguish God's will from that of the world, we allow our self-focused sin-nature to turn us away from each other and thereby distract us from our Father's larger calling together (1 Peter 5:8-11).

Certainly, I welcome efforts of non-Believers to foster mutual caring and respect. Yet I know from personal experience that, apart from the care and wisdom of Christian brothers and sisters—both those who agree with my political views and others who do not—I can easily get suckered into the world's us-vs.-them judgments and lose sight of our common mission.

WHOSE WE ARE

When we let Jesus lead us to the Father, we're reminded of Whose we are. A political worldview cannot confess nor celebrate this divine family connection. Only the Father's worldview, reflected in Jesus as "the Way" to Him, can reveal it.

Reconciliation—whether in marriages, families, nations, or churches—requires remembering and affirming common ground. Jews, for example, celebrate the Passover service annually, to commemorate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land.

Yes, we're all Americans. And yes, that's significant in times of national struggle. For Christians, however, that political reality alone is not our common ground, and therefore cannot reconcile us to stay focused on our calling together.

For those who don't know Jesus, the battle for unity is between Liberals and Conservatives to determine who's correct. Thus, the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil, which seduces us into the world's vicious cycle of accusation and defense.

Since creation, that's been the primary distraction from the Tree of Life, which is Jesus (Gen. 3).

For the Body of Christ, therefore, the battle is between those who seek righteousness in being correct—whether politically or religiously—and those who find it in Jesus, and in Him alone.

COMMON GROUND

He is our common ground, who sustains us in our journey of reconciliation.

Without that foundation together, we've lost The Way before we start.

In the natural world, settling a disagreement is about politically established "laws and commandments" by which one party wins over another. In the Kingdom of God, it's about what God's trying to teach us all so we can unite in Him (Ephes. 2:14-22).

Jesus does not need us to validate him. When you believe your political view makes you a Christian, politics supplants Jesus and becomes an idol.

As human beings, that is—regardless of your politics or faith—we *all share in a common sin-nature that would separate us from God and thereby, from our Christian brothers and sisters*. In order to overcome that division, we must look beyond the nearsighted powers of the world which enforce it, even in our own hearts (James 4:1-4).

Sure, like any family, not all of us will have the same beliefs all the time. That's because, as Paul declared, our broken nature only allows us to "see as a dim image in a mirror" until Jesus returns: "What I know now is only partial...then it will be complete—as complete as God's knowledge of me" (1 Corinth. 13:12).

No church, therefore, is perfect; all in some way miss the mark God has set for us.

Sorry to bear this humbling news, but any church you and I join will be imperfect.

That's because you and I are members.

GOOD NEWS

The Good News, meanwhile, is that we haven't been abandoned in our brokenness. Indeed, via Jesus' death and resurrection, our Father has released His own very Spirit among us (Galat. 4:6). Trusting Holy Spirit's work in and through us, we can cultivate a lifestyle of surrender to God.

That's what allows Him to overcome our sin-nature with His nature, that is, to "(build) us together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Ephes. 1:15-20). In such humble surrender, we find hope to unite safely and work together to bring His Kingdom rule "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Certainly, political outcomes do have consequences, often dire. As we vote for candidates and policy options, Christians are responsible to research the election issues and seek God's will insofar as we understand it.

But until Jesus returns, none of us will hear from God all the time with absolute clarity. We therefore don't expect us all to come out on exactly the same page—not because "those other Christians" aren't really hearing from God like us, but because we all have our natural blind spots as well as our reasoned conclusions and divine revelations.

In fact, the judgment of others in the Body is a major biblical test of whether a message is from God or not. "(Those) who are given God's message should speak, while the others are to judge what they say," Paul states (1 Corinth. 14:29).

When surrendered to Jesus, therefore, we can experience safety in his fellowship; that is, we can disagree without fighting each other as enemies.

That means Christians can speak up politically and vote as they feel led by God. But it also means we must never forget that brothers and sisters in Christ are family. We don't need to have the same political beliefs in order to love and respect each other.

That's what sets us apart from the world.

For so the ancient Roman theologian Tertullian "imagined pagans looking at Christians and saying, "Look . . . how they love one another (for they themselves [pagans] hate one another); and how they are ready to die for each other (for they themselves are readier to kill each other)."[\[2\]](#)

HUMILITY OF INADEQUACY

Obviously, that's been a tough expectation for Christians to live up to—as the long history of often violent division among churches demonstrates. But that's why Jesus had to die for us—and no mere animal sacrifice—in order to lead the way. In fact, it's how the life-giving Spirit which empowered Him 2000 years ago in Israel could be released to animate His Body in all times and places—even among us today (John 12:24).

Thus, the humility in our inadequacy enables us to confess our ultimate dependence upon Jesus—and trust his Spirit to lead us into unity.

In the kingdom of the world, where our natural minds rule, that kind of humility feels shameful. In the Kingdom of God, however, where human intelligence is a gift to serve God, it's courageous, pioneering faith.

In fact, Jesus came precisely to save us from that shame, via the unfathomable grace of a Father who opens the door to relationship "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8).

The enemy's seductive pride, however, urges, "I could never unite with those others, even if they do consider themselves Christian!"

To which I would say, "You're quite right. You can't."

In the grip of our human nature, what we can't do is the end of our story.

In the hands of Jesus, it's the beginning of His story.

DIVINE LICENSE

Yes, "those others" are accountable to God for the wrongs they commit, even as you and I. At times, our larger mission may require prophetic truth as well as grace to each other within the Body (John 1:17). Your divine license to do so, however, is your own accountability to God yourself, regardless of others' behaviors and beliefs.

The cry to unite His Body in John 17 was Jesus' last prayer before going to the cross. His suffering in our behalf and resurrection soon afterward released the power of God's Holy Spirit among us, empowering us to fulfill that prayer unto today.

When we give Holy Spirit such free rein to do that among us, the Bible says, "Your old men will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

OK, I'll take that.

OLD MAN'S DREAM

How's this for an old man's dream?

Determine to be an answer to Jesus' prayer:

Demonstrate holy leadership by kneeling before him. There, at the cross, release humbly your desire for vindication—that is, for God to examine "those other people" and expose *their* wrongs.

Instead, seize the holy initiative and pray like the warrior King David, charged to protect and prepare God's people for their witness to God:

Examine me, O God, and know my mind. Test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way. (Ps. 139:23,24)

Renounce and defy the world's division and enmity. Ask the Father to show you any way that you have demeaned or discounted other Christians for their political views. Ask His forgiveness for judging your brother or sister.

Contact one other person to whom this applies--quite possibly from your own church--and tell him/her that you miss your friendship and want to re-connect. No need to talk about politics off the bat. You can just talk about your families or some other area of common interest. At some point when it feels appropriate, you can ask forgiveness for caving in to the world's division and judging him/her.

Whether that person responds to your overture or not is an issue between them and God; whether you contact or not is between you and God.

A TIME TO REPENT

Above all, remember: this meet-up is not about politics, but relationship. It's not a time to defend your viewpoint or change anyone else's. It's a time to be repent and listen (see "How to Stop a Fight before It Starts: Listen to Each Other" in *Loving to Fight or Fighting to Love: Winning the Spiritual Battle for your Marriage*).

I've had this conversation myself several times and can tell you, it's not easy. Like life, it doesn't always go the way you want. But I can also tell you it's worth it to give the Father a restored friendship to bless.

Later, you can increase your scope. Encourage the Body of Christ where you worship to do likewise. Call some other church whose members hold political views different from your own, invite them to visit with your congregation and share their story of why they hold their views.

In the name of Jesus, bind any spirit of judgment and listen respectfully to these other members of your Christian family. Pray God's wisdom to learn from each other (James 1:5).

Sure, you might get wounded. But it won't be as bad as what Jesus suffered on the cross, and he'll be there to comfort and lead you.

Many hot-button political issues remain unresolved among Christians today. This Newsletter does not address any single one specifically, but rather, offers a template for reconciliation that the Father might use to address them all.

In the coming year, at stake for the Body of Christ is the integrity of our faith and thereby, our credibility in the world. For Christians, the New Year is not an occasion to make flimsy resolutions about what we're going to do. Rather, it's a time to remember what our Father has done in Jesus and thereby, to re-claim His eternal promises for His Church.

We don't have to trust each other. We just have to trust Jesus.

Why not?

After all, "What is impossible for (human beings) is possible through God" (Luke 18:27).

RESOURCES

Gordon's books available at www.abbafather.com

**AR = Audio Reading mp3 download or cd
ebooks at www.kindle.com**

*** Reconciling the Church**

*Broken by Religion, Healed by God: Restoring the
Sacramental, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Social Justice Church*

*** Reconciling fathers and sons**

Sons of the Father: Healing the Father-Wound in Men Today (AR)

*** Reconciling sexual desire and God's purposes**

Pure Sex: The Spirituality of Desire (AR)

(with Mary Andrews-Dalbey)

*** Reconciling autonomy and marriage**

Loving to Fight or Fighting to Love:

Winning the Spiritual Battle for Your Marriage (AR)

(with Mary Andrews-Dalbey)

*** Reconciling a man and his masculinity**

Healing the Masculine Soul

(includes "Healing Fathers and Daughters")

*** Reconciling the reality of evil and the longing for good**

No Small Snakes: A Journey into Spiritual Warfare

*** Reconciling a man's warrior nature and the call of God**

Fight like a Man: A New Manhood for a New Warfare (AR)

*** Reconciling our natural perceptions and spiritual reality**

Religion vs. Reality:

Facing the Home Front in Spiritual Warfare

*** Reconciling fatherly ambition and a child-like heart**

Do Pirates Wear Pajamas? and Other Mysteries in the

Adventure of Fathering (AR)

[1] "Letters from a Birmingham Jail"

[2] <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/see-how-these-christians-love/>