

Catholic Vs. Protestant Unity



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When I was a kid and saw little Protestant churches in my largely Catholic Chicago neighborhood, I used to look down at them thinking how much greater and unified the Catholic Church is. After I got saved, I sought out and fellowshiped with members of all the different non-Catholic churches I could find. I wanted to see how they differ from each other. I learned true Christian Church unity is solely in Jesus Christ and the Bible-based doctrine of the Gospel.

I like the insights in this article and am inspired to share it.

It is constantly urged by Roman Catholic priests that the Church of Rome has one faith, and one practice: We deny the former, while we partly admit the latter. The reverse is the case with Evangelical Protestantism; which in a great measure holds "one faith," although its various churches differ from each other in their forms of government and public ordinances. It has considerable unity, though not uniformity.

Christian unity must be free. The congruity (points of agreement) of the Church of Rome is **dependent on mental apathy**.

If an order comes from the Vatican, that some new dogma is to be received by the masses, some novel ordinance to be practiced, or some additional forms and ceremonies to be observed, all must, at what time they hear "the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music," (Please read Daniel 3 to understand this in context) immediately conform to the decrees that "Our Lord God the Pope" hath set up. **No approval of the understanding is asked, no consent of the will is obtained.** Implicit obedience is sternly required; and if it is withheld—**anathematizes it.** The new decree or canon may be in flat contradiction to a former one, but **no questions upon the subject are allowed, no freedom of opinion is permitted.**

The dogmatic authority of the Church of Rome produces the uniformity of an inert, listless, involuntary mass of mind, which will not think because it dares not differ. Here is no union of soul. It is the fellowship of a gang of convicts, who conform to the rules imposed upon them with sullen apathy. It is the uniformity of the dead, who are moved about by others offering no resistance. How different is this forced sameness of appearance from the agreement of an active and vigorous company, all bent on pursuit, though not taking the same way to accomplish their common object! The minds of men cannot be dulled like the instincts of brute creatures. The compulsory uniformity of Romanism either deprives its votaries of all conscience in

matters of religion, or makes them put on a mask of hypocrisy, which tends ultimately to drive them into infidelity. If minds are to expand, they must have free play. Rome has persecuted her best philosophers, fearing the development of the human faculties.

It is not the object of this editorial to enumerate the schisms which have taken place in the Church of Rome, the conflicting decrees of different councils, and the changes that they have made in the articles of faith and practice; the oppositions of contemporary Popes and Councils, their mutual anathemas, and the bloody wars that they waged; the rise of hostile sects and orders of monks, differing in creed and manners, hating each other, and engaging in bitter controversies; or that detestation of the priesthood which has frequently pervaded a great mass of the people, so that only some political reason, or the presence of an armed force has kept them subject to a yoke under which they have groaned and writhed.

All these are matters of history: and the millions of men and women, including every age and rank, and episcopacy itself, who have been put to death, imprisoned, or banished for their alleged heresies, yield evident proof that **Rome has been far from having unity in herself.**

Rome has no cause to glory in her pretended unity. When weighed in the balances, it is found wanting. Even its claims to uniformity must be conceded with some limitations. It contains many elements of internal discord, and bears many marks of outward disagreement. It is uniform, however, in its arrogant claims of superiority, its intolerant spirit, its grasping covetousness, its despotic government, and the relentless cruelty with which it persecutes the true Church of Christ. It is uniform in its tyranny over the judgment and conscience of its adherents, and in repressing every free thought and noble aspiration of the human soul. It is uniform in trying to prolong the night of ignorance, to veil the mental sight by superstition, and shut out every gleam of spiritual light that would harbinge an approaching day of evangelical righteousness. It invariably opposes the spread of Divine truth, which would expose the falsity of its pretensions, the corruption of its manners, and the heavy chains with which it has succeeded in binding so many captive to the decrees of a soul-destroying power.