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A TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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It should be rather easy to understand that a true Christian fellowship must be based solely on the plain and open teachings of Jesus, with Jesus their leader and authority, to the glory of the Father. (*Matthew 23:8-10*) If it is based on anything else, the fellowship will be short lived. This has been demonstrated countless times throughout Christian history. Nearly every reform movement eventually reverted back to a type of authoritative religion of priest and so-called reverent men doling out 'spiritual food' to a complacent flock of followers. This cycle must come to an end. As has often been mentioned, it is insanity to keep repeating the same thing and expecting a different result. At some point, there must be a return to the religion Jesus practiced and promoted – a true Christian fellowship of brothers and sons of God. This is the best and only way of assuring that the Christ remains the head of the congregation and is never usurped by men.

In order to understand what a true Christian fellowship is, one must first come to appreciate the difference between spirituality and religion. Once that is understood, the identity and purpose of a true Christian fellowship becomes abundantly clear.

Spirituality vs. Religion

Spirituality, in its simplest form, is the relationship one has with God. It is where we build our faith; where we place our hopes; where we consecrate our lives; where we worship and pray. Spirituality is what Jeremiah prophesied about when he wrote:

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because **they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

– *Jeremiah 31:33-34*

Spirituality is what Jesus had in mind when he said:

“Blessed are the **poor in spirit** [*devoid of spiritual arrogance*], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... Blessed are those **who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be filled. ... Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they will see God.”

– *Matthew 5:3, 6, 8*

And spirituality is what Paul had in mind when he wrote:

“Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” **So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child;** and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”

– *Galatians 4:6-7*

Spirituality is personal and must be cultivated, nurtured, grown, and evolved over time – time spent in personal communion with God by means of spirit. As Jeremiah wrote, spirituality is not taught by others. It is as Jesus promised:

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.”

– *John 16:13-14*

It is as the Apostle John wrote:

“I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and **you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”**

– *1 John 2:26-27*

Spirituality comes from no man; it comes from the spirit of God that dwells within each one of us (*1 Corinthians 3:16*), and is ignited by the Spirit of Truth given by Jesus as Paul wrote:

“The Spirit himself testifies **with our spirit that we are God’s children.”**

– *Romans 8:16*

From this we know that we cannot gain spirituality ‘in church.’ No priest, pastor, reverend, elder or other spiritual advisor can teach us spirituality. It is a personal lesson given by means of spirit.

On the other hand, religion can be defined as the social expression of our spirituality. Religion is where we demonstrate to others in our daily activities the nature and quality of our spirituality. Religion is where we prove what sort of spiritual persons we are; where we manifest what we believe in; and where we walk the spiritual path we have chosen.

Religion is what Jesus had in mind when he said:

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

– *Matthew 5:13, 14, 16*

Religion is what Jesus demonstrated when he washed the feet of the apostles:

“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’

and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.**"

– *John 13:12-15*

And religion is what Paul and Peter had in mind when they wrote:

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, **let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**"

– *Galatians 6:10*

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live **holy and godly lives.**"

– *2 Peter 3:11*

In summary, we can say that spirituality is internal; whereas religion is an outreach. Spirituality is where we consecrate ourselves to do God's will; whereas religion is where we actually do it! These two aspects are defined and enveloped in the two great commandments:

"[*Spirituality*] "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.

[*Religion*] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

– *Matthew 22:37-40*

Thus, spirituality is experienced individually; whereas religion is experienced from the spiritual individual outward. Spirituality **cannot** be taught and religion **need not** be taught since religion is the natural expression of one's spirituality. And, consequently, the quality of our religious activities in serving others and doing good to our neighbors is a reflection of the quality of our spirituality. If our religion is perfunctory or done begrudgingly, it is a demonstration that our spirituality is weak or non-existent. Conversely, if our religion is joyful and our interaction with our fellow man is genuine, that is a demonstration that our spirituality is alive and well!

We can see that both spirituality and religion can be practiced by an individual who simply goes about his daily activities treating others as he wants to be treated – the so-called 'Golden Rule' that Jesus left with his disciples:

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

– *Matthew 7:12*

From this, we can see that one does not need to join with others in order to be either spiritual or religious. Yet there is great value in joining with others. More good can be done by a community of spiritual people than by one spiritual person. Jesus, being a perfect example of spirituality and religion was not content to practice his religion alone. He sought out others to practice his religion with him. That is the nature of a true Christian fellowship.

The Nature of a True Christian Fellowship

A true Christian fellowship can best be defined as a group of spiritual people gathering together to accomplish a religious purpose. A true Christian fellowship cannot **give** spirituality or religion, though it should be a place where spirituality and religion is demonstrated and encouraged.

The Apostle Paul described a true Christian fellowship when he wrote:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

– *Hebrews 10:24-25*

Christians should gather together for a purpose – to incite one another to demonstrate love and fine works toward others. It is not merely a meeting of like-minded people where they simply discuss the hope they hold in common. It is not merely a lecture or a classroom setting with teacher and pupils. And it certainly is not a place for self-aggrandizing propaganda as a ‘chosen people’ or a ‘chosen denomination,’ nor an occasion to judge the faith of others. Christians are to gather **to do something** – to further the will of God. This ‘something’ could be any number of things, feeding the hungry, tending to the sick, caring for the needs of the poor, and things like these just as Jesus and the early Christians did. And, most importantly, they preach the good news of liberty and freedom to all mankind – the ministry of reconciliation:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

– *2 Corinthians 5:18-20*

Yes, a true Christian fellowship is a meeting of ambassadors of the Kingdom of the Heavens, doing the will of God and carrying out the ministry Jesus carried out, substituting in his place while he is physically absent until his return.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

– *Matthew 28:19-20*

But a true fellowship needs to widen out beyond preaching and teaching, and begin serving the needs of the communities in which they exist. Christian churches, temples, synagogues, etc., should be community centers for service of all kinds – anything that uplifts the condition of man.

They can also be schools of instruction of ‘the sayings of Jesus’ (*Matthew 7:24-27*) and ‘the things Jesus taught’ (*Matthew 28:20*), but they are not places where the teachings of men are expounded (*Galatians 1:6-9*), nor where one’s spirituality is defined, judged or constrained.

“The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things,
but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments.”
– *1 Corinthians 2:15*

No priest, reverend, elder or leader of any kind is the master over another’s faith, nor are they authorized to interject themselves into the personal decisions of others. Those who take a leadership position in a true Christian fellowship are only administrators organizing a ministry. They can provide personal counsel **when asked**.

“Is anyone among you sick? **Let them call the elders** of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.”
– *James 5:14*

And they can attempt to readjust others when their conduct interferes with the fellowship’s purpose of carrying out the ministry:

“But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? **Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.** Expel the wicked person from among you.”
– *1 Corinthians 5:11-13*

But such men have no authority over the households of others or over what people do in their personal lives outside of the fellowship arrangement. Those who take the lead are not spiritual police. There is nothing in the Christian writings that authorizes any man to micro-manage the affairs of another. Quite to the contrary:

“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you **for your joy**, because it is **by faith** you stand firm.”
– *2 Corinthians 1:24*

As Paul explained, no leader, other than Christ, died for us, nor were we baptized in the name of any man other than Christ Jesus. (*1 Corinthians 1:13*)

It should also be noted that a true Christian fellowship should not involve itself in politics. While an individual Christian is free to participate in the affairs of their community, their state, or their nation as a natural part of citizenship, religious collectivism when it is directed toward a political purpose is nothing more than a political party. This is what the Christian writings discourage. A true Christian fellowship should steer clear of those types of entanglements, and remain true to their ministerial purpose of ‘inciting one another to love and fine works.’ They are ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom, not spokesmen for a political ideology or for a religious organization.

Finally, a true Christian fellowship should encourage its members to be responsible for their own conduct. When our brothers and sisters know that they are the faith sons of God

and accountable directly to the Father and Christ Jesus, they are more inclined to live in truth, for they will know that they cannot hide their errors. They will keep in mind that the Spirit is real and the plain and open teaching of Jesus are powerful.

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

– **Hebrews 4:12-13**

Those who want to ‘practice’ sin to the detriment of others will not last long in a true Christian fellowship. They will become quickly exposed and will flee from you when they realize they cannot prevail over the sons of God.

If more Christian groups could form or reform themselves into true Christian fellowships, all those associated with it will be revived and strengthened. They will demonstrate to the world who Jesus really is by being living examples of his life and ministry. They will be the lights of the world as Jesus said:

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

– **Matthew 5:14-16**

We welcome your comments.

“Elaia Luchnia”