

The One Church

In the 17th chapter of John's gospel Jesus says, "I do not pray for these only (the twelve) but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may be one .. so that the world may believe that you have sent Me." (vs 20-21) The New Testament writers also give voice to the 'oneness' of the church. (see Ephesians 4:4) However, a cursory glance at church history would not fill one with confidence concerning the church being one. Was the prayer of Jesus concerning the 'oneness' of the Church ever answered?

Many, even in the church, would cynically claim that the church has never been one! They point to the many denominations and differences that have characterised the history of the church as proof of their cynicism. Are they correct? I certainly do not believe so. The church has always been one. It is by the churches 'oneness' that those in the 'world' have been influenced to become part of the one church.

The churches 'oneness' is not something we create through denominational uniformity; identicalness in places and expressions of worship! The oneness of which Jesus spoke is something in which we participate. In other words, the oneness of which Jesus spoke does not relate to a visual uniformity, but a visceral or vital conviction . What is the conviction of this oneness? It is defined by Jesus in v.20, "those who believe in Me through their word". The 'word' to which Jesus refers is defined in v.17, ie., 'Thy Word is truth'. The church is 'one' in its adherence to God's Word. It is when the Church disregards that Word that its oneness disintegrates.

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