



October 2018

Dear Friends and Partners of CWR/PTM,

IT'S FAR FROM BREAKING NEWS! Our world is hopelessly divided, embroiled in continuing controversy. With soul-depressing regularity it seems entire news networks and organizations here in the United States spew out one and only one polarizing political perspective, demonizing all who disagree. Then there is the religious world, where “devout” people whose holy books tell them to love their neighbors are instead terrorizing and persecuting and even killing those who disagree. *Politics divides us and Christ-less religion separates us.*

You may remember the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)—what began as a war between Catholics and Protestants became one of the longest and most deadly religious wars in history to that point—something like eight million lives were lost.

Starting with disagreements about doctrine and dogma, the strife escalated to strong-arming, authoritarian attempts to enforce doctrinal agreement and compliance. Massive devastation resulted, with suffering and bloodshed because of violence and war as well as deaths caused by famine and disease.

Some credit Augustine (354-430) with coining the catch phrase *In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity*. Others believe this maxim of peace and understanding arose as a wise perception of the hatred and carnage caused by the Thirty Years' War, attributing its original source to either an anonymous author or to the Lutheran theologian Rupertus Meldenius. Philip Schaff, a 19th century historian, called *In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity* “the watchword of Christian peacemakers.”

Paul reminds us, “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master [that is, Jesus, our Master] he stands or falls” (Romans 14:4). Within Christendom, denominations and churches and congregations disagree, quarrel and fight about a huge list of teachings and practices they see as absolute “essentials”—most of which are “non-essential” differences (I started to create a list, but there isn’t enough room in this brief letter to enumerate the topics that cause Christians to argue and bicker!).

When it comes to “essentials” and “non-essentials” many churches and denominations allow little room for differences, barely acknowledging “non-essentials” while their list of “essentials” is long, tedious and overbearing.

The gospel of Jesus Christ dictates “essential” issues, all centered on and around who God is and how he loves us and relates to us, but the list of “dogmas” listed in the New Testament is relatively small. As Christ-followers we may, as Paul says in Romans 14, disagree on “non-essential” issues without becoming disagreeable.

Jesus did not leave us with vast doctrinal lists of dogmas and acceptable and unacceptable behaviors—rather, detailed enumerations and catalogs of right and wrong are the products of human religious organizations that pervert and twist the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ-less religion produces division and condemnation of others whereas Jesus unites and brings peace. Christ-less religion has fabricated a long laundry list of necessities and requirements, so that its own members might be assured of their own righteousness and in order that outsiders might be readily identified as heretics (of course, the most common religious definition of a heretic is someone who is not a member of one's own church!).

Many religious authorities are drawing unwarranted lines in the sand, insisting "it's our way or the highway" regarding peripheral, "non-essential" issues. But they have no Christ-given direction or permission to make these bold pronouncements, so we must ask: upon whose authority are they condemning those who do not agree with them on "non-essential" teachings and practices? Why are people causing division and sowing discord and strife in the name of Jesus?

Thus, sincere, but misguided Christians come to believe that God judges their faith by their commitment and belief in certainties and dogmatic beliefs and practices. **They misunderstand God, perceiving him as an intolerant, regimented god of the rulebook.**

Because their pastor, congregation or denomination demands complete compliance to procedures and practices, they perceive God as a stern and harsh judge who insists all must conform and march in exact lock step.

According to this legalistic mindset, there are no "non-essential" beliefs and practices upon which Christ-followers may differ—faith in such a blind and oppressive system is defined by an "all or nothing" package deal of accepting the rules and stipulations of their leadership, lock, stock and barrel. No questions allowed—no diversity tolerated!

But the reality is that the universal body of Christ has many differences, even though many churches and denominations insist that they are *the only* or at least *the best* Christians, and that those who are not members and who do not attend their buildings are not Christians at all.

In *Whistling in the Dark*, Frederick Buechner compared the universal body of Christ to the animals onboard Noah's ark:

"They are all piled in together helter-skelter, the predators and the prey, the wild and the tame, the sleek and beautiful ones and the ones that are ugly as sin. There are sly young foxes and impossible old cows. There are the catty and the piggish and the peacock-proud. There are hawks and there are doves.

"Some are wise as owls, some silly as geese; some meek as lambs and others fire-breathing dragons... There's backbiting just like everywhere else... There's growling and grouching, bitching and whining... It's a regular menagerie in there, and sometimes it smells to High Heaven like one.

"But even at its worst, there's at least one thing that makes it bearable within, and that is the storm without—the wild winds and the terrible waves... at its best there is, if never clear sailing, shelter from the blast... a beacon in the dark, the hope of finding safe harbor at last."

In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, IN ALL THINGS CHARITY.

CHARITY: Translated from New Testament Greek into late Old English, the word *charity* appears in the Authorized King James Translation, perhaps best known in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 13:13: "And now abideth faith, hope, *charity*, these three; but the greatest of these is *charity*."

CHARITY: Within popular usage in the 21st century *charity* normally defines generous and benevolent individual giving (as in "charitable giving"). *Charity* is also used as a noun to define a

non-profit institution as a “charity”—*charity* is widely used in the United Kingdom in that context. *Charity* also speaks of “lenient judgment of others—an act of love giving others the benefit of the doubt.”

CHARITY: The most serious void in our world at large, within all religion everywhere and within Christianity in particular, is love/*charity*. Being united with Christ and of one mind and attitude with him means considering others better than ourselves, looking to their interests as well as our own (Philippians 2:1-5).

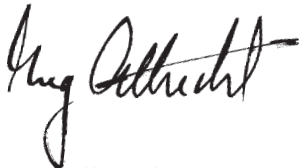
Closely related to the abysmal lack of love and concern for all people, of all cultures, races, religions and ethnicities is the massive misunderstanding of the nature of God. **God IS LOVE.** But the vast majority of religion begs to differ—it gives lip service to God as defined as love, but in faith and practice it believes God to be a monster, a tyrant, someone who delights in punishment and suffering.

God’s love for you and me and the entire world means that his judgment is lenient and that he delights in giving all his children the benefit of the doubt! Forgive me if you have heard/read me say this before: *God knows all there is to know about you and me and he still loves us anyway!* We, the imperfect, are the recipients of God’s supreme and perfect love. With Robert Louis Stevenson we all describe our pitiful efforts to be righteous as “one who meant well, tried a little, failed much.”

But the incredible, overwhelmingly GREAT NEWS is that by God’s grace Jesus lives in us as our risen Lord and produces his charitable love within us—therefore we give the benefit of the doubt to others.

My dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, proclaiming the love/charity/grace and mercy of God and the true nature of God is our sacred mission, our divine objective, our high calling and our wonderful privilege. Thank you for your tireless dedication and heart-felt commitment to this ongoing work that we share together!

Because of the supreme love of God, and his charity manifested in his grace,



Greg Albrecht
President Plain Truth Ministries

Here’s a letter of thanks from a reader and listener in Nevada who appreciates the ministry of CWR/PTM which **YOU help to provide** through your faithful prayers and financial gifts.

This entire world needs to know what is being taught by the ministry of CWR/PTM. The message you proclaim is so inspiring, motivational and encouraging! Thank you so much for all you do. I pray that our Lord will continue to be with and bless everyone involved in this life-changing ministry.

CWR/PTM Prayer List—October 2018

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray for my husband who is diabetic and has high blood pressure, and I'm fighting a bladder infection.—Mississippi

Thank you for the uplifting encouragement that CWR/PTM supplies. You have been a great support to me.—Tennessee

Please pray for my niece. She lost her baby a year ago and is still in great emotional and spiritual distress.—Washington

Please pray for my upcoming surgery and pray that more people will respond to the Lord's calling.—New York

Please pray for my husband who has prostate problems. Thank you so much for your prayers.—West Virginia

My daughter has suffered with severe acne for several years. Pray for her skin to be clear and healthy again.—New Jersey

My husband has a viral ear infection which causes unbearable ringing in his ears and he has lost some hearing.—Texas

Please pray for my sister who is struggling with Parkinson's Disease, for my cousin who has a year to live and for my friend who has cancer.—Oregon

My cancer is gone and my heart surgeon said, "See you in a year." Thank you for your prayers and all you do.—Arizona

Please pray for our granddaughter, who suffers from Crohn's Disease to get the medication she needs.—Missouri

My wife just recently had a complete knee replacement. Please pray for a quick and total recovery.—Florida

I'd like prayers for my dad who is a diabetic and is currently in the hospital for gangrene of his toes.—Michigan

Please pray that God heals the pain in my back, hip and leg. May God bless your ministry.—Massachusetts

Thanks for all your prayers for my health, which is getting better. I am growing stronger each day.—Illinois

Please pray for my daughter—she will be having a liver transplant soon.—Virginia

Pray for three dear friends who live in a Senior Center—one has terminal cancer, one has melanoma and the other has an infection in the blood stream.—Pennsylvania

I have fallen twice in the last five weeks, and my family is preparing me for a nursing home.—Wisconsin

Please pray for me—I have shingles and I have nerve damage. I hope I will be able to drive a car again.—New Jersey

I had West Nile Virus in 2004 and I've had after-effects ever since. I have depression and trouble walking.—Louisiana

My daughter just got out of the Army. Please pray for her to find a good paying job.—South Carolina

Please pray for peace in our family—we're split along political and religious lines and are now fracturing apart.—Texas

Please pray that my son will be released and able to return home soon. He is serving a three-year sentence. We thank God for his presence in our lives.—Michigan

Please pray for God's healing of my various maladies and for the income from my business to improve.—Florida

Please pray that my wife and I will qualify for heating assistance for this coming winter.—Missouri

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.