

LOVE, the Missing Dimension

Like many Australians. I watched a good part of the evidence given by Cardinal George Pell by video from Rome to the Australian Child Abuse Royal Commission. Here was a highly intelligent man, third from the top in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, who in his past served for years around the Australian city Ballarat and lived there alongside several priests who have been revealed to be paedophiles, participating from time to time in their removal to other places after complaints became too frequent, who apparently alone among parents, teachers, the public and Catholic authorities, knew nothing of their depraved activities.

No wonder the witnesses from Ballarat were astounded, to the extent that several claimed that he was lying to protect his position. One of Cardinal Pell's excuses was that such things had no interest to him, creating gasps of horror from those watching, who apparently expected that *any* priest would be very concerned for the children in his flock, under threat from his paedophile colleagues.

They had every right to be shocked, for Jesus Christ explained that, John 10:11-13, *'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.'* One of the witnesses exclaimed afterwards that he saw no Christianity in George Pell's behaviour and others among the abused, claimed that the Cardinal should resign. But after the evidence he gave I would not expect it, and indeed it will be interesting to see if there is any response from the Pope at all.

Interestingly, Jesus Christ prophesied that there would exist an end time dominant Church, which he pictured as an evil woman, Revelation 17:4-6, *'The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."* [The Protestant churches that came out of her] *And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.'*

He also explained that in the end time true Christians would become persecuted, divided to the extent that they betray and hate one another as a result of the loss of their love, Matthew 24:9-12, *'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.'*

What a sad prediction, for Jesus Christ had also told us that their love for one another would be the one sign of a true Christian, John 13:35, *'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'* The word 'love' here is from the Greek word 'agape' which means 'love, benevolence, good will, esteem.' It is further expounded in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, *'Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it is not proud, arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, it is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not take pleasure in evil and is always glad to acknowledge the truth.'*

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and can endure all things. Love never fails.’ That kind of love and concern was not apparent in Cardinal Pell’s behaviour, and sadly it is not always apparent between the various Christian church denominations even amongst those who claim to closely follow the biblical instructions, including those who have retained the biblical name ‘Church of God’.

It seems that becoming a member of such a denomination all too often limits the love and concern to others to *within that denomination*, and those outside, even those of similar beliefs, become regarded more as rivals or competitors than brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is a tragic error, for Jesus Christ explained that if we are following His words we are all, as Christians, branches of the *same vine*, which is Christ, John 15:5, *‘I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.’*

Providing that we share a belief in the keeping of the Ten Commandments, that we respect the whole of God’s word from Genesis to Revelation, have accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour and have repented, been baptised and had hands laid on us for the receipt of God’s Holy Spirit, we are brothers and sisters in Christ even if we differ on minor points of doctrine. Acts 2:38-39, *‘And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’* Consequently, if we are faithful to Jesus Christ’s words, we should have love for one another, even if we belong to different denominations.

We can easily see the evidence that this should be the case, by examining Revelation chapters 1-3, where we see Christ’s words about the seven churches in Asia, which also picture the various characteristics of God’s church down the ages. Here we see that differing churches with quite serious doctrinal errors are still recognised by Christ as His Church, though they are exhorted to overcome their faults.

Once we recognise this Divine teaching we are bound to obey Christ’s command and overcome our lack of love for our brethren, or face denial of our right to the tree of life and an eternal future, Revelation 22:14, *‘Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they **may have right to the tree of life**, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’*

We should understand that there is a common denominator in Cardinal George Pell’s Roman Catholic Church and in those churches which display this lack of love, which should be the primary fruit of God’s Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23, *‘But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**’* That common denominator is hierarchical control; whole ranks within the church structure with the lay people at the bottom and one man at the top, whether he be called Pope or President.

Yes, there are differing roles among God’s servants but these are not ranks, they are the different gifts which God provides for the edification of His Church, 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, *‘And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then **gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of*

*healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire **the higher gifts.**'*
1 Corinthians 12:7-12, *'To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one **is given** through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually **as he wills.** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.'*

There is to be no dominion of one man over another in God's church, for we are all of one body and the head of that body is not a man, but Christ, Ephesians 4:15, *'Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.'* Christ Himself instructs us, Matthew 23:25-26, *'But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.'* The Apostle Peter also makes this clear to the ministry, 1 Peter 5:2-3, *'shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.**'*

Do not be deceived by those who use mistranslations in the King James version such as Hebrews 13:17 to impose dominion upon you, *'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.'* This should be translated – *'Be persuaded by the evidence of those that lead you'* or *'assent to the evidence of those that guide you.....'* The **only authority** we shepherds have is the clear authority of God's word.

The trouble is that dominion arises when the pattern of quite independent churches which is seen in the New Testament is replaced with a **physical organisation** of churches, requiring management. The ministry then becomes a career rather than a calling or vocation and competition for advancement replaces genuine service. To safeguard their power and control over the brethren such hierarchies begin to claim that they are the one true church, making all others imposters. This may appeal to the human nature of us all in whatever group we are, but in the process we lose our love for our brother and sisters *outside* our denomination. Fear of expulsion then replaces the love we should have for our Christian brothers and sisters. Satan has separated us from the sign of God's people.

We have seen that this lack of love was predicted by Christ for the end time, and we have seen that it is brought about by the importation of hierarchy into the church as it was felt that the church needed physical government to retain unity. The New Testament pattern of small independent churches was seen as uncontrolled and liable to stray from church doctrine (which may or may not necessarily be correct).

One senior minister, Ronald L Dart, when asked where the church had gone wrong, stated: "It was when men left the college and went out into the field and got into a hierarchical structure where they had to compete. That's where it happened. You create an organisational structure where ministers compete and it's headed for disaster." Who were the men competing with?

“With one another,” he said, “Ministers with minister. They had to. This guy’s a pastor rank minister, so he had to climb this ladder. It’s like becoming a cardinal and getting a red hat.”

Yes, we have seen the result of Cardinals with red hats, but the fruits of lack of love and dominion are also visible in disfellowshipping any who question church doctrine, or the behaviour of any of those “in authority”.

Lack of love is often replaced with fear, distrust and suspicion, as brethren are ‘excommunicated.’ I have seen policemen wearing guns brought into church to escort out families who wished to be there but who have been ‘marked’ by the false minister, along with the sadness and crying in church that comes from families who have been spilt by his disfellowshipping.

Those ‘ministers’ who, despite the clear scriptures we have visited, inflict such dominion upon God’s people today because they have the power, authority or position, have already disqualified themselves from *any* position of rule in the coming Kingdom of God, unless they repent.

Yes, there will be a hierarchy of government in God’s kingdom, but all those who participate in it, from God the Father down, through Christ, then the Patriarchs and prophets and the Apostles and onwards, will all have proved their faithfulness to the divine requirement that we should love and serve rather than rule over each other.

This is simply because at this time, we are unqualified to judge justly, as physical human beings, because we are unable to read the minds and hearts of others, as members of God’s family *will* be able to do in His Kingdom.

So, what is the result of failing to love each other as Jesus Christ requires? Well, if at the return of Christ for His Saints, (Bride) we have still not repented our lack of love, though in all other respects we are faithful, we will be found unprepared for our role as the Bride of Christ, and **we will not participate in the first resurrection**, Matthew 25:1-10, *‘Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.’*

As a consequence, those unprepared will remain behind to experience the Great Tribulation of the Seventh Seal, during which many will at last recognise their error and repent, even at the cost of their lives. Revelation 7:14-17, *‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:*

*and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’ And Revelation 14:12-13, ‘Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, '**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!**'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow with them.’*

These verses indicate that it will be only at the *second resurrection* that such repentant Christians gain the future positions of service mentioned here, as the first resurrection occurs previously, at the Sixth Seal. While they are rewarded for their repentance, no doubt many will then regret their failure to follow Christ’s command to love their brethren, earlier, looking instead to their church and ministry, for nothing can ever replace the relationship they *could* have obtained, but lost, as the Bride of Jesus Christ.

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