
The Communion of the Saints

Part 11:

The Unity and Diversity of the Church



Introduction

- **Mark 3:25:** “If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”



Introduction

- **1 Corinthians 12:12:** “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.”
 - The church is called to be a unity in diversity
 - But *Why?*
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Introduction

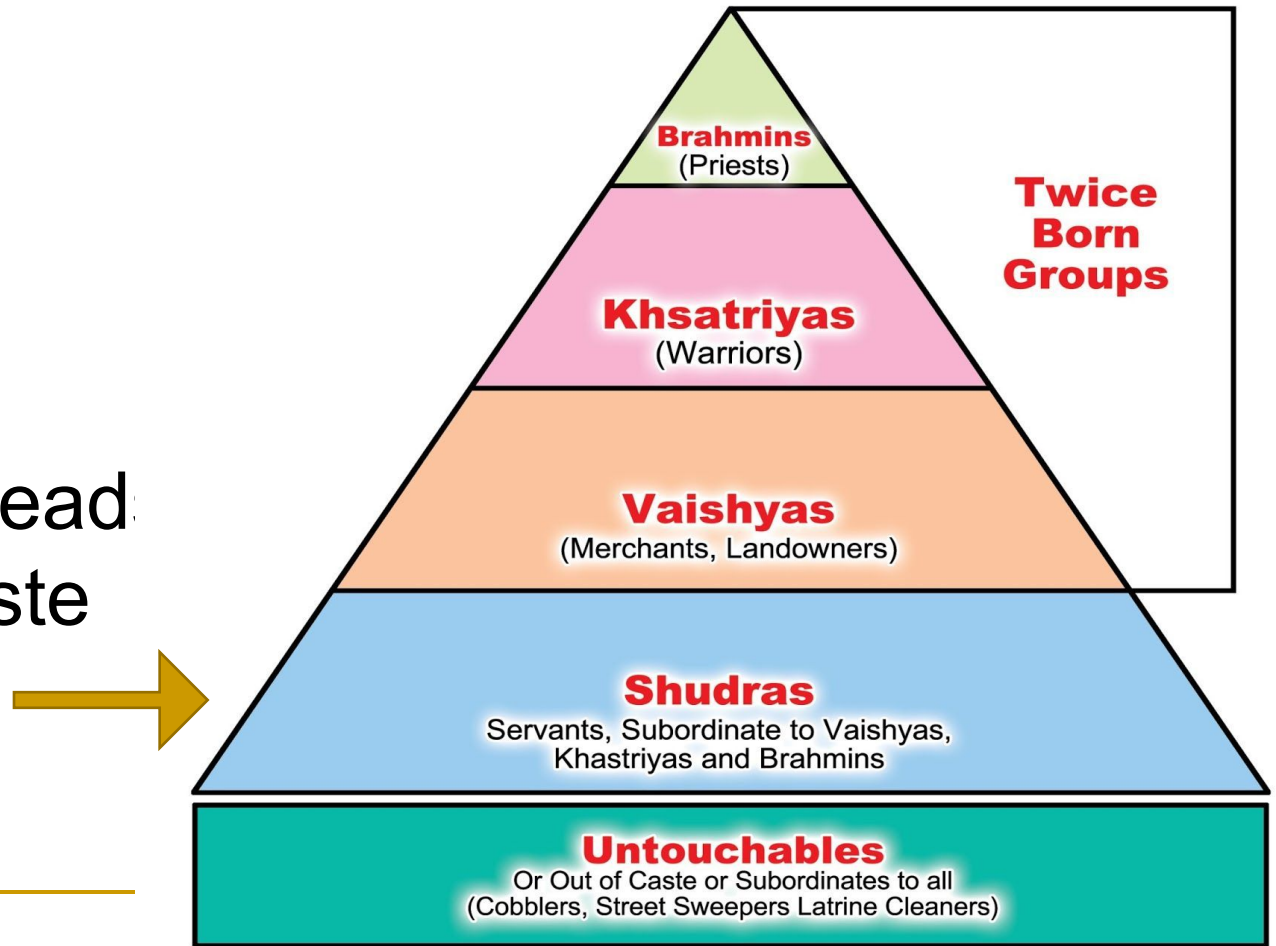
- **1 Corinthians 12:12:** “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.”
 - The church is called to be a unity in diversity
 - But *Why?*
 - Because **the Trinity** is a unity in diversity
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The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- Societies and religions reflect their view of God
 - If God is **many**, diversity is ultimate
 - If God is **one**, unity is ultimate
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The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- Polytheism emphasizes **diversity**
- Example: Hierarchy of Hindu gods lead to Indian Caste System



Indian Caste System

The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- Monotheism emphasizes **unity**
- Example: Islam: Allah is one god as one person
 - Muslims are given new names
 - Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
 - Muhammad Ali



The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- Muslim prayers are uniform



The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- Muslim dress at Pilgrimage is uniform (called Ihram)



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- “The essence of gathering with others on the same place and doing same actions, praying in a similar way and asking forgiveness and blessings from Allah together is to inculcate unity, discipline and brotherhood among the Muslims. When a multitude of the people stays and prays together for many days in same dress, it creates harmony and discipline. It is appreciated worldwide how Muslims show great discipline following same dress code and pattern of worship.”

--about Islam.net

The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- If God is many, diversity is ultimate
 - If God is one, unity is ultimate
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The Trinitarian Reality of Unity and Diversity

- The Christian Trinity emphasizes both Unity and Diversity

One God in Three Persons



Unity



Diversity

The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- The Church was designed to be a diverse people
 - **Galatians 3:26-28:** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
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The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- The church of God is diverse in **ethnicity**
 - “There is neither Jew nor Greek.”



The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- The church of God is diverse in **gender**
 - “there is neither male nor female.”



The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- The church of God is diverse in **personality**
 - **Nathaniel:** Gullible, Quick to believe
 - **Thomas:** Skeptical, Slow to believe



The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- The church of God is diverse in **political views**
 - **Matthew:** Tax Collector
 - **Simon the Zealot:** Israelite Political Activist
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The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- The church of God is diverse in **social class**
- “Bond or free.”



The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- We need diversity in the church to bring God the **greatest glory**.
 - **John Piper:** “The beauty and power of praise that will come to the Lord from diversity of the nations are greater than the beauty and power that would come to him if the chorus of the redeemed were culturally uniform. The reason for this can be seen in the analogy of a choir. More depth of beauty is felt from a choir that sings in parts than from a choir that sings only in unison. Unity in diversity is more beautiful and more powerful than the unity of uniformity.”
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The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- We need diversity in the church to show the superiority of the gospel to **all other religions**
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“(A main) reason for Christianity’s success is to be found in its absolute inclusiveness. More than any other of its competitor religions, it attracted all races and classes. The pagan deities, for example, were often tied and confined to certain regions and nations. And even in the days of its most active proselytizing activities, Judaism never overcame its racial boundaries because converts had to become culturally Jewish. Christianity, however, gloried in its appeal to Jew, Gentile, African, and barbarian. The philosophers of Greece and Rome, on the other hand, appealed to the educated only, and could never win the masses. It was one of the charges against Christianity, that it drew the lowly and uneducated multitude- that its essential teaching was so simple that anybody could understand.

Yet Christianity also developed a philosophy that converted some of the greatest minds in the society. And Christianity, too, is for both sexes, and women were active in its work, while two of its main competitor religions were almost exclusively for men. Finally, the mystery religions were mainly for the rich- initiation was very expensive. There was no other religion that took in all groups and all stratas of society. The one tenable explanation of Christianity's inclusiveness was probably its teaching of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. For if Jesus was not a teacher showing the way of salvation but the Son of God who accomplished salvation, then members of both sexes and all races, the learned and the unlearned, the high and the low, the able and the non-able, might all be able to share in the salvation made possible in Christ."

--Lamin Sanneh

The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- We need diversity in the church to help us see our **blind spots**
 - We are all a product of our diverse experiences
 - We interpret life and Scripture through our experiences
 - We are biased
 - We are blind to our biases
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The Trinitarian Reflection of Church Diversity

- **Tim Keller:** “Cultural experience and background in some cases make you blind to the gospel implications and in some cases makes you clear eyed about the implications of the gospel. Everybody is standing in some culture no matter how hard you try. Your position is limited and you can only see part of the glory of the gospel. We have to have each other. Here is the great irony: our cultural differences are a huge problem, and our cultural differences are the solution. Only together will we grasp the kingdom of God and the glory of God.”
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The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Unity is a major New Testament topic
 - **John 17:11:** “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*.”
 - **John 17:21:** “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you.”
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The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Church unity is built on the foundation of **doctrine**.
 - **Ephesians 4:1**: “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit.”
 - **JC Ryle said**, “unity without the gospel is a worthless unity.”
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The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Church unity should be a **priority** in the Christian life



The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- **John Piper says,** “It is biblically illogical to think we can live a life worthy of the gospel and be indifferent to Christian unity.”



The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Church unity is a creation of God which we are called to **preserve**.
 - **Ephesians 4:3**: “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit.”
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The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Church unity is a responsibility for all Christians, including **you**
 - **Ephesians 4:1:** “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit.”
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The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Church Unity involves not **giving** offense and not **taking** offense.
 - **Ephesians 4:2**: “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.”
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The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- Not giving offense:
 - Humility and gentleness
- Not taking offense:
 - Patience and tolerance



The Trinitarian Requirement of Church Unity

- **John 11:52:** “Jesus would die for the scattered children of God to bring them together and make them one.”

