

APPENDIX

The following chapters address some of the issues facing the Church of Jesus Christ today.

Causes of Conflicts

(Romans 14:1 through 15:13)

What causes conflicts?

1. Not encountering or having clearly defined guidelines.
 - a. In our place of work.
 - b. In our relationships.
 - c. In our expectations. Many conflicts in marriage arise because when the couple comes together each has certain expectations of the other that were not clearly defined beforehand. Those undefined expectations become unfulfilled expectations and the foundation for conflicts.
2. A craving, a desire, or a felt need for resources that are not in abundance.

Gold miners got into shooting fights. Friends develop jealousies when a colleague has a better car, library, computer, etc. "Blood for oil" was coined during Desert Storm.
3. Mechanisms that distance people or make distinctions.
 - a. They and We / Them and Us.
 - b. Race, Class, Religion, Politics, Culture, etc.
4. Mechanisms that unite people.
 - a. The United Nations.
 - b. Employment.
 - c. A Local Church, Golf Club, Family, Graduating Class, etc.
5. Limited choices.

The store carries only Rice Krispies and Corn Flakes and you like Special K.
6. Beliefs (Theology and/or World View).

One's beliefs should have a Scriptural foundation, though many times they do not or the Scriptures were not properly interpreted. Conflicts come because groups or individuals interpret the Bible differently. For example, I believe that the Bible teaches that baptism is to be done by immersion as a testimony of one's personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Others believe that baptism symbolizes the coming of the Spirit, or the washing away of the sin nature, and water is poured on the head, and babies are baptized. A thorough study of the doctrine of baptism has given me convictions that can cause conflicts. However, while in Brazil, I observed missionaries who taught their American cultural habits as though they were biblical truths. They had upgraded their cultural values and personal preferences to the level of theology. This can bring conflicts between missionaries and nationals.
7. Values.

A Christian's values should always be based on the Scriptures. The believer in Jesus should have values that are the result of his proper application of the Word of God to life situations. Because the Bible teaches me to renew my mind (Romans 12:1-2), I have formed the habit of daily Bible study and prayer. Because church is the place I

go to publically worship God, I attend regularly. At formal events, I prefer to dress in a suit and tie, not what I would wear when going to Wal-Mart. These are values I have formed because of the influence of the Scriptures on my life as well as my culture. Values are not doctrinal issues, because the Bible does not address them directly. They are practices one has established because of the application of biblical truths to his life and/or because his culture demanded them. It is my conviction that what we label as “racism” is really a tag for differences in values and cultural habits.

8. Preferences.

Preferences are usually a personal matter. They come from one's background (home, culture, peers, personal needs, etc.). I'm a morning person. My best study time is shortly after an early breakfast. I like classical music. Some prefer guitar music. I would choose a General Motors car. These are all preferences.

A Word of Explanation

Now, let's imagine that your local church has decided to buy a bus for special events and the Sunday school program. One trustee thinks that GM makes the best busses. Another is sold on Ford. Personal preferences and values are the cause of most church fights and splits, not doctrinal beliefs.

Let's take this a step further. A dedicated Christian couple grew up in California. The West had influenced their lives. For casual wear the wife has always used modest, feminine looking slacks. She believes her apparel meets the standard of 1 Timothy 2:9 and that a skirt, when working on dirty cleaning jobs and/or on a ladder, restricts her and can cause her to be immodestly dressed. She also prefers slacks rather than a skirt for camping and sports activities for the same reason. In California, and in their local church, modest slacks are acceptable dress for a Christian woman. However, this couple goes to serve the Lord on the mission field, and there they meet a missionary couple from the Bible Belt that believes women should always wear skirts. Hungry for friends, one day the Bible Belt couple goes to visit the new missionaries, and Mrs. California has been cleaning the top shelves in the kitchen. A misunderstanding of the influence of one's values and preferences and placing them on the level of theology can destroy Christian fellowship and bring hate and divisions where love should reign. (Though this illustration is very real, the solution is quite complicated, if not impossible in some cases, because of peer pressure and because some people have a mental block to understanding the reasons for their beliefs, habits, preference, and values.)

Many times Christians enter into conflicts because they raise their personal values and preferences to the level of theology (biblical teaching). They think that their values and preferences are Scriptural, when actually they are the product of long-established habits, culture, and experiences. Separating this truth from our belief that they are Scriptural is not always easy. Paul was dealing with values and preferences in Romans 14:1 through 15:13. Paul confronted Peter because he was letting the cultural values and the preferences of his peers destroy the ministry (Galatians 3:11-21).