



"Harmony exists no less in difference than in likeness, if only the same key-note govern both parts."
—Margaret Fuller

18-Jan-13

God's Orchestra

Last June, my wife Mariela and I were treated to an orchestral performance at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where we had some nice seats in the balcony. We both enjoyed the concert. Some have considered the symphony orchestra may be the most "finely tuned" metaphor of unity and cooperation ever devised by man. We can learn a lesson in how to conduct our lives by the way the musicians in an orchestra discharge their responsibilities.

At the concert, there were a hundred orchestra members playing a variety of instruments: flutes, clarinets, oboes, trumpets, violins, etc. They all individually played wonderfully, but led by the conductor, and following the guidance laid out by the composer, the result was fabulous. Every musician played his instrument at just the right time, and as a result, each member's skills were highlighted in order to produce a wonderful musical piece.

At one point during the performance, the conductor acknowledged the various members of the orchestra, explaining that she would introduce them in a different way than usual. Rather than present them according to their instruments, she did so by their years in the orchestra. They ranged from just a few years of service to more than 25 years. Even though they had joined the orchestra at different times, they harmonized marvelously. We see this in God's church as well, with old-timers working well with those who are newly converted.

There are many examples of the benefits of cooperation and teamwork in the Bible. One verse that stands out is [Psalm 133:1](#), which says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The word "unity" is *yachad* in Hebrew, and it means "a unit, all at one." It is from a root that means "join, unite, to be (or become) one." *Yachad* is usually translated as "together." In fact, [Psalm 133:1](#) could probably be translated, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in togetherness," as the same word used twice.

[Jesus](#) prays in [John 17:21-22](#) for His followers to become "one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they may be one in us . . . that they may be one just as We are One." Describing the church as the Body of Christ shows how close the unity should be between us and Him. Through conversion, we come to have the same views, outlook, motivation, purpose, and even dreams as our Lord.

Paul writes in [I Corinthians 12:12-14](#):

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves of free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member, but many.

According to Wikipedia, humans have about 10 trillion cells. It has been said that a single "simple" human cell is about as complicated as the street map of New York City. By itself, a single cell may be a marvelous thing, but alone, it cannot accomplish what trillions of cells, all doing their parts, can. Although cells start out nearly the same, at some point in development, they are "gifted" and become specialized cells like heart, muscle, blood, etc. We, too, have each been blessed with different gifts, and we need to use them for the good of the entire Body.

Even more, in the human body all the cells are organized into many different systems, and they all work together to enable our bodies to perform as close to their potential as possible. The body's systems each have a function and work together to perform what is needed for that system and for the good of the whole body. What good would it be to have a well-developed muscular system if our sense of balance (nervous system) would not allow us even to stand up?

So seeing the ideal, how do we arrive at this goal? The late Richard Valdivia sometimes talked about the time he spent in Europe during World War II. He thought that the way

that the soldiers and even the whole nation came together and worked as one was fantastic, and he mused on how much the church could accomplish if we had the same determination. The soldiers' cause motivated them to think beyond themselves and outward to the good of their families, friends, the nation, and even the whole world!

In their book, *Effective Groups*, Mark Cannon and Brian Griffith write, "Getting the real value out of a team means providing it with a task that is better performed by a team and that requires each member to use his or her particular talents, and to coordinate efforts towards producing a desired outcome." [God](#) is doing this. He is bringing us together to work on projects that require our specific skills to bring His goal to pass.

By utilizing the best talents of a diverse group of people, we can do a much better job than if just one person handled it alone. We all see things in different ways, based on our experiences, education, and our current environments. We may see the same things, but we see them in ways that makes sense to us. God can use people, each with his own experiences and skills, in a collaborative way to perform incredible works.

As I was writing this, I heard an actor on the television in the background saying, "You need the right tool for the right job," bringing to mind [Romans 12:4-8](#), 10-11:

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our [faith](#); or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness . . . in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. . . ."

In the concert we heard, the music was wonderful because every member of the orchestra deferred to the others. At the proper times, their skills were brought to the fore. If every musician had tried to be the oboist or the flautist or the violinist or the conductor, imagine the chaos! An orchestra works when scores of individual musicians each do their best and submit to one another's skills at the appropriate times. The result is that each one receives the acclaim due him for his contributions—*everyone* is glorified.

God has a plan for each of us; the score has already been written. *Our* job is to play our

very best. When we follow our Conductor's lead, the result will be a symphonic masterpiece.

- John Reiss

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Redeeming the Time for Unity](#)

by Mark Schindler

Mark Schindler, reflecting on Loma Armstrong's dream about Christ's imminent return, warns about using time carelessly or frivolously. Our use of time will potentially result in something very special or very destructive. Realizing that we have been called into a royal priesthood, we cannot afford to waste time on frivolous things. We are called to use our time very carefully, redeeming the time, walking circumspectly- doing our part in God's work- the sanctification of the saints, acquired through yielding to God's will and purpose for us, making us a unified body of Christ- united with each other as we are united with the Father and the Son.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Unity and Personal Responsibility](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The most prestigious international organization dedicated to peace on earth is the United Nations, but such a name can be true only in the most vaguely hopeful way. Nations and the people who comprise them are tragically disunited. John Ritenbaugh shows what we must do, personally and individually, when calamitous events—in the world and in the church—are taking place.

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