

DOES CHRISTIAN UNITY MATTER ANYMORE?

The Protestant Reformation was accompanied by conflicts that were often bitter and even violent, and it set in motion a process of division which is still unfolding. Not only did the Reformation set Protestants against Roman Catholics, but it often divided Protestants themselves as well. And those divisions remain today, long after the Reformation, despite many dedicated efforts to overcome them. Some observers even maintain, in fact, that the Christian world is more divided today than ever. But others claim that the time has passed when such divisions matter. We are living, these people say, in a "post confessional" age, when believers are less likely than they once were to identify or affiliate with religious institutions and even members themselves are little concerned with denominational or confessional differences.

But is this really true? Or is it just a surface impression which obscures the real state of affairs? And if it is true, is it a desirable development, as is often implied by the people who are given to characterizing our situation that way? If so, why? And if not, why not? These are surely questions which deserve serious consideration in 2017, when Protestants and Catholics alike are commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.