

CHRIST THE DIVIDER

ROBERT H. FARISH

Excess of zeal for one doctrine of the New Testament makes the zealot especially liable to neglect of other elements of truth. No doctrine is to have exclusive attention. Paul's conviction of personal freedom from the blood of all men, was based upon the fact that he "shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). No part of God's counsel can be slighted with impunity. A full view of Christ is imperative, for Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). A partial view of Christ yields a warped concept of God, Christ is presented as the Prince of Peace and also as coming to bring a sword.

The Prince of Peace

Zachariah prophesied that "because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day spring from on high shall visit us, to shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:78, 79). Concern for this feature of his mission i.e. "guide

our feet into the way of peace", is reflected in our Lord's prayer, in the closing hours of his earthly life – "neither for these only do I pray but for them also that believe on me through their words; that they all may be one...." (John 17:20, 21). Any disciple worthy of the Prince of Peace will pursue peace; he will as much as in him lieth, be at peace with all men."

The Sword of the Prince of Peace

Jesus is the Prince of Peace but he himself declared – "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34, 35).

Love for Christ and dedication to the cause of truth binds the disciples who are worthy of Christ in the bond of peace; this same love and dedication to Christ will set a man at variance with all who love not the truth, regardless of sentimental considerations, natural affections or any other thing. This does not, however, give license for the exercise of injustice, unkindness, bitterness, hatred or any lack of love toward those who are in error, whether they be straying brethren or avowed unbelievers. The presence of "Christ in you" has never been demonstrated through such means.

"Be Ye Separate"

"Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for ye are a temple of God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:14-18)

This has primary application to the need of the Christian to keep himself aloof from the world of idolatry and unrighteousness, in the sense of

avoiding any contact which will result in his being defiled by engaging in sin or practicing error. The principle of separation, however, has wider application than just this area. Not only is the duty imposed upon the Christian to come out from the sinful practices of the world, he must "mark them that are causing the divisions and occasion of stumbling contrary to the doctrine which ye learned and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent." (Rom. 16:17, 18). One who is so naive as to take "smooth and fair speech" as a guarantee of either unfeigned love or doctrinal soundness will not long retain the sanctification or separateness required by the Lord. On the other hand, "smooth and fair speech" must not be taken as sufficient evidence within itself to prove either feigned love or doctrinal error. In "trying the spirits, whether they be from God," one needs to largely disregard the manner of presentation and look intently at the matter presented.

All need to "give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit": and also, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of man, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." (Col. 3:8)

No reflection upon the efforts of godly men, who contend earnestly for the faith in opposing perversions of the divine pattern of church organization and work of the church should be tolerated; equally true no right thinking person will impugn the motives of sincere and sound brethren to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace." But in all cases care must be exercised to avoid looking toward some part of the truth so intently as to cause one to be inattentive to the requirements of any other part of truth. –4109 Avenue F, Austin, Texas

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LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP

Robert H. Farish

Much has been written on the subject of "Fellowship". From some things I have read and heard I have gotten the impression that "love" and "fellowship" have been equated in the thinking of some. Some seem to think fellowship should extend as far as love. While I can't think of any scriptural fellowship where love can be absent, yet there are many people that I must love but must not fellowship. God has made the range of love far greater than the range of fellowship. It is just as sinful to extend the range of fellowship beyond the divine boundary as it is to fall short of the divine boundary of love.

God loves the world with an intensity beyond human grasp. Yet God is not in "fellowship" with the world. Only those who "walk in the light, as he is in the light" have fellowship with God (1 John 1:7). But what is it to "walk in the light"? The answer can be found by studying the phrases "the truth", "his word" and "the light" in context. In I John 1:8, the apostle declares, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" - in verse 10 he says, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us". "The truth" and "his word" are used interchangeably; they are equal. Jesus identified "the truth" as the word of God in his prayer for the apostles - "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:7). The truth is the word of God. But notice also that to "do not the truth" (1 John 1:6) is the exact opposite of "Walk in the light" v. 7. To do the truth is to walk in the light. "His word" (v. 10) is called "the truth" in verses 6 and 8 and "the light" verse 7. To do the truth is to obey his word; it is to walk in the light.

The Lord requires us to love our fellowmen but when we come to love anyone more than we love the truth, we

are lost. "And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish: because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:10). Love of the truth must be cultivated.

Jesus declared, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This is conditioned upon abiding in the word of Christ. "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples" (John 8:31). Knowledge of the truth will never come to one who does not remain in the word. Thus freedom in Christ is not the condition of those who refuse to be restricted by the word.

The divine requirement to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) must not be regarded as conflicting with the inspired entreaty to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Such an idea is intolerable to those who believe that the scriptures are inspired of God. However, fellowship or unity may be sought so excessively as to become a fetish. Equally true controversy can become a "way of life". These dangers however should not be allowed to deter us from giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit and contending earnestly for the faith and loving one another as our Father in heaven requires. In fact, we are keeping the unity of the Spirit by contending earnestly for the faith.

The obligation to contend earnestly for the faith presupposes that the one who has a good and honest heart can recognize the faith when he sees it. Emotional prepossession and prejudice against some person or institution, egotism, etc., all contribute to grossness of heart. Neither a bachelor, master or doctor's degree is required

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to understand the will of the Lord but a good and honest heart is essential.

The faith was once for all delivered unto the saints. The faith delivered to the first century saints, is the faith to be contended for by the twentieth century saints.

It is revealed that the first century Christians ate the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). This is a revealed thing; it belongs unto men. No one with even slight respect for the Bible would be willing to say that it is wrong to eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week. Why then go browsing around to find excuse to fellowship one who has gone onward and picked some other day to eat the Lord's supper? Talk about "hay and stubble of human opinion"! We have Luke's testimony as our evidence that first century Christians ate the Lord's supper on the first day of the week. What evidence is there that they ate it on other days, except the "hay and stubble of human opinion"? Eating the Lord's supper on the first day of the week is a matter of faith, not opinion. When I eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, I am imitating the faith of those that "spoke. . . the word of God". Paul was one of those who "spoke unto you the word of God"; he ate the Lord's supper on "the first day of the week" even though he had to tarry seven days, when "he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost" (Acts 10:6,7,16). When some one else eats it on another day, he is walking by opinion.

It is a revealed thing that "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God" (2 John 9). ~~One who hath not God is certainly not in fellowship with God.~~ No Christian should dare fellowship such a one. Love him and strive to save him from his error, yes; fellowship him, NO.

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Some Of The PROBLEMS OF UNITY

ROBERT H. FARISH

Keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is a duty which God has assigned to every Christian. The widespread neglect of this duty is due to the failure to realize that this is a duty assigned by God; none is exempt. We need to be made aware of our personal responsibility in this matter, lack of such awareness can lead only to

spiritual ruin of the individual as well as division in the body.

The moving entreaty of the apostle, written from prison, is indicative of the seriousness with which he viewed the matter of unity. Paul wrote, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

The prayer of the Lord on behalf of us who believe on him through the word of the apostles had unity as its chief theme -- "neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20, 21). Think of the many things for which an all wise and concerned Saviour could have petitioned the Father on behalf of his future disciples, and then ponder the fact that out of all these things the Saviour selected the unity of future disciples as the sole petition which he uttered on behalf of those disciples! The reason for this is the effect that such unity would have upon the world -- "that the world may believe that thou didst send me." The rejection, by the world, of the doctrine of the deity of Jesus, is due in a large measure to the division among the professed believers. Ridicule is heaped upon Jesus by unbelievers for the divided state of "Christendom" as much as for any other thing.

To the Corinthian saints the apostle wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren ... that there are contentions among you ..." (I Cor. 1:10,11). The contentions which were present in Corinth were the opposite of that unity of speech, attitude and judgment which the apostle besought the members to maintain. The specifications of the unity here approved are far more exacting than is the "unity in diversity" concept. Any diversity with reference to whom we are following is carnal and no amount of glossing with ingenious phrases can alter its character. Faithful gospel preachers are still only "ministers through

whom ye believed," "Wherefore let no one glory in men" I Cor. 3:21. The increase realized from the preaching of the gospel is of God. God gives the increase through his word. Ministers who *preach the word* and nothing but the word are keeping the "unity of the Spirit." Those who pervert the gospel have the curse of heaven overshadowing them. Those who receive the gospel as the word of God, and subject themselves to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, have the unity prescribed and required by the Holy Spirit. No unity or "togetherness" which involves compromise of truth is to be tolerated.

It is still "good and pleasant" for brethren to dwell together in unity. But if those who have attained to that good and pleasant state described as dwelling together in unity, expect to continue enjoying the pleasant fruits of unity they must be alert to early detect those who would cause division. To this end the Holy Spirit requires us to "mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (Romans 16:17,18). So many are so unsure about the doctrine that they are unwilling to commit themselves positively to "one faith" "once delivered unto the saints." Those who take pride in the fluid state of their "convictions are unable to decide what is contrary to the doctrine which is learned from the New Testament. This uncertainty prevents taking the action, prescribed by the Holy Spirit, which will insure the "Unity of the Spirit." We need to learn that concord with darkness or agreement in error is not the unity of the Spirit. "Evil men and imposters wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," making it difficult to "abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them" (II Timothy 3:14). But the unity of the Spirit can never be enjoyed except as we mark and avoid those who teach and act contrary to the doctrine of the New Testament. The antics of those who are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," disrupt and confuse but now as in the first century the faithful child of God can and will "abide in the things which he has learned" from the New Testament. All who abide in the things learned from the apostles are "one"; they are keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace.

Unity In Diversity

"Unity in diversity" is a phrase of "smooth and fair speech" with which the heart of some has been beguiled. Some have been induced to accept the unity in diversity doctrine in place of the unity of the Spirit. The nature of the unity of the Spirit is not understood by those who will settle for any agreement or togetherness based upon human wisdom. Any doctrine that allows for faiths many of necessity must allow "Lords many." The Spirit which demands recognition of "one Lord" also demands recognition of "one faith." The diversity of heathenism is condemned by the Holy Spirit. "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him" (I Cor. 8:5,6). The standard of authority in religion for this age is unique -- "there is one faith" Ephesians 4:5. This "one faith" is the gospel. Paul preached the gospel, Galatians 1:11; when he preached the gospel, he preached the faith, Galatians 1:23. The anathema of heaven is upon any who preach another gospel (faith). No diversity can be tolerated which exists by reason either of open defiance or impious indifference to the teaching of Christ, the gospel, the one faith.

The need and possibility of understanding the will of the Lord, is apparent. Understanding and unity are inseparable. The contention that we can't all see or understand alike is a denial of the possibility of gaining and maintaining the unity of the Spirit. Conceived, if you can, of a situation where Mr. White met the requirements of Ephesians 5:17. "understand what the will of the Lord is," and Mr. Brown also met the requirement of the passage; but they didn't understand alike! There was diversity of understanding! The passage recognizes only two possibilities -- "understand" or be "foolish." When diversity exists with reference to the will of God, it is not a case of different understandings, it is simply a case of misunderstanding versus understanding, or misunderstanding versus misunderstanding; never can it be understanding, versus understanding. One either understands or he misunderstands. The need is urgent for concerned saints to direct their energies toward

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1 he was called without lowliness. The death of
 2 lowliness accounts for much of the division that
 3 exists. Lowliness literally means "low lying."
 4 It is the opposite of counting self better than others,
 5 of setting "all others at naught." The unity of the
 6 Spirit cannot long continue where some think of
 7 themselves more highly than they ought. It is
 8 difficult to convince a high-minded person that he
 9 IS high-minded. It is pretty much of a personal
 10 problem to be solved by each individual for him-
 11 self. Sober thinking is a duty of every man; it
 12 is God who requires it. Being a God-imposed duty,
 13 it must be within the reach of every responsible
 14 being. You can "think soberly."

Meekness is also essential to success in keeping
 the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To
 regard the lowliness and meekness here required
 as marks of weakness would logically demand
 that Jesus be regarded as weak and one to be scorn-
 ed, for he himself claimed to be "meek and lowly
 in heart." He was "despised and rejected of men"
 for men have never been generally committed
 to the value and strength of meekness and low-
 liness. The spirit of the world is characterized by
 pride, arrogance and over-confidence in human
 accomplishments. Meekness is the temper of spirit
 in which we accept God's requirement of us as
 good. It is that spirit or attitude toward God which,
 knowing what the will of God is, never questions
 it but relies upon it implicitly. The absence of
 meekness causes one to be ashamed of the gospel.
 The thoughtful can see how such hinders ac-
 ceptable unity.

Long suffering is "long temper." This long
 temper is to be exercised in love. A short temper
 doesn't put up with irritations and things that are
 personally unpleasant to the servant of the short
 temper. It is only masters who exercise long suf-
 fering; not servants who are exercised by short
 temper, who can expect to succeed in keeping
 the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,"
 which characterizes the one who "walk (s) worthily
 of the calling" of Christ is not something which can
 be deferred. It cannot be assigned a secondary
 place. Christians must give diligence to "keep the
 unity of the Spirit ..." Diligence is "to hasten to
 do a thing, to exert oneself." It is to take the di-
 rect route. Some one defined it as "go jumping
 fences." No barrier is to be allowed to hinder
 or turn one aside from the goal of unity -- Holy
 Spirit approved unity, that is.

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Some of the Problems of Unity - Con't

understanding what the will of the Lord is and to
 raise their voices in leading others to under-
 stand and do the will of the Father who is in heaven.
 This is not the case in our day; rather than preach-
 ing the word with conviction, "voices of concern"
 are raised in defense of a diversity which diversity
 can only exist in the absence of understanding.

Lowliness, Meekness, Longsuffering, Diligence

Among the problems to be met by the saint in
 discharging his duty as a Christian in keeping
 the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is
 that of lowliness. Lowliness is indispensable in
gaining and maintaining the unity of the Spirit.
 No one can walk worthily of the calling wherewith

'THE TRUTH AND THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT'

ROBERT H. FARISH

The character of the truth, what God designed the truth to accomplish and what the proper attitude toward the truth is, are things which should be kept constantly in the forefront in all efforts for unity. It is to be feared that unity has become a fetish with some. Rather than being a fetish with magical powers to cure all religious ills, the unity of the Spirit is a fruit which is produced by the truth among all who properly receive the truth and respond to its requirements.

We now set forth some of the claims for the truth which are found in the New Testament.

"Thy Word Is Truth"

Jesus identified the truth as the word of God in his prayer recorded in John 17:17. "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth." This passage not only defines the truth as being the word of God, but it also implies the separative power of the truth. God sanctifies men, i. e., sets them apart (separates) them from others, for his service in the truth. The divisive force of truth must be recognized as well as the unifying force of truth.

"Speaking Truth In Love"

In the context in which the apostle exhorts

brethren to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," the requirement to speak truth in love is found. "That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things unto him, who is the head even Christ..." (Eph. 4:14,15). Not only is the speaking to be in love but truth is the thing to be spoken. Maturity in Christ cannot be gained in the absence of either the truth or love. It is disastrous to give disproportionate emphasis to either element, for neglect of the other is inevitable. Love should never be profaned by seeking to justify tolerance toward error by reference to the requirement to love. The so-called "love" which is indifferent to any element of the truth is not the thing required by the Spirit of Truth.

"Love Of The Truth"

Love of the truth must be cultivated, for without it no ground for hope of salvation exists - "and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved and for this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they

should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." II Thess. 2:10-12.

Some "love to have the preeminence," others "love the chief seats in the synagogue," while the "love of money" absorbs others. These loves oppose the truth; love of the truth cannot continue in the same heart with these other loves. God's jealousy extends to his truth; men must love the truth.

"Know The Truth"

Before anyone can speak the truth in love he must know the truth. In fact before the truth can accomplish its purpose in the life of a man the truth must be known by that man. Christ said "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The freedom from the bondage of sin, which is the freedom under consideration by our Lord, is not enjoyed by any except those who know the truth.

Those who are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7) continue in our day in God's disfavor. God expects and requires men to know the truth.

"Obey The Truth"

Knowledge of the truth has as its complement obedience to the truth. God "will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patience in well doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but to them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness shall be wrath and indignation tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil... (Rom. 2:8,9).

Those who fail to continue to the path of obedience are rebuked in the Bible -- "who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth" (Gal. 5:7).

"Hindering the Truth"

Christians often seem to fail to realize the seriousness of hindering the truth. Ponder the warning of Romans 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth in unrighteousness."

"Truth Vs. Fables"

"For the time will come when they will not t

endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts: and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3,4). Division is inevitable when such a condition as this develops; the only kind of harmony that could be had with such is a sort of unity in fables. Fellowship with those who are afflicted with "itching ears" is not desirable the only proper contact is that which might contribute to curing the condition. The disease is contagious; dissatisfaction with the truth is catching. The divine prescription is "PREACH THE WORD."

"Handling Aright The Word of Truth"

In all our efforts to keep the unity of the Spirit we must constantly remember our duty of "handling aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). No one can lay just claim to "handling aright the word of truth," who fails to speak the truth, speak it in love, love the truth, know the truth, obey the truth, prefer it above fables and give diligence to avoid hindering the truth.

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