

“One Is Your Master”

In this special 90th anniversary edition, we are pleased to republish, with nearly complete exactness, the very first Christian Life & Doctrine article which appeared in the inaugural October 1932 issue of The Dawn magazine.

Its general subject of Christian unity is just as applicable now as it was when presented nearly a century ago. Given the fact that the saints on this side of the veil are gradually becoming smaller in number, and as we should expect according to the prophetic times and seasons, “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” among the Lord’s consecrated people is of greater importance today than ever before.

We pray that the words on the following pages may once again strike a chord in each of our hearts as, working together in loving fellowship and in the spirit of unity and cooperation, we each endeavor to make our calling and election sure.

“One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”

—Matthew 23:8

FOR YEARS THE WINDS OF strife have been beating heavily upon the saints throughout the entire earth; and as a result, they have been scattered and

divided into many groups and divisions, contrary to the express command of the Master when he said,

“All ye are brethren.” We believe that the time has come for all Truth brethren to recognize that the spirit of division is the spirit of carnality.

The Apostle Paul censured the church at Corinth because it showed a tendency to become factional. So also now we should realize that there is no scriptural excuse for any who are fully consecrated to the Lord to be segregated into special groups or cliques and to insist upon special tests of faith and fellowship that are not authorized in the Bible.

We are convinced that the responsibility for the many separations and divisions among the saints should be placed upon the one to whom it belongs, which is Satan the Devil. Satan has always been the great enemy of the church, and doubtless he now believes that he has achieved a great victory over the Lord’s people in that he has been successful in forcing upon them the spirit of rivalry, doubt, envy and division.

SCRIPTURAL UNITY

We shall herein set forth briefly, what we believe to be the broad scriptural basis for unity among the Lord’s people—and with which we feel confident that all true Christians agree. The policy of *The Dawn* magazine will be carried out in strict accord with this scriptural basis of unity as herein stated. Shortly before Jesus was glorified he offered up a sincere petition to his Heavenly Father, in which he requested the necessary divine grace to make possible a complete oneness of heart and purpose among his followers.—John 17:11-26

Looking over the history of the Gospel Age, it might at first appear that this inspired prayer has

gone unanswered; but such is not the case. God has always had individual representatives upon the earth who have been in full heart harmony and union with him and with his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, who is the Head of the church.

The hundreds of divisions represented in the many denominations that have long masqueraded under the name of Christ, and also the more modern appearance of factions among those who profess belief in “present truth,” do not necessarily represent divisions of spirit in the true church. (II Pet. 1:12) Rather, they are mainly divisions on carnal lines, generally caused by those who have selfishly sought to establish complex organizations and “channels,” apart from or beyond that simple arrangement for the church that is so clearly outlined in the Lord’s Word.

While it would be a foolish waste of time to try to amalgamate as such, the various factions, or organizations, now existing among the saints, yet this does not minimize the responsibility on the part of each of us to work for that true union of spirit and fellowship for which Christ so earnestly prayed.

UNITY, NOT CONFEDERACY

A scriptural unity of spirit among the various groups of consecrated brethren should not be considered a “federation” as some have mistakenly suggested. The uniting of diverse groups and factions as such, doubtless would amount to an unscriptural confederacy, but to encourage individual Christians everywhere to recognize Christ only as their Head, and to meet together in accordance with the spirit of Christ’s prayer for spiritual

unity, most assuredly would meet with divine approval and blessing.

No true Christian should wish to insist upon the furtherance of the spirit of carnality by advocating that the various groups each hold themselves aloof and selfishly seek fellowship and service, entirely independent of all other consecrated brethren of our one true Head. True Christian unity can be possible only so long as Christ is recognized as the sole head over all his people and so long as the ransom sacrifice of Christ is regarded as the true basis of Christian faith and hope: “Other [scriptural] foundation can no man lay.”—I Cor. 3:11

It also must be recognized by all brethren in present Truth that in this end of the age the Lord has revealed to his people the beauties of his divine plan of redemption through Christ, whereby both the church and the world are to receive in God’s due time the blessings of life everlasting. We believe that the great but simple fundamental truths of the divine plan, which have been made known to us all, will be gladly recognized by all Bible Students, in addition to the ransom itself, as a necessary basis for true Christian fellowship and service at this time.

There may be details of interpretation concerning the fulfillment of prophecy, or other items of minor import, upon which some of us may have reached different conclusions; but there is no scriptural authority for making matters of this kind a test of Christian fellowship.

ORGANIZATION

Looking back over the history of the Gospel Age, it becomes apparent that many divisions among the

saints have been brought about by the unscriptural endeavor of certain leaders to “force” upon the church some scheme of organization that God’s Word has not authorized. A careful reading of the New Testament history concerning the organization of the Early Church reveals this most important fact—that every congregation of the Lord’s disciples at that time was entirely independent of every other congregation; and that there was no central organization, group or committee which these independent congregations were supposed to look to as in any sense of the word their headquarters.

Even among the apostles themselves no central authority was recognized. The Apostle Paul, for example, after his conversion, went forth in the ministry without so much as communicating with the other apostles concerning his activities. He says, “I conferred not with flesh and blood; Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me.” Later he talked with Peter, “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James.” (Gal. 1:16-19) As Paul went forth preaching, he was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ, but they had “heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.”—vss. 22-24

Although the Early Church had no central organization, and no head except the invisible Christ, yet the organization of the various independent congregations of the saints back there was as efficient as it was simple—the various servants being elected according to the scriptural manner of voting by stretching forth the hand.—See Acts 14:23, *Young’s Literal Translation*

It is our conviction that true Christian unity can obtain only where this simple apostolic method prevails. In harmony with this conviction, we wish it known that the settled policy of this magazine rests upon this scriptural basis. Let us recognize only Christ as our Head, which means that no organization, group or committee, outside of your own congregation, should be recognized as having authority in, or being the “headquarters” of your congregation.

In seeking fellowship with others of “like precious faith” it is not our purpose to ascertain with whom they may be cooperating in the work of the ministry. Rather, we are happy to accept into our fellowship all believers in God’s great plan who are desirous of exalting the cross of Christ and are recognizing only Jesus as their Head.

It is our thought that when Jesus prayed for unity among his brethren, he prayed for that unity of spirit which should exist in each local congregation of the saints. He was not praying for a complex, visible, humanly devised organization that would centrally control all local ecclesias in matters of faith and works. There is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that God expects the various congregations of his people to be united in the exclusive support of some central committee or organization.

Contrariwise, the Scriptures make it clear that those who insist upon the recognition of outside influence in the ecclesia are guilty of engendering the spirit of “carnality.” If it was a carnal spirit that prompted some in the Early Church to say, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” surely then it

is still the spirit of carnality for any to say, either by word or by example, that they cannot fellowship with or recognize any consecrated Christians who are not affiliated with a particular group or organization, and who are not bound with them by a certain system of private interpretation which they unscripturally have set up as a test of fellowship.—I Cor. 3:1-6

COOPERATION, NOT BONDAGE

In setting forth the foregoing outline of what we believe to be the true basis of Christian fellowship which is obtainable only by the full recognition of Christ, as Head, and by upholding at all times the sovereign rights of the local ecclesia, we do not wish to be understood as opposed in any degree to hearty cooperation with any of the various service organizations for spreading the Truth that are scripturally operating in the field.

Rather, we are seeking to emphasize the fact that, as a service organization, we believe it unscriptural and carnal to be so committed to a union with any single group or influence that anyone would be prevented from recognizing and aiding the good work that is being accomplished by other Truth brethren.

We recognize fully that to accomplish an effective general presentation of the Gospel message, which calls for cooperative service among all the brethren, none can be entirely isolated from their brethren in other parts of the field. For example, it would be very inefficient and expensive for each local ecclesia to publish its own literature for dissemination of the Truth. It is far cheaper to have it prepared and

shipped from some central point. But we also claim that it would be very unwise, as well as unscriptural, to insist that only one particular committee or organization be given the exclusive right of publication, thus becoming a “one and only” channel.

Our policy is to grant every individual in any ecclesia full liberty as to the Truth literature they may desire to use in their work of the ministry and to let them be free to cooperate with any of the various service organizations that may be doing a general publishing work for the spreading of the Truth. The interest and prayers of the publishers of *The Dawn* go out in behalf of all the saints everywhere who are in any way endeavoring to exalt the cross of Christ and to make known the glad tidings of the kingdom.

SERVICE ORGANIZATION

As above stated, this magazine holds that the only church organization which God recognizes as having special right in its own territory is the local ecclesia. The New Testament reveals that such organizations alone were recognized in apostolic times, and they alone are honored in the Scriptures by being called the “church of God.” —I Cor. 1:2

Service organizations, therefore, must be recognized as, at the most, mere auxiliaries—business expedients, through which to make possible a more economical, effective and general dissemination of the Gospel. But there is no scriptural authority to sanction the thought that any such organization should be considered an exclusive channel of service for the church.

We believe that the Apostle Paul expressed the proper Christian principle concerning cooperative service when he said of a certain family in Corinth that had become active in their service of the brethren: "Let all your deeds be done in love. And I entreat you, brethren, as you know the family of Stephanas, that it is a firstfruit of Achaia, and that they devoted themselves to service for the saints, that you also be submissive to such, and to every one who cooperates and labors."—I Cor. 16:14-16, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

There is so much to be done in the way of serving the brethren and making known the glad tidings to others that there seems no need for rivalry among God's people, and so we desire to encourage and cooperate with all who, as the Apostle declares, "have devoted themselves to service for the saints."

ALL INVITED TO COOPERATE

We have endeavored herein to set forth briefly that which we understand to be the scriptural basis of Christian unity; and we believe that it is upon this basis that many of the congregations of God's people are organized. It is upon this same basis that we extend to you the invitation to cooperate with and support this and all similar efforts to spread the glad tidings of the incoming kingdom "while it is day."—John 9:4

While it is true that individual Christians throughout the age have been united with Christ, and thus in spirit united with each other regardless of their denominational surroundings, yet may it be that in answer to the inspired prayer of Jesus, the Heavenly Father will now permit all his saints

as a church, before they are finally gathered home, to be victorious in the matter of unity as well as in every other respect. But irrespective of the extent to which this true basis of unity and fellowship may yet be recognized by the various local congregations of the saints, we feel certain that it is our duty to work toward the end of such an ideal, for which Christ prayed, and not to foster the carnal spirit of division.

During the time of the harvest thousands of the Lord's people have received a knowledge of the Truth and have come out of bondage. But in order that every individual saint in the closing days of the age might recognize fully the necessity of union with and dependence upon Christ as their sole Head, it has been necessary that the church be subjected to the fiery trials that have assailed it, especially during the last sixteen years [1916-1932].

Yet, if through these experiences we have learned nothing more than that Christ is our Head and that no human instrumentality, whether individual Christian or organization, should have been recognized in any way as having authority over the church, have not all our trials been well worthwhile?

We ask especially an interest in your prayers on behalf of the spiritual success of this publication, that its pages may ever be to his honor, that each succeeding issue may result in rich spiritual blessings for all who read it, and that its influence toward Christian unity, fellowship and service might extend out for the blessing of many more than those who actually become subscribers and material supporters in carrying this work forward. ■