

## CHRISTIAN UNITY.

John 17:20-21.

E. Hilton Post.

Bengel observes that this of all chapters is the simplest in words and the deepest in meaning. The text is selected from the most remarkable prayer in the Bible. It is the High Priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Clarke divides this prayer into three parts: (1) Our Lord's prayer for Himself, vs. 1-5. (2) Our Lord's prayer for His disciples vs. 6-19. (3) Our Lord's prayer for His Church and for all who would believe on Him, through the preaching of the Apostles and their successors, vs. 20-end.

The verses used as the basis of this paper form part of the heart-cry of our Lord for genuine Christian unity, which is so essential in order that we may accomplish our mission in the world and glorify Him, our federal head.

"It must be remembered that this unity for which Christ prays, by its manifestations leads to the glory of God, through the walk and conversation of Christ's true disciples. When this is realized the world will then see and know Christ in His people and will be convinced that only union with Him can make them light in the world."

Christ in the text makes unity essential in order to convince the world that He is the true Messiah. For that reason we ought to give the most prayerful attention to this important subject. One Commentator says: "The indwelling Spirit of the Father and the Son is the one perfect bond of union, knitting us into a living unity, first of believers among themselves; next this unity into one still higher with the Father and the Son."

First, let us consider that this unity is not. I do this because I am convinced that many erroneous ideas are advanced and even enjoined in some quarters as essential to Christian unity which have no relation whatever to it. They are the opinions of men only and were they rigidly enforced would fail to effect genuine Christian unity. It is not oneness of opinion in non-essentials. I know this is a statement that can be easily misunderstood and misquoted. For that reason I must state myself clearly. I mean by non-essentials everything that has no direct relation to personal salvation and that would not bar a soul from Heaven. There are many things that are lawful, but for the sake of others and harmony are to be separated from the life. "If meat maketh my brother to offend I will eat no more meat" is the way Paul put it. Not that he felt condemned, but because it was a source of hindrance to another.

Here lies the danger in that we have come to see this we are more or less inclined to raise it up as a standard and insist that everybody give up the same things in order to be right with God. The fact is, what we have done may have no direct relation whatever to personal salvation. Hence I am requiring another to surrender what I have no right to exact.

But non-essentials may also include some things that were necessary to our own personal salvation. Some things that

would not be harmful but for the fact that we have our hearts and affection set upon them.

We must remember that He will allow nothing to come between Himself and His children performing His full will and service. He wants all our love and will have nothing short of it. Others may have these identical things with never a thought of setting their hearts upon them so that they hinder the fullest service to be rendered. Readily you can see that the tendency is to raise up the surrender of these things as essential, and insist that others do likewise. Why not let the same Spirit that spoke to you about them also speak to others as He pleases?

Christian unity is not oneness of method. How we do contend for our way of doing things! Indeed, sometimes we cannot even see the possibility of success without our method. How strange! If we all adopt the same method of procedure doubtless the results would be disappointing to a degree.

It is not oneness of mannerism. That is, we do not all have the same demonstrations, i. e., shout alike, etc. In some quarters they have the same way of talking. This attempting to be like others borders dangerously on monkeyism, or a parrot-fashion religion.

It is not uniformity. There may be unity without uniformity, and there may be uniformity without unity. Some one has well said, "The uniformity of a church or society may be like the uniformity of a grave yard in which all the tombs, monuments and head stones are of one pattern." That is uniformity and not unity, for unity cannot be found among the dead, but only among the living.

I do not believe the unity for which our Lord prays is organic union. The uniting of all churches into one great body is farthest from the thought and if effected would not accomplish the fulfilment of this wonderful prayer.

What is Christian Unity? Its foundation must be laid in an agreement in fundamental truths are such that, if rejected, would keep us from the fold of Christ and His coming kingdom.

We must agree in the necessity of the new birth and entire sanctification as essential for right relation to God here and Heaven hereafter. I know that those who stand for fundamentals are being ridiculed and censured in some quarters, but we insist that these are vitally essential, not only to personal salvation, but to Christian Unity. It is unity of fellowship and sympathy. Differences in non-essentials should be no barrier to sympathy and fellowship among the brethren. A very holy man, a choice pilgrim, once confessed that he was tempted not to fellowship the writer because he used medicines and had a physician when sick. How easily the devil could break the fellowship of good people if we would listen to him!

It isn't a question whether we like the way one does, but is He in the circle of God's children? Frequently we make "preference" the basis of our fellowship and sympathy.

It is unity of effort—all pulling together and the one way. What wonderful results would be recorded if all the Church

and holiness movement pulled the same way and together!

It is unity of motive and of prayer and faith. How strange that the burden of prayer and faith rests frequently on a circle within the circle. How we need prayer and faith in the accomplishing of our tasks.

This unity is effected not by efforts to unite together, but by vital union with Jesus Christ. This is a fundamental basis of all true unity. It is also effected by full obedience to the Divine will on the part of all God's children.

It would not be best to close this paper without a brief reference to the sad results where this unity does not prevail. In the Church divisions arise. Little bands opposing each other. I read the sad account of two British ships meeting in the night and engaging in a deadly conflict which resulted in a frightful slaughter. When the morning dawned and they discovered the British flag flying from each vessel their grief knew no bounds. A more pitiful picture is a divided church engaging in a battle with themselves when they ought to be engaging the enemy. Another sad result is the loss of power and glory. Then there are no souls saved, no weeping penitents, no happy converts, no revivals, etc. Hence we see the Church becoming the center of community, fun and frolic.

Our Lord in the text assigns the reason why we should have this unity—"that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." Dr. Clarke observes that the Greek word "kosmos" translated world meant primarily the Jewish nation. He wanted both Jews and Gentiles to believe on Him. When they saw this they would be convinced that He was the true Messiah. How we need this unity today to convince the world that Jesus is the true Messiah—the Lord and Christ of God.

"Heirs of the same immortal bliss,  
Our hopes and fears the same,  
With bonds of love our hearts unite,  
With mutual love inflame.

So may the unbelieving world  
See how true Christians love;  
And glorify our Saviour's grace,  
And seek that grace to prove."

—Wesleyan Methodist.

## "LET US."

Selected from the Epistle to the Hebrews  
by a Layman.

Let us have grace.  
Let us draw nigh with a true heart.  
Let us come boldly to a throne of grace.  
Let us go on to perfection not laying  
again the foundation.

Let us consider one another to provoke  
unto love.

Let us hold fast the profession of our  
faith without wavering.

Let us go forth without the camp bear-  
ing His reproach.

Let us run with patience the race set

Let us labor, therefore, to enter into  
that rest, lest any man fall after the same  
example of unbelief.

Let us therefore fear, lest a promise be-  
ing left us of entering into His rest, any of  
you should seem to come short of it.