

UNION AND UNITY

BY DR. THOMAS'S DAUGHTER.

IN view of the great importance and high estimation which we have ever been wont to place upon the testimonies of Jehovah, we desire to draw your attention for awhile to the consideration of the subject of *Unity*. This has come to be a subject of primary importance at the present time. All true earnest believers of the truth everywhere feel the great importance of Unity, in order that they may not lose their early confidence, become shaken in mind, and be in a fit condition to be blown about by "every wind of doctrine and the sleight of men."

The apostle Paul, the great teacher of the Gentiles, dwells largely upon Unity. He speaks of the "Unity of the Faith" and "Unity of the Spirit." He never alludes to any kind of unity which does not include as a foundation these two kinds before-named. A seven-fold unity is clearly shown in his Epistle to the Ephesians, a number of units which complete the whole. One of these is styled "the One Faith:" this we conclude to be the same that is mentioned in Jude, viz., "the Faith once delivered to the saints," which he exhorts us "to contend earnestly for." The body of Christ, another fold of the seven, has been honoured and appointed as the "pillar and ground of the truth." Pillars perform a very important office in upholding the edifice: the ground is also indispensable. But suppose the pillars and the ground were to take up opposite views concerning the edifice they were upholding, what would become of the building? "A house divided against itself cannot stand." If the body of Christ is to perform its proper functions—its legitimate office, it must be an unit, based upon the seven, as taught by the apostle Paul. It may then be a "light shining in a dark place until the day dawns;" it may then be in a condition not only to enjoy the truth within itself, but also to extend the same boon to others, and maintain an effectual defence of the faith until the Master comes. When firmly united in this kind of unity, however small in number or in worldly standing, the ecclesia cannot fail to exert a powerful influence in behalf of the truth upon society around, thus obeying the injunction given by Christ, to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," and be able to carry out fully the exhortation of the apostle, to do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."—(Phil. 2:15). If, on the contrary, we fail to secure Unity in those things set forth by the apostle Paul, we shall fail to sustain an effectual defence of the Faith—we shall fail to preserve harmony and love amongst ourselves, and we shall fail to shine as lights in the world; for each individual member will soon find the light which once did illuminate his own mind, through the truth, gradually diminishing, until it become finally extinguished; and while a form of Godliness may be preserved, it will be without the power—having very little vitality left in it.

Vitality is the life-power. Spiritual life is the life of the inner man, the spirit of the mind. It does not always flourish, accompanied with a high degree of animal spirits or natural life; for the apostle Paul recognises a condition of things, wherein, "though the outward man perish, the inward is renewed day by day."—(2 Cor. 4:16.) When the two

kinds of life accompany each other, it is well; but they may exist independently of each other. If we desire to promote spiritual life in a community whose association together is based entirely upon a community of sentiments in regard to Scripture doctrines and precepts, it becomes necessary to keep in lively remembrance those elements which constitute the basis of their Union. Their faith, their hope, their purpose of life, their aims, objects and affections, all tending towards, and centering in this seven-fold Unity, by which alone the incense of their hearts' devotion can ascend with acceptance to the One God and Father of all, "and that we may stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

The Scripture testifies concerning Paul, that he 'preached the kingdom of God, and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.'—(Acts. 28.) When giving account of himself, he states, that "after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets." In his Epistle to the Galatians, he identifies the gospel which he preached with the promises made to Abraham. In his defence before Felix, the hope and resurrection of the dead form is the theme of discourse: "I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers;" and again, touching the resurrection of the dead, "I am called in question by you this day." He reasoned three Sabbath Days unto them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that Jesus was that Christ, thus uniting the hope of the promises with the things concerning Jesus Christ, to be attained after the resurrection of the dead. We find these things amplified and greatly enlarged upon in reading the epistles. The promises made of God unto the fathers, the covenants, both Abrahamic and Mosaic, are dwelt upon copiously in the epistle to the Galatians. In Romans we learn concerning justification through faith; justification by grace, and not through the works of the law. According to the text, it reads: "Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Both the natural seed and the spiritual seed are included in the acceptance by grace, after repentance from dead works, and justification through faith, by the principle of obedience, "according to the election of grace." The natural branches to be grafted in again, if they continue not in unbelief, when the time of restitution shall arrive.

THE apostle in his epistle to the Colossians explains concerning the mystery of our union with Christ, our burial with him, and rising again through the waters of baptism. Then we read about the great mystery of godliness—God manifested in the flesh—the nature of the Son of God: his humanity; his divine origin; the appearing of Deity in flesh. Christ as a sin-offering; Christ in his priestly office, after the order of Melchisedec; Christ as a king, descending to the earth with mighty angels, "taking vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord." We are also instructed concerning the times and seasons, about the rise, development, and characteristics of anti-Christ: the mystery of iniquity, which should flourish with power, signs, and lying wonders, and be finally destroyed with the brightness of his coming.

This very concise summary of the doctrines taught in the writings of the apostle Paul, is all we can enter into at present; each one alone would form a theme for an epistle. The apostle leaves nothing untouched; he has even anticipated the inquiry which some might be prompted to make concerning the resurrection body; for he says: "Some men will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" Then he proceeds to

illustrate the process of the change from the natural to the spiritual body, by the process of the development of grain, taking things natural to make plain matters which might otherwise be obscure. The apostle then exhorts us not to be continually laying the foundation anew, but leaving first principles to go on to perfection. First principles, he says, are these: “Repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.” When we come to investigate closely these fundamental elements of the truth, we see how very comprehensive they are, and may be likened to so many seeds, from which beautiful plants grow, and unfold their various leaves and flowers. From these elements, the apostle proceeds to develop the doctrines contained in all his writings, and desires that we should proceed along with him in his unfoldings, and not to refuse to follow him; not settling down upon certain elementary principles, and refusing to make any move towards perfection. We can scarcely conceive of a real lover of the truth, who would feel as though he did not wish to know any more about it. But one may ask, by what means can I progress? Shall I go to the clergy or ministers of any denomination — Protestant or Catholic? Will they help me to a further understanding of the word of God? Alas, they cannot; the secret of the Lord is not with them; they cannot shew it. Can we search into the deep things of the Spirit for ourselves? We are thankful that we may do this; but if we attempt this singly and unaided, we are likely to fail in securing unity, harmony and light, and run the risk of finally drifting into chaos. The Lord has looked upon our helpless condition, and what we were not able to do for ourselves, He has caused to be done for us, through certain instrumentality, raised up at certain times, both past and present; agencies thoroughly competent for the work. May we not, then, with great profit, avail ourselves of the aid that is within our reach, and cast not away our portion. The apostle Paul claimed to be in perfect unity with all the teachers of the truth that had preceded him. He began by identifying himself with all that was written in the law and the prophets. He said the Gospel that he preached, had been preached to Abraham before, and that in the last days, the great salvation began to be spoken by the Son of God himself. What authority could be greater than this? This great apostle, so closely identified with all who had gone before him, says, there is but one faith, and that was the one which he delivered unto the people; that there was but one hope, and that was the one which he stood to answer before the Roman authorities; that there is but one Lord—the same whose nature, character and offices, he so clearly describes. That there is but one baptism, and that is it which is based upon the one Faith, and the One Hope; and which unites the believer to the name of the Lord. That there is but one body, and that is composed of a number who have been united to the One Lord, by means of the One Faith, One Hope, and One Baptism.

Those who have been subjects of this process, are then animated by the One Spirit, and are in a position to receive the grace or favour abundantly bestowed by the One God and Father of all. To retain this favour and grace, we have to remain true to this seven-fold Unity.

Faithfulness being one of Jehovah’s attributes, all those who would serve Him acceptably, must be faithful also, if they would receive the approving sentence, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”