



UNITY.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

By S. J. B. C.

LONDON :
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQ., E.C. 4.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

UNITY.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY S. J. B. CARTER.

(PSA. CXXXIII.; EPH. IV. 3, 13-16.)

THE desire for unity is very evident everywhere among Christians. The desire is quite right, but the methods employed in order to reach unity are often very questionable and sometimes quite wrong. Unity in order to last must be divine. What is human and man-made cannot stand; it will not do for God. The unity of the Godhead was the basis of Judaism as it is of Christianity. Three Persons, but one God: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii. 5.)

Now, it is the desire of the heart of God that this unity be morally reflected in the saints down here. Every true heart in every age had desired unity among the people of God. Abram did all he could to stop division between himself and Lot. If his yieldingness was not known to all men, he let it be known

to Lot; he was willing to go to the right hand or to the left hand rather than have strife. Then Joseph said to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way." He knew how quarrelsome they were. We know that brethren do quarrel sometimes, and it grieves the heart of the exalted Joseph. When the two and a half tribes desired to get their portion on the wrong side of Jordan Moses was deeply agitated. It looked like division; and it became that in the end. Then you will remember, when Jeroboam set up calves in Samaria and instituted an apostate system of worship, he perpetuated division in Israel, and ever after he is spoken of as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat which made Israel to sin."

When Elisha was called to his prophetic ministry, he was ploughing with *twelve* yoke of oxen, and "he with the twelfth." Doubtless he had the thought in his soul of administrative unity in Israel. Although the nation was divided he had God's original thought, and was willing to be the least and the last to help on unity. Paul on a certain occasion spoke about "our twelve tribes." Had he been asked to point them out, he could not have done so. In the original, "twelve tribes" is one word, which emphasises the thought of unity. We are told that Elijah took twelve

stones "according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob," and built an altar with them. Then the one loaf on the table which we partake of from time to time is significant, surely, beloved. The Lord's own yearning desire "that they all may be one" finds an echo in our hearts.

Now, the word unity only occurs three times in the Bible (in the three passages we have read). In the Epistle to the Ephesians we get "the unity of the Spirit" and "the unity of the faith," and in the psalm we read the practical enjoyment of brotherly unity. I suppose the unity of the Spirit is the unity which the Spirit formed at Pentecost when He came down and formed believers as the house of God and the body of Christ. That unity exists still; it has never been broken, though "the bond of peace" has.

When Paul writes to Timothy and speaks of "my doctrine"—that refers to the unity of the Spirit, and when he speaks of "all scripture" it refers to the unity of faith. The Bible is not a number of chapters and verses strung together at random, but there is divine unity in it, it is the subject-matter of our belief—the unity of the faith. Now in Psalm cxxxii. we get the last of the fifteen psalms which form the songs of ascent. These

psalms are based upon what we have in Psalm cxix.

In Psalm cxix. we have renewed Israel, and the law is referred to in some way or other in every verse. There are a hundred and seventy-six verses in this psalm and we get the Hebrew alphabet in the twenty-two sections into which the psalm is divided, shewing us that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all that is for God in the world to come. There are eight verses in each section; eight indicates a new order of things in resurrection. As has been remarked by another, when the mind of God is written upon the hearts and affections of the earthly people of God, they begin to go up, and so we have the "songs of ascent." The last song is full of praise; it presents the saints at home in the house for God, which they fill with praise. We have a chequered experience detailed in these psalms, many ups and downs during the journey, but in the end home is reached. If you go through these psalms carefully you will find as the Psalmist proceeds an increasing sense of getting nearer and nearer home.

In Psalm cxxxiii. we have "brethren dwelling together in unity," and consequent upon the ark getting its right place. (Psa. cxxxii.) David heard of the ark in Ephratah and

found it in the fields of the wood. That would doubtless refer to the time when the ark was in the house of Abinadab on the hill in Kirjath-jearim. I believe Kirjath-jearim means the city of woods. Ephratah is a poetical term for Kirjath-jearim, "in the fields of the wood." David heard of the ark there; he found it, and brought it up, but not in God's way. He did bring it up, but in a wrong way—on a "new cart"—and then the breach of Uzzah followed.

We get David's exercises about his failure and about the ark in Psalm cxxxii. His exercises caused him sleepless nights; he would not give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids until he had found a resting-place for the ark. David's exercises were very deep.

After the breach of Uzzah, the ark was taken into the house of Obbedom, and there it found a resting-place for three months. We must start on the individual line when it is a question of giving Christ His right place. The apostle prays "that the Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"—not your *heart*, but your *hearts*. The individual experience comes first—the ark, so to speak, in the house of Obbedom. Then David fetches it from thence and brings it up in a right way, and puts it in "the midst of the tent which

he himself had pitched." That seems to me to be the assembly as we know it here—the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. David put the ark in a *new* domicile altogether. And so the apostle goes on to say in writing to the Ephesians—"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus." Then you get the ark in its right place collectively. Then unity—"endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

In Psalm cxxxiii. the Psalmist has the joy of unity before him. He cannot describe it; it is beyond words to portray—the sight is infinitely blessed. He holds it up, so to speak, to our view: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is [good to God and pleasant to man] for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Let us always emphasise that name *brethren*. If we realised in our souls that we are brethren, many troubles that occur might be obviated. You will remember the first division among brethren. You may say, "I am not old enough." Neither am I. You say, "It occurred about 1844 *A.D.* It occurred a long time before that. According to the chronology in the margin of our Bible it occurred about 1844 *before* Christ. You will remember what the patriarch said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen ;

for we be brethren." What a touching appeal! Surely if that did not affect Lot, nothing could. "*We be brethren.*" The sense in our souls that we belong to the same family goes a long way towards the promotion of brotherly unity.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to *dwell* together in unity!" It is a matter of *dwelling*. The local brother is tested in this way. The visiting brother comes into the meeting and spends a happy time with the saints; they are refreshed, and he goes away. The visiting brother is not tested like the local brother. The man who goes in and out the local assembly year in and year out and still retains the love and confidence of the saints is the man who stands this test—the test of dwelling among his brethren. It is a question of dwelling, and dwelling together. How one loves that word together. It is mentioned five times in the great supper chapter of the Bible.

I do not like to go into the Lord's day morning meeting and bow my head and close my eyes, and abstract myself from my brethren. I want to look at them. I remember a brother telling me some years ago that he was very surprised at the late F. E. R. one Lord's day morning, because he was looking round about before the meeting started. He spoke to him

about it afterwards, and dear F. E. R. said, "I always like to have a good look at my brethren first of all."

It is a great thing to look at one another and to realise that we are all loved by the same love. It is important also to look at the emblems. We discern in the loaf and the cup the emblems of the fellowship into which we have been brought—the fellowship of His death. Then we can look away to the Lord for Him to come in and make Himself known when the emblems are dispensed, so that we can reach the other side of death—the sphere in which there is no need because there is no want and consequently no prayer—a sphere that is characterised by every desire being fully satisfied.

I would say to any young believer here, If you cannot quite understand all that goes on in the meeting, yet do you not feel that it is happy to get together with the saints; to get into a sphere where salvation is known and where one is relieved from the pressure of things which weigh one down at other times?

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."

The precious ointment is the holy anointing oil. Aaron was anointed when he had on his person those garments for glory and beauty—the only occasion on which he wore them. I think what we have here implies the mystical Christ—what is spoken of by the apostle as “the Christ” when writing to the Corinthians—“so also is the Christ”—Christ as the anointed vessel. There is the head, which suggests the leading gifts in a body—the eyes and ears, and we read about the gift of smelling, that moral instinct that enables one to detect by the very scent what is of God and what is not. (See Isaiah ·xi. 3, New Trans., note.) The beard speaks of maturity—those who have reached maturity in Christianity. We start with those who are leaders when it is a question of practical unity.

I wonder how often we pray for our leaders. Three times in the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer speaks about “your leaders.” Our leaders need to be prayed for. Division always starts with the under-shepherds; it did in the case of Abraham and Lot. May we pray very much for our leaders that they may be anointed with the holy anointing oil. And then, beloved brethren, the unction goes right down to the skirts of the priestly garment. The weakest and the youngest can know something of what this anointing means. You will

remember that on the hem of the robe of the ephod there were the golden bells and the pomegranates.

At Pentecost we get the golden bells—testimony was heard there. What a testimony went forth and caused astonishment all round. There was the testimony to the fact that the Priest still lived—the One who according to Luke's gospel had gone up blessing those He had left behind. The testimony of the Acts was this—that the Priest still lives. The golden bells sounded forth in order that those outside might know that Aaron still lived. Then there was the pomegranates—fruit—that which was spiritually productive—and it came out in testimony—three thousand being converted in one day.

All this is connected with the sanctuary, with what is *priestly*. In what follows we have the outside place—what is *Levitical*. And so we get "As the dew of Hermon that descendeth on the mountains of Zion." (New Trans.) The mountains are outside. It is not now the oil or the anointing, but the dew. The dew, I think, is ever a symbol of refreshing and restoring ministry in the Spirit. There must be what is *priestly* first. The *priestly* unity must be realised, and then what is *Levitical*—what has to do with the activities of service. The dew descends upon the mountains of

Zion. Mark you, whether it be the oil or the anointing, or whether it be the dew, unity always comes down. We cannot work it up.

And then, what follows? "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Who could speak disparagingly of eternal life when it is realised that it is the desire of Christ. I have heard some speak of eternal life in a disparaging way as something the saints have been floundering about in for years. Eternal life is the desire of the heart of Christ (Psa. xxi.), and it should be the desire of our hearts.

"For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." It is a collective thought; it is when the saints are together that we enjoy it. It is for us now to enjoy it when we are "together in unity." It is found in Him who is going to bring it into display in the world to come. Think of it: "*His heart's desire*"—the triumph of life over death, in a scene where death has reigned.

I would venture to say a few words on what leads up to all this—those lovely and Christlike features which the apostle desires might be developed in us. We hear the voice of Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, coming out of his prison cell in accents of entreaty. I think there is a note of entreaty in the apostle's

voice as he exhorts these saints that they "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." What a calling it is. In the opening of this epistle you find that the calling is connected with the Father—we are sons before His face. Then it is later on connected with Christ and the church, which is His body, the complement of Him who "filleth all in all." Then we have the calling connected with the Spirit, the household of faith brought in. (Chap. ii. 21, 22.) What a calling it is, that we are told to walk worthy of!

Although the calling is infinitely high, the walk must be characterised by lowliness and meekness. "*All* lowliness and meekness," says the apostle. We can never be too lowly and never too meek. Lowliness refers to a certain state of soul, and meekness is the spirit that the soul breathes when in that state. You may go along a country lane in the spring and inhale beautiful perfume. Where does it come from? You find tiny violets hiding their heads under the leaves unnoticed, but the perfume that comes forth is fragrant. And so it should be with us; out of sight but not out of sense. The fragrance of Christ coming out in the saints appeals to others—"all lowliness and meekness."

Then we have "longsuffering, forbearing [or bearing with] one another in love." Mark

you, it must be *in love*, not as a matter of policy. How much human policy there is amongst us; we feel it and know it. It is quite possible to shake hands with a brother, and smile, because we do not want to fall out with him; and yet have something against him. Then when he gets under a cloud with his brethren what we have against him comes out.

These things ought not to be so, beloved. The corrective is Christ Himself. "Bearing with one another *in love*"—when that is so, it is real. "Endeavouring [or giving diligence] to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." I do not think the word "endeavouring" is right; I nowhere find that God tells me to try to do anything; He tells me to do it. For this diligence is needed.

The unity of the Spirit cannot be broken; it is intact because it is divine, but the bond of peace may be broken, and then the unity is not manifested. That is what we have to be careful concerning. We have to give diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things where-with one may edify another." (Rom. xiv. 19.) The Lord said, "Blessed are the peacemakers:

for they shall be *called* the children of God." If we are peacemakers, others will take cognizance of us that we are the children of God. They will call us that because there is a moral resemblance between us and "the God of peace." The Lord said, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." (Mark ix. 50.) We are prone to reverse the exhortation, and to try to put the peace in ourselves and the salt in others; that will not do. Salt is the inward preservative power of self-judgment that keeps the soul right with God and right with His people. "Have salt in yourselves"; we are to be unsparing concerning ourselves. Then, if you judge yourself and I judge myself there will be peace one with another.

Let us seek grace, then, to help on brotherly ~~unity~~ and to promote peace! Oh, may these hearts of ours respond to that yearning desire of the One to whom we owe everything: "That they all may be one."

Lewisham, S.E.

S. J. B. C.