

ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT.

THE Bible is a blessed book ; and I hardly know what circumstances could be mentioned that should prevent its being read. "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We must learn from it and judge by it. It is the measure of measures; yet it is a most sad thing that it is generally so read as to be observed with little particular attention. The sound of its pleasant words are often like the sweet murmurings of a stream that gives no distinct sound, and the spiritual leave it to men desirous of honour and preference in this world to dispute about. But it is the spiritual, the conscientious to God, who should be those to investigate it, and by it to help him that seeketh after wisdom by the light thereof.

In the 1 Corinthians xii. 13, there are these words—"For by one Spirit we are (have been, Gr.) all baptized into one body." I ask and desire earnestly the attention of the readers of this Tract, to consider the force of these words. It is added—"and all have drunk into the same Spirit." Here an act on our part is betokened or expressed. Being baptized may seem to mean something done to us; when we *drink*, we act consciously. This would show that when the apostle says, "we all," he means, (as it is plain from the intermediate part of the verse, at which the reader is requested to look), all who have so drunk, gathered from among whomsoever they might be; and it must be evident that it is to these he speaks and writes in his letters.

O blessed cross! that by thee we should come to God and be in peace; and being in peace, serve our God as new creatures, baptized into one Spirit, that we may serve Him as we ought in His church, in one blessed concord of service and love!

It is to this end in holiness that Paul labours in these writings; that they whose place it is to be a spectacle to angels and to men, may be the pattern of God's ways in Jesus, and that by the Spirit.

It is said also in the 4th of Ephesians, 4th verse—"One body and one Spirit." Surely these things were not said for nothing. Children of God! do you think these are to be left like the law, shut up in the ark, and laid by as the memorial of by-gone things, because he hath now established some other and better things on earth? Are you who have drunk into one Spirit, unconscious that, with full power and with full liberty, you deeply fail in your duty of showing forth the mind of Christ. You do not show it forth. "ONE BODY and ONE SPIRIT," saith the Apostle. Some are contented with *one* body. The Church of Rome is contented with one

body. So is the Church of England. And if we measured by the measure of the Apostle, many would be found besides, content with body and leaving out the Spirit, happy in the extension of the body. Others stipulate for conversion in the belief of grace, or for apparent conversion; but of conversion little is apprehended in truth: but they have learnt a duty, and to that they confine themselves. Others, having learnt something of the Spirit, own the truth of the children being scattered here and there; and desire, wherever they are, to acknowledge them: but, indeed, this is often precluded by the interest of the *body*; but they still recognize the truth that these are of one Spirit. Does not this respond to the heart of the child of God,—to the heart of those who have drank into the same Spirit, and thirst for more communion with their Father? To such I now address myself. They mourn in secret, they find more communion alone with their Bible than any where else. What brought them where they are? Do they find themselves in the wilderness, and no God to feed them? Was it not a sort of impressment by which they were assured that they *must* belong somewhere? Moreover, perhaps they find themselves cut off from private communion in the things of Jesus with those with whom they formerly opened their hearts. Do these see nothing in the words of the Apostle—“ONE BODY and ONE SPIRIT”? And is there no duty to God contained in this—no confession of His truth, and no seeking of His blessing? Is it not clear that it was the mind of Christ that these two should go together? In the mind of the Apostle, what made the body? One Spirit, must be the answer. What is the Spirit to constitute? One Body, must be the reply. The incompleteness of the position of the saints is plain, when brought to the test of the word. And what says it? By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one Body. What then keeps God’s children apart? The want of a sense in power of this the truth of Him who called them. Nor do God’s children see that they are to act in weakness. Jesus was crucified in weakness: yet He liveth by the power of God. They must expect, nay it is their necessity, to act in weakness: but to act are they called; and what withstands them? Nothing but that which is overcome. “I have overcome the world,” saith the crucified. He says it still. If it be ignorance of the hope of their calling, (and the hope of their calling is One, and alike to all), may God enlighten the eyes of their understanding, that they may see what it is! What rears itself to oppose them in their outward circumstances, that they should not recognize these things? Is it the circumstances of the body

in which they are reckoned? What Body? Held together by whom or by what? By communion in the Spirit? That cannot be: for if all the bodies were in one Spirit, they would not be separate bodies. It is something then that is now opposed to the one Spirit, that constitutes their character as bodies. These bodies are held together by their respective differences. Hardly even by that now, but by a power acting upon them, and not from internal connection or principle. The children are often left to hunger in the Spirit while their chiefs are at ease in their ways.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy exercises a dominion upon a claim of universality; they are satisfied with dominion and the form of communion; and communion, in truth, and every thing, is sacrificed to dominion over the bodies of men. They have had, and may have among them spiritual men; and there may be, even with their adverse doctrine, unknown children among them even now. In the Church of England, as every where, if God's own truth be preached (I mean the primary truth of single salvation), He will own it in individuals, while at the same time the world is mistress of her order. The other bodies, with two or three exceptions, claim another rank; they claim it to be said, that the members of the churches are born of God. I believe God's children are, in many cases, deceived by this claim. The desire of increasing the number of members, and of embracing the power of public society, obscures the work of spiritual insight; and so it will be their case (with its own peculiarities), as with others—worldliness being at the root of the evil: not a worldliness to be charged on the members, nor truly on mere declension (though of this there is enough), but which is the natural result of their constitution. This state puts the claim, or the expectation that the membership is of those who are born of God and followers of Jesus, either *quite* out of the question, or admitting it to be true that they are so, makes the present rule over the House of God, a rule over *children* by an order of things not of the Father; the rule of the Father being a rule raised by God, and which is not of man, for the oversight of individuals who *in grace* are to be brought to answer the ends of the Lord by the Spirit in the Body: — a blessed service! ministers indeed — servants indeed — a privilege indeed — servants of the servants of God in the Heavenly Calling! Not the agents of the work to be done to gather in rivalry against others those they can, and to keep them by the rule that has engaged them. The Gospel, and not the *cause*—the Children, and not the connection — is the object of the single eye. But God's children, on whom His love is resting

amidst the strife of tongues and the overflow of ungodliness, for it is ungodliness where godliness is gain (for so it should be read), mourn alone, and scarce find the life and the power of communion: and if they sometimes seem to do so, do they find, as they should, the blessed constancy of the work of membership, in which the weakest is as necessary as the strong—in which work is as much to be done in the communion and intercourse of saints, as for themselves selfishly, if I may so term it: a spectacle to angels and to men. I say to you who are looking for the God that has dealt with your hearts—who are looking for the Father that has drawn you to Jesus and revealed Him in your hearts, try all these things by His word and His love and His purpose in you, for duty in this scene of service here, as well as for everlasting life. Do you ask, What shall we do? How shall we help ourselves? You can ask this question in your secret studies and private communion with God over the word in your retirement. There is such a thing as the Oneness of the Spirit in the children, wherever they are. They are around you, known to you: it was an end of the blood, to gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad. You have the blood which you know, and its purpose in this respect to encourage you. It is common to you. Seek one another, and, having found one another, “give diligence to keep the Oneness of the Spirit by the bond of peace,” for so I read it. You have the map of the word to track your way. It cannot be said that the children generally have not the same want and the same mind as yourself. Assuredly all have, for they have the same Spirit which, like its embodied form resting on our Lord (as known in common nature), pines when alone. Sheep are gregarious, not solitary beings. They hear the shepherd’s voice and move together. The Lord is among you, and ye know it not. Lord, increase our faith! Is the glory of the bond of perfectness to find no habitation among men? Brought out of the dust and set in hope, be not withheld from seeking the Lord together in your own gift, and the Lord shall bring you into a large place and establish your goings.

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