

“The Unity Of The Spirit”

(Br. T. A. Smith given in his home ecclesia Bellingham, September 20, 1970)

In our study of the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT we shall use the 133rd Psalm, “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; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

This word “unity” is found only once in the Old Testament. It is from the Hebrew word #3162 in Strong’s concordance. It means properly a unit, be or become ONE. So the Psalmist is saying, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together as ONE.” We all know what the word “good” means—it means something desirable and we all know too what the word “pleasant” means—something that is delightful—this is the thought that is given in Strong’s concordance.

This dwelling together as one, is likened to the precious ointment that was poured upon Aaron’s head when he was anointed to be the High Priest. This, as we know, was typical of the Holy Spirit which was received and possessed by our Lord in full measure, and of the same Holy Spirit that is received by the body members. So this unity, this oneness, in being compared to the Holy Spirit, must be something that is very precious and happifying, promoting the highest and best in Christian relationship between the body members of Christ.

The Psalmist magnifies the blessedness of this oneness, by likening it to something else that is refreshing in meaning—to the dew from the lofty mountain of Hermon. Hermon was a mountain having three peaks on the Northeastern border of Palestine, estimated to be 10,000 feet in height. A mountain having such an elevation would be very cool having snow on its peak even during the summertime. So the dew of Mt. Hermon would be refreshingly cool. And this oneness is likened also to the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Summarizing then, we have this dwelling together in unity—this oneness, called “good and pleasant” and it is likened to the Holy Spirit that came upon our Lord, and also likened to refreshing dew, and finally it is linked up with God’s promise of life everlasting. From all this we conclude that dwelling together in unity is something vitally important to attain and to hold to the very end of our Christian journey.

We find an interesting comment upon Psa. 133:1 on Reprint page 3246, col. 2, par. 2, “The Golden Text is an excellent one, and applied to this lesson we see it illustrated in David’s course. Although he was a man of war, courageous and aggressive toward the

enemies of the Lord and of Israel, David was most emphatically a man of peace toward his brethren of all the tribes—careful to treat them as brethren, and to do all in his power to maintain unity and brotherly love and friendship.”

We now turn to the New Testament to see what we can find out about unity. Surprisingly, the word “unity” is found only two times in the New Testament, and both instances are in the 4th chapter of Ephesians. V. 3 reads “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” V. 13 contains the other use of the word “unity”—“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

In Strong’s concordance this Greek word is #1775, and is translated unity only these two times. It means oneness. As to “oneness of faith” this can mean only one thing—unanimity of thought as concerning our faith. As to oneness of spirit, there can be only one meaning, viz., to be in accord as far as disposition is concerned—it means to have one spirit.

Let us carefully study this 3rd verse—“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” Phillips translation reads, “Make it your aim to be at one in the spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another.” This is just plain logic, isn’t it; that if our aim—the aim of all of us—is to be at one in spirit, peace will naturally follow. It becomes vitally important then to understand what this oneness of spirit is supposed to be. On Reprint page 1278, par. 4, there is an interesting thought given which gives us a clue to the whole idea. There it was explained that to have one spirit means to have “one sentiment or disposition.” What disposition or sentiment would that be? There is only one answer—the disposition that is in complete harmony with the Holy Spirit, that is in complete harmony with the will and plan of God. This would be the spirit of Christ, the spirit that he had.

Actually this covers quite a field of thought, for there are so many things involved to be in complete harmony with the will and plan of God. To begin with, there is our relationship to God brought about by his blessings extended to us and our acceptance of these blessings. This would bring about deep gratitude to God for His ‘mercies and gifts to us—gratitude, then, would be an important part of this one disposition, this one spirit that we all should have.

Next, is our relationship to our Beloved Redeemer, and here too, we think deep gratitude would be a part of the one spirit, the one disposition that we are supposed to have. As the truth of the Scriptures, and the truth contained in the Harvest Message played such an important part in God’s dealings with us, revealing His lovingkindness and will for us, and the lovingkindness and will of our Redeemer for us, we can see that gratitude for the Truth comes a close second to our love for God and for Christ.

That reminds us of a very striking reference found in Vol. VI, page 264, brought to our attention by a Sister back East. Here is how it reads, “Next to the Lord, the Truth is the most precious thing in all the world; it is not to be trifled with, not to be played with; and whoever is negligent along this line will himself sustain injury.” So here is another important facet of the one spirit—deep love for the Truth, not only the Truth contained in the Bible, but also the Harvest Message which made the truth of the Bible understandable to us.

In addition to our relationship to God and to Christ, and our relationship to the Scriptures and the Harvest Message, we have other relationships—we are involved with other matters. We all know there is a lot being said today about becoming involved with other people. People are being reminded today that they are unwilling to become involved with other people, for fear of responsibility that might come to them in so doing. As an extreme example along this line, we remember an incident reported in the press recently. A young woman was being terribly treated by a man, and she cried out urgently for help, but no one would come to her assistance, and quite a number of people were aware of the plight of this young woman. And another extreme was reported in the press having to do with certain individuals injured in an automobile accident. Passing motorists would take a quick look but hurry on their way, not stopping to offer assistance

Well, we as Christians are involved in a big way with everyone on earth—we have our families, our neighbors, our brethren in Christ, yes, even our enemies. We are taught that we must feel involved—we must not go through life unconcerned with those around us. No, we are taught to be interested in doing good in every way we can to all we can—this too, is a vital facet of the oneness of spirit, oneness of disposition that we are to have. We are all obligated as Christians to be concerned as to the way we think about and act to others around us. We are not to meddle in the personal affairs of others, or to be busybodies, but definitely we are to be involved in an unselfish interest in doing good to others. As an all-embracing command or exhortation, we find the apostle Paul expressing the idea in these words, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” This is found in Gal. 6:10.

On Reprint page 768 is an article entitled CHRISTIAN UNION, and the text was Eph. 4:1-16. In brackets after the words “one spirit” was this explanation—one “aim,” one “mind.” So if there is to be a mutual possession of “one spirit” the meaning is that we are to have “one aim, one mind.” It is important then, for us to determine what the “one mind” is, what the “one aim” is supposed to be. That is what this discourse is all about—to refresh our memories as to what our one aim and our one mind is supposed to be, what it is supposed to cover.

In 1 Pet. 3:8, 9 we read, “Finally, be all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” To “be all of one mind” means to have harmony of mind—to be in accord on certain things. The word “finally” should be noted as this means that we are to develop this state of mind, this disposition, until “finally” we reach this pinnacle of development. We are to carefully study the Lord’s will for ourselves as Christians, so that we will intelligently understand what is the Christian mind that we may attain it and maintain it.

We might ask—does harmony of mind mean that we are all to be exactly alike as far as personality traits are concerned? The answer is NO—all of the Lord’s people have individual characteristics and there is nothing wrong with this, in fact this is desirable. This is illustrated in nature. For instance we have the seven colors of the rainbow and there are the various notes in the musical scale. The rainbow colors are beautiful and pleasing to our eyes, and the music notes are pleasing to our ears. The Christian is being transformed into the divine likeness, but he is not to lose the various elements that make up his natural temperament and disposition—but he is supposed to lose those elements of dross that would be out of harmony with the divine disposition. This is not attained instantly when one starts out in the Christian way, but is a process of development, and we want to attain that “finally” state as quickly as possible and then stand, enduring the tests that are applied. My guess is that even that “finally” condition becomes more refined and balanced as time goes on.

The apostle says, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” It takes only a short time to agree, to be willing to be transformed—but it does require patient endurance and perseverance in well-doing to comply with the instructions. How important it is then to clearly grasp what the Lord’s instructions are, and not go through life in a maze, not clearly perceiving what the mind of the Lord is.

Because of our natural temperaments, we are not in exact accord with the Lord’s will for us when we start out in the school of Christ. One quality which is important and a necessary element of Christian overcoming is combativeness. Combativeness is the quality which resists and fights, and we do have to resist and fight certain things after we become Christians. But, we have to learn just what to resist and fight and how to go about this; otherwise we can cause a lot of trouble and make a very bad impression. We are not to squelch this quality, but learn how to use it in Christian channels. For instance, one who comes into the truth knows that it is extremely important that he be loyal to the truth and courageous in its defense. But the question is how should this loyalty to the truth and defense of the truth be shown or manifested? Should we act and speak with sharp words of criticism of others when we are defending the Truth? No, we should speak the truth in love; and speak it we must. This is what Paul says in Eph. 4:15 This speaking the truth in love is part of the “one mind” that we are to have.

Now let us consider another facet of the oneness of mind that we are to have—this “one spirit.” Paul writes in Heb. 10:24, 25 “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much, the more as ye see the day drawing on.” How vital it is for all the Lord’s people to have one mind, one spirit on this important characteristic! We are to be transformed from any old ways we might have to irritate one another, to nettle one another, to say catty things. We are to have the new mind which will provoke, incite or encourage one another to goodness of thought, word and act in harmony with heavenly wisdom. Our influence as Christians is to promote goodness in others whether they be follow-Christians, or people of the world—we are never to relax this attitude.

The way of fallen man is to provoke to evil. Even a little word may kindle a fierce blaze of unkind thoughts and evil suspicions leading on to envy, malice, hatred and strife. And we as Christians must come to see clearly that it is possible to say an evil thing in a gentle manner. Some may possess the ability to implant an evil thought in a smooth and polished manner. We are to put everything like this away and adopt the new mind as our own which will provoke to love and to good works.

In provoking to love and to good works we must try to be considerate of one another’s personality traits that the most good can be done. If we use care, we can avoid any word or manner that might be offensive to a fellow-Christian or to one of the world. The Golden Rule is very helpful in suggesting a course of action or the right word to speak. This “provoking unto love and good works” is linked up by the Apostle with assembling ourselves together. It is a vital part of Christian training to assemble with the Lord’s people, for we can learn a lot of things when we assemble with one another. By assembling we have opportunities to do things for one another and also we benefit from the members of the body who assemble. This companionship brings coals of fire together and we stimulate one another by example and exhortation and our prayers have a sanctifying influence upon the whole assembly. We have special need to assemble ourselves together at this time, because the great Millennial day has already begun, chronologically, and has brought with it new activities in mind and body. There is a greater pressure today of business and rush to keep abreast of the times, and the Lord’s people are in great danger of being choked with the cares of this life, or with the deceitfulness of riches, or the seeking of riches. To counteract all these influences, we need the counteracting influence of assembling together.

In 1 Tim. 3:14, 15 we find these words, “I write unto thee...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Here is another facet of “the one spirit” that we are to have—as to “how we oughtest to behave ourselves in the house of God.” “The

house of God,” as we all know, does not refer to a church building, but to the members of the church class—we are all members of the Body of Christ, the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit of God amongst men.

As to how we behave ourselves in the house of God, is a very broad subject, and really covers the whole will of the Lord for his people. There is one particular point though, that we want to touch upon—this has to do with personal liberty in the selection of meetings. I think we all remember that “where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” We are all to have “one spirit” in granting liberty to one another—the particular liberty of choice we have in mind at the moment, has to do with the selection of meetings. In Matt. 18:20, Jesus is quoted as saying that “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” That promise is as true today as it ever was, and places no restriction upon any of the Lord’s people.

Apropos to this I would like to quote an interesting paragraph on Reprint page 4010, col. 2, par. 1, “If, therefore, any of the Lord’s flock feel that their best spiritual interests are not served by the arrangements already made by the Church, they are fully at liberty to start a meeting that will be more helpful to them—any kind of a meeting not in conflict with the provisions of the Scriptures. In case of such a necessity seeming to present itself to any, our advice would be that they seek to appoint such meetings at a time and place that would not be in conflict with the appointments of the general congregation. If then it be desirable, as we hold that it generally is, that the Church should take a general supervision of such matters, it should recognize its responsibility and appoint a sufficiency of meetings and of the desired kinds, and under such leadership as will meet the necessities of the dear people—that all may be fed, that all may be strengthened, that all may progress, and that all may be maintained in unity of heart and in love and fellowship and cooperation.”

This is a phase of that “one spirit” that is very important to follow to the very letter. Much distress has been caused in the church by a tendency on the part of some to curb the liberties of the Lord’s people in having meetings that are best suited to the needs of the friends, as to what is to be studied, when and where. If we do not have this “one spirit” then we are coming short to that extent at least.

In 1 Cor. 1:10, 11 the Apostle Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren... that there are contentions among you.” Apparently in the Apostle’s day too there were contentions among the brethren. To counteract this, Paul is exhorting that “they speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among them.” They were supposed to be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” There can be a number of reasons

why there are contentions and divisions and if we are to avoid these it is important to know how we are to be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” What are we to have the same mind on? What should be the basis of our “same judgment?”

Back in Aug., 1909, there was an article written using these same words of Paul. The article was entitled “MIND THE SAME THINGS,” and may be found on Reprint page 4446. It is interesting and instructive to carefully analyze this article to see what the contention was all about and to see what “same mind” was advised to counteract the particular contention at that particular time. Apparently there were a few leaders of classes at that time who boasted of their independent thinking and who did not agree with the Studies in the Scriptures and articles written by our Pastor—they disagreed with certain features of Present Truth. Such leaders seemed to give the impression that the brethren should esteem them most highly because they were independent thinkers. The natural result of this so-called independent thinking was to divide the brethren into parties—one group followed one independent thinker, and another group followed another independent thinker.

In the 12th and 13th verses of this same chapter, Paul writes, “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you; or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” Paul was pointing out that the Gospel message was all the same whether spoken by Paul or any other one chosen of the Lord—there was to be no division into parties, led by independent thinkers—the sectarian spirit is foreign to the Truth of the gospel of Christ.

In the 1909 article the remedy suggested was for the brethren to have the same mind—that all should recognize the fact that we are living in a special time of enlightenment from the Lord, and what we have in our possession is a harmonization of the entire word of God. Present Truth, as it was called at that time, and as we still call it, was recognized by those who appreciated it, as indeed the Divine Plan of the Ages, a stupendous miracle in fact, considering the multitude of conflicting creeds existing at that time. It was pointed out at that time that the “independent thinker” was, by his very independence, leading into darkness rather than into light. Such independent thinkers were attempting to convince the Lord’s people that they were able to “strike a spiritual match which would give greater light and throw the Divine Plan of the Ages into the shadowy background.” Apparently such independent thinkers did not have their longings satisfied by the Truth but were looking for something new. With such an attitude as this, it is manifest that there was not this “one spirit” on the part of the independent thinkers.

Those who have “one spirit” in appreciating Present Truth, are “so overawed with the wonderful grace of God in the light of Divine grace of God in the light of Divine Truth, which had percolated through the blindness of his previous superstitions and given him

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, that he would be bowed down in humility and gratitude.” He would fear to lift his eyes even for a moment from the beatific vision lest a single feature should be missed. Nor could he rationally expect to find a grander one, if he has really seen and really tested the riches of God’s grace and truth, as now made manifest to the saints. The only explanation that at all fits or explains present conditions, and the present bright-shining of the divine word, is that given us by the Master himself. He assured us that at his second advent he would make himself known to those who would be at that time his true, loyal servants. He assured us that he would gird himself, become their servant, and cause them to sit down to meat, and bring forth to them from the treasures of divine truth things new and old. (Luke 12:37) This is the only explanation of the wonderful light on the divine plan now shining; the only explanation of the bounties that crowd the table of the Lord’s faithful ones. Meat to eat indeed have they of which the world knoweth not.

The Lord is proving us to see to what extent we recognize him as the giver of all good; to what extent our hearts are feeding upon the Truth; to what extent they are being nourished spiritually; and to what extent in others there is merely a feverish excitement and dissatisfaction, and looking for something new. We may be sure that to those who are in this dissatisfied condition, Satan will present himself as a messenger of light, offering them other food and other light—“newer and better.” We may be equally sure that God will be pleased to permit Satan to bring such delusions upon his people to prove them, to test them. Only those who take heed to the Lord’s Word and cultivate its spirit, and recognize the Master, and his providential leadings and care, and the feeding of the flock, will be ready to mind the same things, and be able to bring forth much fruit, and to gain the kingdom.

Back in 1909 it was noted by the Pastor that some who were opposing the Vow were manifesting “a peculiar bitterness of spirit and word,” and he urgently cautioned the brethren who were not opposing the vow to “preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” In other words the Pastor was urging the brethren who did have the right spirit to refrain from returning evil words with evil words, because the Adversary is always alert in every possible situation to “stir up evil surmising, evil speaking, insinuations, malice, envy, hatred, strife, lovelessness.” We are in possession of the greatest outpouring of Truth since the days of the Apostles, but it is imperative that we go beyond the mere word of the Truth in our possession and develop the fruits and graces of the spirit. Thus we can preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” The Vow is merely a fresh reminder each day of our resolution to guard if possible, every thought that we might make progress in self-control and in the development of the fruits and graces of the spirit.

For a few moments, let us consider again the sentiment of Psalm 133:1, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” In some earthly families there is a considerable degree of unity—all the members seem to be pulling

together, so to speak. In other earthly families however, there is the opposite spirit—there is strife, a pulling and hauling in opposite directions. When we see husband and wife, brothers and sisters seeking to be assistful to one another, we naturally feel there is a great deal of love in such a family. This is good for the Bible teaches us that we have a special duty toward those who are near to us. Paul says in 1 Tim. 5:8 that he that careth not for his own is worse than an unbeliever. Man was originally created in the image of God, and love divine was the standard for family conduct. But so much of this divine love has been effaced by selfishness because of the reign of sin for so many centuries—to the extent people are fallen, they are selfish. However, there are some who are kind and generous to the members of their own family and who seek to cooperate in helping one another; and this is a right principle if this does not work injury to outsiders. Brothers and sisters should sympathize with one another and have the spirit of helpfulness, and in so doing there is a delightful family relationship. But there are some families where there is no personal interest in one another, no brotherly sympathy. Members of such families seem to be interested in doing things for outsiders but not for members of the family. Such find it easy and take delight in pointing out blemishes in their own family, and this is indeed unjust. In such families unity is impossible.

We, as the Lord's people belong to a new family that has been established by God. Earthly ties are not the basis of love in the divine family we belong to. Our ties are based upon the Spirit of God—all the members of the divine family have been begotten by the Spirit of God. Our ties are linked up with the “unity of Spirit” that we have been talking about. We find a type of this divine family in the days of Gideon—Joash was Gideon's father and all the sons of Joash were different from all the others in their general appearance. It is written that these sons resembled the children of kings. In Judges 8:18 we read that the brethren of Gideon “resembled the children of a king.” We are children of our Divine Father who is King of the universe. If we truly have His spirit, our words and deeds should be marked accordingly, and this would “show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Pet. 2:9)

There is nothing of selfishness in the Lord's spirit. What then causes the spirit of strife and discord on the part of some of the Lord's people? Evidently the principle of selfishness is the cause of disagreements, and this being the case, it is evident that some of the growths of selfishness have not yet been entirely rooted out of the disposition. One may manifest his selfishness by setting himself up in seeking to take away the rights and liberties of others. Another, with a similar spirit of selfishness, will manifest his disposition of selfishness by being clannish—“I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” and this clannishness leads to forcing others to fit into this clannish mold. Paul exhorts us all to be united only in Christ.

What must be done to attain a greater degree of unity of the spirit? The remedy is that all must seek to have the Lord's will done in their mortal bodies. To this end, ignorance

must be overcome so that the Lord's will may be clearly understood. Also we must endeavor to overcome our weaknesses—this is the best climate for the growth and health of unity amongst the Lord's people. When difficulty arises over ignorance, those who have a good measure of the Holy Spirit should endeavor to kindly point out the will of the Father as expressed in the teachings and character of Christ. If there is a difficulty over some weakness of the flesh, those who have a good measure of the Lord's spirit should be sympathetic and try to point out to the brother where he comes short. The erring brother, in turn, should apologize for his mistake and thus the spirit of unity is maintained.

It is not possible to dwell together in unity with everyone. For instance it is not possible for God and Satan to dwell together in unity because the spirit of the two are directly opposite. Likewise the Lord's people are not supposed to be able to dwell in unity with anyone who has the spirit of Satan. There would be polishing, it is freely admitted, but there could be no true unity, for what fellowship has light with darkness?

On one occasion Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, "I hear there are divisions among you." Such was permitted of God that whatever was wrong might come to the surface, that the inharmony of the situation might be realized, and that the one in the wrong might be led to go out, because he was in reality an intruder. Let us notice the words of Paul from 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." The erring one, in leaving, would say by his actions that he did not belong to a Christian ecclesia; or if he would not leave of his own accord, he should be advised to do so.

If there are any who are not true brethren, but who are children of darkness, associating themselves with the children of light, such should be dealt with strictly according to the rules set down in Matt. 18:15-17. Let us note the words of Matt. 18:15-17, as they are very important rules to follow in case of serious difficulty, "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

However there are difficulties that arise occasionally that do not require such stern measures. We would like to give an illustration from the Reprint article on page 5981 entitled "THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION." On page 5982, first column, we find these words, "Repeatedly Bible students write us that their elders try to hinder them from the use of our publications as textbooks in Bible study. Some of these elders go so far as to tell the classes that they are out of harmony with many of the things in these text books..."

We are asked what should be done under such circumstances. We reply, Let those who wish to follow such leaders do so—that is their right. We shall wish them well. But let us not follow with them nor submit for a moment to such arrangements... Let us make a discrimination between the positive teachings of the Bible—the doctrines of Christ—and the slightly variant ways of expressing those doctrines. We are not to expect any two persons to use exactly the same words; but there are certain doctrines which are fast and immovable from the viewpoint of the majority of Bible students. Anyone not in good harmony with those pretensions should not be encouraged in the slightest degree but, on the contrary, should be discouraged. If he has different views, do not persecute him—do not follow the style of the dark ages, but follow the proper course of letting him ‘flock to himself,’ or with as many as prefer to view matters as he views them. We have not given such strong advice heretofore; but we perceive that many of the dear sheep are being troubled; hindered of development, and imposed upon.”

A well-working machine is a good illustration of Christians dwelling together in unity—the parts of a machine are working smoothly and orderly because they are well put together. We are well put together if we are under the supervision of the Great Engineer; or in plain language if we come into harmony with the spirit of God, we will work together in accordance with the Holy Spirit. In our working together we want to be sure of our own intentions and judge ourselves objectively and righteously.

So we can see that this “oneness of spirit” means simply that we are to have the one Holy Spirit operating in our lives—the various qualities of the Holy Spirit are to be the guide lines for our thinking, or words and our conduct. This oneness of the Holy Spirit is to operate in all the affairs of Christian living—in the home, in the church, and in our dealings with the world.

Christian brethren dwelling together in unity of spirit is a beautiful thing to behold. This being the case it is of deep concern to us to note any of those situations which interfere with our dwelling together in unity. It has been suggested that amongst those who are spirit-begotten there is more opportunity for friction. This might sound strange, but a little reflection will show the truth of such a statement. We are enlightened by the Truth, consequently there is a greater activity of the mind. The Christian is encouraged to use his mind in religious matters. However there are some matters that are not directly taught in the Word of God, and it is possible to philosophize on such matters, and this is perfectly permissible. But, in the presenting of our own philosophizing and in the consideration of the philosophizing of others, we all need to see to it that we do not assume a dogmatic position or attitude, for if we do we cannot dwell together in unity. If we are to dwell together in unity of spirit, we are to remember that if we have a thought and present it to the brethren, and it does not seem logical to them, we are not to force it upon them, nor are they to force their views upon us. The proper spirit is to give each one the right to his own opinion on those matters not directly taught in the word.

The truth, as we know, attracts strong characters; and while such strong characters find it difficult at times to dwell together in unity, yet strong characters are pleasing to the Lord. Amongst mankind, there are some characters who are like putty, and still others in whom you can make a momentary dent, as a rubber ball, and there are some who are like diamonds, which have a firmness of texture, firmness of character.

When we learn more and more about human nature, we come to realize that there is a real danger of stumbling one another, wounding one another, and this knowledge should give us wisdom and we should use care in the attitude we show when philosophizing. And even when we are discussing that which is definitely truth, we must use care when we talk to one another. We are to study one another and try to appreciate the worth of one another, so that we will be careful not to hurt one another. Having this “one spirit of unity” we are a blessing to one another by our example of using restraint of our natural tendencies to be firm and extremely positive.

John tells us in 1 John 3:14 that “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Our Pastor suggested that there may be an intimation by John that some of the brethren would be hard to love, and that, unless we have passed from death unto life, we would be unable to love them. As we said before, the truth attracts strong characters—who have “in their flesh more grittiness and combativeness than have some, who are too pliable and ‘wishy-washy’ to be acceptable to the Lord.” Thus it is evident that the very quality which makes us acceptable to the Lord, and which is a qualification of the overcoming position, is a serious disadvantage in some respects, when a number of these get together as a church. It has been said that “Even a diamond surrounded by mud would cut nothing, would scratch nothing; but place a number of diamonds together, and the more you get rid of the mud element, the more gritting, scouring and cutting there is likely to be.” So with the Lord’s jewels—the more they come together, the more they get awakened, the more opportunities there will be for friction, and the greater necessity there will be that all be thoroughly embedded and covered with the Holy Spirit, which, like oil, is smooth and unctuous and tends to prevent friction.”

There is another avenue of difficulty that I think merits our careful attention. We have in mind our “lifting up the voice together.” In Isa. 52:7, 8 we read, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”

What does it mean to “lift up the voice together?” Does “together” necessarily mean that we all use exactly the same literature from some organization? Does “unity of spirit”

necessarily mean that we literally walk together “arm in arm?” I think not! The voice that the Lord’s people lift up together is the voice of truth. For instance, supposing someone living in Brazil was handed a copy of Vol. I that was printed in our Pastor’s day. And supposing that person would carefully read the Volume and understood its meaning and felt blessed. Supposing further that another Bible Student would contact this same person and hand him a copy of Volume I, printed recently in magazine form. If this person in Brazil looked this Volume over carefully, would he not say, “Oh, I have read this book already and think it is wonderful.” Do we think this person would make a difference between these two brethren, because one handed him a copy of Volume I printed in Bro. Russell’s day, and the other brother who handed him a copy of Volume I in magazine form, printed in our day? Of course not! He would know that both of these brethren were “lifting up the voice [of truth] together.” If we are to have “unity of spirit we must recognize that it is the TRUTH that is the voice, and we must not insist that this Truth must come from a particular service organization. “Unity of spirit” means that we have the same spirit, the same disposition, and in the case of giving out the truth, this means that we all rejoice to give out the same glorious Harvest Message. If we are clannish and say, “I am from such-and-such an organization” and will not recognize others who are giving out the truth, then we are carnal and coming short in having the one spirit.”

If any of you have the desire to go back and review this subject for yourselves, I suggest the following Reprint articles: Christian Union (page 768), Unity Vs. Christian Union (page 1504), Imitation of Christ (page 1594), “Finally Be All of One Mind” (page 2877), Admonitions For the Consecrated (page 4008), Provoking One Another (page 4076), “Preserve the Unity of the Spirit” (page 4338), “With Jesus and Learned of Him” (page 4460), “Mind the Same Things” (4446), Love of the Brethren a Crucial Test (4994), Dwelling Together in Unity (page 5229).

Closing Hymn #183 - “Watchfulness”