

## A "CHURCH TRUST" UNDESIRABLE.

But while divisions in the Church of Christ are very wrong, and very contrary to the will and word of our Lord, they are better far than a *union* of bondage under Papacy's system, faith, etc. Instead therefore of attempting to get all the sects to combine in a sort of "Church Trust" an image or likeness of the Papal system of oneness (though on a higher plane), to regulate and restrict further investigation and further growth, we need to do the very opposite, – to abolish all sects and all elaborate creeds and confessions of faith. Instead of being further bound (by such a Church Trust Union – or wheel within a wheel, double imprisonment), all bondage should be set aside, except the simple tests first imposed in the one faith once delivered to the saints; and all party sectarian names should be repudiated, and the name of Christ should be the only name borne by his Church.

Such a breaking down of sectarian fences would leave the true children of God willing to accept the original and simple test – "all one in Christ Jesus;" and this is what is needed. It would destroy sectarian pride, which so often counterfeits true Christian zeal and love, but it would tend to develop the truth, and thereby to develop the real zeal for the truth which our Lord desires in his followers. The term Church of Christ would no longer mean to any "our denomination," but the one true and only church, when they would sing: –

"I love thy church O God  
Her walls before thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of thine eye  
And graven on thy hands."

Under such conditions, recognizing the true and only test, as above quoted from Paul, those who formerly championed opposite sides of the various questions of doctrine would join heads and hearts in carefully weighing the various statements of the Scriptures; and truly

seeking the divine plan they would ere long, as promised, be guided into all truth.

They would join hands and hearts as *Christians*, and while their heads, on certain points might not at once agree, it would only be a question of a short time; for the unbiased study of God's plan with no sectarian theory and organization to uphold, would bring the heads of all into union and general harmony, even though as at first the growth of faith in roots and branches might vary. All would believe the "*same things*" even if some could see and believe more elaborately than others.

This freedom, and yet harmony and union, which is the result of a full acceptance of God's will and word, will not be attained except by the few, the "overcomers" in the present age. Others the Scriptures show, will continue in sectarian bondage and even increase their bondage-union by a Church Trust or "confederacy" (See Isa. 8:12), until all this is corrected in the close of this time of trouble by the fall of sectarian monarchies as well as of present political governments. – Dan. 12:1; Rev. 18:2-5.

In the next age, during the *world's* trial, such great deceiving systems will not be permitted; but now they are permitted in order to the testing and manifesting of the "overcomers."

Let the dear saints who now walk the narrow way, and whose names are "written in heaven" as probationary members of the one true church of Christ, patiently persevere in worshiping God after the manner which others term heresy – closely studying and believing all that is written in the inspired Word, however it may conflict with human creeds, and the opinions of so-called great theologians. Be simple enough to take God at his word, however church monopolies or trusts may seek, either willingly or unintentionally, to wrest it to their own advantage.

Flee all so-called unions which are merely bondages. What is needed is less of *such* unions, not more. Each individual needs to feel and exercise the same liberty on doctrine that each sect now claims. In this sense and view the bondage-union of the church under Papacy was the worst and most complete enslavement of the individual Christian; and the full breaking up of all sectarianism, so that no two persons will be *bound* to hold one faith (except on first-principles), is the most desirable condition. The breaking of Papacy into a hundred sects, each free from the other, was a good work; tending to the realization of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Though at first regarded as a calamity, it soon came to be known as the Reformation. And now the breaking up of these numerous sects, so that *each individual will be free*, is essential to a fuller growth in grace, knowledge and love than is at present possible. This breaking up of sectarianism, now regarded as a calamity, will by and by be truly recognized as the greatest of all religious reformations. The signs of the times indicate that such a reformation is impending, and the Scriptures declare it. A little more light, a little more knowledge, and these sectarian shackles upon the individual conscience will fall. Then whatever union shall exist will be upon right principles, – a union of hearts and principles and not merely on creeds and confessions. Recognizing each other's personal liberties, each disciple of Christ will be bound to the other by his love of the Lord and of his word alone; and others will be separated.

Sectarianism has woefully distorted that beautiful figure of Christian union given by our Lord, recorded in John 15:1-6. To fit it to sectarianism, and to make their error in this appear to be supported by God's Word, it is claimed that the "Vine" is the whole church and the various denominations of "Christendom" are the *branches*. But that the Lord's words will bear no such construction must be evident to any one who will give the passage candid consideration. The branches are the *individuals*, and any branch is defined to be "any man" by our Lord's own words. Let this, our Lord's illustration of the true proper union of all the branches in *one vine*, connected and nourished by the

same sap, from the same roots, teach us of true union and personal freedom in the body of Christ.

\* \* \*

Suppose that the salaries and "livings" of all ministers, bishops, priests, etc., were cut off, all churches, chapels and cathedrals destroyed, all theological seminaries broken up, and their professors turned to other pursuits, all religious guilds and societies broken up, including all sectarian organizations – what would the effect be?

Who can doubt that it would be a real blessing under the disguise of a great and terrible catastrophe? The effect would be to bring *true* Christians together as the family of God, and not as sectarian bands, to study God's Word and not human traditions and creeds formulated in the darker ages. Very soon, unhindered, God's word would be heard by all truly his; and one Lord, one faith, and one baptism would soon be the result, while the worldly mass would speedily drift apart and the true distinction between the church and the world would be discernible. The Scriptures seem to indicate that very much of this sort of destruction of present systems must take place before all the "wheat," the true church, will be separated from the "tares" – the mere professors. Party spirit and love of sect is so strong that, apparently, nothing short of a complete wreck of them all will suffice to set free all of God's children now bound and blindfolded in and by them.

This catastrophe, – sectarian destruction, the fall of Babylon, is what is referred to in the Book of Revelation under the symbol of the seven last plagues. **[R1074 : page 5]** (Rev. 15-18.) The pain from these will consist largely of mental chagrin, from the disappointment of sectarian hopes and plans, and the wounding of sectarian pride. When the Master said, "Watch ye that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things coming upon the world," it included the pain of these plagues, as well as other annoyances which the world will be subject to, because of ignorance of the real *plan* of God. It is of escape from

these plagues that the Revelator (our Lord – Rev. 1:1) speaks to us, saying, "Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues." – Rev. 18:4.

