

Diversity and Unity.

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It is at once interesting and instructive to mark the varied lines of truth presented in the New Testament, all finding their common centre in that blessed One who is the truth. We see this, both in the Gospels and in the Epistles. Each of the four Evangelists, under the direct guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, gives us a distinct view of Christ. Matthew presents Him in His Jewish relations — as the Messiah, the Son of David, Son of Abraham — heir of the promises made to the fathers. Mark presents Him as the earnest workman, the diligent servant, the laborious minister, the incessant preacher and teacher. Luke gives us "The Man Christ Jesus," in His human relations, Son of man, Son of Adam. John is occupied with the Son of God, Son of the Father, the heavenly Man, in His heavenly relationships.

Thus each one has his own specific line. No two are alike, but all agree. There is lovely variety, but the most perfect harmony; there is diversity and unity. Matthew does not interfere with Mark; nor Mark with Luke; nor Luke with John. There is no collision, because each moves in his own proper orbit, and all revolve round the one grand centre.

Nor could we do without any one of the four. There would be a serious blank if one were missing; and it is the Holy Spirit's purpose and joy to set forth every ray of the moral glory of the Son of God. Each Gospel fulfils his own service, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost.

So also is it in the Epistles. Paul's line of things is as distinct from Peter's, as Peter's is from John's, or John's from James'. No two are alike, but all agree. There is no collision, because, like the four Evangelists, each moves in his own appointed orbit, and all revolve round the one common centre. The orbit is distinct, but the centre is one. Paul gives us the great truth of man's relation with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, together with the counsels of God as to Israel and the Church. Peter gives us the Christian pilgrimage and God's government of the world. James insists upon practical righteousness. John opens up the grand theme of eternal life; first with the Father, then manifested in the Son, communicated unto us, and finally displayed in the glorious future.

Now, it would be the very height of folly on our part to institute any invidious comparison between those varied lines of truth, or the beloved and honoured instruments by whom those lines are presented to us. How silly it would be to set up Matthew against Mark, Mark against Luke, Luke against John, or John against all the rest! How puerile it would be for any one to say, "I go in for Paul's line of things, only. James seems below the mark. Peter and John I do not appreciate. Paul is the man for me. His ministry suits me."

All this we should, at once, denounce as sinful folly, not to be tolerated for a moment. The varied lines of truth all converge upon one glorious and blessed centre. The varied instruments are all employed by one and the self-same inspiring Spirit, for the one grand object of presenting the varied moral glories of Christ. We want them all. We could no more afford to do without Matthew or Mark than we could do without Luke or John; and it is no part of our business to undervalue Peter or James, because they do not give such a lofty or comprehensive range of truth as Paul or John. Each is needful in his place. Each has his work to do, his appointed line of things to attend to, and we should be doing serious damage to our own souls, as well as marring the integrity of divine revelation, if we were to confine ourselves to any one particular line of truth, or attach ourselves exclusively to any one particular instrument or vessel.

The early Corinthians fell into this grave error, and thus called forth a sharp rebuke from the blessed Apostle Paul. Some were of Paul; some of Apollos, some of Cephas; some of Christ. All were wrong; and those who said they were of Christ were quite as wrong as any of the others. They were carnal, and walked as men. It was a grievous folly to be puffed up for one against another, inasmuch as they were

all Christ's servants, and all belonged to the whole Church.

Nor is it otherwise now in the Church of God. There are varied kinds of workmen, and varied lines of truth; and it is our happy privilege, not to say our holy duty, to recognize and rejoice in them all. To be puffed up for one against another, is to be "carnal and walk as men." To depreciate any of Christ's servants is to depreciate the truth which he carries, and to forsake our own mercies. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

This is the true and the divine way to look at the matter; and this, too, is the way to avoid sects, parties, cliques and coteries in the Church of God. There is one body, one Head, one Spirit, one divine and perfect revelation — the Holy Scriptures. There are many members, many gifts, many lines of truth, many distinct characters of ministry. We need them all, and therefore God has given them all.

But, most surely, God has not given the various gifts and ministries for us to set one against another, but that we may humbly and thankfully avail ourselves of all, and profit by them according to His gracious purpose in giving them. If all were Pauls, where were the Peters? If all were Peters, where were the Johns?

Nor this only; but what must be the effect of going in for any one particular line of truth, or character of ministry? What but to produce an imperfect Christian character? We are all sadly prone to one-sidedness, and nothing more ministers to this evil than an inordinate attachment to some one particular branch of truth, to the exclusion of other branches equally important. It is by "*the truth*" we are sanctified — by all, not by *some* truth.

We should delight in every department of truth, and give a cordial welcome to each vessel or instrument which our God may be pleased to use in ministering His truth to our souls. To be puffed up for one against another is to be more occupied with the vessel than with the truth which the vessel contains, more occupied with man than with God — a grievous mistake! "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as *the Lord gave to every man.*"

Here lies the grand principle. God has various instruments for His work, and we should value them all as *His* instruments, and nothing more. It has ever been Satan's object to lead the Lord's people to set up heads of schools, leaders of parties, centres of cliques, thus splitting up the Church of God into sects, and destroying its visible unity. Let us not be ignorant of his devices; but in every possible way "*endeavour* to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace."

How is this great object to be attained? By keeping near the Centre — by abiding in Christ — by habitual occupation with Himself — by drinking deeply into His spirit, and walking in His footsteps — by lying at His feet, in true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind — by thorough consecration to His service, the furtherance of His cause, the promotion of His glory, the prosperity and blessing of every beloved member of His body.

Thus shall we be delivered from strife and contention, from the discussion of profitless questions and baseless theories, from partiality, prejudice, and predilection. We shall be able to see and appreciate all the varied lines of truth converging upon the one divine Centre, the varied rays of light emanating from the one eternal Source. We shall rejoice in the great fact that, in all the ways and works of God, in every department of nature and grace, in things on earth and things in Heaven, in time and eternity, it is not a dull uniformity but a delightful variety. In a word, God's universal and eternal principle is "DIVERSITY AND UNITY."