

Col.II:2 "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, & unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to be the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, & of the Father & of Christ:

The seventh article of the Augsburg Confession, which is the chief symbol of our church, defines the "one holy Christian Church" to be the congregation of all believers, among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity, & the holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" It further declares that, "this is sufficient for the unity of the Christian Church, that the Gospel is preached therein according to its true intent & meaning, & that the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the Word of God. And, for the true unity of the Christian Church, it is not necessary that uniform ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere observed. As St Paul says: Eph IV 4: "There is one body, & one spirit, even as ye are called in our hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism" The Formula of Discipline of the Evang. Luth. Church reiterates the same sentiment, declaring "the true or invisible "Church of Christ," to be " the collective body of all those of every religious denomination in the world, who are in a state of grace"" & that our "Lord Jesus Christ has not only promised to preserve" this church against all attacks of its enemies, but has vouchsafe his presence in all its vicissitudes to the end of time"

Believing these sentiments to be true & evangelical, I have selected the text as the basis of my remarks on the present occasion, relying on the Great Head of the Church for counsel in the discussions & applications of it, hoping that what may be said may have a tendency to bind us in the "unity of the Spirit & the bonds of peace".

In the apostolic days, a numerous sect had already spring up in the Christian church, whose doctrines tended to corrupt the purity & simplicity of Christianity, & to disturb the peace & harmony of the Church. This sect were partly judaizing, (sic) & partly paganizing Christians, the respected disciples of Simon Magus, who joined with the Christian name the rites & ceremonies of the Jewish worship, & the impurities of the Gentiles: making a kind of mongrel religion, denying the principal doctrines, & repudiating the holy design of Christianity, while at the same time they assumed or retained the name: making high pretensions to a degree of knowledge, superior even to that of the Apostles themselves. To this fact Paul probably had reference in the words immediately succeeding the text, where he says that in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

How similar to this case of Paul with the Colossians is the condition of the Church in the present day. Christianity has always had its enemies, the most subtle of all is that "man of sin" who, hearing the Christian name, endeavors by the most insinuating arts of seduction to overthrow the purity of the Church.

Let us, therefore examine the course which the Apostle recommended to cure the evil in his day, & draw a lesson how we should act in similar circumstances. He addresses the church at Colossae & others who desired to maintain "the faith once delivered to the saints", & expresses his earnest desire & severe conflict in their behalf, "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, & unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, & of the Father & of Christ"

In consequence of the dissemination of false doctrines, the hearts of the faithful were liable to become discouraged, which tended to relax their energies for the promotion of the true faith of the

Gospel. Hence the Apostles assured them that he had a great conflict for them, & desired that their hearts should be comforted, an encouraged, notwithstanding the extent to which those false doctrines had been propagated. The Greek word _____ signifies to be cheered, to be made glad, to be encouraged. Hence, we understand the Apostle as earnestly desiring that they should be encouraged, confirmed, & established in their Christian faith: that, whereas there were such arts & means used to prevent the Christian religion, & draw men away from the simplicity of the Gospel, they might all be entire complete & persevering Christians to the end, that thus they might, at length, thwart the efforts of such designing men.

The means for the accomplishment of this purpose are two-fold-mutual love to each other-& a clean, certain & efficacious faith of the Gospel. He most earnestly desires them to be knit together, or compacted in love, & unto all riches of the full appearance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, even of the Father & of Christ. Mutual love is the tie that binds Christians, one to another, whatever pretensions they may make in regard to religion, if this holy principle be wanting, their professions are unfounded, & contribute only to distract the church, & give the enemies of religion cause to triumph. But if this principle reigns & rules in the heart, its tendency is to cement the whole church into one united brotherhood, & presents an insufferable barrier to the encroachments infidelity in whatever form it may present itself. In order, therefore, to confirm & establish the church at Colossae in their faith in Christianity the Apostle exhorts them to have “their hearts knit together in love, & unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, even of the Father & of Christ.” Not only should they be compacted in love, - they should also endeavor to obtain a clear, certain & efficacious faith of the Gospel. He would have them to understand the full substance of the Christian doctrine, which he styles a “mystery.” He calls its “the mystery of God” – a divine mystery, to distinguish it from mere human fiction: & then he particularizes it as the mystery “of the Father & of Christ.” Not the mystery of God alone, as the Creator & Preserver of the Universe, & the Ruler of the Jewish people, but the mystery of God, even of the Father & the Son, comprehending the entire godhead, including the whole plan of redemption, prefigures & typified under the old covenant dispensation, & accomplished by Christ, the _____ of the new covenant, in which the grace of God , & salvation by grace are now offered to both Jews & Gentiles upon the same terms of faith & obedience. And this mystery he desires them to receive & acknowledge unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding. He desired their faith to be without the least shadow of doubt, -an _____, vital acknowledgement, - a cordial embrace & a lively perception of the same blessed truths.

By these two principles of love, & a clear operative faith – the one knitting their hearts together, & the other binding them to God in Christ – they would never give their enemies opportunity to triumph over the downfall of their true Christian interests. Such being the course pursued by the Apostles, & recommended as a safe-guard to the Church at Colossae, may we not learn a useful lesson in its application to our own times? The prudence & piety of the inspired guides of the primitive church directed them to bring the points, in which they would have Christians to unite, into as small a _____ as possible, neither multiplying articles of the faith nor rites of worship.

These two principles of faith & love, as they answered the design of the Apostles, will fully answer our purpose & design: - & I will venture to affirm that they are both efficacious & necessary. They are the only means to heal & save the Church, & are well adapted to effect a cure in the present distracted state of Christendom. Without them we need never hope that anything can be accomplished.

- (1) The Sincere love of Christians, one to another, is the only happy means of preserving the true Christian faith among us. But, in order that we may fully apprehend the truth of this operation, it will be necessary to ascertain correctly what kind of love is here recommended. It must be remembered that this love is connected with the full appearance of understating, & the acknowledgment of the mystery of Christianity. It must, therefore, be the love of Christians to one another as Christians. Not the love which we bear to mankind in general, as creatures of the same nature. We should love our fellowmen, as the creatures of God, destined to the same immortality, with ourselves: & this love should stimulate us to employ every means in our power to promote their spiritual & eternal well-being. But the love which we owe to each other as Christians, as servants of one common Lord & Master, is of a higher nature. We love them because they are born of God, because they are his children, created anew in Christ Jesus, & have been made fellow heirs with us of the inheritance in light.
- (2) Nor is it a love to Christians of any particular sect or denomination. It is natural to suppose that we should feel a strong attachment to that particular Church with which we are more immediately connected to the mother which gave us birth, & has nourished & cherished us in our heaven-ward course: but to confirm our love & esteem to thine alone, with whom we are thus closely connected, to the exclusion of all others, so far from service the purpose intended, tends only to defeat it. Our love to Christians should recognize all, who in profession and practice accept the doctrines of a sincere & incorrupt Christianity; by whatever name or title they may be designated.
- (3) Such love would contribute greatly to the growth & strength of the Christian life. It would enable us equally to hold "the head, from which all the body, by joints & bonds, having nourishment-ministries to knit together, increaseth (sic) with the increase of God:" & thus, "speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from which the whole body fitly joined together & compacted by that which every joint supplieth (sic), according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh(sic) increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love."

As all obstructions to the free circulation of the vital principle in the natural body, tend to its final decay, so that the wont of this active principle of love in the church God, which is the body of Christ, tends to destroy its vital influence. Mutual Christian love would inspire the church with courage & fortitude in its conflict with the powers of darkness. If parts of an army, arrayed against a common enemy, give way to mutiny & revolt, or refuse to act in concert, the result is disastrous: but if each & every regiment is fired with patriotism, it diffuses courage through every breast, & prepares them to live or die together. So, in relation to the Church of Christ, let the principle of love be wanting, - let selfishness, or sectarian prejudice prevail, - let mutual distrust antagonize the hearts of each to each, & you cannot more effectively throw open the door to skepticism, infidelity, & every false principle: which, on the other hand, mutual Christian love emboldens its subjects in their adherence to truth & goodness & most affected bolts the door against the encroachments of errors in any form.

3 Mutual Christian love, as it inspires the Church with courage & fortitude, so does it also extinguish the flames of anger & discord one towards another. If this holy principle animates the breast it drives out every feeling of bitterness from our discussions on the minor points of difference existing between us. Witness the sad effects of bitter controversies upon the early Christian Church. How

soon did the primitive apostolic church dwindle down into insipid, lifeless formality, after the removal of the inspired guides. It broke up into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high & the spirit of love departed from it. Brethren! "Grieve not the Holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Set all bitterness, & wrath, & anger, & clamor, & evil speaking be put far away from among you." And "laying aside all malice, & all guile, & hypocrisies, & curses, & all evil speaking, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby."

4. If love be our governing principle, it will stimulate us to mutual acts of kindness & friendship. It will make us always ready to serve one another in love, to bear each others' burdens, & so fulfil the love of Christ. It will open a friendly intercourse between Christians of all denominations, & cause them to unite their counsels & efforts for preserving & promoting the true interest of religion. We should no longer be like the Jew & Samaritans, who had no dealing with one another, but should use all our efforts "to provoke each other to love & to good works. Hence

5. All prejudices & jealousies would cease. Mutual confidence would take the place of distrust, & all suspicions of evil purposes & designs would pass away.

6 It would produce our earnest desire to effect (sic) a union of heart in reference to our minor differences, & would contribute much to effect it. Acting upon this principle of mutual love, our differences would be diminished in magnitude, & we would be brought to see that we are much nearer together than we had before imagined.

7. Or, if this entire union cannot be affected, it would, at least, cause us to abstain from undue censures (sic) of one another in regard to our adherence to our peculiar tenets. Charity, that thinketh no evil, would save us from the reproof (sic), "who art thou that judgest (sic) another man's servant?" Our provenances to this evil evinces how little of the true principle of love is to be found amount professing Christians. I've now come to notice this second requirement contained in the text viz:

The apprehension of a more clear, efficacious & practical faith of the Gospel. That "their hearts might be comforted," being "knit together in love," that they may enjoy "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, even of the Father & of Christ.": The one follows, as the legitimate fruit of the other. Save to the brethren is one of the accredited evidences of the genuineness (sic) & sincerity of our faith. "if you love me," says our Divine Master, "keep my commandments." Again "this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." And again "by this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." In our love to one another, we are to strive for the "riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, even of the Father & of Christ."

Our effort should be, to gain a full understanding of the Gospel, so as duly to apprehend the meaning of this mysterious revelation of God: & to be fully assured of its truth: - to receive it practically & vitality (sic) in our hearts, so as to surrender all we have & all we are unto God, through Christ, the mediation revealed in that mystery. This is the essential feature of the mystery of faith: & if rightly understood & acknowledged, it cannot fail to attract all the followers of the Redeemer into one holy and united brotherhood, & eases all minor differences to decay & vanish. We should not only know, but feelingly apprehend that we all agree in far greater things than our differences; & be now strongly inclined to hold together that to contend with each other in smaller matters.

2 By this our religion would exhibit more of the vital principle, & consequently be more pleasing to God. Our heavenly Father takes no delight in strife & contention, now in a bare profession of his name, which is destitute of the living substance of religion. A mere formal profession will contribute much to the withdrawal of his presence, & the gracious influences of his Spirit; whereas, a true heart=felt acknowledgement of the mysteries of revelation & is a firm attachment to the truths therein revealed, will secure his exprobaton,(sic) & cause him to bless our humblest efforts for the promotion of his cause amount our fellowmen. The history of the Christian Church exhibits the sad effects, produced by a departure from this principle, & the discent(sic) from the fundamental truths of religion to matters of minor importance, from which we may be guarded by learning wisdoms from their folly.

3. A due regard to the advice given in the text, would contribute greatly to the destruction of every false principle, & be the means of allowing the ungodly from the paths of vice & folly. The barren fruits of an impotent inefficacious spiritly religion, are revolting even to the uninitiated; while that which is lively, active, powerful, & productive of genuine fruit, carries with it a glory, & a majesty, which cannot but command the reverence & esteem of all who witness it.

In Conclusion

Having briefly considered these two principles of Christian love & a clear, certain & efficacious faith in the mystery of godliness, it remains for us to inquire how the case stands with us. In casting our eye over the Christian Church of the present day, we have cause to lament the decay of these holy principles. Alas! How visible is this decay! & how destructive of the true interest of Christianity! Papacy & infidelity are making fearful inroads among us & the Church of God, dwindles down into a state of lifeless formality, is standing by as a silent looker on. Divided into multiplicity of sects, each viewing with jealous eye the movement of the others, it can no longer be said "See how these brethren love each other." How far are we from being knit together in love, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement of the mystery of the godhead! How little of genuine, practical, governing faith is to be found in the churches! & how feeble must our efforts necessarily be, to counteract the influence of the hidden power of darkness!

Brethren! Let us strive for the revival of these holy principles. As the mother church of Protestantism, as the first to bring to light this mystery of the Gospel, after it had been buried for centuries in the ashes of papal superstition, let us set an example for all others. I mean not that you should relinquish your confessions of faith. This you cannot do without compromising the Gospel itself. The symbols of your faith are based upon the word of God. They are the oldest of which we have any tidings in the annals of Christendom. The united power & eloquence of the 16th Century could neither gainsay nor refute them. They have stood the test of investigation in all succeeding ages. They have been made the ground work of the creeds of all orthodox denominations; & they are destined to grace the final triumph of truth over error. I expect it, you have nothing to relinquish. But you can do this: you can set an example of Christian love & charity to your brethren of all other denominations. "Be at peace among ourselves," & extend the right hand of Christian fellowship & love to all who hold the truth in love. Be uncompromising in your opposition to the encroachments of papacy and Infidelity. Relying upon the Word of God, as your only rule of faith & practice, & regarding the symbols of your faith as the true & faithful exponents of the doctrines revealed in the mystery of godliness, plant your standard at the foot of the cross, unfurl your banner

to the breeze, & let your "heart be comforted," cheered & encouraged, "being knit together in love," not only those of your own name, but toward all who hear the truth in righteousness, "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, even of the Father, & of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom & knowledge.

Behold! The world in darkness lies!

Thick clouds of error cast their dismal shade

'O'er land & sea, & threaten to extinguish

The last faint spark of Truth divine!

Superstition & Infidelity, base offspring of beclouded minds. Exert a fatal influence on the Church of God!

When lo! From yonder cloistered cell a solitary monk steps forth, to chase those gloomy cloud (sic) away.

Clad in the armor of celestial light, he fans the glimm'ring (sic) spark into a flame whose bright-
effulgence wakes the drowsy flow'rs (sic) of those who long had slumber'd (sic) neath the beam of
Papal rule.

Twixt light & darkness, fierce the contest rose; Until, at length, o'erpower'd (sic) by superior force,
the clouds move back apace: -the holy principles of Faith & Love Resume their influence divine.

The church long fetter'd (sic) by the clanking chains of Papal Despotism, now throws off her shackles
(sic) & prepares for victory or Death.

Her fearless champion, armed with grace divine, withstands the united force of potentates and
priests: Draws up in form unique, a summary complete of Christian doctrines-subjects them to the
inspired Word of God for proof: & then in deep integrity of hearts, defies the world their fallacy to
show 'Twixt light & darkness the contest still wages. To you, who bear the honor'd (sic) name of him
who brought to light the holy principles of Faith & love & to a benighted world Restored the pure &
unadulterated Word of God to you 'tis giv'n (sic) This conflict to pursue Until the last black cloud is
chased asway; Until celestial beams illuminate with radiance bright, the Church of God on earth.

Then shrink not from the rightful task, imposed by Him whose spirit guards the interests of His
Church: But lead the _____, & in the exercise of Faith & Love

Bid all your fellow Christians Follow on.

Amen

Thus, in a solid column moving on, -

Our common foe to stive against-

One common cause your energies demands,

And when the final triumph is achieved, -

When all the foes of Christ their doom receive
Then 'twill be seen, that the pure doctrine
At your altars taught, received by other churches
In a mutilated form, have been the means
Which God employed, that mighty triumph to achieve!
Then will sectarian prejudices flee
Apace, like shadows from the presence of
The Noon-Day's Sun, or empty chaff
Before the driving wind: -& all the people of
The Living God – from east to west,
From pole to pole, -shall in the grand
Chorus join: "Salvation to our God! - Hallelujah
The god Omnipotent reignith (sic)! - Hallelujah!"

(This document is written on 8" X 10" paper folded in half and sewn together with sewing thread)

