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Divisions Are Not Always Bad

When to unite and when to divide, that is the question, and a right answer requires the wisdom of a Solomon.

Some settle the problem by a rule of thumb: All union is good and all division bad. It's that easy. But obviously this effortless way of dealing with the matter ignores the lessons of history and overlooks some of the deep spiritual laws by which men live.

If good men were all for union and bad men for division, or vice versa, that would simplify things for us. Or if it could be shown that God always unites and the devil always divides it would be easy to find our way around in this confused and confusing world. But that is not how things are.

To divide what should be divided and unite what should be united is the part of wisdom.

Union of dissimilar elements is never good even where it is possible, nor is the arbitrary division of elements that are alike; and this is as certainly true of things moral and religious as of things political or scientific.

The first divider was God who at creation divided the light from the darkness. This division set the direction for all God's dealings in nature and in grace. Light and darkness are incompatible; to try to have both in the same place at once is to try the impossible and end by having neither the one nor the other, but dimness rather, and obscurity.

In the world of men there are at present scarcely any sharp outlines. The race is fallen.

Sin has brought confusion. The wheat grows with the tares, the sheep and the goats coexist, the farms of the just and the unjust lie side by side in the landscape, the mission is next door to the saloon.

But things will not always be so. The hour is coming when the sheep will be divided from the goats and the tares separated from the wheat. God will again divide the light from the darkness and all things will run to their kind. Tares will go into the fire with tares and wheat into the garner with wheat. The dimness will lift like a fog and all outlines will appear. Hell will be seen to be hell all the way through, and heaven revealed as the one home for all who bear the nature of the one God.

For that time we with patience wait. In the meanwhile for each of us, and for the church wherever she appears in human society, the constantly recurring question must be: What shall we unite with and from what shall we separate? The question of coexistence does not enter here, but the question of union and fellowship does. The wheat grows in the same field with the tares, but shall the two cross-pollinate? The sheep graze near the goats, but shall they seek to interbreed? The unjust and the just enjoy the same rain and sunshine, but shall they forget their deep moral difference and intermarry?

To these questions the popular answer is yes. Union for union's sake, and men shall brothers be for all that. Unity is so devoutly to be desired that no price is too high to pay for it and nothing is important enough to keep us apart. Truth is slain to provide a feast to celebrate the marriage of heaven and hell, and to support a concept of unity which has no basis in the Word of God.

The Spirit-illuminated church will have none of this. In a fallen world like ours unity is no treasure to be purchased at the price of compromise. Loyalty to God, faithfulness to truth and the preservation of a good conscience are jewels more precious than gold of Ophir or diamonds from the mine. For these jewels men have suffered the loss of property, imprisonment and even death; for them, even in recent times, behind the various curtains, followers of Christ have paid the last full measure of devotion and quietly died, unknown to and unsung by the great world, but known to God and dear to His Father's heart. In the day that shall declare the secrets of all souls these shall come forth to receive the deeds done in the body. Surely such as these are wiser philosophers than the religious camp followers of meaningless unity who have not the courage to stand against current vogues and who bleat for brotherhood because it happens to be for the time popular.

"Divide and conquer" is the cynical slogan of Machiavellian political leaders, but Satan knows also how to unite and conquer. To bring a nation to its knees the aspiring dictator must unite it. By repeated appeals to national pride or to the need to avenge some past or present wrong the demagogue succeeds in uniting the populace behind him. It is easy after that to take control of the military and to beat the legislature into submission. Then follows almost perfect unity indeed, but it is the unity of the stockyards and the concentration camp. We have seen this happen several times in this century, and the world will see at least once more when the nations of the earth are united under Antichrist.

When confused sheep start over a cliff the individual sheep can save himself only by separating from the flock. Perfect unity at such a time can only mean total destruction for all. The wise sheep to save his own hide disaffiliates.

Power lies in the union of things similar and the division of things dissimilar. Maybe what we need in religious circles today is not more union but some wise and courageous division. Everyone desires peace but it could be that revival will follow the sword.

Men of God

"We need men of God again."

The Church at this moment needs men [and women], the right kind of men, bold men. The talk is that we need revival...

We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul, who cannot be frightened by threats of death because they have already died to the allurements of this world. Such men will be free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances; their only compulsion will come from within—or from above.

This kind of freedom is necessary if we are to have prophets in our pulpits [and Sunday schools, and neighborhoods, and homes] instead of mascots. These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of religious retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial considerations, perform no religious act out of mere custom; nor will they allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or the desire for reputation.

Much that the church—even the evangelical church—is doing these days she is doing because she is afraid not to. Ministerial associations take up projects for no higher reason than they are being scared into it. Whatever their ear-to-the-ground, fear inspired reconnoitering leads them to believe the world expects

them to do they will be doing come next Monday morning with all kinds of trumped-up zeal and show of godliness. The pressure of public opinion calls these prophets, not the voice of Jehovah.

The true church has never sounded out public expectations before launching the crusades. Her leaders heard from God and went ahead wholly independent of popular support or lack of it. They knew their Lord's will and did it, and the people followed them—sometimes in triumph, oftener to insults and public persecution—and their sufficient reward was the satisfaction of being right in a wrong world.

Another characteristic of the true prophet has been love. The free man who has learned to hear God's voice and dared to obey it has felt the moral burden that broke the hearts of the Old Testament prophets, crushed the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ and wrung streams of tears from the eyes of the apostles.

The free man has never been a religious tyrant, nor has he sought to lord it over God's heritage. It is fear and lack of self-assurance that has led men to try to crush others under their feet. These have had some interest to protect, some position to secure. So they have demanded subjection from their followers as a guarantee for their own safety. But the free man—never; he has nothing to protect, no ambition to pursue and no enemy to fear. For that reason he is completely careless of his standing among men. If they follow him, well and good; if not, he loses nothing he holds dear, but whether he is accepted or rejected he will go on loving the people with sincere devotion. And only death can silence his tender intercession for them.

Yes, if evangelical Christianity is to stay alive she must have men again, the right kind of men. She must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and she must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of men of the stuff prophets and martyrs are made of. God will hear the cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt. And He will send deliverance by sending deliverers. It is His way among men.

And when the deliverers come—reformers, revivalists, prophets—they will be men of God and men of courage. They will have God on their side because they will be careful to stay on God's side. They will be co-workers under Christ and instruments in the hand of the Holy Ghost. Such men will be filled with the Holy Spirit indeed, and through their labors He will fill others and send the long delayed revival.