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When the Bible says that Christ is God, it does not do that by dragging God down. It does not ask us to forget a single thing that it has said about the stupendous majesty of God. No, it asks us to remember every one of those things in order that we may apply them all to Jesus Christ.

—J. Gresham Machen

J. Gresham Machen
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Calvinists Can and Do Cooperate!

WE have previously taken the position that a general Protestant church unification is undesirable. We have also indicated our belief that, in so far as public testimony is concerned, cooperation among conservatives of differing theological tradition and conviction is undesirable, because it would necessitate treating large areas of doctrine on a least common denominator basis.

Now how about a unification program among churches which agree in their understanding of the system of doctrine taught in Scripture? For convenience, let us consider this in reference to those who hold to the system known as the Reformed faith, who are commonly described as Calvinists.

Such convinced Calvinists now exist in a number of separate denominations. We could mention, for example, the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as other groups. Probably the main reason these churches exist separately is the national background of their membership. People coming to this country had a tendency to associate with those of their own nationality—Scotch with Scotch, Dutch with Dutch, German with German. But in connection with the nationality background there are also distinctive elements of church polity and practice. These likewise are based on practices in the "old country," but they do complicate the situation, and in some cases they have a distinct doctrinal significance.

The first thing to be said about possible church unification in this area is that the basic hindrance, which we have found to exist in other connections, does not exist here. Although there are differences of policy and national background, there is a common devotion to one total system of truth, and a common conviction that that system of truth is taught in Holy Scripture, and is the only system of truth taught there. In their public testimony to the gospel, therefore, these churches are already in fact substantially united.

On the other hand, particular differences in practice, policy, and tradition cannot be run over rough shod. What is needed here is increased mutual acquaintance and understanding. Differences should be considered and dealt with in sincerity and honesty.

And in the third place, if it appears that these

differences are not capable of reconciliation, we do not believe that the actual organizational unification of these churches is, from a Christian viewpoint, an essential. Much has been said, chiefly by Modernists, to the effect that the division of the church into denominations is sinful per se, and must be overcome at any cost. We do not believe this. In an article appearing in this issue, Professor Murray indicates that a famous verse in John 17, frequently quoted in this connection, does not necessarily bear the interpretation so commonly attributed to it. The real unity of the church in this world is a unity of faith and spirit, not of organization.

On the other hand, we do not believe that there is any specific value in maintaining different denominations committed to the same understanding of a common faith. The eventual unification of churches holding sincerely the Calvinistic (which we believe the true) interpretation of Scripture, is certainly a goal to keep in view, a goal, that is, if through its attainment a more effective public testimony can be maintained.

The interchange of information through magazines, occasional interchange of preachers, fraternal delegates to synods and assemblies, establishment of interdenominational gatherings for the discussion of matters of mutual concern—these are some means for furthering our knowledge of those who hold a like precious faith with us. To an extent all of these things already exist. Interdenominational young people's gatherings, men's meetings and activities, and the common support of such enterprises as parent-controlled Christian schools, radio broadcasts, and other media for bringing our faith to those about us, are important. There is much that can be done (and is being done) to show that though we have separate organizations, we are really not divided.

The great concern and business of the church of Jesus Christ is to proclaim to all the world the truth given us in God's Word, and to interpret that truth in its application to every area of human life and thought. The more we who hold the faith in common give ourselves to this task, the more our union with Christ and with one another will be evident to the praise of His glorious redeeming grace.

L. W. S.

"That They All May Be One"

By JOHN MURRAY

IT scarcely needs to be said that the church union movement has attained to vast proportions in the last few decades. In the argument for union no text has been appealed to more than the words of our Lord's high priestly prayer, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21). The most conspicuous travesty frequently perpetrated in the quotation of these words is that they have been enlisted to promote the kind of union which violates the basis of true Christian unity, namely, unity of faith in Christ and in the revelation which is the charter of His will. What our Lord prayed for was that all who would believe in Him through the apostolic Word might be one. When there is no unified conception of who Jesus is, of what He has done, and of what His will as revealed in the Scripture is, it is obvious that the premise upon which our Lord's petition rests is absent. To apply the petition without its presupposed condition is distortion.

But an equally grave perversion of our Lord's prayer resides in failure to recognize what Jesus prayed for. In propaganda and argument for union this text is quoted again and again as if what Jesus prayed for is simply that they all might be one. That is not what Jesus prayed. What He prayed for is rather "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, in order that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." What needs to be noted is that the prayer in its essence is that all believers might be one in the Father and in the Son.* It is with reference to union with Himself and therefore also with the Father that Jesus prays. What lies in the foreground is not union of believers with one another but the union of believers with Christ Himself and with the Father. And this becomes particularly apparent when we consider that Jesus institutes a comparison between the

union He prays for and the kind of union that exists between the Father and Himself. It is not simply that they all may be one but "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee." This is a stupendous comparison.

It must not be supposed that the comparison establishes an identity, that the union for which He prays is identical in kind and nature with that which exists between the Father and the Son. A comparison is instituted and there is therefore analogy. But analogy is not identity. We must not raise the union of Christ with believers to the level of the union that exists between the Father and the Son. Other examples will show the necessity of avoiding such an equation.

The union of Christ with believers is compared to that of man and wife (*cf.* Eph. 5:23-33). But we may not reduce union with Christ to the level of the union that exists in the marital relation. Union with Christ is compared to the union that exists between the head and the other members in the human body (*cf.* Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:15, 16). But this analogy does not establish identity of kind and nature. Union with Christ is compared to that of the vine and the branches (John 15). But the difference of kind is only too apparent. Finally, union with Christ is compared to the relation that the chief corner stone sustains to the other stones in the building (*cf.* Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4). Here the difference between analogy and identity is most conspicuous. What we find is that union or unity exists in the various strata or levels of being. Union of believers with Christ is compared to the union that exists in four of the lower strata of relationship. But there is no thought of obliterating the line of demarcation that distinguishes the different spheres of being and relationship. In John 17:21 our Lord proceeds in the opposite direction and does the amazing thing of comparing the union of believers with Himself and the union that exists between the Father and the Son. But in this case we must not heighten the former to the level of the latter any more than, in the other cases, should we lower the one

to the level of the other. Analogy is not identity.

We must not therefore think of union with Christ as on a level with the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. Yet we may not fail to appreciate the stupendous import of the comparison. It is when we appreciate this that we discover that of which Christ is speaking. He is speaking of that mysterious spiritual union that exists between Himself and believers, the union by which believers are united not only to Him but also to the Father. Believers are one in the Father and in the Son. Jesus is speaking of what has appropriately been called the mystical union. It is that of which Paul was thinking when he said, "This mystery is great" (Eph. 5:32.). And nothing in all Scripture serves to confirm the mystery of it; nothing serves to enhance the preciousness of it, nothing seals the intimacy and indissolubility of it more than the fact that it is compared to the union that exists between the Father and the Son. It is of this subject Jesus is speaking and it is for the realization of that union that He is praying. He is praying that all who believe on Him will be one in Him and in the Father in that mysterious unity that is comparable to the unity of the Father and the Son. How vacuous is the use of this text that does not take account of this amazing fact!

We should remember also that the intercession of Christ is always efficacious. "I knew that thou hearest me always" Jesus said to the Father (John 11:42). It is a certainty that all who believe in Christ will be united to Him; it is an order that cannot be frustrated. The high priestly intercession of Christ is directed to the bestowment upon those on whose behalf He offered Himself a sacrifice all those riches of grace and blessing which He has procured and secured for them. Paramount among these, as the bond by which they are bound together and as the medium through which they are conveyed, is union with Christ Himself. Jesus did not pray for anything that would be problematical or uncertain but for that which is secure in accordance with the arrangements of covenant grace and faithfulness, yet realized through the means of His all-availing and all-prevailing intercession. He prays for those given Him by the Father and He prays that the abundant grace secured by His priestly sacrifice

*It makes no essential difference to the basic import of John 17:21 whether the third clause is rendered "that they may be one in us" or "that they may be in us." Some manuscripts omit the word which stands for our English word "one" in this clause, other manuscripts insert it.

may be realised in its fulness through the medium of union and communion with Himself. It is well to follow the spiral of His intercession: "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (vss. 22, 23).

This union for which Christ prayed is not unrelated to the unity of confession and testimony. It is from the spring of union with Christ that the confession and testimony of believers emanate. Union with Christ is Spiritual, and this means that the bond of union is the Holy Spirit. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His and no one can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit. Testimony to the world is testimony vitalized and made actual by vital union with Christ. It is through the testimony of believers that the testimony of Jesus is borne in and to the world. Hence the relevance and necessary connection between union with Christ and the purpose which our Lord enunciates, to wit, "that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (vs. 23; cf. vs. 21). It is the life in Christ, communicated to believers through union with Him, that issues in the witness by which the world may believe that the Father sent the Son and by which to the end of the world the confession may be elicited, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Furthermore, it cannot be doubted that our Lord's intercessory prayer bears upon the matter of visible unity in the fellowship of the saints. What we call the visible church is not to be abstracted from the spiritual relationship which believers sustain to Christ and by which the church is constituted. The inward spiritual unity of believers with Christ and with one another in Him is exemplified and expressed in the unity of the church of Christ. The implications of this text are indeed far-reaching for the maintenance and promotion of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and for the recognition that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5, 6; cf. vss. 3, 4). But these implications and applications are very different from those considerations which animate such union

movements as ignore the real unity for which our Lord prayed and the

conditions upon which its realization depends.

" . . . And They Crucify Him"

By HENRY TAVARES

YOU and I have never seen a crucifixion. But centuries back, criminals were sometimes executed by being fastened by nails and ropes to a wooden cross driven into the ground in some public place where all might see. There they hung stripped of their clothing and exposed to the mercy of the elements. As the hours passed, the torture increased with the development of fever and even tetanus from infection in the nail wounds, until the victims finally succumbed exhausted by pain, disease, and starvation. It is said that they really died a thousand deaths.

The Romans considered this form of execution too shameful for a Roman citizen. They reserved it for slaves and aliens, and for the lower classes of men. The Jews did not practice it at all. Yet when they wanted Jesus put to death, they clamored for crucifixion. They wanted Him treated as an imposter and a rebel against the Roman empire. They wanted Him exposed to the utmost contempt not only of the Jews, but also of the Romans, because they hated Him with cruel and malicious hatred.

Yet what was His crime? He had exposed their sins. He had laid bare their hypocrisy. He had called them to repentance, and had preached himself as their only hope of escape from their sin, miseries and shame. This they counted as a crime because it so completely upset their distorted but greatly cherished convictions. He was to them a blasphemer and an imposter, deserving of the deepest shame and disgrace.

Yet they were utterly wrong. Peter had rightly confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. He was the Anointed of the Lord, endowed with authority and power to exercise the offices of the Redeemer of God's people, and to save a doomed race. He it was who should teach men the truth, declaring the word of God, making known afresh that which men had suppressed by their unwillingness to have God in their knowledge, and

disclosing the secrets of God's purposes of grace which eye had not seen nor ear heard, and which human hearts had not imagined. In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. No man knows the Father as He knew Him, and to Him belonged the decision to reveal Him. . . . And yet they crucified Him!

Not only was He the sovereign of truth and knowledge, but He reigned over all. The demons trembled before Him and obeyed His word. Disease was subject to His control. The seas and the wind obeyed His will, and death itself surrendered to His commands. He was master of every situation, and all creation was under His feet. . . . And they crucified Him!

He was the Son of the living God. John calls Him God's only begotten Son. John learned this from heaven, for Jesus was twice proclaimed from above as the only begotten of the Father, and the Spirit also had taught him. Jesus as the Son of God was one with the Father and the Spirit. In being and power and glory He was God. The work of creation is ascribed to Him, and by Him all things hold together. When He came into the world He came unto His own. He was the image of the invisible God, and in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. . . . And they crucified Him!

It is said of Him that He did no evil, neither was guile found in His mouth. The Father from heaven declared His complete approval of Him and commanded all to hear Him. He himself challenged His enemies to prove Him a sinner. And no man did. He is called in the Scriptures the righteous one. And it is said of Him that He shall judge the world in righteousness. But this even God could not do if He were not righteous (Rom. 3:5-6). He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Yet He was included among offenders as if He were one of them. He was numbered with the transgressors, He was held up to open