True Christian Union and the Devil's Counterfeit

By R. A. Torrey

My subject this morning is TRUE CHRISTIAN UNION AND THE DEVIL'S COUNTERFEIT. I have seven texts:

The first is Ephesians 4:1-3, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "

The second is John 17:20-21, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."

This third is Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."'

The fourth is Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

The fifth is 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall beat people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

The sixth is 2 Chronicles 25:5-8, "Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of

Israel for an hundred talents of silver. But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim."

The seventh is 2 John 9-11, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

True Christian unity is one of the greatest, one of the grandest, one of the most glorious, one of the divinest, one of the most beneficent things on earth. It is the life of God the Father and the Son reproduced in the Church. It greatly delights the heart of God. It is one of the things that our Lord Jesus Himself most emphasized in His high priestly prayer the night before His crucifixion. The devil's counterfeit of true Christian unity is one of the most abominable and pernicious things on earth. The Bible is full of warnings against it; indeed some of Its most solemn warnings are against the devil's cunning counterfeit of that unity which God so greatly desires and for which our Lord Jesus so earnestly prayed and which lie laid down His life to make possible. It has always been the devil's subtle policy to counterfeit God's work and God's methods. For God's true Christ, Christ Jesus, the devil would substitute his Antichrist, who is yet to come; for God's way of salvation through the atoning blood, resulting in those who accept Him who shed His blood as their atoning Saviour being transformed into His own perfect likeness, the devil would substitute "salvation by character," a character achieved by our own will and our own moral effort; for God's revelation of the truth in the written Word, the Bible, and in the Incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, the devil would substitute a revelation by man-made philosophy and man-made science. And for the true Christian unity that God works out in the body of true believers, the invisible church, in the ways we shall this morning consider, the devil would substitute a unity worked out by all kinds of compromises and cunning devices of men.

Some of the passages from God's Word which I have just read set forth in a very clear and unmistakable way both the beautiful character and the imperative need of *true Christian unity.* Other passages from God's Word which I have just read expose the awful wickedness and ruinous results of the devil's counterfeit of God's true Christian unity.

The words *unity, brotherhood, love and cooperation* are very much in evidence in these great days in which we are living. These words set forth eminently Christian ideas. But these words are today among the most abused and most frequently misused words in the English language. Everywhere one goes throughout the United States, in England, Scotland, Honolulu, Japan, Korea or China, the one word that is written large and forever drummed into our ears is

"Union," "Union," "Union." But the union many are seeking to achieve and to foster is as far from the unity for which our Lord Jesus prayed and which He taught and which was emphasized by Paul and by John, as night is from day, as darkness is from light and as damning error is from saving truth and as the great enemy of God and Man, the devil or Satan, is from our glorious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TRUE CHRISTIAN UNITY

What are the marks of true Christian unity, the unity for which our Lord Jesus so earnestly prayed, so insistently and constantly taught and which John and Paul and other inspired men so strongly emphasized?

- **In the first place, true Christian unity is a "unity of the Spirit," that is, a unity which the Holy Spirit dwelling in and controlling the hearts of regenerated men, women and children brings to pass.** This is clear from our first text, Ephesians 4:1-3-"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." True Christian unity is not a unity of man's making but of God's making. It is not a unity that results from a mob of men and women of heterogenous characters and ambitions and beliefs getting together to cooperate to bring about some result in which they are all more or less interested. It is a unity, as the context clearly tells us, of men and women who have one Lord, the Lord Jesus; and one faith, faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 20:31; 1 Jn. 5:1, 5); and one baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit; and who are thus brought into one body, the real, living, invisible church, the Bride of Jesus Christ (see Eph. 4:3-6), a unity, as we have said, which the Holy Spirit Himself brings to pass in those in whom He comes to dwell because they have received and confessed Jesus as their Saviour and their Lord and with the whole heart they believed on Him.

  I need hardly say that the union that the Federation of Churches at home and Union Universities on the foreign field are seeking to promote does not bear the faintest resemblance to this true Christian union.

- **In the second place, *true Christian union or unity is a union that results from prayer.*** This is very clearly evident from our Lord's own wonderful prayer recorded in John 17:20-23-"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word ... that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that

they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." The unity that our Lord desired for all those who should believe in Him throughout all coming generations was a unity that should be the outcome of His own prayers and the prayers of those who are at one with Him and, therefore, had fellowship with Him in His intercessory work. The unity that Jesus Christ prayed for and taught and that John and Paul emphasized was not a unity that men get up by their cunning contrivances and conscienceless compromises, but a unity that God sends down in answer to the fervent and believing prayer of His own dear Son whom He always hears and of those who are at one with Him through living faith in Him. It is the unity that comes in answer to believing prayer offered in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not the unity that results from getting together a lot of shrewd ecclesiastical politicians to devise some way to keep men who believe something definite and worthwhile from voicing their convictions, as was done for example at the much-lauded Edinburg Missionary Conference by one of the most astute ecclesiastical politicians of the century and as the steering committee of the huge missionary conference to be held in Shanghai next spring are now trying to do.

While I was in Shanghai awaiting the departure of my steamer for this country, the various commissions preparing for this proposed conference of five hundred missionaries and five hundred native Chinese Christians were in session. The most important committee in many ways is the Committee on the Church's Message. This was assigned to five Chinese Christians, which looked promising; for taken as a whole, the Chinese converts today seem to be more soundly orthodox than the missionary body as a whole. But on this committee of five were appointed the two most notoriously radical modernists that there are among the Chinese "Christian" leaders, one man whose position was not altogether known and two men of the undoubted conservatives. These two men are in a hopeless minority, and it is doubtful whether they have the strength and decision to stand for their convictions. The evident object was to present as the Message of the Church a message upon which both those who believe only in the "social gospel" and those who believe in the real Gospel, the Gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour as set forth in the Word of God, could unite.

- **In the third place, true Christian union is a union in Christ Jesus.** This is clear from Galatians 3:28-"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Please mark well the words, "in Christ Jesus. ""Ye are all one in Christ Jesus. "This is true Christian union, and it is the only true Christian union, union "in Christ Jesus." There can be no Christian union except "in Christ Jesus." Many today, when they speak of Christian union,

emphasize the word union; the Bible emphasizes the word Christian-"in Christ Jesus." There can be no true union between those who are "in Christ Jesus" and those who are not "in Christ Jesus." To attempt such a union is to aim at begetting a monster, a monstrosity.

It was union in Himself that our Lord Jesus prayed for so earnestly. His words are plain: "Neither pray I for these alone, *but for them also which shall believe on* Me through their word; that they all may be one; *as Thou, Father, art in Me,* and *I in Thee,* that they also may be *one in Us:* that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be *one, even as We are one: I in them,* and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." Oh, how frequently those who are trying to forge a false unity quote our Lord's prayer, and how carelessly they read and quote His words, making no attempt to mark exactly for what He prayed! There is no hint here of prayer on our Lord's part for a union between those who really are *in Him* (and in whom He is) and those who are not in Him (and in whom He is not). Not for one moment would our Lord pray for such a monstrous thing. Indeed, in His prayer for union, He is very careful to say and very emphatic in saying it: *"I pray not for the world,* but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (v. 9). Why will people who profess to be Bible students and especially students of the words of our Lord Jesus persist in ripping the words of our Lord out of their context and shutting their eyes to their plain meaning and putting upon them a construction which it is as clear as day He never intended they should bear?

- **In the fourth place, *true Christian union is a union in the Truth, a union between those who believe the great fundamentals of the Christian faith, and between these alone.*** This our Lord Himself clearly indicates in His prayer. In the words immediately preceding His prayer for oneness or union He says, "Sanctify them *through Thy truth: Thy Word* is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified *through the truth"* (vv. 17-19). John, who alone records this prayer of our Lord for union, says in his second epistle in verses 9-1 1, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.

He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, *receive him not* into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." This is the strongest possible prohibition on God's part of all union with any man or company of men

who do not accept absolutely the authority of the teaching of Christ, who do not *abide in His teaching,* that is, those who throw the words of Christ overboard on any point (for example, rejecting the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the inerrancy of the whole Old Testament and the historicity of the story of the Flood and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, all of which our Lord explicitly taught) because some German infidel who claims to be a great scholar teaches differently. Union with those who do not abide in the teaching of Christ, who reject His absolute authority at any point but go onward to something different that they claim is better, is not Christian union. It has not the faintest resemblance to TRUE CHRISTIAN UNION. There can be no union pleasing to the God who is the Author of this Book or pleasing to Jesus Christ, between those who believe the great fundamentals of our faith and those who question any one of them.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE FUNDAMENTALS?

The first of all of these fundamentals is the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, His full equality in nature and attributes with the Father, the doctrine that He is a Being to be believed in, honored and worshipped even as God the Father is believed in, honored and worshipped (Jn. 14:1 ff.; Jn. 5-23). There can be no true Christian unity between us who believe this and those who deny or question it.

The second fundamental is the absolute, final and infallible authority of the Bible. Jesus taught this in a most expressive, most emphatic and most uncompromising way, and those who question it are of those whom John describes as going onward and abiding not in the teaching of Christ and with whom He forbids in the sternest way any form of union, any fellowship whatever.

Previous to the annual meeting of the Bible Union of China at Kuling, a very prominent missionary, who is supposed to be orthodox, said to my son that the point of division between missionaries should not be upon the authority of the Bible but upon the Cross of Christ, and he went on to tell him how the most notoriously bitter opponent of the Bible Union Movement in China was clear on the Cross of Christ, and that is where the line of division should be drawn. Now, when one carefully considers it, this is utter nonsense. To try to get those who believe in the absolute, final and infallible authority of the Bible to unite and cooperate with those who deny the absolute, final and infallible authority of the Bible, just because they happen to be clear on the Cross of Christ (if indeed they be clear on the Cross of Christ, *as the doctrine of the Cross is taught in the bible)* is as foolish as it would have been in the late way to get those who believed in the aims of the Allies to fight in the same regiments with those who were devoted to the damnable schemes of the Kaiser. Followers of the Lord Jesus

Christ cannot cooperate with the followers of the Antichrist, even though the Antichrist claims to be, as he always does claim to be, the real Christ.

And whether he knows it or not, everyone who denies the true deity of the Lord Jesus is a follower of, and aider and abetter of, the Antichrist. What does God say in 1 John 2:22, 23? "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." And whosoever denies the absolute, final and infallible authority of this Book, the Bible, is also on the side of the Antichrist, and he is a more useful ally to the Antichrist and to the devil if he is in the church than if he were out of it. Will I unite to fight with him because he is a charming man in many ways and teaches some very beautiful things? Not 1. If I do, I will bring upon myself the stern condemnation of God as set forth by Him in 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

The third great fundamental is the substitutionary character of the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Anyone who denies this great saving doctrine of the substitutionary character of the death of Christ, that Christ Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross (I Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:2 1), is a follower of the Antichrist.

This doctrine of the perfect atonement made by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary is the doctrine that the devil hates and that the devilish pride of the natural heart hates above almost any other doctrine. A man, some of whose devotional books have had a large sale and who is in great demand at many so-called Bible conferences, is reported on apparently good authority, the authority of one who sat in his classroom within a year or two and took down in black and white what he said, as saying, "The doctrine of the blood atonement is nauseating to me." Shall I cooperate with him because he is a delightful man and seems to teach many things that I believe? Never. It was on the question of atoning blood that there was the first great separation, a separation that God Himself brought to pass, between the one whom God accepted and the one whom God rejected, between Abel and Cain (Gen. 4:3-5).

Again, anyone who denies the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ from the dead is a follower of the Antichrist. If he is right in his decision that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was simply a spiritual resurrection, then according to God's own Word our preaching is vain and our faith also is vain (1 Cor. 15:13-14). Can I cooperate with one who denies this great fundamental of the Christian faith, the actual, literal resurrection of the

body of Jesus Christ from the dead? Not unless I am an utterly blinded fool.

Still again, anyone who denies the virgin birth of our Lord is a follower of the Antichrist. His virgin birth was one of the chief points of attack by the first great scholarly enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ, Celsus; and most of the enemies of Jesus Christ from that day to this have followed in Celsus's wake. Any one who denies the virgin birth of our Lord makes Him out to have been a bastard, at least by implication, as Celsus frankly said in plain words. Shall I cooperate with anyone who even indirectly casts this appallingly blasphemous implication upon my Lord? How would you, feel toward anyone who cast such a reflection on your own mother's virtue and on yourself? How then do you feel toward the one who casts such an aspersion on the "blessed" mother of our glorious Lord? I for one burn with indignation toward every dastardly scoundrel that does it. Will I cooperate with him in Christian work and call it Christian union? Not for one briefest moment. Yet even Presbyterians in China send their Chinese candidates for the ministry to Union Theological Seminaries where this infamous doctrine of the denial of the virgin birth of our Lord is openly or secretly held and taught; and if any one dares to protest against such folly and wickedness, he is called hard names and is bitterly accused of introducing division in the forces of Jesus Christ. Forces of Jesus Christ? Never. He is separating the forces of Jesus Christ from the forces of Antichrist, and they ought to be separated. Has not God Himself said in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Between those who believe what this Book tells us in the plainest possible terms about the virgin birth of our divine Lord and those who deny His virgin birth and thus make Him out by implication at least to have been a bastard, there should be war, and war to the hilt.

Some one of you may say that this is an appeal to sentiment. Yes, it is in part an appeal to holy sentiment, but why not appeal to sentiment if it is holy, sound, Christian sentiment? Ought we not in our actions as well as our feelings be moved by the sentiment of love to our Lord who died upon the cross for us and a sentiment of intense indignation toward those who cast vile aspersions upon His holy Person and holy name? We should be more deeply sensitive to our Lord's honor and good name than to our own. Those who deny or question the virgin birth of our Lord sometimes do not realize, indeed oftentimes do not

realize, what they are doing; but they should be made to realize it, and if they persist in pursuing their monstrous course we ought to bid *adieu* to them, and we ought to let them know with just what sentiments we regard them.

In the fifth place, true Christian unity is a unity of men and women who believe in Jesus Christ, a union of regenerated men and women. This our Lord Himself clearly indicates in His much quoted prayer. He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one" (Jn. 17:20-21a). That is plain enough, is it not? Union between those who are united to Christ by living faith and those who are not thus united to Christ is not Christian union. A union between men and women who have been born again and have thus become children of God, and those who have not been born again and thus remain children of the devil, is not Christian union. It is the devil's counterfeit and a mighty poor counterfeit at that; and yet, poor as the counterfeit is, it passes current today as the genuine coin of the kingdom among many who consider themselves very intelligent Christians. Oh, let us have done with this nonsense and this clamor for something that this Book condemns in no uncertain terms.

THE DEVIL'S COUNTERFEIT

I intended when I began to take up the marks of the devil's counterfeit of the true Christian union. But it is not necessary. The marks of true Christian unity which we have just indicated reveal by contrast the marks of the devil's counterfeit. The devil's counterfeit of true Christian unity is a man-made unity. It is a mere outward unity; it is a union out of Christ,- it is a union between those who disagree on fundamental doctrines; it is a union between the forces of Christ and Antichrist, it is a union between those who are born again, thus becoming children of God, and those who are unregenerated and, therefore, children of the devil. It is a union of the forces of Christ and the forces of antichrist.

For a true Christian unity let us pray and let us labor and let us make every necessary sacrifice. As to the devil's counterfeit of true Christian unity, let us fight it to the last ditch, knowing that it is the devil's great strategic masterpiece for the defeat of our Lord's work in the world. The enemies of Jesus Christ are far less dangerous when openly fighting against us than they are when they claim to be one with us and seek our cooperation in the substitution of any other gospel, the "social gospel" for example, for the saving Gospel of the once crucified, now risen and soon returning Lord.

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