

Subject: Community of Purpose.

Scripture. Acts 4³²⁻³⁷ 1 Cor 12⁴⁻³¹.

Lev 10^{6,7} They help everyone his neighbor;
and everyone saith to his brother. Be of good courage
For the carpenter encognoseth the goldsmith, and
he that smootheth with the hammer him that
smileth the anvil, saying of the soldering "It is
good":

When ever a group of people start taking a new
project or enter into a new contract of collabora-
tion, there always arises a desire to give out-
ward recognition to their common purpose by some
mechanical system which shall bring them
together into one fold and under one sign.
This desire has manifested it self in various
forms, The community of goods, denouncing

the right of private ownership of property has been tried again and again, and has always failed. A common creed has also been used and is still used, This is a method which in theory denies the right of free thought, and is in fact an intellectual infirmitity.

But always have people recognized the fact that in the very nature of things the only binding binding force essential and possible is the community of purpose, or as Paul says to desire earnestly the higher things.

These various methods of expressing in a limited mechanical system that which is essentially infinite in manifestation have been tried time and again during the history of the Christian church, and they have failed, because of

the utter impossibility of the attempt to limit
that which is infinite.

Jesus had hardly finished his brave and
 noble life, devoted to breaking the mercenary
 system of Judaism, and infusing into peoples
 lives, the common purpose of love to God and
 love to man, ^{when} then his followers made their futile
 attempt to organize the Christian Church into
 a communistic society. It seems somewhat
 sad and pathetic to see how soon the followers
 of a teacher, whose teaching was so large and
 so free, whose purpose was so high and so
 noble, attempt to bind and limit his influence
 by the restrictions of community holding all things
 in common. Jesus conception of life and the
 soul was so broad so grand that this
 feeble attempt to interfere with his conception

of life, in terms of land, bread and material
wealth, and that so soon after his death, only
sever to drive home to us the truth of how little
Jesus life was appreciated even by his most
closest followers. With all due regard to
the enthusiasm and spirit with these few
people organized themselves into this community
it still remains true that it was a short
lived venture, without apparently any volatile
revolt either for the communists themselves
or the cause to which they had bound them-
selves. In fact when we get together the
forages in Paul's first letter in which he refers
to the saints at Jerusalem, and the great
effort which he made in collecting money
for the support of the saints at Jerusalem

we cannot but feel that there lurked in Paul's mind some infatuation, not to say contempt for those few who attempted, to limit the spirit of Jesus life, by that same life which sent Paul preaching and teaching all over the civilized world of his time, to endure undue ridicule and suffer punishment in seeking earnestly higher things.

This attempt failed, as others of the same nature have always failed, and always will, because they are based on misconceptions concerning life and death.

In the first place we do not always remember what constitutes one right to property. I take a piece of wood, and from that wood I construct a table, my hawel has sanded, cut, and

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finished it, my brain too concerned of the
flow of the talk, and directed my hand in
the execution of the pen. That talk is mine
because it is stamped with my personality,
because by the sweat of my brow it was made.
Why is it that you and I care for a spot of
ground called our home, our farm, more than
we do for all the rest of the world. Simply
because that spot is stamped with our
personality, every bit is associated with
something that we have done. Why do you
and I care for some one book in our library
much more than we do for books just like
it in other libraries. It is because the
leaves of that book have been turned by
our hands, the pencil marks along the

margins referent on thought. Why do you care for this church more here in comparison with some other more elegant and costly, because this refers to your work, your labor, your thought, your sacrifice, and it is that that makes it yours. Upon this ground, the stowing of our personality upon some object outside of us rests our claim to our property.

Now it may happen I can make tables better than you can, but you can make chairs better than I can. So I will make a table for you, while you make a chair for me. because we think that it is for the advantage of one living to have both tables and chairs. Then in consideration of the fact that you give up your claim to your extra chair, I will give up my claim to the extra

table, we exchange. Both are better off than we were before. Thus we keep on exchanging each other property, until we have about us all that is worth while for life - home, comforts, books, music, art, opportunity to work. We have accumulated wealth by the interchange of our property and products of our personalities. For wealth is that which avails for life and noble living. as Pushkin says, wealth is that which makes possible the attainment of the purpose of life, which Paul describes to desire earnestly the higher things of life.

But in the interchange of these things which constitute wealth, man discovered that it would be very convenient to have a medium of exchange, so that if I had a table to

exchange for a piece of land. I could sell
the table to the man who wanted it, and
go and buy from the man who wished to
sell the land, and carry from the man to whom
I had sold the table, the money, medium of
exchange, and give it to the man from whom
I bought the land. That is a very convenient
device, but the mischief came into the
arrangement, when people began to think
this money, a very convenient yard stick
~~was~~ was worth itself, just as if you or I should
go to a store and ask for 20 yards of cloth, and
the storekeeper should give us 20 metal yard =
sticks worth in the market just as much ^{as} of the
the cloth, and we should run home to make
a cheer out of twenty yard sticks. So people

file of money, metal yardsticks, thinking that it is wealth, when it isn't wealth, and never was wealth, and never can be wealth, for that only is wealth which avails for higher and better living, and higher and better living cannot be estimated in terms of metal yardsticks.

Now these early disciples of Jesus made this same mistake of estimating the worth of life in terms of money, and thought that by shunning all their possessions into one common file they had solved the problem of life. Their dream failed because it does not recognize that the right to property depends upon the sweat of our brow, and impressing our personality upon some

object, or some form whether it is working a
chain, running a railroad, or as servant
of the government. It failed because it
does not recognize that wealth is that which
makes life better, richer and more simple.

Property of some kind, wealth in some degree are
necessary to the interpretation of life, but
life itself can no more be satisfied with
or confined to the limits of property and
wealth than can the power of electricity be
confined within a few electric generators.

Community of goods as a means of expressing
the higher life, the ^{common} purpose of living fails us.

Christian

This form of the early followers of Jesus
the ~~Christian~~ failed to satisfy as does the

other plan of awaring large amounts of money
and thinking you have become wealthy. After
a brief experiment the idea of the commun-
ity of goods died out, but they had so soon
learned their first lesson that they entered
upon another plan equally or disastrous.
They attempted to express the figure of their
living by a community of ideas, and
then began the development of needs. By
the year 325 we find the need fairly
well defined, and the church started
out on its career of living under a
community of ideas. They attempted to
dump all their ideas into one common
form, and to live within the limits
prescribed by the needs produced.

But a life of living such as this has even greater difficulties, than the life of community of goods, and its woes were serious dangers. A man cannot say "I believe," singly, because some one tells him so. He can only say "I believe" when the truth that he believes has become a fact of his nature, stamped by his personality, true to his experience and his deepest present thought. When he says "I believe" to a statement which he does not believe, which is not true to his experience, he forfeits his self respect, and his right to utter truth.

We exchange our ideas as best we may by the use of words and forms. In all our intellectual life, we are so much

in danger of mistaking mere words and statements for the truth that we are behind them. We turn to a worn out creed, long since free from all life and meaning and truth that is valuable to life and say "I believe" just as one might count over bills of unredeemable money and say I have wealth. It may not be very bad for the man who is counting the unpreserved money to say to himself I have wealth but when he hands that money over to some unsuspecting person in exchange for property he becomes a villain. It may not be bad for a man to reflect those meaningless creeds to himself, but when he hands them over to others or if stamped with his

approval, he is upon very doubtful ground.
Sometimes when I hear the pessimistic cry going
about that society is becoming corrupt, that
business men no longer hold to the
Christian law of business, that people no longer
live up to their sacred marriage vows, the
thought often comes to me, "How much of
this looseness is due to signing of church
creeds which those who sign do not believe
and those who cause them to be signed
do not believe." Why should a young man
and woman who have been told to sign a
certain creed whether they believe it or not,
why should they take any more seriously the
marriage vows made before the same
alter, and in the presence of the same

people, and in the name of the same God.
When we go into a great library and see the
books that have been written to express the
ideas of men, the absurdity of thinking
that we can express our belief within
the limits of a creed, and that creed
a thousand years old, the absurdity of
living under the system of a community
of ideas cover over us with such
force, as to make us wonder why we
ever attempted it, to ^{any} nothing of why it
still continues. Freed from all those standards
our words fail for their real value, the
value which is set upon by the stamp
of our own personal integrity and
honor, the value which they contain for

high life.

No! we cannot fit into a creed however large, however swell it may be, that gives no hope of our life which is so fondly expressed even by all the symbols of language, which are at our command, to enclose truth in a book that is infallible. Living under the community of intellect, as represented by adherence to a common creed is without and inconsistent with personal integrity and does not give free play for the infinite varieties in which truth manifests itself. Plainly, but surely the creeds are failing, simply because they do not and cannot express our real belief, and are in no way adequate to cloth the great truths.

that you and I feel to be the very fact
of our nature. The community of thought
is as false a basis upon which to unite
in a common work, as the community
of goods. The man who binds himself
to a creed, deceiving himself with the
idea that it is truth, is even more in
error than the man who counts his money
and thinks he is wealthy, for the money
may fail as current value for fifty
by but the creed is like the money of
a government long since wicked and
scattered upon the shores of history. The
money of an old time nation is intact
and for some value, as a relic of the
past. The creed of an age that is past

is interesting as for some value as an historic reli., but as a living vital force in the life of men, and as a standard mechanical device to unite us in a common cause, it has no more value than any other dead shell of an earlier age.

So, we cannot find our basis upon which to unite and give expression to our purpose either in the world of things, or the world of thought, so be sure we love our church which we own in common, to be sure we have many ideas which we own in common, but the only flame upon which we can unite in our common work is the flame of the spirit, the flame

upon which we very all stand looking forward to the realization of those high purposes that are before us. We cast aside as common and inadmissible the idea of uniting ourselves upon the low basis of things, or within the limits of creeds, and boldly pledge our selves to a common purpose of forgetting the things that are behind and pressing forward to the things that are before. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report. if there be any praise think on these things." To realize the best and the highest ideals of life.

to which our minds by the utmost study
and thought can attain, that is the com-
mon future that binds.,.

But we realize that the growth into
these ideals must take us through paths of labor
and study, and devotion. We have besides
this great purpose of climbing to the top of
the mountain, the more immediate purpose
of finding our way carefully step by step
among the rocks, trees and ravines at
the base. We have the work of this climb
to do, we have to help each other to find
the way. we may have to construct a
bridge across the streams that prevent our
advances, we have to clear the way and
blaze the trail for others who may come

after us.

In this work, in traveling each day's journey, cover the difficulty. We can all get to a point of vantage, and in perfect hawkeye gaze longingly at the vision on the mountain top, but when we take our eyes from the vision and put ourselves to the immediate task before, then comes the danger of friction, and uneasiness. So let us gaze so intently at the vision on the mountain, that as we go about our daily tasks, of picking our way up the mountain side, always that mental image of that vision may be within us to half when things go wrong, and we become impatient or disengaged. Sometimes for a long distance

as you struggle, the vision at the top will be obscured, by some obstacle, some ~~too~~ failing cloud, but always it is there, and the memory of it must keep us encouraged as we slowly too climb up, up, up.

If we have obstacles to overcome, we will take mine come together, each one contributing his part to the whole truth through the power of which the obstacles are to be put behind us. If we hence work to do each one will do his part, and thus working together, day by day we can put behind us the difficulties which seem so tremendous. Always we are inspired by the vision on the mountain top, which is still fresh in our minds. Always we are quickened

to work harmonious action by the thought
of our community of purpose, experienced
so simply by the ancient prophet. They
hew every one his neighbor; and every
one scith to his brother Be of good courage.
So the confuter evenazeth the goldsmith
and he that smootheth with the hammer
him that smiteth the anvil. saying of the
soldering It is good.