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Community of Purpose

Earl Clement Davis

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Pulyiet: aumunity of Purfore.

Scription. Acts 432-37 / Cor 124-31.

"Left JAA. 4167 they bely every one his neighbor:
and every one raith to his per Bother. Be of good smorpe

Bor the conferm encomageth the gold smith, and
he that swortheth with the formula him that

switch the aunil, reging of the saldwing "It is
good".

When such a good of fertle stat token a new forgest or senter into a new comfact of whotens ship, there always arises a clesice to give out: ward recognition to their common furface by some mechanical system which shell brief them together into one fold and under one sign. This desire has wanifested it self in variant forms, the community of goods, elevizing

the sight of frivote ownership of frogerty has been tried again and again, and bor shorps failed. a comme creed has also here used and is still used, This is a wetterd which in there devices the right of free thought. and is in fact an intellection impossibility. Two always have feefle recognized the fact that in the very nature of things the only hinging lunding force essential and forsible is the community of fugure, or as Paul mys to desire savestly the higher things. There warion wethods of explaining in a limited muchanical system that which is executally infinite in manifestation have been trick time and again sluving the textury of the Christie church, and they have failed, because of

the utter impossibility of the attempt to built that which is infinite. ferus had harrly finished his frame and wable life, devoted to breaking the merhanial system of fuctorin, and infusing into fugles lines, the courinn funface of home to god and lore to wor, the his followers works their futile attempt to organize the Christin church into a commistic society. It seems somewhat sail and fothetic to see how soon the followers of a teacher, where teaching wer so large and so fue, who fufre wer so high and so wohle, stempt to brick and limit his influence by the restrictions of community bolding are things in course. Jesus conseftin of life and the sort war so trovel so gravel that This fuble attempt to interfact his conceptions

of life, in terms of land, head and mothered wealth, and that so som after his death, only sever to dive home to us the touth of how little Jesur life wer affected even by his wort closest followers. Mith all close regard to the enthusiasm, and spirit with there few fufle organized themselves into this community it still remains two that it was a short hind neutine, without affarently any volvoble results either for the commists themselves or the cause to which they had brund them : selve. In fact when we gent together the foreger in Paris & firther in which he refer to the Saints at Jensolen, and the quest effects which he work in collecting wenny for the suffert of the Saints at Jernsolen

Paul's surinch some importance, voit to say thus content for three few who attempted, to himit the spirit of fewer life, by that some life which sent Paul freeding and teaching and teaching and training and which the civilized world of his time, to end me medice richards and suffer funishment in seeking earnestly higher things.

This attempt failed, as other of the same notes have showed failed, and always will became they are based on wisconceptions concerning life and meath.

In the first flare we do not always remember what constitutes one right to ferferty. I take a fixe of wood, and from that would construct a table, Try havel has sowed, cut, and

finished it, my hair for conceined of the flow of the take, and directed my havel in the execution of the flow. That toke is wine because it is storfed with my farmality. became by the sweet of my how it was mide. My is it that you and I save for a spot of genel collect our home, our faire, were there we do for all the sent of the world. Simply because that sfort is storufed with on feremality, every bit is associated with something that we have show. Why do you and I care for some one to book in our library much were the we do for books just like it in other libaries. It is because the leaver of that book have her tuned by on lovels, the famile marks slung the

warging referent our Thought. Why do you care for this church have here in comparison with some other were elegant and with, " herame this refresents your work, your lober, your Thught, your racefire, and it is that that wohen't yours. Upon this gurnel, the storfing of our fermality upon some object out: side of us sests our claim to our proferty. how it way boffer I am wohe tobler better then you con, but you can works clairs better the I con. So I wohe a table for you, while you woke a chair for me. because we think that it is for the adventige of one living to two both tobles and chair. Then in consideration of the fast That you give of your claim to your extra chair, I will give of my slaim to the extra

table. We exchange. Both are better off then we were before. Thus we keep on exchanging each other feoferty, until we have about us all that is with while for life; home, comfats, books, music, act. offuturily to work. he Same accumulated mosth by the intuchinge of one ferferty, and products for ferendities. for wealth is that which avails for high and voble living, as Ruskin sop, health is that which wohen for when the attainment of the Jungere of life, which Paul describer to desire, earnestly the legher things of life. But in the interchange of there Things which contitute wealth, men discoved that it world be very convenient to brea a weeking of enchange, so that if I had a table to

exchange for a frice of level, I swed sell the toble to the urn who wanted it, and go and floy from the un who wished to sell the level, and say from the were to whom I had sold the table, the woney, weclim of exchange, and give it to the won from whom I brought the level, That is a very sorrement device, but the mirchief come into the anaugement, when ferfle began to think this wrien, a very convenient youd stick were mostly itself, Just as if you ad should go to a store and ash for 20 yards of sloth, and the strekefer should give us 20 metal yard: sticks with in the workst just as went of the the cloth, and we should seen fine to write a cheer out of twenty youl sticke. In feofle

file of woney, wetob yould tiche, thinking that it is mosth, when it is not, and never wor mosth, and never can be weath, for that only is mosth which avails for higher and better living, and higher and better himing count be estimated in terms of metal yard ticks.

how there early discifler of Jerus works this some wintoke of estimating the worth of life in terms of wowey, and thought that by dunfing see their formeries into one com: were file they book solved the fewtlem of life. Their shear failed became it does not recognize that the right to proferty defends upon the sweat of our brow, and infracing our ferserably upon some

object, or some flow whether it is working a chair, running a raidrood, or as servont of the government. It failed became it does not serginge that wealth is that which woken life letter, sicher and were simple. Proferty of semekind, wealth in some clegace are necessary to the interpretation of life, but life itself un vo war be sotisfied with or confined to the himility feeferty and weath the some the former of electricity be corefined within a few sleeting generators. Commity of goods as a wear of expressing the higher ligs, the furface of living fails us. Elin flea This flew of the early follower of fewer

of filing failed to satisfy as slower the

other flow of awaring large awants of womey and thinking you have become wealthy. Often a brief experiment the idea of the commune ity of goods chiel ort. but they had we some leaved their first leven thou they entired ofm another flow egwolly or directions. They attempted to expect the fugre of their living by a commity of ideas, and then begin the development of exects. By the year 325 me find the need fairly well defined, and the church started out on its cause of living under a community of iclear. They otherflul to dung sel their iclear into one common form, and to live within the hunity frescribed by the usech fevelused.

But a flue of living such as this has even quester difficulties, then the flux of commity of goods, and it involves were serious changes. a une count say I believe! swife, because some one tells him to, He can only say I believe' when the trutt that he believes how become a fact of his nature, stamped by his ferovolity, true to his experience and his defect present thought. when he soys I believe" to a stolement which he does vot believe, which to is not true to his experience, he fufils his self respect, and his right to utter truth.

by the me of words and forms. In all our intellecture life, we are so much

in change of mistohing were words and stolements for the touth that was once behind them. We turn to a worn out creed, longer since free from all life and meaning and truth that is wohntle to life and soy I belie" just as one might count one bills of confecterate woney and say I have weath, It way out he very boll for the won who is counting the con: pederate unney to say to himself I have wealth but when he hands that woney over to some unsurfecting farm in exchange for frosty, he becomes a villain. It way vot be tool for a won to refer there meaningles creek to himself, but when he hovels them over to other on if stimped with his

affrovol, he is upon very dent of grewel. Sometimes when I have the fusionistic cry going shood that society is becoming corrupt, that business were wo larger bold to the I third hour of busines, that fugle we large live of to their saved mariage nows, the thought often cover to we. How wuch of this loquer is she to signing of church creech which three who sign do not believe and thre who same them to be signed do not believe." Why sohold a young were and weren who have been told to sign a sestain seed whether they believe it a vot, why should they to be any were seriously the manige wome works before the serve often, and in the framewore of the serve

feefle, and in the name of the some book. When the grinter a great likery and see the broks that here been wither to expens the idear of ween, the obsurchity of thinking that we con expere our beliefs within the himle of a need, and the need a thousand year old, the absunching of living under the system of a community of iclear corner over some with such force, as to woke us worden why were was attempted it, to wothing of why it still centimes. Fued from all fole standards our words for for their real volue, the volve which is fut upon by the story of our our ferend integrity and Sover, the value which they centim for

high life.

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is intenting as for some volve as an historic relie, but as a living with force in the lift of wow, and as a standard westowisch device to mite us in a common cause, it has we was volve than any other dead shell of are earlier age.

lo, we count find our basis upon which to with and give expression to our frofice either in the world of things, or the world of thought, In he sure we have our church which we own in common, to be some we have wray ideas which we own in coverer, but the only flain when which we are with in our comme work is the flain of the spirit, the flair

ufor which we way set stind looking forward to the reality abin of thre high furfores that are before us. We cast asiele as courson and inaclegrate the idea of uniting omselves upon the low basis of things, or within the limits of creeds, and boldly fleelye on selver to a course fugeree of frigitting the things that are behind and flessing forward to the things that are before. Intotrouver things are two, whotsoever thing are honorable whotrown things are just, whitsoever things are five, who trouver things are linely, who traver Things are of good refert. if there he any fraise that on there things." To realize the hert and the highest ideals of life.

to which our minds by the utwent study and theyat con ottain, that is the com = were fufue that briefs,

But we realize that the growth with thre ideals sunt tohe us through father of labor and stirly, and devotine. We have besichs This great furfre of chimbring to the top of the wountain, the were immediate furfue of fiching on way earfuly step by step aving the works, their and navines at the base. We have the work of this church to dr, we have to hely each other to find the way, we way have to construct a bridge across the steams that fewert on actornes, we have to clear the way and Alaze the trail for others who way some

after us.

In this work, in traveling each chaps joiney, comes the clifficulty. We can all get to a friet of vortige, and in ferfect harvery goze longungly at the vision on the wountain tof, but when we toke our eyes from the wisin and fut meelines to the immechite took before, then comes the elinger of friction, and uneasiner. for let us goge so interthy at the minim on the wountain, that as we go short on daily tasks, of fiching our way uf the wown = tain side, shown that mental singe of that vision way be within us to helf when things go mong, and we become infatient or discourged. Some times for a long chatterine

as you stuggle, the suision at the top will to observed, by some obstrile, some tog foring shoot, but always it is thee, and the wewvery of it must keep us encouraged as we slowly to climb off, uf. uf. of me here obstacles to one come, we will toke mise comine together, were one curtie: buting his fact to the whole truth though the former of which the obstailer are to be futhehind us. If we have work to do each one will do his fact, and thus working to-gether, day by day we can fort behind us the difficulties which seem so tremendous. always we are inspired by the vision on the woulding top, which is still perh in our winds, always we are quickend

to wor harmonion action by the thight of our community of furfre, expensel so simply by the auxient profest. They hef every one his weighter; and every me swith to his brother Br of good wronge. for the conferte everyth the goldwith and he that swortheth with the former him that switteth the auxil. saying of the soldering It is good.

Community of Purpose

Earl Clement Davis

Harvard University

No Date

Scripture: Acts 4:32-37; 1-Corinthians 12:4-31.

Text: Isaiah 41:6-7: "They helped everyone his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good courage.' So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothest with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil saying of the soldering, 'It is good.'"

Whenever a group of people take up a new project or enter into a new compact of relationship, there always arises a desire to give outward recognition to their common purpose by some mechanical system which shall bind them together into one fold and under one sign. This desire has manifested itself in various forms. The community of goods, denying 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 impossibility. Not always have people recognized the fact that in the very nature of things the only 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 mechanical system of Judaism, and infusing into peoples' lives the common purpose of Love to God and love to man, when his followers made their futile

¹ 1-Corinthians 12:31.

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 interpret his conception of life in terms of land, bread and material wealth, and that so soon after his death, only seems to drive home to us the truth of how little Jesus' life was appreciated even by his closest followers. With all due regard to the enthusiasm and spirit with these few people [as they] organized themselves into this community, it still remains true that it was a shortlived venture, without apparently any valuable results either for the communists themselves or the cause to which they had bound themselves. In fact when we group together the passages in Paul's epistles in which he refers to the Saints at Jerusalem, and the great efforts 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 impatience, not to say contempt, for those few who attempted thus to limit the spirit of Jesus' life, that same life which sent Paul preaching and teaching all over the civilized world of his time, to endure 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 wealth.

In the first place we do not always remember what constitutes our right of property. I take a piece of wood, and from that wood I construct a table. My hand has sawed, cut and finished it. My brain has conceived of the plan of the table, and directed my hand in the execution of the plan. That table 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 represent our thought. Why do you care for this

church house here in comparison with some other more elegant and costly? Because this represents your work, your labor, your thought, your sacrifice, and it is that that makes it yours. Upon this ground, the stamping of our personality upon some object outside of us, rests our claim to own property. Now it may happen I can make tables better than you can, but you can make chairs better than I can. So I make a table for you, while you make a chair for me. Because we think that it is for the advantage of our living to have both tables and chairs, then in consideration of the fact that you give up your claim to your extra chairs, 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's property, until we have about us all that is worthwhile 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 high and noble living, as Ruskin 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.2

But in the interchange of these things which constitute wealth, men 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 yardstick, is wealth 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 yardsticks worth in the market just as much as the cloth, and we should run home to make a dress out of twenty yardsticks. So people pile up money, metal yardsticks, thinking that it is wealth, when

John Ruskin (1891-1900) in his 1862 essay, "Unto this Last," wrote "There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. The country is the richest which nourishes the greatest numbers of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest, who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others." (Section 77.)

it is not 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 dumping 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 plan whether it is making a chair, 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 is 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.

This plan of the early followers of Jesus failed to satisfy as does the other plan of amassing large amount of money and thinking you have become wealthy. After a brief experiment, the idea of the community of goods died out. But they had no sooner learned their first lesson than they entered upon another plan equally as disastrous. They attempted to express the purpose of their living by a community of ideas, and then began the development of creeds. By the year 325 we find the creed 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 creeds produced.

But a plan of living such as this has even greater difficulties than the plan of community of goods, and it involves more serious dangers. A man cannot say, "I believe," simply because someone tells him to. He can only say, "I believe," when the truth that he believes has become a part of his nature, stamped by his personality, true to his experience and his deepest freest 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 was once behind them. We turn to a worn out creed, long since free from all meaning and truth that is valuable to life, and say, "I believe," just as one might count over bills of confederate money and say I have wealth. It may not be very bad for the man who is counting the confederate money to say to himself, "I have wealth," but when he hands that money over to some unsuspecting person in exchange for property, he become a villain. It may not be bad for a man to repeat those meaningless creeds to himself, but when he hands them over to others as if stamped with his approval, he is upon very doubtful ground. Sometimes when I hear the pessimistic cry going abroad that society is becoming corrupt, that businessmen no longer hold to the ethical laws of business, that people no longer live up to their sacred marriage vows, the thought often comes to me, "How much of this laxness 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 beliefs 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 comes over with such force, as to make me wonder why man ever attempted it, to say nothing of why it still continues. Freed from all fake standards, our words pass for their real value, the value which is put upon by the stamp of our own personal integrity and honor, the value which they contain for high life.

No! We cannot put into a creed, however large, however small it may be, that great purpose of our life which is so poorly expressed even by all the symbols of languages which are at our command. To enclose truth in a book, that is impossible. Living under the community of intellect, as represented by adherence to a common creed is impossible

and inconsistent with personal integrity and does not give free play for the infinite varieties in which truth manifests itself. Slowly, but surely the creeds are passing, simply because they do not and cannot express our real belief, and are in no way adequate to the cloth the great truths that you and I feel to be the very part of our nature. The community of thought is as fake 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 pass as current value for property but the creed is like the money of a government long since wrecked and scattered upon the shores of history. The money of an old time nation is interesting and of some value as a relic of the past. The creed of an age that is past is interesting as [it] has some value as an historic relic, but as a living vital force in the life of man, and as a mechanical device to unite us in a common cause, it has no more value than any other dead shell of an earlier age.

No, 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. To be sure we have our church which we own in common, to be sure we have many ideas which we own in common, but the only plane upon which we can unite in our common work is the plane of the spirit, the plane upon which we may all stand looking forward to the realization of those high purposes that are before us. We cast aside as common and inadequate the idea of uniting ourselves upon the low basis of things, or within the limits of creeds, and boldly pledge ourselves to a common purpose of forgetting the things that are behind and pressing forward to the things that are before. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any praise, think on these things."3 To realize the best and highest ideals of life to which our minds, by the utmost study and thought, can attain, that is the common purpose 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

³ Philippians 4:8.

the mountain, the more immediate purpose of picking our way carefully step-by-step among the rocks, trees and ravines at the base. We have the work of this church 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 advance, we have to clean the way and blaze the trail for other who may come after us.

In this work, in traveling each day's journey, comes the difficulty. We can all get to a point of vantage, and in perfect harmony 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 mountainside always that mental image of that vision may be within us to help when things go wrong, and we become impatient or discouraged. Sometimes for a long distance as you struggle, the vision at the top will be obscured by some obstacle, some passing cloud. But always it is there, and the memory of it must keep us encouraged as we slowly climb up, up, up.

If we have obstacles to overcome, we will take wise council 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 have 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 more harmonious action by the thoughts of our community of purpose, expressed so simply by the ancient prophets. "They helped everyone his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good courage.' So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothest with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil saying of the soldering, 'It is good.'"