

DOES STRICTNESS KILL THE CHURCH?

There are those who are fearful about the proclamation of radical truths lest the church will not grow. But it is compromise that kills, a turning away from the fundamental doctrines and turning to the world for entertainment and support that paralyzes the church. This has always been true and will continue to be true until the end comes.

Some also are afraid of fanatics. There are a thousand compromisers for every fanatic to be found in the churches. There are those who are so fearful about fanaticism that they swing to the other side of the road and completely fill the ditch of formalism. We have no use for fanatics or formalists either, but the latter, because of their great numbers and more dangerous propaganda, are more to be dreaded than the former.

The Lutheran Witness published the following editorial recently on the subject, "Does Strictness Kill the Church?" and we reproduce it for the benefit of our readers:

Kill the church? Why, it is the only thing that will keep it alive! Still, the expression is sometimes heard in the conversation of professed Christians, Lutherans, maybe, that the church will never succeed unless it becomes more liberal, gives up its narrowness and strictness.

Now, in the first place, it is not our business at all to save the church or to build the church. That is the Lord's business. Preachers and people have only one business—to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. One thing is required of them, that they love their Lord and Master and be obedient to His will. Then, by their testimony to His teachings, God wants to build and preserve the church. It is not their business at all to consider whether these teachings are popular, or whether those who hold them will be regarded as bigots, fanatics, as narrow and pharisaical. They are to trust the good Lord that He has made no mistake in commissioning them to preach exactly what he taught His evangelists and apostles, the divinely ordained teachers until the day of judgment, to set forth in the Scriptures. If we are going to listen to this fleshly complaining about "strictness" and "narrowness," where do you suppose this thing will end? Do you know that the world generally believes that there is no difference at all between the teachings of the pope and those of the church of the Reformation? They call these differences, which touch nearly every single doctrine that Jesus taught, "hair-splitting."

Some will not go that length. Of course, they say Romanism will never do; we must teach the gospel. But why be so narrow in our judgments of what is right and wrong? For instance, about the dance, the theatre, lodges.

Instead of arguing this point, let me just draw your attention to a significant fact: Which are the powerful, independent, growing church-bodies? Those, undoubtedly, which hew to the line of those doctrines and principles which they hold to be true. Why, in other quarters, this tendency toward union? Is it not a sign of weakness and helplessness? They see the people slipping away from them and hope

to save the situation through strong organization. Look about you and tell me, which church-buildings are standing empty and disused in your city or county? Which have the dwindling audiences? Is it not those of the liberal type?

Have you ever seen an abandoned Lutheran church? How many of our congregations can you mention that are going backward even financially? What does it mean that many are hardly able, many quite unable, to accommodate the worshippers on Sunday morning? Some Reformed Churches, very few, draw crowds through the reputation of the preacher as a pulpit orator. But the majority even of the Reformed churches which are well attended are churches of the conservative, the "strict" type. Men want something definite in religion. The consistent, fearless church is the strong church. Recently the Expositor received a letter from a preacher in Minneapolis, in which the writer explains the means employed by him to "draw the crowds." "Not movie shows or any other kind of worldliness," but "the preaching of the old-time gospel of Jesus!" He has had an increase in membership from 700 to 1,200 in seven ones the first year I was here. God helped us to get rid of them without any disturbance or ill-will." Whether evangelical church of worldly-minded members, the record does not say. But strictness did not kill that church. It now supports five of its own missionaries and ten native workers in various heathen lands. No suppers or auctions or tricks to raise the money; the people just plainly give. Common working people constitute the congregation. Three thousand people attend services every Sunday.

Strictness does not hurt the church. With us, strictness means that we take God at His Word, that we accept His Commission as it reads, and are not swerved by the cry for a "liberal" gospel from our endeavors to preach the will of God as we know it.—Free Methodist.

MANIA FOR PLEASURE.

"One great bane of modern society is the mania for a good time. Money is squandered recklessly and evening after evening consumed in idle indulgence of fleshly lusts. Spendthrift habits are swallowing up family earnings, and family ties are torn to shreds. Home becomes a mere lodging house and each one follows his wild bent for gay frolics. O, for a restoration of the family fireside, homely joys, loving co-operation, wholesome habits of industry, and that godly contentment sweeter than the gayest orgies of the gay. Then home becomes the sweetest refuge, love its atmosphere, co-operation its rule."—Selected.

HIS GREATEST DISCOVERY.

When Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform and one of the greatest scientists of Scotland, was asked what he considered his greatest discovery, he replied: "The greatest discovery I ever made is that I am a great sinner, and that Jesus Christ is a great Saviour."

TWO KINDS OF READING.

A young boy found that he could read with interest nothing but sensational stories. The best books were placed in his hands, but they were not interesting.

One afternoon, as he was reading a foolish story, he heard someone say, "That boy is a great reader; does he read anything that is worth reading?"

"No," was the reply. "His mind will run out if he keeps on reading after his present fashion. He used to be a sensible boy until he took to reading nonsense and nothing else."

The boy sat still for a time, then arose, went up to the man and asked him whether he would let him have a good book to read.

"Will you read a good book if I let you have one?"

"Yes, sir."

"It will be hard for you."

"I will do it."

"Well, come to my home with me, and I will lend you a good book."

He went with him, and received the volume the man selected.

"There," said the man, "read that, and come and tell me what you have read."

The lad kept his promise. He found it hard work to read simple and wise sentences, but he persevered. The more he read the more he talked with his friend about what he read, the more interested he became.

Ere long he felt no desire to read the feeble and foolish books. Besides, his mind began to grow. He came to be spoken of as an intelligent, promising young man, and his prospects are bright for a successful career.

He owes everything to the reading of good books and to the gentleman who influenced him to read them.—Presbyterian Record.

JOHN WESLEY'S STANDARD.

A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; one who loves the Lord his God with his heart, mind, soul and strength. He rejoices evermore, prays without ceasing, and in everything is full of love to all mankind, and is purified from envy, malice, wrath, and every unkind affection. His one desire and the one design of his life is not to do his own will, but to do the will of Him who sent him. He keeps all of God's commandments, from the least to the greatest. He follows not the customs of the world, for vice does not lose its nature through becoming fashionable. He fares not sumptuously every day. He can not lay up treasures upon the earth, nor can he adorn himself with gold or costly apparel. He can not join in any diversion that has the least tendency to vice. He can not speak evil of his neighbor any more than he can tell a lie. He can not utter unkind or evil words, nor does corrupt communication ever come out of his mouth. He does good unto all men—unto neighbors, strangers, friends and enemies. These are the principles and practices of our sect. These are the marks of a true Methodist. By these alone do Methodists desire to be distinguished from other men.—John Wesley.