

The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness—Isa. 40:3.

VOL. XXXIV.

MONCTON, N. B., JUNE 30, 1925.

NO. 124

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

The cross will ever be the central object in Christian experience. It stands for the atonement to which the types and shadows of the Levitical economy directed the minds of pre-Christian worshippers, and around which the affections of the pious Christian will lovingly cling. Some place images of the cross upon church spires, or wear them as ornamental badges of discipleship. The cross has found its way into song and story and is venerated as an essential of Christian experience. There can be no Christianity dissociated from the cross. It has made sacred the Mount of Calvary, forever marking the place where issued the holy waters seen by Ezekiel, rejoicing the earth. Upon a thing of such importance we may well afford to spend a little time in reflection.

There appears to be three senses in which the cross is presented in the Scriptures. First, as a literal instrument of torture and death. Our Lord bore such a cross on the way to Golgotha, and upon it suffered and bled and died the ignominious death of an alleged criminal in the midst of those who really were such. Upon those the tragedy of the ages was enacted, the chains of justice satisfied, the prison doors were opened to them that were bound and redemption accomplished for a lost race. The followers of Christ do not take up a literal cross, nor suffer upon one, but there is a sense in which they take up the cross of Christ and are crucified.

This leads us to the consideration, in the second place, of the mystical sense in which the cross is used in the Scriptures. As Christ went to Calvary and there upon the cruel cross expired, so we, recognizing Christ as our substitute, by our acceptance of Him as such, identify ourselves with Him so that we see ourselves in Him taking our cross, marching to our Calvary and there being executed, thus in a mystical sense paying the penalty for our sins.

The sinful, responsible, moral character, which convicted of guilt, was by the law of justice sentenced to death—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"—now expiates his crime, is crucified, dies and ceases to be. True, Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live" (Gal. 2:20) but he does not mean that he did not meet death on the cross. He died—but the life he now lives is by virtue of a spiritual resurrection.

Hear him: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"—his identity preserved, but a change of character effected. The former sinful character is crucified and

dead, yet by virtue of being raised to newness of life he is constituted a new character and lives anew by faith.

It certainly is a serious mistake to conclude from Gal. 2:20 that, though crucified, death has not ensued and that the moral character which was crucified is still alive. The soul truly still lives and identity inheres in this, but the moral character which was crucified is dead and a new moral character has arisen in his place. Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." That this in the mythical sense meant death, is clear from the next verse: "For whosoever will save his life (i. e., will not take up the cross) shall lose it." That is to say, if a man will not lose his sinful, fleshly, moral life by execution upon the cross, he will lose the spiritual life which he is supposed to be seeking. This shows that it is not the same moral character living which was crucified.

There is no thought in the Scriptures more comforting to the penitent sinner than this: That we may by the scheme of salvation so identify ourselves with Christ that His atoning death is ours—that we die in Him, and pay the penalty for sin through the death, and, further, that we may identify ourselves with His burial because we have died and must be put out of His presence and that we may rise to newness of life in Christ Jesus—and "live anew by the faith of the Son of God." Not that this experience is a mere mental gymnastic. It is an experience safeguarded by the established conditions of the atonement, and requires acceptable moral attitudes. For example, though Christ died for all yet the atonement does not become operative for responsible transgressors until conditions are met. This precaution, and this alone, provides for "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," without which the moral government of God fails. It was an essential provision for the moral security of heaven that the flaming sword was placed at the gateway to the tree of life to guard the way to this tree lest the impenitent and unbelieving eat of it and live forever in their sins.

The analogy between the ordinance of marriage and union with Jesus Christ may serve to further illustrate the conditional operation of the atonement. This ordinance demands the forsaking of all others and the keeping of oneself to one's accepted choice so long as they both shall live. Likewise, it is demanded of us that we should forsake the world and sin and all other loves and keep ourselves only unto Christ as long as we shall live. Under these conditions, and these only, can spiritual union with Christ be effected.

This puts the experience of identifying

ourselves with Christ clear beyond the idea of a mental syllogism and puts it into the realm of acceptable moral attitudes, leading to a real experience by the sense we do not take up our cross daily any more than we are daily executed and cease to be, and daily become new creatures. But this is an important, yea, the chief, sense in which we take up our cross. We should be devoutly thankful for the cross that thus settles the past account of sin and brings us to salvation.

Light on this feature of the cross dispels the darkness of moral night, inspires faith in the perplexed pilgrim along life's way, and enables him to make the crossing of the river of death.

"Which way shall I take," shouts a voice on the night:

"I'm a pilgrim aweared, and spent is my light;

And I seek for a palace that rests on a hill,

But between us a stream lieth, sullen and chill."

"Near, near thee, my son, stands the old wayside cross;

Like a grey friar cowed in lichen and moss;

And its cross beams will point to the bright golden span

That bridges the waters so safely for man."

Here upon Calvary's cross we die, and are freed from sin which was our master whom we served, and become servants of righteousness, our new master (Rom. 6:18).

Inasmuch as the law could not free us from the service of sin, we were bound to it as our master of life, and could be freed from it only with the termination of our life. Thus it is that when we die in Christ as our substitute, we are automatically freed from the service of sin, so, because we are crucified (Rom. 6:6; 7 and 8), we are to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin as our former master, and alive unto God as our new Master. "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (I. Pet. 4:1,2). Here is couched the same thought as that of Gal. 2:20 and 5:24. By means of the cross as an instrument of execution, we, in Christ as our substitute, pay the penalty for sin and in Him, expiring, cease from the service of sin because we can not serve when we are dead. Then by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead we are raised to newness of life and commence the service of our new master, righteousness.

In the provision of infinite wisdom the
(Continued on Page Five)