



The King's Highway

Miss Viola Churchill, June 48

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

"And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness."

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PAUL'S THREE MEN

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Text: "The natural man . . . "He that is spiritual . . . "Ye are yet carnal."—I. Corinthians 2:14-15; 3:3.

We sometimes hear it said that, from the Christian point of view, there are just two classes of people in the world: those who have saving faith and those who do not; those who are "born again," and those who are not. But if such a statement had been made in the presence of the Apostle Paul, he would have disagreed. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that he would have accepted the distinction but would have insisted that it be qualified.

Paul frankly divides us up into three groups—the "natural," the "carnal," and the "spiritual." The "carnal," according to his teaching, is an intermediate stage between the "natural" on the one hand and the "spiritual" on the other. In his treatment of the matter he speaks of these groups representatively as though they were three men. I want, with you, to look at them for a few moments. They deserve our most honest study. They are mirror-men in whom we may discover ourselves.

In the attempt to make our discussion as clear and helpful as possible I shall deal with these three propositions:

First, that "the natural man" stands for life lived on the level of instinct, moderated by conscience and environment;

Second, that "the carnal man" stands for life lived on the level of faith, mixed with selfishness; and

Third, that "the spiritual man" stands for life lived on the level of love, under the mastery of the Holy Spirit.

I.

Take now the first proposition: The "natural" man represents life on the level of instinct, moderated more or less by conscience and environment.

Immediately, it seems to me, we've got to clear the atmosphere of our thinking by saying a somewhat technical word about this adjective which is translated "natural." For all practical purposes it is an unfortunate and misleading translation. According to our common English usage the opposite of "natural" is "unnatural." Since Paul condemns this so-called "natural" man as being without the Spirit of God, the inference would be that the Christian, in possession of the Spirit and life of God, is "unnatural," that is queer or abnormal. To leave such an impression is certainly far from Paul's purpose. Actually what Paul believed and preached is that the only truly normal man on earth is the man of God!

It is difficult to carry over into English the

meaning of the Greek word from which the translators derived this term "natural." If a literal rendering were attempted, it would be the "psychical" man. Others have called it the "soulish" man. This at least puts us on a warm trail. Since the opposite of this "soulish" man is the "spiritual" man, it is evident that Paul has in mind those persons who simply live the one-dimensional life of self and sense. Their own emotions, desires, instincts, and appetites govern them. In this light read the verse in which appears the phrase we are examining, as translated by Moffatt: "The unspiritual man rejects these truths of the Spirit of God; to him they are 'sheer folly,' he cannot understand them. And the reason is that they must be read with the spiritual eye."

If you want another description of the same condition, take this passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, again in the Moffatt translation: "Now in the Lord I insist and protest that you must give up living like pagans; for their purposes are futile, and their intelligence is darkened, they are estranged from the life of God by the ignorance which their dullness of heart has produced in them" (Eph. 4:17-18). Pausing at this point, we might say that the picture presented is that of the "natural," or worldly, man at his best. But going into the clauses that follow, we see him at his worst: "men who have recklessly abandoned themselves to sensuality, with a lust for the business of impurity in every shape and form" (v. 19).

Here then is the life of the men and women who have never had but one birth—the birth of nature. They have never had a rebirth in which they have been lifted to a higher level than that of instinct. Therefore they live as they do on the level where they are.

The scenery on this plane of living isn't one bit pretty, dress it up and camouflage as we may. It is the plane where selfish desire is the lion that roars and rules, where people frankly want their own way, and so far as they can, they get it. It is the plane where man descends closest to the life of the beast. One dog wants another dog's bone. If he is big enough to take it away from the other dog, he does so.

If a young man is living on the level of instinct and he wants to gratify his desires at the expense of some young woman's chastity and future happiness, he does so. If an older man is living on the level of instinct and he is economically powerful enough to wrest a fortune out of the sweat of ill-paid workers or the weaknesses of ill-prepared competitors, he does so. If a woman is living on the level of instinct and she is in love with a man who is married to someone else, she will have her way with that man if she can, regardless of

what happens to his wife, his children, and his home. If an employer or an employee is living on the level of instinct, each one will give as little as possible and take as much as possible by every means possible—and the devil take the hindmost.

"A Savage Animal"

To be sure, these things are descriptive of the "natural," or worldly, man as he really is in his heart. In practical life he is moderated in his conduct according to the degree of training that his conscience has had. He is, moreover, throttled by the social pressures and the legal requirements with which he is surrounded. His animalism may be greatly modified by these influences, but until he is touched and transformed by the Spirit of God, it remains essentially unchanged.

Thus one listens to Theodore Dreiser as he declares, "Regardless of ideals or dreams or material equipment, [man is] an eating, savage animal, and in youth and often in age, his greatest appetite is sex." Thus, too, one hears Oswald Spengler, the philosopher and historian, as he grimly announces, "Man is a beast of prey. I shall say it again and again. All the would-be moralists and social-ethics people who claim or hope to be 'beyond all that' are only beasts of prey with their teeth broken . . . They are too weak to read a book on war . . . If I call man a beast of prey, which do I insult, man or beast? For remember, the larger beasts of prey are noble creatures, perfect of their kind, and without the hypocrisy of human morals due to weakness."

Of course that is harsh talk, and hard to take. And, because it sees nothing in man beyond this more or less refined animalism, it is not Christian talk. At the same time it is a terrifically realistic picture of what the Bible says is the deep-rooted selfishness and ugliness of unregenerate human nature.

Furthermore—and here is one of the points which Paul scores against the unconverted, worldly mind—the man who is living on this level and is content with it, lacks the capacity to understand and appreciate spiritual values and virtues. "To him they are folly," says the Weymouth New Testament, "and he cannot learn them because they are spiritually appraised." Consequently, he is indifferent to them, or spurns them, or perhaps even scoffs at them. If he is intellectually cunning, he will probably say that the gospel of Christ is irrational and incredible.

"A High Price Tag"

It is, of course, neither one, but it does have a high price tag on it—a tag that says something about humility and repentance and submission. It was to this phase of the truth that

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