

The King's Highway

Rev. L. K. Mullen, Nov. 8

AN ADVOCATE OF SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

VOL. XXXVIII

MONCTON, N. B., MARCH 15, 1958

No. 433

THE VERSATILITY OF THE CROSS

Rev. M. E. Dowson
in "American Holiness Journal"

The cross enacted an almighty benefit when it reconciled us to God by Jesus Christ. In fact, so great was this benefit that we almost invariably overlook a companion benefit almost equally precious, our reconciliation with each other. Because of the cross we may now be so submissive to God and so in harmony with each other that our various distinct individual identities become submerged in His personality, and we unite together as members of a totally new organism, the body of Christ.

It is this unified organization of vastly different members that most publicly displays the success of the cross. What does the power released by the death of Jesus Christ mean to men of this day if it does not produce in us the ability to adjust ourselves to each other and gladly accept the domination of that same will expressed in the life of Jesus Christ? We may claim to have been "quickened together with Christ" and "raised up together with Christ", but if we are not also "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," our personal claims are meaningless.

That kind of dissention in the body of Christ which destroys this "sitting together" is one of the major disruptive encroachments of our day. It is almost a contagious disease. But however troublesome it is, it does not defy diagnosis; neither is it incurable. The same scripture, Ephesians 2, which speaks of our regeneration, our resurrection, and our relationships, speaks also of God's capable remedy for all enmity, that ignoble source of contention, strife, faultfinding, and criticism.

The Partition

The question logically arises, What is it that fosters dissention and enmity in the body of Christ, the church? What is it that inhibits fellowship and constructs barriers? According to Ephesians 2:14, 15, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" alienates men; the law erects partitions.

What is it about the law that makes it a divider of brethren? What power does it possess that it can destroy the unity and peace of the church? To find a satisfactory answer we must first remember that love is the band uniting us in Jesus Christ, nothing else—not social equality, not mutual interests, not kindred relationships, not blending temperaments—only love. Love unifies us because we love the same Person.

We should also remember that we must love to remain unified. We must constantly rekindle our allegiance to the Head. We must habitually retain God in our thinking until He becomes the atmosphere in which we circulate. We must construct a God-consciousness. It is our surest protection against dissention, our most able antidote for internal ills. Divorce us from it and we become mere men; the church, just an institution; love, only a loyalty.

Right here, however, is where legalism damages the body of Christ. Because the law is primarily a discrimi-

nator, it assails the most sensitive, not with an increased God-consciousness but with a morbid self-consciousness. Immediately, differences instead of likenesses come to the front. And since these differences are gauged relatively, that is, by comparing ourselves with some other person rather than with Jesus Christ, estranged relationships naturally develop, introducing tensions and strife and criticism. Wherever criticism begins to work, enmity soon has a home.

The Peacemaker

Dissentions, we see then, are the result of a wrong consciousness, produced in the church by a legalism inspiring enmity. Barriers, disruptions, and division logically follow. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is by no means impossible. Unity in the body of Christ is rather a glorious possibility! Ephesians 2:15 says, "(He) abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." In other words, the supreme achievement of the Son of God was peace-making, not only between God and man but also between man and man.

Now, this peace He made was not an impersonal creation. Verse 14 says, "He is our peace." Verse 15 says that He made in himself "one new man, so making peace." Later, verse 17 says, "(He) came and preached peace." This may be said another way: "When He preached," here on earth, that is, "He preached Himself. His life was His truth." Is it any wonder that He taught with authority! Flesh and blood always produce the most understandable and pointed lesson.

By means of this extremely discernible way of incarnating truth and instruction, Jesus Christ instituted all of His reforms. By means of it, also, He condemned, reprovved, and rebuked. It cannot be truly said that He ever led a crusade against anything. He never fought. He never campaigned. He destroyed whatever opposed Him by outliving it. In this positive manner He abolished the law. Of itself it became useless because He lived beyond its highest reach. It produced enmity. He produced peace. It could not judge Him. He was the "new man." The law was for the "old man" and his entire lineage. The new man lived by love and exuberant affection, discernible in His life by His delightful surrender and subordination to the will of God. And because of this devotion, peace, unity, and harmony literally flowed from His life, manufactured and assembled in the deep depths of His affection.

Thus, as the scripture says, He abolished enmity. And thus, as it further says, He broke down the partition causing division. In Himself He did all this. How do you and I realize that unity and the peace that He made? By the cross. He did not retain the ability of living above enmity. He released it through death. The cross reconciles because the cross sheds the life He lived upon us all—all that are willing to live as He lived, under the domination of the divine will.