

"ENEMIES OF THE CROSS"

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you ever weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." (Philippians 3:18)

In the latter part of the eleventh century a war was waged by the professed followers of Christianity against the Mohammedans, who possessed Palestine. It was thought intolerable and a disgrace to those who professed the Christian religion that the country in which Christ lived and taught, and made atonement for the sins of the world, should be left under the dominion of His enemies. Preceding the council of Clermont, Peter the Hermit, a monk, went from town to town, and from church to church preaching the holy war. At the council of Clermont hundreds and thousands gathered, at which time Pope Urban made an address. He said in part: "Brave warriors this is the time to prove that you are animated by a true courage...When Christ summons you to His defense let no base affections detain you at home...Listen to nothing but the groans of Jerusalem, and remember that our Lord said, 'He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.' Gird your swords to your thighs, ye men of might. It is our part to pray; your part to do battle."

The surging mass arose in enthusiastic rage, and the loud cry "God wills it," was like the voice of many waters. This army consisted of monks, mechanics, farmers, and peasants. They were called "Crusaders" not only because they were going to rescue the cross of Christ from its enemies; but also because they wore on their right shoulder a red cross.

Even though the Mohammedans and Turk infidels were enemies to the cross, that was no way to combat them. This would not defend, but rather defeat the cross. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews..." (John 18:36)

The cross of Christ had enemies in Paul's day. Paul had to cope with Judaizing teachers who tried to incorporate circumcision and other items of the law of Moses into Christianity. Some were in Antioch. (Acts 15:1) Some were in Galatia. (Galatians 5:4) These false teachers were enemies of the cross because they attributed justification to the ordinances of the law, rather than the sacrificial death of Christ. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". (John 1:17) Hence Paul said, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4)

There were those in Paul's day who perverted the gospel of Christ. Paul said to the Galatian Christians, "...there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Galatians 1:7)

"Pervert" means "to corrupt or turn away from the truth by misrepresenting and misapplying." For instance, Paul teaches that baptism is a likeness or representation of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4) Only burial in water will properly symbolize these three facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. On this verse Dr. Philip Schaff says: "All commentators of note (except Stuart and Hodge) expressly admit or take it for granted that in this verse the ancient prevailing mode of baptism by immersion and emersion is implied, as giving additional force to the idea of the going down of the old and the rising of the new man." John Wesley: "'We were buried with him'--alluding to the manner of baptizing by immersion." Conybeare and Howson: "This passage cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion." But there are those who have substituted sprinkling for immersion which is but a perversion of the apostles symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

The cross of Christ has enemies today. Let us note some of them:

Paganism and polytheism are enemies of the cross. Any religion that teaches that there is more than one God is an enemy to the cause of Christianity. The Bible very emphatically declares that there is one God. Jesus said to the tempter, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10) Paul affirms that there is "one body," "one Spirit," "one Lord," "one faith," "one baptism," "one God and Father of all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Modernism is an enemy to the cross of Christ. Modernism not only denies the first verse in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," (Genesis 1:1), but this system also rejects the Divinity of Jesus, the miraculous conception of Mary and the virgin birth of Jesus, as well as the miracles performed by Jesus. A modernistic preacher told me not long ago that it was his conviction that many of the miracles attributed to Jesus, recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were recorded by fanatical people. But John says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31) Hence to reject the testimony of the gospel writers concerning the miracles of Jesus is to reject the Christ, and to refuse eternal life through His name.

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Modernism repudiates the blood of Christ, yet Paul says, "...without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22) Modernism does not admit man's need of a Saviour; hence does not accept Christ as the atoning sacrifice for sin. But Christ is the last sacrifice which heaven offers for man's redemption, and to continue in sin and renounce this last sacrifice, is to be utterly and irrevocably lost, for Paul declared that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Hebrews 10:26)

Denominationalism is an enemy to the cross of Christ. Jesus came to break down "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile, but denominationalism erects another wall to divide professed followers of Christ. Jesus prayed most earnestly that we all might be one. Said He, "Neither pray I for thee alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20-21) But modern denominationalism contributes toward this prayer being unanswered. But why did Jesus pray that we might be one? "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." But denominationalism contributes toward unbelief. A divided Christendom certainly does not commend itself unto an unbelieving world. The fact that there are more than 200 religious bodies in America alone, each teaching different doctrines and engaging in different practices, yet all claiming to get them from the Bible, causes the average man to wonder if the Bible is true. The infidel argues that the Bible is untrue, that it is a book of conflicting doctrines, for two preachers preach different doctrines, and yet get them from the same Bible. But the word of God is truth. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) But truth does not contradict itself. When doctrines cross each other they both cannot be true at the same time. Paul said, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace..." (I Corinthians 14:33) The Bible does not teach conflicting doctrines; they are the products of men.

Another enemy to the cross of Christ is premillennialism. It is definitely an enemy to the cause of Christianity, because it is in direct conflict with some of the basic principles of the gospel of Christ. There are some that endeavor to occupy a neutral position toward premillennialism, but no faithful Christian can be indifferent toward the matter. One of the primary purposes for which Christ was raised from the dead was that He might be exalted to the kingship over His kingdom, and thus occupy the throne of David. In Peter's memorable sermon delivered on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, he affirmed that Christ had been raised "to sit on his (David's) throne." (Acts 2:30) Thus it inevitably follows that if Christ is not now, presently, sitting on David's throne, He has not been raised from the dead. But if he has not arisen from the grave, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain," said Paul. (I Corinthians 15:14)

Moreover he also said, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (I Corinthians 15:17) But reigning now. They contend that at the second coming of Christ, He will be given a kingdom over which He shall reign on earth for a period of one thousand years. But let Paul testify as to what shall occur when Christ returns. Hear him, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (I Corinthians 15:24-26) Here the apostle plainly teaches that Christ is now reigning as King over His kingdom, but at the end of the world, He shall deliver the kingdom up to God the Father.

But again, premillennialism is an enemy of the cross of Christ, because it has divided the body of Christ. Christ's literal body was crucified by his enemies, but premillennialism has divided His spiritual body, the church, by those who profess to be His friends, but they are His enemies none the less.

Moralism is an enemy to the cross of Christ. The moralist, who claims salvation upon the merits of his own moral goodness, is one of the greatest enemies to the cross. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) Again the Saviour said, "He that is not with me is against me..." (Matthew 12:20) Therefore the moral man outside of Christ can have no hope of salvation upon the merits of his own morality. Morality is of man, but salvation is of God. "... it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23) Not many look to the gambler, the murderer, or the thief as an example in right living. All admit that they are enemies of the cross, but the moralist who remains outside of Christ, influences many to walk in His steps; therefore, he is a dangerous enemy to the cross.

Hypocrisy in the church--the counterfeit Christian is an hazardous enemy to the cross of Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14, 16) But if our lives are not pure they will glorify the devil. Our lives either make friends or enemies for Christ. Either we are lights to illuminate, or tempests to destroy. When the world sees members of the church profess one thing and practice another it has a most damaging influence on the world. Christians are said to be living epistles "known and read of all men." (II Corinthians 3:2) The world knows what a Christian ought to be; hence Christians are exhorted to "...be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed..." (Romans 12:2)

There is no middle ground; we are either for or against the Lord. (Matthew 12:20)

If you are not a Christian will you not give your life unreservedly to Him? Believe on Him with unfaltering faith, repent honestly of every sin, and upon a public profession of your faith in Him, be baptized into Christ. Thus become His friend and disciple, and a member of His body--His church.

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