

THE
BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

By Vern Bennom Grimsley

Most modern men live together like brothers.

Brothers Cain and Abel.

And you will recall from Genesis, chapter 4, that Cain slew Abel!

Mankind has witnessed time and again the pernicious power of brotherly hate. The time now has come to learn the power of brotherly love as sons and daughters in the Family of God.

It happened in New York City, where the subways are often overcrowded to the very limits of human endurance. A little man called out to the subway conductor, "we're packed like sardines in here; can't you do anything before we're completely crushed?"

The conductor answered sardonically, "why certainly, sir. Just count off all the passengers, and then have the even numbers breathe in while the odd numbers breathe out."

Some population experts pessimistically predict that the whole world may one day become nearly that jammed with people. Visualize it--Canada inhaling while the United States exhales.

I have exaggerated, of course. But the simple fact remains that in an increasingly crowded world, men must increasingly learn to get along with each other; the alternative--trying to get along without each other--is called war. Yet mankind needs more than merely the spirit

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of cooperation, essential as that may be; we need the spirit of brotherhood.

"The spirit of brotherhood" is not only poetically, but literally, what mankind needs, for brotherhood is spiritual. It is possible to admonish people, plead with them, reason with them, threaten them, intimidate them, and even psycho-analyze them--but it is wholly impossible to force them to love each other unless they want to. Brotherly love is inward and spiritual in origin; it is not merely a refined and civilized version of the cattle "herd instinct"--it is born of God.

In First John, chapter 4 and verse 11 it is written: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And in First Peter, chapter 2, verse 17: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood."

You are a member in the brotherhood of man!

When my wife Nancy and I were dating back in high school, once we spent an evening looking at my family's old photograph album. It bulged with snapshots of multitudinous relatives, uncles, cousins, grandparents, brothers, sisters and other assorted sorts who roost in our family tree. There were reams and reams of pictures in that album, and photographs of people I didn't know at all grinned from its pasted pages. But I was aware everytime I looked at them that whether I knew them or not, they were still my family.

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Consider: whenever you walk down the street, each and every person you see, whether you know him or not, is a fellow member in your family...the family of God. This is a startling and potentially world-changing idea! All this earth is one family precisely because we have one Father: God. He loves us. And the religion of Jesus is quite simply the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

When I was a young boy, it was our custom to hold a family reunion every few years. One time it would be in my home town of Garden City, Kansas, and another time we would all meet in Trenton, Missouri, at the grandparents' farm.

A large family reunion is a wonderfully peculiar event. You may never have met most of the people there. In fact, if you didn't know they were your relatives, you might never speak to them at all. For instance, if you were sitting on a bench in a train station waiting for your departure time, and those very same people were all milling around you, you would likely pay very little attention to them. But meet them at a family reunion, and everything is different. You talk, joke, help each other, and have a wonderful time. Why? Because you know you're all in the same family; you know you are related. And that makes all the difference in the world.

So it was meant to be in the Family of God. The same people you see every day are suddenly more

interesting when you become aware that they are spiritually related to you.

There are no strangers in the world--only brothers you haven't met. Every time you shake hands with someone, it's a family reunion. Because both of you are brothers in the Family of God.

Someone objects, "But I can't love everybody!" Maybe you can't, but God can, and the spirit of God is in you. The daily life of a faith-born child of God is powered by more than hamburgers and potato chips: it is strengthened by the living love of God.

God's love for us can alter our behavior toward others. Think of a young man whose girl friend tells him for the first time that she loves him--suddenly that boy becomes more friendly toward the whole world. We have all seen that happen; it is a fact of life that being in love transforms human attitudes. Likewise God's love for a man, when accepted, creates a new friendliness within that man, and friendliness is the sown seed of brotherhood. Truly, we cannot have the brotherhood of man without the Fatherhood of God any more than we can have oaks without acorns.

Dr. Luther L. Terry, U.S. Surgeon General, once said that within the next twenty years he expects nine of man's most dangerous diseases will all but vanish, slain by the sting of hypodermic needles. He

mentioned such diseases as diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, rabies, measles and typhoid fever. Wonderful! But what will be the result? A world of healthy hatemongers? A race of sound-bodied barbarians? Or will we increasingly learn to live in love as a human brotherhood? It is a crucially cogent question for all mankind. We must learn how to love.

In one of his books, Mark Twain has Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn become "blood brothers" by sticking themselves with pins and signing their names in blood. But a believer in the brotherhood of man is hardly a fanatic who wanders about with a hatpin and a piece of paper, poking people and making them sign their names. For the brotherhood of man is a present fact. Our mission is not to bring it into being, but to believe in it and live it as sons and daughters of God.

Time, perhaps, for a Grimsley terrible parable: Once two grade school boys began fighting during recess; they happened to be brothers. A teacher saw them scuffling, ran over, separated them, and said, "Boys! Let's have a little more brotherly love." One of them said, "You'd have a little more brotherly love if I had a more lovable brother."

But it is not others who keep us from loving, it is ourselves. The choice is ours to live as children of our Father and brothers to our brothers in the Family of

God. The choice is ours this moment.

And the destiny of our planet hangs in the balance!

The following are scriptures which clearly portray the Brotherhood of man.

Matthew 5:22-24, "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

I Thess. 4:9, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

Hebrews 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue." (But in our present world today the need is that brotherly love begins).

Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

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