

## All the Bobby's of the World

*'Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. – 1 John 5:1*

Belief in Jesus in His role as the Christ, that is, as God's anointed One, is the basis for the new birth. Whatever "faith in Jesus" means to the modern man on the street, to the apostolic witnesses it always included the embracing of a number of essential truths regarding His Person and His mission. Jesus was anointed by God to enter this world as a man, to demonstrate sinless manhood in union with God and to die in the place of every person who failed to hit that mark. On the third day, He rose from the grave, proving that indeed, He does hold the keys that can release us from the shackles of sin and death.

No one is saved without Jesus. That is judged to be a narrow-minded message in this culture of diversity and alleged tolerance, but we must not bend. *"Christ and Him crucified!"* is our gospel. But, there is another truth on which we cannot bend. Anyone else who knows Jesus by virtue of the same new birth to the same Father is our brother. He or she is ours. We are stuck with him or her, not as a burden, but because *". . . everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well."*

The mother of three notorious kids was once asked, "If you had it to do all over again would you have children?"

"Of course," she said, "just not the same ones."

Still, what's a person to do? They are family. We keep them. We love them. If you want to alienate yourself from a person, attack those who belong to them. If you want to try and draw near to a person, be prepared to love and respect all who belong to them. To posture yourself as a person who loves another without caring about those who that other person cares about is too plastic of a façade to even try to maintain, so don't bother.

When our grown nurse was a toddler, she wanted a "boy baby." We found "Bobby." He had a soft body with a regular molded doll's head, but he had brown eyes like her in a day when most dolls were blue-eyed. Eventually, Bobby became a fixture. There were other toys that were more valuable, but none were loved like Bobby. When Bobby got dirty, we just wiped off the plastic head, but once, scrubbing his face a little too aggressively, I ripped his little head right off. A string through a casing in Bobby's shoulders secured his head to his body as the string was drawn and seated in a ridge in the neck of the head. The string had broken. I threaded a new string into the casing and tied Bobby's head back on, but I could never secure it as tightly as the factory had. Every few days, I was reuniting Bobby's body with his dismembered head.

The prudent thing would have been to retire Bobby and get a new doll. But, if I loved Nikki at all, that was unthinkable. I had to love Bobby as well, and I had to put him back together as many times as it took. That's how God presents Himself to us: "If you love me, you love all my Bobby's as well. We're a package deal. My Bobby's are all valuable, not because you see their value, but because I see it. And, anything that you do as an act of service to them, you have done 'unto me'".

Loving others validates our claims that we love God. But, truly loving God authenticates our love for others as a divine love and not something less. We might get involved in benevolent endeavors out of real compassion. But, the heart is deceitful. It is conceivable that much of this good work is done because it makes us feel good about ourselves. Societal guilt and public relations drive many benevolent projects. Only the love that was modeled when Jesus died for us is 100% unsullied. And, it is the only love that is driven simply by seeing people as God sees them, divinely loved because they are God's handiwork. And, it especially calls us to love all those with whom we share the new birth.