

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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Editorial Notes and Comments

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE FUTURE

S WE entered the new year our thoughts involuntarily projected themselves into the future. No doubt we contemplated the past with mingled feelings of satisfaction and regret and yet, for the most part, our thoughts had to do not with that which has been but with that which shall be. Are we moving on, whether we will or not, to a time of darkness and gloom when existence shall be a terror and life a burden? Or are we traveling toward a land of peace and plenty such as we have never known? When we envisage the future, do we see a figure, fierce and terrible of countenance, from whose gaze we shrink and whom we would fain avoid? Or do we see a figure, fair of form and comely of countenance, on whose kindly face there is a smile of welcome?

If our viewpoint is that of Christian faith, then, appearances be what they may, it becomes us to cherish high hopes and expectation concerning the future. Whether we have in mind our individual selves or mankind as a whole, it becomes us to believe not only that the best is yet to be but that the blessedness that awaits us is beyond all comparison preferable to any thing we have ever known. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." As individuals it becomes us to say, "Now are we the children of God but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." In the perfect manhood of Jesus Christ we see that which we are to be. The hour is coming when evil shall have been wholly eliminated from our lives; when every weakness and deficiency of character shall be but a memory; when we shall exercise to the full "our God-like power to do, our God-like aim to know"—to doubt that is to doubt the word of Him who "gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." Moreover, as we turn our thoughts toward mankind as a whole, it also becomes us to cherish high hopes and expectations. It is true that we are precluded from believing that a desirable future awaits all. There

are those to whom the judge of all will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." Let us never forget, however, that "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." Evil is not to triumph as the pessimist would have us believe. Neither are good and evil to continue in endless conflict as others would have us believe. "For He must reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet." We may be sure, therefore, that at the end of the years all that is opposed to God will have been brought into subjection and that the petition our Lord taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," will have been fully granted. As Christians we look forward to the full establishment of Christ's kingdom—a kingdom in which none shall hurt or destroy, in which men shall dwell together in peace and harmony, where love shall be the law and happiness the universal condition.

These hopes and expectations should not be accounted among the least of our assets as we face the future. They are an important part of our Christian inheritance. They are not only a source of encouragement, they powerfully influence conduct. Because we shall reap in the future what we sow in the present some so-called practical people would have us believe that our beliefs as to the future are a matter of small moment. Do your duty in the present, they tell us, and let the future take care of itself. Some go even further and say that beliefs about the future are a positive harm on the ground that they foster an otherworldliness that is hostile to a proper appreciation of the life that now is. There is no real warrant for such notions. For though it be true that we reap as we sow it is also true that what we expect to reap determines the kind of seed we sow. And though the choices we make today determine what and where we shall be on the tomorrow, yet those choices themselves are largely determined by what and where we hope to be in the days to come. Hence the importance of these hopes and expectations even from the viewpoint of conduct.

Unquestionably our hopes and expectations as Christians would be a rich source of comfort and encouragement, and so possess large value, even if they exerted no discernible influence over choice and thereby over conduct. Their full

the rule of life for those accepting the principles of His kingdom. "And seeing the multitude He went up into the mountain and when He had sat down His *disciples* came unto Him and He taught *them* saying..." This is the only rational and possible interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. You and I both pledge our adherence to it as servants of Christ; then it becomes my rule of conduct toward you because you are bound by the same principles. Any other interpretation produces such an absurdity that it not only has not been practiced, but it has not been believed by the Church or the world. A bandit put his gun in our ribs and takes our small change. So we "let him have our cloak also" and hand over the billfold he has overlooked! We find a robber at our downstairs safe and lovingly point out to him that most of the money is kept in the third floor safe, and, if he will just come along, we will open that for him!

As to offensive war, leaving out the question of volunteering, what is the Christian to do when he is conscripted? I believe the Bible clearly tells him that he must do his duty as a citizen unless he believes the causes of that particular war (not war in general) are unrighteous—in which event, let him stand up and be shot like a man for conscience' sake. The events leading up to any war in these days of general knowledge are such that any intelligent Christian should be able to make up his own mind as to the principles involved. Certainly no one can read President Wilson's address to the Congress of the United States upon our entry into the World War and feel that there was anything other than the deepest conviction and justification of this act. I know there was a lot of propaganda and misrepresentation, and there always will be, but the great salient facts stand out. Possibly, too, the principles the President set forth then have since become discredited. That does not alter the fact of our necessity to act in accordance with the best light we have on a subject at the time action is called for.

The growing modernist section of our Protestant Church, and a large section of those whose faith is still evangelical, believe that war is the greatest single obstacle in the progress of the kingdom of God on earth. To those whose faith in the Son of God is still clear, I can only urge a better understanding of the plan of God for this age. It is this mistaken idea that the Church is to achieve the kingdom which leads us into positions historically and scripturally impossible like this. I well remember Dr. Robert McWatty Russell's smiling challenge to his brother ministers of an offer of \$500 to any one who would show him a single verse in the New Testament which taught that the kingdom would be achieved apart from the presence of the King.

Once our understanding of God's plan for this age is clarified, much of this hopeless and unscriptural attitude of the evangelical remainder in the Church will vanish. Then we will get rid of all these impossible objectives, and turn to finish the real task of the Church, the evangelization of the world in our generation.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

ALEXANDER HENDERSON'S TEXT— GLASGOW, DECEMBER 13, 1638.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Psalm 110:1.

Before me lies a manuscript history of the memorable Scottish General Assembly of 1638, open at the sermon which Mr. Alexander Henderson, the moderator, preached from this text at the excommunication and deposition of "the pretended Archbishops and Bishops of this Kingdom." Behind this Assembly lies the story of the tumults at Edinburgh when King Charles I ordered the introduction of a Romanizing Liturgy; and the renewing of the covenants at Greyfriars, February 28th.

The heart of the sermon of Mr. Henderson is that Christ is the only Lord and Head and King of the Church. The ground of this dominion is the will and word of God declared here and many other places, such as, Dan. 2:44; 7:13. Luke 1:33. God hath given Christ the dignity of sitting at His own right hand. Let us for whom He hath suffered so much but acknowledge His Lordship. And then the beams from the sun of righteousness will give light and heat to our souls in answer to His blessed advocacy. The Church is to seek that form of worship and of government that her Lord hath given her and to rely wholly on Christ's immediate presence with her.

Christ is to reign at the Father's right hand until every enemy is made His footstool. In the time to come His great glory and triumph shall be manifest. But today He calls us to maintain His Lordship, especially in His Church. As His faithful bride she is called to a holy jealousy in seeking a worship, a government, and a work that are wholly of His ordering. As in the days following this memorable assembly let us see that at the tent of every captain of the army of Covenanters there is "fleeing" a banner with this inscription:

"FOR CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT."—W. C. ROBINSON.

In the Heavens

THE eagle is the king of birds; it soars the highest into the heavens. Believers are to live a heavenly life, in the very presence and love of God. They are to live where God lives; they need God's strength to rise there. To them that wait on Him it shall be given.—*Andrew Murray.*

The Living Stream

(Common meter.)

By JOHN W. MCLENNAN

Thy cleansing Word's a living stream,
Thou Well-spring of all good:
We sense its worth; we sing its power
To bring celestial food.

The noisy rills from human source
Dry like our passing tears;
Its source is in the hills of God,
Unchanged through changing years.

In letters clear its channel spells
The name Immanuel;
Hark how the ripples on its shores
Sing and His glories tell!

What thrilling life for thirsting souls
Its flow serene bestows!
Our deserts tap its steady tide
And blossom as the rose.

Mark how its depths reflect the deeps
Of Majesty above;
Therefore its trusting barks shall make
His port of deathless love.