

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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TELL IT LIKE IT IS

B. HERBIN

"The burden of taxes shall follow me the rest of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of poverty forever." This paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm may be the testimony of the poor today, for with ever increasing prices on food and other commodities necessary to the survival of the consumer, the burden of making a living grows heavier day by day. If wages are increased, so is the cost of living, so one really never sees his way ahead and out.

There may be many faults in the establishment of American life, but the economic status of its people might be considered the worst. Social Factions may not be pleasing to many, but everyone has to eat, and there is nothing so revealing of true brotherhood as that feeling of a well-fed person who must look upon his neighbor who is hungry, undernourished and infested with all the evils of poverty. Our country, our state, our cities and counties have many such people trying with difficulty to live daily in the land of plenty. This is not mainly true of Negroes, it is relevantly true of whites as well, and no one race is responsible for it. Institutions of government are the agencies on whose door steps the guilt of the burden rests. It all begins with politics and political parties. A United States President from the Democratic Party enacts measures to care for its poor; The Republicans trim the fat from the lean so closely that the gravy of survival affords no soppings for the morsel of bread. The poor wage earners pay higher taxes on property, if they own any, as well as on clothing, food and household items. Where families are large, the head of the house finds he just can't make ends meet. Despondency ensues and little hope or appreciation for living exists. Now, your President, Richard Nixon loves the poor so well that he is talking of cutting out welfare (which is poor as it is, in meeting the needs of its indigents adequately), and I wonder if this will place the social workers in an uncomfortable position? To hear some people talk, it is almost necessary to beg for the little mite they are entitled to, and often, these workers are not at all sympathetic to the cries of the poor. The state itself, so rich with increases, tends to turn a deaf ear to the voice of the people in preference to better highways for speed and more highway men to catch the racers before they hurt themselves; the City Fathers want a new face on the Court House and if more land is needed for redevelopment, they hand you a few pennies payment for what you've sacrificed for years, a life time, to put your hard-earned dollars in. The state, figuring you have too much lawn to mow anyway, simply cuts across your front yard for its expansion purposes. Hence, the ideology of private domain is only public domain turned inside out. Equally, home-owners, so-called are merely leasing property from the state, for the taxes, in time, will chew you to shreds. Landlords must be challenged to a bullfight before they will consent to repair a leaky roof or fix a door, and when they do, they install highway stripping (concrete) and all but surface it with tar and gravel, so what does any of us get out of sacrifice and work? An empty stomach, some extra grey hairs and a new suit for burial and an honorable eulogy, if of course, you belonged to a church and paid your high premium insurances. If you expect any enjoyment in life, better take 'em all to the fair and when you come home broke, at least, you know where the green back went.

Or fishing or hunting you may go for the price of the worms and shells, if you already have your rod and gun, but then, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they don't start taxing every fish, rabbit or squirrel you catch, and twice as much for a coon.

Any way you look at it, you are stuck and doomed to the burden of taxes for the balance of your days. There is only one possible way to beat the tax: just refuse, protest at growing old enough to secure a working permit.

As for the poor in spiritual finances, you will just have to cut down on your family production business, learn to keep a budget and live by it (which should be a function of the social workers) in helping you spend your little income, by advising you how to get the most from the least; you will have to buy what you need rather than

This Week's Sunday School Lesson**THE CHRISTIAN HOPE BEGINNING WHERE YOU ARE**

Historically, persecution has been a part of the lot of Christians. Early experiences in the Methodist movement illustrate the point. John Wesley wrote: "Being convinced of that important truth . . . that 'by grace we are saved through faith,' we immediately began declaring it to others. . . . It was our daily subject. . . . But in doing this, we were assaulted and abused on every side. We were stoned in the streets, and several times narrowly escaped with our lives. In sermons, newspapers, and pamphlets of all kinds, we were painted as unheard-of monsters."

As exciting as are Wesley's descriptions of the dangers in which these early Methodists found themselves, it is more to the point to revel in the passages that reflect the inner security of these Christians in the midst of the threats against their lives.

Joan Parks stood by John Wesley on one of these occasions. His journal for October 20, 1743, reports her reaction thus: "I asked J. Parks if she was not afraid when they tore her from me. . . . She said, 'No; I knew God would fight for His children.'"

In more recent times Kikuyu Christians stood fast in the time of the Mau Mau persecutions in East Africa. The record of their faithfulness has taken its place in the brightest annals of Christian courage and heroism. Many of these people died in the spirit of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and with his words upon their lips. (See Acts 7:59-60.)

This kind of courage in the face of hatred, violence, and even death moved Isaac Watts to write:

I ask them whence their victory came:

They, with united breath,
 Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
 Their triumphs to his death.

This would be the testimony of uncounted thousands of Christians who, through the centuries, have died for their faith. They have been sustained by their confidence in Jesus Christ.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The Scripture for this lesson is Revelation 21:1 through 22:5. Selected verses are printed below.

what you want. Of the basic human emotions of wants, needs and desires, needs are the one you should consider most. Learn the list of needs to your family's well-being and let the wants wait until each deprived individual has the privilege to do his own thing, which through proper guidance and direction equips him with understanding and reasoning, and the knowledge of what he can have and what he can't. When he is old enough to paddle his own canoe, perhaps he can get what he wants and what he needs.

There are those who think such a procedure of life unfair, and it may be, but in our society, and in all of society throughout the history of man, the philosophy has been for the greater part, "survival of the fittest," and even today, one of the popular songs of meaning in the soul world is "Only the strong survive," quite true in this world, this Nation, this State, city and town. "The race is not to the swift, but to those who endureth."

Revelation 21:1-4, 22 through 22:5

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; 3 and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates shall never be shut by day — and there shall be no night there; 26 they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

1 Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; 4 they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Memory Selection: I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them."

—Revelation 21:3

EXPLORING THE QUESTIONS

We live in a time when the

followers of Jesus, in or out of the organized church, find themselves in varied types and degrees of difficulty. Antagonism and indifference are equally problems to the efforts of churchmen to understand the meaning of their faith for living today. Bitter disagreements threaten division within the church at the same time that Christians are working toward greater unity among the various branches of the church.

Does the Book of Revelation have any help or encouragement to offer in this difficult and anxious time? Why was it written? What is its basic message? What may we say is the shape and content of Christian hope today? In what way may Revelation speak to our needs?

It is fitting that we ask these questions in the concluding lesson of a yearlong study of "The Story of God and His People." We have seen that our biblical faith and our Hebrew-Christian faith assert that God has expressed himself, and worked to the fulfillment of his purposes, in calling a people, and in creating his church. This final lesson should leave us with something of a "theology of the future," a frame of mind in which we discharge our responsibility as Christians in a troubled world.

FINDING HELP WITH YOUR QUESTIONS

The Book of Revelation is a difficult book to understand. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that, because of his faith, the author had been exiled to the island of Patmos. (See Revelation 1:9.) To get his message past the emperor's censors, he had to put it into language and symbols that would be meaningful to his intended readers but not to the Roman officials.

Unfortunately, much of the symbolism is based on ideas and ways of thinking that are unfamiliar to persons living in the twentieth century. However, we can understand the reason the book was written and the main thrust of its message.

Why Revelation Was Written

The Book of Revelation is uniquely a tract for the times in which it was written. According to Martin Rist, "Revelation was written in a time when the Christians of Asia Minor, and probably other places as well, were being persecuted by the Roman officials for their refusal to worship the emperors, both living and dead, as gods and to worship Roma, the personification of Rome, as a goddess."

Repression, persecution, pressures from families, neighbors, and community—all made life exceedingly difficult for those disciples who remained faithful during the reign of the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Revelation was written to encourage these Christians to hold fast.

Unflinching loyalty to Jesus Christ was urged upon these persecuted believers, even though, in not a few instances, the end result of such loyalty was death. To them was held out the twofold assurance (1) that the struggle in which they were engaged was linked to the

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