

The Covenanter Witness



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A Thought for Each Day

Sabbath, April 1. And as thy servant
was busy here and there, he was gone.
I Kings 20:40.

Be not too busy, O thou earnest heart,
To hear what friends are saying at thy
side,
To know if cares or joys with them
abide

And for their help or cheer to do thy part,
To hear the "music of humanity,"
To feel thyself one of God's family!

Be not too busy with thy work and care
To look to God, to clasp thy hand in
his;

Miss thou all else, but fail thou not of
this;

Thou need'st not all alone thy burdens
bear;

Listen and wait, and learn to do his will;
His love and service all thy life shall fill.

Monday, April 2. Making request, if
by any means . . . I might come unto
you. Romans 1:10.

These words might easily escape notice
as having no special profit for us. They
show Paul long had a request filed away
in heaven, that had not been attended to.
About it he prayed incessantly. And thus
it had happened: the Spirit thwarted his
desire, but made it the occasion for indict-
ing that wonderful Epistle to the Romans.
How much wider are God's purposes than
ours!—Mrs. George C. Needham.



A small outdoor shrine in the yard of the Confucian Temple, Tsitsihar. The Chinese characters above the shrine, translated mean: "If there is a request there will be a fulfillment." Note the two incense sticks in the bottom foreground. Shrines such as these dot the countryside, being however more common in China proper than in Manchuria. Heathen people burn incense before these shrines in order to obtain their requests. Sometimes there is a picture of a god or idol inside the shrine.

EDITORIAL

For Those Who Make Mistakes
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By Rev. J. M. Coleman, D. D.

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"WHEN HE HAD GIVEN THANKS"

Some speak of it as, "Asking the Blessing;" others call it, "Returning Thanks;" while others, still, prefer the words, "Saying Grace" at meals. The name is not as important as the religious exercise itself.

Some pray before eating, only; others pray both before and after the meal. Whether the two exercises—asking God to bless the food and returning Him thanks for it—are united unto one or not, is of very little importance compared with that which is of exceeding great importance, namely, that we should follow the example of our Lord each time we eat food in making acknowledgment to Him who is the giver of all good.

Our daily food is God's gift and we should be grateful. Also we should recognize that the things that come to us from God's hand may be a blessing or may prove to be a curse. We should ask God to bless our food that it may be a blessing to us. And, unless we are grateful for His gifts then we are not in a fit spirit to be blessed by them and are not worthy to receive them.

Great care should be taken lest this spiritual exercise turn into a mere form that has lost its real meaning. It should never be permitted to turn into a muttered routine of words uttered carelessly or in irreverent haste. It should be an actual turning to God and a recognition that only His provision enables us to live.

It is most important that every member of the family be present when the Blessing is asked. It is not just a ritual that must be gone through with. The value does not lie in the fact that it is performed but in its meaning to those present. It is not merely the turning of a door knob to open the meal. It is a spiritual experience—or nothing.

It is a good plan that each member of the family be given an opportunity, from time to time, to lead in this exercise. I can remember well how, at the Indian Mission, Mr. Carithers sat at the head of the long table in the dining room. At either hand, just under the board of the table, was a little holder containing slips with the names of each of the workers at the Mission. The cards at the left were those who were to lead in Family Worship. Those at the right were the ones who were to ask the Blessing. Each name, after that person had taken his or her part, was put at the back of the case so that the workers took their turn leading in regular order. It was both a service and also a training to be one of that group for a while.

What should one do about Asking the Blessing in public eating places? Ought one to close their eyes and bow their head, or should they do it as inconspicuously as possible? Dr. G. Campbell Morgan was once asked whether he thought it proper to read the Bible on the train, whether it

CAN THE COVENANTER PROGRAM BE DRAMATIZED?

By Rev. J. M. Coleman, D. D.

This question suggests two others. First, What is the Covenanter program? Second, What is meant by dramatizing this program?

The Covenanter program means nothing less than winning this and other nations for the Kingdom of God. This means much more than merely individual salvation. It means social salvation of which individual salvation is a necessary incident. The Socialist and Communist programs are considered revolutionary in the changes which they demand. But neither one, nor both together, can compare in revolutionary character with the change which Covenanters seek.

We ask not only for a new social order, but for new men and new women to bring the new order into existence. We ask not only for a change of institutional forms, but a change in heart and life.

The Covenant of 1871 offers but a partial statement of fact when it reads, "We will refuse to incorporate with the political body until this blessed reformation is accomplished." We are asking for more

would not look like making a show of religion? He answered that he had never thought of it before but that he certainly thought it was the proper thing to do and that he studied his Bible constantly on the train. And why should he not? Was it a disgrace to do so? Was it offensive to others like blowing tobacco smoke in their faces or using indecent language in their hearing?

It seems to me that it is quite the proper thing for one in almost any circumstances to close his eyes and ask God to bless his food and to accept his thanks for the same. This can be done silently, of course, unless a group occupy a whole table. Then one can be asked to lead in the prayer. Did you ever ask a blessing in an eating room with your eyes open? Why were they open? Was it for fear others might know what you were doing? My own opinion is that it is good for the world round about us to see God's children unafraid to pray, if it is done reverently. It causes them to remember that there is a God—a thing which most of them have forgotten. Also it is a good thing for the one who prays. It shows him whether he is really ashamed of his Lord and of his religion or not.

Returning thanks is such a small repayment for God's constant and unailing provision that it should never be forgotten and never be omitted. Asking the Blessing should be one sign that we are Christians.—O. F. T.

than reformation. We insist that the nation must be born again. That is transformation. A reformed drunkard may go back to his cups. A reformation gave our nation the Eighteenth Amendment and the nation has gone back to its vomit again. A transformed drunkard and a transformed nation will not go back. In that we are wiser than our fathers.

What does it mean to dramatize the Covenanter program? It means to give to it such an urgent appeal to human sympathies that it will move men to thought and action as Uncle Tom's Cabin moved men three-quarters of a century ago. So far we have made our appeal to the country by logical arguments which seem to us beyond refutation. But men have not been moved to think, much less to act. We have not reached the heart of the nation. Have we even yet learned the lesson of the life of Jesus that there is no way to the crown, but by the cross? Without the cross all the teachings of Jesus would never have lifted the world.

The same lesson comes to us from Scotland. Sandy Gordon wrote that in the time of Renwick, the Covenanters numbered about seven thousand.

That is near enough to our own numbers to be suggestive. Was it not by the testimony of these that, in good part, the Stuart Kings were ousted from the power they had abused? The phrase in our present Terms of Communion that seems to me to have most meaning in life reads, "An approbation of the martyrs of Jesus"; that is, it means most if we show our approbation by taking up the cross as they did, but if it is only intellectual approbation it means little. As a matter of fact, who doesn't now? But if it means "resistance unto blood", who does? Doubtless a refusal to vote means self-denial, but since a large part of the eligible voters do not cast a ballot anyway, our non-voting gets little attention. If Covenanters were fined, or jailed, for not voting, it would get more notice.

We shall not get the issue before men except in the way that every great cause has become an issue and that is when it is presented in the terms of human suffering. God gave us the opportunity to do this in 1917. It was not necessary to bring the issue of war before the Synod, but it was done because God wanted the witnessing church to meet it. What took place is history. The Covenanter Church followed the example of many other churches, and the world in general, by putting its stamp of approval on the World War. Some in Synod did not agree with the action, but no one recorded his dis-

sent from the action taken, no one went home to declare that the war was a sin against God and a crime against men. And since no member of Synod did those things, I judge that we are all responsible for the consequences of that war.

That was our opportunity to dramatize our attitude to a paganized government. We might have gone on record as holding that since we could not join with that government by voting for officials in time of peace, we could not join with it in killing in time of war. Indeed to many of us now, this matter of killing our fellow men—even our fellow Christians—in time of war, is no less of a sin than voting in time of peace, for the government brought us into the war. Also Synod's condemnation of the war might have saved precious Covenanter lives. Then we might have gone home to our congregations to give public expression to our views, which would have resulted, in some cases at least, in jail sentences for pastors and a cell in Leavenworth for laymen, who were of draft age and who followed the pastors. And the publicity which these cases would have given to the Covenanter views would have brought to the consciences of men why Covenanters do not vote, more than we have been able to do by argument in a hundred years. History teaches us that much.

But why bring up now this sin—for sin I believe it to be—of the past? Because only as we get our lesson from the past shall we be able to avoid like sin in the time to come. As Jesus could not avoid the cross in making redemption of the world possible, his witnesses can not avoid the cross in making it effective. It seems to me a far cry from our present rather smug comfort to "an approbation of the martyrs of Jesus" as that was lived in Scotland, but however far away it may be, history holds that the church has never otherwise fulfilled her mission. So unless God has chosen some other means than the Covenanter Church to bear witness to His Kingship, the opportunity to witness in a dramatic fashion will come again. What we must admit is that logical and unanswerable arguments have not moved men to action. When three hundred pastors left their manses for the Moors in Scotland for conscience' sake it lifted Scotland more than all their preaching could have done.

The opportunity may come in another war, international or civil. Never before has nationalism, the war-breeder, so obsessed the nations. Never have governments more assumed the prerogatives of God than now. Hitler has not assumed the prerogatives of God any more certainly in Germany than the Supreme Court of the United States has placed divine sovereignty in Congress. When national governments usurp the place of God there is no settlement of issues be-

CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM

By Rev. Roy C. Fullerton

Christianity and Buddhism are alike in two respects; both were founded by individuals, and both failed at home but succeeded in establishing themselves in other lands. In almost every other respect they are hopelessly unlike.

The founder of Buddhism was a young Indian prince, Gautama, born 552 B. C. He was dissatisfied with the Hindu way of life and with the gross sensuality of the people about him. After withdrawal from the world to a life of asceticism, he discovered what he thought was the way. Then he became known as Buddha—the Enlightened One, and began his career as a teacher. Thus Buddhism is, and claims to be, a discovery of the way of salvation by a man, in opposition to Christianity, which is a way of life revealed by God. The two are likely, therefore, to differ in a few respects at least.

The History of Buddhism

In its first stage Buddhism was not so much a new religion as a reform of Hinduism. At first Buddha merely taught within the Hindu castes. "He was the Hindu Luther . . . whose personality fused into living unity forces that long had been gathering, and originated a movement that swept over India and all but submerged for a time the monuments, institutions, and ordinances of the ancient religion." Then it began to meet with opposition from the Hindu priests. It began to compromise with Hinduism, and as a result was almost completely reabsorbed into the old religion. For a time it almost disappeared.

Its reappearance is due to Alexander the Great. After his invasion, the new king of India was from one of the lower castes of Hinduism. The high born Brahmins looked with disgust upon him, and he, to secure revenge, gave official favor to Buddhism. That was the turning point of Buddhism, and from then on it flourished. The great grandson, Asoka, of this lowborn king extended his rule over almost all India and made Buddhism the official religion of his realm. During his reign it became a missionary religion and sent its monks throughout China.

As a missionary religion its success lay

tween them but through war. There can be no umpire between gods. In case of war the Covenanter opportunity would come up again and we need to be training our people for their mission.

It may not be war, but in some way the test must come to purify the church and restore its power. Persecution would drive the world out of the church. Persecution drives us to Jesus Christ. In some way God must prepare his witnesses. For the time of testing the church must be getting ready and we are not ready.

in its willingness to compromise with or to incorporate with the beliefs of any other people. In China it maintained itself by compromise so that the Buddhism of China today is a mixture of Animism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. It went over into Korea and flourished through political favor. From Korea it went over into Japan, where it purified itself from many of its worst evils. "But the noticeable thing about Buddhism today, is the fact that everywhere we find it today, it is a totally different thing from the religion which Buddha established, and a religion which Buddha himself would never recognize."

So much for its history, now for its faith.

The Beliefs of Buddhism

Like Hinduism, its mother, the creed of Buddhism is indistinct. A creedal definition of Buddhism is hopeless. It has retained the essential faiths of Hinduism, such as: salvation by works, transmigration of souls, unbelief in a personal God, the supremacy of mind over body, and tolerance of all other religions as equally true.

It retains the Hindu belief in transmigration, but makes it much more definite—in some places and under some teachers, but not everywhere. In some lands Buddhism teaches five possible conditions after death: Nibban, or Nirvana, heaven, rebirth as a human being, rebirth as an animal, or hell. Of these only Nirvana is eternal. If a soul has been so bad that it deserves punishment it must be sent to hell for a season; if so good that it deserves reward less than Nibban it is given a few years in heaven. Someone asked the Buddha if the soul lived when it had died its last death. He refused to answer, saying that a yes or no answer was impossible. "It would be equally false to assert that the saint lives after death or that he does not." He is unconscious, for the highest joy is possible only when all material things and sensations have been abandoned. For the Christian, true joy lies in the perfection of the soul's highest qualities and the fulfillment of man's noblest desires in the eternal home prepared for man by Christ. To the Buddhist, true joy lies in the extinction of all desire. This difference lies in the fact that we have One who can supply our greatest desires, while the Buddhist has not.

Buddhism is essentially pessimistic. It teaches that everything is evil in this world, and that the more you separate yourself from this world, the better you are. Asceticism is man's highest attainment on earth. Buddha did not deny that family and friends and earthly possessions bring happiness. But by illustrations such