

The Covenanter Witness



A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO EXALTING CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR KING

Published Weekly by the Reformed Presbyterian Church

Editorial Office: 922 Clay Street, Topeka, Kansas

VOLUME XII

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1934

NUMBER 7

A Thought for Each Day

Sabbath, February 18. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears. Psalm 80:5.

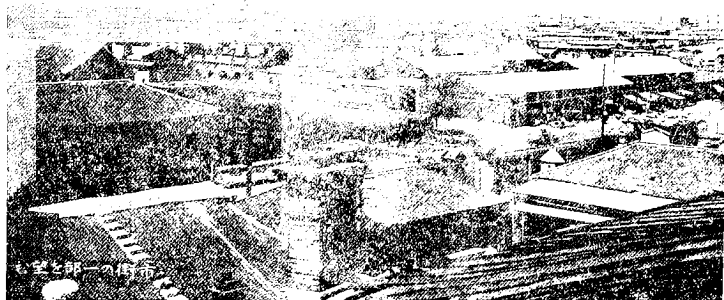
Human tears sometimes mark divine triumphs. Along the pathway of adversity and trouble God's people have in every age been led to new enduements of character which could have been acquired in no other way. The Bread of Life has often been ministered to them as the bread of tears. And in the discovered meaning of their experience we may find interpretation of our own.—J. Stuart Holden.

Monday, February 19. The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one. Zechariah 14:9.

This is no dream of an enthusiast, but the declaration of the infallible Word of God. Jehovah shall become known among all people, and His gracious sway shall be acknowledged by every tribe of man.—Charles H. Spurgeon.

Tuesday, February 20. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14:34.

The most important thing that a nation can save is its own soul.—Theodore Roosevelt.



GENERAL VIEW OF TSITSIHAR

As usual in Chinese cities the buildings are mostly of one story blue-gray fire brick.

MARGARET HOLBROOK'S DREAM
A Story by Mary E. Fowler

EDITORIAL
"Unredeemed Guns"
Dead Letters

FAMILIARITY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
A Sermon by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan

PENTECOST AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL
By Rev. J. M. Coleman. D. D.

THE AGED PEOPLE'S HOME
By Mrs. T. H. Martin

PENTECOST AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

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

A wise man once said that a book that was worth reading once was worth reading twice. That is the reason that I am reading again "The Social Gospel and the Christian Cultus" by Morrison, editor of the Christian Century, and for those who are able to take what is helpful out of a book and leave the rest, this book has my most cordial approval. Some may remember that the Christian Century took the Covenanter position on the MacIntosh decision saying editorially, "The time has come when a loyal Christian may not become a citizen of the United States." While Morrison does not state the Covenanter conclusions in his book, he states the philosophical and religious premises better than any treatise that I have seen in many days. So if this bit of free advertising induces any to read the book, the article will not be written altogether in vain.

Dr. Morrison writes that the evangelist who thinks he is reproducing Pentecost when he leads some sinner to personal confession of Jesus Christ as his Saviour is missing the chief fact on that eventful day, since Pentecost presented, not an individual, but a social gospel. That day saw the beginning of a new social order, the Kingdom of God, set up to witness to a sinful world the way of social salvation. The Jews were "pricked to the heart" less because they had crucified a Saviour of men than because they had killed their Messiah, for whom they had longed for centuries. The subjective change of conversion was not an end in itself, but only a means of gaining membership in this Christian brotherhood.

That Pentecost presented a social gospel seems justified by the context of the Gospels and the Acts. John, in heralding the Messiah, had announced, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus began His ministry with the same assertion. He sent out His disciples to preach the Kingdom of God. They were to pray for the coming of the Kingdom on the earth. That the Kingdom was a common theme in his ministry is shown by the question of the disciples after his resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" Did Jesus answer that question of His disciples? I think that He did when he said in effect, "I am leaving the unfinished task to you. You shall be my witnesses for the Kingdom when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, beginning at Jerusalem." Pentecost was the beginning so that the second chapter of the Acts is the answer to the question of the disciples in the first.

A recent writer in the Covenanter Witness holds that Peter's answer to the inquirers at Pentecost in Acts 2:38 of

"repentance," "belief in Jesus Christ," and "baptism" would be sufficient as Terms of church membership at the present time, leaving further instruction for later periods. This view seems to be neglecting the context in which this text occurs. If we think of Acts 2:38 as Terms of Communion, then the rest of the chapter is the explanation of the Terms. What does such a confession of Christ mean now? In most communities in this country it costs nothing in social standing, is even a badge of respectability. Church membership helps a man to get work. It extends his credit.

What did it mean at Pentecost? On the outside it meant ostracism. The Christian would be disowned by his family. Like an employee he would lose his position. Like Paul he suffered "the loss of all things that he might gain Christ." What did it mean on the inside of the brotherhood? Read the record, "Joy and gladness," "prayer," "praise," "singleness of heart." This is what the Terms of Communion meant at Pentecost. But there is one more fact that is still more searching for most church members. "They had all things common." Peter said that this was not compulsory in his talk to Ananias, but it was of sufficient obligation to make Ananias lie about it. What effect would that condition at Pentecost have on church membership now? That meant not one-tenth but nine-tenths.

At the present time we have a diligent searching of the Scriptures to show that even one-tenth is not an obligation. The Mosaic Law prescribed two-tenths for religious purposes, the first for the Levites and the second for temple feasts, but at Pentecost, when the Spirit filled the brotherhood, they gave all that they had. The friend that wrote the article to which I refer wanted to get back to Pentecost conditions because they were so easy. If there is a congregation anywhere that meets the Pentecost conditions I would like to apply for a seat near the door, since I am sure that the front seats are taken in that church. But I need repentance to qualify for admission.

There are a good many churches now that ask nothing more for admission than a formal confession of Jesus Christ and baptism, what the editor of the Covenanter Witness calls the "common denominator" basis and what I would call the least common denominator. But the marked difference between these churches and the Pentecostal brotherhood is that while the latter was so distinct from the world that it was persecuted, branded as "enemies of the human race," in too many modern churches none but God knows where the world ends and the church begins. But at Pentecost it was

not so much a line between the Pentecostal brotherhood and the world as a gulf. Paul was told by the Jews at Rome that the Christians "were everywhere spoken against." Rome was tolerant of all religions except Christianity because this religion alone refused to compromise. Religious devotees might worship as they would provided that they added the worship of the Emperor, just as an American citizen is asked to give his conscience into the keeping of Congress.

Though I do not know just what it would mean to us now, I believe that we need to revive the conditions experienced in that Pentecostal company, not at all because they were easy, for they demanded a degree of sacrifice of which we know little, even grudging Him the one-tenth of what He gives us in His mercy. Our weakness as individuals and as a church is that our demand for separation from the world is far less searching than that of Pentecost. Stanley Jones says that every denomination begins in revolt and ends in compromise. Christianity has done that. Protestantism has done that.

I am trusting that the "Master of all good workmen" will not allow the Covenanter Church to do that, and we have sailed pretty close to the wind on the voting issue. Also we have not touched on business relations.

Pentecost was the preaching and the realization of the social gospel. It meant separation from the world. It meant sacrifice. It meant persecution. And it meant power. We want the power. Do we want the price? Power is there, but it is not on the bargain counter. If it were to be had by a confession of Christ and baptism, a good many churches would have power. George Adam Smith said that wherever love meets sin there stands a cross. While we are trying to detour around the cross we are apt to forget that the way of the Kingdom preached by Peter and Paul lay by it. I would like to see the Covenanter Church take that way even if I needed the baptism of repentance to hold my membership. The lesson of Pentecost means that to me.

Wednesday, February 21. Not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you. Joshua 23:14.

Joshua had tried God forty years in the brick kilns, forty years in the desert, and thirty years in the Promised Land, and this was his dying testimony.—D. L. Moody.

"Even a snowflake lets a shadow fall
As to the earth it slowly sinks to rest,
So may the whitest, sweetest soul of all—
Seem sometimes wrong to those who know
them best."