

## THE CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW

By D.B. Knox

### THE PROTESTANT FAITH

The modern view of the world does not take in a broad enough canvas. It does not for example reflect on the very beginnings of things, or on their purpose, or on their conclusion and objective. It simply confines itself to the present and to the immediate past. Scientific method can tell us nothing about origins, or about purpose or about objectives and ends, and so consequently the modern scientific attitude is inclined to deny the existence of these things which the scientific method is not able to investigate, or at least it ignores these things so profoundly that they might as well not exist. Yet even commonsense tells us that things around us have a beginning and origin, and that they therefore have a purpose and a conclusion. The trouble with us modern Christians is that we have accepted the modern world view at the centre of our thinking and we added to it a few things as extras such as belief in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ and Heaven and hell. But this is inconsistent, to believe in God and yet not make Him the centre, and this is the reason for the ineffectiveness of our modern Christianity.

Now the Bible gives us quite a different world view. It focuses our attention on the beginning, and again on the end, and on the purpose underlying the present. God is in the centre, and to recognize this is the only correct starting point. That is why our Lord taught us to pray as the first of all prayers that God might be honoured in our thoughts and in our lives and in our community. The first petition of the Lord's Prayer is "Hallowed be thy name", that is to say, may God be honoured and recognised as God. God is honoured by our trust and obedience. If we make the recognition and the honouring of God the first objective of our lives and the first desire of our hearts we will have a very different world view than that which is common today. We will in fact be approximating to the world view of the Bible; the opening words of which you may remember are "In the beginning God created the



heaven and the earth". God is sovereign over what He has created. For the very fact that God began a work such as creation shows that He had a purpose, and since He is almighty God, that purpose will not be frustrated. Nevertheless as we all know, and as the Bible affirms, there has developed a certain intransigent element in our experience which does not subject itself to His will (though it is not outside the scope of His sovereignty to control) and this intransigent element is the element of evil which finds expression in the human race in many different ways - selfishness in the home, dishonesty at work, untruthfulness aggression - and it finds its most unpleasant expression in the godless attitude which ignores God, pushes Him to the edge and treats His honour as a thing of no importance. Now the Bible makes clear and it is in itself not surprising that God's purposes in the present stage of the world's development is the subjugation of this principle of evil and the establishment of His Lordship. God does not achieve this subjugation and defeat of evil by using compulsory force and pressure but by the influence of goodness which draws our wills freely. For God works through the nature he has made. Our human nature does not get in the way, but he works through it, in a natural way, as we would say. This conquest of evil reached its acme and highest expression in the life and death of Jesus Christ, for here we find love and humility and goodness repelling and subjugating sin and evil. God is love; but sin, in contrast, is hate. So in the cross of Christ we find God's love and man's hate both exemplified. And the love of God in Christ triumphed, and the victory was so complete that naturally resurrection followed.

The cross of Christ is the very centre of history because it is the centre of the purposes that God is working out in human life, but it also reminds us that this process is moving towards a

culmination which will be reached with absolute certainty. This culmination (or objective for the world in which we live) is the final manifestation of God's character and kingdom which will be brought about with the coming of Christ. There will be then no alternative but the acknowledgement of God and the honouring of Him but it will then be too late to change sides. Now is the opportunity of hallowing His name through our free choice before we become involved in the compulsion of no alternative. It will mean that as we pray the Lord's prayer "Hallowed by thy name" we ourselves will seek to honour God for example in our ambitions and in the way we spend our time and money. Do we honour God, for example, in our homes? Do we as a family read the Bible together and pray together led by the head of the family? Or are we ashamed to honour Him in this way? Or can't we find the time? If so, why call ourselves Christians? In Ezekiel 36, from which our Lord took the phrase "Hallowed by thy name", we read that God hallows His name chiefly by saving sinners and changing their characters for the better, so that when we pray "Hallowed by thy name" we are really praying that God will save us and our fellow men.

When God's purposes reach their culmination there will be a judgment, that is to say, an assessment of our lives. Jesus said that the assessment will be so thorough-going that even every idle word will be examined, and if this is the case then of course more serious matters in our lives will certainly not escape scrutiny and judgment. The certainty of judgment is absolutely logical if we recognise that God is sovereign in His own creation. But because the modern world view has pushed God out into the impossible position of being on the perimeter and edge of things we nowadays are able to forget the judgment; but our forgetfulness doesn't alter the inevitability and certainty of the judgment. God is in control of His world; He is in



the centre. He should be central in our views of the world and we should realise this. He will bring everything to a thorough-going examination and judgment. This is because He treats our lives seriously and will ask us to give an account of it. Life is serious, because it is the gift of God to us and He will hold us accountable for it. Because God treats life seriously and will bring all things to judgment we also should realise the seriousness of our actions, for God takes account of them.

In Matthew 25:31 Jesus said that the coming judgment would be based on how considerate and thoughtful our lives had been towards his brethren. In a word the judge will look for a life of Christ-like service for other people in their need, of putting oneself out to help. Jesus described His verdict of approval as taking the following form. "Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and you gave me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me... Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, you did it unto me". Note that the verdict is given on the life as it is lived; it is the end-product that is examined, and it is examined as to whether it corresponds to the character of God as shown in Christ. Only the life that is completely free from selfishness is approved. The question of how religious the person was is not what is being examined, for true religion produces Christ-likeness of character and it is this which will be examined at the judgment. Now, of course, it is not possible to grow into this character unless we use the appropriate means. We make a great mistake if we think that we can imitate the character

of God by our own efforts. God alone can produce a life free of selfishness and a willingness to be put out for other people, and He produces this Christ-like life in us by His Spirit indwelling our hearts; and His Spirit cannot have fellowship with our spirits unless our sins have been forgiven, that is, unless we have come to God in repentance and faith in Jesus our Saviour. Nor can the Holy Spirit continue His work in us, unless we keep close to Christ. That is to say, unless we use the means of prayer, reading the Bible and attendance in the Christian fellowship at Church. But remember, judgment will be on the end-product; that is, on whether our lives bear the fruit of Christ-like actions. Yet we make a great mistake if we think that our lives will be seen as unselfish and Christ-like in that judgment day, if we have not lived in fellowship with Christ now.

God is sovereign in His world and the final judgment is part of that sovereignty. We do well to make God central in our view of the world and in our daily life; for the modern world view which puts God out on the edge of things does not take a long enough view. It is based on unreality, for it is based on the obvious contradiction of acknowledging God's existence, yet ignoring Him.

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22/73 12.8.73

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