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EDITORIAL NOTES.

The daily study of the Scriptures is one of the best means to develop the Christian life. Lack of the study of the Bible itself in the home and school is largely responsible for the failure of children to grasp the fundamental and essential truths of religion. Memorizing the Bible and the Catechisms of the Church should be an important feature of every Sunday school class and should be given large attention in every Christian home. Parents, Sunday school teachers and superintendents should give the Bible the important place that it deserves in the training of the child life.

Prayer is the greatest power that God has put into the hands of His people for the accomplishment of His work. The human heart is prone to neglect the use of this power and to depend upon its own strength and varied resources. In the awful calamity that now envelopes the world there is unprecedented need for prayer. Our General Assembly humbly petitioned President Woodrow Wilson to proclaim a national day of fasting and prayer. In the hearts of many Christians there is an earnest desire that such a day shall be observed throughout our land. The appointment of a special day, however, is not as essential as that the people shall be constantly in prayer. Every Christian should pray more earnestly and more constantly than ever before that God in His great wisdom and grace will shorten the days of this awful war.

The suggestion has been made by the "Great Commission Prayer League" that the first week in July should be set apart as a special period of national, or better still international, prayer and fasting, of self-humiliation, of confession and waiting upon and crying mightily unto God in view of the world-wide conditions today. The call is sent out unsigned by human names in order that the name of Jesus Christ alone may be supremely exalted. It is urged that this summer be such a summer of prayer as Christians have never known before. The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, but a Greater than Jonah is in the midst of the world today. Will you yourself pray daily and weekly as never before for a world-wide revival and for God's Kingdom to come with power? The "Great Commission Prayer League" is located at 808 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

The second coming of Christ has been to many Christians a peculiarly obscure and perplexing doctrine. Theologians have been divided into several schools of thought with reference to it. There have been Pre-Millennialists and Post-Millennialists, as well as a school of thought that occupies a middle ground. An interesting discussion of this subject is found on page 8 in the "Mid-Week Prayer Meeting" department, in which Rev. John M. Vander Meulen, D. D., pastor of the Second Presbyterian church, Louisville, Kentucky, presents some very practical and helpful thoughts on this important subject. A proper understanding of the teaching of Christ on this subject will fill men with optimistic energy and inspiration rather than lead

them to assume an attitude of mere inactive useless "watchful waiting." More and more pastors are finding the "Mid-Week Prayer Meeting" department of the "Christian Observer" a help and inspiration in the prayer meeting service.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is able to make Christians even of those people who have not yet attained to the modern standards of civilization. The converts to Christianity on the Congo are unquestionably Christians of as true type as can be found in all the world. Attention is called to this fact in an article on page 6 of this issue in which an appeal is made for a revival of the study of the Standards of our Church and the Shorter Catechism. The study of these, together with a memorizing of portions of the Bible, are required of all candidates for admission to the Presbyterian Church in the Congo.

The Christian Stewardship Contest, inaugurated some months ago by the General Assembly's Campaign Committee on Stewardship, has been brought to a close, and announcement is made on page 11 of those who have received the awards for the best discussion of the subject of stewardship in the different sections. "Every one who participated in this contest," says Rev. R. L. Walkup, the superintendent, "deserves a prize." The greatest value of the contest undoubtedly lies in the fact that every one who participated in it has a clearer and more vital knowledge of the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship as laid down in the Word of God. Never in the history of the Christian Church has the subject of Christian Stewardship received such large attention as is given to it today.

The Presbyterian Church played an important part in the early history of the United States. No more courageous, unselfish and heroic men were numbered among the early settlers than those who brought with them the doctrines of Calvinism together with the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechisms. An intensely interesting sketch of one of the churches founded by these early settlers at Paris, Kentucky, in 1787, is found on page 10. One of the most notable features of the early history of this church was the custom of the session to select young men of piety and godly ability and educate them for the ministry. In one case they bought the time of a young man who had been apprenticed to learn a trade, and educated him for the Gospel ministry. Twenty-seven young men have gone out from this church to preach the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the sessions of churches today were eager to select young men and persuade them to enter the ministry, as did this early church, the ranks of the ministry of our Church would be recruited to full strength.

Never in the history of the world has a nation been called upon to float such an enormous loan as that which the American people are now absorbing in the "Liberty Loan Bonds" of the United States. The first issue of \$2,000,000,000 will soon be in the hands of the people. The appeal has been made to individuals to make some sacrifices in order to purchase one or more of the bonds. Many persons have been quick to act upon the sug-

The joy of resisting temptation is the highest joy men can feel. It is a moment when our little life here grows larger, and we feel ourselves lifted into a wider sphere; we have a sense of fellowship with higher beings, and are somehow conscious of their sympathy. All God's creation smiles upon us, and appears made for our joy.—A. B. Davidson.

Mid-Week Prayer Meeting

BY REV. JOHN M. VANDER MEULEN, D. D.

WATCH AND PRAY.

Topic for June 27, 1917.

Suggested Scripture Reading: Luke 21:28-36.

The topic, "Watch and Pray," is really the final part of this passage which may be entitled the prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ. Taking that for the theme, we may divide it, first into "Its Illuminating Principle," secondly, "Its Optimistic Note," and thirdly, "Its Expected Human Response."

The doctrine of Christ's Second Coming, like the doctrine of His Resurrection and Ascension, was meant to be of practical value to the believer. The practical value of the Resurrection and Ascension is that it makes more real and vivid to our souls the consoling and inspiring facts of immortality and Heaven and our right to them. The practical value of the Second Coming of Christ is that it shall be an inspiration and incentive to the Christian Church in praying and working for the coming of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

Sometimes, to be sure, its effect has been the exact opposite of that. It was so with some of the "Adventists" in Paul's day, and it has been so with some of the "Adventists" in our own day. But that is because the doctrine has been misapprehended. When the teaching of Christ on the subject is rightly understood it will fill men with optimistic energy and inspiration instead of with mere useless "watchful waiting."

I. The Illuminating Principle.

Prophecy and fulfilment in the Bible, as we conceive, proceed not so much after the manner of mechanical magic, as after the manner of the unfolding of some vital fundamental principle. Take for example the phenomena of wars and rumors of wars, of revolutions, of destructions, of regimes, of which the destruction of Jerusalem was only one instance. When Jesus had been foretelling such events in the seventeenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, the disciples came to Him with the question, "Where, Lord?" and He answered, "Wheresoever"—mark the word—"wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." In other words, wherever there is corruption, there destruction and dissolution are bound to follow. It was a statement of a fundamental and prophetic principle of God's government of the world that must of necessity have not one fulfilment but repeated fulfilments.

Now if we understand the teachings of Jesus aright, then it is just so with the prophecy and fulfilment of the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus seems to indicate that by the very parable of the fig tree in this passage. The putting forth of new leaves by the fig tree was a prophecy that the summer was nigh, but that did not happen once, but repeatedly. Repeatedly that phenomena was a prophecy of coming summer and repeatedly it found its fulfilment. And so I take it that Jesus meant to say that the prophecy of His Second Coming would occur repeatedly, find repeated fulfilment in the world. This would throw light upon such otherwise difficult words as these, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled."

But if all these Second Comings of Christ are parts of a piece, successive fulfilments of the same fundamental principle in the providence and grace of God, they all point forward to and prepare for the great climax, the coming of Christ visibly in person, with which event the coming of the Kingdom will be complete.

The unifying principle of all these successive events is given to us by Jesus in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, where He, speaking of the first of such cataclysmic phenomena, said "that all these things are the beginning of travail." The figure which Christ uses of the whole is that of a single birth. And these different upheavals, which He also foretells, are but the repeated birth-throes, the birth-throes of that single birth. The world, under the gracious and providential dealings of God, is in travail to bring forth the Coming of the Kingdom of Christ. In each one something new and good and preparatory to the final consummation comes forth. At the completion of that travail, the visible King will appear at the head of His Kingdom.

II. The Optimistic Note.

But if this is, first, "Christ's Illuminating Principle of His Second Coming," I remark in the second place that it is also "Its Optimistic Note."

There are two kinds of pain in the world. The one may be called the pain of death; the other the pain of birth. For we die in pain, but we also are born in pain. And all the aches we have between those two events throughout our lives, all the aches, not only physical but mental and spiritual, may be divided into these two classes. They are either the pains of dissolution or death, or they are the pains of becoming or birth.

And it is just so with society, with the world at large. It too goes through its sorrows and agonies. And there come times in its history when there are crises of these, when they seem gathered together into such numbers and in such intensity, that we instinctively know it is no ordinary hour in the world's history, that it is a momentous hour which will leave things never again the same.

And in such an hour there are those—for it is easy, especially for the sufferer, to confuse the two—who are ready with the pessimistic interpretation that these are the pains of death.

But it is precisely the other and optimistic interpretation which Jesus gave us of the world's sorrows. He told us to be on our watch for it. These things He said to the men of His generation, who were yet to go through such world agonies, these things are not the end of things good and noble, the glorious history of the past. These are the beginning of things. The beginning of what? The beginning of travail when Christ and His Kingdom shall be born anew into the world. It was the optimistic note.

It is the thing we need to remember in our own day. Never since Christ's day in that first age, certainly never since the days of the Reformation, some have thought never since the dawn of history, has the world and society rocked in the throes of a world-wide agony such as civilization is going through at the present hour. At the beginning of this agony, at the beginning of it more, I suppose, than now, men in their pessimism cried out that this was the end of things. Civilization had collapsed, they said. The Church had proved to be a failure, possibly even Christianity. So some thought.

But the true and sane Christian believer, forewarned against such an interpretation by the express words of Jesus, fortified in that also by other such crises in the world's history which have proven those words true, is lost in no such despair. He hopes and expects that this is but the herald of another one of the Second Comings of Christ in His Kingdom, which hasten, because they are a part of and prepare the way for that final consummation when He shall stand before us visible in person and complete in His glory because the prayer He has taught us to pray has been answered through precisely these birth throes, "Thy Kingdom come."

III. Its Expected Response.

But if we have considered, first, "The Illuminating Principle" and, secondly, "The Optimistic Note of Christ's Second Coming," consider now in the third place "The Expected Human Response To It."

Jesus Himself defines that attitude in the context of this prophecy in two words: "Watch" and "Pray."

It is interesting to notice how full this passage is of up-to-dateness and how it is illuminated by our present world crisis. It is scarcely necessary to emphasize the fact of how much prayer fits into the present situation. We suppose that never in the life time of the present generation have there been so many earnest prayers sent up, not only for individual loved ones, but for the coming Kingdom in the world in general. Instinctively we feel that prayer is a necessary factor in the issue of this struggle and what shall come out of it.

But we may dwell a little more explicitly on the other injunction to "watch." This, if one will read the whole prophecy of Jesus in regard to His Second Coming, or, as we may put it "Second Comings," is no injunction to mere "watchful waiting." Quite the contrary, Jesus Himself says of it (Matthew 24:45, 46): "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Christ expects at His final coming to find us "doing." It is so that He expects to find us at every one of these previous, preparatory "Comings." And the reason we must watch is that we may take advantage of every new situation or development for the coming of His Kingdom.

This interpretation of His injunction finds a ready illustration in our own crisis. Christ warns us here against some particular sins at such a crisis. One of these sins is the sin of food extravagance. Another of these sins is the sin of drunkenness. "But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare." Now what we mean by active watchfulness is that when with the exigencies created by such a crisis as the present, there is an opportunity to abolish forever such an old sin as that of the liquor traffic, which is but a synonym for drunkenness, Christian people should be as quick to take advantage of it for their King and His Kingdom as a general would be to throw a force into what he discovered to be a weak point in the enemy's lines.

It is by such an attitude of prayer and watchfulness that we shall bring to its full blessing the Coming of the Kingdom at each particular crisis not only, but that we shall hasten the final con-

summation when our Lord shall Himself come in visible person and glory.

Louisville, Ky.

The Sunday School

BY REV. EUGENE P. MICKEL, D. D.

ISAIAH'S CALL TO HEROIC SERVICE.

Sabbath School Lesson for July 1, 1917.

Isaiah 6.

Scripture Lesson.—1. In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;

7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

9. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.

12. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

Golden Text.—"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."—Isaiah 6:8.

Time.—Between 760 and 694 B. C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 51. What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word.

LESSON COMMENTARY.

Isaiah was the most notable of the prophets divinely inspired by the Lord to proclaim His messages, and with Moses and David he shares the honor of being one of the three greatest authors of the Old Testament. His name means "Jehovah hath saved." His home was in Jerusalem. His labors as prophet extended from the last years of King Uzziah through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, a period of some sixty years. Jewish tradition relates that he was put to death at the age of ninety by that wicked king of Judah, Manasseh, who ordered him to be sawn in two because he would not obey some idolatrous law of that monarch.

The book which bears Isaiah's name, and of which he was the author, varies greatly in style and language as it passes from one theme to another. Sublimity, pathos and irony, plain narrative and most vivid imagery, every art of rhetoric to fix and retain interest, are here employed in wonderful profusion, marking Isaiah not only as the greatest Scripture author, but also as the foremost author of all in any age or language. Delivering his messages to men of different generations and including in his faithful preaching the whole range of divine revelation, varying from sharpest rebuke to most gracious invitation, we shall expect to find great changes both in vocabulary and in arrangement as Isaiah passes from one theme to another. Because of these changes, to imagine that of necessity this book must have been composed by two or more authors, as some have done, is but a failure to comprehend the greatness of Isaiah and the masterful diction of his writings. There is not the least foundation in history or tradition to support such a theory.

According to the varied contents of its different portions, the book of Isaiah might be divided into many separate parts. There is rapid change from denunciation of sin to pleading for repentance, from prediction of woe in the terrible punishment of wickedness to foretelling the gladness and riches of the times when the nation should return to God, from declaring the darkness of death covering the idolatrous age in which he lived to portraying the entrancing vistas of everlasting life in the final triumphs of the One whom he announced should come, first in humiliation and suffering, but at last to reign in all-conquering and eternal victory. Making but three divisions of the book, we may