

In 1908 a new magazine was launched, the Christian Century. It was launched by a man with a vision for the future, this was to be the Christian Century, the age when all wars on earth would cease, when there would be the end of poverty, when Christian morality and reform would bring in the kingdom of God, here on earth.

In 1893 the Anti Saloon League was organized as a church orientated, direct action, political pressure organization. Its one goal was to ban alcohol in every place possible. On January 16, 1919 the great day came as Nebraska ratified the prohibition amendment and Prohibition of Alcohol was the law of the land.

In August of 1914 the War to end all Wars began. Known as World War I today, then Christian thinkers were sure that it was the one last war that would need to be fought to bring peace and security to the world for all time.

In 1980 some talk of us as living in a post Christian era. In 1930 no one even knows what Christian morality even looks like. In 1980 poverty and hunger throughout the world are worse than ever.

And then there's alcohol, in 1930 an accepted part of most lives, yet ^{caused by the effects of} as the disease alcoholism a storm to bring apart homes and families and lives. And drugs, used by young and old, some bought and sold illegally, some prescribed, some like caffeine and nicotine commonly used in church basements.

And war. How we would like to go back to simple wars where men killed men, where you could see the blood and pain that resulted from the bullet fired, the bayonet thrust. But in 1930 there is talk of a missile system costing billions of dollars whose only purpose is the assurance that after they have wiped us out we could still have the firepower to kill and destroy them and we call this deterrence. And not one war, but countless wars raging in countries and between nations even at this minute. Guerrilla warfare, internal struggles, incursions into a neighboring land. Every kind of war that was ever dreamed of, any kind of war you might like to fight in.

And this is the Christian Century, this is where ^{we have come after} Prohibition and the War to end all wars ~~have brought us.~~ Yet this week there was the beginning of what I suspect will be more of the same, the Washington for Jesus demonstration. Christians calling our nation to Christian principles, expecting that if we but live according to Christian morality, which they would

define, then our nation can expect ~~and~~ ^a bright and golden age.

All of these are visions, from the Christian Century, to Prohibition to Washington for Jesus, visions of Christians. But there is another vision that stands before us, which is not so much a vision of Christians as it is the Christian's vision of the future, granted to the church through John some 1900 years ago.

"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. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud 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; 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. And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold I make all things new."

There are many ^{who} would tell us to build our hope for the future on this program or that, at every time there are many voices crying follow us and we will give you peace, ~~and~~ security, and prosperity. Even individually we are so foolish to think that through proper management of our time and money we can guarantee a future for ourselves. But a Christian Century turns into the reign of Satan and Washington for Jesus may turn into a new reign of tyranny, and the man who works to build barns to ~~store~~ ^{store} to store his grain that he might dwell in comfort and ease is called a fool by Jesus because even that night his soul would be required, and the dream for which he worked, whose would it become. No, there is but one vision of the future on which we can count, a vision guaranteed by God, and not the feeble efforts of man, the Holy City coming from on high.

This is the only vision worth living and dying for. We wear ourselves out trying and working for this or that and when tomorrow comes and we ~~will~~ have what we devoted ourselves to it brings us neither happiness nor security, only more work, more worry.

Today we are living in the time of the collapse of our visions, the falling apart of our dreams. Sparing interest rates, ~~and~~ dry weather, and inflation are threatening to take our dreams and our security and smash them to the ground. Savings accounts carefully gathered through the years are devoured by the rise in the cost of living, travel that was put off until we could afford it now is put further in the future, businesses built ~~carefully~~ and farms established with hard work are costing more than they make. And though we still have enough to eat, and enough to wear, and enough to keep shelter over us, the dreams are being crushed and some of us with them. Poverty will kill few of us, but in the dashing of our hopes for our future many of us ~~may~~ may fall.

But harder times will teach us what prosperity never can, that there is one dream. And dreams of prosperity and dreams to create a utopia, these we will find are not so very important after all, for our world may collapse but our God will not, and our cities may be destroyed but the Holy City will remain. And the one true blessing in life, the dwelling of our God with men is ours in good times and bad, and will be ours until that day when we stand in the Holy City of our God.

We are much like Martha, caught up in our work and saying and to us Jesus says, "My children you are anxious and troubled about many things, one thing is needful." One thing, one vision, one dream that cannot be taken from us, The dwelling of God with men.