

How do you look at life?

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This is a question which I should like to ask my fellow-Christians everywhere. I am stirred to do so by reading a brief article in a secular magazine.

The paper in question — *Elder's Review*, a quarterly issued as to West African matters by the large Steamship Company operating in those regions — was sent to me by a friend, before whom it came in the course of his business. He requested me to read a brief article, of but three short columns, which the editor had inserted right in the very centre. The *Review* I opened as indicated. The article, "How I look at Life," by Lord Beaverbrook, I have read.

The editor introduces the article with a few words pointing out that but few men in our day, in climbing to affluence and influence, have had such a romantic career as the author, and he expresses his opinion that the article is one which gives ample cause for reflection to those who are on the threshold of their careers and also to those who are older. With the editor we certainly agree.

Lord Beaverbrook points out that, "So much depends on the youthful direction of the mind that we can never completely recall our earliest important decisions." He goes on to cite his own case as an example of this, telling us how he was born in Canada, where prices are higher than in England. His father was a Presbyterian minister with an income of but £200 to £300 a year, whereon he struggled to bring up a family of a good round dozen. "As a consequence," he says, "we were miserably poor, and so life struck me as the necessity for an escape from poverty."

Naturally, then, he strove for education as the equipment which would enable him to live some better life, for as he says, "I was so shocked with the atmosphere of penury which reigned at home that, when I went into the world, I sought above all and first of all — money." To the making of money, therefore, he turned all his youthful energies, with the result that in a very short space of time he accumulated a fortune, and with it came honour and influence and power.

His lordship is now well on in middle life and he looks back upon the years that are past, that he may speak of what he calls, "*Life's real satisfaction*." He says, "Yet I regret this turn which circumstances gave to my mentality. I would gladly have lived a different life.... There is nothing I admire quite so much as the life of the evangelist — the man who embraces poverty willingly, who preaches a new doctrine to mankind, and revivifies an ancient faith for humanity. Luther, Knox, or Wesley — it is all the same. These are the men who have had the most satisfying of lives, because real satisfaction in life consists in the knowledge that one has done good. That is an ambition which can never be exhausted."

As for money, he tells us that he puts it lowest in the scale of what gives life satisfaction. Power he ranks just one degree higher. The power to do good is, he considers, better than all; the supreme source of satisfaction. Therefore it is that the career of an evangelist so greatly appeals to him.

He closes his article with these remarkable words: —

"If I were in a position to influence the life of a sincere young man today I would say to him, 'Rather choose to be an evangelist than a Cabinet Minister or a millionaire.' When I was a young man I pitied my father for being a poor man and humble preacher of the Word. Now that I am older I envy him his life and his career."

It may be observed that in these quotations which we have given there is nothing to show that God's call and God's work is recognized; nothing to show that no one can really devote his life to the work of an evangelist except first converted and then called of God; that conversion and the endowment of the Holy Spirit are needful before any individual can do a solitary thing in the service of the Lord. That is so, and the omission, alas! characterizes the whole article. That point of all-importance his lordship does not appear to see, and every reader of these lines might well at this point lift up his heart to God with the request that his eyes may be effectually opened to see it.

Still, this fact by no means takes the edge off his words. Here is a very successful man of affairs who is at least beginning to see life in its true perspective, and he tells us in very plain and open fashion what he sees. We, by the great mercy of our God, have been converted. Our sins are forgiven, we stand justified from all things, and we have received the Holy Spirit. We therefore have the Anointing which enables us to know all things in their true perspective, and we have the Power which capacitates us to take up the service of God under the direction of the Lord. How do we look at life? Let us ask ourselves this question in all seriousness.

We especially beseech our younger brethren and sisters to face this question. Many of you doubtless live in quite poor homes. Some of you have, or have had, fathers not earning as much as the salary of the Presbyterian minister, even in these days of high prices compared with fifty years ago. Does life strike you as being in the main an avenue of escape from the grind of poverty? God forbid that it should. Others of you come from homes of comparative comfort, and some few of you from homes of affluence and wealth, from circumstances which can provide you with anything within reason on which you may set your heart. Does life strike you as mainly an avenue bordered on either side by gardens of pleasure, whence you may pluck as often as you please every flower that takes your fancy; a pathway which is to provide you with every earthly delight which does not violently clash with your Christian profession? Again we say, God forbid that it should!

One of our poets has said,

"Life is real, life is earnest,

And the grave is not our goal."

This witness is indeed true. There surrounds us on every hand the world that is: there lies before us the world that is to come. The one thrusts itself upon our notice at every turn; our eyes rest upon its gilded glories, our ears are filled with its ceaseless din. The other is at present known only to faith. Yet the one is the creature of one short fevered hour in the history of eternity; the other abides for ever. No wonder the Apostle John has said to us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Though we all of us handle and use the things that are in the world we are to take great care that they do not obtain a strangle-hold on our affections. He added, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2: 17). God's world abides, and in that world he who does God's will abides for ever.

Dear young Christian, we appeal to you! For which world are you living? In which direction are you bending your energies? What seems to you to be the highest good in life?

You will tell us, perhaps, that you quite admit the truth of what we have been saying: that you could not very well be a Christian and not admit it. Yet there are, you urge, many difficulties — one must make one's way in life and earn one's living: it is not pleasant to have but little of the good things of this life in the presence of others who have much: downright earnestness in God's things often brings contempt and even ridicule. Our reply to this has to be, that these difficult facts are just as you state

them.

We cannot shut our eyes to them. Even Lord Beaverbrook in his article did not attempt to do so. He says, "I know only too well from bitter experience how youth is turned away from such high missions of service by the intimate prospect of penury." Again he adds the following striking words, "To this is often added the fear of ridicule and contempt which unworldly enthusiasm arouses. 'Let us,' said a bishop of the late eighteenth century, 'let us, above all things, put down enthusiasm.' And so the church lost Wesley. That man will be happiest in middle years who resists most successfully the temptation of a purely material success."

The difficulties are apparent, and we do not shut our eyes to them. But shall we flinch from them? Shall we allow them to obscure before our eyes the lasting glories of that world which is to come? Shall we let them dim in our souls the brightness, the sweetness, of the love of Christ, or damp down the holy enthusiasm which such a Master and such a message are otherwise bound to create? By the grace of God it shall not be so with us.

Let all the difficulties and disadvantages be duly weighed up and appraised. Then let the coming day be considered, when humble saints, who have been true and faithful to the Name of Christ, shall be vindicated, according to that word, "Behold, I will make them [the opponents] to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Rev. 3: 9); when there shall be fulfilled to humble servants that word of their Master, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour" (John 12: 26). What shall we say to these things?

Without a doubt we shall say that to be publicly honoured of the Father, and declared to be the objects of the love of Christ, is a coming blessedness and joy with which all possible disadvantages are not worthy of being compared. To be disliked by men and dishonoured by them is not pleasant, but what will it be to be loved by Christ and to be honoured of the Father?

Can you conceive of anything more blessed than that? No, indeed! Then see to it that for a little success and paltry honour in this world you do not forgo that honour which comes from God alone. See to it that you do not miss the opportunity of giving yourself whole-heartedly to Christ and His service.

Your abilities may be large or small. You may have gift of a pronounced kind or you may have no special gift at all. Whichever way it is, our exhortation to you is the same. You know the grace of God. You have a Master of infinite blessedness and glory to serve. Your years upon earth are at most very short. Your opportunity for devotedness to Him and His service will soon be gone. Oh, embrace it, dear young Christian, and labour not for the world that is but for that which is to come!

May God enable you to be wholehearted for Christ.