

Editorial

HOW SHOULD WE THINK OF THE FUTURE?

No matter how carefully we plan, the future is by no means certain. We might wish that it were otherwise—that we might know with certainty what to expect in the months and years ahead. Actually, it is of the Lord’s providence and wisdom that we do not know the future.

We can look to the future in one of two ways: as an opportunity to achieve *our* purposes, or as an opportunity to fulfill *the Lord’s* purposes.

The first view is from self and leads to the anxious concern that is forbidden in Scripture. Someone who believes that he governs himself is “constantly agitated, being carried along into evil desires, into anxious cares about things of the future, and thus into a vast number of anxieties” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2892).

The second view comes from the recognition that life is not our own but is governed by the Lord. The person who believes this “trusts solely in the Lord and has no anxious cares about all else; he is quite sure that all things work for his good, blessedness, and happiness for ever” (*Ibid.*). Although such a person exercises diligent prudence to accomplish uses and to attain his hopes, he does not think of the future anxiously.

In this sense, the future *is* known. It is known to be in the Lord’s hands and leading to His good ends. Such knowledge does not relieve us of our responsibility to live in support of the Lord’s ends. It does not guarantee that all of our reactions to coming events will be positive and happy, but it does bring us the confidence to seek from the Lord our “daily bread” and to guard ourselves against the uncertainty of a “doubtful mind.”

Those who believe thus in an overruling providence are given a trust that the Lord is “directing their lot.” Consequently, they have “no wish to know beforehand what it will be, lest they

should in some way interfere with the Divine providence” (*Divine Providence* 179).

Hope and a desire for accomplishment are not forbidden. We should look upon the future with high hopes, using our minds and strength to bring forth fruit “unto life eternal.” The Lord has hidden the future from us that we may experience the joys and delights that come in the performance of use.

How then should we think of the future? Not without hope or ambition. Not passively, awaiting some mysterious fate. We should think of the future as a new opportunity to serve the Lord and the neighbor with energy, creativity, and a happy sense of accomplishment. We should face the future with confidence — not in ourselves but in the Lord’s providence. We should be ready to recognize that our ways are not always the Lord’s ways and that His will is to be done. Such an attitude will save us from many disappointments. We cannot be sure what the future holds for us, but we can be sure that the Lord knows and will provide that whatever happens in time will be conducive to our eternal happiness.

As we enter a new year, our lives often besieged by a host of natural concerns, let us remember the comfort of the Lord’s teaching: “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37: 5).

DECEMBER MAILING

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