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THE PATTERN IN THE MOUNT

—BY—
The Rev. Dr. John H. Kerr

A sermon that attracted so much attention that it was repeated by the despatch of his people the same evening was preached in the Arlington Avenue Presbyterian Church, Brockton, by the pastor, the Rev. Dr. John H. Kerr. The subject was, "The Pattern in the Mount."

The text was from Hebrews, vi:5: "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount." Dr. Kerr said:

It has been claimed that the present European war is but a judgment on the contending nations for their national sins. It would be very easy to put your finger on acts in their histories for which no possible defence can be made, and which might justly call for an expiation. But had the principles of righteousness and peace and joy in things spiritual and divine been instilled in them, they would not this day be engaged in a life and death struggle with one another—indeed, the things that have led up to this whole well-nigh world-tragedy would not have existed.

I am well aware of the fact that there are many who affirm that nations cannot live according to the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, or even of the Golden Rule. That certainly is true, inasmuch as they are not building according to a heavenly pattern. When the idea set forth before them is commercial supremacy, or to be invincible on land or sea, we will find that the means by which they seek to attain unto such ideas have never been conceived on sunlit mountain tops, but down in the low-lying valleys, reeking with petty jealousies and envious strifes, where men have been trained to hate the things that belong to another nation. When national hatred has been fostered and fed by well-nigh a thousand different ways, out of such brooding will eventually come forth the progeny that is characteristic of it, the most dreadful teeth are sowed, what is it reasonable to expect will spring forth?

Well might crowned heads and rulers hear the injunction with reference to nation building. "See that thou make all things according to the heavenly pattern." Militarism does not find its counter part in the spirit that views things from the standpoint and vantage-ground of the eternal hills. National hatred and the training of every male inhabitant, who is not by reason of physical disability actually incapacitated in the use of armaments of warfare, is bound to sooner or later find expression in just such exhibitions of human ferocity as are entailing a cost on Europe that a hundred years will try in vain to repay. No; these things do not come from above, but out of the pit in which are brewed the most nauseous and deadly draughts ever forced to human lips. We know now, if we didn't before, that great armaments are not preservers of peace, but provocatives of war.

But when nations build themselves along the lines of a heavenly pattern, they will not be so busily engaged in circumventing their neighbors, finding sinister meanings in all of their moves and plotting their own commercial prosperity on the ruin of others, that they cannot look up into the clear skies. God has been pushed aside too much in these latter days, and men have been engaged in finding justification for their own unrighteous acts rather than in conforming their ways to God's and in seeking to know and do His will.

When over three months ago I selected this text for the Sabbath I had no conception of the application of it to nation building, though to my mind it does fit wonderfully well in that direction. I had in mind the building up of a church. We are now rapidly advancing through the twenty-five years of the existence of our Church. My special concern has been and is with reference to the pattern after which we shall make all things in our work as a church. It is too easy in these days of ready conformity to the standards set by others to build as they may suggest to us. Any church may lower its own standard, feeling that it is justified by the conditions that confront it. It may thus be led to conform itself to earthly standards rather than to a heavenly pattern.

Ahaz, one of the kings of Judah, was visiting once in the city of Damascus. While there he saw an altar that attracted his attention and caught his fancy. It was a very old altar, and he sent to Uriah, the priest in Jerusalem, "the fashion of the altar and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof." In due time the reproduced altar was established in the temple at Jerusalem. To make way for it the king dared to change the arrangements in the temple. Says one, "In the opinion of Ahaz, the altar which had been built after the model of that of Damascus was not to be an idolatrous altar, but an altar to Jehovah. The reason for this arbitrary removal of the altar of Solomon, which had been sanctioned by the Lord Himself at the dedication of the temple by fire from heaven, was in all probability, chiefly that the Damascus altar pleased Ahaz better; and the innovation was a sin against Jehovah, inasmuch as God Himself had prescribed the form for His sanctuary, so that any altar planned by man and built according to a heathen model was practically the same as an idolatrous altar."

the relation they ought to the world they must stand for the ideals of the kingdom of God?

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That bit of history is instructive. The same sin can be easily repeated in these days if a church goes to any other source than a divine source for the pattern upon which it is building. Damascus altars can never with safety be introduced into the service of God. It necessitated a decided departure from the pattern on which the temple arrangements had been made. It was the departure that was not warranted and could not be justified. That great cathedral at Rheims, today a dismantled wreck in this warfare that holds nothing sacred, was in building over long ages of time. But it was consistent in its architecture, because the pattern on which the temple of its original architect, to whose genius it is a great monument, even in its ruins. Let us be true to the heavenly pattern, and introduce no departure from it in the building we are doing here as a church.

We should remember that they are fitted for the highest purposes only in so far as they contribute to the reproduction of the pattern that is expressive of the mind and will of God.

Can anyone suppose that if the principles of the religion of Jesus Christ had been thoroughly wrought into the lives of the people of the contending nations we would have the spectacle that in this year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fourteen is not merely checking the world's progress, but turning it backward? Never has there been a time when God was calling the people to sober second thoughts as now. In His providence he is saying, "See what havoc your worldly methods have wrought. And in the same voice He is bidding us all revise every tendency of our lives that is in the present disastrous direction."

The imperious call of the hour is for a different viewpoint in life than actually prevails with the large majority of our race and to large extent with our nation. Too many of those who have declared themselves to be the followers of Jesus Christ are following almost any other person than Him. Is this true of any of us? If we are conscious of a departure from the pattern given us, now is the time to return to God and take up again the divine mission of building our own lives, our church's life, our nation's life, the world's life according to the pattern God will show us if we go up out of the mists and darkness into the sun-lighted heights of His mountains. Oh, for a broader vision of life, for a consuming desire to be obedient to the heavenly vision that calls us to higher and better living, according to the pattern, that was so that we may more effectually play the part we ought in the nation, and therefore in the world, by being what we ought to be in the Church of Jesus Christ, which alone can accomplish the regeneration of the life of the world. "See that thou make all things according to the pattern, that was showed thee in the mount."

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