

I was reading a book the other day, and I came across something very interesting. It was describing the attitudes and views of a very famous philosopher who rejected Christianity because it was so pessimistic. Pessimistic, I thought! How in the world could anyone think that the gospel was pessimistic? Here was his statement: There is nothing here (on earth) that can keep you happy. Now that is true, in a sense. But it represents a somewhat distorted viewpoint, and in fact Christianity was found to be pessimistic by the philosopher because he was basically pessimistic himself.

But it brought to my mind that everyone is basically one way or the other. I would like for everyone to take a look at this picture for a minute and just think about what it is. This is not an accurate test of whether you are an optimist or a pessimist, but it can be interesting. If most of you are like me, you would say, "What a beautiful sunset!" I have several pictures of what I call sunsets around the house, and as I thought of optimism, I thought that I ought to call at least half of them sunrises, because who is to say which way the sun is going, up or down? Whether they are sunrises or sunsets, then, depends on your point of view. Part of our mental fix on sunsets is due, of course, to the fact that we are rarely up at the early hour required to see a sunrise. But maybe this is also an indicator of our attitudes. It seems that the older you get, also, the more this picture looks like a sunset, for age is sometimes called the sunset of youth. But I shouldn't be that old yet.

Now let us wander back to Christianity. One can say either that there is nothing here that can keep us happy, or that there is nothing here than can keep us from being happy. Think about that. Christianity is an upbeat philosophy, not an offbeat one. It is a growing thing, and we can always look to tomorrow to be a better day. Our emphasis should be at all times, you can do better. Sometimes people are pessimistic about Christianity because they know that they can never become perfect, like Christ, and so they think that it is useless to even try. But the optimistic view is that there are no limits to the amount that we can grow in Christ. If we emphasize this to all that we see, I can't see how anyone that knows us could possibly be able to say that Christianity is pessimistic. The greatest life that could ever be is still ahead, and we can be a part of it.