

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, January 3rd, 1918.

The Christian Year

The First Sunday After the Epiphany,
January 13th, 1918.

THE FATHER'S BUSINESS.

There would seem to be one very clear message coming from the Collect, Epistle and Gospel for to-day.

When we look around us and within us we find "trouble about many things." Many are the objects of life, many are the voices which call us, many are the claims made upon us; we are indeed hampered by "a multiplicity of wants." "Every wind that blows is loaded with trifling fears and cares, covetous and envious fears, unprofitable cares, and unabiding pleasures, which, passing away, leave no trace behind, but a heart more entangled and deceived by the world." But as we meditate on the simple lesson of this Sunday we learn that it is the Father's business which matters most, that the offering of ourselves to God is the great object of life, and that guidance to do God's Will is the chief need. Yes, as we study the Gospel, Epistle and Collect the claims, object and pressing needs of life become simpler, they narrow down to the essentials.

"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" This was the work of prime importance to Him. With His first recorded words, Jesus Christ makes it perfectly clear. This is how it seemed to Him—the Father's business must be first. From beginning to end, the Father is first with Him—from this word in to-day's Gospel to the last Word on the Cross, "Father, into Thy hands," His chief thought was His Father. God first, says our Gospel, and all other claims of life will take their right place. The putting of God first sets no low place to life's common duties, for was it not the Boy Who said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business," Who went down to Nazareth with His Mother and St. Joseph and "was subject unto them"?

St. Paul has his word to give us about the objective of life. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The object to be held before us is the giving up of ourselves to God to please Him. It is by giving up ourselves we are fitted for the Father's business and are enabled to carry out His purposes for us. We are in constant danger of being conformed to this world—for the World's business is always present with its many distracting claims, pressing itself upon our notice, and making its appeal to us. It is the transformed mind—the mind renewed in Christ—which alone can discriminate amid the clamorous calls of the world, and learn "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

This thought brings us to the Collect in which we are taught to pray for guidance in these matters, "and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do." We are not left alone in making our choice of the many claims being made upon us. God will, in response to prayer, grant us His help and guidance so that we may know what we ought to do, and be able to see what is "My Father's business," and He also will bestow upon us "the grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same."

Editorial

A CALL TO PRAYER.

The King has issued a call to united prayer. Many have wondered why this was not done long ago, but for reasons known best to the King and his advisers nearly three and a half years of war have raged without any great act of public recognition of the place of God in such matters. A large proportion of the members of the British Empire acknowledge the existence of God, and a large percentage of these acknowledge Him to be the Father of mankind. Like a wise Father, though, He does not force us to comply with His will but waits for us to make our needs known to Him. Is it not reasonable, therefore, that we should go to Him in a body and, acknowledging our weakness and expressing our willingness to follow His guidance, ask Him to reveal His will to us and to help us in the struggle in which we are engaged?

Why are we not more ready to go to God in such matters? Is it that we have any doubt that He will hear and answer our requests? We fear that there are far too many who have very distorted ideas as to what is meant by an answer. They utter their prayer but have made up their minds already what the answer should be. They do not leave the matter in God's hands, but (we do not say that they do it intentionally) they practically dictate the reply as well as the request. Moreover, too many fail to realize that to refuse a request is just as much an answer, as to grant it. Why should we always look for an affirmative answer? We know that our knowledge of what is best for us is limited and we should realize that it is impossible for us to tell, under all conditions, what the best answer to our prayer is. God alone knows what is best and every prayer should be made conditional, "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done."

This does not mean that prayer should not be definite. The loving earthly father longs to know the particular desires of each of his children and we have reason to believe that our Heavenly Father does also.

Perhaps another reason why we have been slow in making a united appeal is that we think that God requires that we should do everything in our power first to help ourselves before going to Him. We admire the spirit of independence and we despise the man who is always leaning on others. But there is a point where independence becomes a sin. We can afford to be independent to a great extent so far as human help is concerned, for the development of strength depends largely upon self-exertion. In our relation to God though, it is a very different matter. Children can afford to be independent of one another but they cannot very well ignore their parents. It is God's wish that we ask Him to help us all through and not treat Him as a sort of "forlorn hope."

Independence is, however, sometimes merely another term for rebellion. We know the conditions necessary if we are to receive help from God and we refuse to comply with them. We should like to be the judge of our own actions and of the means employed in gaining our ends. We believe that our cause is just and we can ask God to bless it. We cannot feel just the same, perhaps, regarding some of the measures taken to defeat our enemies and we are unwilling to change these or ashamed to

approach God while continuing to employ them. Let us rest assured that unless we are willing to place everything, without reserve, in the hands of God we may just about as well leave our prayers unuttered. But, on the other hand, let us rest just as much assured that submitting everything to His guidance and approval and doing what we believe to be in accordance with His will, no matter what reverses we may have to suffer, the result in the end will be what is best not only for ourselves but also for all the other members of His family.

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The address of the Primate on Tuesday evening next in the Church of the Redeemer, Toronto, is on "The Call of the Hour to Canada." It is for men and should be heard by all who possibly can be present.

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With this week we enter upon a New Year and we wish most heartily that each and all of our readers may find it happy and prosperous in the very highest sense. We all must have realized that the year just ended was more trying in many ways than the preceding year, and we are justified in believing that there are still more strenuous days ahead. The darkest hours though are just before the dawn, and we earnestly hope and pray that the dark days facing us may, through the power of the Spirit of Light, be turned into true joy and brightness and peace.

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The Union Government has begun already to grapple with the many difficult questions confronting it. We are not altogether certain that the late government deserved the criticism that was levelled against it in the matter of Dominion-wide prohibition for it is a very easy matter for Provincial Legislatures to shelter behind the Dominion Parliament. However, we are delighted with the recent announcement sent out from Ottawa. While we recognize the fact that there are legitimate uses for alcohol even in war time, in the manufacture of explosives, as a substitute for gasoline when used with kerosene, as a cleaning solution for guns, as a fuel, and for medicinal purposes, there is no legitimate reason that can be given why it should be used in the manufacture of beverages. Anything that detracts from the effectiveness of our man power, whether overseas or at home, should be eliminated.

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LADY JELlicoe FUND.

Mr. Justice Hodgins, 9 Dale Avenue, Toronto, will be glad to transmit, without expense to the sender, any comforts or money which it is desired to forward to Lady Jellicoe for the benefit of the British Navy. In a letter, dated November 22nd, 1917, from Lady Jellicoe, speaking of warm clothing, she says:—

"The actual Royal Navy is . . . very well equipped, and the only portion which requires comforts are young boys. If ever you have any spare comforts I shall be very glad of them for the Mine-sweepers' Fund, as this force is always increasing and demands for warm clothing increase likewise. As you may well imagine, their lives necessitate much warm clothing and they quickly wear them out."

Any contributions which may reach Mr. Justice Hodgins will be sent by him for the purpose of meeting the wants specially mentioned by Lady Jellicoe.