

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, September 14th, 1916

The Christian Year

The Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity, Sept. 24.

A celebrated writer has reminded us in a certain well-known phrase of the large amount of bad in the best of us and the large amount of good in the worst of us. There is, of course, much obvious truth in the remark. The gradations of good and evil in each character are so subtle, the blends of various qualities are so multitudinous, that good men and bad men seem to shade off into one another in such a baffling and elusive manner, that the moral geographer finds it practically impossible to draw a clear dividing line between the two classes.

It is, therefore, particularly interesting to observe that S. Paul, in our "Epistle" for the Sunday, seems to see life ultimately divided into two categories—"life in the Spirit" and "life in the flesh"; that is to say, life lived under the dominance of the Spirit of God working in the higher parts of our complex nature, and life lived upon the whole under the dominance of the lower parts of that nature, both fleshly and psychical.

Between these two life principles S. Paul witnesses a deadly conflict raging—that conflict with which most of us are only too painfully familiar by sad experience. But the qualities of the spiritual life are such as to secure for it, if only it be granted free scope, a complete triumph.

For mark, first, that the spiritual life is a victorious life. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The statement of the Apostle is couched in the strongest terms and is quite unequivocal. The man who walks in the Spirit has victory over sin. What a magnificent anchor of assurance for tempted humanity! The reason why the conflict raged so fiercely still in the breasts of the Galatians, with the constant ebb and flow of battle and a predominance of defeat, was simply that they had not yielded completely to the Spirit of God, working from within and renewing their natures. The law of duty was still something external to themselves—an oppressive and foreign commandment. They were in moral bondage—enslaved by the power of temptation on the one hand and by a heartless "categorical imperative" on the other. But once yield to God's Spirit, and the fetters are broken.

For mark, next, that "life in the Spirit" is spontaneous. Its results in action are more appropriately termed "fruits" than "works." Right conduct grows out of right disposition. In fact, right disposition, as the only true foundation for right conduct, is the fact upon which the chief emphasis is laid. The fruits of the Spirit are not so much acts of love and deeds of peace, as the graces of love and peace themselves flooding the soul, until "the house is filled with the odour of the ointment."

Note, finally, that "life in the Spirit" is a dying life, for it is a life which dies daily to all that is low and base, all that is not of the Spirit. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh"—and crucifixion is a lingering death. The price of the higher is the continual mortification of the lower. But the last word is not death, but life. Here and now the Christian, who is willing to pay this price, is conscious of possessing spiritually the Resurrection—Life of Christ—of Him who hereafter will change the bodies of our humiliation that they may be "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Editorial Notes

Sunday School Commission.

The regular semi-annual meetings of the Sunday School Commission will be held in Montreal on October 16th and 17th. The Executive Committee will meet on the evening of the 16th, and the Commission on the morning of the 17th. Members of the Commission desiring hospitality are asked to send in their names at once to the Reverend D. B. Rogers, 107 Champlain Street, Montreal.

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The Passing of the Rural Church.

We are told that in the State of Kansas "500 rural Churches have been abandoned in the last five years," and one of the reasons given for this is the growing use of motor cars in rural communities. These make it possible for the owners to go much longer distances and the deduction is implied that fewer places of worship are as a result needed, and that probably the rural Church is rapidly becoming unnecessary. While one must recognize the change that is coming over rural communities through the introduction of automobiles, rural mail deliveries, rural telephones, and electric power, still we must confess that we fail to see that these things should justify a wholesale closing of places of worship such as that mentioned above. There has possibly been an over supply of Churches in certain communities and the location chosen in the past, as well as the grouping of Churches in parishes, is not always the best for present-day conditions. Still, an increase in rural population which must take place in the process of time if the production of food is to keep pace with its consumption, coupled with the fact that there will always be a percentage of people who cannot afford the luxury of motor cars, would seem to indicate a continued need for the rural Church. These are, however, only surface reasons and we cannot help feeling that the withdrawal of the rural Church, if such ever takes place, will be a calamity to the life of the whole nation. As a centre of spiritual influence in the community, as a centre of religious training for the young, as a centre from which streams of new life will continue to find their way into the towns and cities, and also as a centre from which the Church will continue to receive a large percentage of men for the ministry, it is, we believe, an absolute necessity.

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Our Missionary Policy.

The Board of Management of our Missionary Society is to hold its autumn meeting in Montreal in a few weeks' time when the work for the coming year will be determined. At this meeting the grants for the year 1917 to both Canadian and Foreign work will be made, and the total amount required will be apportioned among the different dioceses in the Dominion. Each year the same proceeding takes place and no department of the work knows with any degree of certainty what it is likely to receive until this autumn meeting is held. Bishops from the far West and North make long journeys to attend this meeting at great expense and often to the detriment of their diocesan duties. They have assumed certain financial responsibilities in their dioceses and a thousand dollars more or less mean a very great deal to them. There is no time when they know for more than a year at the outside what the future has in store for

them, and that period gradually decreases until it reaches the vanishing point. To plan any work that will require years to develop is practically impossible. They are working and planning in great measure a year at a time. And yet we are laying foundations for the future of the Anglican Communion in a new country!

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The Source of Supply.

We have referred to the effect of our present Missionary policy on our Missionary dioceses. The effect is not, however, confined to them, but touches what is known as the "Home Base" as well. A few years ago the present editor of this paper travelled Canada as Secretary of the Anglican branch of the Laymen's Missionary Movement. An effort was made to obtain not only more general support for missionary work on the part of our laymen, but more generous support on the part of our wealthier laymen. We were, however, faced with the fact that the average layman who invests large sums of money in any undertaking naturally wants to know where the money is going and to feel certain that the plans are adequate and likely to be permanent. In the case of the Church of England, however, nothing could be promised for more than a few months ahead and no assurance could be given that everything might not be changed at the next autumn meeting. The call was strong, the opportunities were tremendous, but the plans of the Church for the future did not appeal to them, at least so far as the Canadian end of the work was concerned. Is it any wonder that large contributions, except from a few devoted men who are willing to give in spite of such things, were not forthcoming? We think not.

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What is Needed.

The remedy for this condition of affairs, that is not only crippling the work in our mission fields but is affecting the source of supply as well, must be apparent. We need a policy that reaches further ahead and plans that are more comprehensive and permanent in their character. The fact that the General Synod of the Church meets every three years suggests that as the period that would probably be found most workable. In connection with the General Synod we have the Board of Missions which up to the present has done little other than pass upon the work of the preceding three years. We suggest that this Board should enlarge the scope of its work and should outline the policy to be followed in our mission fields. It should also determine the basis of apportionment for raising the amount of money required. This latter should be revised more frequently than at present and the consent of each diocese should be obtained before it is finally fixed. Our Canadian Missionary dioceses should be given some assurance that they would receive a certain amount of assistance for at least three years at a time, and at least one year should be allowed in which to adjust the work before any great change is made in the amount of this assistance. In the case of some of the dioceses a scale could be agreed upon whereby the amount of assistance would decrease year by year until they become self-supporting. It is impossible for us to do more here than suggest a few of the main features, but we feel certain that some such system would go far towards remedying the present unsatisfactory state of affairs and relieving those directly responsible for the work of a heavy burden of anxiety.

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