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THE LESSON OF ADVENT

The beginning of the ecclesiastical year is the time when churchmen should ask themselves some very plain questions with regard to the duties and privileges of the past, and with regard to those which are to be again presented to them, if life be spared, during the unrolling of the next volume of Church life. There is certainly much cause to think that the present moment in the history of religion has something of critical importance in it. The world was never so keenly applying itself to the solution of spiritual problems. Sometimes we are inclined to think that there is a *dilettante* flavor in present-day religious investigations, and men talk of Buddha and Mohammed, and the claims of Christianity as if they were entering upon speculations of the intellect, which could be entertained without much regard to the personal and subjective importance of these topics. There is a certain amount of interest and excitement in the way men regard these questions, but too often the light gaze with which they are contemplated reminds us of the amusement and delight with which the Gallic barbarians looked upon the Roman engines which were operated against them, and were to be fatal to their homes and lives. ADVENT should bring with it an earnest wish to deal under a sense of deep responsibility with things which are of tremendous importance to each single man. Life is too short to learn the why and the wherefore of everything, and Christianity merely counsels, "While we have time, let us do good unto all men." The sense of human accountability, the consciousness of a coming day of reckoning with the One Lawgiver, are sufficient motives to practical work, to continuous worship, to almsgiving, to repentance and reformation, as well as to those larger schemes of Gospel labor whose sphere is not confined to the parish or the diocese, but concerns *the evangelisation of the whole world*. Missionary work commences in the heart of the individual; it spreads to the household and the neighborhood, but is not complete until it has embraced the world from pole to pole. This is the time when new expedients are to be tried, when old ones are to be revived, when personal religion is to be quickened and to take fresh

measures of vigilance for the future. The Church must now wake once more to the trumpet call, and its forces go out once more to the battle. This is the lesson of Advent — *Sel*

THE ADVENT QUESTION.

BY G. T. M.

"What sayest thou of thyself?" — St. John 1, 22.



The real Advent question, the true Advent mission, rings out in these words: "What sayest thou of thyself?" Before we are in any way fitted to kneel at the manger-bed, Advent must come and lay its fingers on the pulse of our most inward and deeply hidden life and demand some answer to this question. Can there be any more heart-searching enquiry put to any of us? In the light of all that Advent stands for, what reply are we prepared to give? As we face the second coming of the Son of Man, and in the full knowledge of that first coming, with all its results and possibilities of power henceforth for you and me, what shall we say, what can we say, when asked, "What sayest thou of thyself?"

It is the fairest question that could possibly be put to a soul, as well as the most heart-searching. None, but your God knows you as you know yourself, and yet, when have you answered this honestly even to your own conscience? Has there not been a shrinking behind what others say of you as a refuge from what you could say of yourself?

Ah, we all know well enough how easy it is to rest satisfied with the favorable estimates of others, mistaken though we know them to be, rather than examine ourselves. But it is not your friends' estimate that God asks of you this Advent, but your own.

"What sayest thou of thyself?" You know the praise you get that is not due, the motives that underlie your efforts that no one dreams of. What are you doing that is going to last, that is going to stand the fire of that Day which shall destroy all that is "wood, hay or stubble," and only spare the true metal? To all this "What sayest thou of thyself?" Can we, in any sense, give St. John's answer, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness—Make straight the way of the Lord?" Is that