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CHURCH LIFE AND ENERGY.

In asserting that in no other age has there been more life and energy displayed in the building and restoration of churches than during the last twenty or thirty years we shall not have to go far for proof, for on every hand and in every land the buildings themselves, by their number and improved appearance, assure us of the fact. It is not so long ago that the exterior of our churches made them the least attractive of any buildings, private or public, in every community, while now they stand out in bold relief, the most striking and beautiful, and the best situated among those which surround them. Not only so but when we enter their sacred precincts the change is even more remarkable, for now they bear signs of much pains and skill in their ornamentation, and their clean and well kept condition indicates constant care and attention. All this in itself is sufficient to prove that a higher and better view prevails with respect to God's service as well as His sanctuary, and that a true revival has quickened into active life a zeal for God. But while these gratifying results of a better understanding of what is due to God are in themselves pleasing to witness yet they ought most surely to have produced a corresponding improvement in our personal approaches to God. Carelessness as regards God's earthly habitation, indifference as to the outward and inward appearance of His sanctuary, betokened a low conception of God, and a low spiritual condition of the Church and her members. And on the other hand, the change ought to indicate a growing reverence and fear for His Holy name, and a more earnest and anxious desire to serve Him in an acceptable manner.

While there is very much to cheer the Christian heart in these evidences of quickened zeal, it must be confessed that there is yet much cold formality existing even among congregations where the changes and improvements in the material building have been most marked and gratifying. It is to be feared that some are content to see these signs of life all around them, and even perhaps are glad to engage, in some measure, in helping it along, without having recognized its meaning, and the necessity of offering consecrated and humble hearts to God as above all else the offering which He loves to accept. There has grown to be a spirit of rivalry between congregations which has stimulated some to work of the kind we have named with an entire forgetfulness of what God loves best and what God demands—the dedication of the individual heart and life to

His service. It is alas! too true that worldliness has entered the Church, and that professing Christians so freely engage in the pleasures of the world, that it has become most difficult to draw the line between those who are and those who are not communicants, when there should be a well-defined line of demarcation between them.

Speaking of this zeal to which we have alluded, and this deadness of the individual spiritual life, the Bishop of Manchester at a recent consecration of a new church, said: "It seemed to him that there never was a time when Churchmen, and he might say professors of every form of Christianity, needed more to be brought back to the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to those things which were really essential. By the side of the quickening influences observable, there was an immense amount of lethargy and deadness, and he thought that every minister looking over his people and parish and work ought to take very strict account of himself whether he could discover more signs of life or of deadness. Unless there was spiritual life among their people, the building of churches and the crying out of the name of Christ in the streets were of little worth."

It does indeed become important that the clergy should carefully guard their people against being satisfied with anything short of a personal consecration to God's service and an earnest zeal from the highest motives—love to Him—for His cause. Her children so trained, the Church must prosper and God's name be glorified. We have as Churchmen much to prize and be truly thankful for, but special privileges and special blessings entail upon us great and special responsibilities; and if they operate not upon our hearts and lives to make us God-fearing and God-loving and active and zealous in our Master's service, how can the world believe in the Church? ah! solemn consideration—*how can the world believe in God?*

THE NEEDS OF THE TIMES.

THE following article recently appeared in the columns of the N. Y. *Churchman*, and is one among many which we have lately seen in our Church press speaking of the importance of putting out of sight our minor differences in view of the combined forces which the powers of darkness are arraying against Christianity. It is a fact, that but very few among the baptized seem to recognize their duty to be personal defenders of the faith, an aggressive force against infidelity, scepticism and irreligion, although it takes but little to arouse men into opposition against some well-intentioned (although, perhaps, sometimes unwise) efforts of their brethren to honour and glorify God. What we want above all else is personal work for God in the every day life of the Christian professor, and until we have a Missionary Laity, alert and active, we cannot hope to find the Church making headway against her foes who are united, powerful and determined. The *Churchman*, in the article referred to, says:—"Comparatively few of the really good people take an active part in every or any good work. Martyrs come singly, or two by two. Reformers are, generally, compelled to toil alone at first. The spirit which drives them into the battle fails to move the hearts of others, who, nevertheless, believe as they do, that a blow ought to be struck. Evils, which a majority of the citizens in the community readily lament and condemn, are allowed to continue, simply because those who are armed with both authority and power to banish them will not take the necessary steps toward that desired end."

"Out of, say, a thousand men, all of whom admit that a certain thing ought to be done, there may not be a dozen ready to do it. Through selfishness, or indolence, or timidity, the great multitude hang back, leaving a little band of resolute, and enthusiastic, and ready soldiers to carry on the work. Perhaps, after considerable effort, some of the armed idlers may be coaxed or frightened into active helping. But such tardy and conditional service is worth far less than that which is freely and unhesitatingly given. There is all the difference in the world, as regards both value and effectiveness, between the work of one who cares for the cause and loves it, and that of one who is only a hireling; and also between the loyalty of him who, when called, immediately leaves all for the Master's sake, and that of him who answers 'Let me first go and bury my father.'

"The Church has reached a point in the history of the world when the spirit of readiness is needed more sorely than it ever was before. Everything is rushing in these last days. The conflict which Christ entered at the beginning of His ministry, and which His followers have been commissioned to continue—following whithersoever the drawn and uplifted 'sword of the spirit' might point—deepens as the centuries roll on. The warfare becomes more intense as the final crisis draws near.

"We would not, and we need not, magnify the perils that confront the Christian army to-day, nor would we raise any needless cry of alarm for the safety of God's truth or the perpetuity of His Church. Still every one who has been baptized into soldiery for Christ ought to see that this is no time for resting or for disputing about unessential things; but that it is a time for prompt, willing and united action—for heroism and self-devotedness and sacrifice. Next to the damage and the sin of wrong-doing comes the crime of doing nothing; and of the two the latter may be more deadly in its effect upon the soul. For it were better not to put on the armor of God than, having taken it, to use it as a mere personal adornment, or suffer it to gather rust by disuse because the feet were unshod with preparedness for the conflict.

LENT AND THE WEEK OF PRAYER.

In making the suggestion, which we did last week, that the Evangelical Alliance would act wisely if it changed the time of its Week of Prayer from January to the Church's special time of Lent, and so make it a season common to all Christians, we were not only representing the views of Church people, but those of many able and good men among the various Protestant bodies in the United States and elsewhere, who, in the public press, each year speak out with increasing earnestness and force in favor of the change. Whether some among our Protestant neighbors care to notice it or not, there is a growing feeling in favor of "the old paths" in preference to the new ways of modern times, among many of their best minds. It used to be the correct thing to keep as far from any approach to Catholic usage—we don't mean *Roman Catholic*—as possible, but now good men in the various bodies have come to see that the saints and martyrs, the Bishops and confessors of the first centuries knew best, and were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they did and ordered. The thoughtful minds among our brethren are coming more and more to see that the festivals and seasons of the Church were wisely ordered, not for a past age, but for all time, and that the Faith can alone be preserved in its integrity by a due observance of the Church's