

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, August 31st, 1916

The Christian Year

The Twelfth Sunday After Trinity, Sept. 10.

"And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." Biblical students have suggested various reasons for this sigh of Christ. Perhaps He sighed because this particular case of suffering brought vividly before His mind that great burden of pain which mankind is heir to. Or He sighed because He foresaw the sad use to which the restored senses would be put by the man who had been deaf and dumb. But the important point is not the reason for this sigh of the Master, but rather the remarkable fact that He, Son of God as well as Son of Man, actually did sigh. It is from this divine sigh that we may learn a lesson of profound significance.

A sigh of God! And a sigh betokens labour, sorrow, disappointment. And yet men generally think of God as lifted far above these pangs of earth. He still dwells, to the minds of most of us, like the Epicurean gods of old, in the "lucid interspace of world and world," where no trouble ever rises to mar His "sacred everlasting calm." He is Almighty, and so can do what He wills. He is without passions, and so controls, in an eternal serenity, the Universe which He has made.

But against this common, yet heartless view, we have to place the startling fact of our "Gospel"—a sigh of God. And as we meditate, it dawns upon us that this sigh of God, with all the bitterness of its burden, is entirely in line with what Scripture, from its first book to its last, reveals to us as to the character of God. God is there portrayed as grieved and vexed by the foolish and obstinate sin of man. But more than that—He suffers in intensest sympathy with the sufferings of His people. Whosoever touches them touches also "the apple of His eye." And when we cross from the Old Testament to the pages of the New, we find the Incarnate Christ, not only sighing, but weeping tears of poignant grief at the spiritual blindness of His nation; and finally passing, by an inscrutable, but compelling, necessity, to the Agony of Gethsemane and the Dereliction of Calvary. Even when, in later years, the Beloved Disciple saw in vision the Son of Man in His glory, He still appeared, amid the heavenly hosts, as a "Lamb that had been slain."

A sigh of God! Scripture portrays God as suffering. Scripture also uniformly assigns one cause for that suffering, and one cause only—sin. God limited His own omnipotence by the grant of free will to His creatures. The abuse of that gift of free will brings suffering to the great Heart of God. Did God send the War? Must we throw up our faith and become atheists? Man's sin brought the War, and God suffers, for "in all their afflictions He was afflicted."

Our materialism, our selfishness, our worship of mammon, our worldliness, our refusal to surrender ourselves wholly to the Spirit of Jesus—these have been the fruitful cause of this inconceivable burden of pain.

Can we also bring joy to the Heart of the Father? It is written, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Editorial Notes

The War and Pauperism.

The war is upsetting many a fine theory. Among them is the idea that has prevailed that there were large numbers of men who would not work even when there were opportunities for doing so. There are doubtless some of this kind, but the fact that pauperism is at present almost non-existent in England is abundant proof that many a man has been a pauper in the past through no fault of his own. In February, 1913, the number of homeless people sleeping out in London was 431. In March, 1916, it was 44. Of the 537,000 paupers in England to-day, over half are invalids and nearly all the others are children or old people. The labour problem has for the present been solved, and this must have a great effect on this question after the war is over. A proper distribution of work, an adequate return for work done, and a proper distribution of the workers will not only do away with the greater part of the pauperism that has disgraced so-called Christian lands in the past but will elevate the whole moral and intellectual condition of the labouring classes. The war is bringing the different classes of society together in a common cause and paving the way for a solution of many a past problem. The Church holds in trust the ultimate solution of all these problems and its power in the future will depend largely, humanly speaking, on her attitude towards these questions now.

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M.S.C.C. Finances.

Seven months of the present M.S.C.C. year have passed by but on enquiry a few days ago we were informed that up to the middle of August less than \$45,000 had been received on a total apportionment of \$188,535, or less than 24 per cent., as compared with some \$49,000 on a total apportionment of \$177,892, or nearly 28 per cent. during the same period in 1915. The fact that so large a number of our active young clergy, the majority of whom were warm supporters of the M.S.C.C., have gone to the front as chaplains, makes it all the more important that those who remain at home should see that extra efforts are put forth to avoid a falling off in our missionary funds. Our loyalty to Christ is being tested at the present time and we need to ask ourselves if we can expect God to bless our cause in Europe if we neglect the work of extending Christ's Kingdom in our own land and across the seas. Loyalty, moreover, to the men and women who have answered the call and gone to the front in the Church's mission fields should spur on those of us at home to see that their support and that of the work they are sent to do is adequately provided for. The money is doubtless in different pockets in many cases to-day, but there is plenty of it in Canada for the work of the Church in addition to that of the other war.

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Our Department Secretaries.

The two departments of work in the Church in Canada that have secretaries placed in charge are the M.S.C.C. and Sunday School Commission. Both these organizations will be meeting in a little over a month's time in the city of Montreal, when the work of the past year will be reviewed and provision be made

for the future. As one who has been "through the mill" and has worked in the closest possible touch with the secretaries of both these organizations, the Editor of the Churchman is in a position to speak regarding their work and responsibilities. It is unnecessary to say anything regarding their qualifications or ability, and it would be presumption to do so. These are fully recognized. Each of these officials is, however, expected to do the work of practically two men. Thousands of miles must be travelled each year. Scores of sermons and addresses must be given. In addition to these they are rightly regarded as experts in their respective departments and as such are being called upon incessantly for advice and information, and are expected to be always up-to-date and inspiring. Each has, moreover, a burden of responsibility to carry that is in itself enough for the average man without the road work. It is an endless process of giving out with little opportunity for renewing their energy and fund of information. Both these officials are too valuable for the Church to lose, and they should both be relieved almost entirely of the road work that they are doing. Unless this is done, and we know whereof we speak, it will be necessary before many years for the Church to train new men for the work. Moreover, steps should be taken without delay to prepare for a vigorous advance as soon as peace is assured. "Penny wise and pound foolish" has been the history of the Church in too many cases. We trust it will not be the case here.

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City Mission Churches.

There is probably no portion of the Church that has been affected so severely by the war as the new congregations on the outskirts of our cities. During recent years large numbers of Church people from the Motherland settled in these districts and were busily engaged in building homes for themselves when the war broke out. New missions were established and although helped to some extent by outside funds were struggling to make ends meet. On the declaration of war a very large percentage of the able-bodied men, married or unmarried, volunteered at once. Much of the money received by their families has had to be used in paying interest, or instalments on principal, of mortgages, and while some have been better off financially than before the war, this is not saying much, and many are much worse off. The work of the clergy in these missions has, moreover, been very much more difficult, not merely on account of the financial conditions, but also on account of the demands made upon their time, and their sympathies. Anxious wives and mothers seeking advice on financial matters or comfort in anxiety or sorrow, government officials or employers seeking information regarding the men who have gone and the financial conditions of the families left behind, have all turned to the clergy for assistance. A hundred and one things have had to be done that were unnecessary in times of peace. It is a most important work, and every clergyman engaged in it is in a very real sense "doing his bit." Many of the men will, we hope, return, and the extent to which their families have been cared for and the work of the Church maintained, will decide in great measure their future attitude towards the Church. The clergy in charge of these centres have, therefore, a right to look to more fortunate parishes for assistance and encouragement, and it ought to be given willingly and unstintingly.

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