

were done and the homes of the people were well and wisely visited, I think there would soon be few vacant seats in our city churches.

Some churches are tolerably well filled at both services, and perhaps the rectors and their helpers can do but little more aggressive work. But there are other churches where there are many vacant seats, especially at the evening service. Perhaps more aggressive work is needed in connection with these churches.

I would suggest as before, more music, more lively singing of familiar hymns, the announcement of free seats, with pleasant and obliging ushers at the church doors, giving all, especially strangers, a hearty reception, a hymn-book and a seat.

#### AN AGGRESSIVE RELIGION.

The religion of Christ is an aggressive religion. The church was founded for aggressive purposes. When a church ceases to be aggressive she has only "a name to live," and may find her place and doom recorded in the Third Chapter of the Book of Revelation. Every church should be a centre of light and labour, from whence should go forth those who would be willing to *live and die* for Christ, and for the salvation of their fellow men. The Master says to all his churches, and to all his followers, "Occupy till I come," "Work while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work."

#### OBSTACLES.

The direct obstacles in the way of more aggressive work may be classified as follows: "Intemperance, indifference, and the pew rent system." With regard to the first of these obstacles, I have not found it quite so serious as some good temperance people would have us believe. While the many evil phases of the liquor traffic must be condemned by every well-wisher of his fellow men, I know whereof I affirm when I say that the working people generally (Protestants) are not greatly addicted to habits of intemperance. So that comparatively few are kept from church by their drinking habits. I think I may truly say that there are few men in Canada who have had a wider experience, or a more thorough practical knowledge of the "masses" than the writer of this article, and he is therefore glad to bear his testimony to their sober, intelligent, and industrious character and habits. We must consequently look elsewhere for the reasons why they do not as a rule attend church on Sundays.

#### INDIFFERENCE.

That they have lapsed into a state of indifference cannot be denied. You meet it everywhere. When questioned as to the cause of their absenting themselves from church, their answers are almost invariably such as to bring out one's deep sympathy and respect. They are generally as follows: "Well, we are not wanted," "Protestant churches are more like drawing rooms and parlours than anything else," "We should soon be 'spotted' if we were to sit down in those grand cushioned pews!" "Besides the churches are so expensive. What with high pew rents, numerous collections, &c., we could not afford to attend them and pay our share?" When a working man has paid his rent, taxes, and school fees for his children, and household expenses, there is little or nothing left for Sunday clothes for himself and wife, and unless he can appear something like those who occupy pews, his self-respect, if nothing else, will prevent him from attending church. Consequently he becomes indifferent, and in many cases settles down

into a non-church goer, if not a free-thoughtist or a Plymouth Brother.

#### PEW RENTS.

But the greatest obstacle of all in getting the "common people" into our churches, in my opinion, is the pew rent system. They are practically shut out of many city churches, and people know it and feel it too. Pew rents are unapostolic, if not immoral. This is strong language, but the evil is so great that it is time to speak out. Think of Jesus, Paul, or Peter, shutting out the poor and those of slender means; but who may be quite as worthy and as good as those who are better able to pay a good price for well upholstered pews. I went into a city church one Sunday morning just before the time of service, and after looking round at the fine pews, I said to one of the office bearers, "Where are your pews and seats for working people and the poor?" He shook his head sorrowfully and answered, "I am sorry to say we have none!"

Many churches have adapted the envelope system, and have found it to work tolerably well as a substitute for pew rents, but even this, if not carefully and prudently worked, may be almost as objectionable and as expensive as the pew rent. While it may to a certain extent be voluntary, and give persons of limited means an opportunity of contributing according to their ability, at the same time it furnishes the means whereby those who have wealth, but who are mean and covetous, can escape pew rent and give only according to their own petty ideas of what is right and liberal. I know a city church where the envelope system is in vogue, and in order to stimulate the members of the congregation to give, they publish a *printed list* of what every one contributes. The said list is circulated among the congregation and elsewhere, so that the world may know what is given? Could anything be more offensive? A clergyman to whom I mentioned this, said in a letter to me afterwards, "I should shudder at the thought of parading such a subscription list."

We shall have to come down still lower, or rather go up higher than the envelope system, before we get to the apostolic order of things. The only true principle or system is that of *free seats*. The "glorious gospel of the grace of God" is free, and all obstacles that stand in the way of its being preached freely to the people, should be removed. It is vain to sigh and mourn over the wickedness of the "lapsed masses" while we shut them out of our churches, show them no sympathy, and take no practical interest in their welfare. The free seat churches in Toronto are generally well filled at both services. They are by far the most lively, and seem to be doing the most aggressive work among the people, and they manage to pay their way.

When a farmer commences to cultivate new ground he first removes the obstacles that stand in his way, then he begins to plough and puts in the seed. As in agriculture and farming, so should it be in work moral and spiritual. First remove the obstacles, and then proceed with sowing the seed of the word—and, with God's blessing, greater and greater success will ever continue to follow the grand old church. Applying in a *general sense* the late strong words of Canon Dumoulin, spoken by him in reference to St. James' Cathedral. "The church has a great future mission we believe. Few can doubt that her future is to be a free church, in which God's worship shall be daily performed in the beauty of holiness, and to whose portals all may flock 'without money and without price.'"

#### LENT—ITS ORIGIN AND USAGES.

(COMMUNICATED.)

A Lady writes from a country town: "The P—ites here are busy in persuading people that it is a sin to turn to the East in saying the Creed, and that Lent had a terrible origin. Their theory is that the Emperor Constance, I suppose they mean Constance or Constantine in order to smooth over some difficulties with certain converts, who had a lingering love for paganism, incorporated the turning to the East in the Creed with their custom of worshipping the Sun, in the person of Apollo, and that he turned a forty days fast or feast of Apollo into a Christian fast. Hence the origin of Lent. Will you, give us a true account of the origin of Lent, and of the custom of turning to the East which prevails in many churches, and is, I think, an ancient usage."

We beg to assure our gentle friend—and others whom these P—ites may be perplexing—that the whole theory in both its branches is a pure fiction—made out of whole cloth. This is at once evident from the fact that S. Irenæus, born 120 A. D., wrote to Pope Victor about A. D. 170, taking sides with the Orientals against the Pope, in the dispute about the time of keeping Easter, and reminding him that there had been differences not only about the time of keeping Easter, but about the manner of the fast which preceded it. "Some fast one day some two, some more, some forty." Generally it was held to be a matter of obligation to fast for the 40 hours during which our Lord lay in the grave, while others voluntarily extended the fast as Irenæus describes. This explains the conduct of Tertullian, who was born A. D. 145, nearly 200 years before even Constantine became a Christian, and who, when he had become a Montanist, reproached the Catholics because they thought themselves obliged only to observe those two days in which the Bridegroom was taken away from them (Tertul. de Jejunia Cap. 2). Elsewhere he says the Catholics observed other fasts besides the two days, (Tertul. de Jejunia Cap. 13), so that in the times of Irenæus and Tertullian it was regarded as obligatory to fast 40 hours preceding the resurrection, and customary to do so for 40 days. Irenæus says this "did not begin in our age, but long before us, among our ancestors." So the Church historian, Socrates, gives this account of it in describing the difference of rites and ceremonies in divers churches. "One may observe, he says, how the Ante-Pascal Fast is differently observed by men of different churches. The Romans fast three weeks before Easter, only the Sabbaths and Lord's days, (i.e., the Saturdays and Sundays) are excepted. The Illyrians and all Greece and the Alexandrians fast six weeks, and call that the Quadragesimal Fast. Others, the Constantinopolitans begin their Fast seven weeks before Easter, though they excepted certain days." Sozomon the historian gives a like account of the Quadragesimal Fast before Easter. He says, "Some observe six weeks, as the Illyrians and Western Churches, and all Syria, Egypt, and Palestine. Others make it seven weeks, as the Constantinopolitans and neighbouring nations as far as Phœnicia." These testimonies put it beyond dispute that Lent was observed throughout the church for two hundred years before Constantine or Constantius ever became Emperor. And it is evident from every Christian writer of that period that neither he nor any other Emperor had anything to do with its first institution. So much for fiction No. I. And fiction No. II, about the origin of the custom of turning to the East, is equally founda-

tionless and to the existence of Constantine or Constantius again figure of Constantine, Valin, Cap says, "The the East is from them so the day the sun, at ance." So prayers, w or the h writer say natural lig fore, the s ness. An Creed, and faith in F Lactantius peculiarly fountain o because H West, whi to the wicl he hides t upon mer in their si turned to devil. A outstretch his faith to God. ancients f Christ ma ascended manner & dead are so that v they will shining t the fiction originated Bishop Roman an refers to t ing to th viction t the altar East, an sence. T Corporis e body and death an way that appointed really pr "Body a indeed t most ho closest pr bol and belief an

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