

Outlook for the Future

From Charge of Rt. Rev. E. J. BIDWELL,
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REGARDING the general outlook for the future, it is clear that we are entering upon a period of great changes in every department of life. We shall do wisely if we endeavour to assimilate the lessons which this terrible struggle is teaching us, so that a better world may emerge from the chaos which now reigns. I will touch briefly upon the more outstanding facts.

Materialism Has Gone.

In the first place, the sheer materialism which really ruled in pre-war days has gone, I hope never to return. It is abundantly clear to-day that the life of a nation depends upon the ideals which it is prepared to maintain at all costs. The very thought of the sheer luxury and extravagance which prevailed in pre-war days is revolting to us now when we remember the hardships so gladly endured by our men at the front. Life shows signs of becoming much simpler, and, therefore, really much happier. Men are valued in a time like this for what they are, rather than for what they have, and the outburst of popular indignation against those who have seized the occasion of their country's need to heap up profits for themselves is a hopeful sign that the worship of wealth as the only thing in life worth having is doomed.

In the future, too, it seems likely that the two great principles of service and sacrifice which have, thank God, been displayed to such a gratifying extent by many already, will be permanent influences in the national life. It is true that there are not a few even now who are victims of selfishness, allowing others to make every sacrifice for their benefit while doing their best to evade it themselves. Such people can only be dealt with by the Government, who must compel them to bear their share of the burden. Trained in self-denial and sacrifice by the war, the great majority of the people would support any proposals which shall distribute equitably the burdens which have to be borne, and they will reckon as their great men in the future not their multi-millionaires, but the men who have best served their generation in any direction. This is the principle of true greatness taught by Christ, and all His followers will rejoice that it should prevail.

Change in Politics.

Next, there are indications of a changed attitude towards what we call "politics." The war has exposed some of the inherent weaknesses even of democratic forms of government as we know them. The idol of party, which seemed to stand on a pedestal from which it could never be removed, has already received a shattering blow under the exigencies of the present situation, to give place to the principle of uniting all the best talent available, of whatever shade of opinion, in the common service. It is to be hoped that this principle will never be lost sight of. We need the very best minds that our country can produce to carry on the government of the nation. More and more I believe the people are beginning to see that true democracy means the government of the nation for the benefit of the nation by its ablest and most honourable men. We are fighting to-day, as has been said, to preserve democracy for the world, and

it lies with us in the future to make that democracy worth preserving, as I believe we shall, even at the great price in blood and treasure we are now paying.

Last of the matters upon which I have time now to touch, but the most important of all, is the changed attitude which is growing up towards religion. We are learning that we cannot do without it. It is not only that those who have our dearest at the front at the constant risk of their lives could never have a moment's peace did we not believe that they are and will be, whatever may happen to them, in the hands of a loving God, or that those who have been called upon to suffer bereavement in this war have found in the grand and glorious resurrection faith their greatest comfort. The conviction is growing that religion is not only a matter of saving the individual soul, supremely important as that is, but that it must bring its influence to bear on all the practical matters of this life, on social problems and relationships of every kind, and in a public, though not a party sense, upon politics. The preservation of child-life, the elimination of the deadly diseases which prey upon society, the care of the feeble-minded and the improvement of environment which will prevent this evil, the securing for everyone the right of equal opportunities in life, the removal, as far as may be, of the present system of grinding competition, which is answerable for so many evils, and the Christianizing of the relations of capital and labour—all these things are the legitimate sphere in which the Church should and must exercise her influence. The Council for Social Service of our Church, by means of the literature circulated under the extremely able editorship of Professor Michell, a member of this Synod, has done something towards familiarizing Church members with the subjects in question. But we must never forget that the Church must approach these questions not from a material, or even from a purely philanthropic point of view. The Church must rely mainly upon spiritual weapons. She must seek primarily to change men's hearts, to get the spirit of Christ into them, to build up the Kingdom of God and His righteousness here and now. Not alleviation, but redemption, is the task her Master has assigned to her.

United Effort Needed.

Further, it is beginning to be seen that if the Church is to exercise upon the world the influence she might, there must be united effort upon the part of all those who confess and call themselves Christians. If the world is to listen, as I believe that she is ready to listen, then Christians must learn to speak with one voice. Hitherto we have only seen the difficulties of closer union, and they certainly are serious enough. But the time has now come to consider the possibilities. We have in our Church a priceless heritage. Certain great truths for which we stand we could never surrender, because of their proved spiritual value to countless numbers of men and women from the earliest days to the present time. But closer union should come not on the basis of elimination, or even of compromise but of contribution of treasure. This is a question for the leaders of our Church to take up without delay, as spasmodic and undisciplined movements lead nowhere. The time has come for the Church as a whole to express its mind on this important matter.

Once the Christian forces of the country were able to speak with a united voice, we could impress upon our statesmen as we cannot now, the tremendous and national importance of spiritual training for our children, side by side with their mental and physical education in our schools. We could then see to it

that the matter of providing for the spiritual needs of the population that we are building up in this country, left hitherto to the efforts of various religious bodies a task that they are obviously unable to fulfil adequately, should be seen to be a national obligation, and that the previous policy of doing everything to meet the material needs of those who come to this country, while leaving the provision for their spiritual needs to individual religious bodies, ignores the fundamental fact that no national life that will endure can be built upon a foundation which overlooks the nation's obligation to provide for the spiritual as well as the mental and physical needs of all. It ought not to be beyond the bounds of possibility to secure such a measure of agreement as would bring this result within reach.

The Religious Outlook.

In conclusion, I desire to touch upon a matter of the highest importance to our Church, and, indeed, to religion in general, which has been disclosed by conditions at the front. Chaplain after Chaplain has stated, and the Bishop of Fredericton in his report fully corroborates the statement, that among the men there is a vast and widespread ignorance of what membership of the Church implies. They have been baptized, but are hardly aware of any obligations or privileges thereby entailed; they have mostly passed through the Sunday School, yet their knowledge of the Bible and Prayer Book is rudimentary. They have in many cases been confirmed, but know little or nothing about the duty and privilege of Communion.

Professor Michell, in an exceedingly able pamphlet, which he has just issued for the Social Service Council, entitled "Reconstruction," from which I shall quote again later, and the study of which I recommend to all, goes even further and says that the unanimous evidence of Chaplains is that there exists a hitherto unsuspected lack of the very rudiments of knowledge, not only in doctrine, but of the groundwork of the Christian faith, even in its simpler form, among great masses of men, and from what I myself have heard and read from the same source of information his statement does not seem to be exaggerated.

Two conclusions would appear necessary to be drawn from these reports. First, that the Church has somehow failed to get hold of much of the manhood of her people. The clergy have, perhaps, not known their men as they should. This probably applies more to the town than to the country, but it is true in some measure of the latter also. The fact is that it had become an accepted idea that women should do most of the work of the Church, while men, if they did not hold aloof altogether, were to be satisfied with contributing money. The result was and is that the clergy are often much more in touch with the women than the men. This must be changed. The clergy must get men to see that they are personally responsible for the work and activities of the Church, not less than for its financial support, and must get and keep in close touch with them, young as well as old. I know that there are many difficulties in the way, and it may take a long time to effect this change, but it must come. Further, every effort must be made to put plainly before our men what discipleship really means, what kind of view of life it implies, and what demands it makes upon a man. It has been far too easy and comfortable a Gospel that has been preached of late. It has hardly appealed at all to the daring and heroic instinct that is in our manhood. We clergy have tended to represent it as rather a time affair, or at best a matter largely of sentiment, and so men,