

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, December 26th, 1918.

The Christian Year

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

The Holy Gospel.—St. Luke 2:15.

THE shepherds on the hillside of Bethlehem, who had a vision of angels and a message from angels, were intensely practical people. Stirred and electrified by the appearance and announcement of the heavenly messengers, they at once decided to act. "Let us go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known."

"THEY came"—none held back—the decision was unanimous. "They made known abroad." "They returned" with joy in their hearts.

Angels sing heavenly notes at Christmas-time that even the dullest ears can hear. They sing songs of hope, of unselfishness, of kindness, of tenderness, of generosity. The Christmas spirit takes hold of all. The blindest cannot but catch a glimpse of the Holy Child Jesus and the stable.

Then the carols and hymns! How they ring with heavenly music on our dull ears and tell us that "Christ is born in Bethlehem." We are uplifted by it all and hardly know ourselves we are so generous, thoughtful and kind. But, alas! How often the vision departs and we fall back after Christmas into old, hard ways.

Act as did the shepherds. "Let us go and see." Christianity is founded on fact. Trace the angelic ministries of the world—your own Christmas spirit—the spirit of home—of philanthropy of Red Cross, etc., and you will find yourself at Bethlehem—and in Bethlehem you will find Jesus—the Lord of all good life. Get behind Christmas to Jesus Christ. Let none hang back. Each open seeker for Christ makes it easier for another to go and find out if the angels' song is true. They were not disappointed in their honest search. So convinced and delighted were they that "they made known abroad." It is always the case. The man who will take time, thought and trouble to get behind the emotional in religion will come to know the reality, and, having found the reality, his religion will have so found him that he cannot but be a missionary. "We cannot but speak of the things we have seen and heard." "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." They returned, glorifying and praising God. A spontaneous peace and joy—a new knowledge of God came to them. They were different men.

If our Christianity is selfish and dull, let us, while the angels of Christmas sing, go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which 1900 years ago came to pass, that God hath made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ Who was born at Bethlehem.

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All toil is holy if the toiler be holy.—Campbell Morgan.

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He, who, forgetting self, makes the object of his life's service helpfulness and kindness to others, finds his whole nature growing and expanding, himself becoming large-hearted, magnanimous, kind, sympathetic, joyous and happy; his life becoming rich and beautiful.—Ralph Waldo Trine.

Editorial

THE TOUCHSTONE.

ISMS and 'asms are without number. The birth columns in our papers might well include the new "religions" that almost daily spring into being from the minds of some self-styled prophets who shed upon the waiting world "the full-orbed light" at last. There is Science, with just enough touch with reality to contrast with its general lack of foundation, and Thought forever chasing itself in a circle and hailed as New by the man who travels the circumference and forgets the centre. Some men expect to lose themselves in the reincarnations of Theosophy and some in an utter blank hereafter.

As the climax of particularism, Mormonism comes with its incredible story of the golden gates and its gross teaching of polygamy. As the climax of universalism, Vedantism from India, through its missionaries at New York and London, comes to teach us that all religions, Christianity included, are but expressions of the one universal Truth, and that truth is Vedantism.

It seems rather strange that the ANGLICAN CHURCH provides its contingent for enlistment in these new 'isms (Mormonism excepted). One might imagine that a Church which so insists on the uniqueness of its own position would be proof against such defections. Further, in no other Church is there more faithful reading of God's Word in the public services. Our people should be steeped in the truths of God's Revelation through Holy Writ. Yet the fact remains that more than a few succumb to the attractions of some new thing.

Why is it? First of all, we must remember that in this characteristic our age is not singular. Long before the coming of Christianity man's religious activity showed itself in a multitude of creeds and ceremonies. With the advent of Christianity some of this activity was diverted, but did not cease, for OUR LORD speaks of false Christs, and St. PAUL complains of men "turning aside to fables."

Why do these efforts meet with any success? "Itching ears" was one of St. Paul's explanations. The old message had lost its novelty, and the ear craved something exciting, just as the jaded palate craves some new condiment. But it is only the abnormal, unhealthy appetite that cannot be satisfied with substantial food.

Did you ever notice that it is the man who has time to let his thoughts run to seed who is the advocate of some 'ism? He makes a hobby of some particular theory and uses it as a rule-of-thumb test "to divide the sheep from the goats."

Sometimes it is the desire to avoid the moral reformation necessary in Christianity that indicates the abnormal. One particularly popular 'ism to-day teaches that there is no such thing as sin. No wonder it is popular when it offers a progress into self-respect, almost self-deification, without the humiliation of repentance and the narrow path of careful living!

Sometimes it is a man's inability to give an answer for the faith that is in him which lends an oily-tongued announcer of the next new religion an opportunity. From a tangle of dislocated and twisted Scriptures he builds a

house that seems substantial until you look to the foundations. In the lonely country parts, by agents and literature, some earnest souls are troubled. THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENT ASSOCIATION, for example, is the organ of Russellism, and they have the guile to label their book as from "London, Bible and Tract Society."

What is the touchstone? We need some infallible test which can be simply applied. The Christmas Message is the touchstone.

"Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2, 3.)

The Incarnation, "God made flesh," is the truth the Church teaches at this season. Many a time it is lost sight of in the sentiment of Christmastide. This year, thank God, Christmastide means Peace. Then Epiphany follows on the heels of the glad season. So between the solemn warnings of Advent and the missionary calls of Epiphany there is scarcely time for the full message of Emmanuel.

We appeal for special instructions and sermons to be given on the subject of the Incarnation. It is not enough to state the fact. Many laymen are doing serious thinking about the matter, and more ought to think. The Church must increasingly emphasize the message of the Incarnation. It would have a wholesome effect on the parsons, too. Our Christ would not so often be lost in a luminous cloud of exemplary manhood, and our Saviour would be more than a leader by the force of moral excellence. Christ is supreme in exemplary manhood and moral force, but He is much more than that. He is the Son of God.

Here we have the touchstone that will discover the true metal from the base and be a guide to troubled or careless minds.

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THE Christian Year column has been a feature of this journal since its inception. While our aim is to have the whole paper, directly and indirectly, emphasizing the spiritual values of life, through this column we have special writers calling attention to the truths of the Christian Religion as they are presented in the round of the Church's seasons. We have been fortunate in securing for this important service men who are actively engaged in the pastoral and preaching ministries. This has given a presentation of the great subjects calculated to appeal to the average reader. During the last year CANON L. W. BROUGHALL, Rector of St. George's, St. Catharines, conducted the column, and the practical application of Christian truth has been the burden of his message. During the coming year REV. DR. R. C. BLAGRAVE, Rector of St. Mark's, Toronto, will be our writer, and those who know him are confident that he will sustain the devotion and scholarship of his predecessors' work.

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DECIDED literary ability has been shown in Miss Lillian Leveridge's stories, which conclude with this issue. Her imagination and style is bound to appeal to young readers. The stories will be published in book form some day. It is a satisfaction that the CANADIAN CHURCHMAN has provided the weekly stimulus for such excellent material. In the new year a serial story will commence.

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