

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, November 29th, 1917.

The Christian Year

THE COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Second Sunday in Advent, Dec. 9th, 1917.

This Collect is one of the best-known prayers in the English language. It gathers up in its short space some great facts about the Holy Scriptures.

"Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning." First we set before us, as we pray, the authority and object of the Bible. God is behind the Scriptures. He it is Who has "caused all Holy Scriptures to be written." Through them He has sent out His message to the World. How remarkable it is that in this Divine Library of many books, written by different authors of varying types, education and environment, separated from one another in some cases by hundreds of years, with widely different messages, and addressing widely different audiences, we have nevertheless an undeniable unity, which forces us to the realization that behind these different men, of different times, there has been standing One Who is the Author of all, even God Who has "caused all Holy Scriptures to be written." These Scriptures are "written for our learning." This is their object. The message is for us to master. Many of the truths of the Bible are on the surface, for anyone to read, but much is beneath the surface, calling for earnest toil and diligence. "Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." Here we have some explanation of the "learning." We have to set ourselves to this great task, losing no opportunity of learning all we can of the Bible. "Hear them" suggests the duty of listening with alert attention to the Lessons in Church on the part of the people, and should also remind the Clergymen of the importance of the reading of the Lessons. It is for him to so read that people will attend. He has a great opportunity in this matter, an opportunity to be made the most of by prayer and careful preparation. "Read, mark, learn"—how emphatic the terms are. We are to read with attention, with thought, comparing passage with passage. The reverse of careless, hurried, perfunctory reading is indicated by the words. "And inwardly digest"—the message is to be taken into our spiritual natures as food which nourishes the body. It is to become part of ourselves. It is to manifest itself, as healthy food for the body, in strength and vigour for the soul.

"That by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life." There is nothing like true, prayerful Bible study to redeem life from pessimism and gloom. The heart glows anew with a great hope as one reads again the promises of God in the Holy Scriptures. Once more we take fresh courage as we realize the glory and wonder of the purposes of God, that He is working His purposes out through the long years of human history, that His promises stand for ever and ever, and, above all, there shines "the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in Our Saviour Jesus Christ."

"Christ is not quickly learned; and gradual is the progression of a soul to Him."

Editorial

CO-OPERATION.

The question of Church attendance and Church work generally has been discussed in our Correspondence columns from several points of view, and the tendency seems to be to lay the blame for any weakness at the doors of the clergy. Doubtless this is deserved to a certain extent, for the clergy are human like the rest of us and do not claim infallibility. There is also, doubtless, a considerable amount of blame that can be laid at the doors of the laity. However, we fail to see where any headway is to be made if this is to be the method of procedure. Mutual fault-finding does little, if any, good and it tends, moreover, to place each party to the dispute on the defensive.

Progress of the whole body depends not on separation and recrimination, but on co-operation. In the days gone by there developed the tendency to regard the body of the clergy as the Church and a young man on being ordained was spoken of as "entering the Church." There can be only one result to this kind of thing and to-day one of our chief difficulties is to persuade the lay members of the Church that it is not sufficient that they should be merely interested onlookers or nominal members, but that they should be active workers, co-operating with the clergy and taking their share of responsibility for the work.

The war has drawn attention to certain defects in the way in which the members of the Church have been doing their work. There has been too much professionalism on the part of the clergy and too much apathy on the part of the laity. A certain degree of unreality has crept in, a selfishness has developed, and secondary matters have too often been permitted to overshadow the vital points of our faith. The question that faces us is, how can we get rid of these things?

The first step is to acknowledge our mistakes. A school teacher who thinks it necessary to hide his mistakes from his pupils and to make himself appear infallible will ultimately lose the respect of his pupils. An honest acknowledgment of a mistake wins and holds respect. So in Church matters.

The second step is through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to study together, clergy and laity, the whole situation. Deanery meetings at which clergy meet for consultation are good, but they are not sufficient. We know the difficulty of securing the attendance of laymen but this is necessary if the lay point of view is to be brought to bear on the questions before us. The present tendency to limit their share in the work of the Church to finances, will reap its own reward. Moreover, in parishes something more is needed than a couple of wardens. The scope of the Church's organized work has been increasing but parochial machinery has not kept pace with it, with the result that we frequently find in a parish a multitude of separate committees with little, if any, co-ordination or co-operation.

The third step is a readiness to adapt our methods of work to the needs of the situation. We do not believe in jumping at conclusions, but the Church of England can scarcely be charged with being radical or revolutionary. How often we have seen it go to the other ex-

treme! One wearies of such expressions as "vested rights" and "prerogatives." Are we to let such things stand in the way when souls are to be saved? And yet that very danger faces us to-day. Do we realize the immensity and seriousness of the task we have undertaken? Our machinery has become cumbersome and disjointed and we are so much taken up with "seeing the wheels go round" that we are in danger of losing sight of the great purpose of it all. Co-ordination and co-operation are sadly needed in every department of our work and the sooner this is brought about the better.

Sunday, December the 9th, has been set apart as Bible Sunday when special attention is drawn to the printed Word of God. It is not necessary for us to dwell upon the importance of this subject but the debt is not fully recognized that we owe to those societies that have translated the Scriptures into some five hundred different languages and each year distributes millions of copies, many of them at a nominal price. Into the uttermost parts of the earth, North, South, East and West, the sacred Word finds its way and carries its silent but powerful message. The war has laid a special burden upon these Societies. Since August, 1914, over 6,000,000 volumes in some 60 different languages have been provided for the soldiers of the various armies. This has entailed, of necessity, a heavy additional expenditure and should call forth a generous response from those at home. In the midst of our war activities let us not overlook the more directly spiritual agencies at work.

We are issuing this year as usual a special Christmas number of the Canadian Churchman. This will be mailed on December 23th, or one week earlier than last year. We have received permission from the Missionary Education Movement to use on the cover that beautiful picture of Harold Copping's "The Hope of the World," depicting our Saviour surrounded by children of different races. A story has been written specially for this issue by Mrs. Plumtre and at least two of our Archbishops have promised messages bearing on the relation of Christmas to the War. These with other stories and articles of a special character will make this a valuable Christmas present. In order, however, to ensure an adequate supply with no waste it is necessary for us to ask that orders be sent in so far as possible beforehand. It will assist very materially if those desiring copies will return the coupon on page 771 at as early a date as possible. The price is 10 cents per copy post paid to any address in Canada, or 15 cents if outside Canada.

May we draw attention to the letter from the Bishop of Kootenay in this issue. It is most unfortunate that such a matter should have been the subject of a letter in the secular press. It would have been a simple matter for the writer to find out what the Bishop's present attitude towards such organizations is. Doubtless even the writer of the letter referred to has done something and expressed certain views, in his past life that he would not care to father now. We should remember always that it is a very easy matter to do harm but a very difficult matter to set it right again.

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