

pamphlet handed me by a Presbyterian minister on whose ministrations I attended at the time. I live in a small town where we have no Episcopal Church. Are there not many who could be induced to adopt this plan if it were presented to them personally by their pastors and urged upon their attention? I think there are, and I wish every clergyman in the land would make an effort to induce one or more of his parishioners to try it, or, better still, to adopt it for the period of his or her natural life. Think you it would make no difference—no addition to the salary of any minister who shall be so fortunate as to induce a number of his people to adopt this plan? I know it would, but I do not urge it on that ground, but solely on the ground of love for the Master. That ought to be sufficient—nay, it ought to impel or compel every Christian to do it most gladly. And every one who shall do it shall be benefited by so doing, whether pastor or parishioner—benefited as I believe, both temporally and spiritually, as I firmly believe I have been.

Oh, that Christian people could be impressed with the duty of systematic contribution to the Master's work. Oh, that our clergy would understand its value and importance both to the Church at large and to their own particular work. It would remove every difficulty, every obstacle (may I not make that assertion truthfully?) in the way of spreading the Gospel, and enable our Mission Board to increase fourfold the work they have in hand.

In God's name let it be so impressed upon the hearts, and minds, and consciences. Let every Church paper "keep it before the people,"—urge it, insist upon it, week after week, month after month, and year after year. If this be done, some, yes, many, will be convinced of their duty in the premises, and will be led to adopt the plan of weekly contribution, and the Lord's treasury will overflow with their offerings, and there will come such a blessing from the Lord that there will not be room enough to receive it. Small weekly contributions are a better dependence than large transient ones, however large they may be, if all Christians would do their full duty in this matter.

God speed the day when they shall see and perform their duty, not grudgingly nor of necessity, but gladly and of a willing mind; for God loveth a cheerful giver, and, what is more, a cheerful giver is very apt soon to become a lover of God and His earthly Kingdom and an inheritor of the Heavenly Kingdom.

Now, reverend and dear sir, I do not write this because I am anxious to see myself in print. That has lost its novelty for me, for I am a country editor—but I want it pushed right up to the front and kept there—this subject of systematic giving. It is the most important one to your Board that can be brought to your attention, and will double your means twice over, so that you can enlarge your work instead of retrenching it."

## THE CHURCH YEAR.

Among the changes that have taken place in recent times, in regard to the system and teaching of the Church, as observed by other people, none are more observable perhaps, than that concerning the Church year. Time was, when the observance of Christmas was an "abomination" to a Puritan, and when in England it was made a public fast day.

The Rev. Dr. Merriman, a distinguished Congregational clergyman of that same country, has different views from those of his forefathers on the subject and thus sets them forth through the *Andover Review*:—

"The observance of the Christian year is both stimulated by the fresh interest in the life of Christ, and promotes that interest. 'Christianity, both as a creed and a life, depends absolute-

ly upon the personal character of its founder.' As the chief attention of criticism, and so necessarily of the theology, and thus of the actual Christian life, is more and more concentrated upon the story of the gospels and upon the portrait of life of the divine man therein set forth, such an annual following of that life in study, worship and practical application to our own conduct as the felicitous ordering of the Christian year affords becomes more attractive and useful. It tends to fix attention on that which is simple, primary and essential to the faith.

"It incites personal affection and loyalty to Jesus, and lifts him up, as an example and inspiration, in daily conduct. In this way the Christian year tends to bring Christians out of the abstractions of theory and opinion into the reign of life. It makes our religion more real and vital, because closer to the life of our Lord.

"The observance of the Christian year naturally tends to relieve us of that uncertain, restless and arbitrary way of arranging for special services and periods of religious activity which is often now so distracting and wasteful. There is a tacit agreement that we must have times and reasons for rejoicing, for penitence, for confession, for revival. But the appointment of them is left to chance; the observance of them to gusts and freaks of feeling. Many churches feel the need of making autumn a time for spiritual preparation. Why should we not all agree to observe the Advent regularly at such a time, and concentrate attention upon this? The week of prayer was established from a sense of a necessity of a fixed and regular period in which all could unite in confession, repentance and supplication for the divine favor. As such, the week of prayer constitutes a very strong argument for Lent.

"But it is a very arbitrary appointment, unfortunate and impracticable in its time, artificial in its suggestions and associations. So the day of prayer for colleges. Why should not the regular observance of Lent by our churches helpfully take the place of these two appointments, and indeed, by bringing our churches into sympathy with other Christians make this period of repentance and revival more effective? And if special evangelistic efforts are to be made in our churches, let them not be made suddenly by fits and starts at odd and accidental times, but regularly and soberly in connection with these occasions of the Christian year.

"What with the constant craze for new organizations and original methods and fresh appliances for Christian work, our churches are becoming bewildered and their forces scattered and frittered away in change. The further observance of the Christian year would be in the direction of a check upon the dissipation, and of concentration and conservation. Our Sunday school work would be vastly improved, if, instead of the arbitrary hop, skip and jump method of selecting the lessons which now prevails, some attention could be paid to the systematic study of the life of Christ, the history of the Church, and the meaning of faith in connection with the festivals of the Christian year. The individual minister would gain some relief from the distractions which now oppress him. His themes would be chosen with more point, and the whole year's work would have more consistency and effort.

"Moreover, neighboring churches would have interest in one another's work, and could plan it more in harmony and sympathy. As Cardinal Newman so beautifully points out, six months of each year, from Advent to Trinity Sunday, would be the period of struggle, of work, of effort in redemption; and the remaining six months, from Trinity Sunday to Advent, would be the period of growth, of joy, of peace—of peace in believing.

"We may well go further in the observance of the Christian year for the sake of our children and youth. We can hardly understand how the Puritan child two hundred years ago got on without any Christmas or Easter. It is true that he did, but then he did not have to contend with the disadvantages of the modern child. He had his own simple resources, and they serv-

ed him well. But our children have a different outlook on a different world and far different proximate ends to serve, though none the less noble and necessary. There is the same Bible, but it must now be read with very different eyes; the same gospel, but it must be studied with different tools and methods; the same history of the Church, but it discloses great treasures and different lessons; the same Jesus Christ, 'the same yesterday, to day and forever,' but he is drawing nearer to man, to society to life, to claim them more simply and directly to himself.

"The Christian year, with its beautiful literature, its divine associations, telling significantly year by year, his mysterious and thrilling story, contains treasures, avenues and inspirations to a larger simpler and more serving spiritual life, which we shall be blame-worthy if we keep hidden from our children and youth, when they, in this day of specialities, sub-divisions and distractions, need all they can get of sobering and steadying association and condition.—*Oregon Churchman*.

Again the Church year summons us to the study of the fundamental facts of Christianity, and a renewed spirituality. The importance of a perpetual return to these facts cannot be overestimated. It is a day of manifold theories and endless speculation. The human will continually drives the mind upon the inquest for truth, and insists that by mere thinking it can find God. We may be thankful for all reverent thought, it is true. But why this endless struggle to divorce thought from fact, and so deprive it of the essential base lines? Whereas these facts are to the Christian all and more than the base line is to the student of the stars. The age prides itself upon its practical methods of investigation. And the Church Year in its arrangement exactly meets the claim of the age. For it is radically practical. It is not a voice crying in the wilderness of opinion; it does not confine itself to the philosophies of religion. On the contrary it gives philosophy and fact together. For every great doctrine it displays and emphasizes the historical fact upon which the doctrine rests. To the clamorous demand for proof so natural to the human mind it responds with the calm display of facts fortified by every form of evidence, by every kind of witnessing upon which belief may rest; upon which it has ever rested. It is unnecessary to illustrate this statement by analysis of the array of facts presented and proved by abundant testimony, from Advent to Transfiguration. Any serious attention to the Church year will show this so clearly that he who runs may read. We may not dwell upon this therefore. But we may and ought to recall ourselves from the discontent of idle speculation, abandon the weary treadmill of human endeavor upon which so many are wasting their mental faculty, and all their spiritual ambition, and come back to the quiet home of the soul—Christian Facts, and all other real historical evidence of Christianity. And we may rest in peace assured that in this old fashioned yet ever new pathway, following the Saviour's story step by step, we shall receive edification in mind and renewed grace in things spiritual. Just to fortify a creed is not enough. For a cold Credo must be a lifeless creed. Let ours be the privilege to find and know the Living God therein, and rest in peace in the care of a Heavenly Father. Let ours be the blessed faith which becomes, not a cold cave of empty wordiness merely, but the daily home in which we think and work, and have our being. So we shall enter in humility of soul the temple of obedience, and pass upward from the region of evidence to the altitudes of holy experience. Growth is a gracious mystery, but the way to enter upon growth is not at all mysterious. Our Lord has cleared the way, and the spirit points it out to us, and His Church says daily—"Son walk ye here." Pray and obey, obey and pray—so and only so may Man, the spiritual being, come unto the haven where he would be.—*North Dakota Churchman*.