

# Canadian Churchman

Toronto, November 28th, 1918.

## The Christian Year

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

### The Word of God.

St. Paul, referring to the Old Testament Scriptures says, "Whatever things were written afore time, were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." If there is this boon to men in the Old Testament how much is this boon enhanced by the addition of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! The Bible is a book of the past, to help us in the present by opening our eyes to the glorious purpose of God in the future. It gives us hope, without which trouble would be unbearable and difficulties overmastering.

Though written "aforetime"—long, long years ago,—it is never out of date. God, by whose inspiration the Book was written (for every Scripture is inspired by God) never changes. Man, in whatever age you find him, has the same fundamental needs, sorrows, sins, temptations. The purpose of Holy Scripture is to give man hope in this life and that which is to come. This it does by recording the unveiling of God to man, by telling us of the character, purpose and will of God and by illustrating for us God's dealings with men and nations.

Many people forget the purpose of Scripture. It is more than a remarkable record of past events. It is more than a vast store house of interest for the historian or philologist or antiquarian. It does make its appeal to the intellect. Scholars the most profound cannot exhaust its wealth of interest. Its primary appeal is to the heart and conscience of man. We approach this Divine Library gathered, by the providence of God, into one volume, not for information, but that through the recorded acts and words of God in the past we might have our soul aglow with a mighty hope, which would fashion our lives and direct our acts.

Perhaps the greatest gift of the Reformation period in England was that of the Bible in our mother tongue—and the opportunity given to all to hear and read the Holy Scriptures. To us of this generation this gift is accessible. Not only is it read throughout in the public services of the Church in the course of the year but practically all of us can read and very few are unable to procure a copy, if they desire it. Yet it is an open question whether, in view of our advantages over former times, we read as much of the Bible or are as keen about knowledge of the Holy Scriptures as men in days gone by.

The Collect suggests the steps we must take to make the Bible a power in our lives. "The different verbs are so arranged as to give the idea of a gradual progress from a superficial acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures to the profoundest reception of them in the inner man." We must *hear*—Let the reader of the Scriptures remember this. Let us listen with attention, recognizing the authority of the Book. *Read*—take some personal trouble to find what the Bible does say—and says to us. *Mark, learn*—attend that you may lodge them in your memory that they may be food for thought—take some mental trouble. "Thy words have I hid within my heart that I should not sin against Thee." Inwardly *digest*. Work that which we have learned into our lives.

## Editorial

THINGS AND MEN.

**R**ECONSTRUCTED men or reconstructed things? Most of our plans and talk about reconstruction concern the things. Industrially, politically and socially our old world is to be remade. Once get things right then they will stay right. If things can be changed then man will grow to suit the things. The present emphasis is on things.

Things indeed show the injustice of man to man, and are the damning evidence of his selfishness for all he prates of brotherhood and love. For men are the creators of things as they are. Undoubtedly things must be changed. The Church has said so but she must not hesitate to throw the weight of her influence on the side of rapid improvement.

Right things and right men will make up the right world. But the dominant force is men not things. At present things reveal injustice because man is selfish and sinful. For improvement to be permanent man must be changed as well as things.

The circle is the usual round of human endeavour. No sooner is a reformation accomplished than the selfish ingenuity of man checkmates the effect. The superiority of industrial slavery over the old serfdom lies only in the fact that the change wakened the slave but it took him generations to use his wits to demand more. Manhood suffrage, free education, and all the reforms of the past century were each hailed as the weight that would tip the scale from selfishness to brotherhood. Their failure to change the basis of things, is because they did not change the basis of man's nature. The load of the world is on the weakest backs. that was true one hundred years ago. It is true today.

Things as they are can never be satisfactory to men who are as they should be. It is the reconstructed men who must give the lead on any adequate reform of present conditions. That reform must never lose sight of the men as well as the things. Herein lies the strategic point of power of the Church. "Saved to serve," is the motto of the Christian life.

By the help of our novelists we have come to imagine that there are only two types in the world, the man with Christ in his heart and not on his tongue who does things for others and the man with Christ on his tongue but not in his heart who does nothing. We forget that the way to deliverance from social wrongs was blazed by men who knew Christ well enough to testify to Him as Saviour and Friend—Wilberforce and Lincoln will suffice for examples. The Christian to-day who is not making his impact on things as they are is not the man as he should be.

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**C**HURCH Union is a pressing topic. It is a dream which men would like to see come true, if it come to suit them. More than a dream, it is a prayer in the hearts of many a devout member of the Church. As in our common danger four years ago we drew together in our worship and intercession to the Lord and Father of us all and throughout the weary months and years have felt the bonds draw us closer to one another because closer to Him, so in our common rejoicing in these last days we have come together in unprecedented

fashion to thank God for His goodness and as Christian citizens of one nation have joined in prayer and praise. In England the impulse of fellowship has led to similar expressions of common joy so that the impossible has happened.

Some have drawn off by themselves in disapproval of the common worship. Others may say that we have moved too rapidly. But we feel that the heart of overflowing thankfulness could not lead us astray. In our moments of supreme gratitude we have had no thought except of God and His power and majesty.

Our problem of Church Union was not solved by our common worship of Victory Day. Its solution was brought measurably nearer. It showed us that under the pressure of some great task and the inspiration of some mighty triumph we are all one in reality as we are one in Christ Jesus. We have a unity which easily surmounts our differences when overwhelming events summon it.

Sacrifice of essentials is something we can not submit to. Whatever the future has of marvel or surprise certainly it does not hold the voluntary disappearance of the Church of England in some nondescript creation of the moment. Sacrifice of the essentials is something we would not ask our friends to submit to. They and we must be the judges of what are to be considered essentials.

Absorption rather than union is what some are thinking of. They strangely misread the times. We could not if we would absorb our fellow churches, and, better still, many feel that we would not if we could.

Before we can judge essentials we must get on some mountain peaks of experience. A great task and a great triumph have lifted us so that we could see over the walls that divide us. We shall better judge the true essentials as we feel the inexorable pressure of a greater task than the judging.

If Church Union be made an end in itself we feel that the end will be defeated as soon as it be accomplished. But if we combine in order to proclaim the Kingdom, to cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, to fight evil, to rescue its victims, then we have the task and by God's grace the ultimate triumph too which will make our union a reality. The deadness and infidelity of heathendom, the struggling, rival churches of a prairie village, the wickedness and vice of a great city are some of the things which have opened men's eyes to the necessity of a united Christendom and to the folly and waste of a divided Church.

What form shall our Union take? All such questions are far off just yet—far off in our frame of mind, perhaps not far off in time, for a swift turn of the wheel might bring them on us at once. We have considerable distance to cover. We would like to see more clearly the advantage of such a loose union, where all differences would be admitted, which might become only a union in name, except for administrative and financial purposes (surely the smallest).

One sure way to come to the kind of union which is desirable is to foster the spirit of unity, to make evident to the world that unity in Christ which is already real. Nothing now prevents our coincident effort in moral and social reform except our jealousies and ambitions.

Let us pray that God will send the pressure of great tasks to overwhelm the soul of His people in His good time. The fields are white

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