

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, October 30th, 1919.

Prevailing Unrest

THE PRIMATE

(Part of the Charge delivered by Archbishop Matheson at the last Synod of Rupert's Land.)

THE world-war through which we have passed seems to be developing into a world-revolution. Things to-day are in a state of flux. "Old things are passing away," and it is not known yet what the "new things" will be that will take their place. The old world that we had before the war I do not believe can ever come back exactly as it was. Lloyd George, I believe, was right when he advised, "Don't be always talking about getting back to where you were before the war; get a really new world." No period in the history of the world was ever so fraught and so full of possibilities for its future weal or woe as these days through which we are passing. Democracy has asserted itself as it has never done before, but never in its evolution has it needed guiding as much as it does to-day. Deep down in my heart I have always had faith in democracy, and I have still in its ultimate triumph if it is guided aright, but we cannot help feeling that it is living dangerously just now. The following words from a man who has had a wide experience in dealing with social questions and has a broad sympathy with true democratic ideals are sane and worth quoting:—

"Groups are forming within the social organism which are anti-social and anti-democratic. Appeals to cupidity, class antagonisms and the weird enterprise of social destruction—just to see what will then happen—are increasingly manifest. To live as a democracy is to live dangerously. Apart from all groups, with their sectional passions, interests, jealousies, policies, there is needed the great keeper of the people's conscience. Into the turbid stream of social passions must flow the pure waters from the fountains of truth and love to clarify them as far as possible. Increasingly must the Church interpret the Christian evangel into terms of social life and communal righteousness, and she must speak in language understood by the people."

That the Church must do something is self-evident. In fact, to my mind, it is not only imperative that it should, but it is perilous, both for its own sake and for the sake of the world, that the Church should hold itself aloof from what is going on. If it is asked how it can best address itself to the task, my answer is "that organized Christianity must, first of all, take an intelligent interest in the problems which are so intensely agitating human society at the present time. And I want to say, no matter what the world thinks or what the man on the street avers, organized Christianity is not only thinking deeply upon these questions, but it is putting forth very clear and courageous pronouncements upon them."

Examine, for example, the report of a committee of twenty-six appointed by the Archbishops in England on "Christianity and Industrial Problems." It is an extremely masterly and luminous document, and anyone who reads it can entertain no doubt as to where the Church stands.

And not only overseas, but the Churches in Canada have come out most pronouncedly on the same subject. During the past year four Churches, namely, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican, have issued and made public declarations on industrial life and wealth in Canada. When the pronouncement of our Church was made before the General Synod in September last, the following resolution was moved and seconded by two leading laymen:—

"That in view of the unsatisfactory relations that too often exist between capital and labour, the employer and employed, the General Synod would urge the clergy and members of the Church to give special study to industrial conditions with a view to their improvement, and to industrial problems with a view to their eventual solution in the spirit and according to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, the point I wish to make, and also to stress, is this: If these considered conclusions were read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by our clergy and people, I am confident that social and industrial conditions would very soon improve, and I am as confident that they will never be set, even measurably right, until people give time to study the different viewpoints, and by studying them, get together. Most of our troubles arise from misunderstandings, and it is simply appalling the amount of erroneous misunderstanding there is.

May I venture, then, to make a few suggestions? First of all, as I have already mentioned, let us, both clergy and laity, read and post ourselves on these public questions. In the second place, let us discuss them among ourselves and endeavour to obtain an intelligent grasp of them. Remember, I am not recommending that our clergy should preach on these contentious subjects. Far from it. The pulpit is not for that, and it is prostituted when it is used for anything outside of the proclamation of the Gospel of the grace of God. But we must remember that the preaching of the Gospel involves the clear inculcation of the Christian ethic which must reveal, and reveal courageously, the duty of man to man. What I wish to suggest, however, is that in every parish some evening in the week might profitably be devoted to the study of what are termed "social questions." At such meetings the pronouncements of the Church, which are now hidden away in the archives of Synod journals and are rarely seen, could be read and discussed.

What I desire is that the Church should not sit aloof from these vital matters, but know about them, and leaven them with the ideals of Christ. The Church must not simply do ambulance work and assist people when they are wounded by the evils that exist in the world, but do its part intelligently in removing evils or mitigating them. You may have seen the picture called "The Guardian Angel." It represents a bridge with a broken rail. The angel is standing there, and is turning back a little child, who is chasing a butterfly, to keep it from falling off the bridge. The original picture was at the St. Louis Fair. Many of the people gazed at it intently and for a long time. After a while a farmer came along, took a look at it and turned quickly away. He was asked why he turned away. His answer was, "I have seen all of the thing I want to." He walked over a little nearer and said, "Why does not that angel mend that rail and then go about his business and do some real good?" The moral from that is obvious.

The Christian Year

The Ransom Price

(TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY)

THE Collect for to-day takes up the theme of the Gospel for the nineteenth Sunday, in which forgiveness of sins was discussed in connection with our Lord's great act of forgiveness. "Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace." In that discussion it was pointed out that only He who is offended can properly forgive the offence. This, of course, God, in His sovereign purpose may do if He wills it. But is it consistent with His moral plan and purpose that He should? Is repentance all that is necessary for us to secure God's forgiveness?

There is no mystery about the necessity of repentance. A thing to be repented of is a thing to be avoided. If one is really sorry for having done a wrong, or committed a sin, he has established a moral presupposition against the likelihood of his repeating the offence. It is said that Germany has not yet repented, and, therefore, is not to be trusted among the league of nations. Repentance indicates a change of heart, and that is what God wants above all else.

REPENTANCE INSUFFICIENT.

But repentance alone is insufficient. The integrity of the law that regulates human society would not be conserved by offering free pardon on confession or repentance, even though it were a free act on the part of the offender. So likewise it has always been felt in regard to sin against God. The conviction arises out of the spontaneous religious sense of mankind. Repentance may commence a new life, but of itself it cannot abolish the old. It is probably not too wide a generalization to say that all the sacrificial systems of religious history have sprung out of this belief. On the other hand, it is possible to observe sacrificial rites and ceremonies without having a changed heart. This was the fatal weakness of Judaism in the days of our Lord. The Pharisee, accordingly, was not so near to the Kingdom of God as the "poor publican." But was repentance on the part of the publican sufficient to admit him to the Kingdom?

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION.

This is the crucial question upon which the eternal issues of theological controversy turn to-day. If God the Father can forgive sins upon repentance, then the place of the Atonement in the economy of the Kingdom is of doubtful value. Christ said to the palsied man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," not *are* forgiven. He spake thus by the power committed to Him as Son of God, and in the merit of His, then, sacrificial self-emptying. If sin could be forgiven without a price, then the death of Christ, however important in other ways, was not essentially necessary. Herein lies the difference between the Christianity of the creeds and the tendency of irresponsible aberrations from the truth of the Gospel. The whole foreground of St. Paul's consciousness consisted in the grateful sense of redemption from sin, not through repentance only, but by the blood of Christ. According to St. Paul, repentance itself is due to the grace of God; and so, while it indicates a new heart, it has no atoning merit in itself. The penalty of sin is death. Re-

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