

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY.

- JANUARY 1.—CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.
" 4.—Second Sunday after Christmas.
" 6.—EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD.
" 11.—First Sunday after Epiphany.
" 18.—Second Sunday after Epiphany.
" 25.—CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Second Sunday After Epiphany.

The collect for the day is a general prayer to God that He will hear the supplications of His people, and grant us His peace all the days of our life. Through Christ will our prayers be heard, and in Christ is our peace; for if all that the Scriptures have foretold, and we find in the Gospel related, has not taken place—if Christ be not raised from the dead, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins. Every step, therefore, in this marvellous chain of events, by which it has been assured to us that this is "He of whom Moses and the prophets did write," that "this is indeed the Prophet that should come into the world," brings us toward that consummation we desire, through which our prayers are heard and our peace secured. No step, then, is to us more confirmatory of this than the manifestation of our blessed Lord to the world. In this manner he convinced the world, or those whom he called out of the world, and in this manner does He manifest Himself to us; gradually revealing himself as we are able to bear it. As, then, in the services of last Sunday, the Church proposed to our attentive consideration His appearance among the doctors in the temple, so in the services of this day, does she set before us in the Gospel his first miracle, that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, whereby His disciples, those whom He had called around Him, were taught to believe on Him. He had before aroused the attention of the doctors and teachers of the law, as well in the miraculous guidance of a star as in the hearing and asking them questions. He now drew to the miraculous powers with which he was invested, the attention of his disciples—of those faithful and chosen few who were hereafter more fully to manifest Him by preaching, with signs following, to the Gentile world. In Galilee prophecy had said that this light should first shine, and, in accordance with this, we have this first manifestation of Himself to His followers in Cana of Galilee, and he here manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. The Church, in the selected Gospel, having thus drawn our attention to this, teaches us, in the passage she

has chosen for the epistle, the practical lesson that it enforces on us. We are each of us, as Christians—for without it we deceive ourselves in assuming that name, or in dwelling on the hopes it holds out of happiness, and of salvation through Christ Jesus—according to our several opportunities, to set forward this manifestation of our Lord to the world. Our faith comprehends the salvation of every brother, of every fellow-creature of God, as well as our own. The glory of God must be manifested by every one who calls on the name of Christ; and it is our duty earnestly and soberly—not by intruding ourselves into the office of others, and neglecting the duties of our own, but each by fulfilling the duties of his station, and having a common hope and interest in the great cause which brought the Son of God into the world, the salvation of the souls of men—to further to the utmost over the hearts of Christ's people, or of those who still sit in darkness and the shadow of death, his manifestation. We need not go out of our way to do this; it is in our way every hour and moment of our lives, when, by example, by a word of advice spoken in season, or by our good works and consistent life of Christian holiness, which our less enlightened neighbor may behold, he may learn to glorify our Father which is in heaven, and that holy faith which he has taught us in His Son. Whatever differing gifts we may have—for God has given to each according to his ability, as trusts, for the diligent use of which we shall be responsible—let us use them in Christian simplicity, with diligence and with cheerfulness. Let us learn to practise the lessons the Apostle teaches: "To live without dissimulation; to abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good; to be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love; to be active in business, for there is a time for all things, and whatever we do must be done well;" to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to rejoice in hope; to show our patience in the hour of tribulation; to continue instant in prayer; to use our worldly means to the purposes for which they were given. Above all things, to imitate the example of our Lord, in blessing our persecutors; to sympathize whether in the joy or in the grief of our brethren, and to be ever of the same mind one towards another. Thus shall we be disciples of our Lord, and set forward His manifestation and His glory, uniting, in the bonds of charity, our interests with that of our brethren, and setting forward the common salvation.

The Opportunities of Winter.

There is no season of the year which presents as great opportunities to the Churchman of building himself and his brethren up in their most holy faith, as the season of Winter. In summer, no doubt, a great deal may be done in the way of enlisting new recruits, collecting and examining and brightening up old rusty armor, and otherwise getting the parochial machinery into good and effective order. But the winter is the time for the real work.

If then, speaking generally, we call the summer the time for enlisting recruits, and the winter for inuring them to the discipline of active service, we are assigning to the latter season no unimportant functions. For we need to recognise this—that in the present day the task immediately before us is the *building up* of souls that have been aroused into life, rather than the actual arousing them.

The question that wants answering is not so much "Must I be saved?" as "What must I do to be saved?" With ever-increasing eagerness men are asking for definite instruction for the guidance of their daily lives. They do not wish to be told, "You must *not* do this!" "You must *not* do that!" "This system is wrong, and that is defective," but, "Here is a rule which will help you in your efforts. Here is a principle—a command of Christ—which will ensure for you a distinct blessing." It is construction, and not destruction—building up, and not pulling down, that the world is panting for, and hardly getting. For, to speak the truth, it is heartily weary of merely negative systems. It was because he was conscious of this that Frederick Maurice said: "Never take away from a man even the shadow of a spiritual truth, unless you can give him substance in return."

Now this substance the Church of Christ both has to give and will give to the humble and patient seeker. And the best way of giving it at this season of the year is by means of *classes*. All the instruction that the pastor, in the pulpit or on his rounds, fails to impart, may be supplied in the class. And therefore we urge our clerical readers to form, wherever they are not yet in existence, winter classes of instruction, and our lay friends to join them. These may be Bible classes, Communicants' Classes, Confirmation Classes, Prayer-Book Classes, Church History Classes, and possibly others, varying in number and character, according to the size and needs of the parish.

And first, as to the *Bible Class*. Reader, do not turn away at the mention of this name and say, "That is not for me. I know all about that. That is a subject for children." Most probably your knowledge of Holy Scripture is extremely limited, being nothing more than a general smattering, gathered from the Reading of the Lessons in Church, or from the recollections of early childhood. It is astonishing what general ignorance prevails of the real teaching of the Bible. Few people have given the time and trouble necessary for extracting and weighing the truths contained in God's Holy Word. Every one, of course, knows *about* it, few *know* it. Every one can quote texts, few can apply them agreeably with the context.

Now the hour at the Bible Class, we can venture to say from experience, may be made one of the most delightful and profitable hours of the week. The attendance generally increases in numbers as the winter goes on, and people learn the true nature of the class. The subject, say, is one of the Gospels—the scope and object of which is, at the outset, carefully explained. The variety of thought that is suggested, as the class enters into the narrative, prevents any feeling of weariness. A careful and accurate description of the scenery, and habits and customs of the Jewish people, throws light and interest into many a passage that has hitherto been obscure, and therefore unintelligible. The conductor, too, of the class, does not fail, as he proceeds, to point out the passages which prove the creeds and doctrines of the Church, enforcing his teaching by other passages bearing upon the same subject. Thus his hearers become intelligent Church-people, able to give to others "the reason of the faith that is in them." But this is not all. No one has reaped the full benefit of the Bible Class who does not come away from it feeling that he has "been with Jesus," that *His* voice has spoken to him as it spoke of old, that, as one of the company of the disciple— he has