

# Canadian Churchman

Toronto, November 21st, 1918.

## The Christian Year

## Editorial

### THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

### AN UNSTATED GOSPEL.

THE Advent Collect never fails to thrill us with its trumpet call to awake and bestir ourselves in view of the transcendent event to which all Holy Scripture points, viz., the return of the Saviour Judge in glorious majesty. To those for whom Holy Scripture is a guide, no event is more sure—no event will be more far-reaching.

The First Coming of Our Lord is a matter of historic fact (*si monumentum requiritur*, e.g., "The cross on our soldiers' graves.") His Second Coming is a matter for our faith.

Though professed in our Creeds, the Return to Judgment is a belief often unrelated to the moral and religious lives of many Christians. In the past four years we have been surprised at ourselves for being so blind as to fail to believe in the intentions of Germany before 1914. We did not lack prophets or proofs of a scheme of world domination. Yet the Allies refused to believe, and when the predicted onslaught came they were unprepared.

The Second Coming to bless and to judge is revealed and heralded, yet many are unmoved at the thought. "Where is the promise of His Coming," they say. "All things continue as at the beginning."

The fact is Christ will come again in His glorious majesty. The time we know not, the manner baffles our imagination, but the fact remains, and for this creation waits. Christ comes even now. Have not the past four years been a time of judgment for the world? Are not the present days a time of opportunity, just as Christ's coming to Jerusalem, recorded in to-day's Gospel, had in it both judgment and opportunity?

In view of all this a call comes to each:—

1. Awake! Think rationally, i.e., think in the light of certain facts. Christ has come. Christ is ever coming. Christ will come in glorious majesty. When we realize that the purpose of His coming is to reclaim men to God and to vindicate the Righteousness of God and make it possible for men, there is but one course for the thoughtful to pursue. Cast off works of darkness. Doff the uniform and insignia, the ways and manners of the enemies of God, the devil, the world and the flesh. Make effective your baptismal vow of renunciation. Have done with thoughts, words and deeds which cannot bear the light of God's truth and purity—sins of flesh and spirit.

Put on the armour of light. Make effective your vow of faith and obedience by taking and training against the spiritual foes of man the whole armour of God (Eph. 6: 13).

"Put in Christ." "Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus."

What will this mean? "Owe no man anything." Fulfil in love all your obligations: your full duty as parent, husband, wife, child, neighbour, Churchman, citizen.

Awake! Put off! Put on!

Do these words suggest anything to your conscience? May God give us grace to think and act in view of what He has done and will do!

RE-STATEMENT is a popular cry now. It is on the tongue of many a thoughtless speaker. That is the price paid for popularity. The grave need of re-statement is likely to be lost sight of in the hysteria of speeches and books, which try to prove that age-long human nature has been changed by the incident of war. It does not take long to gather the only contribution which some writers have to make—that the times are out of joint. That is true. A man would be foolish to say that things religious are as they should be. But what is to be done? Some of our prophets answer: "We are not quite sure, but upset everything, then you will find the things that ought to stay straight."

Theology makes a convenient tilting-horse for the careless of speech. They work themselves to a fine frenzy over the Articles. No such thing was ever suggested in the Sermon on the Mount. But if every theological proposition could be blotted from the mind of every man to-morrow morning, by the evening every thinking man would have started another theology. Not a man but has his idea, his philosophy of life, in few words or many. Everybody, to save themselves from lunacy, must bring their experiences into relation. So also with our religious experiences. The first question, "Why?" starts you moving towards a complete body of theology.

The careless thinker confuses theology and religion, and the superficial thinker imagines that there could be religion without theology. The one chokes over the fish bones instead of eating the fish; the other thinks that all fish should be amoebae, jelly fish and the like.

An unstated, not a re-stated, Gospel is the logical issue of their observations (if they have any logic). A *bonne entente* of humanity and good fellowship, a gospel of good intentions, would be basis definite enough for Christianity, as far as they can see. It would be a gospel with the statement left out.

Reality is the first essential of any adequate meeting of religious needs of to-day. Human nature, with its sad but hopeful mixture of good and evil, is the only starting-point. The statement of religion that denies or ignores the one or the other cannot be true. The Gospel of Jesus Christ fits men. It is uncomplimentary in its revelation of men as they are. It is magnificent in its plans for men as they should be. Humiliating is man's weakness when he tries to stand alone. Confident is His strength through Christ.

The new world can come only through new men. New men can come only through Christ. Repentance and Regeneration must be elements in the simplest statement. Christianity, in its lowest terms, must always be based on the needs as well as the visions of mankind.

Of course, we shall, we must, interpret our religious experiences in the terms we understand. Nothing else would be interpretation. It will be found as really serious thought is given to the stating of our conclusions that we differ from the best minds of the past in expression more than thought. For religion is not like science and philosophy, dealing

with the knowledge and theory of the world about us. The science and philosophy of another day have given little more than the framework and background of theological expression. Religion is an affair of the soul, in which David stands beside the men of to-day in his confession of sin, and the love of the child for God is kindred to that of the man.

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WAR has been declared. Two days after the signing of the armistice with Germany the enemy opened fire. In Toronto and other cities cards were distributed advocating opening the bar-rooms. The lie told this time was that it was a measure necessary for the health of the people. The unholy haste made clear the origin. The men who want to make money by creating and pandering to the appetite for strong drink are ready to fight for the easy prosperity they once enjoyed. Every man who puts his hand to supply alcoholic stimulants as a beverage is in the same class, whether he be a rich distiller or a cheap tavern-keeper. Vigilance is the price of freedom from this blight. The men overseas have given us a free country. Let us keep it a sober country. Don't be a slacker in this fight. Line up and keep the conditions that everyone acknowledges are good for Canada. What would Victory Day have been with open bar-rooms? We were relieved from the silly cheers and stinking breaths of staggering drunks. We must have the best of conditions for the times ahead or there will be trouble easily aroused.

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BOUND, beaten, bitten, pounded and choked into unconsciousness was the recent experience of the lady superintendent of the Toronto Jail. She was set upon by two of the women who were "trusties" when she went to close the cross gates in the corridor. She was a victim of desperate women who realized that one woman stood between them and freedom. The protection provided for the superintendent was absolutely inadequate. Such inadequacy is utterly foolish. It risks the safety and lives of the guards and it continually suggests to the prisoners the possibility of escape. In prison reform we must remember and insist that adequate provision be made for the guards as well as the prisoners.

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GOOD roads are going to play a large part in the solution of the problems of our rural churches and the improvement of rural conditions. The scheme of the Ontario Government to put a Government highway through the entire province will be far-reaching in its effects on rural life. The chief obstacle to most enterprises of the country church is isolation and the lack of stimulus. Good roads will mean the possibility of frequent communications with larger centres and the breaking down of insularity and parochialism.

N.B.—If your copy of the Canadian Churchman does not reach you regularly, we shall be grateful if you will let us know.

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