

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, November 2nd, 1916

The Christian Year

The 21st Sunday After Trinity, November 12.

The Apostle, in his prisoner's room at Rome, is dictating the last paragraphs of the inspired message to the Christians whom he loves in Ephesus and in Asia. He has told of the mystic purpose of God for the world and for the Church. He has stirred his converts' imagination by his majestic picture of the long distances and of the glistening heights of God's eternal plan. But while long views are inspiring and are necessary, they have their dangers, if the immediate view, the next step, the individual's task, is overlooked. And so St. Paul turns from the far horizon to the near foreground, and warns and arms his followers for the mighty struggle, the spiritual conflict, which each must faithfully wage, not only to achieve his own victory, but for the fulfilment of the vast scheme of God.

The spiritual conflict! All who have set out upon the Christian path know something of its pains and of its terrors. But to the penetrating insight of the Apostle it looms black with awful moment. For he recognizes, behind the temptations mediated through the flesh or the material and social environment, an eerie array of malignant spiritual powers, controlling, co-ordinating, organizing and directing the forces of evil. It is usual now to disparage the existence of a personal devil—to refer such a belief to the lingering effects of Jewish superstition. And yet it is obviously as rational to believe in the existence of discarnate evil personalities as to recognize the existence of sinful human souls. If we believe in good angels and a good God, why not also in demons and a devil?

"This truth within thy mind rehearse,
That in a boundless universe
Is boundless better, boundless worse."

And how is the Christian to stand in this dread encounter? He can only do so as he arms himself with the panoply of God. To use the language of the New Testament, we may say that this complete suit of armour is Christ Himself, who is the Truth, and who is also Our Righteousness. But to put the matter in a more modern phraseology—the gist of St. Paul's words lies here. The great defence against temptation is a certain mental state or attitude in the Christian, traceable ultimately to the working of the divine Spirit upon the human personality. This mental state must be marked by an utter sincerity, and by a rightness which is uncompromising to all forms of alluring evil. This necessary attitude of the soul must also always be ready to forestall the enemy by attack, by active furtherance of the divine interest upon earth. And above all there must be an unconquerable optimism, based upon no shallow philosophy, but upon the certitude that there is a Divine Power, ready to meet every need as it arises, and able to make all things work together for good to those who are co-operating with the grand purpose of God. Sincerity, rightness, trust! All can be summed up in that word of tremendous inclusiveness—love! For it comes to pass that as the heart of the Christian is settled steadily upon the higher, the lower loses its power, and the Tempter is vanquished.

May each and all of us be more than conquerors over the assaults that beset the pilgrimage of our mortality, armed in this invincible panoply of God!

Editorial Notes

Montreal L.M.M. Luncheon.

Montreal Churchmen do not do things by halves. The luncheon provided for the visiting delegates to the meetings held in that city a couple of weeks ago was a credit to them and a great opportunity to come into touch in an informal way with the outstanding leaders of the Church. The Anglican L.M.M., under the leadership of Professor Armstrong, was responsible for the details of the luncheon and Sir Melbourne Tait, who presided, was an admirable chairman. Those who were privileged to attend will not soon forget the addresses by the Primate and Dr. Cody.

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The Indian Problem.

The poor red man has from the day that the pale face took possession of the northern part of this continent, been one of the greatest problems that the latter has had to face. A child of nature, living largely on the flesh of wild animals and clothing himself in their skins, he soon found himself deprived of both and compelled to look elsewhere for them. Fortunately for him, the Government was not slow to recognize its responsibility and an honest, if not altogether successful, effort was made to shoulder it. Land and money were given, but land and money never yet produced character, even in white men. The Church also recognized its responsibility and noble men have spent their lives in an effort to lift the red man up to a higher plane. In the course of time a union of efforts took place, on the part of Church and State, until to-day it is fairly generally recognized that the ultimate solution is to be found along these lines, the Government caring more particularly for their temporal and the Church for their spiritual welfare.

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The Church and the Indian.

We cannot enter into details here regarding the work of the Church among the Indians in the past. Suffice it to say that up to the present the greater part of this work has been supported by English Societies, mainly the Church Missionary Society. In recent years the Woman's Auxiliary in Canada has given increasing assistance but little has been done through our main Missionary organization, the M.S.C.C. However, the Church Missionary Society believes that the day has come when this work should be handed over to the Canadian Church and the latter, through the M.S.C.C., is at present considering ways and means whereby this work can be done. Committees have been at work for some time and considerable information was presented to the M.S.C.C. Board at its recent meeting in Montreal. It was hoped by some that steps would have been taken at once to provide greater financial assistance but the matter has been delayed for another year. In the meantime, a committee, to be chosen by the Primate, will visit the various dioceses where Indian work exists for purposes of investigation. It is useless to deny the fact that a great deal of misconception exists regarding the value of this work and our duty towards it. To undertake it without clearing away these misconceptions would be to court failure, and we are in hearty accord with any honest effort to secure the utmost possible information and to pass it on to the members of the Church as a whole.

The latter, however, must be done and well done, if the investigation is to be of any real and permanent value.

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Sunday School Lesson Schemes.

For many years past the basis of the scheme of Bible lessons used in the vast majority of Sunday Schools in Canada and the United States has been that known as the International Lesson scheme prepared by a committee representing both countries. At the present time the International Committee has as a matter of fact two schemes, one a Uniform Scheme in which the same lesson is used throughout the school, and the other a Graded Scheme, in which different subjects and different portions of Scripture are used in the different grades. The former scheme has not, however, been found altogether satisfactory, and in the effort to find a solution of the difficulty it is to be replaced, beginning with January, 1918, by a new scheme, known as the Graded Uniform Scheme. The uniformity will consist in having the same theme treated in all grades but a different portion of Scripture will be used in many cases as the subject matter for the lesson.

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The Church and the S.S. Scheme.

The Church of England in Canada for some time past has been following to a great extent the Uniform Scheme of Bible Lessons drawn up by the International Lesson Committee. It has always endeavoured to adapt this scheme to the Church year, and in order to provide for instruction in the Prayer Book adopted a double scheme, whereby both Bible and Prayer Book lessons were taught, or, in many cases we fear, supposed to be taught, each Sunday. Dissatisfaction was expressed with this plan and the matter came up for discussion at the meeting of the General Synod in September, 1915. The outcome was that a questionnaire was sent out to enquire whether a double or a single lesson scheme was desired. The replies received were overwhelmingly in favour of the latter and the problem had then to be faced of drawing up a scheme that would make provision for both Bible and Prayer Book instruction. The additional problem of relating this, if possible, to the Scheme of the International Committee had to be faced. However, the decision of the latter to adopt, as stated above, a graded uniform scheme in place of the present uniform scheme of lessons, made it practically impossible to follow them, and at the same time follow the wishes of the majority in the Church in Canada. The result is that at the recent meeting of the Sunday School Commission it was decided to draw up a scheme of Bible lessons independently of the International Committee, the new scheme to come into effect in Advent, 1917. What the result of this step will be it is impossible at present to estimate. We realize the difficult nature of the situation facing the S.S. Commission while at the same time regretting the apparent necessity of the step taken. The problem of providing suitable and sufficient material for both teachers and students is no small one, and the loss of the help at present obtained from such publications as the Sunday School Times will be a serious one. However, we do not believe that the scheme outlined by the International Committee, as we understand it, is a feasible one, and the task laid upon the Church of producing its own helps will possibly be a blessing in disguise.

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