

## The Christian Year Service in the Kingdom

SEPTUAGESIMA.

SEPTUAGESIMA is the commencement of the penumbra of Lent. We begin to look forward to the personal application of those lessons which the Epiphany manifestations are designed to teach. We begin to think of what it means to take up the cross and heroically bear it after Jesus. O Lord, we beseech Thee favourably to hear our prayers, and, of Thy great mercy, spare us the just punishment due to our sins.

### THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM.

The Gospel for to-day contains another parable of the Kingdom. These parables are meant to illustrate the method of the Kingdom of Christ, and to reveal the ethics of the will of God among men. DR. ZANE BATTON, in one of his addresses before the Christian Men's Federation during the week beginning January 19th, described the Kingdom of God as something to be entirely distinguished from the Church of Christ. It is something, said he, much larger and more comprehensive than the Church, which, by inference, conveyed the impression that, to the speaker, the Church was narrow, stupid, and antiquated. The popular use of the term, "the Church," is confusing because ambiguous. Sometimes it is meant to include all Christian societies—organized Christianity; at other times it clearly connotes only the "Catholic" ideal of the Church. Let it be observed that "the Church," whether used in the narrower or wider sense, suffers more from the reproaches and unconscious aspersions of recognized religious leaders, who ought to be her best friends, and really mean to be, than from any other one source. The Kingdom of God is to include, of course, the political order, the social order, and the industrial order. But these orders cannot be spoken of as if they were separated off into airtight compartments. They are all one. There is an absolute interfusion of the political, social and industrial order, and also of the ecclesiastical order. All these orders commingle in the human aggregate—the community. The Church is over all and through all, as *Christ is in the community life*. Into the life-blood of the entire social order are being constantly infused the ideals, the ethics, the hopes and the inspirations of the Kingdom of God through the instrumentality of His Divine-Human agency, the Church; and this in proportion as people of all degrees are associated in the unity of her life. In that sense the Church can properly be identified with the Kingdom of God; for no one can carry out the programme of a Christian man in worship, love and service other than in co-operation with his fellow-Christians in a visible Church society. Hence the Church—organized Christianity—includes those in all orders into whose hearts the Kingdom of God has come. But this Kingdom will only be complete when His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. To bring about this consummation is the world-wide commission of the whole Church of Christ.

### RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

The Kingdom as represented in the parable seems to uphold an injustice. It does not seem fair that a man who labours but one hour should receive as great a reward as those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. It is like the complaint of the home-keeping son against the reception of the prodigal. Incidentally, emphasis is put upon the sacred right of property, which, if once destroyed, the doors would be thrown wide open to social chaos, so that one could not call even his life his own. Our lives are not our own; they are God's. But relatively they are our own as regards our fellowman; that is, they may not be commanded or claimed by a rapacious mob any more than by an exacting autocrat. Our lives are to be given to our fellowmen in spontaneous and loving service by a recognition of duty rather than of right. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Capital has no more right to possess the life of labour than labour has to possess the life of capital. The will of the people is the final appeal; but that will must be so enlightened as to reflect the will of God, and by it consecrated to Holy Service. The rights of property, in justice and without slavery, are sacred, as is the right to life.

### THE REAL LESSON.

The parable struggles to speak in terms of God's Kingdom, the standards of which are so unlike ours. In it the first often shall be last.

The one who toils long in a spirit of self-glory or self-seeking will not have as high a place as the one who gives but a short span in the spirit of the Master. He who serves God must not, while serving, keep calculating his reward. Peter, in a mercenary moment, said, "And what shall we have, therefore?" There is no limit to Heaven's Grace. "The souls that grudge Heaven to Prodigals and Magdalens, and find no gladness in the prospect of sharing it with saints who once were the worst of sinners, must be the architects of their own narrow Heaven and pioneer their own way thither." We must learn to appreciate the joy and glory of living near to Christ here; and if that is not sufficient reward to divert our attention from those who at the eleventh hour hear the summons to service and obedience, then there is something wrong at the centre of our Christian life. "He that loseth his life, the same shall save it."

## World Citizenship

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THE chapter on Hinduism is carefully written and one of the best sections of the book. The object of the writer has been to give the salient features of this most complicated of all religious systems, and at the same time to have such regard for brevity and clearness as the purpose of the book demands. We think he has, on the whole, been successful in this. However, anyone who attempts to lead a class in a study of Hinduism will do well to read this chapter over several times, and, if possible, to read one or more of the volumes suggested at the end of the chapter.

Hinduism is an enormous and staggering problem for the Christian Churches of the British Empire. The Hindus are all within the bounds of the Empire, and number probably about 250 millions. To make disciples of a population two and one-half times as great as that of the United States of America is an appalling proposition. In spite of mass movements in India, we are at present only touching the fringe of the population, and if the Christian call to make disciples of all nations is a compelling one, and necessary both for the salvation of the individual and for the peace and order of the world, we must be up and doing—doing much more than ever we have done in the past—or it will be generations before India has even had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel.

Indian life and religion shows great variety. There is a vast deal of superstition, and correspondingly low and savage conditions of life. There is, on the other hand, much enlightenment, lofty religious ideals, and comparatively civilized and happy social conditions. In one group one will find the lowest forms of magic and fetishism; in another, the grossest polytheism; in another, a highly intellectual pantheism, and in still another a theism which is almost Christian. However, it is generally agreed that the main feature of Hindu religion is its Pantheism. The teacher will do well here to read what the author says about pantheism, and in addition to read one or more articles on the subject in such dictionaries or encyclopedias as may be to hand. Tennyson's "Christian Pantheism" might also be read as showing that some prominent thinkers of our own feel that some features of pantheism enter largely into our Christianity. This need not stagger us, as it would be strange if there were not some truth in a system espoused by so many millions of comparatively enlightened people. However, there is one outstanding point where Christianity and Hinduism part company, viz., that Christianity holds firmly to the belief that God is a personal Being with Whom we may have real fellowship and communion, while Hinduism denies this. The Hindu begins his religious thinking with the assumption that God is *One*, and that he is *All*, and the *Oneness* is treated in such a rigid way as to exclude any possibility of differences; consequently, what we take to be different things, different objects in nature—sights, sounds, colours, tastes, and even persons—are all illusion. There cannot be different persons; personality is illusion. Salvation consists in realizing this truth, in escaping from the world of illusion as soon as possible and lapsing back into the infinite ocean of the impersonal Divine from whence we came. This is a good illustration of how, when we begin with false premises, we may, by a process of logic, land ourselves in a serious denial of the most patent evidence of our senses. Christianity takes the firmer and far saner ground that the world is real and not illusory; that there are real distinctions in nature; that personality is real—real both in man and in God

—and that, therefore, we may have communion with Him; that there are distinctions, even in the Godhead, and that He is not the dead level of uniformity and absolute unity which the Hindu presupposes.

The doctrine of God is central in every religion, and when it is erroneous it is not only true that all the doctrines which cluster round it are affected by that original error, but all the life which is based and founded upon it will be coloured by it. If we could purge Indian thought of its initial error, we should purge Indian life in a large degree of its superstition and cruelty, its sin and shame.

But in spite of the fact that the Indian philosopher teaches that God is One, that He is All, and impersonal, yet India is a land of gods. Like ancient Athens, there are almost as many gods as men. Yes, this is the popular religion—not the religion of the philosophers. The man of the street demands a God with whom he may have fellowship, a God to Whom he can pray, a God Who knows his fears, anxieties, sorrows and pains, and Who can be touched with a feeling of his infirmities. Indian polytheism is a reaction from the fatalistic and cruel pantheism of her great teachers. It is the reversion of a disappointed people to a primitive but more soul-satisfying religion. A few of India's scholars recognize this and are endeavouring to purify and elevate the polytheism into a reasonable theism, but, oh, so few, as compared with the multitude of teachers of the Vedanta!

And what can Christianity do for India? To take back her intellectual leaders to the point from which they started and show them their initial error—this would be a high and noble ideal. To purge the gross or refined polytheism of the masses of its error and immorality and present to their minds the glory of one personal God—this would be a great ideal. But we have a higher calling than this, viz., to preach Jesus Christ as the supreme Revelation of a God Who is not merely *One*, not merely *Holy*, but gracious and merciful, plenteous in goodness and truth. Not merely Creator, Sustainer, King and Governor, but, better than that and high above all—Father of our spirits, yearning over us in love, not sparing us when we sin, but nevertheless patient, forbearing, forgiving, just like an ideal father, just like Jesus Christ when He was here amongst men. Would it not be a great privilege to carry or send such a message to India—a message of love from every Christian man and woman of our Empire?

This alone can give the millions of India peace within the heart, this alone can give them place as part and parcel of a great League of Nations consecrated to peace, this alone can give them a worthy part in the shaping of the destiny of mankind. Think what it would mean for our Empire and for the world if the 300 millions of India—pagans, polytheists, pantheists, Moslems—were all bright, hopeful, happy followers of Jesus Christ and all consecrated to the service of their fellowmen! Well, it will not come in a day, but we should hasten the time and bring it measurably nearer if we were all to make this the subject of more earnest prayer and of more consecrated effort.

### ARMISTICE DAY IN JERUSALEM.

"That night the troops on the Mount of Olives let off a number of star-lights and the bells all over the city rang. They were fairly going all over Jerusalem from all the little tinkles to the big boom of the Holy Sepulchre. The first event was a big service at the Holy Sepulchre. After this we set to work to prepare for a great service of thanksgiving in St. George's Cathedral. The Church Army took up the decorations. They hung festoons of flags across the courtyard and flowers across the screen in the church. I went to see the Governor and found him very keen. Eventually, there turned up the Archbishop and three Archimandrites of the Greek Church, two Bishops and one Priest of the Armenian Church, Abbot and two Priests of the Coptic Church, one Bishop and two Priests of the Syrian Church, Abbot and four Priests of the Abyssinian Church, Mufti Effendi (Moslem), Rabbi (Hebrew), mayor and municipality, judges, Zionists, and others. General Sir Arthur Mooney and staff, the Military Governor and staff, representatives of America, France and Italy and representatives of fifty-two units of the British forces.

"We fairly lifted the roof with the hymns. At the end I signalled to the Archbishop of Sinai and to the others to follow. We all processed down the aisle, followed by all the representatives. I stood outside and shook hands with them all. Then they were led off by their Kavasses with silver-knobbed sticks."—Extract of letter from Rev. J. E. Wright, author of "Round About Jerusalem."

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