

The Need of the Church

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A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

THERE is a universal consciousness throughout the Church in Canada that God is working. The Forward Movement has been a revelation. It came to a startled Church as a magnificent surprise. As a matter of fact, in many cases few believed that the financial objective would be attained, still less so nobly surpassed. The fine response to the appeals, the splendid team work, the enlistment of unknown and hitherto untried workers, the response so unexpected and sometimes incredible, the lining up and toning up of parishes and even dioceses that were never expected to respond in such measure; all these things have gone to prove that our God is able and willing to evoke newer and fuller powers for Church expansion and missionary supply than our faint hearts were willing to believe.

We stand as witnesses of the manifestation of a new era of divine working.

The financial victory represents an assurance of God's grace to do for us greater things in the higher and deeper areas of spiritual service. But God have mercy upon the Church of England in Canada to-day, if we are satisfied with this financial outburst, and rest upon our oars as if we had done something wonderful and had attained a sufficient and satisfactory standard of Church advancement.

The other day one of our leading judges, a most earnest and consecrated Churchman, was addressing a body of men in one of our city Churches. Among other things he said that we had heard a great deal during the campaign about that phrase, "going-over-the-top," a phrase he thought that was considerably misunderstood. For the Judge went on to say, that while we are thankful for all that was done in the financial movement, we must not forget that in the war when the men went over the top it meant that their work was just beginning. They went over the top simply to leap into the arena of danger and of duty, of desperate fighting, and of victorious advance. It was *after* they went over the top that they came to grips with the real work of war. The real work then began. And so, he said, the supreme question of the Church at the present moment is the using and inspiring the forces in the great work of winning men to Christ and His Church. The Judge was right.

As a matter of fact, the high and difficult work that lies before us is that of utilizing these forces of service and of intercession that were so unexpectedly revealed, and to train and put to work the new enlistments of Church workers, not for some unique and extra spurts of extraordinary Church enterprise, but for the commonplace of routine Christian service, Church attendance; family prayer, visiting and winning the indifferent and Churchless, and the greatest of all vocations, the work of prayer.

Strike while the iron is hot.

Perhaps the most effective form of service and the most accessible to all, is that quiet, unobtrusive work of personal and domestic intercession. Who can doubt that the extraordinary accomplishments of the preliminary Forward Movement were owing, in a large measure, to that great number of unknown intercessors and the effect of their continuous and united intercession work. The Church has realized this, and the Continuation Forward Movement is presently putting forth a new booklet of prayer, corresponding to the Prayer Cycle for present and more permanent use, in order that the Churchmen of Canada may individually and collectively, exercise this marvellous power of God for the awakening and inbringing of souls. Who can tell? It may be that one of the most far reaching things that the Church in Canada ever did was to evoke and educate a growing body of Churchmen, young and old, strong and weak, who through the unity and association of the daily intercessional act touched the secret forces of

God and brought down blessings far and above all that men could ask or think.

At the same time, we Churchmen ought to remember, as a distinguished modern writer has said, that the issue of aids to prayer, however, numerous, and of incentives, however, excellent, does not, thereby, create a body of praying men and women. The free distribution of musical instruments does not create a body of musicians, nor will the free circulation of these prayer manuals to the extent of one hundred or one hundred and twenty-five thousand throughout our Church in Canada create effectual intercessors. They are only, after all, helps to those who desire to intercede, and they are to be sent forth only as guides to a movement of united, and continued intercession, in the hope that the sustained and concerted effort by individuals and groups in prayer services will make for enlargement and triumph. We understand also that later on when the Canadian Bishops have returned from Lambeth arrangements will be made for a wider spiritual effort, of which the very basis and body will be collective and continued prayer. But would it not be possible, even though it is so late, for Churchmen throughout Canada to have at once a *ten day prayer movement from Ascension to Whitsunday*, with even two or three gathered together in each parish at some hour in accordance with the promise of Matthew 18: 19-20, to pray for a great spiritual quickening, and thank God, for the great things that He has already done.

Now, as to service. Never were the advantages perhaps more favourable than now for impressing upon the men and women who worked in this campaign the further duty of visiting the parish for Church help purposes, and pushing forward the spiritual side of this forward Church work. Every organization in the parish, whatever it is, should be utilized. The St. Andrew's Brotherhood, if it has died should be revived, for no finer means of utilizing the laity could be found. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," might well be applied to it, and to other methods that have probably failed for lack of faith, and prayer, and love, and hope. Every branch of the W. A. should be quickened with new spiritual zeal and fervency of prayer and love. The laity too should do all in their power to encourage and strengthen the hearts of the clergy. Kind words can never die. Kind hearts can cheer and revive, and there is such an enormous work to be done when we think of the vast body of the untouched outsiders and the vast body of the indifferent insiders, that every stimulus of hope and cheer should be used to the utmost.

Above all, the clergy, the men who bear the burden and heat of the day, who do the planning and thinking and organizing, and the drudgery of sacrifice and patience, themselves being revived by the Spirit of God and infilled with a new love for souls, should grasp with peculiar joy this marvellous opportunity (1 Cor. 16: 9), and press through this open door in the conviction that to-day is a day of the visitation of the Spirit of God, and that if we, His messengers and stewards, are only faithful, we can successfully meet this unique crisis for the expansion and establishment of the Kingdom of God. We need more faith. Our God is able and in Him we are able. The coward heart within us ever sees the Amalekites and the children of Anak and cries, we are not able to go up! But the Caleb spirit strong in faith and giving God the glory, ever answers, let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome. (Numbers 13: 28-33.)

It is a melancholy fact that the religion of many persons is not constantly operative, but is manifested periodically, or at some particular times. It is assumed, for instance, on the Sabbath, but is laid aside on the shelf during the week days; but true holiness, be it remembered, is not a thing to be worn for occasions; to be put off or put on, with an easy accommodation to circumstances or to one's private convenience. It takes too deep root in the heart to be so easily disposed of as such a course would imply. It is meat, with which we are fed; clothing, with which we are clothed; the interior and permanent principle of life, which animates and sustains the whole man.—T. C. UPHAM.

The Bible Lesson

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Subject: The Day of Pentecost, Acts 2: 1-11.

1. The Day of Pentecost. This was the second of the three great festivals of the Jews. It came between the feast of the Passover and the feast of Tabernacles. It marked the close of the wheat harvest, and one of its features was the offering of two loaves made from the new wheat. This dedication of the first-fruits was a fitting symbol of the consecration of these first Christians to their great task of bringing to the world the bread of life.

2. With one accord in one place. It is a beautiful description of the unity and obedience of the early Church. They had been directed to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit and they were found all together in the upper room when that gift was given. It was their accustomed place of meeting. It was probably the same room in which they had elected Matthias to take the place of Judas and, perhaps, the same room in which the Risen Lord had appeared to some of them. It was a sacred place for them. In that sanctuary of prayer and fellowship they received the Gift which the Lord had promised.

3. The outward signs. There was a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, although it is not indicated that any wind was blowing. Tongues like as if fire parting asunder, appeared unto them and it sat upon each of them. These were the outward signs. They were symbolic of movement, power, enlightenment, light-giving, and withal, the mystery of their appearing indicated that they came from God. To these outward signs was added another, the speaking with new tongues with which those Christians were endowed.

4. The Gift. The Holy Spirit was given. This was the essential fact of Pentecost. They were Spirit-filled men from that time, prepared by this Divine Indwelling to do the work for which they had been chosen. This Day of Pentecost is frequently spoken of as the Birthday of the Church. I don't know that such is quite an accurate estimate of what took place. The Church was born when Jesus began to gather men about Him and forward them into the Community of His Fellowship. It was, however, the Baptism of the Church and the giving to it of the Divine Seal of the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is true that the Holy Spirit had been with these men prior to this time in the general guidance of their lives and in the conviction of the truth which each had received. We do not think of the Creation, or of human life, as apart from the Holy Spirit. His divine work of order and of life has been always present in the works of God's Creation. Pentecost brought to the Christians of Jerusalem a New Manifestation of the Holy Spirit. He came then in His indwelling power to Christian lives and in convicting power to the world at large. Wherever the disciples preached the Gospel there the Holy Spirit gave to them His Divine assistance in their heart and in their utterance. He also brought to bear upon their hearers the conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment.

5. The effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was immediately perceived. On the disciples themselves the result was a consciousness of spiritual power and an utterance at once miraculous and convincing. On the multitude the effect was no less great. They were amazed at the way in which the wonderful works of God were declared to them. Three thousand persons were immediately added to the Church.

6. Practical Lessons. (1) We may have the gift of the Holy Spirit. (2) His presence is necessary for doing good work for God in the world. (3) His work in us is in the following order (a) Convicting, (b) Indwelling. (4) Jesus taught us to pray for His presence—ask and ye shall have.