

Christian Messenger.

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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

IS THERE ANY HOLY GHOST?

All who believe in the Divine Threeness as revealed in the inspired Scriptures, and believe also in certain related doctrines which are more especially prominent in the system of salvation by grace, make large account of the Holy Ghost as one essential element in the Divine personality. To that One of the Triune existence the personal pronouns are applied in Scripture as distinctively as to either of the others; to Him are ascribed the same attributes and perfections; to Him is rendered the same worship. He is represented as participating in the creation and government of the world, and especially as performing an important part in the salvation of the Divinely chosen and redeemed. His prerogatives have been recognized by the spiritual church in all her centuries and in all lands, and dependence on His agency has been acknowledged in all creeds otherwise evangelical. Ecclesiastical history is especially clear and definite in the exposition of upward and downward tendencies in both orthodoxy and morals just in proportion as there has been a firm adherence to this idea, or a disposition to let it drop out of the creed as unimportant. More error has crept into the churches through lax guardianship at this point than through any other opening. Corruptions of both theology and morals have damaged Christianity especially through neglect of the Scripture doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and it has ever been more difficult to effectuate reformations, theoretical and practical in this particular than in any other. At all periods, in all places, it has been easier to bring errorists back to a reception of correct views of Christ's character and vicarious work than to a recognition of the offices and executive service of the quickening, converting, sanctifying Spirit. Justification by faith, as taught by Paul and afterwards by Luther as the article of a standing or falling church, has never met with the stubborn resistance which has opposed the teaching of both Paul and Calvin with respect to regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit. Arminianism in its varied forms has wrought untold mischief in theology by its representations of the Spirit's work in man's recovery, not as sovereign and supreme, but rather as auxiliary and co-operative—one of the great family of powers in which the human will is co-ordinate with the Holy Ghost. No theories are so repugnant to human nature as the totality of man's ruin and helplessness, and his consequent dependence upon the almighty agency of a Divine power as indispensable to his resurrection from death and sin. This is the *locus vexatissimus* especially hated in modern orthodoxy, and the object of all opposing systems is to extrude it from creeds and pulpits and religious literature. This eliminated, other truths easily go the same way, until all that distinguishes Christianity is gone. Ignore the Holy Ghost, and what to the world is the benefit of Christ's mediation?

From those who were never convinced by that Divine Agent of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, we expect nothing better than a studied exclusion from their creed and teaching of this truth, so radical and indispensable in the practical working of Christianity. They have no experience that is traceable to this Agency; they are what they are as the products of other agencies; they know nothing of any Gospel truth "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" their faith stands in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God. But of those who profess to be the subjects of experimental religion, we have a right to expect more than a theoretic recognition of the existence and admission of Him who came to supply the place of the glorified Saviour, and to execute a service apart from which none are or can be saved.—Hence we are profoundly concerned as we hear any of them speaking of Him, not as a personal agent, but as an influence, a mere emanation, and especially when we see them depending for converting efficacy more upon human than upon Divine agen-

cy; more upon certain men, certain tactics, certain expedients than upon "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; more upon contrivances to influence the will, apart from intelligent conviction of sin and dependence upon mercy, than upon the plain exhibition of Gospel truth as the instrument and the Holy Spirit as the applying force. Where the Holy Ghost is thus practically disregarded, if not theoretically ignored, where is the propriety of calling a revival "a work of the Spirit," "a work of grace," "a work of God?" What is the probability in such cases that the counted and reported converts will prove to be anything better than imitations. If He is not honored by the co-operators in such a process, how far will He honor them in the character of their products! Will He take the converts at their hands as incipient Christians and carry forward a work thus begun to completeness of Christian character?—Time will reveal.

The disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus confessed, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." They were simply ignorant of a fact, and needed instruction. Being right in heart, they were ready recipients of the truth when explained, and "the Holy Ghost came upon them" in a way that proved them to be genuine converts. Ignorance of a particular theological truth may not disprove the reality of a spiritual experience. Those disciples did not dishonor a known truth. They acted up to the full measure of their faith, and needed only more illumination. But how about such as know that there is a Holy Ghost, and yet practically set Him out of account?

We remember, as do many others, an occasion when, in a deliberative Convention called to consider grave questions relating to methods for the multiplication and increased efficiency of a denominational ministry; the discussion turned so much upon human devices and endeavours as to painfully affect the mind of the late President Wayland, and bring him to his feet with the startling inquiry, "My brethren, in relation to this matter, is there no Holy Ghost?" A sudden thrill, went through the audience, and was the more intensified as he proceeded with great solemnity to give the New Testament view of the Divine supremacy and methods in selecting, calling and qualifying Gospel ministers. So, as we attend what are often called revival services, and observe what is said and done, we sometimes wish for some one, taught in the ways of God, to interpose the question, "Brethren, in the conversion of sinners, is there no Holy Ghost?" We recollect one occasion when a man of years and experience did make an address which we thought eminently scriptural, setting forth the Holy Spirit as the only quickener of the spiritually dead, and afterwards heard it said, "That old fogey killed the revival!" Whose revival, then, was it? Is any Gospel truth fatal to the Spirit's work?—W. & R.

A MODERN INSTITUTION, IN ANCIENT DRESS.

"It came to pass in the village of Bulwer, in the Province of Quebec, in the first month of the year 1869 after the birth of Jesus Christ, that George the son of Simon, said unto Isaac and George, the sons of Joseph, and to James and the rest of his brethren,—Behold the priests of the tribe of Wesley do willingly instruct us out of the law of the Lord on the Sabbath-days, and we have not requited them according to their labor. Go to now, let us make a feast for them, and go ourselves unto the feast, and let us eat and drink with them. And let us bid our brethren, and their wives, and their little ones, of all the tribes that are here in Bulwer, to the feast. Then they willingly agreed together to make the feast, but they said one to another, Who will prepare the feast for us? Then George, the son of Simon, said, I will even ask the principal women round about, and our wives will help them if they consent. Then George, the son of Simon, spoke unto one of the principal women in the presence of her husband, Wilt thou bake cakes for the feast? And she said, Behold I will bake

cakes that will suffice for twenty persons to eat. Then eight of the principal women, said, We have flour of wheat, and butter of kine, and sugar, and sweet spices of the merchant, and dried grapes, and currants, and we will even provide enough that the house may be filled with guests. Then the ninth day of the second month of the same year, they came together to the feast; and they said, Let us every one give to the door-keeper a piece of money for the priests, because they have no inheritance of houses or lands, that they may have garments, and gear, and flesh for themselves and for their households. And when they had reckoned and found the sum of the money, behold it was sixty shekels of silver; and they delivered the money into the hands of the priests. And behold there were some there present of the tribe of the Congregationalists, and of the tribe of the Baptists; and a priest of the tribe of the Baptists was there, for his brethren of the tribe of Wesley had said unto him, Come with us to the feast; and he came and did eat and drink with them, and spake kindly unto them. And though there were so many that the house was filled, they did all eat and drink, and were satisfied, and left.—Then William the son of John, the chief of the Council, said unto the singers, Sing, I pray you, some of the songs of Zion: then they sang and made melody. Then said he unto the priests, one by one, Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the people, that which may profit them; and they did so.—And because the priests spake much, and the singers sang many sweet songs, they abode together until the tenth hour of the night. Then the chief priest lifted up his hands and blessed the people, and they departed, merry and joyful in heart.—*Christian Guardian.*

MARRIAGE LAW REFORM.

The Question, Whether a man may marry his deceased wife's sister? has been discussed with much earnestness from time to time in Great Britain, in the press and in Parliament but the prohibition still exists. It is likely that more will be heard on the subject shortly in the new parliament. The *London Freeman* in referring to this subject says:—

Mr. T. Chambers has renewed an endeavour which was carried on with considerable vigour a few years since in order to remove an oppressive law which would have been repealed long since but for the "privilege of sanctuary." The right of a man to marry the sister of his deceased wife is wholly denied and forbidden in only one civilized country in the world, and it would be speedily conceded here if it did not belong to the region of ecclesiastical reforms. The House of Commons has several times declared in its favour, but the judgment of the "Upper House" has set aside the decision of the Lower. The Tory Peers have a traditional fondness for all kinds of restrictive laws and abuses, but their darling of darlings is an ecclesiastical monopoly—something that "muzzles the Dissenters" and puts disability or degradation upon those who have dared to think for themselves and to be keepers of their own consciences.—To a Tory peer a proposed ecclesiastical reform is like a red rag to an irreful Spanish bull, and it mars his Belgrayian bliss as effectually as the sight of Mordecai spoils the sunshine of Haman's prosperity. Hence the House of Lords has uniformly rejected the bill for legalizing marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Jews, Nonconformists, Roman Catholics, and some bishops of the English Church hold that such marriages are not contrary to Scripture—the experience of other countries proves that they are not hostile to domestic purity; a Royal Commission has declared in their favour; but despite all this the House of Lords looks upon the oppressive law which forbids them as a "Church" question, and therefore persistently gives it the privilege of sanctuary. The history of the last fifty years teaches us how this opposition to the removal of a social wrong is to be overcome. The people must press on their own

House to keep on sending the matter up to the Lords until sooner or later their Lordships will do as they have done before, concede the oft-denied right in a way very suggestive of one who in olden times said—"Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

We do not forget that many people conscientiously believe that these marriages are forbidden by the Old Testament Scriptures. But there is no desire for an Act of Parliament which shall interfere with their freedom and force them to act against their consciences. Mr. Chambers' bill is not for the purpose of compelling every man to marry his dead wife's sister. Those who think that such matches are not scriptural, or seemly, or expedient will still be at perfect liberty to loathe them with all their hearts and abstain from them with all their strength, while those who with equal consciousness believe that they are in accordance with Scripture, morality, and common sense, will be equally at liberty to carry out their convictions. Around a solitary and somewhat obscure passage of Scripture much controversy gathers. Able divines say it means this and other able divines say it means that. Is it not a case in which each one must be left free to form his own conclusions and act as he deems best?—What right has one portion of the community to take its disputed interpretation as infallible, and then bind it by an Act of Parliament on the consciences and practice of another portion of the community?

The majority of our readers will have no personal interest in the just settlement of this question. We would submit that they must not therefore be indifferent about it. It presses sorely upon many people, and we must remember those who are in bonds as being ourselves bound with them. We are not revealing any secret, and we trust we are not violating any delicacy when we say that one of the most gifted preachers of this generation has been driven from his country by the cruel action of this oppressive statute. Its repeal will not only be a relief to many who directly suffer from it, but it will also be another victory for religious freedom, and another instalment of religious equality.

In the absence of any law on the subject in the British Dependencies the decisions given in Great Britain are regarded as law, so that any alteration of these restrictions there will operate here. This is therefore a matter in which Nova Scotia is as much concerned as England.

A DISSATISFIED PARISHIONER.

We once knew a man who said to his pastor; "I am going to another church after this."

"Ah, and why so?" asked the minister.

"Well, if you don't get your shoes made at my shop, I won't get my preaching done at yours."

So he went off, but the following incident, which we find in the *Nation* newspaper, rather leaves our dissatisfied shoemaker in the shade.

A young clergyman had just buried his young wife. In the early freshness of his grief he was waited upon by one of the deacons, who announced that brother Smith had left his church and gone over to the Methodists, and brother Smith says that you—his own minister—hurt his feelings so that he can't get over it. The tender shepherd was touched by this imputation, and eager to atone to the aggrieved sheep for any unintentional wrong he might have done him.

"So he took up his little crook, Determined to find him."

which he did, sulking over some job of his trade of house carpentry.

After an expenditure of much affectionate entreaty and skilful cross-questioning, the minister elicited the following:

"Well, the fact is, I knew there wasn't much chance of your wife's getting well, so I went to work two or three weeks before she died, so as to have it all ready, and