

The Higher Life.

“HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST?”

BY THE REV. W. S. BLACKSTOCK.

THE story of those Ephesian disciples to whom this question was proposed is at once interesting and instructive. It shows that then, as now, the truth had found its way into places where the voice of the Christian preacher had not been heard. From whom these people learned what they knew of Christianity we know not, but that they had not learned it from any of the apostles or any of their co-labourers is evident. If an apostle or any, who had been specially trained and commissioned by the apostles had preached the Gospel to them, they would have been more perfectly instructed. And yet, without the ministry of such, they had learned enough of Christ to induce them to accept Him as the Messiah and to become His disciples. They had not only taken their place at His feet as learners, but, as the word imports, they had submitted themselves to His discipline and government. They were members of the Kingdom of God, subjects of the Mediatorial King.

And yet these people belonged to an inferior stage in the development of the Kingdom of God, they had not yet attained to the full enjoyment of the privileges of the new dispensation, the dispensation of the Gospel, which is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Spirit was unknown to them. They had not so much as heard that there was any Holy Spirit, or, as it is in the Revised Version, dropping out the italicised word which the revisionists have supplied, but the equivalent of which is not in the Greek text, “We have not so much as heard that the Holy Ghost was.” Evidently, so far as they were concerned, the evolution of the doctrine of the Trinity was not complete. They knew the Father and the Son, but the fact of the Holy Spirit being one of the persons of the Godhead, co-essential with these, was a truth which had not yet been apprehended by them. They had passed beyond the Jewish dispensation, but they had not reached the Christian; they were yet in the compound intermediate dispensation of John; and their apprehension of the truth rose no higher than that stage of development.

And as their knowledge was defective so was their experience.