

THE CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 5648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

POWER FROM ON HIGH.

BEFORE this reaches the readers of the INDEPENDENT, the "Week of Prayer" for 1880 will be well nigh over, though its influence upon us will, we hope, have only just begun. Such an observance ought to be to all the churches of Christ "the beginning of days." It has been placed at the commencement of the year, rather than at Lent, at which season Dr. Bacon suggests it should be observed, that it may bring with it a divine inspiration, and may permanently raise and sustain the tone of the general church life throughout the year. Without that result we doubt if it does not actually do harm instead of good. A week of prayer, *without prayer* in any true sense of the word, is an anomaly, an abortion, a reproach. Of such sacrifices the God of Israel has said "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." Humble, believing prayer, on the other hand, is as the incense of the evening sacrifice. And in respect of the effect of such services upon ourselves, we may say as Paul said of religious teaching and observances generally "The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life."

What, then, shall be the effect of the week of prayer on us for 1880? Shall it be a mere *spurt* of religious feeling, a momentary *effervescence* to be followed by a corresponding flatness and indifference? It will probably, as in past years, be the occasion of some "revivals," and additions to the churches. A few drops of heavenly blessing will doubtless fall upon the parched land—perhaps even a shower that shall water the earth. But far more needed, as it appears to us, is the increase of general religious vitality in the Church of God. That is *true* revival. We need to pray more that we may feel how much more there is to pray for, and so go on to "pray without ceasing," to continue "instant in prayer," for it all centres here. As a Christian pastor, the writer is impressed more deeply than ever with the fact, and that it is a fact, that what we want, and must have, if we are to do God's work well this year, is the power from on high. The great Sower did not go forth Himself to sow until He had been baptized of the Holy Ghost, and, for the same reason, He forbade His disciples to leave Jerusalem until they had been endued with that power. And can *we* do without it? Very much is said about raising the standard of ministerial ability and attainments—of the need of a higher style of pulpit ministrations, and of something to suit the literary tastes, and cope with the keen criticism of the age in which we live. No doubt. The Lord send His people the best "brain and brawn" in the land for our colleges and pulpits! But our great want is not "excellency of speech and of wisdom," not even the clearer and fuller setting forth of the gospel which is God's wisdom and power, but the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. We have prophesied long enough to the "dry bones;" now let us prophesy to the Breath, that it may breathe upon them, and they shall live. We have honoured the Word, have we sufficiently honoured the Divine Spirit, by Whom alone even that Word can be made effectual?

GENEVA, CANTERBURY, OR —

FOR some time past the readers of the Toronto "Globe" have been treated to articles on Geneva v. Canterbury, with an occasional by-look to Rome. It does not seem to have entered into the minds of either party in the case that another alternative church might be quoted, *viz.*, that of Jerusalem, which though it may, as Bishop Lightfoot says, have presented "the earliest instance of a bishop," was evidently independent either of formulated creed, or

external church authority. Indeed the newspaper controversy reminds one of the Irishman to whom was referred the question whether "either" should be pronounced *e-ther* or *i-ther*, when he replied, "Its nather, but its *a-ther*."

An impartial umpire might say in *re* Geneva v. Canterbury—It is neither, but a church, or rather churches, to which no merely local name can be affixed, it is Congregational.

If the question to be settled is, What was the ascertained government of the New Testament Church? the matter should not be so very difficult. More recent and exact inquiry has not falsified the conclusions of Mosheim and Neander, who are still respectable authorities on Church History. Mosheim writes of the first century: "All the churches in those primitive times were independent bodies, none of them subject to the jurisdiction of any other. For though the churches which were founded by apostles frequently had the honour shewn them to be consulted in difficult and doubtful cases, yet they had no judicial authority, no control, no power of giving laws. On the contrary, it is clear as the noon-day that all Christian Churches had *equal rights*, and were in all respects on a footing of equality. Nor does there appear in the first century any vestige of that convocation of the churches of the same province which gave rise to councils and metropolitans." Neander with equal decision though more elaborately asserts the same, *eg.*, the condition is stated as "a sisterly system of equality in the relation of churches to each other," and the "choice by each separate church of its own presidents, presbyters, or bishops." And Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons (A.D. 150-204), in a letter to Victor of Rome, expressly disapproves of the attempt being made "to impose one form of churchly life upon all churches, declaring that nothing was needed but faith and love, and that these so far from being injured by differences in outward things, would only shine forth more clearly through their very differences."

In brief we have no authority for asserting Presbyteries and Synods in the modern acceptation of those terms to have had even the shadow of an existence during apostolic days. Nor can the gathering at Jerusalem of which the history is given, be fairly pressed into the service, for we have no evidence of a strictly representative character as endued with ecclesiastical authority, nor that any churches were represented at all save those of Antioch and Jerusalem. If, as our Presbyterian brethren in their standards maintain that God is only to be worshipped by the ordinances He has appointed, and that government in form is such an ordinance; or if, as our High Church friends assert, there is special virtue in Apostolic Succession, than neither with Episcopacy nor Presbytery rests the *jus divinum*, but with a body which though in Canada comparatively small, is yet exerting some scriptural influence on surrounding churches and is called CONGREGATIONAL.

TRUTH AND TEACHINGS.

PROFESSOR DAWSON, of Montreal, in a lecture delivered last week for the Young Men's Christian Association of Toronto, said that the supposed conflict between Science and Religion was due, not to any real opposition of the two, for there was none, but to the dogmas of the scientists on the one hand, and the dogmas of theologians on the other; the former made science responsible for their own interpretation of its teachings, and the latter fastened on the Bible, in an equally unauthorized way, their views and theories of the Divine government. These are reasonable words, and we thank Dr. Dawson for them, though others have given utterance to the same sentiments, but in this case there will be no suspicion of disloyalty to the truths either of Science or the Word of God.

We cannot get too firmly impressed on our own minds, or too emphatically teach to our young people not only that there is not, but that there cannot be, any conflict between the revelations of God—Nature and the Word; the truths which the stars, the rocks and

the rivers teach, are not in opposition to those taught to holy men of old by the Spirit of God.

We, as Protestants, take for our rallying cry that famous utterance of Chillingworth's, "The Bible, the Bible alone the religion of Protestants," but the fact is that we, after our fashion, are bound by the traditions of men; we have our Bible, it is true, open before us, free, untrammelled—thank God for that, but do we bring opinions and teachings uttered in its name to the test of its pages? Verily, no, but we receive men-made doctrines, which are given to us, honestly and sincerely enough, but erringly, and measure the truths of nature and science by them, a process which too often drives our young men into doubt and unbelief, makes shipwreck of faith and everlasting hope.

In speaking thus, we are of course referring to those points where more especially the Bible and Natural Science touch, we are not referring to the cardinal, purely Biblical truths of our faith, though even there is an accretion of human thought and teaching which appears at times as if it would completely cover and hide the Divine.

What then shall we say? More bible study, not simply Bible reading, that is good as far as it goes, but diligent, earnest, prayerful Bible study. But will not that lead to a still greater diversity of thought and opinion? Will it not multiply sects? We think not; we have a profound conviction that as men are found diligently inquiring for the truth, minor differences will vanish and they will come nearer together in faith and practice. But were it otherwise, we should still rejoice that it was a seeking for truth that had produced such effect, feeling assured that the ultimate result must be good. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

THE PEW TO THE PULPIT.

IN the "Contemporary Review" for December appear a series of letters addressed by John Ruskin, the celebrated artist and author, to the clergy of the Church of England. They were produced in reply to an invitation by the secretary of a clerical society to Mr. Ruskin to give his views and opinions on clerical work and duty, apparently, for this is not positively stated, we only gather it inferentially. The importance of these letters, coming as they do from a man of such eminence and so highly considered in the communion to which he belongs, can hardly be overrated. The Rev. F. A. Maleson, to whom they were addressed, evidently thinks that they point to important changes in the Church, for he says in his "Introduction" to the letters, "The draught may be a bitter one for some of us, but it is a salutary medicine, and we ought not to shrink from swallowing it," and again, "If we do go forward straight in the direction which Mr. Ruskin points out, I know we shall come, sooner or later, to a chasm right across our path. Some of us, I hope, will undoubtedly cross it."

What, then, it may be asked, is the purport of these letters? Put into the briefest form, we would say that they advocate practical teaching by the clergy, and something like purity of communion. Mr. Ruskin starts with asking two questions—"What is a clergyman of the Church of England?" and, giving the answer himself, supposes "that the clergy of the Church of England are teachers, not of the Gospel to England, but of the Gospel to all nations; and not of the Gospel of Luther, not of the Gospel of Augustine, but of the Gospel of Christ,—then the second question would be: Can this Gospel of Christ be put into such plain words and short terms that a plain man may understand it? and, if so, would it not be, in a quite primal sense, desirable that it should be so?" Then, in the next letter: "And might not such definition—'what the Gospel is'—acceptable to the entire body of the Church of Christ, be arrived at by merely explaining, in their completeness and life, the terms of the Lord's Prayer—the first words taught to children all over the Christian world?" Again, "My meaning in saying that the Lord's Prayer might be made a foundation of Gospel teaching, was not that it contained all that Christian ministers have to teach; but that it contains what all Christians are agreed upon as first to be taught." In subsequent letters he enlarges upon the