

# Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1876.

## WHITSUNDAY.

The Jewish feast of Pentecost commemorated the delivery of the Law on Mount Sinai, fifty days after the Passover, counting not from the Passover itself, however, but from the Sunday after, according to the direction given to the Jews for their feast of weeks, Lev. xxiii. 15, 16. And after the same interval from the true Passover, when Christ was offered for us, the Holy Ghost was given to the Christian church. The name of Pentecost is therefore still retained among us, although it has partially given way to the English Whitsunday, the derivation of which appears to be by no means a settled point. The vulgar idea that it was the same as Whitesunday, from the white garments of the newly baptized, is certainly erroneous, as Whitesunday, the "Dominica in Albis," was the first Sunday after Easter, sometimes called Low Sunday. Some make it from *Wytsonday*, i. e., Wit, or Wisdom Day in commemoration of the wondrous gifts bestowed on the Apostles. Others take it from *Huict-Sunday*, the eighth Sunday from Easter; and still another authority says it is so named from the milk which was distributed to the poor on that day for the love of God. Whatever may have been the origin of the name however, we shall ever regard it as an especial festival of the reformed church of England; it having been selected in 1549 as the day on which the new English service should be commenced.

The proper Psalms for the Day are the xlvi., lxxviii., the civ., and cxlv. The forty-eighth is a hymn in honor of Jerusalem as the chosen place of God's Worship, and has an especial reference to waiting for the loving kindness of God. The sixty-eighth contains a prophetic description of the ascension of Christ, who ascended up to the lofty seat of Jehovah and gave gifts unto men; and when the Lord gave the word great was the company of the preachers. The hundred and fourth Psalm is a hymn of praise to the Creator, and is probably selected for the day from the resemblance between the natural and the spiritual creation; and because it speaks of the renewal of the earth by the breath of God. The hundred and forty fifth Psalm recounts the attributes of God and His care over His creatures which are manifested to men by the agency of the Divine Spirit.

The first Lessons contain the Law of the Jewish Pentecost, and a prophecy of the conversion of Jews and Gentiles through the ministration of the Spirit; the Gospel relates our Lord's promise of this great gift; the second Lessons and the portion of Scripture for the Epistle relate the fulfilment of these promises.

## THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

It is not without ample reason that a great distinction is sometimes made between the privileges vouchsafed to the Church, after the day of Pentecost was fully come, and those which the Church could claim at any previous period. When our Saviour uttered the words, the greatest that had ever been born of women was John the Baptist; and yet, the least in the kingdom of Heaven, which had just then come, was greater than He. And so, in as large a proportion, were the gifts and powers, the privileges and graces, bestowed on the Church, and sent forth from the Throne of the Highest by the Son, through the agency of the Divine Spirit, as much surpassing any of the bestowments received by men from the direct agency of the Son of God Himself, while He was personally manifested on earth. And therefore they are in error who, professing to admire the incomparable beauty of the sermon on the Mount, dwell on the imperishable Christianity contained in the Lord's discourses, keeping solely to His own teaching as given in the four Gospels, and ignoring altogether the fuller expansion of the doctrines of the Atonement, the influences of the Spirit and the development of the Church's powers, as given subsequently to the day of Pentecost. The object is evidently to narrow the Christian's creed as much as possible; and the fallacy is about the most plausible in the whole range of false doctrine, which leads a man to claim to be all the better, and the more emphatically a Christian for keeping strictly and exclusively to the teaching of Christ. Just in the same way we meet with many who refuse to attend to Church order, Church means of grace, Church ordinances, because all grace comes from God through Christ, and by the agency of the Divine Spirit; and also claiming that the teaching of the Church is unnecessary, because the Bible is God's own word. This kind of talk leaves out of sight altogether, the fact that the Bible directs us to avail ourselves of the Church, and of her divinely ordained ministrations, and that the grace of God was designed by the Great Head of the Christian Church Himself, to flow forth to man in the ordinances of that Church.

And so with regard to the teaching of Christ, He Himself informed His disciples before His departure from the world, that he had many things to tell them which they could not then hear; and that He meant to tell them these things, not in person, but by the agency of another, the unseen Spirit, the Comforter, hereafter. After He had left the world, so far as His visible presence was concerned, He would still, from His invisible home, speak to men. And He led us to believe that what the Twelve should teach would be His teaching, even though it should go beyond

anything which He had actually said Himself, because he had not said to them all He intended to say. To the Twelve He said:—"He that heareth you heareth Me; he that receiveth you receiveth Me; he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent me." So that by refusing to listen to the instructions of the Twelve given after the descent of the Holy Spirit, men really refuse to attend to what Christ meant them to attend to; just in the same way as by refusing the ministrations of Christ's own ambassadors now, and the ordinances of the church as now existing and as come down to us from primitive times, we are setting ourselves against the instructions of Christ Himself, and against the authority of the one great Author of the Christian Religion.

The Lord then intended that His teaching should be completed by the Divine Spirit. "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." Our Lord gave the germs, which the Twelve, guided by the Holy Spirit, expanded into the broad doctrines of the Church for all future time. As, for instance, our Lord referred to the blood of Messiah as the blood of the New Testament which was to be shed for His disciples; and in the apostolic writings, this is expanded into the doctrine of an atonement. And again, our Lord spoke about Himself, His sinlessness. His claims on human affection, and His intention to come again as the Judge of all men. He emphatically proclaimed Himself, and declared that all men were to honor the Son even as they honor the Father. But the fuller expansion of these things was given at a subsequent period, when St. Paul declared to the Colossians that "all things were created by Him and for Him," that "He is before all things and that by Him do all things consist;" to the Romans, that He is "over all God blessed for ever;" to the Philippians that, at His human name, Jesus, men and angels and beings below should bow in reverence; and to the Hebrews that, He is "the resplendent outbeaming of the Father's glory," and the "express image of His hypostasis;" that "His throne as God should endure for ever and ever." And St. John, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, sees Him enthroned as the Lamb slain and yet glorified, while all the highest intelligences of heaven prostrate themselves before Him, and join in the new song of adoration around His Throne. The disciples could not have borne the full splendour of this truth when they listened to the Sermon on the Mount, and yet this sublime principle was the only justification of that most wonderful of all sermons. To revise the Law given from Sinai, or indeed, to approve and ratify that Law, implied that the speaker claimed to be one with Him who was the Lord of Moses. These things the disciples understood not at