

WHAT ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

THIS, too, we have proved to be, as a subject for creed belief, non-essential. But is there not a dogmatic utterance concerning this matter in the creeds of all Protestant churches, including the Methodist? Certainly there is. Then is it not necessary for a member of any of these churches to give his unqualified assent to this dogmatic statement of creed if he honestly remains in said church?

This is a bigger question than the asker, mayhap, imagines. No leading church to-day expects a blind, thoughtless subscription to every part of its creed. Just now the various heresy trials in the churches emphasize the fact of differing views on some parts of their creeds, not only by refusing to anathematize some who differ, but by the fact also that where some are condemned for this difference it is by no means by a unanimous vote. Now if differing views on these parts of the creed were not to a certain extent winked at, then those who compose the minority vote at such trials would be dealt with.

In our own church when the late Dr. Ryerson strove to change its creed concerning class meetings as a test of membership he failed to get a majority vote. But no one hinted that he and the minority at his back should step down and out because they were not slavishly loyal to that part of their churches' creed, so to-day many are considered to be in harmony with Methodism who yet are well known to be disloyal to this one of its creed forms.

Again, no one part of the creed of Methodism was more emphasized by Wesley and his earlier successors than the doctrine of holiness as taught by himself. And yet, to-day, the fact that very many, not only amongst the membership but even of the ministry either ignore this doctrine or teach at complete variance with it, is fully known to all who care to turn their attention to the matter.

Hence it would not follow that a disposition to re-examine into the dogmatic teaching concerning the birth of Jesus and hesitancy to accept a traditionary foundation for this teaching as sufficient, might not appear to some as a sufficient cause for severing their connection with the denomination, at all events until the matter should be pronounced upon with all due formality.

But why look into the subject at all? Why not let sleeping dogs lie? We answer, because this subject amongst others is used in the interest of Antinomianism. God hath called us to be preachers of righteousness, and hence whatever makes for, or condones, unrighteousness we are called on to examine minutely and publicly for the good of all.

Whilst no deliverance concerning the birth of Jesus militates necessarily against righteousness, and whilst it is true that we may not dogmatize to any who profess to walk in the Spirit as to what their belief should be concerning this subject, still it is a fact that the dogma of the immaculate conception is used largely in the interest of those who wish to condone sin, and even teach that sin is acceptable to God, and therefore may be caressed and dandled on the lap of His saints.

It is by the aid of this dogma that we are taught that we must sin in thought, word and deed continually, in some churches, and in others that it is impossible so to live and please God as not to be under the necessity of making constant confession of sin to Him.

The teachings of Christ calls on us to do the will of God as it is done in Heaven, or as Jesus did it upon earth, but this teaching declares all this to be impossible, and tries thereby to nullify and destroy the teaching of Christ Jesus. This we give as our ample excuse for opening this subject and dwelling upon it even exhaustively.

But is the doctrine of the immaculate conception true or false, one asks? Now