

# Provincial Celestian.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1868.

## Separate Schools.

We have on different occasions expressed our views in relation to the existing Educational system in Nova Scotia, as being ill adapted, if worked out as it ought to be, to afford the benefit of free Education to every child and youth of our Province. The School Law, as it stands on our Statute Book, is the result of the experience of the best Educationists in our own and other countries; and in framing it the ablest minds among us, of every shade of religious and political opinion, gave to it the most careful attention, so as to render it as nearly perfect as possible. It may, as time elapses, require modifications in some immaterial respects; but as it is, it challenges the admiration of those abroad competent to form an opinion of its merits, while it will bear comparison with the best School Laws of countries famed for their Educational privileges. What we have to do is to work the system that afforded us to the best advantage possible. If it presses us hard, by the taxation it imposes for the erection of school buildings and the support of teachers, let us bear this patiently, remembering that succeeding generations are thereby to be benefited. Let our aim be directed to uphold, and generously sustain our Higher Schools and Colleges, so that they may afford us a supply of well educated, liberal, and useful citizens. It is too soon to expect much fruit from our newly introduced School system, yet already are its benefits apparent; and as the public mind becomes more awakened to the necessity of having first class schools, and as the teachers become better qualified for their important work, and their services better appreciated, we may hope to see Nova Scotia occupying a proud position in regard to the great question of educating her youth. We very deeply regret that our Legislature has interfered with the beneficial operation of the Common School system, by an attempt to introduce an amendment that would separate or denominational Schools; to be supported on the principle of the existing statute by general taxation. The measure introduced, and which was postponed until the next Session, would admit of a minority in any school section, or a combination of minorities in adjoining sections, with the consent of the Commissioners and of the Council of Public Instruction, to establish a distinct School. The design of this amendment is to allow the establishment of common schools under ecclesiastical control, in which denominational tenets shall be taught, and yet be supported by general taxation. It is objected to our present School system, that it is "godless." This we cannot admit. As regards religious teaching it is every common school system ought to be. It provides that the instructors given in our Schools shall be based on sound moral principles, embracing lessons from the Holy Scriptures, without at all encroaching on the domain of sectarian opinions, or infringing upon religious liberty. Our School Law as it now stands allows of moral and religious instruction by the teacher, to the utmost that any common school teacher ought to be permitted to do; while the School Trustees are left at liberty to make such arrangements as they may deem desirable, bearing in mind the spirit of the law. The Schools accordingly may be opened under the direction of the Trustees, by Scripture reading and prayer; but so jealously religious freedom is protected, where such opening exercises are authorized, the attendance of those children whose parents or guardians object thereto is not compulsory during such opening religious services. By this arrangement every reasonable demand is met. There is no kind of denominational views, and yet to allow more than this in the way of religious instruction in our common schools would be to afford State support for the inculcation of sectarian principles; while, on the other hand, to oblige School Trustees, contrary to their religious convictions, to ignore the Book of God and other recognition of Christianity and of religious obligation, would be unworthy of the age and of the country in which it is our happiness to live. Several modes of combining the secular and religious instruction in our common Schools have sometimes been recommended; but to every one of these, except the plan admissible by our present School Law, grave objections may be urged. We have the strongest conviction that school instruction should be based on sound religious principles. We are also alive to the great importance of giving to youth a thorough religious training. But our persuasion is, by the public mind, that the kind and amount of religious teaching which every young person should certainly receive. This important part of Christian education can be best discharged by Christian parents, Christian ministers, Sabbath school teachers, or by such other methods as the churches may severally choose to adopt. In our judgment the introduction of our common schools of any amount of religious instruction beyond what is available under our existing School Law would be injurious to the existing system, and would be a retrograde step in the educational interests of the Province; and such an enactment as one that would assuredly have a most injurious bearing upon our present school system. It would defeat the intention of the present law, it would break up many existing schools or standing in their efficiency and grandeur. It would establish two or more schools in sections not able to support more than one good school. It would sow broadcast sectarian animosities, and distract communities. It would afford opportunity for factions and division which should be harmony and peace. It would give the separate for any denomination to acquire for a separate school, no matter how small, a minority such denomination might be in a school district; and it would oblige persons to submit to taxation for the support of views regarded by them as heretical. There is reason to believe, that in some instances in our Province, School Commissioners have winked at the introduction of denominational teaching in the common schools. This is all wrong, and we hope will not long be tolerated. Some of the schools in this city were formerly arranged by the adoption of previously existing schools, some discretionary power may have been allowed the Commissioners in

## The Watchnight.

In a few days more, the last evening of the year will have come, and in many of our churches will be held "the Watchnight." A few words concerning the interesting public religious service which this name is applied, will not be unseasonable. The origin of watchnights among the Methodists appears to have been at Kingswood, near Bristol, England, not later than the winter of 1741-2. They had neither Mr. Wesley nor any other minister for their founder. It would seem they arose from the fervent piety of the Methodist people. Mr. Wesley's first connection with the watchnight is thus mentioned by him, "I was informed that several persons at Kingswood frequently met together at the school, and when they could spare time spent the greater part of the night in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving." The first watchnight that Mr. Wesley held was on April 9, 1742, in London. The Friday night nearest the full moon was chosen, that they might come from a distance might have light on returning to their several homes. In the days the service began at half-past eight, and continued until a little after midnight. There was usually a sermon preached, which was followed by exhortations, and prayers, wherein the society took an active, and even a principal part. A peculiar blessing was often found at those seasons. Generally there was a deep awe upon the congregation, owing doubtless, in part, to the silence of the night. The service was commonly concluded with singing the 54th hymn in the book now used by the connection. Hearken to the solemn voice! The awful midnight cry! Waiting souls rejoice, rejoice! And see the Bridegroom nigh! Happy he who Christ shall find! Waiting to see his come! Him who shall bear triumphant home. For a considerable time the watchnight was held monthly in a few places, which were the chief centres of Methodist activity. There were some persons who advised that this service should not be allowed. These objectors put Mr. Wesley upon weighing the matter thoroughly, and comparing it with the practice of the ancient Christians. He not only saw no cause why he should forbid it, but he believed rather that the service might be made of more general use. Whether the benefit of watchnights towards saving souls arose from the novelty, or the peculiarity of the thing, especially the bearing about the coming Saviour in all his glory in the awful stillness of the midnight hour, it was clearly observed that the impression then made on many souls was never subsequently effaced. For how many years was the monthly watchnight held in most of our churches, and it is not material to do so, neither does it appear in what year the custom was introduced, which gradually became general. Of holding a watchnight on the last evening of the year. It is believed that the earliest record of such an occasion in Mr. Wesley's published journal was in 1762. He was then also in London, but a watchnight at the close of the year had been customary before. His words are: "Thur. 31. We concluded the year as usual with solemn prayer and praise, and thanksgiving. In the same manner, blessing and praising God." Two other notices of similar services will in this day be read with much pleasure. This distinguished servant of God was in Bath in the last days of 1778. He wrote shortly afterwards, "We concluded the old year and began the new with blessing and thanksgiving. Four or five of the local preachers assisted me. I was agreeably surprised, their manner of praying was so serious and laborious, and their words were so full of sense and expression." At the end of 1779 Mr. Wesley was again in London. His account for the last service for that year is in these words, "Thur. 31. We concluded the old year with a solemn watchnight, and began the new with praise and thanksgiving. We had a violent storm at night. The roaring of the wind was like loud thunder. I kept me awake half-an-hour. I then slept in peace." His last watchnight was held where the first had been, in Kingswood, on October 1, 1789. He was then eighty six years of age, a marvel of neatness in his apparel, his face was as fair as a child's—his spirit pure and benevolent. He had very long white hair, his voice was very soft and beautiful. It is therefore not to be wondered at that he should say, "most of the people stayed till the end." The historians of Methodism have carefully preserved for the coming generations the salutary influence of the watchnight on the piety and the progress of the Connection. It is now rarely if ever held, except at the end of the year. If it is necessary, and as useful in these days as in the past. Recently it has been adopted by other churches. The Rev. Newman Hall holds a watchnight in the celebrated Surrey Chapel at the close of each year. It is very numerous attended, and it is most impressively conducted. In some of the sanctuaries of the Church of England the watchnight has been introduced both at home and in the colonies. In these facts we rejoice to read a public endorsement of those special means of doing good to the souls of men, by the pious, active, honored ministers of other denominations. Their success is ours. We wish them good luck in the name of the Lord. Certainly in one respect Thursday the last day of the present year will be favourable for the usual watch meetings. The moon will be full two days previously. On the 31st she will rise at about 7.30, and of course there will be excellent light until morning. This will conduce to a large attendance, and that may be

the precursor of an abundant and abiding blessing to the people. To those who are not very familiar with the manner of proceeding on our circuits of average area, and that proceed ordinary facilities for assembling the people, it may be said the minister will proceed in some such way as this (although every superintendent will have his own modification and improvement on the sketch here given): In those circuits on which there is any room for selection, he will early choose the church, in which the watchnight will be held, and of this, intimation will be generally made without delay. The hour of commencement is varied, according to the number of persons expected to assist. Long services are found not the most profitable. Many watchnights are begun at five o'clock, and are closed a few minutes after "the noon of night." When the people receive notice of this service, they will be requested to arrange their business and social intercourse so that their coming may be promoted, and not hindered. All will be respectfully invited to attend, especially the young, and that they would be present at the beginning of the meeting. The minister will also pre-engage the help of the warm and able, that himself and they may be duly qualified for their respective parts at the watchnight, that their individual exercises may fit into one another as an acorn into its cup, or a hand into its glove. He will likewise request the aged and other pious persons who may not be able to attend, to pray very earnestly that the service may be one of saving grace to many. In due time he will make arrangements that the church be made as comfortable by warmth and light as circumstances permit. He will sufficiently early place the members of the hymns to be sung in the hands of those who talent for singing he can confidently rely, that this part of the solemn service may be executed with the utmost possible propriety. The minister well knows that attention to this is the more necessary, if any of the hymns be in a peculiar metre, like that of the 46th hymn, which is often the last sung, in the earliest minutes of the new year, and, indeed, one more suitable cannot be found.

Some let us save our journey purse. And never stand still, till the Master appear. O, that each from his Lord may receive the glad word. "Well and faithfully done." Enter into my joy and sit down on my throne." It may confidently be expected that a watchnight thus prepared for, and then conducted with mingled seriousness, zeal, knowledge, affection, may be worthy of long and grateful remembrance. When it is very near midnight, the voices of all are hushed. Every one is requested, whilst passing into the new year to engage on his knees, in solemn prayer. Solenn thoughts then occupy the mind. Holy purposes are formed, divine grace is sought and obtained to render them effectual to conversion—holiness—salvation. Ministers may safely expect that their labour herein shall not be in vain. When the Lord gives to his servants apostolic yearning for the souls of men, and power to proclaim, though it be with tears, the apostolic doctrine of Jesus and him crucified. He will be willing to give them also apostolic success. When thus souls are won, consolation, labour, blessing, and joy, and "the joy shall be even as the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Come, then, brothers and friends, let us see to it, and strive for it, that so far as the holy profit of the watch-night for the year 1868, may depend on the suitable efforts of our ministers, and people, nothing shall be wanting. May the great Lover of Sinners effectually succour his servants in gathering the lost home to Himself that they may be found in Him for ever. In many circuits, and it is worthy of imitation, on New Year's Sabbath the day, not only for communion in the Lord's Supper, but also for renewal of the Covenant with God. The watchnight will afford a grand opportunity for first sufficiently urging the duty and privilege of deciding to serve the Lord; and then, of inviting all by grace so to decide to receive all into the house of the Lord, and in fellowship with his people on the ensuing Sabbath. Then again, may the prophesy be fulfilled, "In one day I am the Lord, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." E. B. December 14, 1868.

## The True Ritualism.

The ritualism which Christ requires, the only one which is appropriate to the Church of Christ, is a holy and beautiful life. The religious man, that is, the devout worshiper, according to St. James, is the man of purity and benevolence. In Old Testament times, the service of God was ordered in an elaborate and imposing ritual, a temple, magnificent and lustre with marble and gold, an altar with slaughtered victims, the fire and smoke of sacrifice; a high priest, splendidly clothed in symbolic garments, and splendidly attended. Under the New Testament dispensation, this spectacular ritual has been abolished; and in place of it has come a simpler, sweeter, and useful life. Coleridge, in his *Aids to Reflection*, remarks, with a beauty to be seen only when his profound meaning is understood, "the outward service of ancient religion, the rites, ceremonies, and ceremonial vestments of the old law had morality for their substance. They were the letter of which morality was the spirit; the emblem of which morality was the meaning. But morality itself is the service and the ceremonial (cultus exterior) of the Christian religion. The sense of truth and grace, that became through Jesus Christ the faith that looks down into the perfect law of liberty, has light for its garment; its very robe is righteousness." So that Christian living has under the Christian dispensation been exalted into the worship of God. Vocal prayers, and singings, and preachings, in houses built by human hands, is not worship, but only the sign and preparation for it, not the living service of God itself, but the school and tuition of it. It is as far from being the real thing, as it is the scaffolding from the building, and not less subsidiary. This is all the more true, because it was not so one. Before Christ, the worship of God was a literal ritual; it was confined to Jerusalem, was exclusively in the hands of a priesthood, and proceeded through scenic representations, a sacerdotal victim, a blood-splending and burning offering, the incense, the aromatic, the flame and smoke, all symbols and prophecies of the Christian service, which now consists not so much in psalm and prayer, and Sabbath assembly, as in the religion of which the Epistle of James is a portraiture,—a life of faith expressing itself in works like His, who went about doing good. The distinctive feature of Christianity is just this, the exaltation of holy obedience, in walks of life, to a religious religion, that which is the end and consummation of Sabbath and Sabbath services. Since Christ died there has been no legitimate priesthood on earth, no temple of God, no ritual.

All Christians have become priests; the whole world a temple; all time holy; and the only ritual prescribed, the palm of a life fashioned after the example of Christ. This is the temple of the body of a Christian the temple of the Holy Ghost, and Peter makes all Christians "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." If these things be so, those reactionaries in this country and England, who are introducing a gorgeous ritual, like the Jewish and the Roman, convict themselves, if not of ignorance, of an anti-Christian rebellion. They are the judges of Paul's time, attempting to revive what Christ has abolished. They are Romanists, without the excuse of Romanists, and voluntarily accept the great apostasy of Rome from the simplicity and freedom of the early church, when all Christians were brothers, and religion was a new life in Christ. First came the Hierarchy, offering of human ambition; and next, the Ritual, Judaism revived; and it has pleased God to devote a thousand years, and the fairest part of Europe, Asia and Africa to the setting up in history of a ritualism in capable of the usurpation of Christianity. Is not this enough, and shall we re-inaugurate the ritual in this nineteenth century, and on this virgin soil of a new continent? God forbid! This new land of ours is married to a new future. One of the ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York has been preaching a series of sermons on what he is pleased to call "The Fallure of Protestantism." As if Rome had not failed, by would have been the same thing, if the ritualism, does any body imagine is capable of the usurpation of Christianity. Is not this enough, and shall we re-inaugurate the ritual in this nineteenth century, and on this virgin soil of a new continent? God forbid! This new land of ours is married to a new future. 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