

# THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL.

VOLUME I.

ST. JOHN, N. B., MAY 23, 1899.

No. 12

## The Home Mission Journal.

A record of Missionary, Sunday-School and Colportage work. Published semi-monthly by the Committee of the Home Mission Board of New Brunswick.

All communications and subscriptions may be forwarded to  
REV. J. H. HUGHES,  
Carleton, St. John.

Terms, - - 50 Cents a Year.

### The Secularisation of The Church.

Let us look at the secularisation of the Church, as to its worship. Christ, the founder of the Church, gave to the "woman at the well" the criterion of worship. According to Him, it that is to be conducted "in spirit and in truth;" that is, it must proceed from the soul of man and be a true expression of that soul in its relation to God.

This department is secularised, firstly, by being made to consist of

FORMS AND CEREMONIES UNSANCTIFIED BY SPIRITUAL PROMPTINGS,

and, secondly, by being made the product of intellectual and aesthetic culture.

First, then, all means that are used in the services to make *appearances* part of the *worship* is secularisation. Among these may be included the burning of incense, the carrying of the cross, bowings and crossings, the assuming the eastward position, the wearing of surplices, etc. The actions are no expression of the soul, and therefore form no part of true worship. They may seem "things of no importance" to us, but if we glance back at the Reformation in England we shall observe that they were not counted so then. Under Elizabeth hundreds of clergymen were expelled from their office for refusing to admit them into their worship, and Bishops Hooper and Ridley both denounced them.

But the secularisation that arises from intellectual and aesthetic tendencies are to-day of a more dangerous tendency than those mentioned. Brilliant epigram, highly polished sentences, logically constructed discourses of the most perfect finish, are looked for from the pulpit; while the musical portion of the service must be well balanced in harmony and perfect in rendering. To secure the former, intellectual culture, rather than depth of spiritual life, is expected in the minister; while in pursuit of the latter, musical ability, rather than reverence, is the qualification necessary to take the lead in the praise of the congregation.

Now with the preacher we have nothing to do; to his own Master he standeth or falleth; but this may and must be said, that if

### THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP IN GOD'S HOUSE

is to be a source of spiritual life, then intellectual acumen and scholarly attainments are not enough to qualify a man for preaching the Gospel and building up the church in the true faith. We are often told that all truth is in the dark, and can only be discovered by patient search. So much is generally admitted. But let it be further added that the search must be conducted according to natural principles, otherwise all attempts will be vain. This also is true of spiritual truths; the search must be conducted according to spiritual laws. Christ revealed the chief of these laws in the words, "He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;" and to neglect this law, and endeavour to understand the doctrine relative to spiritual things on the same principle that you attain to natural truths, is surely a form of secularisation that cannot be denied.

Let scholarship and culture of the profoundest and most refined type distinguish the ministry of the Church; but reverence for and loyalty to Christ are absolutely necessary for the attainment of spiritual knowledge and to lead the Church of Christ into Gospel light and truth. Oh, that

the trumpet would sound aloud in Zion for the proclamation of this truth!

Let us now turn to the leaders of praise in the Church. In regard to these we find that not even profession, in many cases, is necessary or even asked for. The organist may be a thorough worldling, and men who cannot lay claim to even a high moral character are paid to sing in the choir. Here then we have secularisation in its barest and most repulsive form. The worth of worship to God—nay, the very condition of its acceptance by Him—is sacrificed, that the music may be pleasing to the cultured ear of man. In view of this, do we wonder that the Spirit of God is often not to be found in our churches? Can we marvel if His blessing does not rest upon them? If we must have an organ, let the organist be first spiritual and then musical; and with those who form the choir let reverence of soul be a qualification that shall override purity of voice—it is better to make a joyful noise unto the Lord from the heart than to discourse sweet music from the lips alone. To pretend that a meeting purposely arranged to please the taste of man is sanctified to God, is arrogant hypocrisy, which brings its accursed reward. When the worship is made to consist of anything less than the outpouring of the soul to God it is secularised.

Let us now pass on to mark:

### THE SECULARISATION IN MEMBERSHIP.

In referring to this I have not particularly in mind the system by which, through physical means, children are supposed to be made members but I must refer to the system in order to explain, as promised, the reason why the religious and political life of the people is regarded by so many as co-extensive.

According to that system, a child is born into the nation and "baptized" into the Church; and as, according to this system, every child born is supposed to be "baptized" also, it is evident that the same people must form Church and State. Such members do not come within the true definition of a Church. Neither do I refer to that illogical idea which frightened the timid not so long ago, raised by a modern prophet who, however earnest and well-wishing and well-doing too, was certainly mistaken in this—that an atheist might be a member of the Church as ordinarily understood. But I mean that there are those who for certain temporal reasons best known to themselves have enrolled their names among the members of Christ's Church.

The visible Church has, through no fault of its Founder, become rich and powerful in temporal things. There are therefore privileges and honours connected with it which are dear to the eyes of the children of this world. Some doubtless have been tempted to enroll their names in its books to secure these advantages, and have consequently neglected its laws and statutes to suit themselves.

Among the first Twelve there was one of this type. Ananias and Sapphira sold their lot and handed over part only of the price to receive honour among the brethren; while Simon Magus desired the power of the Holy Spirit to make money thereby. These are fair examples of the secularisation of the Church in membership to-day. Here then we have

### THE KEY TO THE WHOLE SITUATION.

The Church can never be a true Church while its members have entered it regardless of the motive of its Founder, and submitting not to its principles and government. It is supposed to consist of the most humble, the most unselfish, the spiritual among mankind; and the proud, the worldly, and the self-seeker have found a place in it. Its Founder left His seat on the Throne of the Universe, and lived a life of humility, humiliation, and self-sacrifice, and submitted Himself to the shameful death of the cross that He might benefit others. Yet there are among its professing adherents to-day those who oppress their fellow-men, grinding the face of the poor that they may entertain their fellow-

members at their palatial residences, they drive up to the church doors in stylish equipages and write their names as donators to charitable institutions. Oh, the pity of it!

From the richest to the poorest, examples, alike in kind but varying in degree, may be found; and in them we see the reason why the wealthy rather than the wise in God's sight are elected as its leaders, why culture rather than Gospel is desired in its pulpit, why harmony rather than praise in its worship, and so the fact must be faced that while the Church is secularised in its membership, its purpose to itself and its mission to the world will remain unfulfilled.

This last remark leads us to our final division, "Secularisation in relation to the world." Christ informed His followers that they were "the light of the world," "the salt of the earth," and that they were to preach the "Gospel" to every creature. Therefore, although the Church is not of the world, it has a mission to fulfil to it, to purify and enlighten it by its influence and proclaim for it the message of salvation.

Now what is offered in some churches is not the Gospel Christ commanded, but a moral code made attractive by surrounding pleasures that cater to the tastes of the masses. The Gospel must be secularised, made less spiritual; the gold is too pure, it must be alloyed in order to fulfil its purpose. Christ did not think so when He preached His sermon on the mount, and He had not changed His mind when He gave His parting commission to His followers.

Again, as to the

### INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON THE LIFE OF SOCIETY.

She is to enlighten and purify it. She cannot, however, do this by going down to the level of the world itself, or by parleying with its vices and evils; but by being herself pure and untarnished, and touching not the unclean thing. Then she may put forth her influence for good, opposing all evil, and aiding and supporting all that makes for righteousness.

Men talk as if the Church were too spiritual to take notice of the world around it. The Church is deaf, they say, to the cries of the weary and sorrow-laden, she does not lift up her voice against greed and oppression; and the fault, they think, may be remedied by secularising the Church. Never was there a more fatal or a more foolish mistake. The Church has become too much like the world to be of use to the world. It is not because it is too *other-worldly* that it does not lend a listening ear and stretch out a helping hand in answer to the cries of the weary and oppressed, nor exercise a purifying influence on the world around, but because there is too little of the *other-world* sentiment and truth in it.

Let us hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter. The Church is secularised:—

1. In its government, by making worldly rather than spiritual distinctions qualifications for leadership.
2. In its worship, by making it consist of culture and beauty, rather than love and devotion of soul.
3. In offering to the masses something less than the Gospel of Christ.
4. In directing its efforts towards redeeming the body, rather than the soul through the body. And the reason of it all may be seen in the fact the Church has become powerful and influential, and therefore attracts, and offers admission to, people who seek its membership for secular rather than spiritual purposes. The day is coming when "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The minister who quotes Scripture in jest or twists it into a witticism does more to breed irreverence for the sacred Word than does the destructive critic. Nothing is more reprehensible or more offensive to a correct taste.