

The Present Condition of Christianity and its Prospects in the World.

We ventured on the affirmation in our last that, "Within the past one hundred years, more has been done to give the nations the word of God, than had ever been done since its sacred canons were completed, and its solemn prophecies sealed up."

In support of this affirmation, we do not intend to produce a series of statistical calculations, we at once refer to well-known and undisputed historical facts. Within the period mentioned, numerous societies and associations have been formed for this express purpose in Europe and America, especially in England. In this favoured island Sabbath-school, Religious Tract, and Bible Institutions had their origin, and here Protestant Missions to the heathen first assumed an organized and permanent form. The United States of America promptly imitated our example, treading closely upon our steps; and then Scotland and several of the Continental nations followed in the glorious enterprise.—And now there is scarcely a sect of evangelical christians which has not its Missionary Society for sending the Word of God to the nations of the earth.

The field was the world, and "the world was all before them." There was room for them all, and thousands more. Some went north, where "winter sits upon his icy throne," and the heart of the frozen Greenlander was warmed by the warm life-blood which flowed on Calvary—others went south, and taught child-murderers and man-eaters lessons of love and kindness—some went east, and gave to her teeming millions copies of the true shaster, telling of the true incarnation and the true atonement—and others penetrated the forests and prairies of the west, and taught the wild men of the woods the Word of the Great Spirit. On and on, year after year, they went; and though peril beset them by the way, and repulse met them on their arrival, and danger attended them daily—yet there, among the heathen, they laboured in faith, and patience, and hope. And ultimately they had their reward. So that now were we to survey the world and compare it with what it was a hundred years ago, we should find abundant cause for gratitude and hope. Let us glance at a few spots on its surface.

Then, the innumerable islands of the southern ocean were alike entire strangers to the truths of christianity and all its ameliorating and civilizing influences. Now groups of them have the holy scriptures and places for Divine worship, and books and schools; infanticide and cannibalism are abolished, and the comforts of civilization are appreciated.

Then, his "celestial majesty" proudly forbade the Book of God to enter his vast dominions; but now, his pride humbled and his power broken in pieces like a potter's vessel, he is content to admit the sacred volume, which in the mean time had been translated into that most remarkable of all languages, and to allow the ministers of Jesus to locate themselves in his most populous cities and provinces. This of itself were an achievement for a century!

Then, Birmah, like China, was without God, and long did his "golden-footed majesty" spurn with contempt all overtures from Heaven's messengers; and for this he well nigh perished by the way. But now, to Birmah's sons, Judson has given the Bible, and hundreds of the Karens are receiving the message of salvation with joy.

Then, India, lately wrested from the stern grasp of the Mussulman, by English artifice and force, was in the same state of awful ignorance and crime in which it had been sunk for ages. Idol-worship, caste, suttee, infanticide, and self-immolation prevailed among her myriad tribes. And among her conquerors christianity had no votaries—at all events a newspaper advertisement to find a christian in Calcutta was never answered. Now, the word of God, chiefly through the labours of Carey and Yates, may be found translated into nearly all her languages. Christian churches here and there, though yet few and far between, have been gathered from among the heathen. School-rooms and asylums for the young open their doors to the ignorant and the outcast. Books and tracts have been circulated by thousands—by millions, and already the whole system of Hindoo idolatry totters to its fall. Its very priests are deserting.

Then, Africa was one dark scene of cruelty and crime, unrelieved by a single ray of hope. Now, in the regions of her southern extremity, and along her extended western coast, suc-

cessful efforts have been made to direct the down-trodden negro to Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. And, wonderful to tell, Africa's almost unintelligible languages have been reduced into forms, and the word of God is in the hands of her sable sons.

We stop: though we might proceed. Col-lateral historical facts however may be briefly noticed.

Then, the crescent of the Grand Turk was in the ascendant in the East, and Europe had scarcely recovered from the alarm which the invasion of her south-eastern provinces by his infatuated armies had excited. Now, he only exists as a sovereign by permission. The scymitar of Mahomet is broken, and the spiritual influence of that grand delusion is passing away—the Crescent is waning into darkness.

Then, Despotism, with iron heel, trampled on the nations of continental Europe. Now—emphatically Now—for little more than only one year ago we could not have said now—Despotism has received a blow, from the effects of which she will never recover. And one thing has already been snatched from her tenacious grasp—the right to teach and preach the word of God. And not the least, but perhaps the most remarkable, event of these very eventful times, is the fact that the pope, compelled to flee in disguise from the throne on which he sat with names of blasphemy, worshipped as God, is now doomed to hear the astounding proclamation—SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IN ROME.

What will be the end of these things no one knoweth. Despotism and popery may again recover a portion of their former power and influence. But they never can be again what they once were. We question if they will ever attempt.

We take encouragement, then, from all these facts, and especially from that one Great Fact—the nations are receiving the word of God—the incorruptible seed of the kingdom. Men die—but the Word lives. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Upon this then, mainly, we rest our expectation and our hope of the restoration of mankind to God. He who ordereth all things hath, in his perfect wisdom and infinite benevolence, arranged that his divine Word shall be the grand instrument of man's recovery to himself. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." And, unalterably faithful to that word, he will not fail to fulfil all that he hath spoken. To his once-suffering but now exalted Son he saith, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And to his expecting people, who wait with longing eyes for the dawning of millennial day—"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings"—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts"—"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, was tingnor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

We conclude this brief sketch with a quotation from a christian writer of our own times:

"THE LORD REIGNETH" as of old. He will ever be the defender of truth, righteousness, and mercy. The thought of his heart will not fail. The word of his promise shall

not return to him void. The kingdom of which he spake by his prophets, and which he has given to his Son, must be built up in the earth. His providence is always working surely and steadily, though in ways that surpass our understanding, towards that consummation. It is not for us to penetrate his counsel. We may err, as wise and good men have erred, in expounding all the symbols, and arranging all the chronology of prophecy. Yet are we well assured that he 'knoweth the end from the beginning.' All past history pours light upon the calm revelations of that word which represents him to us, as working 'all things after the counsel of his own will,' bringing light out of darkness, good out of evil, and turning 'the curse into a blessing.' He forms men's hearts. He orders universal affairs. He is King—and he alone is King over all. To our impatient minds he may sometimes seem as though he had left the earth in confusion and misery, as the mere theatre of man's ambition, and cruelty, and pride. Confining our views, as we are too prone, to narrow spheres and to short periods, we may fancy that to progress is made towards that better age for which the hearts of good men have always longed, in which the sorrows of many bitter and conflicting centuries are to close in long and happy years of peacefulness and joy. On the one hand, we may be thus doubtful and unbelieving; and the effect of such a state of mind may be, to unfit us for our allotted share of work in bringing about the better state of things which patriotism, humanity, and true piety, prompt us to desire.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that we may be too sanguine, too self-relying, forgetting the variety of agencies by which God is wont to effect his purposes; the long tract of time which has, hitherto, been required for ripening his plans; and the great principle which pervades all his works—his jealousy of his creatures presuming to take to themselves the glory which is all his own. The sober lessons of history are useful to us in correcting both these tendencies of our minds. By showing what God has done, how he has done it, and when he has done it, they greatly regulate our expectations of what yet remains of his doings in our world. If we are firmly grounded in those doctrines of Providence which the scriptures so clearly teach, and which they illustrate with such ample variety of examples, we read the lives which compose the leading facts of history, not as idlers, merely seeking entertainment, nor as practical atheists, but as christians, who know that, not only on the small scale, which lies level to our apprehension, but also on that large scale, which reaches far beyond our thoughts, in all ages, and in all worlds, God is making 'the wrath of man to praise him;' restraining and controlling all the passions of our fallen nature, and overruling ambition, and tyranny, and craft, and power, for the furtherance of his own righteous and merciful designs."—*Baptist Reporter.*

Calvin as a Preacher.

FROM HENRY'S LIFE OF CALVIN.

Calvin's style is remarkably simple, his method not synthetic; such at least is the case with his discourses, which commence with a proposition, from which he derives all the rest, generally by way of analysis; while he runs through whole books of Scripture explaining a certain number of sentences in an instructive manner, and closing the whole with a prayer.

Several of his sermons, however, are on definite subjects. Calvin's pulpit exercises were generally weightier and more solemn than those of the German reformer, more impressive by the force of their inferences and striking sentences. Luther often unfolded his text dogmatically, and returned to it.—Calvin kept his hearers, and objections which might be urged, more closely in view, and frequently wandered far from the text to answer the arguments of adversaries. That which gives a certain appearance of heaviness to his sermons, is perhaps the manner in which they are usually read; those who peruse them rarely considering the discourse from beginning to end, or flying over the whole as it were in spirit, but employing themselves at every step with some weighty, striking thought. But every one who reads him must say, as was said Demosthenes, 'This man is right.' However the pompous rhetoricians under Louis XIV. might ridicule his naive, simple manner, the time is come in which his rough, powerful style is preferred

far above those regular, rounded, ornamental periods, which were so long regarded as the model of eloquence, but which, instead of awakening, only weary and depress the soul.

Calvin preached extempore: it is nowhere mentioned at least, that he ever wrote a sermon. He himself says expressly, in an unpublished letter: 'I did write the twenty-two sermons on the eighth psalm; but they have been printed simply as they could be gathered from my mouth, in the church. You there see our style and ordinary mode of teaching.' He frequently also declares, that the power of God could only pour itself forth in extempore speech; and he expresses himself very distinctly and beautifully, in his letter to Somerset, against the reading of sermons. 'The people,' he says, 'must be taught in such a manner that they may be inwardly convinced, and made to feel the truth of what the Apostle says, that the Word of God is "a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I say this to your Highness, because there is too little of living preaching in your kingdom, sermons there being mostly read or recited. I understand well enough what obliges you to adopt this habit. There are few good, useful preachers, such as you wish to have; and you fear that levity and foolish imaginations might be the consequence, as is often the case, of the introduction of a new system. But all this must yield to the command of Christ, which orders the preaching of the Gospel. And this preaching must not be dead, but living, and, as Paul says to Timothy, "for doctrine, for correction, for edification." So that when a Christian enters the church, he may be moved to penitence, and be inwardly convinced, and so feel himself led to give honor to God.—You know also how the Apostle speaks of the life of the Word in the mouth of the true and faithful servants of God. They ought not, then, to wish to shine in the ornaments of rhetoric, or to effect great things thereby; but the spirit of God should be echoed by their votes, and so give birth to virtue. No possible danger must be permitted to abridge the liberty of the spirit of God, or prevent his free course among those whom he has adorned with his graces for the edifying of the church.

On the power of eloquence, Calvin says, 'You must take care, as far as possible, to have good trumpets, such as may penetrate deepest into the heart; for you are in danger of not reaping much fruit from any part of the Reformation which you have effected, however good and holy the work, if this power of preaching be not more and more unfolded.—It is not said without reason, that Jesus Christ "shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips." This is the means by which the Lord will bind and destroy all his enemies, and hence the Gospel is called the kingdom of God. Although the edicts and laws therefore of princes are good auxiliaries for the support of Christianity, God will make his dominion known by the spiritual sword of his Word, proclaimed by his ministers and preachers.

Results of the Great Awakening.

Hence, from the controversy which was occasioned, the Great Awakening appeared, in 1741, to have come to its close. It had wrought, however, a "great salvation;" for "it was the Lord's doing." And well might it be "marvellous" in the eyes of his people, notwithstanding all which they had seen or heard of human imperfections and extravagances. "Those who had the best means of judging," says a learned and careful writer, "estimated the number of true converts, as proved by their subsequent lives, at 30,000 in New England alone, at a time when the whole population was 300,000; besides many thousands more among the Presbyterians of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the more southern settlements.

It was, then, as you may see, a result, which you will the more vividly apprehend, if you just consider, that it would be like adding to the church in Massachusetts, within the next three years, 80,000 persons, young and old—and of such as would continue to sustain a Christian character; and to the churches throughout the Union, not less than EIGHTEEN HUNDRED THOUSAND!!

The more I reflect upon this subject, the more am I persuaded that no inconsiderable part of that which makes the true glory