

From the Watchman and Reflector.]

THE PRIMITIVE DISCIPLES AND PRESENT CHRISTIANS COMPARED.

There is no subject, probably, so often introduced, and so little understood, as the comparative merit of the piety of the present generation of Christians, and that of the primitive disciples. Many a time have we heard the subject handled with flowing and impressive eloquence, and a long series of comparisons expressed in well-balanced antitheses, when it seemed quite apparent, the speaker himself had never taken pains to understand the things compared.

It is the habit of many people to run down the age in which they live. Some do this inconsiderately, simply because others do it.—Some indulge in it out of good will, hoping if the disciples can be persuaded that they are a degenerate race they may earnestly set about reform. Others do it because they are afflicted with *spleen* and *bile*. But poverty of thought, laziness, and desire to appear *big* without incurring the trouble of being really *great*, cause the greater number to indulge in this class of invective. To weigh the great world in scales at two different periods of its existence, is a magnificent idea, and surely no one susceptible of any emotion can think himself doing this, without experiencing some kind of inspiration: He will look vastly wise, and talk oracularly. He may inflate himself to the very point of bursting, and the wider will most of his hearers open their eyes, and the more piously will they nod. The idea has somehow become generally established that the primitive disciples shone forth in all the perfection of beauty; therefore the more sombre he portrays the present age, the more he will be esteemed for his keen sightedness, independence and fidelity. The very act of exploring the selfishness, inactivity, small attainments and low aims of the present race of Christians, implies that the censor has stolen several days march upon the great world.

Exceedingly few persons can handle this theme properly, the subject is so vast and so intricate. It requires the rarest combination of natural and acquired endowments to do it justice. The primitive church is separated from us by a wide waste. The histories of those times are scanty. They indeed spread out the age before us, but the view is distant and obscure. You seem to look from a commanding position over an extensive landscape. You are charmed and thankful for the privilege. Exceedingly different, however, is the impression given by such a view, from what you would receive were you to travel leisurely over the country, climb the hills, descend into the valleys, enter the houses and converse with the inhabitants! From your point of observation you can behold only the most marked features. All things appear beautifully smooth and soft. No thorns and briars are visible, no barren knolls, no dismal swamps and impenetrable jungles. The majestic elephant and kingly lion may possibly be seen stalking over the plain, and the eagle circling in the air; but snakes and toads, wasps, and hornets, gnats and musquitos, do not seem to be there. With such obscure outlines, how few can truthfully fill out the picture? But very many, who speak very magisterially on this subject, have not even taken such a distant view of the primitive church as we have now supposed. They have not extensively read, and with deep attention, the history of those ancient times.

Yet the chief difficulty is not here, but in another quarter, where men generally anticipate no difficulty whatever; and for that very reason they are more likely to commit egregious mistakes. Is it possible that we can live, move and have our being in an age, and yet not know that age? Yes, the thing is exceedingly possible. Few things are more difficult of comprehension than our own time.—Suppose yourself marching in a procession through the streets of Boston. Winding between the houses you can see a few rods before and behind the file of which you form a link. As you can see neither its beginning nor end, and cannot tell how long it is passing a particular point, how is it possible to form an estimate of the length of the procession, or of the number of men in it? This is the privilege of only the few marshals who can step out of the line. When the highest mountains were submerged, what could Noah know about the flow, and the ebb of the waters?—He rose and fell with them, and floated wherever they carried him. On such a flood arc we drifting. All beings and things are moving, some more rapidly than others, and

there is only now and then a seaman who can take celestial observations.

Then, to compare objects so huge as two generations of men, standing two thousand years apart, is no trifling task. Individuals so differently situated cannot be judged by precisely the same standard. On a subject, too, of this nature, the judgment will be influenced more by the mental character and the experience of the individual himself, than by the law and evidence. One person has a great veneration for all things ancient, and is by nature a Tory; another is radical and despises whatever is old. It would be impossible for such men to see alike when the question is, which is superior the old or the new?

There is yet another thing. Were it the question, Who excel in the fine arts, the ancients or the moderns, would any one attach importance to the opinion of those who have no taste for sculpture or painting? If the comparative merit of the philosophy of the ancients and moderns were the inquiry, of what value would be the judgment of those who had not read extensively and who were not sound and independent thinkers? So the comparative merits of the piety of the primitive disciples and of the present generation of Christians, can be estimated only by those who are deeply pious. This alone, will not qualify one to be a judge, but is indispensable. Our opinions are colored very much by our own feelings, and the undevout cannot find his way to the hearts of the devout. To the earthly individual all things appear earthly. The undevout will be his associates, and the deeply pious will put a bridle in their mouth while he is in their sight.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

The last act of Papal insolence, the news of which has just been confirmed, is one of the most pregnant signs of the times. By a single stroke of the pen, the Bishop of Rome, who himself within the last two years absconded from his own palace in the disguise of a liveried footman, assumes to possess and bestow sees, titles, and dignities, in this realm of England, and places, under the very shade of Her Majesty's palace, a priest, whom he styles "the Most Reverend the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster," and from whom he will claim that entire devotion and obedience which is rightfully due to the Sovereign alone. Such an aggression as this is full of serious consequences. The main circumstance of the case, and that which involves an important principle, is this, that we have here a foreign priest or prince—call him what you will—assuming a right and lawful authority to confer titles, and dignities, and real power on emissaries and agents of his own, of whom the Sovereign knows nothing, and who themselves do not profess to concede to that Sovereign more than a qualified and secondary allegiance. Within the last few months it has become a common thing for the Pope's adherents in England, at their festive meetings, to give first the health of their foreign master, and then, as holding the second place, to drink to Queen Victoria.—This is now vauntingly and ostentatiously done. And let it not be dishonestly replied, that their devotion and allegiance to the Roman Bishop is limited to "spiritual matters." Only grant "his Holiness" a "spiritual supremacy," and he will need no more. The most juvenile scholar of Maynooth will find no difficulty in showing any question whatever to have some "spiritual" interests involved in it. Henceforward, then, not in Ireland only,—but in England also,—we are to have the Papal fingers in every dish—the Papal *veto* at every council board. The creation of a Romish "hierarchy" in England will do much to bring the Irish "difficulty" nearer home.—And, if this intrusion be not resented and resisted by her Majesty's Government, the members of that Government must be among the weakest of men. One of these islands has been for a long period England's weakness, when it ought to have been England's strength. The "difficulty" of which Sir Robert Peel spoke was a difficulty which grew and increased with the growth and increase of the Papal power. If England could be but overcome, Rome would reckon the world again her own. Therefore to harass and weaken this "heretic" kingdom must be Rome's main desire. She has a certain footing in Ireland—and that footing will be always used, as it has been always used, to annoy and perplex the English Government. But to assault England from Ireland can never be so formidable a course as to raise up war within her domain. Now,

therefore, her Church is to be confronted by a rival Church; her prelates are to be insulted by competitors; and soon we may expect to find new and hitherto inconceivable demands put forth even within the walls of Parliament itself. We cannot help thinking that this hostile and most objectionable step on the part of Rome might have been checked and perhaps prevented by a tone of decided disapproval from the British Government. How far the change of blameable neglect attaches, we are not in a position to say; but we greatly fear that Lord John Russell has been guilty of a criminal remissness or indifference in this matter, the recollection of which will be very painful in the hour when he shall have leisure to recall, and to re-judge, the various acts of his lengthened political career.—*Mor. Herald.*

An Age of Missions.

It is an *age of Missions*. The islands of the Pacific have heard the cry, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, that our earth has been honored and blessed by the coming of a Divine Redeemer. China has shuddered to see the long dominion of her Confucius and her Boodh invaded by the gospel of Jesus the Nazarene. The Shasters of Brahminism find their sacred Sanscrit tongue employed, by the diligence and fidelity of missionary translators, to utter the oracles of that One True God, who will banish from under the heavens which they have not made, and which He has made, all the hundred thousand gods of the Hindoo Pantheon, with all the other idols of the nations, however ancient and however popular. The tinglings of a new life from on high seem, along the coasts of Asia and of Africa, shooting into nations that Paganism held for centuries senseless and palsied. Is not Ethiopia soon to be, as the prophetic eye of the Psalmist long ages ago saw her, stretching out her hands unto God? But whilst each Christian church, each band of spiritual disciples, in lands long evangelized, is thus lengthening the cords of her tents to take in the Gentiles under its broad canopy, she must in consequence, as it were in counterpoise, of the extension, strengthen her stakes at home, to bear the increased tension and extended shelter. Her supports must be proportionately augmented at home, by a deepening piety and sturdier vigor of principle in her discipleship, or the work will soon come to a stand abroad. A sickly and bedwarfed Christianity here will not furnish the requisite laborers, or the needful funds. Expansion without solidity will bring upon our Zion the ruin of the arch unduly elongated and heavily overloaded. Christendom itself must be thoroughly Christianized, before Heathendom will relinquish its old character and worship, and learn our creed and love our Saviour. Already the zeal and heroic sacrifices of some of our recent converts shame and should stimulate the comparative worldliness and lukewarmness of the churches that had first sent to them the missionary and the Bible.—*Dr. Williams.*

Progress of Evangelizing.

Amid all the discouragements and hindrances to the work of diffusing the Gospel in the world, the progress which is now actually made, is in the highest degree encouraging. Probably, there is not a friend of missions in existence, who, thirty years ago, really expected that by this time, such an amount of success, and such openings for future action would be secured as have been at this day.—In India, the Christian religion was a few years ago, almost unheard of. Now in that vast empire, it has become a broad and substantial element of power. A contemporary well says:—

Not less striking is the progress of the missionary work in other parts of Asia. More recently the walls of China have fallen, and her gates been thrown open, and the word of the Lord begins to have free course, and to be glorified there. Look at Turkey, look at the islands of the sea, look the world over, and the Gospel is flying abroad everywhere without let or hindrance, and rapidly filling the earth with the knowledge of salvation.

With this map before us, fix the eye on these several points of interest—they are radiant points of light, that are piercing the thick gloom of heathen darkness, and when the rays of these suns are blended, they will cover the lands where they shine with the glory of God. This is not a rhetorical flourish. It indicates the process by which this world is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the sea. We are to go steadily onward, building new fires on the mountains of heathen-

ism, and still other fires, and yet farther on, and the time will come, it is nearer than many people think, when the whole face of the globe will be covered with the light of Divine truth. None shall need say to his neighbor "Know the Lord," for all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest.—*Puritan Recorder.*

Christ our Refuge.

A man standing near the north pole, and feeling a few warm rays of the sun, straggling in upon him, would naturally think that it would be good to go near to their source. He might in fact conclude, as he feels the power of the unrelenting frost by which he was surrounded, that he could not get too near a body emitting such genial and reviving beams.—But if he should proceed southward, he would find that a body lifting itself away from the earth; and as it rose in height above his head, pouring down rays whose concentrated fire he could in no wise endure. The uncovered and vertical sun would reveal itself to him as a very different thing from the luminary he saw parallel with his horizon, and whose rays only came to him through a long journey of earthly mist and frost.

The sinner, as he feels the rays of God's benevolence falling upon him in a world where his eyes are dimmed with earthly mists, and all his sensations are blunted by the chilly fogs of his own and others' selfishness, thinks it no difficult matter for him to love God; and in his short sightedness imagines he should love to be near him. But if by any means he gets a closer and more unmingled perception of God as he is, he finds that his character burns upon him with a consuming intensity which he would hide himself in the centre of the earth to escape. The moment God comes near him with the blazing beams of his infinite justice and infinite holiness, he is in hell. Immediate contact or near approach to such a being are of all things that which he cannot endure.

There is one mode by which the sinner can come near to God, so as to be partaker of his light and life, and yet not be consumed. God, of his infinite mercy, has provided that way.—Sheltered in Jesus Christ, the infinite Saviour, he may draw near with "confidence," yet with boldness, and be warmed into life and comfort.

A Ruined Man.

Two neighbors were engaged in earnest conversation. The remarks made as they separated were, "So he is a ruined man."
"Is there no hope in the case?"
"Not the slightest."

What had happened to him who was so emphatically called a ruined man? A suit respecting his title to the lands he held in possession had been decided against him. The broad acres which he had called his own were to pass into the hands of another. He was to go forth penniless, from what had long been his happy home. *He was a ruined man.*—Men sympathized with him. They saw that he was ruined and therefore gave their sympathy.

But when a man loses his title to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away; when sentence in heaven's tribunal has been pronounced against him, few look upon him as a ruined man, and few sympathize with him. A man ruined for a time is a bad spectacle! What shall we say, then, of a man ruined for eternity!

A man of feeling would be very sorry if he were accessory to the temporal ruin of another. If one should be the means of reducing another to poverty, he would never fail to reproach himself for the act; at least, he would never fail to do so when he witnessed the poverty and discomfort he had caused. What should be the feelings of one who has been accessory to the eternal ruin of another—who has taken away his birthright, and left him to pine in eternal woe?

Men are accessory to the eternal, much oftener than to the temporal ruin of men. Let them take heed.—*N. Y. Observer.*

Happiness in Sorrow.

It was once on a visit to a friend, who requested me to accompany her to see a sick woman, supposed to be near her end. The house was not a cabin but a mere wreck of a once comfortable dwelling. Every appearance of comfort was absent. The partitions appeared to have been taken down, and the whole house turned into one large room.—There was no glass in the windows—but that