

## GATHERING THE GRAIN

A Sermon of Congratulation to the C. E. Association.

## THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY

The Christian Religion is Mightier Today Than It Ever Was Before—Its Fidelity is Not Half So Blatant in the Present Day as It Was in the Days of Our Fathers.

Washington, July 7.—Although Dr. Talmage was hindered from attending the great annual meeting of the Christian Endeavor Society at Cincinnati, his sermon shows him to be in sympathy with the great movement. Text, Amos ix. 13. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper."

Unable because of other important duties to accept the invitation to take part in the great convention of Christian Endeavorers at Cincinnati, begun last week, I preach a sermon of congratulation for all the members of that magnificent association, whether now gathered in vast assemblies or busy in their places of usefulness, transatlantic and cisatlantic, and as it is now harvest time in the fields and sickles are flashing in the gathering of a great crop, I find mighty suggestiveness in my text.

It is a picture of a tropical clime, with a season so prosperous that the harvest reaches clear over to the plowing time, and the swarthy husbandman, busy cutting the grain, almost feels the breath of the horses on his shoulders, the horses hitched to the plow, preparing for a new crop. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper." When is that? That is now. That is this day, when hardly have you done reaping one harvest of religious result that the plowman is getting ready for another.

In phraseology charged with all venom and abuse and caricature I know that infidels and agnostics have declared that Christianity has collapsed; that the Bible is an obsolete book; that the Christian Church is on the retreat. I shall answer that wholesale charge today.

Between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 Endeavorers sworn before high heaven that they will do all they can to take America for God, Europe for God, Asia and Africa for God—aren't the signs most cheering? Or turn to the agricultural figure of my text, more than a million reapers are overtaken by more than a million plowmen. Besides this, there are more people who believe in the Bible than at any time in the world's existence. An Arab guide was leading a French infidel across the desert, and ever and anon the Arab would stop and say, "How do you know that your God is God?" And the Arab guide said: "How do I know that a man and a camel passed by our tent last night? I know it by the footprint in the sand. And you want to know how I know that there is a God? Look at the sunset. Is that the footprint of a man?" And by the same process you and I have come to understand that this book is the footprint of God.

But now let us see whether the book is a last year's almanac. Let us see whether the Church of God is a Bull Run retreat, muskets, cannons and haversacks strewn all the way. The great English historian Sharon Turner, a man of vast learning and great accuracy, not a clergyman, but an attorney as well as a historian, gives this overwhelming statistic in regard to Christianity and in regard to the number of Christians in the different centuries: In the first century 500,000 Christians, in the second century 2,000,000 Christians, in the third century 5,000,000 Christians, in the fourth century 10,000,000 Christians, in the fifth century 20,000,000 Christians, in the sixth century 20,000,000 Christians, in the seventh century 24,000,000 Christians, in the eighth century 30,000,000 Christians, in the ninth century 40,000,000 Christians, in the tenth century 50,000,000 Christians, in the eleventh century 70,000,000 Christians, in the twelfth century 80,000,000 Christians, in the thirteenth century 75,000,000 Christians, in the fourteenth century 80,000,000 Christians, in the fifteenth century 100,000,000 Christians, in the sixteenth century 125,000,000 Christians, in the seventeenth century 155,000,000 Christians, in the eighteenth century 200,000,000 Christians—a decadence, as you observe, in only one century, and more than made up in the following centuries, while it is the usual computation that there were at the close of the nineteenth century 470,000,000 Christians, making us to believe that before this century is closed the millennium will have started its boom and lifted its banners.

Poor Christianity! What a pity it has no friends! How lonesome it must be! Who will take it out of the poorhouse? Poor Christianity! Four hundred millions in one century. In a few weeks of this year 2,500,000 copies of the New Testament distributed. Why, the Bible is like an old castle with 20 gates and a park of artillery ready to thunder down every gate. See how heathendom is being surrounded and honeycombed and attacked by this all-conquering gospel. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 150 missionaries at the close of that century 84,000 missionaries and native helpers and evangelists. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were only 50,000 converts. Now

there are over 1,000,000 converts from heathendom.

You all know that an important work of an army is to plant the batteries. It may take many days to plant the batteries, and they may do all the work in ten minutes. These gospel batteries are being planted all along the seacoasts and in all nations. It may take a good while to plant them, and they may do all their work in ten minutes. They will. Nations are to be born in a day. But just come back to Christendom and recognize the fact that during the last ten years as many people have connected themselves with evangelical churches as connected themselves with the churches in the first fifty years of last century. So Christianity is falling back, and the Bible, they say, is becoming an obsolete book. I go into a court, and wherever I find a judge's bench or a clerk's desk I find a Bible. Upon what book could be uttered the solemnity of an oath? What book is apt to be put in the trunk of the young man as he leaves for city life? The Bible. What shall I find in nine out of every ten homes in this city? The Bible, in place of every ten homes in Christendom? The Bible. Voltaire wrote the prophecy that the Bible in the nineteenth century would become extinct. The century is gone, and I have to tell you that the room in which Voltaire wrote that prophecy not long ago was crowded from floor to ceiling with Bibles from Switzerland.

You may talk about the church being a collection of hypocrites, but when the diphtheria sweeps your children of whom do you send for? The postmaster, the attorney-general, the hotel keeper, the minister of the religion. And if you have not a room in your house for the obsequies, what building do you select? Do you say, "Give me the finest room in the hotel." Do you say, "Give me that theatre?" Do you say, "Give me that public building where I can lay my dead for a little while until we say a prayer over it?" No. You say, "Give us the House of God." And if there is a song to be sung at the obsequies, what do you want? What does anybody want? The "Marsellaise Hymn"? "God Save the King"? No. They want the hymn which they sang their old Christian mother into her last sleep, or they want sung the Sabbath school hymn which their little girl sang the last Sabbath afternoon she was out of her father's arms.

Then you have noticed a more significant fact if you have talked with people on the street that they are getting disgusted with worldly philosophy as a matter of comfort. They say it does not amount to anything when you have a dead child in the house. They tell you when they are sick and the door of the future seems opening, the only comfort they could find was the gospel. People are having demonstrated all over the land that science cannot comfort, cannot solace the troubles and woes of the world, and they are taking Christianity, the only sympathetic religion that ever came into the world, and they are taking it to the streets. You just take a scientific consolation into that room where a mother has lost her child. Try in that case your splendid doctrine of the "survival of the fittest." To the child died because it was not worthy as much as the other children. That is your "survival of the fittest." Just try your transcendentalism, your philosophy, your science, your wisdom, your soul, and tell her companion should be taken away from her, just as in the course of the world's history the megatherium and the mighty mammoth had to give up existence, and then you go on in your scientific consolation until you get to the sublime fact that 10,000 years from now, we ourselves may be scientific specimens of the geologic shelf, petrified specimens of an extinct human race. And after you have got all through with your consolation, if the poor afflicted soul is not crazed by it, we will send forth from any of our churches the plainest Christian we have and with one half hour of prayer and reading of Scripture the people will be wiped away, and the house from floor to cupola will be flooded with the calmness of an Indian summer sunset. There is where we see the triumph of Christianity. People are satisfied with everything else. They want God. They want Jesus Christ.

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And then I find another most encouraging thought, the fact that the secular printing press and the pulpit seem, harnessed in the same team for the proclamation of the gospel. Every banker in this capital tomorrow, every Wall street banker tomorrow, in New York, every State street banker tomorrow in Boston, every Third street banker tomorrow in Philadelphia, every banker in the United States, and every merchant will have in his pocket a tract on Christianity, 10, 20 or 30 pages of Scripture in the reports of sermons preached throughout the land to-day. It will be so in Chicago, so in New Orleans, so in Charleston, so in Boston, so in Philadelphia, so in Cincinnati, so everywhere. I know the tract societies are doing a grand and glorious work, but I tell you there is no power on earth today equal to the fact that the American printing press is taking up the sermons which are preached to a hundred or a few thousand people, and on Monday morning and Monday evening scattering that truth to the millions.

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of the naturalists of our day are adopting facts which do not bear observation or have not passed under observation. These men warring with each other—Darwin warring against Lamarck, Wallace warring against Cope, even Herschel denouncing Fergusson. They do not agree on embryology, do not agree on the gradation of the species.

Here these infidel scientists have impaled themselves as a jury to decide this trial between infidelity, the plaintiff, and Christianity, the defendant, and after being out for centuries they come in to render a verdict. Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed on a verdict? No, no. Then go back for another 500 years and deliberate and agree on something. There is not a poor miserable wretch in the royal prison who row that could be condemned by a jury that did not agree on the verdict, and yet you expect us to give up our glorious Christianity to please these men who cannot agree on anything. Ah, my friends, the Church of Jesus Christ instead of falling back is on the advance. I am certain it is on the advance. I see the glittering of its sword. I hear the tramping of the troops: I hear the thundering parks of artillery. O God, I thank thee that I have been permitted to see this day of thy triumph, this day of thy victory. I thank thee, O Lord God, for thy sword from thy thigh and ride forth to the victory!

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Then you have noticed a more significant fact if you have talked with people on the street that they are getting disgusted with worldly philosophy as a matter of comfort. They say it does not amount to anything when you have a dead child in the house. They tell you when they are sick and the door of the future seems opening, the only comfort they could find was the gospel. People are having demonstrated all over the land that science cannot comfort, cannot solace the troubles and woes of the world, and they are taking Christianity, the only sympathetic religion that ever came into the world, and they are taking it to the streets. You just take a scientific consolation into that room where a mother has lost her child. Try in that case your splendid doctrine of the "survival of the fittest." To the child died because it was not worthy as much as the other children. That is your "survival of the fittest." Just try your transcendentalism, your philosophy, your science, your wisdom, your soul, and tell her companion should be taken away from her, just as in the course of the world's history the megatherium and the mighty mammoth had to give up existence, and then you go on in your scientific consolation until you get to the sublime fact that 10,000 years from now, we ourselves may be scientific specimens of the geologic shelf, petrified specimens of an extinct human race. And after you have got all through with your consolation, if the poor afflicted soul is not crazed by it, we will send forth from any of our churches the plainest Christian we have and with one half hour of prayer and reading of Scripture the people will be wiped away, and the house from floor to cupola will be flooded with the calmness of an Indian summer sunset. There is where we see the triumph of Christianity. People are satisfied with everything else. They want God. They want Jesus Christ.

Young man, do not be ashamed to be a friend of the Bible. Do not think your thumb in your vest, or your young man sometimes do, and swagger about, talking of the glorious light of nature and of there being no need of the Bible. They have the light of nature in India and China, and in all the dark places of the earth. Did you ever hear that the light of nature gave them comfort to their trouble? They have lanterns to cut and juggle them to crush, but comfort, Ah, my friends, you had better stop your skepticism. Suppose you are put in a crisis like that of Colonel Ethan Allen. I saw the account at one time mentioned in an address. A descendant of Ethan Allen, who is an infidel, said it never occurred. Soon after I received a letter from a professor in one of our colleges, who is also a descendant of Ethan Allen and is a Christian. He wrote me that the incident is accurate; that my statement was authentic and true. The wife of Colonel Ethan Allen was a very capable woman. She was instructed the daughter in the truths of Christianity. The daughter sickened and was about to die, and she said to her father: "Father, shall I take your instruction or shall I take mother's instruction? I am going to die now. I must have this matter decided." That man, who had been loud in his infidelity, said to his dying daughter, "My dear, you had better take your mother's religion." My advice is the same to you, O young man! You know how religion comforted her. You know what she said to you when she was dying. You had better take your mother's religion.

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