

OUR SERMON.

THE GROWTH OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY.

A SERMON PREACHED IN BOSTON, A. D., 1875, BY REV. MATTHEW SIMPSON, D. D., BISHOP OF M. E. CHURCH OF THE UNITED STATES.

"Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come."—Isaiah 21: 11, 12.

The words selected for this evening's meditation are contained in the prophecy of Isaiah, twenty-first chapter, and parts of the eleventh and twelfth verses: Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. The prophet in vision, places a watchman on his tower looking out over Mount Scir. The people are agitated, and in the night, just before the dawn of morning, an anxious inhabitant comes to the watchman and earnestly inquires, "Watchman, what of the night?" and in his anxiety, showing his deep concern, he repeats the question, "Watchman, what of the night?" What news do you have of the enemies? What dangers are around? What prospects of deliverance may be entertained? The watchman replies, "The morning cometh;" the night is almost past; the danger is over for this special period; the light is abating, and no enemy need now be expected. But the danger is not past: "The morning cometh, and also the night." There is still necessity to keep an outlook; the foe have not entirely abandoned their project; there is still danger; but then he adds, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye." That is, it is proper to ask these questions; it is right to be interested; it is well to make this enquiry. "Come again; return, come." You may approach at all times while I am on the tower and ask questions; he repeats the question, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come," as a constant exhortation.

If these words were spoken in special reference to the condition of the city, they probably indicated a temporary deliverance from the power and thralldom of Babylon, which the prophet had foreseen. But he saw further; a night to come; that after the temporary deliverance, there should come other dangers, and a night settle down upon the land. But in connection with the passage I have this evening read, the prophet sees one coming, clothed with robes of office, upon whose shoulder was the key of dominion, who could open and no man shut, who could shut and no man open, and the prophet's vision centres around this great personage. We are told that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; that it is not of any private interpretation; and we are told also that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and these prophecies, directly or indirectly, lead us to the coming and triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the question I ask to-night, is that which may be asked of every watchman on the towers of Zion: "What of the night?" What are the prospects of the Christian Church? What are the indications of the times?

The first remark I have to make is this: That the spirit of revelation, the spirit of Christianity, not only allows but encourages free inquiry. It trusts our judgment, our understanding, and so far from repressing any investigations, the spirit of Christianity bids welcome to them all. Whether they are in reference to the heavens above us, the depths of the earth beneath us, the antiquity of man on the earth, or any facts, if connected with God's government, and man's relation to Him—the spirit of Christianity, I repeat, not only allows but encourages the utmost freedom of inquiry. That which is not true, cannot stand; though the world should combine to uphold it. That which is not true, ought not to stand, and truth should be the object of all our inquiry. False systems may shun investigation; that which feels it has the truth, courts the fullest examination; and so it is with the spirit of our Christianity. And better for humanity that man should occasionally err, better for humanity that reason should sometimes fly beyond the province, or attempt to fly beyond the province assigned it, than thought should stagnate, or inquiry should be repressed. To all thoughtful men I will say, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." Study the volume of revelation; study the volume of nature; read the thoughts of the best thinkers; compare them with the Divine Word; and in the end all shall be found in some form to harmonize with that Word which shall stand forever. My interpretations of it, and your interpretations of it, may sometimes be found to be defective; some of our systems, possibly, may be shaken, and some of our opinions may possibly be rudely jarred, but in the end, the truth, which alone

is worthy, shall be found and shall triumph.

The second suggestion connected with this passage is, We are not to expect in any great movement on earth, perpetual and unvarying success. "The morning cometh, and also the night." God has so ordered that great movements seem to be—as least in part—cycles. It is thus in nature: we have the morning and the evening; we have the summer and the winter. You know in our own experiences we have not always the sunshine of joy, nor the winter of sorrow. It is oftentimes the case that we mistake when we fancy there may be loss of progress. We sometimes see the planets receding from the sun, sometimes approaching very near, and passing beyond; they seem to us to move irregularly, but the eye at the centre sees these planets moving in unbroken order. So there is success, so there is progress, oftentimes, when we do not see it. There would be no strong trees, if there was perpetual summer. The winter and the period of rest is needed, as well as the period of bloom and fruitage. Though sometimes it may seem as if there is delay, or actual retrogression, yet at the same time, as with those bodies in the heavens around us that are in motion, there is one great central point around which if it takes myriads of years for them to circle, they will move and ultimately finish their course. God regards not time as we do. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day.

Having said this much, I approach more especially the line of thought marked out for your consideration this evening, and that is this: That Christianity, and chiefly in its evangelical form, is in constant advance, and that it is beginning to realize the declarations of the prophecy that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ. How singular that the Apostle exiled to the little island, from which he could scarcely see the continent, with every form of earthly power opposed to Christianity, should yet take up his harp and proclaim that the time was coming when Christ shall be King of kings, and Lord of lords; and should look till change after change, the breaking of the seas, the opening of the pages, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ, who has said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and who has forbid His followers to take the sword, even though for His defence. If then, we take up this line of thought in reference to Christianity, I think we shall find that from age to age, and especially in this age of ours, evangelical Christianity is constantly gaining influence and power.

I am aware there are many thinkers who have a supicious indifference as to the forms of religion, and who tell us that humanity is more equally situated under whatever form a nation shall adopt. Men in Christian lands are speaking of the benefits of paganism, and are bringing sentences out of heathen writers which they compare with the beautiful sayings of Jesus of Nazareth. There are some that tell us that Mohammedanism is as rich in truth and as favorable for the exaltation of humanity, as Christianity, and that no matter what may be the religious form, a nation will advance about equally well under the system that is taught. Let us compare, then, for a few moments, the different forms of thought in reference to religious subjects:—

And first is paganism. When Christianity appeared in the world, the entire population of the globe was pagan, with the exception of the inhabitants of the land of Palestine, and of such of the people of the Jews as had gone to dwell in other countries. Palestine, itself, had been conquered by the Roman power, and every government on the earth was in pagan hands. We have seen the many changes,—events of which I will not dwell upon, till to-day there are but two leading kingdoms that are pagan,—China and Japan. There are some smaller nations and tribes contiguous to China, and in Africa, which are pagan, but they are unimportant peoples and tribes. What has occasioned this change?—The preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The civilization of the world to-day is in the hands of Christian countries. I need not refer you to the question where are the armies, navies, schools, universities, presses, hospitals, institutions for the benefit of humanity, and you will answer, "In the hands of Christendom." Paganism has failed to elevate humanity.

If we pass to Mohammedanism, the answer is about the same. There is but one strong Mohammedan power in the world to-day,—Turkey; Persia is a secondary power. There are also a few small tribal nations—such as are in Tartary; and in the interior of Africa—that are Mohammedan; but the greatest Mohammedan power—Turkey—is kept in being simply by Christian nations. Were it not for the interference of England and of France to-day, Russia would sweep the Sultan from his throne, and Turkey would become a Christian nation. Full three out of

four people, residents of Turkey in Europe, are Christian in creed. The system, then, which has not gained power sufficient to maintain itself in the face of Christendom, but lies on the arm of other nations, has certainly not imparted strength to humanity. Mohammedanism has yielded before the progress of Christianity in these latter days. Thus Spain, that was Mohammedan in large part, is Christian. Algeria is taken under the dominion of France. Russia has swept down over the northern provinces, which were owned by Persia, embracing the inhabitants of the Circassian mountains, of Georgia, and has conquered part of Independent Tartary. Christian nations have continually encroached upon the borders of Mohammedanism; and a very singular fact obtains to-day, that were it not for the express command of the European powers, the revolution in Bosnia would in all probability destroy the Sultan's power.

I had testimony on this subject of evangelical religion and its power, a few weeks ago, in which I was deeply interested. I listened to a sermon delivered by Cardinal Manning, the head of the Catholic Church in England, and who will be, as is supposed by many, the probable successor of Pope Pius IX. It was an anniversary sermon on the "Restoration of the Roman Hierarchy to England;" and he was endeavoring to show that the establishment of the Roman hierarchy would be a great benediction to England. One of his arguments was, that the loss of that hierarchy had on two occasions been followed by great loss and disaster to England. He spoke of the age that followed Henry VIII., and then of the age that followed the loss of the Roman hierarchy in England 1688, and said that the nation passed into infidelity and degradation till the middle of the eighteenth century; and then pausing, added, "Had it not been for one man, a man in whom there was much to admire, as well as much to blame—I may as well name him,—and it not been for Wesley, this evangelical doctrine of justification by faith, his stirring presentation of great cardinal truth,—no man can tell how long England would have sunk to-day." From such a quarter, the testimony was a very significant one, but I quote it only to show the general consent as to how low the leading land of England had sunk in the middle of the last century, and that evangelical truth rose in the face of all that opposed it, till it has become the power it is to-day.

In the year 1500, just before the time of the Reformation,—for Luther's era, or the commencement of his public labors, was about 1520,—the whole Christian world was under the domination of the papacy, as far as government is related, with the exception of the inhabitants of the then exceedingly limited kingdom of Russia. A small population centered around Moscow were of the Greek Church, but no other government on earth at that time,—no other Christian government,—was based on any other form of religion but that of the Catholic. When the Reformation occurred in Germany, it took nearly a half a century to settle the relative positions of the people. The great protest—political protest—was made in 1539. At the end of that period you will find that Austria, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and a number of the German States, remained Catholic. The lands which were Protestant, were England, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, small parts of Germany, with the kingdom of Saxony, and a portion of Switzerland. Now the fact to which I wish to call your attention is this: No country whose political power was ever wielded by Protestant influence, has since become Catholic! Examine the whole line of history: Holland has become Protestant; Switzerland, which was about half and half in population, has now become a united confederation, and the population is about three-fifths, or a little over, Protestant. Then consider the change that has occurred with regard to Protestant lines. Has any Catholic country become Protestant? After the discovery of America, as you know, by the bull of the Roman pontiff all America was divided,—or the discovery was divided,—between the governments of Spain and Portugal, and all America was consigned to Catholic dominion; and in 1559, whatever of Christian power there was in America was in the Catholic form. There was no Protestantism on this entire continent. To-day how does America stand? One small corner, Patagonia, is heathen; South America, Central America, and up to the northern line of Mexico is Catholic. All the continent, from the north line of Mexico to the North Pole, is under Protestant government.

And now consider the changes that have been in our day: With the commencement of the present century,—1800,—the line of the English government transferred to the United States was from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, from the Lakes to the thirty-first degree of north latitude; and this was all the part of America that was

then under a Protestant power, excepting Canada, which had been taken from the French about a half century before. In 1750 there was no Protestant power with the exception of within this line which I have mentioned. What is it to-day? In three quarters of a century, France gave us the whole territory west of the Mississippi; Spain gave us Florida, embracing the Gulf coast to the Mississippi; from Mexico we have received California, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. At the beginning of the century there were but about eight hundred thousand square miles, or a little over, of Protestant territory on the continent. To-day, in the United States alone, there are three million six hundred thousand square miles. In other words, at the commencement of the century, three-quarters of its present territory was under Catholic dominion.

Now turn to Europe. As I said, Holland, that was for a time Catholic, became Protestant. The government of Poland, one of the strongest of Catholic governments, was divided between Russia, Prussia, and Austria,—two-thirds of it to Russia. With the exception of the part which has gone to Austria, all that was the large, and at one time the powerful, government of Poland, is to-day under non-Catholic dominion,—either under the Protestant or Greek Church. Russia has extended her borders immensely, and is doing a glorious work in unifying some hundred different tribes, and leading into one language some forty different dialects.

But another thought: If we take the outlook of the world, how is it with regard to the population? Unless you have thought on this subject, you will be, possibly, surprised to think that nearly all of the future outlook for the growth of this world, lies in countries under Protestant rule. Look at the vast territory of the United States, and of British America,—the vast unoccupied fields! Turn your eye to Australia and the Islands adjacent, themselves united,—an empire! Look at Russia, that embraces in its boundaries a territory more than equal to the whole of Europe,—is non-Catholic! Turn your attention to the islands, and how many of them are under English sway? The growth of the world is almost wholly in the direction of non-Catholic nations. France has a territory without outlet except her province of Algeria, and some little colonial possessions. Spain has lost all her possessions but Cuba and Porto Rico, and to-day they are trembling in the balance; and if Cuba becomes independent, it will soon be non-Catholic! Then Portugal has lost her possessions in South America, and has but comparatively little in the East Indies. England has a great part of India. Herdard has a large part of South Africa,—the border running up from Cape Colony, Swaziland, and the territory on the east side of the continent. Malacca, that was pagan has become by a ruling house Protestant; that is, missionaries have free access, and the ruling house of Malagascar favors the Protestant religion. And wherever Protestantism and Catholicism have stood face to face with perfect freedom, Protestantism has always gained, except by the influence of immigration.

Now I ask who is in the advance? I have only time to suggest this thought: You will find in the line of advance the most evangelical churches. Whoever the most wholly and earnestly preaches Christ, exalts the Cross with all its glory, that class is on the advance line. To-day the hearts of the nations are stirred. Witness the uprising in England. The masses crowding around to listen to the simple story of the cross. Look at this country where the people are gathering to hear that story told. Nay, look at this audience in Boston,—the centre of literature. Your public halls filled with audiences on week-day night, listening to Gospel sermons, a thing unknown before. It is a new manifestation, a new power, and the world is yours. I have not time to dwell on the outlook now. Christianity stands like the Saviour Himself, with arms outstretched, and its invitation is to all the world everywhere. Christianity is like a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that is rolling on to fill the whole earth. The governments that were pagan have ceased. The governments that were Mohammedan are breaking down. The governments that forbid the Bible to circulate among their people are crumbling and falling. With a free Bible, and a free Gospel everywhere, soon shall be heard through all the earth the words of Jesus how they ring. Tell me of Demosthenes, tell me of the orators and philosophers of other days. Who reads them? The lettered few, the leading minds, the students. Who pores over the page of Homer with all its beauty? Your young men in the seminaries and colleges; but the words of Jesus are read everywhere; translated into more than two hundred languages; you will find them in the palace and in the hovel. When a native

prince came to England and asked Victoria the secret power of the British Government, she took a Bible in her hands, and said, "It is in that book." Kings follow it, and the poor people embrace it. The words of Jesus, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," ring out to the working man, the weary man, and the widow comes and rests beneath the Cross. The poor man finds his treasures there, the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The limbs of the lame leap for joy. Oh! go out into the world, go into our hovels, follow the scattering population where you may, and the hearts of the people turn to the blessed Saviour—Humanity will soon join in the utterance of the dying girl of whom I was told some time since. Her tears were giving away, her articulation almost gone; her lips moved, and her friends who gathered around her bed were anxious to know what she said, and as they bent the ear and listened, she said "bring;" and they brought her medicine, and they brought her water, but she shook her head. And she spoke again and said "bring;" and again it was only "bring;" and they almost despaired, after trying everything to find what she wanted, till at last she summoned breath enough and said,

"Bring forth the royal diction, And crown him Lord of all."

GOD THE GIVER OF STRENGTH.

Let me remind you that the strength which the Lord gives to His people, is not meted out at once and in full measure. It is given according to the desire, the capacity, the faith, the need, the duty, the trial. The lowest powers we have—our bodily powers—grow by growth, and they grow by exercise. Such is the law of our physical childhood, and no other is the law of the childhood of our spiritual being. You may not hope that all the spiritual strength that you know you need, shall be at once infused, that the strength and stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus shall at a leap be reached. The grace that strengthens is not given in the gross, there is no full stock of it at first bestowed to be laid up and drawn upon by us as we require. The Giver of it holds it over in His own hands, and He deals it out in the wisest, kindest, most beneficial way. Our safety, our comfort, our progress, are wrapped up in an abiding sense of our continued and entire dependence, and He evokes and He sustains that sense by keeping us in His hand, obliging us to repair every day afresh to Him for fresh supplies; by giving the strength, not beforehand, but only at the moment it is needed; by giving more than is asked and longed for; by giving the more, the better use that is made of what already had been given; by giving the more, the more trust is put upon His promise, and the more effort in the exercise of that trust is made. Consciousness of weakness is the way to the gaining of this strength. "He giveth power to the faint, to them that have no might he increaseth strength." It is out of weakness they are made strong. It is "by waiting" on the Lord that they renew their strength, that they mount up with wings as eagles, that they run and are not weary, and walk and are faint not. Blessed are they whose waiting eyes are ever toward the Lord, whose strength is the Lord's. They go from strength to strength on this their earth's journey, and in Zion shall every one of them appear before the Lord. "And blessed be he, the God of Israel, who giveth such strength and power unto his people. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before his presence with exceeding joy; unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to the only wise God our Saviour, by glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."—Wm. Hanna.

Ice is now largely manufactured in the South. From Florida to Texas machines are being put in operation at frequent intervals. The actual cost of manufacturing from the St. John's River is said to be about 70 cents a ton, including storage and delivery. As northern ice used to retail from \$10 to \$15 a ton there, it is plain that a handsome profit results for the manufacturer after paying his price so low as to drive all natural ice machines from the market. One of the machines, in which ammonia is used to do the freezing, turns out ten tons of ice daily in the form of blocks about two and a-half feet long and ten inches in thickness. The congelation is perfect, and many say said to prefer ice thus made to that formed in the laboratory of nature.

On the daughter of one of the Rev. J. of South T. zealous sup. Highly thoughtful. She's gone. And all t. Why should I. Her grief. We wept. Is left. And heart. To all the. She fought. She tried. And could. Show you. No more. No more. She—front. She—front. As "dark. For here. There—un. Her glory. Is man. You there. They th. To those. A serv. Then wep. But stri. July 187. Bro. Jan. While yet. Weeched. Island. There also. tween th. the enjoy. favour, an. type. A r. the house. and devote. of the sick. Convert. the Free. Unit with. timed after. Free Bapt. throu in. Up to tw. in his ac. church. noon, he. and havin. too much. vailing, un. filled and. and while. the shore. sight of h. perished. hours after. not, is no. Chas. G. town. eight on. early on. 10th inst. Favour. age and. he sought. until in. stance. realities. for duty. of God. up this. to him. member. ed his en. remark. taken a. and that. might h. live fore. Now. lost, for. whole. proved. deeply. which. penit. denied. than. him to. he did. What. such as. to his. she was. for God. die was. He. one. of his. the. did. ought. be. some. might. Amount. perced. And. W. At. and. mercif. in. great. taken. If.